

Gaining Possession of Torah

Parshas Ki Siso

by Rabbi Menachem Rokeach

One of the fundamentals of Torah, received on Sinai is the teaching that it was given as a gift. On the passage "When Hashem finished speaking to Moshe on Mount Sinai, He gave him the two Tablets of Testimony..." (Shemos 31:18). Rashi, *ibid*, comments that Moshe was not able to comprehend all the Torah in the short period of forty days which he spent on the mountain, until the Al-mighty gave him the Torah as a gift to own and possess.

According to the Talmud (Nedarim 38a) Moshe's difficulty was retention of the vast accumulated knowledge. He was able to overcome this predicament once the Torah was given to him as a gift. Either way it is astonishing that Moshe, the greatest prophet, learning directly from Hashem, would experience hardship in comprehension or retention. The Torah testifies about him: "Never again has there arisen in Israel a prophet like Moshe, whom Hashem had known face to face." Moshe, then, was the disciple par excellence of Hashem Himself. Isn't it logical to assume that in the presence of Hashem as his "personal" Teacher, Moshe would easily absorb all that wealth of knowledge?

One may find a solution by applying a principle discussed by Reb Tzodok of Lublin, (Tzidkas Hatzadik #154). Though Moshe was in many ways on a higher level than all his contemporaries, he reached that stage only as a representative of Klal Yisroel. Therefore, says Reb Tzodok, every mishap experienced by Israel touched upon Moshe, too, at least in some minor way. Thus, in connection with the sin of

the golden calf, Moshe committed smashing the Tablets in anger (though, on the other hand, it was considered a positive act.) In connection with the sin of the Meraglim (spies, Bamidbor 13) Moshe, too, was involved by sending them in the first place, though it was optional. In connection with Mai Meriva, Moshe erred by hitting the stone instead of praying in front of it.

Applying this concept to the lack of total exuberance of disciple Moshe, we may reason that it was due to his being thoroughly part of Klal Yisroel who would experience missing some sharp depth.

The Talmud states (Megilah 6b): if one will tell you I gained Torah knowledge without toil, don't believe him. One cannot truly achieve Torah sagacity unless he struggles in it. There are many who wish to become Torah scholars overnight, and even on that night to enjoy a good night's sleep. To attain Torah scholarship, however, requires years of sacrifice, devotion of much time, energy and marrow.

The Talmud goes a step further in the conditions to attain erudition in Torah. In connection with the Mitzva of Poro Aduma, the Chumash reads, "this is the Torah teaching regarding a man who would die in a tent...."(Bamidbor 19:14). The Gemoroh coments (Brochos 63b) the "tent" is reference to the tent of Torah study, and expound thus that the words of Torah can be preserved only by a man who dies for it, i.e. is willing to die for it, to give it his last ounce of strength.

Can this strenuous requirement, be cause to alienate anyone from embarking in Torah study? Here is the solution of the Torah given to Moshe as a gift, which really means a gift to every Jew ambitious to know. When Torah is one's possession there is a tendency to aspire for success. The Talmud states (Bova Metzia.): A person favors one

measure of fruit of his own tendered garden - more than nine measures brought from another.

In the blessing before reciting the torah portion we thank Hashem "who selected us from all the peoples and gave us His Torah. After the Torah portion has been read, the "oleh recites the blessing:... who gave us the Torah of truth..." Here "Toroso, (his Torah) is not mentioned. It already has become the possession of the learner.

Many a Talmudic scholar, covering many tracts, would select, in addition, one tract for a lifetime of study which he calls his own, "my mesechta". The same applies, of course, to one who is limited to one perek.

"Happy is the man", the Psalmist begins, "who walketh not in the council of the wicked... But whose delight is in the Torah of the Almighty and in his Torah he meditates day and night"(1:1,2). "At first it is the Torah of the Al-mighty, but after toiling in it day and night it becomes TOROSO, his own Torah" (Rashi ibid).

The Talmud (Kidushin 32b) deduces from the above that a Torah scholar may forgo hid due honor because his Torah is his own.

Thrice a day, following the Shemone Esra, we pray "grant us our share in Your Torah". On Shabbos we include this prayer in the very central blessing Mekadaish haShabos. Moshe our teacher leaves all of us an essential legacy, according which "our share" is indicative of "our OWN share".

When the Torah was given to him as a gift, as his own, he bequeathed all of us with the aspiration and capacity to possess the Torah as our own, thus loving it, protecting it, and knowing it, as our own.

