

“ TORAH STUDY CONNECTS US TO THE SHECHINA”

It is undeniable that Ma'amad Har Sinai (the Revelation on Mt. Sinai) was a most extraordinary and uplifting spiritual experience for our people, the nation of Israel. The question is how could Bnei Yisrael continue the positive elements they gained by these expressions of the Divine Shechina well beyond the one-time event of Matan Torah?

The answer is found in the beginning of our parasha. Bnei Yisrael would donate for a *Mishkan*, which would be a place where the *Shechina* (Divine Presence) would dwell on an ongoing basis (25:8). ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם. Key among the elements of the *Mishkan* was the *Aron* (ark containing the *Luchot*, upon which the Ten Commandments were written). The *Aron* was covered by a *Kaparot*, out of which rose up the *cherubim*, and the voice of HaShem spoke to Moshe from that point (25:22). The idea that we understand from this is that **without an Aron which is the symbol of Torah there is no Mishkan.** and the *Mishkan* enables the continuation of the dwelling of Shechina in the midst of Bnei Yisrael

Thus, our connection to HaShem is not only through bringing korbanot (sacrifices) but with the ongoing involvement of Torah study, which had started with the powerful Divine Presence at Sinai. The *Luchot* are in the midst of the *Aron* which is in the midst of the *Mishkan*. Their presence enables Moshe to continue receiving the Torah lessons from HaShem, which he can share with the entire nation. This center of service and of Torah, which started in the *Mishkan*, continued for hundreds of years in the Beit HaMikdash, continuing the Sinaic experience to this very day.

Through Torah study then, we can continue our direct connection to HaShem. In practical terms it means that Torah study is not merely a course of study or a subject that one engages in for the purpose of intellectual pursuit, but rather, Torah study becomes a profound religious experience that uplifts and connects us with the Shechina. That is why Ezra and his Beit Din had originally ordained that one must not study Torah without first going to a Mikveh, or at least washing hands. This *takana* was later abolished but many still do wash their hands before beginning Torah study. That is why it is written in Pirkei Avot [3:3]: “If two sit together and words of Torah are between them, the Holy Shechina rests between them. And even if one person sits and occupies himself with Torah the Holy One, Blessed is He determines a reward for him”

So the next time you sit down to learn Torah keep in mind that you are about to engage and connect with the Shechina of HaKadosh Baruch Hu, so that our learning must be with greatest awe and reverence. No Beracha need be recited for this awesome event because our morning Beracha of Ahavah Rabba covers our total daily Torah study.[Berachot 11b]