



Kabbalat HaTorah in 5781



M*a'amad Har Sinai* is obviously one of the most defining moments in the history of our nation. It represented the birth of our halachic *mesora* (see Rambam *Peirush HaMishna* Chulin 100b) and gave us a purpose to fulfill every single moment of our life. How can we relate this experience to our modern society, a society which doesn't seem to have spirituality as its ultimate goal?

The Beit HaLevi (Yitro) asked a basic question on the entire experience of *Kabbalat HaTorah*. Rambam (Mechira 11:16) teaches us that an open-ended obligation is not binding. If Reuven agrees to pay “any amount of money” to Shimon, the obligation is not binding at all. One cannot obligate themselves to a *דבר שאינו קצוב*, something unlimited. Thus, asks the Beit HaLevi, how did

נעשה ונשמע work? We obligated ourselves to whatever G-d would command us. But we had no idea what the obligation would be! Isn't that an example of a *דבר שאינו קצוב*, which shouldn't be binding at all?

He answers with yet another *halacha* in the Rambam. A person cannot obligate himself to a *דבר שאינו קצוב*, but he *can* obligate himself to become a servant of another, to create a relationship of *eved* and *adon*, servant and master. Once that relationship exists, then, step two, the *eved* is obligated to do everything the *adon* asks of him. That, says the Beit HaLevi, is exactly what happened at *Ma'amad Har Sinai*. *נעשה ונשמע* wasn't a direct acceptance of all future obligations. Rather, it was a commitment to become *ovdei Hashem*, to be G-d's people and His representatives in the world. Once we accepted that reality, we were then

bound by all the future commandments.

But there is one more crucial point, lest we think this was something we had doubts about, lest we think we weren't sure this was the best commitment for our future. Rav Simcha Bunim of Peshischa adds a beautiful thought. How did we say *נעשה ונשמע* anyway, using the plural language? Shouldn't it have been *אעשה ואשמע*, I will do and listen? How did each Jew know what was in the other one's heart? He answers with a *mashal*. Five men are locked up in an overheated, non-ventilated jail cell, and have not been given anything to drink for three days. Finally, the warden comes in with a big jug of water, and asks, “Who would like some water?” What would their answer be? “I'd like some, but I'm not sure about my friend.” Of course not! It's obvious what each of them would want, and they could each confidently scream out, “Yes, we'd all love some water!” So too, says Rav Bunim, was the exclamation of *נעשה ונשמע*. It was so clear, each Jew had such Divine clarity, that it was a “no brainer” to become *ovdei Hashem*, to accept a fulfilling life of Torah and *mitzvot*.

Yehi ratzon that each of us recognize the privilege, every day of our lives and especially on this day of *Kabbalat HaTorah*, to serve G-d in all areas of life. The Torah is our oxygen and our water. Let us imbibe every drop and live by its dictates and laws. *Chag Sameach!*

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