



Adapted from the sefer **חמין במוצאי שבת** a collection of maamarim on  
תנא דבי אליהו given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Melave Malka

### Melave Malka Parshas Yisro 5766

In the Tana D'vei Eliyahu (23/2), we learn a lesson about Matan Torah. (Hashem says) "How can you ask me why I favor *Am Yisrael*? Didn't they favor me as well at Har Sinai, by wholeheartedly receiving my Torah, and not attempting to trick me as the idol-worshipping nations did. They received the Torah truly, and with all their heart."

There is a powerful question that needs to be asked about Eiliyahu Hanavi's statement. David Hamelech writes in Tehillim (78/36-37) וַיִּפְתּוּהוּ בִּפְיָהֶם וּבִלְשׁוֹנָם יִכְזְבוּ לוֹ (They convinced him with their mouths and with their tongues they were deceitful to him)

The Midrash, (Bamidbar Rabba 7/4) elaborates. "Even at the very moment they declared "*Naaseh V'nishma*", their mouth said the statement, but their heart wasn't in it, as it says וְלִבָּם לֹא נָכוֹן עִמּוֹ וְלֹא נֶאֱמָנוּ בְּבְרִיתוֹ (Tehillim 78/37) (Their hearts weren't truly with him, and they weren't loyal to his covenant).

This clearly tells us that even while they stood at Har Sinai, their hearts weren't truly and totally devoted to Hashem.

In light of this Midrash, we have to ask, how could Eliyahu Hanavi tell us that Bnei Yisrael received the Torah truly and wholeheartedly?

When we read Eliyahu Hanavi's statement carefully, However, we notice that he chose his words carefully, and tells us that Hashem praises his children for not approaching him with trickery as the other nations did. Certainly, if we compare the hearts of Bnei Yisrael to those of the



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nations, it becomes clear that their hearts were whole and true. In Masseches Shabbos we find the story of ההוא מינא, an apostate, who observed Rava learning Torah. Rava concentrated so intensely that he didn't notice that he was sitting on his fingers crushing them to the extent that they began to bleed. The מין said to him, "You are a hasty nation! You put your mouths before your ears (when you said *naaseh v'nishma*), and you continue to be hasty and reckless to this very day. You should have first listened, and if His words found favor in your eyes, accepted (the Torah). If they didn't find favor in your eyes, then you shouldn't have accepted it. Rava said "We remain with our *temimus*..."

Rashi explains Rava's words, "We went with him wholeheartedly, in the way of those who act out of love, and we relied upon him not to place a burden upon us that we wouldn't be able to hold.

The Gemara teaches us that once Bnei Yisrael said *naaseh* before *nishma*, they were worthy of Shlomo Hamelech's description, תומת ישרים תנחם. Their declaration proved that they were wholehearted and true, for they relied on Hashem not to place too heavy a burden on them. In contrast, the nations who wanted to first hear what is written in the Torah before deciding to accept it or not, are described by Shlomo Hamelech with the words, סלף בוגדים ישדם, meaning that they were crooked, deceitful, and traitorous. The Maharsha in his Chidushei Agados adds "ותומת ישרים" means that when they want to follow the straight path even if it is difficult for them, תנחם, you will guide them and help them from above."

From the Maharsha we learn that Bnei Yisrael are considered *temimim* and *yesharim* because they wanted to follow the path of *temimus* and *yashrus*. On the other hand, the nations of the world suspected that Hashem would burden them excessively. Therefore, they are considered dishonest and disloyal.

How do we reconcile this with *David Hamelech's* description of *Bnei Yisrael's* hearts not being in sync with their words of *naaseh v'nishma*?



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If we read the *pasuk* carefully, we notice that it says, ולבם לא נכון עמו rather than אליו. This means that while Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai hadn't achieved the lofty *madreigah* of עמו - being totally one with Hashem's *ratzon*, they really did desire to accept the Torah and fulfill Hashem's will. Compared to the suspicious nations, Am Yisrael's declaration of *naaseh v'nishma*, even with their internal misgivings, was praiseworthy.

We must realize that a person's heart is able to simultaneously contain two seemingly opposite feelings. In the case of *Matan Torah*, the sincere desire to receive the *Torah* and fulfill its *mitzvos* no matter what, co-existed in Bnei Yisrael's hearts together with apprehensions and reservations. The presence of those concerns did not make Bnei Yisrael unworthy of the praise and rewards Hashem bestowed upon them for declaring *naaseh v'nishma*. Those words expressed true desires and aspirations.

This phenomenon is possible because there are levels upon levels of complex depth in every person's heart. The person himself can't even identify what takes place in the depth of his heart. We often do something without realizing that the motivation for that action exists in the deep recesses of our hearts. Such motivations can only be revealed by deep and honest introspection.

Perhaps we can illustrate this with the example of a man whose close friend is suffering. He commits himself to say the entire *sefer Tehillim* every day, until his friend's crisis is resolved. At that moment, he truly and sincerely wanted to undertake and fulfill that commitment. However, after a month or two, the powerful emotions that moved him dissipate, and he occasionally fails to say the whole *sefer Tehillim*. One day something unexpected comes up, and on another day he may simply forget.

If that person looks deeply into his heart, he will discover that this lack of commitment isn't a new phenomenon. It already existed deep in the recesses of his heart when he took on this laudable practice. Only after



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time passed and the powerful emotions subsided did that aspect manifest itself.

We need to understand how relevant this lesson is to all of us. Often, teachers or parents observe children's behavior. It may be that one child learns and davens beautifully while another misbehaves, lies, and is *chutzpahdik*. As we observe them, we need to remember that there are levels upon levels of depth and complexity in their hearts. Even the child who seems so good, has his negative sides and tendencies, and the child who behaves so badly, is never totally bad.

This understanding effects the way we guide them and care for them. Even if we are delighted by the behavior of a model student, we must never assume that need not have any concern for his future. He also needs protection and guidance, for there is no way for any parent or teacher to know what is going on in the depth of his heart. We aren't suggesting that we should *chas v'shalom* suspect that every fine person is simply putting on a show and that his outside doesn't reflect his inside. Nonetheless, we can't be nonchalant. We need to provide him with all of the attention, guidance and protection that every child needs in this challenging world.

On the other hand, when someone behaves negatively, we shouldn't believe that his heart is entirely filled with evil. We don't know his inner depths, and the Torah teaches us that deep in the heart of every Jew there is a pure *nekudah* of desire to fulfill *ratzon Hashem*. Therefore, we need to relate to him with patience and *emunah*, not with strict judgement and anger. We need to help him discover that *nekudah* of purity and explain to him that his mission in life is to nurture those positive tendencies and bring them to fruition. That is the only way to guide him to a life of Torah and *avodas Hashem*, that will benefit him in this world and the next.

We don't have to look beyond ourselves to recognize the truth of this principle. Each of us knows how often and how badly we transgress, and



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how much we need Hashem to focus on the good in our hearts rather than the bad. If we treat our children or *talmidim* according to the letter of the law, we will be judged and punished in the same way *min ha'shamayim*. None of us can survive the judgement of pure *midas ha'din*. If we want Hashem to relate to us with *chesed* and *rachamim*, we must treat those around us with those *middos*. We need to emulate Hashem who crowned the Jewish people when they said *naaseh v'nishma* even though he knew that deep in their hearts they weren't totally sincere.

When we follow in His ways, and focus on the positive aspects of our children and *talmidim* we will benefit from the blessing of Hashem's *chesed* and *rachamim* אכי"ר



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