



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

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פרשת כי תבוא

וַיִּקְרָא מֹשֶׁה אֶל כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם אַתֶּם רְאִיתֶם אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה ה' לְעֵינֵיכֶם בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לַפְרָעָה וּלְכָל עֲבָדָיו וּלְכָל אֶרְצוֹ. הַמִּסּוֹת הַגְּדֹלֹת אֲשֶׁר רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ, הָאֹתוֹת וְהַמִּפְתִּים הַגְּדֹלִים הָהֵם. וְלֹא נָתַן ה' לָכֶם לֵב לָדַעַת וְעֵינַיִם לִרְאוֹת וְאָזְנוֹת לִשְׁמָעַ עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה.

Moshe summoned all Klal Yisroel and said to them, "You have seen everything that Hashem did before your eyes in the land of Mitzrayim, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land – the great trials that your eyes beheld, those great signs and wonders. But Hashem did not give you a heart to know, or eyes to see, or ears to hear, until this day."

(Devorim 29:1-3)

At the end of this week's *Sidrah*, Moshe Rabbeinu gathered Klal Yisroel and delivered his final message to the people. After reflecting on the miraculous experiences that had occurred over the last forty years, Moshe told them that until that very day, Hashem had not given them the heart to understand and the senses to recognise all that was happening.

Rashi explains that until now, Klal Yisroel had been unable to appreciate the kindnesses of Hashem. It was only at this moment, when they truly recognised all the goodness they had received, that they began to draw closer to and desire Hashem.

The Meforshim question as to what significant event led to the profound shift in mindset for Klal Yisroel. What change occurred now that prompted them to acknowledge all the goodness from Hashem, resulting in their deep yearning to grow closer and cleave to Him?

Rashi and others explain that this was the day when Moshe Rabbeinu completed the Sefer Torah and finished teaching the entire Torah to Klal Yisroel. Consequently, the transformation described by Moshe was a direct result of the culmination of their Torah learning. The Torah impacted them with a remarkable awareness that inspired and motivated Klal Yisroel to reach great heights of *קְבִלַת עוֹל מַלְכוּת*, with love and *dveikus*.

The Malbim elaborates on the idea that the Torah possesses a tremendous power to enable individuals to connect with Hashem. Once the Jewish people completed the study of the Torah, their passion and love for following Hashem's guidance and being close to Him reached its peak. This ignited a deep desire to go in Hashem's ways and observe His laws. He emphasises that while they had been gradually learning the Torah over the years, its effects were subtle at first. However, with the completion of the Torah, the impact on Klal Yisroel was significant. He compares this to a doctor prescribing a course of treatment; with each dose of medicine, there is a small effect, but the final dose transforms the patient into a completely healed individual, restoring them to optimal health.

From this, we learn that the Torah has the ability to improve and develop a person's character in the best possible way. It can bring about profound changes, enabling individuals to reach their greatest potential and accomplish remarkable things. Devotion to the Torah reflects a sense of subservience to Hashem, and toiling deeply with His Torah and striving to understand its greatness demonstrates loyalty to its Divine Author.

Chazal teach that the theme and *avodah* of the Yomim Noroim is מְלִכּוּת, crowning Hashem as King and making ourselves completely subservient to Him. It is generally understood that the primary way to achieve this is through *mussar* and *avodas hamidos*. However, R' Yerucham Levovitz *zatzal* explained, based on a Rambam, that another profound method of accepting upon oneself עוֹל מְלִכּוּת שְׁמַיִם is by focusing on and toiling in Torah study.

The Rambam, in *Moreh Nevuchim*, states that the main purpose of learning Torah and fulfilling *mitzvos* is to focus on doing the will of Hashem. This is not an easy task; it requires gradual effort, building one's concentration and focus, step by step, during Torah study and *tefillah*. With each effort to concentrate on *rotzon Hashem*, a person becomes closer and more connected to Him. R' Yerucham teaches that true acceptance of עוֹל מְלִכּוּת שְׁמַיִם occurs when one completely negates their own desires, fully dedicating their attention to the learning, davening or *mitzvah* at hand.

During Elul, R' Yerucham, the famed Mashgiach in Mir, Poland, placed significant importance on deepening one's devotion to learning Torah. He urged his students to fully dedicate themselves to Torah study, exerting all their efforts and eliminating distractions while learning. Although this was contrary to how one might expect the message of a Mashgiach to be during this time, R' Yerucham explained that engaging intensely in Torah study is one of the strongest ways to accept Hashem's *malchus* over ourselves. By setting aside all distractions and focusing intently on the Torah we are learning, we demonstrate our submission to Hashem. This concentrated approach of learning Torah is an exceptional way to connect with Hashem and represents a profound *madreigah* of Avodas Hashem.

There is a fascinating explanation from the Seforno that highlights the concept mentioned above. The Torah states: תּוֹרַת צִוְּהָ לָנוּ מֹשֶׁה מִוְרָשָׁה קְהֵלֶת יִעֲקֹב. וַיְהִי בִישְׁרוּן מֶלֶךְ בְּהִתְאַסֵּף רָאשֵׁי עַם יִחָד שְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, *The Torah that Moshe commanded us is the heritage of the Congregation of Yakov. He became King over Yeshurun when the numbers of the nation gathered – the tribes of Yisroel in unity.* (Devorim 33:4-5). Seforno explains that these *pessukim* indicate that although most of Klal Yisroel only crowned Hashem as King at Har Sinai, those who were already committed to studying Torah reached this spiritual milestone earlier. They achieved that level of subservience through their dedication to understanding His Torah!

Let us utilise these precious weeks of Elul by working to enhance our concentration and focus while learning Torah. The Torah is the most significant and impactful way to serve Hashem and accept His Kingship. In this merit, may we all be *zoche* to a *kesivah vechasimah tovah*.