



## Har Sinai: Foundation of Emunah Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

A friend talked with me once about her early life. She went through tremendous suffering until she was left with nothing except herself. Why would Hashem do this to a person? There are two ways to understand this very difficult story. The first view is that Hashem sometimes strips us of all extraneous reality because it keeps us from knowing Him.

There's a deeper perspective. Hashem prompts us to make room for our inner self to come forth. For some people, the self is only revealed through adversity.

When Hashem told Avraham to move beyond where he was, He said, "*Lech lecha*." Rashi explains that *lecha* means let your true nature be known in the world. Moving from one point to the next, getting rid of every vestige of one's identity, is making who you really are accessible, to yourself and to the world. From this perspective we can understand that all of the suffering in Egypt was meant to help the Jews become aware of their inner beauty, and their connection to Hashem.

In Egypt, Hashem revealed Himself to us in order to evoke the goodness within us. Then He retracted so we would rediscover Him by finding the holiness within ourselves.

There were great miracles during *matan Torah*. The Jews saw thunder and heard lightning. They experienced all sorts of supernatural events that made them recognize that their picture of reality was limited. The miraculous events at Har Sinai were to teach us that Hashem's life force is the interior of all nature. Thunder can just as easily be visual and lightning can be heard if that is the will of Hashem.

This is the meaning of the verse in Tehillim,

"The land feared and was quite." The world recognized that Hashem is not just a powerful force outside of us, but the one who maintains our existence from moment to moment.

Humans tend to love each other if there's no impediment. If there is one, we tend to be stopped by it. The Sefat Emet says Hashem works differently. Shir HaShirim describes Hashem as "*medaleg al heharim*." He leaps over the barriers and goes right to the inside of the person. He doesn't deny or avoid the impediments. He makes a purposeful decision not to relate to them because of his love for us. When Hashem performed countless miracles for us and made our senses function in a supernatural way, he was saying, "I'm here for you inside of every natural event. I want you to reach out to me, to know me, to realize I've been there all along."

When we recognize that Hashem's will enlivens everything, then nature no longer gives us an illusion of separateness from Him. We now see it for what it is, a mirror that shows us Hashem's presence.

Hashem put the mountain over our head and forced us to accept the Torah. We felt the weight of his awesomeness. A person can't say no to Hashem when he has a realization of His presence, only when he's locked up in his own smallness. We were afraid. However, our fear was assuaged by the realization of Hashem's great love for us.

Rav Tzvi Mayer Silberberg teaches that a person's ability to tap into the latent powers of a holiday depends on his preparation. In the three days before Shavuot, we should work towards *kedusha* (holiness). Whatever you are doing, have that higher consciousness. As you busy yourself with the physical aspects of

preparing for *yom tov*, have in mind that you're doing all this because you want to bring the joy of *matan Torah* into your life. Then you're taking connecting to the vitality of Hashem.

The word *Shavuot* means both oaths and weeks. It relates to the oaths we took. These oaths were the second stage of preparation. We swore to keep the Torah, saying *naaseh v'nishma*, we will do and then hear. This phrase means I will do the *mitzvah* first and then I'll understand it. I'll trust Hashem that if He says the way to develop *kedusha* is by doing this *mitzvah* then that's what I'll do."

Another step to preparing for Shavuot is identifying what's holding you back from being what you want to be. You can improve. We read Megilat Ruth on Shavuot. Ruth moved from one extreme to the other. The Moabites were known for their cruelty and immorality. Ruth elevated herself to become a model of kindness and modesty. Shavuot is about believing in our abilities. We must recognize that there's something higher and holier that Hashem can see when he looks at us. The barriers are real but one can jump over them and start again.

When the Jews said *naaseh v'nishma*, Hashem asked who would be their guarantee. They answered the children. Hashem chose to give the Jews the Torah because of the children. Even if the parents fail their children would come back.

We must recognize that we are a part of something bigger than ourselves. We have our failings, but we still have the merit of those who came before and those who will come after us. As long as we desire to say I want my *kabalat haTorah* to be real this time, then we're on our way towards our goal.