



## Shavuot: Torah throughout our Lives

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The *Shem MiShmuel* discusses an intriguing explanation of the *Midrash* which states that the *Torah* was given in the desert with fire and water. These 3 elements, desert, fire and water, correspond to the three levels of the soul, *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshama*. *Nefesh* is the biological level of the soul, *ruach* is the spiritual, emotional experience, and *neshama* is the intellectual force. *Hashem* gave us the gift of *Torah* which speaks to every level of the soul. This is expressed through the *mitzvot*, which address all aspects of our being. *Mitzvot* that entail physical action, like eating *matzot* and putting on *tefillin*, involve the *nefesh*. The *ruach* connects through prayer, and the *neshama* finds meaning through the study of *Torah*.

These three levels of the soul are represented by the three phenomena that were part of the Sinai experience. The

desert is an area which is desolate, lonely, and detached from reality. This symbolizes the *neshama*, the human intellect, which is abstract and has no connection to the physical world. The *ruach* – the spirit and emotion – is represented by the fire of Sinai, the energy of *Torah* which infuses us with spiritual excitement and inspiration. Water, the fundamental building block of the physical world, represents the *nefesh*.

The *Shem MiShmuel* further discusses how our acceptance of the *Torah* went through three stages of development, which correspond to the three levels of the soul. Mt. Sinai symbolizes the *neshama*, the intellect. *Hashem* addressed each Jew individually through the first commandment of “*Anochi Hashem Elokecha*, I am *Hashem* your G-d” and an intellectual connection was formed. The forty year sojourn in the desert represents the *ruach* – a period of

*ahavat Hashem* (love for *Hashem*) and a desire for closeness and connection to Him, This was manifest in the *Mishkan*. The reaffirmation of the covenant between G-d and the Jewish People took place at *Arvat Moav*, the last stop of the Jews in the desert, before they entered Eretz Yisrael. This place corresponds to *nefesh* - the physical side of human existence. Entrance into *Eretz Yisrael* meant the end of the miracle of the manna and the start of real life and its physical struggles.

*Torah* was given to every level of human experience. It is a *Torat chaim* – it addresses every aspect of life.

A Jew's mission is to incorporate the message of *Torah* into every aspect of his life and to tap into its unique and potent force. This *Shavuot*, let us work to integrate the *Torah* into every level of our soul and every fiber of our being. Let its unique power