

Yisro 2017

1.

Zachor and Shamor

"זכור את יום השבת לקדשו."

Rabbi Shimshon Pinkes (Tiferes Shimshon pages 216-217) points out that the Torah instructs us to keep Shabbos again in parshas Va'eschanan. The current pasuk says to remember Shabbos unlike the pasuk in parshas Yisro which says to guard Shabbos. How can we reconcile this dissimilarity? The Gemara in Rosh Hashana (27a) says that the commandments to remember and guard Shabbos were said simultaneously. Remembering Shabbos refers to actively keeping Shabbos unlike guarding Shabbos which refers to passively keeping Shabbos as stated in mesechas Berachos (20b). **Ahavas (loving) Hashem will cause us to fulfill the active mitzvos. Years (fearing) Hashem will cause us to fulfill the passive mitzvos. Love and fear are usually polar opposites. It is usually impossible to love someone who you fear and vice versa. Hashem differs in this regard. When we fear Hashem, our love and closeness to Hashem will also increase.** Many times our carefulness not to sin can cause nervousness or sadness. In reality the opposite is true. Keeping the Torah and mitzvos will lead to pleasure. The more careful we are, the more delight we will have.

2.

Humility

"Hashem descended upon Mount Sinai." (19, 20)

Mount Sinai merited being the mountain upon which the Torah would be given upon because it was very humble. The Chafetz Chaim (page 119) quotes the Pesikta Rabasi (perek zayin) that says because Mount Sinai said it's not worthy for the Torah to be given on it, therefore it merited that the Torah would be given on it. If we want to properly learn and retain the Torah we must make sure to remain humble. The Kedushas Levi (first piece in Likutim on Avos) explains the first Mishna in Avos that says Moshe received the Torah from Sinai (משה קיבל) (תורה מסיני). Why doesn't this Mishna say that Moshe received the Torah from Hashem or on Sinai? The Kedushas Levi answers this question by asking another question. The pasuk (Bamidbar (12, 3)) says that Moshe is more humble than everyone else ("והאיש משה עניו מאד מכל " (האדם כו). Moshe also felt unworthy to take the Jewish nation out of Egypt as stated in Shemos (3, 11). Why didn't Moshe decline being the leader who would transmit the Torah to the Jewish nation? When Moshe saw Mount Sinai he realized that the Torah will be given on something low. He then realized that since he is low, he would be fit to transmit the Torah as stated in mesechas Sota (5). He figured that he is the most inferior person amongst the Jews. With this we can explain the aforementioned Mishna. Moshe realized that since he is low he is fit to transmit the Torah like Mount Sinai.

This shtims with the Nachlas Tzvi page 315. "Hashem spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai" (25, 1) "וידבר ה' אל משה בהר סיני." This pasuk refers to the laws of shmita. **What does shmita have to do with Har (Mount) Sinai? Rashi answers, just like all of the intricate laws of shmita were**

given at Har Sinai so too all of the Mitzvos and their intricate halachos (laws) were given at Har Sinai.

The question arises; why from the mitzvah of shmita specifically, do all of the other mitzvos get derived? The reason for shmita is in order that landowners whose crops have yielded great profits will not become arrogant about their success. Therefore, Hashem commanded the landowner that his land must remain fallow every seventh year in order to remind him that Hashem controls the world. This will thereby reverse the owner's arrogance and make him humble. The first Mishna in Pirkei Avos says Moshe received the Torah from Sinai. The question arises; why did Moshe merit being the one who received and transmitted the Torah? Moshe took mussar (rebuke) regarding the importance of humility from Har Sinai. Meaning, Har Sinai was the smallest of the mountains and the most humble; Moshe took this lesson of humility. This is why Moshe merited being the one who would transmit the Torah to the Jewish nation. This is why **all other mitzvos are derived from the mitzvah of shmita; in order that we will take the lesson of humility from Har Sinai and shmita.** This is the connection and common denominator between shmita and Har Sinai.

How is it possible for leaders to remain humble?

The Chafetz Chaim (pages 195-199) answers that he should compare himself to angels.

Compared to them he is unimportant. Rabbi Ovadia Yosef would compare his knowledge to the entire Torah. The Sifsei Chaim (Middos and avodas Hashem chalek alef page 138) explains that Moshe knew he was on a high level, but he also understood that there were still higher levels to reach. We must realize that we could also do better and attain higher levels.

The Mishna in Avos (perek daled) says be exceedingly humble (מאד מאד הוי שפל רוח). Why does the Mishna specifically say by this mida to be exceedingly (very very) careful? The Ramban explains that we typically do not get repaid in this world for performing mitzvos. This is advantageous. Meaning, it's better to get rewarded in the next world. The reward in this world would be so minimal in comparison to the reward we will receive in the next world. The Chafetz Chaim elaborates on this Ramban. Mitzvos are spiritual, unlike reward in this world which is physical. Getting physically paid for something spiritual would diminish the reward. It is for this reason that the Mishna in Avos (perek daled) says that the reward for a mitzvah is a mitzvah (שבר (מצוה מצוה). Someone who gets repaid by being respected is considered a spiritual reward. The Mishna therefore warns us to be exceedingly humble in order that we will not lose our rightfully earned spiritual reward.

One time the Chafetz Chaim was traveling on a train. Someone who didn't recognize him asked him where he was from. The Chafetz Chaim said Radin. He began to praise the Chafetz Chaim. The Chafetz Chaim said he isn't that great. He got very upset and said 'how could you say negative comments about the Chafetz Chaim?' When they got off the train, he saw that everyone was going over to the individual who he got upset at. He then realized that the person was none other than the Chafetz Chaim himself. He asked for forgiveness. The Chafetz Chaim asked why he asked for forgiveness since what he was said was true. The insults that I'm not a tzaddik were true. Rabbi Nissim Karelitz (Chut Shani Shemiras Halashon pages 350-351) explains that the Chafetz Chaim was happy because after this episode he learnt an important lesson; that it is prohibited to speak lashon hara about oneself if the listener doesn't know that the speaker is talking about himself. The Chafetz Chaim says that kavod is like kugel. We must make sure not to eat too much kugel before Shabbos in order that there will be kugel left to eat on Shabbos. The

same applies to kavod; we must make sure not to get too much kavod in this world. The Gemara in Eruvin (13) says **anyone who runs away from kavod, kavod will run after him.** (כל הבורח מן (הגדולה גדולה מחזרת אחריו. **When one runs away from the kavod he must make sure not to look back and see if the kavod is following him.**

Why isn't Moshe's name mentioned in the Haggadah? We say in Ashrei 'the will of those who fear Him He will do' 'רצון יראיו יעשה'. Out of humility Moshe didn't want his name to be in the Haggadah and Hashem acquiesced. According to this answer, why is Moshe mentioned in the Torah? Moshe being mentioned in the Torah was necessary.

The sefer Tenuas Musser (pages 101-106) relates **that the Chafetz Chaim always viewed himself as a simple person. He never looked for respect. He always tried to lower himself and serve others. He wore simple clothing and a simple hat. He wrote the sefer Chafetz Chaim anonymously because he didn't want people to praise him.** When he traveled to different towns to distribute his sefer he didn't inform people that he was the author. He pretended as if he was a messenger of the author who came to sell the authors sefarim. When his identity was exposed he relocated to a far location and then disguised himself yet again. The Chafetz Chaim didn't allow people to take a picture of him. Out of humility he was concerned that his picture would be distributed. When people gave haskamos (approvals) for his sefer he didn't allow them to write nice titles such as hagoan about him. He didn't allow people to respect him or serve him. When he would enter the Yeshiva he would hurry in order that people wouldn't see him and stand up for him.

Someone who learnt a lot shouldn't be haughty. The Mishna in Avos (perek beis) quotes Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai who says 'if you have studied much Torah, do not take credit for yourself, because that is what you were created to do.' (אם למדת תורה הרבה אל תחזיק טובה לעצמך כי לכך נוצרת.) The Sifsei Chaim (Middos and avodas Hashem chalek alef page 117) explains that one who learnt a lot shouldn't become haughty because he just did what he was expected to do. It is in his nature to do this similar to a bird that is able to fly. The bird surely doesn't think it's so great because it can fly. It is the nature of birds to fly. So too, one who has the nature to learn a lot shouldn't become haughty for this reason. Would a healthy person become haughty upon entering into a hospital that is filled with sick patients?