

"And I remained upon the mountain for forty days and forty nights - I neither ate bread nor drank water." (9:9)

The *Midrash Tanchuma* remarks that Moshe's *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, for the *Torah* earned him the *zechus* that the *Torah* is called by his name, *Toras Moshe*. This means that Hashem *Yisborach* gave His *Torah*, *Toras Hashem*, to Moshe. What was Moshe's *kinyan*, act of acquisition? His *mesiras nefesh* was the medium which catalyzed his proprietorship over the *Torah*. What, indeed, was Moshe's act of *mesiras nefesh*? What remarkable act of self-sacrifice did he exhibit that was so sublime to cause Hashem to "transfer" ownership to Moshe? He did not eat or drink for forty days and nights when he went up on *Har Sinai* to receive the *Torah*. This exemplary demonstration of respect was his act of *mesiras nefesh*.

Let us explore the reason that Moshe did not eat or drink and the profound lesson we are to derive from this act of self-denial. **Horav Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi, Shlita**, cites the *Yalkut Shimoni* that attributes Moshe's refraining from eating to one simple cause: *derech erez*, proper manners! It just was not proper to "visit" with angels who neither eat nor drink and display disrespect for his "hosts."

This is amazing! Moshe's act of *mesiras nefesh* was not for *Torah*; it was for *derech erez*. His devotion to *middos* caused Hashem to confer the title of *Toras Moshe* upon His precious *Torah*. Can one be *mosser nefesh* for *middos* and *derech erez*? Yes, claims *Horav Ezrachi*. One is prepared to sacrifice himself for *Torah*. Do we realize, however, that "*derech erez kadmah la'Torah*," "proper *middos* and *menchlichkeit* comes before the *Torah*?" To have studied *Torah*, to become a great scholar and still remain an individual of unsavory character traits, to study *Torah* and continue to be an "*um'mench*" is the antithesis of *Torah*. Thus, if *derech erez* is an inherent part of *Torah*, to the extent that there is no *Torah* without *derech erez* then *mesiras nefesh* for *Torah* includes within it *mesiras nefesh* for *derech erez*.