

## I am Hashem, Your G-d, Who has taken you out of the land of Egypt. (20:2)

So begin the *Aseres HaDibros*, Ten Commandments, the Decalogue, the basis upon which our Torah stands. Indeed, when we depict the Torah, it is through the medium of the Two Tablets upon which the Ten Commandments are inscribed. *Chazal* (*Shabbos* 88b) relate the dialogue that ensued between Moshe *Rabbeinu* and the Ministering Angels concerning the Torah. The Ministering Angels said to Hashem, "The Torah is a hidden treasure that had been concealed for 974 generations prior to the creation of the world. Yet, You want to give it to a mortal of flesh and blood." Hashem asked Moshe to respond to the angels. Moshe's reply is classic, "Hashem," he began, "in the Torah it is written, 'I am Hashem, Your G-d, Who took you out of Egypt.' Were you (angels) enslaved by Pharaoh? Were you exposed to the pagans – that you need to be enjoined not to worship idols? Do you work – so that rest on *Shabbos* is applicable to you? Do you have parents whom you must honor? Does envy apply to you, such that it would be necessary to command you not to covet, steal, commit adultery or murder?" In other words, Moshe showed them that the Torah does not apply to them.

*Horav Yechezkel Abramsky, zl*, questions *Chazal*. Veritably, Moshe succeeded in explaining to the Angels that *mitzvos* are not relevant to them. How does *mitzvah* observance weigh in on the discussion concerning keeping the Torah in Heaven as the sole property of the angels? Just because they are unable to observe and carry out *mitzvos* does not mean that they should be denied from reveling in *chochmas haTorah*, its extraordinary wisdom. No wisdom is like the wisdom of the Torah, since Hashem authored it. Why should the Angels be deprived of Divine wisdom, simply because they are unable to observe *mitzvos*?

*Dayan Abramsky* explains, borrowing a principle from his *Rebbe, Horav Chaim Soloveitchik, zl*. *Chochmas HaTorah* can be grasped and internalized only by a person who is observant. One who does not observe/carry out *mitzvos* is unable to understand the Torah's unique wisdom. Thus, there is no purpose in giving the Torah to the Angels, to whom *mitzvos* are not relevant. *Mitzvos maasios* – practical, active *mitzvos* – form the foundation of Torah observance. They comprise the *shoresh*, roots, that stabilize the tree of life, the *eitz chaim*, which is the Torah. *Lomdus*, analytic Torah dialectic, plumbing the depths of Torah's profundities, has no lasting meaning or effect on a person who is not observant. Hashem's Divine wisdom "works" for a person who himself is prepared to "work" at observance.

Furthermore, one who does not possess *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven, does not possess the "container" for maintaining Torah within himself. I think this is evident from the early founders of the *Haskalah*/German Reform movement, specifically Moses Mendelsohn, who was a student of the *Korban*

*Ha'Eidah*. He wrote a commentary on *Chumash*, his famous *Biur*, which demonstrated his level of

erudition. Yet, as a committed Jew, he was a dismal failure, with every one of his children marrying out of the faith. Torah must be held in an appropriate vessel. One who is not G-d-fearing lacks that vessel. Whatever he learns will be superficial and unenduring.

*Rav Abramsky* was *Rav* and *Dayan* in London for many years before immigrating to *Eretz Yisrael*. While in London, he was visited by a Jew who was erudite in *Chumash* and *Gemorah*. Nonetheless, he remained *chofshi min ha'mitzvos*, totally non-observant. The man said to the *Rav*, "I am now prepared to begin putting on *Tefillin*. First, however, I want the *Rav* to explain the underlying concept, the meaning and purpose of *Tefillin*, to me. You understand that it is difficult to do something which one does not understand."

*Rav Abramsky* replied, "Fine. I will be happy to explain anything you ask concerning *Tefillin*, but, I have one condition: I will give you a pair of *Tefillin*. I will demonstrate to you how you put them on. One month must pass whereby you put on *Tefillin* every day – one month – no questions – no answers. Only then, after you have completed performing the *mitzvah* for one month, will I teach you everything there is to know about *Tefillin*."

The man was no pushover, and he felt that *Rav Abramsky* was playing a game with him: "Why should I have to wait a month to learn the reasons for *Tefillin*? What if, after a month, your reasoning does not satisfy my curiosity? I will have wasted a month putting on *Tefillin*." The *Rav* said, "Do not fret over it. After a month, I am certain that my explanation will leave you completely satisfied." The man acquiesced, agreeing to put on *Tefillin* for a month. Two weeks later, the man returned to the *Rav*. "Why are you here?" *Rav Abramsky* asked. "We agreed that you would wait a full month before returning."

The man said, "I know I agreed to a month, and it has only been two weeks. I came to inform you of the decisions I have made. First, I am not returning the *Tefillin*. I will pay full price for these. I want to keep them. Second, I no longer require an explanation for the *Tefillin*. Now that I have put them on consistently for two weeks, I have become attached to them. I will never desist from performing this *mitzvah*."