

“When He finished speaking to him on Mount Sinai, He gave Moshe the two Tablets of Testimony.” (31:18)

Rashi notes that the words “*k’chaloso*,” when he finished, is spelled defectively, without the letter “*vov*” between the “*lamed*” and the “*saf*,” as if it were vocalized “*k’kalaso*,” which means like his bride. This implies that the *Torah* was given to Moshe as a gift, as a bride to a groom. Moshe was not able to grasp the entire *Torah* in such a short time. Indeed, as the *Midrash* comments, throughout the forty days that Moshe *Rabbeinu* was on *Har Sinai*, Hashem taught him the *Torah*, but he constantly forgot what he had learned. Moshe turned to Hashem and said, “*Ribono Shel Olam*, I have been here for forty days and I know nothing.” Finally, Hashem presented it to Moshe as a gift, as if it were his bride. We have to endeavor to understand why Hashem waited forty days before he gave Moshe the *Torah* as a gift? This gift could have been presented earlier.

Horav Zaidel Epstein, Shlita, explains that in order to receive the *Torah* one must be prepared for it. He must refine himself spiritually, raising his level of sanctity, purifying himself for the *Torah*. Moshe had to wait forty days in an environment of consummate holiness to prepare himself for the moment when he could accept the *Torah* on behalf of *Klal Yisrael*. It also goes without saying that Moshe’s ascendancy to the appropriate level of holiness was a daily endeavor. Every twenty-four hours the “Moshe” from the previous day was no longer. He was transformed and elevated to a higher spiritual plateau. On the fortieth day, Moshe achieved a level of holiness and purity never before imagined. Yet, this was not sufficient. He still forgot the *Torah*. He was not able to contain within himself the *Torah* on his own. On the fortieth day, however, he reached the point that he was now sufficiently prepared to receive the *Torah* as a gift. *Torah* is distant, completely removed from anything material or physical. Hence, in order for a human being to receive the *Torah* as a gift, he must prepare himself for it spiritually. There is yet one question to be addressed: Why was it necessary for Moshe to assert to Hashem that he was accomplishing nothing towards the goal of receiving the *Torah* before Hashem responded by giving it to him as a gift? Why did Hashem not simply give it to him at the end of his forty-day preparation period?

We derive from here that, as long as one does not sense that he is missing something, he will not strive to overcome that deficit. It was not sufficient for Moshe to sense that *Torah* was needed. He had to prepare himself to receive it. His preparation was still not enough to warrant his receiving the *Torah* as a gift until he asked for it. Only when we realize that without *Torah* our lives have no meaning and we expend effort to receive it, will we be ready to receive it as a Divine gift.