

## **Moshe came and told the people all the words of Hashem and all the ordinances, and the entire people responded with one voice and they said, “All the words that Hashem has spoken, we will do.” (24:3)**

Accepting the Torah was not a simple undertaking for the Jewish People. Here was a people that had previously been living in a country whose citizens were infamous for their profligate decadence; they had been slaves to masters who had redefined the meaning of cruelty; these were a people who were quite distant from religion of any kind, let alone ready to accept a Torah which would totally transform their lives. Yet, when the Torah was offered to them, they accepted it with a resounding declaration of *Naase v'nishma*, “We will do and we will listen.” What motivated their acceptance? What galvanized their acquiescence to a way of life so totally foreign to anything that they had experienced before?

In his *Lev Eliyahu*, **Horav Eliyahu Lopian, zl**, asks from where *Klal Yisrael* obtained the power/strength/ability to accept upon themselves the incredible yoke of Torah. Were they not afraid of the possibility of failure? The *Mashgiach* explains that they were motivated by an inherent sense of *emes*, truth, that is intrinsic to *Klal Yisrael* as a character bequest transmitted from their forefathers. *Klal Yisrael* is imbued with the truth – and the truth fears nothing and no one. Armed with the power of *emes*, one can descend the deepest water without fear, and he can pass through the fiery flames without anxiety. Our ability to transcend the falsehood which is so much a part of the contemporary society in which we live enables us to be *moser nefesh*, dedicate ourselves to the point of self-sacrifice, in our service of Hashem. Thus, with *Klal Yisrael's* acute awareness of Hashem as the essence of *emes*, and the knowledge that He was giving us His Torah, His *Toras emes*, Torah of truth, they were able to accept the Torah unequivocally, without question and without need for embellishment. The Torah was *emes l'amitah*, truth in its purest form.

Moshe *Rabbeinu's* father-in-law was a prime example of one who seeks the truth. An entire world heard of the wondrous miracles which occurred as Hashem liberated His People from Egypt. An entire world heard – but only one man, Yisro, left the comfort of his home to join the Jewish People in the wilderness. Why? Because only Yisro sought the truth. The rest of the world chose to continue living a life of pretense and self-deception, rather than to assume the responsibility that accompanies accepting the truth. The nations of the world quickly forgot about the greatest unprecedented display of Hashem's manipulation of the “laws of nature.” The miracles that shook the world were yesterday's news. The effect of altering nature endures only within those who honestly and objectively seek the truth. Those to whom the truth is a threat invariably hide from it.

The drive to seek the truth catalyzes our ability to reject a life of complacency, comfort and indifference. It stimulates us to want to act, to search, regardless of where the search leads us. Yisro was willing to go into the desolate wilderness to join a nation which he hardly knew, to leave

a prestigious life of honor, to convert and start over again. He understood that a life based on falsehood was no life at all. He was not starting over again. He was just starting – period!

The Torah is truth due to its unique Divine authorship. Any postulate based solely upon human intellect, mortal wisdom, is open to discussion. Wisdom which does not leave an option for dispute is not wisdom. Wisdom is thus relative; so, too, is intellect. Hashem's Torah is true, because it was authored by Him, and He is above human wisdom. Hashem is infallible. His Torah teaches us what is really, absolutely, right and wrong, good and bad. It presents these qualities in their absolute state. This was the level of discernment which *Adam HaRishon*, Primordial Man, enjoyed prior to his eating of the *Eitz Hadaas*, Tree of Knowledge. The Torah conveys Hashem's expectations of us. It informs us how to live, what to do, and what not to do. It guides us on the path Hashem wants us to follow. This is supreme truth.

The following story illuminates this idea. In 1921, **Horav Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, zl**, of Lubavitch was summoned to appear at the government office in Rostov-on-Don, to clarify an issue before the newly established Bolshevik government. He was asked whether the Jewish religion supported monarchism or communism, autocracy or proletarian rule. This question was not a walk in the park. Regardless of the *Rebbe's* answer, he was leaving himself open to dangerous repercussion. Nonetheless, the *Rebbe* was determined to answer the question lucidly, leaving no room for doubt.

He began with a story: "In 1913, I had occasion to travel to St. Petersburg. I sat in second-class coach, sharing a car with government employees and members of the Christian clergy. That year, Russia was celebrating the three hundredth anniversary of Romanov rule. The discussion in the car quickly focused on the merits or demerits of monarchy in general. The question that preoccupied the conversation was: How does the Jewish Bible relate to monarchism? The opinions offered by the travelers ranged from the Torah's support of monarchy, to its advocacy on behalf of socialist values, to the opinion that the Torah championed communism.

"I explained that, indeed, every viewpoint had pros and cons. It is a well-known principle that nothing is good without some bad, and nothing is bad without some good. One will always find an advantage of some sort even in something bad and, likewise, discover something harmful even in the finest situation.

"This maxim applies to human cognition, ideas developed by people. The Torah, which is Divinely-authored, comprises within it only good. It includes only the positive aspects of every idea. Therefore, each one of you is able to distinguish his party's positive aspects from the Torah. Each party has some redeemable aspect. This can be discovered in the Torah."

We now understand that the wisdom of the Torah is pristine wisdom, positive wisdom; its lessons are beneficial and instructive. They guide us to the proper and correct path for living a spiritually, ethically and morally healthy life. Why would anyone in his right mind not have joined Yisro on his

quest for the truth? They simply were not interested.