

## Moshe ascended to G-d... (19:3)

When Moshe *Rabbeinu* ascended *Har Sinai* to receive the *Torah* on behalf of *Klal Yisrael*, it was not a quick and easy reception. The angels felt that the *Torah* belonged in Heaven and that Moshe should turn back and report to his nation that it was not going to happen. Hashem listened to what the angels had to say and turned to Moshe for rebuttal. If he could not convince the angels that *Torah* belonged on earth and was the directive for humans and not for angels, then perhaps he and the people were not ready or worthy to receive the *Torah*. Our quintessential leader replied, "The *Torah* which Hashem gave me (the *Luchos* which were representative of the entire *Torah*) states that Hashem Who has taken us out of Egypt is our G-d, and we are to serve only Him. This implies that the *Torah* was in some manner predicated on *yetzias Mitzrayim*, the Egyptian exodus, and the bondage which led up to it."

Moshe went on to question the angels' relationship with *Shabbos*, the day of rest. "Do you work—that you require a *Shabbos* to rest?" He then brought up the *mitzvah* of *kibud av v'eim*, honoring parents, "Do you have parents to honor?" In short time, Moshe demonstrated to the angels that the *Torah per se* does not belong in the Heavenly environs. It belongs on earth and is meant to be observed by human beings—*Klal Yisrael*. The question which glares at us is: The Heavenly angels had an intellect far beyond human parameters; certainly, they understood that the *Torah* did not belong in Heaven. What innovative response did Moshe give that they had not already known?

*Horav Yechezkel Abramsky, zl* explains that the angels were acutely aware that *kiyum hamitzvos*, carrying out the *mitzvos*, was not a task that Hashem gave to the angels. Their concern was that the *beis din* (the judicial system), *Tannaim*, *Amoraim*, who would debate the interpretation of the law, would maintain the power by saying, *Lo baShamayim hee*—"It is not in Heaven." (This refers to a case in which a dispute arises among *Chazal*, and a Heavenly voice emerges and renders "Heaven's" decision. We declare, *Lo baShamayim hee*. Hashem gave the power to interpret the Law exclusively to *bais din shel mattah*, the earthly court. The angels could not accept this "clause" which allowed the *gedolei ha'dor* to adjudicate and interpret all decisions.

Moshe *Rabbeinu's* reply to the angels was: Anyone who is not *mekayem mitzvos maasiyos*, observing active *mitzvos*, is unable to plumb the depths of *halachah* sufficiently, to the point that he can clarify the *halachah*. When our ancestors stood at *Har Sinai*, the declaration they uttered remains seminal: *Na'aseh v'nishma*—"We will do, and we will listen." They established a primary emphasis on *mitzvah* performance. Understanding and insight follow action. *Mitzvos* are not intellectual exercises or moral guidelines. They are spiritual engagements that affect our souls. When we engage in the performance of a *mitzvah*, we bring its holiness into our lives, allowing us to grow in our connection with Hashem. This connection enhances our depth of understanding. When an individual performs a *mitzvah*, he binds himself to its spiritual essence. A *mitzvah* aligns body, mind, and soul with Divine Will, transforming abstract law into living experiences that shape his character and perspective. One who does not perform *mitzvos* simply cannot understand their nuances and intricacies.

Apparently, the Heavenly angels acquiesced to Moshe's response.