

If you will follow My decrees. (26:3)

Toras Kohanim derives from here that Hashem is *misaveh*, desires, for the Jewish People to toil in Torah. The *Korban Aharon* writes that the term *misaveh* is used concerning something which a person does not have – thus, he desires it. To use the concept of *taavah*, desire, with regard to Hashem implies that He is missing something. What aspect/component of Torah could Hashem be missing? The *Midrash* is emphasizing that Hashem does not just command or expect Torah study – He deeply longs for our *ameilus*, our effort in learning.

The *Maharal m'Prague* (*Tiferes Yisrael* 25) explains that the profundity and Divine wisdom, which are integral parts of Torah, require *yegia*, exertion. Just as something truly valuable demands hard work, so, too, Hashem structured Torah that one must acquire it through exertion and toil. I must add that, regardless of what one puts in and his acuity notwithstanding, achievement in Torah is purely a Divine gift. Hence, prayer for understanding and success is critical. Torah is not merely an intellectual exercise; it is a spiritually refining endeavor, without which the scholarship one gains is valueless.

Horav Chaim Kamil, zl, explains that *misaveh*, desire, with regard to Hashem applies to the halachic dictum of *Lo baShomayim hee*, “It is not in Heaven.” This concept is famously interpreted by *Chazal* (*Bava Metzia* 59b) in the story of *tanur shel Achnai*, the oven of Achnai, in which Rabbi Eliezer and the *chachamim* debate whether such an oven was ritually pure or *tamei*, ritually contaminated. The *chachamim* ruled that it was *tamei*. Rabbi Eliezer argued that it was *tahor*. Rabbi Eliezer invoked miraculous signs to prove that his ruling was correct. The sages rejected the supernatural proofs. Finally, a *Bas Kol*, Heavenly Voice, proclaimed, “Why do you dispute Rabbi Eliezer? The *halachah* follows his ruling in all matters. In response, Rabbi Yehoshua rose up and declared, “*Lo baShomayim hee*.” Once the Torah was given on *Har Sinai*, it is now in the hands of human scholars to interpret, using the principles of *halachah*. We have no room for Divine intervention in *halachic* debate and ruling.

With this idea in mind, we find one area in which something is lacking for Hashem. Hashem granted the power of human intellectual scholarship to rule in *halachah*, explains *Horav Eliyahu Baruch Finkel, zl*, to *Klal Yisrael*, due to the strength of their *ameilus baTorah*. Hashem “desires” to render judgment in *halachah*, which is exclusively reserved for human authority.

Furthermore, posits *Rav Eliyahu Baruch*, the term *misaveh* applies to *ameilus baTorah* – which does not apply in Heaven. *Ameilus* is defined by one’s overcoming a challenge. Life is filled with challenge, trials and speedbumps (which is the perspective a Jew should have on challenge). This does not apply in the Heavenly sphere. Thus, *Chazal* used the term *misaveh* with regard to *ameilus*.

The significance of *ameilus baTorah* is underscored by a well-known vignette concerning *Horav Baruch Ber Leibowitz, zl*. His students asked him a brilliant question concerning a passage in the

Gemorah, which he immediately answered – brilliantly. Later, he rescinded the answer, pronouncing it unacceptable. Why? It came too easily to him; he did not expend *ameilus* in rendering the answer. Indeed, it is related that the *Gaon*, *zl*, *m'Vilna*, refused to learn from the *Maggid* (from Heaven) who appeared to him, because *ameilus* was not involved in learning from him. [The Heavenly *Maggid*, angel/voice, would teach the Torah's secrets and mystical insights to the *Gaon*. He appeared to reveal even greater secrets, but the *Gaon* declined, as he believed in acquiring Torah through human effort. He felt that Torah is acquired through intense study and profound analytical thinking.]

The *Drishah* (*Yoreh Deah* 264) cites *Mahari Menachem*, who posits that the *shalom zachor*, Friday night welcoming of a new male infant, has its roots in the fact that the infant had, until birth, been learning Torah with a Heavenly angel. With the infant's entry into this world, the learning comes to an abrupt end, and he forgets all the Torah he had absorbed. The infant "mourns" the loss of its learning, and, as a result, people come to the *shalom zachor* to comfort the "mourner." *Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz*, *zl*, questioned this. After all, all of this learning was not acquired through the medium of exertion. For what does he mourn? We may suggest that he is not mourning the loss of his Torah learning, but rather, he is mourning the loss of the learning experience. To be able to spend nine months ensconced in an idyllic environment, studying Torah 24/7 with a Heavenly angel, is truly an unparalleled experience, the loss of which gives one reason to grieve.