

Pursuit of Purpose

INSPIRING A LIFE OF MEANING AND CONNECTION

No Strings Attached

Based on the weekly Shmuess given by HaRav Shaya Cohen, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Zichron Aryeh

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In this week's Parsha, we encounter a Pasuk (25:16) that states, "And you should put in the Aron the testimony that I will give you." Rashi elaborates that this "testimony" refers to "The Torah - which is a testimony between Hashem and Klal Yisrael, that I commanded you the Mitzvos that are written in it."

The Medrash further expounds on the nature of the Torah as a gift, stating, "The Torah is called a gift, as it says, 'A good taking I gave you'...the Torah from beginning to end is called a gift because it was given in the desert, a place that is ownerless, and anyone who wants to take it can take it, therefore it is called a gift."

This concept from the Medrash can be puzzling. We often emphasize in Birchas HaTorah how Hashem selected us from among all nations and bestowed the Torah upon us. Even in the Medrash, the quoted verse expresses that Hashem gave it to us, and it concludes by explaining that the Torah is termed testimony, "because it is a testimony to the whole world that Hashem chose us and gave us the Torah." Clearly, understanding the privilege of the Torah gift requires recognizing that it was exclusively given to us. However, the Medrash seems to suggest that it was available to everyone, given its ownerless nature, and thus termed a gift. How do these two ideas reconcile?

The Medrash is essentially highlighting the extraordinary extent of this gift to Klal Yisrael. When Hashem granted the Torah to Klal Yisrael, He did so unconditionally. While a gift typically comes with conditions or some level of control by the giver, the Medrash indicates that Hashem entirely relinquished ownership, granting Klal Yisrael complete control over it. Therefore, these seemingly conflicting ideas actually complement each other. On one hand,

Hashem gave the Torah exclusively to Klal Yisrael; on the other hand, He did so in a manner that allowed them unfettered control.

This notion is exemplified by a well-known Gemara in Bava Metzia (59:), which states, "What does it mean, 'It is not in the heavens?'" Rabbi Yermiyah says that the Torah was already given at Har Sinai and we don't listen to a Bas Kol, as it is written, 'We go after the majority.' Rabbi Noson found Eliyahu and asked him, 'What is Hashem doing right now?' Eliyahu answered, 'He is laughing and saying my sons beat me.'" This Gemara illustrates the extent to which Hashem relinquished control, as we disregard even a Divine decree, and human interpretation prevails. The Chazon Ish further elucidates that this interpretation can alter the very fabric of reality—a testament to the authority entrusted to Klal Yisrael

This concept extends to disagreements within Torah interpretation. The Drashas Haran suggests that while Moshe Rabbeinu received one truth at Sinai, he was also presented with future disputes to acknowledge their validity as part of the Torah's teachings. This is exemplified in the Gemara in Gitin (6b), where an exchange between Evyasar and Yonasan demonstrates Hashem's detachment from ownership, allowing human perspectives to be incorporated into Torah discourse.

Reflecting on these teachings offers a deeper understanding of the gift of Torah bestowed upon us. Hashem not only granted us this invaluable treasure but also relinquished His own control over it, as echoed in the Tur's statement regarding Birachas HaTorah, "He gave us the Torah that He used to delight in every day," implying His divestment of ownership.



Shir HaShirim Insights

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Dovid Hamelech, in the 27th Perek of Tehillim, requests one thing from Hashem, "Let me dwell in the house of Hashem in all of the days of my life, to bask in Hashem's presence and to take root in His sanctuary." The Medrash tells us that Hashem responds and says to him that he started by saying that he is asking for one thing, but in reality he goes on and asks for multiple requests. Dovid responds and says that he learned this from Hashem Himself and he adds that a servant should be able to be like his master. Hashem said in His Torah that He is only asking one request from Klal Yisrael in their service of Hashem and yet He continues with so many more. Dovid finishes the discussion by saying, "The servant has the right to be like his master."

Look at the nature of the relationship that a person can have with his Creator. Hashem is our Master and we are His servants, yet this relationship is bonded in so much love that we feel a certain equality in the relationship. As the Pasuk says in Shir HaShirim, "I am to my beloved and my beloved is to me." Our relationship is so close that we can feel that if Hashem can say He is asking for a little and then asks for more, then we can do the same.



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Our forefathers trusted in You; they trusted and You rescued them. They cried out to You and they were saved; they trusted in You and they were not shamed.

(*Tehilim 22:5,6* – Esther's prayer before entering Achashverosh's chambers to plead for her nation.)

Esther was saying to Hashem: In You our forefathers, the generation who went out of Mitzrayim, trusted. Why should we be less deserving than them? If it is because they trusted in You and we didn't, the truth is that they didn't originally trust in You either. Rather, while still serving idols they cried out and were saved and only after their complete salvation did they trust in You and they were not shamed. This being the case, You should save us as well and we will also trust in You. (*Commentary of RaSh Di Uzida, Megillas Esther 5:1*)

It seems that even when one fails in placing his trust in Hashem, by telling Hashem that he will use His salvation as a means to strengthen his Bitachon in the future, this itself is a tremendous reason to attain Heavenly salvation. For after all, "The main reason the Torah was given to Klal Yisroel was so that they would place their trust in Hashem... for the essence of everything is complete Bitachon which is the sum of all the Mitzvos." (*Vilna Gaon, Mishlei 22:19*)

This, in fact, is the very deal Esther made with Hashem that led to our salvation in the story of Purim!