



The words resounded like the battle cry of our destiny, "*we shall do and we shall listen!*" (Shmos 19:8). They were words that characterized a superhuman commitment to observance of Hashem's Torah. After all, most people listen, ponder, and then accept to execute. The Jews, however, when asked if they want the Torah, used a terminology that is only expressed by angelic beings - first we shall do, then we shall listen. That being the case, the Tosfos in Masechta Shabbos question a Gemara's interpretation of a difficult pasuk.

The Torah, in painting the scene at Har Sinai, places the Jews in a very strange location in relation to Har Sinai. "*And the Jews stood under the mountain*" (Shmos 19:17). The wording is strange. The Torah should have written that the Jews stood at the foot of the mountain or at the bottom of the mountain. The wording "under the mountain" seems to be unsuitable.

The Gemara in Masechta Shabbos explains this pasuk in a literal sense. Hashem, the Gemara explains, literally placed the Jews under the mountain by lifting the mountain above them like a giant pot! And in that state, the Gemara continues, Hashem decreed, "If you will accept the Torah, fine. However, if you do not accept the Torah, this will become your final resting place." On any level this Talmudic interpretation is difficult to understand, but in the light of the Jewish nation's unwavering acceptance of Torah - we shall do and we shall listen -- it is almost incomprehensible. Thus Tosfos asks a powerful question: "why did Hashem force the Torah upon a nation that had already accepted it, lovingly and willingly in superhuman terms?"

When Queen Victoria (1819-1901) of England was about to marry Prince Albert, she wanted to have him bestowed with the title King Consort through an act of the British Parliament.

Prime Minister William Melbourne, knew the strong opposition he would face in making such an unprecedented move, especially since Albert was of German descent. He strongly advised the Queen against such a move. "Your Majesty," the Prime Minister explained, "we can't have any of that." After all, if the English people get into the habit of making kings, they will get them into the habit of unmaking them as well!"

The Torah, the Maharal of Prague (1526-1609) explains, is a vital necessity for worldly existence. It is more than the blueprint of creation, it is the *raison d'être* of the entire universe. And its presentation had to personify such. Though there was unmitigated love and wholehearted enthusiasm in the Jewish nation's acceptance of the Torah, Hashem had to make a point that would be as eternally powerful as Torah itself. He presented the Torah with unmitigated force -- a manner that characterized its essence -- a vital necessity for mortal and universal existence. Torah's acceptance could not be left to the fortunate goodwill of a very spiritual and wanting nation. It was wonderful that the Jews accepted the Torah as such, and their acceptance merited endless reward. But it was time to show what the Torah truly meant to the creation at large. Otherwise, for generations, the emergence and observance of Torah would be an outcome of mortal benevolence -- and that is not the case.

The Torah is plains above the mortality of its observers, and its transmission and acceptance must represent that immortality -- even if it takes raising Har Sinai!

Good Shabbos

Adapted from Rabbi Mordechai Kamanetzky

Mincha: 6:40/8:15

Kriyas Shema: 9:35

Candle Lighting: 8:12

Mincha: 8:05

Shachris: 8:45

Motzai Shabbos: 9:17

This week's kiddush is sponsored by Avraham and Chaya Engel, Richard Shapero and Mayeer Pearl.

Mazel Tov to Ben and Penina Feintuch on the birth of a grandson to Dovid and Malki Feintuch