

SHAVUOS

NA'ASEH V NISHMA

Rav Simoi expounded: "When Klal Yisrael said 'Na'aseh' before saying 'Nishma,' 600,000 Malachei HaShareis came to each and every member of Klal Yisrael and crowned him with two crowns — one corresponding to 'Na'aseh' and one corresponding to 'Nishma.'"

(Shabbos 88a)

The Torah is the expression of Hashem's will. Since Hashem and His Will are inseparable, then just as Hashem is Infinite, so too is the Torah. In contrast, a person has limited intellect.

If Klal Yisrael had first said "Nishma" — "We will understand" — before saying "Na'aseh" — "We will do" — it would have meant that they wanted to decide with their limited intellect if Hashem's infinite wisdom is suitable, and only then to accept it. This would have been *chutzpa*.

By saying "Na'aseh" before "Nishma" they expressed acceptance of Hashem's Torah "sight unseen" — without first understanding. After the unqualified acceptance of "Na'aseh," saying "Nishma" means that we are ready to open our brain, our intellect and our hearts to

understand Hashem's Torah to the extent that Hashem will help us to do so.

From where did Klal Yisrael acquire the ability to say "Na'aseh v'Nishma"? Rav Meir Shapiro, *zatzal*, of Lublin, teaches that this ability has its roots in our forefather, Avraham Avinu.

"Look toward the heavens and count the stars.

Are you able to count them?...So shall be your offspring."

(Bereishis 15:5)

When Hashem promised Avraham that his own child would be his heir, He took Avraham outside and told him "Count the

Stars." Avraham Avinu began counting the stars just as Hashem commanded. Hashem then asked Avraham "Are you able to count them?" — Why would you even attempt to count the stars when it's impossible for a human being to do so? Just as you, Avraham, tried to fulfill My will without first deciding if you were able, "So shall be your offspring." — so will your descendants be willing to say "Na'aseh" before "Nishma."

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SEVEN REASONS WHY WE READ THE MEGILLAH OF RUTH ON SHAVUOS

- 1** The events occurred during the harvest season. Shavuos is the Harvest Festival.
- 2** Ruth was a convert to Judaism. Conversion is an individual "*Kabbalas HaTorah*."
- 3** Ruth the Moabite was permitted to marry Boaz, based on a *drasha* (a teaching of the Oral Law) of the verse, "A Moabite may not marry into the Congregation of Hashem" (Devarim 23:4). This hints at the unity between the Written Torah and the Oral Torah.
- 4** David HaMelech was born on Shavuos. The Megillah of Ruth concludes with David's lineage.
- 5** To teach the greatness of *Gemillus Chassadim* — acts of loving-kindness.
- 6** To teach that the Torah is acquired only through affliction and poverty.
- 7** The name "Ruth" has the numerical value of 606. At *Har Sinai* the Jewish People accepted 606 *mitzvos*, in addition to the 7 Noachide Laws.

NA ASEH V NISHMA

(CONTINUED)

If a Jew will accept the Torah only on the condition that he understand it, the limitation of human intellect will prevent him from ever understanding. But if he is ready to accept Torah *without* understanding, then he will be blessed by Hashem to achieve true understanding of the Torah.

Said Reish Lakish "The Holy One, Blessed be He, will in the future return them [those crowns] to us, as it says, 'Those redeemed by Hashem will return and come to Tzion in song, and everlasting happiness upon their heads.'"

(Shabbos 88a)

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THE CUSTOM TO LEARN THROUGHOUT THE NIGHT ON SHAVUOS

The *Arizal* writes:

"Know that whoever does not sleep at all on this night and is involved in learning Torah, he is promised that he will complete the year and that no harm will befall him."

Mishneh Berurah 494:1

- The *Midrash* says that the Jewish People slept on the night before *Matan Torah*, and it was necessary for Hashem to wake them up in the morning.
- Why did they all sleep on the eve of this most important day? They knew that at the giving of the Torah, Hashem was going to speak to them. Previously, prophets received prophesy while asleep: Avraham slept during the *bris bain habisarim*, Yaacov slept as he envisioned the ladder, and Yosef's prophecies occurred to him in a dream. Thus, by going to sleep, they were preparing for *Matan Torah*. However, this was wrong.
- In order to "rectify" this, we now stay awake all night in anticipation of our own *Kabbalas HaTorah*.
- Hashem says "*I will sprinkle upon you pure water and you will be pure*" (*Yechezkel 36:25*) — "Water" here means Torah. In order to accept the Torah we need to prepare ourselves through purifying our hearts. How do we do that? By bathing in the 'purifying waters' of the Torah.
- Our Sages say, "If you listen to the old, you will listen to the new" (*Succah 46b*).
- By reviewing Torah that we have learned already, we become receptive to learn more Torah.
- The Torah is dear and precious to us.
- Studying Torah with the utmost of our ability highlights this dearness.
- "He gives wisdom to the wise" (*Daniel 2:21*). A rich man obtains a loan more easily than a poor man: So, too, a wise person gains wisdom more easily than a fool. When we delve into the wisdom of Torah, Hashem responds by giving us more wisdom.