



Earning the Gift

We have a principle that first Hashem gives us a free inspiration and then we have to work at it ourselves (Tzidkas Hatzadik 143). A child in his mother's stomach learns the entire Torah (Nida 30b) without putting any effort in (free inspiration) and then during his lifetime he has to put in his own effort and learn it himself.

When a child learns to walk, his father holds him for his first step (free inspiration) but then the father lets go. When the child loses his father's support, he initially feels abandoned. In reality, the father is giving the child the gift of self-sufficiency to walk on his own which can only happen through his letting go. The child cannot fall when his father is holding him. The same applies to us and our father in heaven. Both stages are necessary. Stage one paves the way for Stage two. This is just as a space is needed for an object before it can be put down. The light of Stage one shows us our full capability. The brainstorm is the freebie but we're not here to receive free handouts.

Many times when a Baal Teshuva starts to become religious, he is all excited and on a high as his eyes begin to open up to the truth. This is the freebie; Hashem's gift to him. After a while, the fire dies down and he is left to work on it.

We can compare this to two ways to reach the top of a tall building. One can walk or take the elevator. The elevator is analogous to a free handout whereas walking is putting the work into it.

In 2006, a 21-year-old boy began giving a weekly shiur at the Mir Yeshiva in Yerushalayim. Word spread and the shiur took off- it was packed. As each

successive week came, the shiur's population increased. But as time progressed, the crowd began to lessen until it was down to five attendees. This bothered the one giving the shiur. He asked his Rebbe- is it still worth it to give the shiur? The Rebbe responded that many times in the beginning Hashem shows us this big free light and we get excited. But then He takes it away. Why give it to us in the first place? To show us what I can work up to.

When we are the ones who work at a task, it lasts in contrast to when it is just given to us. This explains why Sinai has no Kedusha in contrast to the Avos, Dovid and Shlomo. Similarly, the first Luchos, which didn't last were a freebie, whereas after we did Teshuva we got the 2nd Luchos that lasted.

Before the first Luchos were shattered, there was no such thing as forgetting. There was no toiling necessary since it was absorbed as it was learned. This is in contrast to the second Luchos were given, one had to put his own toil in, to grasp the Torah (Netziv in Haamik Davar, Shemos 34:1). All life experiences are like this. When we first taste a food it may taste delicious but we get numb to that feeling soon after. We need to work on ourselves where each bite tastes that good. When one gets a new car, house or begins a new relationship he is all excited about it (free inspiration). After a while, that feeling dissipates and he has to work his way back up to that original feeling.

The same idea is seen with Pesach and Sefira (Michtav MiEliyahu, 2, pp. 19-20, Bnei Yisoschar Iyar 3:1, Kedushas Levi, Emor, s.v. יבואר וספרתם. Concerning

Pesach we didn't deserve to be taken out of Mitzrayim as it was a free inspiration and as it states ואתם ראיתם...ואביא אתכם אלי (Shemos 19:4). However, by Kabbalas Hatorah

we need to work at it as in ... אם שמוע , if you will listen to me and observe my covenant you shall be to Me the most beloved treasure of all peoples (Shemos 19:5). This can be compared to sunlight and a torch light. The sunlight is from Hashem and the torchlight is from us.

The explanation in the pasuk said in reference to Makkos Bechoros: ופסח ה'

על הפתח (Shemos 12:23). We have a concept of פתחו לי פתח (Shir Hashirim Rabba 5), Hashem will pass over the entrance- make an opening the eye of a needle (initiate the process) and Hashem will make it a lot bigger (paraphrased). However, Mitzrayim was an exception to the rule as we were taken from the 49th level of impurity without deserving of it. This is the meaning in הפתח ה' על הפתח (Hashem will pass over the entrance)- פתחו לי פתח.

Sefira, however, is about counting our way back up to the high place we were in on Pesach. It was during Sefira that we were in the Midbar- a place of desolation and suffering (We were tested 10 times in the Midbar- Avos 5:6.) and 24,000 died then. It was a time of suffering since we had to work it out ourselves. Then, along comes Shavuot. The name Shavuot literally translates into weeks, because it comes after we toiled and worked it out during those weeks of Sefira.

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