

TZIM PINTL

— ♦ Parasha ♦ —

A Preparatory Talk for Shavuos

I once heard two people speaking. One of them said that he had been at a preparatory talk before the Yom Tov of Shavuos. The speaker had spoken about “Naaseh V’Nishma,” and connected it to accepting safeguards and boundaries in matters of tznius. The other person remarked that Shavuos, in its essence, is not a Yom Tov of one particular mitzvah. It is not a day meant to be built around one detail, even a detail that is important and holy. Shavuos is the acceptance of the whole Torah. That is the focus of the day: the general yoke, the general covenant, the general acceptance of Klal Yisrael as they entered under the Torah.

Certainly, every individual mitzvah draws its life from Shavuos, because on Shavuos we accepted the whole Torah. Safeguards in matters of tznius, Shabbos, money, speech, Torah learning, and bein adam l’chaveiro are all included in “Naaseh V’Nishma.” But the form of the day does not begin with the detail. The form of the day is the whole. First comes the acceptance of the yoke itself, the covenant itself, the belonging to Torah itself. Only afterward do we come down to all the details that flow from it.

Shavuos is different from the other Yamim Tovim. On Pesach there is matzah, the telling of Yetzias Mitzrayim, and the four cups. On Sukkos there is the sukkah, lulav, esrog, hadassim, and aravos. On Rosh Hashanah there is the shofar. On Yom Kippur there is fasting and teshuvah. But Shavuos has no particular mitzvah in the body of the day that gives the day its form, as matzah does on Pesach and shofar does on Rosh Hashanah. Shavuos stands differently. The day itself is Kabbalas HaTorah. The day itself is the vessel. A person stands before Hashem Yisbarach and accepts upon himself the whole Torah.

Shavuos is a day of the whole. Not one detail was given then, but the Torah itself. Not one mitzvah, not one practice, but the entire yoke of Torah and mitzvos. Klal Yisrael stood beneath the mountain, as one man with one heart, and accepted upon themselves to become the people of Torah. Before they entered all the details of the laws, before the questions were clarified, Bnei Yisrael said “Naaseh V’Nishma” upon the whole Torah. Upon everything Hakadosh Baruch Hu would command. Upon everything that would later be revealed. Upon all the laws, all the safeguards, all the ways of conduct. And afterward, throughout life, it would become clear what this general acceptance demands in each detail.



The Aseres Hadibros were also given in a general form. They are ten roots that include the whole Torah: bein adam laMakom and bein adam l’chaveiro; emunah, Shabbos, honoring one’s father and mother, the holiness of the home, the holiness of money, the holiness of speech. All the many laws of the Torah later branch into detail, but at

Matan Torah everything was heard from one root, one voice, one whole.

As it is written, “And He told you His covenant, which He commanded you to do, the Ten Statements, and He wrote them upon two tablets of stone.” The Aseres Hadibros are not merely ten commands or ten laws. They are a covenant. The covenant between Hakadosh Baruch Hu and Yisrael was revealed through the Ten Statements. They are the form of the covenant, the root of the covenant, the whole covenant. Therefore Shavuos is the day of the general covenant. On this day, a person does not stand before one law or one acceptance, but before the whole Torah.

A covenant begins with general surrender. A person enters the covenant, and from then on, every detail that appears in his life becomes part of that covenant. So it is with the covenant of Torah. At the moment of acceptance, a person does not know everything that will pass through his life. He does not know every trial, every question, every difficulty, every situation in the home, in livelihood, in chinuch, in speech, in money, in yiras Shamayim. But he knows to Whom he belongs. He knows that his life belongs to Torah.

On Shavuos we read Megillas Rus. Rus does not come with one detail alone. She says, “Your people are my people, and your G-d is my G-d.” She enters Klal Yisrael. She comes to take shelter beneath the wings of the Shechinah. Geirus is a general acceptance. The ger accepts upon himself to become part of Yisrael, to carry the yoke of Torah and mitzvos, and to enter a different reality of life. The moment of geirus is a moment of the whole. A person who had been outside now enters inside. Not into one practice alone, but into an entire Torah.

Shavuos is like the day of geirus of Klal Yisrael. At Matan Torah, Yisrael became the people of Torah. They stood beneath the mountain and accepted upon themselves to become the people of Hashem. Rus said, “Your people are my people, and your G-d is my G-d,” and Bnei Yisrael said, “Naaseh V’Nishma.” It is a general entrance into the world of Torah, the yoke of Torah, the life of Torah.

Chazal said that Hakadosh Baruch Hu made a condition with creation: if Yisrael accept the Torah, good; and if not, He would return the world to *tohu vavohu*. The whole world depends on Kabbalas HaTorah. There are heavens and earth, seas and dry land, trees, living creatures, man, wisdom, work, livelihood, nations, families, and many forces. But all of this needs a foundation. Without Torah, the world has no inner point that gives it standing. It returns to *tohu vavohu*.

A Yid accepts the whole Torah on Shavuos, and through this, the whole world receives its true standing. The world stands only when it has a root. Torah is the root of the world. It is not one detail within the world, but the foundation upon which the world stands.

From here begins the great work after Shavuos. A whole that does not enter into details remains high and distant. A person may say that he accepts the whole Torah, but afterward he must see how it enters his life. How this whole descends into his home, his table, his time, his money, his speech, his rest, his burdens, his joy, and his fears. This too is part of the general yoke. Not only to

accept the whole in the hour of light, but to reveal it inside the details.

This is the matter of “Return to your tents.” After Matan Torah, the work begins to bring the Torah into the tent, into the home, into life. At Har Sinai, the Torah was given to Klal Yisrael. In the tents, the work begins to see how that great voice enters every home, every person, every situation. First the whole, then the detail. First the covenant, then the covenant revealed within life.

Therefore Shavuos does not need a particular mitzvah to give it form. On the contrary, this itself is its greatness. The vessel of Shavuos is the acceptance itself. The standing before Hashem. The saying of “Naaseh V’Nishma.” The recognition that the whole Torah is our life. A person does not hold matzah, lulav, or shofar in his hand. Rather, he himself stands as the vessel for accepting the Torah. The heart itself becomes the vessel. Life itself becomes the vessel. The general will to be a servant of Hashem is the vessel of the day.

This touches a person very deeply in his avodah. First of all, a person must have a whole. He must have one place in his soul where he knows: I belong to Hashem Yisbarach and to His Torah. Even when I am weak in one detail, the whole has not fallen. Even when I need to correct much, the very belonging remains. Even when I still do not know how to bring everything into my life, the general acceptance still stands.

Without a whole, every detail becomes very heavy. Every difficulty feels as though everything has fallen. Every weakness seems to say that a person has no belonging. But when there is a whole, the details find their proper place. A person knows that he stands within a path. He has a general yoke, and from within that yoke he works on one detail and then another. Today he corrects his speech. Tomorrow he strengthens his fixed learning. Later he becomes more careful with money. Then he brings more yiras Shamayim into his home. They are all details, but they all come from one whole.

This is the proper order. First Shavuos, afterward “Return to your tents.” First the whole, then the detail. First the Aseres Hadibros, afterward all the laws that branch from them. First “Naaseh V’Nishma,” afterward learning, clarification, toil, questions and answers. First Rus comes to take shelter beneath the wings of the Shechinah, afterward her life is built within Klal Yisrael. First the world stands upon the condition of accepting the Torah, afterward every detail in the world receives its correction.

— ♦ Stories ♦ —

He Became Wealthy

He was a ben Torah. That is how he knew himself, and that is what he truly was. Even after he became a man of means, with buildings, accounts, investments, and businesses, he still felt, when he sat alone with himself, that he was simply an avreich, a ben Torah. This was not imagination. He learned, he loved Torah, he honored talmidei chachamim, and he had a true feeling for the beis midrash. Only one thing around him had changed, and he still did not know how to live with it. He had become wealthy.

At first he did not feel it so much. Wealth had not come in one day. One deal succeeded, then another, then doors opened, and people began speaking about him in a different language. Once they would say: a successful avreich, a yerei Shamayim, he knows how to learn, he has a good head. Now they would say quietly: he has a lot, but it is hard for him to open his hand. He still calculates everything as if he has nothing. There is something narrow in him. A little miserly.

They did not always say it with cruelty. Sometimes they said it with pain. Sometimes with pity. Sometimes with wonder. After all, he is a good person. He has a heart. He understands things. But when the moment came to open his hand, something in him closed.

When he was young, he was used to counting every penny. He knew how much breakfast cost, how much a ride cost, how much would remain until the end of the month. Not from miserliness exactly, but from narrow living. A person who lives under pressure learns to close his hand. Not from evil, but from protection. If one opens too much, nothing remains. If one gives here, it will be lacking there. This is how a movement of measuring and caution is built inside a person.

And that movement remained in him.

The money had grown, but the movement had not grown with it. The bank account had changed, but the hand remained the same hand. From the outside he was already wealthy, but inside he was still calculating penny by penny. Not because he was bad, and not because he did not want the good of others. On the contrary, he had a heart. But when the moment of opening came, something in him closed. As if the body still remembered the first narrowness, even after he had already left it.

When poor people or relatives came to ask him for help, a voice of judgment would rise within him. Why does he not go to work. Why did he not save beforehand. Why did he spend when he had. Why did he not calculate every penny the way I calculated. He did not always say this aloud. Sometimes he was even ashamed of these thoughts. But they rose within him on their own.

A person who came out of hardship through narrowness and order can begin to measure everyone else by that same measure. What saved him in his days of poverty later became, for him, the whole form of life.

And it had a garment of opinion. He would speak about it in the language of responsibility. It is not good to give children too much, he would say. It is not good to train relatives that whenever there is difficulty, they run to the one with means. It is not good to scatter to every side. A person must learn to stand on his own feet. One who receives too easily sometimes becomes weaker.

And the words sounded correct. In truth, there is truth in them. There is giving that ruins, scattering that does not build, and help that is not help but only a habit of dependency. But the people around him felt that this was not the place for those words. As true as they were, he did not have to be the one to say them every time. Not every request has to become a

lesson about responsibility. Not every knock at the door has to awaken a whole accounting about how to educate the world.

There are many sayings, phrases, and ideas for every matter. There are sayings that place the poor man so he should not scatter. There are sayings that place the baal habayis so he should not fall into debt. And there are sayings that place the wealthy man so he should know that there is no poverty in a place of wealth, and that expansiveness from Heaven obligates a movement of expansiveness as well. A person must find the saying that places him where he stands now. He should not always use the saying that justifies his old place.

That was his subtle lack. He took sayings of caution, saving, and educating toward independence, and dressed his difficulty of opening in them. Not because he was a liar, but because a person is close to himself. When he has lived for many years in narrowness, the sayings of narrowness become for him like the only truth. Even when Hakadosh Baruch Hu brings him into a place of wealth, he still speaks in the language of poverty, as if every opening of the hand is a danger and every request is a corruption.

His family felt it. One relative needed help for his daughter's wedding. A friend needed a proper loan to save a small business. A mosad asked him to enter a little more deeply. They would say quietly among themselves: he really can. This is not a great burden for him. What was once a large sum is not so large for him today. There is no poverty in a place of wealth. From Heaven they gave him expansiveness; why is he still standing with

the same movement of narrowness. Why does he speak about every request as if they are asking for his last piece of bread.

And he felt this look. On one side he would say to himself: why do they think that everything I have belongs to them. Just because my businesses succeeded, am I obligated to open for everyone. On the other side, another voice would rise within him: but in truth, you can. Not every request is exploitation. Not every poor man is guilty of his poverty. Not every help ruins. There is an opening of the hand that is part of wealth itself.

That was the difficulty. Not the giving itself alone, but the crown. The crown of wealth did not sit comfortably on him.

There are people born into families of means. They saw at home how one speaks with gabbaim, how one gives without becoming frightened, how one supports a mosad, how one arranges help for a relative without the whole house trembling. For them, wealth is not only a sum. It is a movement. They have a natural expansiveness. They do not run after every request, and they do not lose boundaries, but they know how to sit inside wealth.

With him it was not so. He had not sat for generations inside wealth. He arrived there in the middle of life. The body still remembered the days when one calculated whether to buy something now or wait until next week. The soul still kept the habits of narrowness. Therefore, even when he had much, he acted as if soon there would be a lack.

The relatives saw and accepted the reality. What could be done. He is a good person, but he has not yet entered the movement of wealth. He has money, but he did not inherit expansiveness. They knew they had to stand a little far from him. Not because he was not close to them in his heart, but because this was his movement. If they came too close, they would ask. And if they asked too directly, vet es tzurik bansen. It would come back and strike backward. He would close, feel pressured, begin speaking about responsibility and scattering and people who do not stand on their own feet, and even the small opening that could have been would be lost.



So they learned to speak with him gently, to hint and not press, to ask only when there was no choice, and even then not to push him into a corner.

This itself added distance around him. A wealthy man like this creates caution around himself. People have to calculate how to speak with him, how not to awaken his closing, how not to make him run away. There is money, but no expansiveness around him. There is ability, but people move away. And sometimes a quiet hatred awakens around him. Not an open hatred, but a thin hatred born among relatives, when one feels that the other has the ability and knowingly withholds it.

In a family, each one brings what he has. This one brings understanding, this one strength, this one room in his home, this one connections, this one money, this one good advice, and this one an open heart. In a general way, each one feels that from what he has, he gives to everyone. But when one person has something others need, and he closes it off, the withholding enters the relationship itself. The pain is not always justified in every detail, but the movement itself pushes away. The hearts of those around him begin to close against him. Why does he not open. Why does every request become a whole *din v'cheshbon*. Why must everyone walk around him on the tips of their toes. Perhaps with the years he will become used to it. But now, this is how he is. Wealthy on the outside, a narrow *ben Torah* within.

Leil Shavuot arrived. He came to the *beis midrash* to say *Tikkun Leil Shavuot*. A night of Torah. Standing before the whole Torah, before the general acceptance, before the voice of *Naaseh V'Nishma*. He sat there in the *beis midrash*, a little awake and a little dozing, sometimes his eyes in the *sefer* and sometimes his thoughts wandering from place to place.

In the middle of the night, around two o'clock, between one *parshah* and another, he had something like a waking dream, and his mind turned to the words of Chazal: "One who has one *maneh* wants two hundred."

He had always understood it simply. The nature of man is not to be satisfied with what he has. He has a little, he wants more. He has more, he wants still more. That is how people say it, and there is much truth in it. But on Leil Shavuot, a new *pshtat* fell into his mind.

"One who has one *maneh* wants two hundred." Why is it so. One who already has one *maneh* knows how hard it was to acquire the first *maneh*. How many fears, how many doubts, how much labor, how much risk, how many sleepless nights. Why would he want to enter that movement again. Why does he not rest with what he has.

Then a simple thing opened to him. After a person has one *maneh*, the two hundred do not look like the first *maneh*. The first *maneh* was a breakthrough. A going out from nothing into something. But after he already has one *maneh*, the road to two hundred looks closer. He already has a vessel. He already has experience. He already has a name. He already has connections. He already has courage. What was once a high mountain has now become a step. Therefore a person wants more. Not only because he is desirous, but because he feels that now it is easier. The next success stands closer than the first success.

In the world of business there is a name for this: Experience Curve. The curve of experience. This is a simple thing in the business world. A business that has already passed through the first time does not stand the second time as it stood the first time. The first *maneh* did not only bring profit; it built a vessel: experience, connections, a name, courage, understanding of the market, order of work, and an eye for the matter. From then on, the second *maneh* does not begin from zero. It stands on the shoulders of the first *maneh*.

And this is not only with money. It is true in every craft, and it is true in Torah. A *ben Torah* learning his first *sugya* in depth finds everything difficult at first. The language is hard, the calculation is hard, the movement is hard, the question and answer do not settle immediately. He has to break a path. But after he has acquired a first *maneh* in Torah, after he has tasted once what it means to open a *sugya*, enter it, endure the

confusion, stand on the form of the matter, and come out with clarity, the second *maneh* comes from another place. Until, with the years, he becomes like a spring that grows stronger, and *chiddushim* fall to him all day. This is wealth in Torah. One who has one *maneh* wants two hundred, simply.

This is the nature of all profit. When a person profits, he wants to continue, because the second time there can be a real gain with less investment. The nature of man is to seek profit: how to gain as much as possible with the least investment. As part of this, he thinks how to use what has already been built, how not to begin each time from zero. So it is in livelihood, so it is in Torah, so it is in every craft, and so it is in every part of life. A person is built in such a way that every level already acquired becomes a vessel for the next level.

And then he understood something about himself.

He understood why he wanted more and more in his businesses. Until then he had thought it was simply the nature of wealthy people, that they do not know how to stop. Now he felt it was deeper. He feels that everything he has already built makes the next step easier. Therefore the money pulls him. Not only the money itself, but the feeling of ease that comes after the first labor. Every new business looks less frightening than the first, because he already has backing, experience, connections, understanding. Therefore he goes further.

But in that moment, on Leil Shavuot, before the Torah, another thought came to him.

If this is so on the side of earning, why is it not so on the side of opening. Giving also has a movement. Opening the hand also needs an Experience Curve. At first it is hard to open. The hand remembers hardship. The heart fears. A person feels as if every act of giving returns him to the old place. But if he begins to enter it, perhaps here too there will be "one who has one *maneh* wants two hundred." Perhaps the matter will turn over, and he will want to give more and more, because through this he will gain expansiveness many times over. We see clearly that people who give want to give more and more, and the more they give, the more they want to give further. We must say that here too there is this rule of "one who has one *maneh* wants two hundred."

From then on, he did not become a different person in one day. He still calculated. He was still careful. There were still times when he refused, and times when he felt that people were asking more than was proper. But something had changed. He already knew that wealth is not only what a person has, but also how he carries what he has. There is a person who has money and still does not live inside his wealth. And there is a person who slowly begins to learn this movement: how to be expansive without being scattered, how to give without becoming frightened, how to remember the first hardship without remaining its servant.

And the members of his household felt it. Not in one day, and not through a great speech. But the house received a slightly different air. When they spoke about helping others, he did not close immediately. When *gabbaim* came, he did not run away from the room. When he heard about a relative who had fallen into difficulty, he asked more calmly what could be done.

This is what he learned on that Leil Shavuot: the depth of "one who has one *maneh* wants two hundred." A person continues in a place that has already opened for him, because every level makes the next level closer. And if this is true in business, it is true in Torah, and it is true in the heart. The first opening is hard. The second opening is already closer. And when a person becomes a vessel for expansiveness, he begins to understand that true wealth is not only in what comes into him, but also in what goes out from him in the proper way.

This is what opened to him between wakefulness and sleep, in the middle of *Tikkun Leil Shavuot*. Not a great *chiddush* that one shouts out loud, but a point that enters a person and changes, even a little, the place where he stands. And if one stayed awake the entire night only to attain this, *dayeinu*.