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שבועות

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Accepting The Torah

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Part I. The Great Mind

Smoke and Thunder

When we want to speak about *Ma'amad Har Sinai*, we all understand right away that the chief event that transpired on that great day was the *Kabolas haTorah* – the *Am Yisroel* received the Torah from Hakodosh Boruch Hu. All together we said, with one voice, “*Na'aseh v'nishma* – We accept!” And amidst a scene of fiery smoke and loud thunder the Voice of Hashem was heard: *Anochi Hashem Elokecha*.

About that day the Rambam (*Iggeres Teiman*) admonishes us: גְּדוֹלַת הַיָּמִינָה – You should make that scene more important than any other scene, more important than any scene in the entire history of the world! It means even greater than the day of *Bereishis bara Elokim*, greater than the day when Hakodosh Boruch Hu created the world from nothing.

The Real Day of Creation

Now, that's saying something! The creation of the world is certainly a very important event. When contemplated properly, there is nothing that could leave a person more awestruck! The creation of a world from nothing! It's something we can't even wrap our heads around; and yet, the Rambam says, the sixth of Sivan, the day we accepted the Torah, is to be exalted even more than that.

But it's not the Rambam's *chiddush*; that's how the *gemara* (Avodah Zarah 3a) explains the *possuk*: וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי - And it was evening and it was morning; it was the sixth day (Bereishis 1:31). Chazal took note of the fact that it doesn't say *yom shishi* the way it says by the other days: *Yom sheini*, *yom shlishi*, *yom revi'i*. It says *yom ha'shishi*, the sixth day, a special sixth day. And the Gemara says there that it's talking about Shavuos, the sixth of Sivan. וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר - The creation of day and night, that means the creation of the world, you know when it was? יוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי - It was on *yom hashishi*, on that sixth day of Sivan when the Am Yisroel accepted the Torah; that's when the world was created.

Bacteria Are Not That Important

And that's because the world wasn't created so that trillions of bacteria should crawl over the surface of the soil. And neither was it made so that billions of human beings should live like bacteria and crawl around on the surface of the earth. The world was created so that the Am Yisroel should stand at Har Sinai and become the Am Hatorah - that was the purpose of the world!

The *possuk* is saying: And it was night, and it was day - it means the world functions, day and night, day and night, only because of what happened on *Yom Hashishi*, on the sixth of Sivan, when we accepted the Torah. When we proclaimed *Na'aseh v'nishma*, that was the grand finale of *maaseh bereishis*.

What We Accepted

But it's not as simple as it sounds - it has to be explained exactly what *na'aseh v'nishma* really meant; what was it that we accepted to fulfill when we said those words? Of course, *na'aseh v'nishma* includes everything; *mitzvos*, *bein adam la'Makom*, *bein adam la'chaveiro*, *talmud Torah*, *tikkun hamiddos* - everything is included in what we accepted upon ourselves on that great day, and it's all included in the *Kabolas Hatorah* of every Jew until today. A pious Jew who is *mekabeil* the Torah

today, he has in mind that he's willing to do a very many great things for Hashem. He'll suffer discomfort and make sacrifices for Him. He'll give away his time and his money and his labor in the service of Hashem.

Even his life he's willing to give up for Hashem. That too was included in the *na'aseh v'nishma* at Har Sinai. The *Am Yisroel* was ready for *yei'hareig v'al ya'avov* – to let themselves be killed for Hashem. If Hakodosh Boruch Hu would have asked them that they should leap into the fire for Him, they would have done so. That's what they meant when they accepted the Torah: "We'll even give our lives for the Torah."

And it wasn't just empty platitudes. The *Am Yisroel* fulfilled that promise over and over again in all the generations. We know that! In the Middle Ages, when the "holy" Crusaders, the 'turn the other cheek' Christians, attacked the Jewish ghetto with the intention of forcing the Jews to accept baptism, the Jews slaughtered their children so that they shouldn't fall into the hands of the gentiles and be forcibly baptized. Mothers and fathers cut the throats of their little children and then they slaughtered themselves. The *chosson* slaughtered the *kallah* and then he slaughtered himself; it's described in the *kinnos*. And when the enemy finally broke down the doors they found a nation lying in its own blood. There was nobody to baptize anymore!

Something Much Bigger

All that was the result of *Kabolas haTorah*. That's what they meant when they yelled out, "*Na'aseh v'nishma*." It wasn't merely a pious statement; they were promising something that they meant from the bottom of their hearts. "We'll give up everything, even our lives, for You, Hashem."

Now, while all that is included in what the Jewish People accepted upon themselves at Har Sinai, there's still something much bigger than that. Our great teacher, the *Chovos Halevavos*, tells us that there's one form of service of Hashem that makes everything else pale in comparison. Because while it's very difficult to slaughter yourself for Hakodosh Boruch Hu and it's a big job to have *kosher* kitchens, *milchig* and *fleishig*, to keep Shabbos and Pesach, to pay *schar limud* and everything else, but all of that is only a minor thing when compared to what *Kabolas Hatorah* really meant.

And that is the crux of tonight's meeting – the whole subject lies in the following words: More than anything else, *the essence of Kabolas Hatorah is that we subject our minds to the attitudes and ideals of Hakodosh*

Boruch Hu as revealed to us in the Torah. From now on we sacrifice our freedom of thought and accept the Torah's thoughts. That's what *na'aseh v'nishma* meant: "From now on we're going to think with the thought processes of the Torah and nothing else."

Stopping and Starting

Kabolas Hatorah means that a Jew installs the Torah in his mind; from now on he stops thinking and the Torah thinks for him. In other words, he stops thinking with the street and he begins thinking now according to the Torah. *Kabolas Hatorah* means to bend your mind to the Torah; to subject not only your body, but more importantly, to subject your thoughts to the thoughts of Hashem.

Now, right away, modern people bridle when I say this: "You want us to stop using our minds and just to accept everything blindly?!" Like once, when I said in public that we have to follow the *gedolei Yisroel* no matter what, a Modern Orthodox rabbi became impatient with me: "Are we just blind sheep?" So I told him, "Yes; certainly you're blind. No question about it; we're all blind sheep." He was angry: "What do you mean?! I should stop thinking?!"

So we say to him and to all the rest of the self-proclaimed intelligentsia, "No! We want you to *start* thinking!" That's what it really amounts to – you're sacrificing your freedom of thought, but once you start thinking along with Hakodosh Boruch Hu, that's when you *begin* to think.

We Were Not Dumb Romans

Now, had such a *Kabolas haTorah* of sacrificing the mind been offered to the Egyptians or to the Chinese or the Greeks, it would have been a minor matter. They could have readily accepted such an idea because they didn't live by *seichel* anyhow. They lived with a hodgepodge of arbitrary ideas, different gods for different situations, and therefore their minds were always ready to accept any newfangled idea that would come along.

The fact is they *were* offered religions and they accepted them hook, line and sinker. That's what happened in Europe. A king, a Roman king, decided to become a Christian so he made a proclamation: "From now on, you're all Christian. If not, your head comes off." And all the dumb Romans accepted: "Alright; if you say so. We'll give up one *narishkeit* for a different *narishkeit*." That's how they became Christians.

Not only the Christians. The Mohammedans too; Mohammed rode his horse into a town with his army in tow – they were all holding swords – and he announced, “From now on, you’re all Mohammedans.” That’s what the townspeople found out when they got up in the morning and they saw proclamations hanging on the walls announcing that they have a new religion. *Mazel Tov!* You’re Mohammedans now!

A Nation of Philosophers

But when the *Am Yisroel* gathered at the foot of Har Sinai and were presented with the Torah, it wasn’t a nation of docile and unthinking people. The nation that came to Har Sinai, you have to know, were a people who lived according to the dictates of their minds; according to a system of relying on their virtuous conscience that determined for them what is right and wrong, what’s good and bad.

Avraham Avinu had begun a system of Torah that relied on pure *seichel*. From his mind he brought forth great principles of Awareness of Hashem in this world, principles of proper behavior and foundations for how to live life. Avraham Avinu recognized that the human mind has in it an endless wisdom. Dovid Hamelech said, *לְכָל תְּכִלָּה רְאִיתִי קֶץ וְרַחֲבָה מִצְוֹתֶיךָ קָדָר* – *Your commandment is wide without an end* (Tehillim 119:96). What does that mean? According to the *Chovos Halevavos*, Dovid is telling us here that the mind can give us opportunities to serve Hashem – opportunities without end.

The Fifth Cheilek

So Avraham spent his life thinking and drawing forth from his mind very many great principles. And that’s what he taught his children. Yitzchok and Yaakov and then the *shevatim*, the *Bnei Yisroel*, were trained to listen to the voice of the conscience. And it wasn’t done superficially – they dilated upon it and they preached it and it became a whole Torah that came only from their own understanding. The *sheva mitzvos* were handed down to them from Noach, but aside for that, the mind was to them their sole source of Torah. They served Hashem with their *seichel*.

And once they probed the depths of their minds and they came to a decision, it was to them the word of Hashem; the mind was the *Shulchan Aruch* and they were ready to give their lives for it. The *seichel* was the final arbiter and they were willing to stake their lives on the *psak din* of their minds.

A Bigger And Better Mind

And so, for the nation that came to Har Sinai the ultimate criterion was always the following: “Does my clear-thinking mind obligate me in this law? Or does my pure conscience tell me that it’s forbidden?” That’s how it was for hundreds of years and that’s how they became the most independent of nations. Everything was judged not by authority but on its own merits. “Does my reason tell me it’s right?” The *Bnei Yisrael* became the *Am Hashem* because they were a people who had been trained for many generations *not to obey what was told to them* and instead to follow the rulings of their own minds.

And then suddenly Moshe Rabeinu appears on the scene and he says, ‘Are you ready to receive a Torah? Are you ready to give up all of that, all of the ideals and attitudes that you’ve drawn forth from your great minds, for a Torah *seichel*?’”

A Fine Wife?

Now, you have to know that thinking with your mind sometimes comes in direct collision with the Torah. Here’s a man who uses his *seichel* and he says, “Look; I have a very modest and *frum* aunt, a very nice person and I know that she will be a very fine wife to me. We can raise a beautiful Torah family together just like Amram and Yocheved did.”

That’s what Amram did before *Matan Torah*. *Vayelech ish mibeis Levi vayikach es bas Levi*; Amram knew that his aunt, Yocheved, was a virtuous woman, a *tzadeikes*. Even her name was an honor to Hashem. *Yo-Cheved* means “Hashem is my glory.” She was a wonderful woman and when Amram married her, he was praised for what he did; he was extolled for relying on his pure mind to do what would find favor in the eyes of Hashem. And the truth is they had a very nice family. Miriam, Aharon, and Moshe were beautiful children.

V’nahafoch Hu

And now, at *Kabolas haTorah*, the whole thing became wrong! Everything that Amram had thought was virtuous was now just the opposite. You can’t marry an aunt. An aunt?! It’s a terrible sin what Amram did; it’s a *chiyuv kareis*. All of a sudden, at *Kabolas Hatorah* everything changed. The nation of independent thinkers, of highly-developed minds, were now being offered something else: “Your minds,”

said Moshe Rabeinu, “up till now, it was wonderful. But now we’re being offered something much better.”

Kabolas haTorah means that there’s a higher mind, an infinite mind that you’re willing to follow now. And that mind, the Mind of Hakodosh Boruch Hu, *k’viyachol*, will be doing the thinking for you from now on. It means that you have to throw out everything you learned up till now and begin creating a Torah mind, a mind that thinks along with Hakodosh Boruch Hu. That’s what Moshe Rabeinu told the Am Yisroel.

And how did the Am Yisroel respond? They said, ‘*Na’aseh v’nishma*.’ *Kabolas Hatorah* means that they surrendered their minds and they agreed to accept what the Torah told them. That was the tremendous achievement of *Kabolas HaTorah*, the willingness to throw it all away and to think only according to the Torah.

Part II. Changing Your Mind

Constructing Towers

In *Masichta Kiddushin* (57a) the *gemara* tells a story. Shimon Ha’amsuni was a great sage in the days of old and it says about him that *hayah doresh kol esin shebaTorah*. He developed a Torah system; every time he came across the word *es* in the Torah, he said that it comes to teach something. And he made it his job to try to understand what each *es* was coming to teach. That’s a big job! There are many *esin* in the Torah.

And so Shimon Ha’amsuni built up a whole system of *chochmah*, a tall tower of lessons. Because when you learn one *chiddush* it doesn’t apply only in this one place; whatever detail you learn from this *es* is actually a new principle of thinking that has to be applied to many other *dinim*. So he built up a novel system of Torah thought, built on the word *es*.

When it says *kabed es avicha*, honor your father, so he said that the extra word *es* is coming to tell us something. *Es*, *lerabos achicha hagadol* – not only your father you have to honor but you have to honor your older brother too. You hear that? You hear that *chiddush*? *Es* means your older brother. *Kabed es avicha*, means honor the one who is second to your father, the older brother. So don’t be fresh to your older brother. Whether it means only the oldest or any brother older than you, I’ll leave that to

mefarshim, but it says *kabed es avicha – lerabos achicha hagadol*. And Shimon Ha'Amsuni had thousands of such *limudim*, and all of his life he preached to his *talmidim* – it was thousands of hours that he spent studying and teaching about all of the *essin* in the Torah.

A Tough Question

And then one day a great tragedy happened. In the *yeshiva* they came to the *possuk*, *Es Hashem Elokecha tira – You should fear es Hashem*. So the *talmidim* said to Shimon Ha'amsuni, "Rebbi, what does this *es* come to add? Could it be that there something else that can be together with Hashem, someone else that has to be feared like we fear Hashem?"

It's a very good question that the *talmidim* asked Shimon Ha'Amsuni, and their rebbi thought it over. He thought it over and he thought it over more and he couldn't find anything. *Chas veshalom* to fear something else with Hashem?! It doesn't make sense! So he said, "My *talmidim*, "Give me a little time. There must be something because there's the word *es* there. I have to think it over."

And so, Shimon Ha'Amsuni went home to study and to find the answer. He came back a couple of weeks later and he gave a *klop* on the *bimah*: "I have an announcement to make. I'm sorry; my whole system was wrong. All the *esin* that I expounded my entire life, they were all wrong. I take it all back. Because you see from here it's not so. What can you add to *es Hashem Elokecha tira*?"

The Same Reward

"But Rebbi," his *talmidim* said, "*Kol esin shedarashta mah tehei alei-hem*? What's going to be with all the work you put in, all those years of *chiddushei Torah*? You built up whole edifices, tremendous structures of Torah upon the extra *esin*! What's going to happen now with all of that?"

So Shimon Ha'Amsuni said as follows – now I want you to pay good attention to what he said because it's the crux of our subject tonight. He said, "*K'shem shekibalti sechar al hadrishah*, just like I received reward all those years for my *drashos* when I investigated and explained those *esin*, *kach akabel sechar al haprishah*, I'm going to get reward now for backing out, for refraining"

What does that mean, "I'm going to receive the same reward just for backing down, for throwing everything out"? What kind of reward is there for realizing that everything you put into your head was wrong?

The answer is that when a man has invested so much effort in a certain system and he lived with that idea and he's committed to it – could be he even preached it in public – and finally he sees he's wrong, that's not something that's easy to admit. It's easier to hem and haw and twist things around to make it fit into your system of thought. It's already *your* mind now and it's hard to sacrifice your thoughts.

The Painful Sacrifice

One of the most painful things is to discover that you are wrong. It's the most painful thing to discover the truth about yourself and to say, "I am wrong Hashem. I was wrong, and all my life I was wrong." That hurts.

But Shimon Ha'amsuni understood what *Kabolas Hatorah* really meant and so he said, "I'm happy to say I'm wrong! It's an opportunity to be *mekabeil* the Torah again; to back out of my incorrect Torah thoughts in the honor of Hashem." The giving up, the sacrificing of your own opinion, is such a tremendous achievement that it deserves a reward equivalent to all the years that you put in efforts building up the system. "Just like I received reward all those years for my *drashos* when I investigated and explained those *esin*, I'm going to get reward now for backing down." Because throwing away attitudes that are not in coincidence with *seichel* of Hashem, that itself is *Kabolas Hatorah*.

Now, that applies to all of us too. When a person builds up a system of thought in his head and he lives with it, so he's confident that he's right; he's proud of his ideals. Could be he even preaches it to others. And then one day he comes into contact with a Torah truth that contradicts everything he's invested in; he finally sees that he's wrong. "This is *not* the way the Torah thinks!" It's not easy; it's easier to finagle your way out of it so that you won't have to sacrifice your mind. But if you're willing to be honest with yourself, to not continue to deceive yourself and cover it up, that's *Kabolas Hatorah*. That's a tremendous achievement of *avodas Hashem*, a tremendous achievement of character. To sacrifice your own opinions, all of your independent thinking, that's a tremendous thing; it's one of the greatest achievements in life.

You're Not Independent

The truth is that most of us are not thinking independently anyhow. Don't imagine that you're thinking with your own mind – if you don't have Torah attitudes in your head then perforce you're thinking the attitudes of New York City. It's one or the other – if you were never *me-*

kabeil the Torah by sacrificing your thoughts to Hakodosh Boruch Hu so you have to know that you've already sacrificed your thoughts to the degenerates who write editorials for the New York Times and the *ois-vurfs* who are teaching in Brooklyn College.

And therefore anybody who will say, "How can I give up my own independent mind and accept the Torah way of thinking?" is really saying, "I prefer to hold on to what the New York Post is telling me, what the street is saying, what the professors are teaching, what a stupid goy in Hollywood is saying."

Of course, they'll defend themselves: "It's the Torah opinion that I'm thinking;" they'll find ways and means of justifying their attitudes and opinions.

Defending Socialism

I remember when I was a boy, the fad of the day was Socialism. I once had a fistfight with somebody because I was fighting to defend Socialism. I still remember that — I retired from that debate with a bleeding nose. Now, I was only a boy but there were rabbis, European rabbis with beards, who preached in the synagogue *Socialism min hatorah minayin*. They thought it was the wave of the future and so they found Torah ways to justify it. At the same time that the Socialists were tearing down Torah and *mitzvos* and belief in Hakodosh Boruch Hu, these rabbis were justifying it from the pulpit with *pesukim*. But the truth is that it was an opinion from outside the Torah, only that they justified it by means of twisting the Torah so that it should fit into their already twisted heads.

And that's why there are so many Torah principles that are going lost today — because people don't have the humility of mind. So many Torah ideals are going lost from the Mankind and even from some Jewish communities, *chas v'shalom*, because we don't subject our minds to the Torah. And so, if we want to be *mekabeil* the Torah we'll have to start trimming our ideas to suit the Torah mind, the Mind of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Part III. A New Mind

The Mystical Catgut

Now, in order that we shouldn't be too abstract, we'll get down to business immediately. We have to take something out of Shavuot besides the cheesecake. We'll mention just a few of them – they're just examples – so that we can understand more clearly what's expected of us. You'll forgive me if I step on somebody's toes, but I'm only giving over what the Torah teaches.

Here's a man who comes into Judaism from the outside world and he's a music man; he lives for music. He knows that music is an ideal. Then he comes into the Torah world and he finds that music is *lo klum*, it's nothing at all. What is music? If you know how, you can take the guts of a cat and draw it tight over two nails and wait until it dries; then you twist it until it looks like a wire and you put it between two more nails on an instrument like a fiddle or a mandolin. And now you when you pluck that cat gut, so the sound waves that are generated, that's supposed to give you an insight into mystical things, things that the eye cannot see.

Hasidic Music

It's totally false; there's nothing to it at all. I bet some of your people will be shocked to hear that. "Music is *kodesh kodashim*," you'll tell me. Some people have said *chassidishe Torah* that the *heichal haneginah* is close to the *heichal* of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. Look, I'm not looking to make any enemies – everything is good if used for good things. Even a hammer is wonderful if you use it for *avodas Hashem*. If you're going to use a hammer to make a *sukkah*, then a hammer is wonderful. And if music is used to help a man achieve noble aspirations to climb up to Hashem; if it helps you create Torah thoughts in your head, then music is fulfilling its purpose. It's a hammer, that's all.

I once went into a certain *shtiebel* and a *Rebbe* was sitting there singing. I can't forget it. He was singing, "*Ana ana avda di'kudsha brich-hu*." It went into my blood and I'll never forget it. That's already something else. A man who has *yiras shomayim* and he's singing and he's putting all of his *yiras shomayim* into the song. That's something else entirely! I was listening to him and it had a tremendous influence on me.

Everything is good if it's used for *avodas Hashem*; but to make music into an ideal? *B'etzem*, there is nothing to it at all. Not like the

people who walk in the street, bums. You see there's a bum, a tramp, who is carrying a violin case. Ah! He thinks he's a holy man, a great man because of that violin case. And that's what he wants others to think too. What he has in there, who knows? You know the mafia carried violin cases too, only there were machine guns hidden inside.

Lessons Of Scribbles

Another man loves art. He lives for art; he goes to galleries and he spends years and years on that. And he imagines that the painter is teaching something to the world – he's discovering new lessons from the scribbling of a nobody. Now, it's not a bad idea if you're going to make a *parnasah* out of it; if you can sell art or make art and make a living, why not?! But if art is your ideal in life and then you discover in the world of Torah it's *lo klum*, it comes as a shock.

The whole thing is a waste of time. Who needs painting?! If you have a good camera, you can make good pictures in a second. And in case you feel there's more *neshamah* in a hand-made picture, that there's more soul there, there's a secret there that the camera cannot capture, so you have to know you're deceiving yourself – it's time for *Kabolas Hatorah*. Welcome to the world of Torah.

No Fleishigs on Shavuos

Now these are not the worst things. There are worse things than music and art. I'm just giving examples. Another concept is vegetarianism. Anybody who is a vegetarian on principle, it means he wasn't yet *mikabeil* the Torah – his mind is not thinking according to Torah patterns. Now, if he's a vegetarian because he feels that meat is not good for him or not good for other people, that's something else. But if he thinks that on principle it's wrong to take the life of an animal just because he wants meat, that person's mind is thinking in contradiction to the Torah. He's in opposition to the principles of the Torah.

The Torah teaches us that animals are given to man to use and therefore anybody who is a vegetarian on principle, he's acting proud and arrogant against the Torah. The Jewish nation is humble to the Torah, and we understand that that's good for us. That's what the Torah wants and therefore it's right; it's the only truth.

We Are Living In Error

There are more concepts. I'm going to shock you now. The concept of royalty is a Torah concept. When royalty was abolished, a great error

was made. Now, I'm not going to argue with you about it because you think you know more; your minds have already accepted the ideals of democracy; but I'm telling you; I studied the subject – democracy is a failure and it's leading to disaster.

I'm not going to press the point because we live in America and we appreciate the benefits of democracy, but according to the principles of the Torah royalty was a success for the people of the Torah and we look forward to the restoration of *Malchus Beis Dovid*. There's no system of government as successful as that produced by the kings of the House of Dovid. For the other nations, I won't get into any debates with people right now but we have to realize the ideals of the outside world have filtered into our minds and we are living in error.

The Main Actors

Today we are loyal citizens and we all understand that “All men are created equal.” You know what that means? It means we don't know how to think. Because the Torah says that the *Am Yisroel* is *not* equal – we are the purpose why Hashem created the universe. Now, it doesn't matter that you want to be an *anav* – you have no right to think differently than the Torah! Despite democracy, and despite the constitution that says all men are created equal, you're going to have to think according to Torah lines.

Listen to the following possuk in *Devarim* (10:14): הָן לַיהוָה אֱלֹקֵיךָ הַשָּׁמַיִם – Behold to Hashem belong the heavens and the heavens above the heavens, all space belongs to Him. וְכָל הָאָרֶץ וְכָל אֲשֶׁר בָּהּ – and the world, the earth and all that is in it, belongs to Him. But רַק בְּאַבְרָהָם חָשַׁק הַשֵּׁם לְאַהֲבָה אוֹתָם – only in your forefathers did Hashem delight to love them. Only your forefathers! From the whole universe, Hashem loved only our forefathers. And וַיִּבְחַר בְּזֶרְעָם אַחֲרֵיהֶם – He chose their seed after them בְּכֵם כִּיּוֹם הַזֶּה – in you, as on this day.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu created this universe of trillions of huge stars – there's no end to space. And from all of that vast expanse it's only the *Am Yisroel* that Hashem is interested in. All the rest is only background scenery for Hashem's people. We are the main actors in the whole drama of existence.

Now, a thought like that is a revolution in our ideas. Of course, superficially we might be able to repeat it. Why not? It doesn't hurt to say it. But to actually make it part of our mindset? It takes time to root out from our minds the *sheker* that we planted there and to replace

those false ideals with the greatness of the *Am Yisroel*, with the Torah truth that the whole universe is only for us and that *Hashem* loves us more than anything else. So as you walk on the street you have to practice up on that – you and of course all the other *frum* Jews are the center of the universe.

The Supreme Leader

I'll tell you something else. The *seichel* of the Torah is that the husband is the head of the family; he's not an equal partner with the wife. All these people who are preaching for equal rights for women that she should be on par with the husband are struggling against a principle of the Torah.

By nature the father is chosen as the leader. When I say 'nature' I mean nature with a capital N. I mean *Hakodosh Boruch Hu*. Because you see the fact is that all over the world that has been the case. All over the world – whether it's among the black people or the Eskimos – wherever you go it's the case that the father is the leader. And it's common sense too because he has more physical force. A man is taller than a woman; you see that a wife is usually shorter than her husband. A man has a beard, a woman doesn't. A man gives off the aura of authority more than a woman does, he has the powerful voice. Sometimes he has to fight with his son too. In the good old days the father used the club to give his son a good beating.

Replacing A Drunk Captain

That's how *Hashem* made it and you can't have two captains in one house. If you have two captains on one ship then you're looking for trouble. Sooner or later there'll be a mutiny. Your wife however is the first mate and must be respected; there's no question about that. Without the first mate, there's no home. Could be there's a house; there are four walls and a roof, but a home it isn't. But there's also no question that the father is more of the authority figure than the mother. Don't believe what the magazines, the newspapers, tell you. A *nechtiger tohg*. It's impossible. It just cannot be! The mother has a softer heart and physically the father is better suited for the job.

Now, in those families where the father is not suited for leadership it automatically is abdicated to the mother; if the captain gets drunk, so the first mate has to step in to take over the controls of the ship. Even in Europe there were women who were *beriyos*, women who wore the pants – not literally; nobody wore pants there. But she carried on the

business of the house. Because it happened sometimes that the woman was more capable, and the father quietly allowed it. Sometimes it wasn't so quiet, but whatever it was, nature followed its course.

But in most cases it's the father who is the leader. Even when the mother was more capable, it paid for her to assign to the father a nominal role as the head of the family. It paid for her. And she used her abilities to tell the children, "Children listen to what Father said." Because Hashem set up that system, a system that's ordained for the happiness of mankind. Anything else means that the end will be a marriage that crashes on the rocks of life. Anybody who tries to make an artificial rearrangement is going to discover that the experiment is not going to work.

The Endless Kabolas Hatorah

But the truth is that whatever concepts we discuss, it's not enough; it's only the beginning. There are 10,000 other subjects that we could talk about because the thoughts of Hashem encompass everything in the world – the Torah attitudes that we're expected to plant in our minds are endless. You could spend a lifetime of Torah study and thinking in Torah ideals and you're only scratching the surface of an Infinite Intelligence. And yet there's nothing greater, there's no greater happiness than that because even a little bit of infinity is infinitely great.

And that was the essence of *Kabolas Hatorah*. Besides for accepting the Torah in all of its details, *Kabolas Hatorah* means that we're not going to be arrogant enough to think on our own. Once Hashem has already revealed what He thinks, then we don't have the *chutzpah* to be the arbiters and judges of what's right and wrong. Now that we have Hashem's mind to study, we recognize that our minds are nothing. We'll study the Torah; we'll learn the *seforim* and we'll listen to the Torah leaders to see what is the right way to think, and we'll mold our minds only according to those guidelines.

Mind Your Own Business

Now, what is He thinking about? Of course, כִּי לֹא מַחְשְׁבוֹתַי מַחְשְׁבוֹתֵיכֶם – Our thoughts are not like Hashem's thoughts; no matter how much we think it wouldn't be enough. How can anybody know what Hashem is thinking? Isn't that ridiculous for a *basar v'dam* to aspire to know? And the truth is that it's none of our business.

But in the Torah we find what He wants us to think that He's thinking. As far as we're concerned, Hakodosh Boruch Hu has revealed His thoughts to us in the Torah and on Shavuos we agreed to make that our goal in life. A mind that thinks along with the Torah is the supreme achievement of this world.

We give up our own thoughts, our baby thoughts, and we rise to the thoughts of the Supreme Intelligence and think His thoughts. And those are the attitudes and ideals that we adopt as our own. After a time, we begin to hear the echo of Hashem's thoughts in our minds. We begin to think along with the Torah – the Torah is thinking in your head and you become a *ben Torah*. You become a man with a *Torah'dikeh svava* and eventually you become a *gadol* with *da'as Torah*.

Da'as Torah

That's why when it comes to understanding this world, it's the Torah authorities who are the ones most competent to guide the people. Not only in Torah matters but in all matters of public policy the *Gedolei Yisroel* are the ones most fitted for this function. Of course, if you want to ask how you can repair your leaking radiator, don't go to them. But if you have questions relating to matters of public policy, of behaviors of communities, or of how to deal with people, there are so many precedents in the Torah that a *Gadol* automatically knows what to do.

People don't understand that. The *Gedolei Yisroel* are the ones who should make public policy! People think, let's say, that Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky in Monsey or Rav Moshe Feinstein on the East Side, they are good for asking a question in *halacha*, especially when you want a *kulah*, a leniency. You call him up and he says, "Yes," so now you can say "Rav Moshe Feinstein said it's *muttar*." That's all you need him for. But to ask him about a matter of public policy? It's not necessary, you think, because my head is as good as his head.

But that's a fallacy! Because these people have Torah minds – they were *mekabeil* the Torah in a much more perfect sense than you did and they therefore have tens of thousands of precedents in their minds. The Torah is full of precedents, the Gemara is full of precedents, and each precedent teaches a lesson. And even if they don't think of the source; let's say you ask Rav Yaakov Kamenetzky, "Should the State of Israel do this or that?" even though he doesn't think of the *blatt gemara*, or the chapter that it is, but he has patterns in his mind. The *Gadol* has patterns in his mind, established according to the precedents he studies, so

automatically, when he advises, he's following the patterns in his mind, Torah patterns; and that's what informs his decisions.

Peeking Into Hashem's Mind

And that's actually the job of every Jew; as much possible he agrees to fill his mind with Torah ideas. He stops thinking and he begins thinking now according to the Torah. And in the course of time he puts more and more Torah into his head and he thinks along Torah lines.

Every *possuk*, every word in the Torah is another peek into the mind of Hashem *k'viyachol*. There's so much to put into our minds. Think about Avraham Avinu and Sara Imeinu. Think about Moshe Rabeinu and Aharon Hakohen. Think about the *mann* and about the *Mishkan*. Think about *Ma'amad Har Sinai* – we stood at Har Sinai and we saw what nobody before ever saw: הִנֵּהיָה כְּדָבָר הַגָּדוֹל הַזֶּה אוֹ הִנֵּשְׁמַע כְּמֹהוּ הַשְּׁמַע עִם קוֹל: – *Has there ever been any such thing like this great event or has anything like it been heard?! Has a people ever heard the Voice of Hashem speaking from the midst of the fire as you have heard, and survived?! (Devarim 4:32).*

The more you plant Torah ideas in your head, the more you think along with Hakodosh Boruch Hu. If you walk on the street and you see a *frum* mother walking with her children, so if your mind is functioning like a Torah mind, it makes you happy because such a scene makes Hashem happy. You see a woman pushing a baby carriage, and inside are two babies, and six more holding onto the sides, so you admire that – because Hashem admires that! Raising a future family of *ovdei Hashem*, of *bnei Torah*, of mothers, of fathers, of *ohavei Hashem*! We admire that! We see this mother and we consider her a princess. Now, could be she's dressed very plainly. She's busy and she's worried. Her mind is occupied – raising a family means many responsibilities. When a gentile, or a Jew with a gentile mind looks at her, he doesn't see anything special. But we don't want gentile heads. *Kabolas Hatorah* means that we accept to look at this world with a Torah head; we don't look at the world anymore through the eyes of the *goyim*.

The Closed Mind

Now, it's a very big *avodah* we're talking about here tonight. It's a lifetime of work to free ourselves from the shackles of a pre-Kabolas Hatorah mind and install into our heads a Torah mind. *Ein lecha ben chorin ella mi she'oseik batorah* – *The only one who can be a free man, is the one who has a Torah mind*. In America they think that freedom is an

ideal, the freedom to think as you please. A *meshugas*! If you're open-minded, so your mind is open to everything and it lets everything in, so what is the result? All kinds of sewage collect in your mind. All kinds of garbage are now filling up your mind; it's just a garbage disposal, that's all.

But if your mind is closed and it's open only to the subject of Hashem, that's the most valuable mind you could have. Imagine in a bank you have the bank vault, the safe. It's a closed place. There's nothing in there except for gold and silver. And stacks of greenbacks; that's all that you'll find there. You want an open place?! Walk out of the bank, stop at the curb, and look down into the sewer. That's an open place. Everything runs into the sewer. Which is more valuable? The open sewer or the closed bank vault? When you're *mekabeil* the Torah, you close your mind to sewage and you create the best mind possible – it's an imitation *kiviyachol* of Hashem's Mind.

Let's Abolish Slavery

So let's make room in our heads for *Kabolas Hatorah*. Let's stop reading periodicals; let's have no business with the newspapers and the ideas from the street. The majority of the American public – the *frum* American public – is enslaved to the newspapers and to the radio and that means that their minds are sold out to somebody else's mind. You can't be *mekabeil* the Torah if you're filling your mind with something else.

Now suppose somebody gets into the habit of reading good things. He learns Gemara, and he doesn't skip the *Agaddeta*; he learns the *Agaddeta* too. He reads *Mesillas Yescharim*. A man called me on the telephone last week and I told him that if he wants to learn how to think he should begin reading the *Mesillas Yescharim* every day. He said to me, "What?! Should I give up my mind to the *Mesillas Yescharim*? He should become the thinker for me?" Absolutely! Yes, he'll think much better than you think. If you think with your little head so you're thinking along with the street and who knows what's going to happen to you?!

Not only *Mesillas Yescharim*. Every Jew should spend time learning the *Chovos Halevavos* and *Sha'arei Teshuva* – other *seforim* too. And little by little they become his mindset; he thinks only according to their ways. That's wonderful! That's the only thing you should have in your head. That's the most valuable mind in the world and it's the mind that Hashem loves.

The Happiness of Shavuos

And so when the Am Yisroel said “We will do and we will listen,” included in that – actually the most important component of that – was the commitment to think along with Hashem. We won’t yield to what people write, to what the television displays; we don’t yield to suggestions from the street. Instead we will listen and yield before the Torah ideals and create for ourselves Torah minds.

And there’s no greater happiness than the achievement of a Torah mind. We say *V’nismach b’divrei sorasecha* – We want to rejoice in Your Torah; not only that we’ll accept your Torah and study your Torah and fulfill your Torah. Not only to accept to do everything, but to be *happy* with it – we rejoice in the opportunity to have minds that are in agreement with the Torah.

And that’s why *Shavuos* is the time of such great happiness. You know in the *yeshivos* in Europe, once upon a time, they became more wild with happiness on *Shavuos* than you’ll find anywhere today on *Simchas Torah*. It was the *minhag* in the *yeshivos* that on *Shavuos* they were tremendously excited – it was the happiest day of the year. I was there and I tell you, there is nothing that compares to the celebration of *Shavuos* in the old *yeshivos*. And that’s because it’s a re-enactment of that great day, the great day that the world was waiting for since *ma’aseh bereishis*. What could be more of a *simcha* than the celebration of *Kabolas Hatorah*? Nothing could be happier than the great opportunity to demonstrate to Hakodosh Boruch Hu that we are forever grateful for the opportunity that He gave us to think along with Him and create for ourselves Torah minds.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

What's so bad about looking at girls?

A:

Why look at girls?! It's a waste of your time to look at girls. You want to look? Look at the seeds on the trees. Look at the maple seeds on the ground. Now, that's something to look at! Girls are nothing. There's nothing to see in girls. It's only your imagination. And the way to get rid of your imagination, is to marry the girl. Marry the girl, and you won't look at her in that way anymore.

And that proves that it's all imagination. It's nothing at all. It's just a *dimyon* – an imagination running wild. Rav Yisroel Salanter said that imagination is our greatest enemy. It makes us think of nothing like it's something. But it's nothing at all.

And not only girls are nothing; boys are also nothing at all. Nobody is anything at all. Unless you recognize that they are a Jew, a *tzelem Elokim*. That's something else all together. Every Jew is an image of Hashem. Oh yes, that is very important. That's how you should be looking at a Jew. But that's not how you're looking at the girls. And it'll take you a long time to get there, when you'll be able to look at a fellow Jew and see the *tzelem Elokim*. So in the meantime, let your eyes look into the Chumash, into the Mishna, into the Gemara. That's where your eyes should be.

TAPE # E-121

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