

Shavuos commemorates the Har Sinai experience, the most defining moment of Jewish history. This was the moment when the Jewish people received their mandate to live lives of sanctity and purpose, and to serve as a moral light to the nations of the world. The hundreds of mitzvos HaTorah serve as a framework for us to discover our own personal potential in developing as servants of G-d, and contribute to the larger national ambition of propelling this world towards redemption. The Torah (Devarim 4:9-10) describes the importance of embedding this iconic moment within the consciousness of our people:

רק השמר לך ושמור נפשך מאד פן תשכח את הדברים אשר ראו עיניך ופן יסורו מלבבך כל ימי חייה והודעתם לבניך ולבני בניך. יום אשר עמדת לפני ה' אלקיך בחרב בארמון ה' אלי הקהל לי את העם ואשמעם את דברי אשר ילמדון ליראה אתי כל הימים אשר הם חיים על האדמה ואת בניהם ילמדון.

But take utmost care and watch yourselves scrupulously, so that you do not forget the things that you saw with your own eyes and so that they do not fade from your mind as long as you live. And make them known to your children and to your children's children: The day you stood before the Lord your G-d at Horeb, when the Lord said to Me, "Gather the people to Me that I may let them hear My words, in order that they may learn to revere Me as long as they live on earth, and may so teach their children."

The Ramban, in his list of mitzvos, counts this as one of the 613 Mitzvos:

שנמנענו שלא נשכח מעמד הר סיני ולא נסיר אותו מדעתנו אבל יהיו עינינו ולבנו שם כל הימים והוא אמרו יתעלה (ואתחנן ד ט - י) השמר לך ושמור נפשך מאד פן תשכח את הדברים אשר ראו עיניך.

We are prohibited from forgetting the gathering at Sinai and from eliminating it from our memories. Rather, we must

focus on it every day. This is what is meant by the verses "But take utmost care and watch yourselves scrupulously, so that you do not forget the things that you saw with your own eyes etc."

Ramban, Shich'chas HaLavin no. 2

Other commentaries assume that the Torah is relating a general expectation to internalize the overall prominence and centrality of the mitzvos HaTorah. However, for the Ramban, this is a specific directive to remember the experience of Sinai. The Ramban himself challenges his own thesis by quoting the Gemara in *Kiddushin* 30a:

בניכם מנין ת"ל והודעתם לבניך ולבני בניך.

"And you shall teach them to your children" I only know that you must teach your children. What is the source for teaching grandchildren? The verse states, "And make them known to your children and to your children's children."

The Gemara employs this very verse as the source for the mitzvah to teach one's grandchildren, not for remembering the Sinai experience. The Ramban, however, explains that the intent of this Gemara is in fact to convey the particular requirement to teach one's grandchildren about the Sinai experience.

Why would teaching one's grandchildren be distinguished in any way from our overall requirement to study Torah, and teach it to the next generation? Perhaps, the Ramban is alluding to a specific challenge that we often encounter in our quest to pass on the values and commitments of Torah to subsequent generations. Parents and children often overlap in their overall encounter with the world. However, grandparents and grandchildren are often growing up and living in two entirely different worlds. The evolving nature of science,

technology, and society widens the generation gap. The Torah is teaching us that the experience of Sinai is eternally relevant and resonant to our lives. Despite the changes we see in the world around us, our halachic system, is positioned to ensure that the ideals of Torah can be applied and understood in the face of all progress and innovation — by those who guide its development. The voice of Sinai heard by our grandparents is just as powerful and formative for us today.

There are voices within the Jewish community that seek to portray the halachic system as archaic and out of touch with the values that our society has accepted. The Ramban reminds us that our Sinai experience echoes beyond the moment of Sinai and remains a vital and central part of our consciousness forever. No matter what the generation gap may be, the values and principles of Torah are relevant and applicable to our reality.

This issue of *Torah to Go* features a number of articles that explore how the wisdom of Torah impact upon our era's most extraordinary innovations. Beyond the fascinating details of how passages in the Gemara about muzzling an animal can inform us regarding the halachic status of an Alexa on Shabbos, these articles stand for something larger. A confidence and certitude that the experience of Sinai — in its entirety — is never forgotten. That each and every detail remain core to our national identity and our ultimate destiny.

Wishing you a chag sameach,




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