

# PARSHAS KI SAVO

*by Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari*

We need to consider the mitzvah of writing the Torah on the Stones on the day that the Tribes of Israel cross the Jordan (Devarim, 27:1- 4). The Torah that is written both for individuals and for the king, needs to be written on parchment made from the animal kingdom, yet now this mitzvah is to be written on the stones that are inanimate. The Avnei Nezer taught that the Torah should be engraved on the heart of a person, following the verse, 'and you shall write them on the tablets of your heart'(Mishle 3: 3). However, the skin on which the Torah is to be written needs to be processed, otherwise the scroll is invalid. This would hint that the words of the Torah cannot enter the heart of a person unless it has first been cleared and cleansed of impurity and evil. One may ask, how is it possible for the heart to be purified without Torah? As it is written in the Zohar (part 3:80b.), 'the heart of a human being is never spiritually purified except through the words of the Torah'.

However, the spiritual Jewish personality has two aspects. There is the innermost and hidden center of the heart that is virgin-like since no foreign or impure elements can influence it; therein lies the Divine Soul. It is only this aspect of the heart that is able to receive Torah without effort or labor. In addition, there is, however, the externality of the heart, that is like raw material that can be shaped and formed, and therefore needs labor and effort to be purified and cleansed spiritually, before it may receive the Divine Presence. This aspect of the heart requires the study of Torah and involvement in its mitzvot. They enable the Divine Soul in the heart to shape and form the externality of the heart, so that it may achieve purity and sanctity. In this respect, the externality of the heart is similar to the animal hides that need processing before they may be used for the Torah scroll. This what the Avnei Nezer meant when he quoted the verse from Mishle that the Torah may be inscribed on the heart. Parallel to this aspect of the externality of the heart, the Divine Soul that lives in the innermost chambers of the heart and cannot be shaped, changed or influenced is like the inanimate stones on which Israel was to engrave the Torah after it crossed into the Promised Land. Perhaps this is the reason why it was necessary to engrave the words of the Torah on the stones before the conquest of the Land. It is this aspect of the innermost chambers of the heart that is purely spiritual and cannot be influenced, that is the difference between Israel and the Nations of the World. This spiritual difference will enable Israel to conquer the Holy Land, that itself possesses an intrinsic purity and sanctity lacking in all other countries.

The midrash tells us that there is wisdom amongst the Nations of the World but there is no Torah. Their study and understanding of the Torah and even their observance of its mitzvot proceed from and extend only to the externality of the heart, that is raw material to be shaped and formed. Israel,

however, possesses the virgin-like, innermost and spiritual aspects of the heart that require no labor or effort to receive Torah, rather the Torah is automatically an intrinsic part of The Divine Soul, that resides in that heart. The Nations therefore, are only able to observe, study and understand the rational and logical mitzvot, without having a relationship to the hidden and secret spirituality of Torah. Eisav is able to excel in the observance of the commandments of honoring one's father and mother, because this is natural and logical. He could not, however, have any relationship to the other mitzvot. So too, the gentile in Ascelon whom the Talmudic sages so highly praised for his treatment of his father, did so because it was dictated to by his intelligence and logic ( Maharal of Prague).

Perhaps this explains the mitzvah of Shofar on Rosh HaShanah. In theory it would be sufficient for us to express all the ideas of Rosh HaShanah - the Coronation of HaShem as King of the universe, the Day of Judgment and the ability of human beings to do Teshuvah- verbally without the sound of the Shofar. However, the nations of the world bear witness against us on this day before the Heavenly Court pointing out our shortcomings or claiming that they are our spiritual equals. So we use the Shofar where there is only the spirituality of a sound, but one that comes from the recesses of our hearts and expresses the innermost feelings of religiosity, even before these may be spoken or take the material form of words. The Nations of the World cannot on this day, accuse Israel or claim to be its equal, since through the Shofar we express the Divine Soul that lies hidden and protected in the recesses of the heart, even as the Torah engraved on the inanimate stones..

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