



Dvar Torah for Parshat Yitro

Based on Likutey Moharan I, Lesson #22:9–10

Two words. Naaseh v'nishma. We will do and we will hear. That was the Jewish response to God's offer, do we want the Torah.

God had first offered the Torah to all the other nations. Their response was one of hesitation: What does it say? Every nation heard what the Torah teaches. Each felt that there was something in the Torah that it just could not comply with and passed on the opportunity.

Ours was an impetuous answer: Yes! We'll take it. If You, the Blessed Creator, are proposing that we be married to You, we gladly say "I do!"

But "naaseh v'nishma" was not just impetuous; it was angelic. When we spoke these words, a *bat kol* (heavenly echo) called out: Who taught My children the secret of the ministering angels?! If our reply was merely meant to indicate our concurrence, we could have said "yes" or "we will do." What did (and does) the "v'nishma"—we will hear—add? What was so special and "exciting" about it, that it elicited a *bat kol*?

"We will do and we will listen" is not just a response. It is simultaneously a declaration of love and a formula for living.

Rebbe Nachman teaches that "we will do" refers to the parts of the Torah which explicitly tell us how to behave, and the parts with which an individual is acquainted and complies (or tries to comply). The "we will hear" refers to the "hidden Torah," the parts of the Torah in which the mitzvot are couched, the words (and even letters*) that contain messages (as yet undeciphered) of how we may broaden our awareness of God. The "we will hear" also refers to our prayers; asking God for help to do what we know we should, and expressing our desire for intimacy with Him.

"Naaseh v'nishma" expresses our understanding that being God's "bride,"

His people, is not a static exercise, a simplistic checking items off a to-do list. We know also that we have to listen, and listen well, to understand what our Beloved wants; we have to listen in order to

change ourselves. As difficult as it is for a human being to change, we are glad to do so. Keeping the Torah is not what we *have* to do; keeping the Torah is what we *want* to do.

agutn Shabbos!
Shabbat Shalom!

*The Talmud (Ketubot 77b) tells us that Rabbi Chanina ben Papa (in trying to prove that he was worthy of entering Heaven alive) dared the Angel of Death to find even one letter of the Torah that he, Rabbi Chanina ben Papa, had not fulfilled.