

Mussar HaTorah

Torah Insights into Human Nature – Dedicated in memory of Rabbi A. Henach Leibowitz zt"l

18 Av, 5769 Vol. 10, No. 41

Parashas Eikev

“AND ZION SAID: ‘HASHEM HAS FORSAKEN ME’ ... THESE MAY FORGET, YET I WILL NOT FORGET YOU.” (YESHAYA 49:14-15)

They feel as if Hashem has forgotten them

THE GEMARA (Brachos 32b) explains that these verses from this week’s *haftorah* represent a conversation between B’nei Yisrael and Hashem. B’nei Yisrael are despondent after so many years in exile. They feel as if Hashem has forgotten them. Hashem replies, “I created the entire universe, with trillions of stars in it, solely for your benefit; in addition, I have never forgotten the holy sacrifices you offered in the desert.” B’nei Yisrael respond, “Since You do not forget, perhaps You will remember our sin of the golden calf?” Hashem replies, “No, I will forget that sin.” This answer causes B’nei Yisrael to become concerned, “If You do forget the sin of the golden calf, perhaps You will also forget Mount Sinai and how we said that we will, ‘Do, and then hear?’” Hashem reassures B’nei Yisrael, “I will not forget [Mount Sinai and your declaration].”

Hashem reassured B’nei Yisrael of His love for them by reminding them that he created the entire cosmos for their benefit. Imagine the love shown by a father who builds a beautiful treehouse for his child. Now imagine if he builds a real, full-scale house for his child to enjoy. What about the entire world or even the entire universe, with all its dazzlingly brilliant design? Every celestial body and every star, constellation and galaxy testifies eloquently to Hashem’s love for us: “He created all of this just for you!”

He still has that awesome love He felt for B’nei Yisrael at Sinai

If we would have stopped here in the dialogue, and examined the level of Hashem’s love that our people should feel, it would be overwhelming – perhaps one could not even feel a higher degree of closeness, and certainly would not need more than this level. Nevertheless, this pledge did not calm the hearts of the Jewish Nation in exile. They were still concerned. Only after Hashem tells them He still has that awesome love He felt for B’nei Yisrael at Sinai were they calmed. The Jews needed to know that Hashem still felt the same way as He did on that glorious moment in history when we all rose to the level of prophecy, and stood like a pure *kallah* under the *chupah* of Har Sinai with our *Choson*, the Creator who chose us from all the nations to be His beloved. This is the level which B’nei Yisrael can appreciate, which they deserve and even require in their intimate relationship with Hashem.

Hashem has not lost one iota of His affection for us

We see from this Gemara that this ultimate love of *na’aseh v’nishma* was not a one time peak which never recurred. Furthermore, even if we have slipped and fallen in our part of this relationship, Hashem’s love remains as intense as it was at Sinai. Our misdeeds may call for chastisement, but Hashem has not lost one iota of His affection for us. Every Jew has imprinted in his genetic code the desire that closeness and to perceive it. The proof? These Jews in our *haftorah* were the Jews in exile many centuries after the giving of the Torah, and yet they understood, felt and even yearned for the perfect bond between Hashem and B’nei Yisrael that existed at Sinai. May we take this lesson to heart, and sense how beloved we are to our Father in Heaven. Let us use that feeling to reciprocate in our love towards Him and bring ourselves to return from our misdeeds, and thereby merit the fulfillment of the conclusion of our *haftorah* (51:3), “For Hashem will comfort Zion...make her deserts like Gan Eden ...joy and happiness will be found there, thanksgiving and the sounds of song.”