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An Eternal Link

Our rabbis have taught us to take notice of the eternal nature of the covenant that Hashem made with us in Horev – namely, that the Torah was not intended for one generation alone, but “also for him who is not here with us this day” (Devarim 29:13-14).

Indeed, we live with the Talmudic concept (Shevuot 39a) that every Jew took an oath of allegiance at Sinai. That is to say that at a certain metaphysical level, our souls were present at the Revelation. Perhaps this is a reference to the verse from our Parsha (ibid, 6:6) that we say daily in the Shema: “And these matters that I command you *this day* shall be upon your heart,” implying, as Rashi comments, that “this day” is *today*, every day.

Nechama Leibowitz takes these ideas to remind us not to consider the Torah as obsolete, as an anachronistic tome left to dust on the shelf. Instead, we should internalize that the Torah’s halachot are timeless and that the biblical narratives are more than historical episodes.

Indeed the term Torah indicates teaching. The Torah is intrinsically the word of God,

and it represents the Will of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Further, the Zohar designates that God, the nation of Israel, and the Torah “are one.” For Rabbi Riskin, this maxim denotes that Hashem may be experienced through those phenomena that are also perceived as eternal. “Since Israel is eternal [by Divine oath, Bereishit: 15] and since the Torah is eternal, God/Israel/Torah are inextricably linked by common eternity.”

Moreover, the Torah is our guide. Indeed, of the Torah, it has been said, “The Torah is not (just) descriptive; it is prescriptive.” No wonder, then, that the Shema prayer urges us “to set these matters on your heart” and ensure that the everlasting Mesorah be passed on through our children consistently through the generations.

In a world full of symbols, icons, and ultra-progressive clichés, it is of no surprise that the Torah inculcates in us our own treasured and perpetual emblems, such as the Mezuzah, Tzitzit, and Tefillin. These proudly serve as badges announcing our unique link to Hashem and our ongoing connection to a covenant 3,500 years old. ■

Shabbat Shalom! Menachem Persoff



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