

Accepting the Torah – Rejecting Philosophy

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In Sichah 5 in Sichos HaRan, Rebbe Nachman opens a topic which is discussed widely in his writings and those of Reb Noson: simple *emunah*, faith. To demonstrate simple faith, he brings the example of Moshe Rabbeinu giving us the Torah which begins “In the beginning HaShem created heaven and earth”. He commanded us simply to believe in this, without going into any intellectual proofs. For this, Rebbe Nachman says we are very fortunate.

The opposite of simple *emunah* is philosophy, which the Rebbe denounced emphatically. He said that philosophy consists merely of run-around logical arguments based on themselves that eventually reach some insignificant conclusion. However, these books lack any real wisdom such as that found in the

Torah and holy books written by our Torah scholars. There is nothing to be found in these books.

What is worse is that the study of philosophy raises questions and doubts within the person. Since philosophy provides no real answers, the person who studies it is left only with questions. The Rebbe warns that these questions and doubts reinforce the person's natural tendency towards evil, his *yetzer hara*. No one has ever come closer to HaShem by studying philosophy. Therefore, he forbade the study of philosophy outright, including philosophical works written by Torah scholars. For example, he stated that one should not look into the Rambam's Guide for the Perplexed (*Siach Sarfei Kodesh* 2:56). The Rebbe said "Fortunate is he who doesn't know anything about their books, but rather walks with simplicity".

If we look inside ourselves, each person will see that there is a little philosopher there. Philosophy is in the air almost everywhere and it is nearly impossible to avoid absorbing it. Everyone has questions and doubts to some degree, at least very subtle ones. How can we battle this philosophy so that it doesn't strengthen our *yetzer hara*?

The Rebbe says that the key is fear of punishment. While this is considered the lowest level of service to HaShem, it must be the starting point for every Jew, and in fact, few ever reach the higher levels of serving HaShem out of love or out of awe. To achieve true and complete fear of punishment is a great accomplishment and this should be the goal. When the *yetzer hara* is trying to entice us with the temptations of this world, the thing that will hold us back is knowing that we will be punished for giving in. This fear of punishment is synonymous with simple faith. The simple faith that HaShem knows everything that we do, and that there is eternal reward for good deeds and punishment for sins, are what allow us to fight back against the *yetzer hara* and win.

In a few days on Shavuot we will once again receive the Torah

anew. Let us receive it in the way that Moshe Rabbeinu intended when he gave it to us: with simple *emunah*. HaShem created the world, He chose Am Yisrael and gave us the Torah, and we need simply to believe in Him and follow in His ways as set forth in the Torah and explained by the true tzaddikim.