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...Interactive Jewish Learning



Parshas Vo'eschanan thoughts from
The Whitefield Community Kollel
YAAKOV HIBBERT presents:



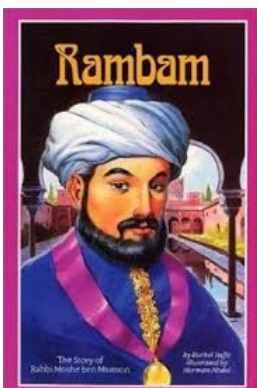
There was an international case where a high flying non-Jewish German lawyer had been working together with a Jewish lawyer. As the case came to a close the Jewish lawyer wanted to give something to the German one as a token of appreciation for the work he had put in. He decided to present him with a copy of Maimonides Sefer Nesikim – one out of the fourteen volume set on Jewish Halachah written by the RaMBaM. Sefer Nezikim is the thinnest volume and deals with all monetary law.

I don't know what language the RaMBaM was written in; I don't know whether there were any commentaries on the copy he gave him. And I don't know whether or not the Jewish lawyer ever imagined the German lawyer would read a several hundred year old 'thesis on law' from a Jewish sage – but he did!

The German lawyer delved into the RaMBaM and before long was totally awed by what he read. The conciseness of this all encompassing masterful piece literally blew him away. He noticed the structured arrangement of the relevant Halachos and he was amazingly impressed by the way in which the RaMBaM had managed to cover all cases in their root form by giving the rules that govern all the cases rather than actually discuss individual cases.

Eventually just from learning a RaMBaM he decided that a law book of this magnitude could only be part of something divine. He compared it with his law books that get rewritten and rewritten every year. They are thousand of pages to study and this years book bares no resemblance to the one from ten years ago, or twenty years ago. Yet he could see that the RaMBaM's book was timeless; unchanging! Utterly Divine!

His fascination led him to probe a bit deeper, into the very sources the RaMBaM was basing his work on. He began to study the Talmud – the words of the holy Tanaim (the Mishnah) and the Amoraim (The Gemora). He came across Rashi and the Toafists. His trip really began when he decided to convert to Judaism not long later! If the monetary law book was so divine presumably the whole of Judaism was such.



Why? Because he saw the absolutely genius of the Torah. He saw that it wasn't just a book of stories and laws. From a RaMBaM he saw Hashem's handwriting – "His Signature of Truth" (Shabbos 55a) was jumping out of every page of RaMBaM. He was in love with the 'style'; it was enthralling and it captivated him to the extent that he realised he had to become part of this Emes - truth!

It says in this weeks Parshah, "and you shall love Hashem your G-d". How do I do so? asks the Medresh. Read the continuation of the verse! "And these words should be on your heart. You shall teach them thoroughly to your children and you shall speak of them while you sit in your home and while you walk on the way, when you retire and when you arise..." Through this you will come to recognize the One who created the world, and you can cleave to His ways.

As the German lawyer demonstrated, serious contemplation of the Torah leads one to both recognize that it was written by The Divine and to feel a love and a desire to draw near to Him. The sheer overwhelming complexity of the Torah, with all the richness of its interweaving patterns and the harmony of the overall structure, this causes the Torah student to gasp in amazement at Hashem's wisdom. Indeed the Ibn Ezra (1089–1167) and later on the Malbim (1809-1879) both demonstrate that affirming Hashem's existence from Torah learning is preferable to deriving it from the natural world.

Rabbi Yaakov Niman (d.1983) says that the biggest proof to the Divine origin of the Torah is the feeling that one gets when learning it - that [German!] inspiration. Proof for Torah? Just try it out! Learn it!

The way this actually works is quite simple. The Torah is made up of various Names (including the Kabbalistic ones) of Hashem. In fact the Zohar tells us that "Hashem and the Torah are one", so when one learns Torah we are so to speak reading the mind of Hashem. We are becoming one with Hashem hence we feel uplifted, and inspired. This feeling is our greatest way of knowing that "Torah is from Heaven". The 'Chinuch' (13th Century) who famously explained many reasons behind each and every Mitzvah, writes with regards to the study of Torah, "the root of this Mitzvah is well known, for through learning one knows the Ways of Hashem" - we are learning the divine ways of Hashem when we learn! No other proof needed just do it! We just need to do it to feel it.

Good Shabbos, Yaakov