



WHY THERE WAS NO LIVESTREAM AT HAR SINAI

Likras Shavuos 5783

Dear Parents,

A popular question that everyone asks about the beautiful *Dayeinu* song of the *Pesach Seder*, is “would it really have been enough?” We say that if *Hashem* had only brought us near to *Har Sinai*, and had not actually given us the Torah, “it would have been enough.” What can we learn about *Maamad Har Sinai*, the Jewish People standing at *Har Sinai*, that made it a meaningful experience, even without receiving the Torah?

“What can we learn about *Maamad Har Sinai*, ... that made it a meaningful experience...?”

To help answer this question, it will be helpful to reflect upon a most unusual event that took place last month in a small town in Michigan. The story was that a school bus was taking a group of middle school students home from school one day, when the driver lost consciousness due to a medical emergency. A student noticed and immediately jumped up from his seat and ran to the front, grabbed the steering wheel to steer the bus which had starting swerving dangerously, and then stepped on the brakes to stop the bus. The student was a hero.

A news reporter covering the story was curious as to why only one student came forward. He interviewed everyone who was on the bus. What he discovered was astounding and terrifying. Every child on the bus, other than our hero, was on a device. They were so absorbed in their screens and enveloped by their ear buds, that they were simply oblivious to what was transpiring around them. As the reporter said: “We always were concerned that excessive screen time was harming children’s concentration and thinking abilities – now we see they are so absorbed that they are losing situational awareness – they have become oblivious to what is happening around them.” Thankfully, for those students and their parents, the story ended uneventfully.

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person imbibed the What connection is there between this slice of pre-teen life and *Maamad Har Sinai*? The *Rambam*, in his famous *Igeres Taiman*, (cited in (ד"קס"ג) עם סגולה דף קס"ד) gives *chizuk* to the downtrodden and besieged Jews of Yemen by focusing on the uniqueness and power of the experience of the Jewish People as they stood at *Har Sinai*. The most central and foundational event in all of human history occurred when each Jewish truth that *Hashem* created and runs the world. The *Rambam* (speaking in the context of Jewish life 800 years ago) goes on to say, that the impact of that experience was so powerful and so deep, so all encompassing, that if someone thousands of years later abandoned belief in *Hashem*, it is proof that his ancestor did not in fact, experience the revelation of the Divine presence at *Har Sinai*.

The contrast between the *Klal Yisrael* at *Har Sinai* and the distracted youth of today cannot be more pronounced. Every single Jew was totally ‘in the moment’ at *Har Sinai*, experiencing and internalizing the deeper meaning of what was occurring around them. The focus was total, the mind was fully receptive to that which was happening in their surroundings. If our children lose the ability to be part of what is happening around them, if meaningful moments just pass them by, what will their life amount to?

But if the experience of parents translates to deeply ingrained values in their children, how great is our responsibility to ensure our children become capable receptors of our teachings.

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Shavuos is the time of year when our hearts and minds are most open to receiving anew the great gift *Hashem* has bestowed upon mankind. Parents are obligated to remove any barriers, electronic or otherwise, that might block the message of “I am *Hashem* your G-d...” from reaching the innermost recesses of our children’s heart, mind and soul. When *Mashiach’s* arrival occurs, what will be if we miss it, because our eyes and focus was on a device.

Let our reliving of *Maamad Har Sinai* this *Yom Tov* propel us to a renewed commitment to open up our children’s eyes and ears to the call of the Divine that is ever present if one only finds the quiet and clarity to hear it and see it.

With best wishes for a beautiful, meaningful *Yom Tov*,

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