“When I ascended the mountain to receive the stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant which the Lord made with you, I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water.” (Deut. 9:9)

Being that the Torah is infinite and it wouldn’t be feasible to be understood or transmitted within a limited span of time, it is safe to assume that Moshe’s acquisition of the Torah during his forty day marathon in heaven was nothing short of a miraculous occurrence. The question is that once we are dealing with miracles why was it necessary for Moshe to spend forty days learning the Torah when technically it could have been accomplished in a quick instant?

A wise man once bemoaned that there are those that want to learn the entire Talmud in one single night and also want to sleep on that very night! (There’s a fairly well-known observation that there are three occasions when yeshiva students think that they will finish all of Talmud: the night of Shavuos, when traveling on an airplane, and during Chazaras Hashatz — the chazzan’s repetition of the Amida Shemoneh Esrie prayer- when one ideally should be paying attention and not studying other things.)

The commentaries explain that it is evident from here that an integral part of Torah learning is relentless effort, self-sacrifice, exerting oneself, and great diligence. Without the toil and effort one will not merit to properly grasp and understand the intricacies of the Torah.

Moshe did not eat or drink during the time he was being taught the Torah by G-d. He did not ask for the “pill-of-all-wisdom-and-knowledge,” or wish to take the easy way out. He even had a difficult struggle with the heavenly angels in order to win the right to bring the Torah down to earth and to give it to the Jewish people. Only after Moshe toiled with immense intensity and sacrifice did he merit Divine assistance to receive and comprehend the entire Torah so that he could transmit it to us for all generations. This is the proper attitude regarding one’s approach to Torah study.

We can now ask, what is the significance of the forty days? Why not a month or a year?

Perhaps we can suggest the following: Rashi in Parshas Noach explains that the Great Flood was for forty days as a punishment for the sin of creating illegitimate children to be born. Forty days is the time it takes for the formation of the human fetus from the time of conception (Tzuras Havlad). Interestingly, a sinner who wishes to attain a complete atonement for certain transgressions is not reached until forty (minus one) lashes are administered. The sinner is then considered a new man. As Moshe was in the upper realms, in a sense, the Torah was “being born”. As a human being studies Torah, he is transformed and so, in a sense, he too was being born. (Moshe was a “born-again Jew!” That is why he needed 40 days to acquire the Torah.

(continued on next page)
The parsha begins with the verse, “Vehaya Eikev Tishmeh’un” (“This shall be the reward when you hearken”...). Aside from meaning “reward,” eikev also means “heel.” Rashi explains that the reward for the mitzvos being referred to here are the mitzvos “hakalos” that man steps on with his heel. “Kalos” is commonly translated as meaning lenient, as opposed to more stringent mitzvos. It can also be also translated as “easy mitzvos.” Why is there such great reward specifically for lenient or easy mitzvos as opposed to more stringent or more difficult mitzvos? (email answers to office@atlkollel.com)
Everyone experienced being Picasso for a night as 41 women throughout the community gathered for a chance to schmooze, nosh and exercise their creativity over chocolate and cabernet. Special thanks to Jon Rubin and Miriam Schwab for the delicious pasta and salad bar, to Bar Rodin and Motek Jewelry for a chance to shop for bling, to Young Israel for hosting, and most of all, to Ruchie Usprich for her enormous talent, leading us through the entire colorful adventure!
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