

TORAH TREATS



An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories Compiled by Yitzchok Henry





שבועות-רות

לעילוי נשמת



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שבועות-רות

Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz



Har Sinai

Sefer Vayikra ends with the verse: "These are the commandments Hashem commanded Moshe to [teach] Bnei Yisrael on Har Sinai."

Sefer Bemidbar opens with a census of the families of Bnei Yisrael.

Midrash Yalkut Shimoni explains that these passages are related: The nations of the world complained that they were not given the Torah, and Hashem responded, "Bring Me your family trees!" What does this Midrash mean?

R' Shmuel Shmelke Guntzler z"l (1834-1911; rabbi of Oyber-Visheve, Hungary for 45 years) explains: We say in the Pesach Haggadah, "If He had brought us to Har Sinai and not given us the Torah, it would have sufficed for us."

What would have been accomplished by bringing us to Har Sinai and not giving us the Torah?

Commentaries explain: We do not mean, "If He had not commanded us to perform the Mitzvot." Rather, "Given us the Torah" in this context refers to Hashem's placing the Torah in our hands, meaning that Torah scholars can interpret the Torah, and their

interpretations and Halachic rulings "become" G-d's Torah. Indeed, even a prophet or a Bat Kol / Heavenly voice cannot overrule a Halachic ruling arrived at using the tools of Torah study.

How could Hashem give His beloved treasure, the Torah, to us to interpret?

R' Guntzler explains: Hashem did not give the Torah to the Patriarchs or to Yaakov's sons; rather, say our Sages, He waited until Bnei Yisrael numbered 600,000. The Gemara (Berachot 58a) explains that, among 600,000 Jews, no two think exactly alike. Also, say our Sages, the Torah has 600,000 letters. In fact, the Torah has only 304,805 letters. But what the Sages mean is that every Jew who was present at Har Sinai represents some aspect of the Torah.

Collectively, the 600,000 who were present at Har Sinai had in their minds every possible legitimate Torah interpretation that would ever be offered; thus, our interpretations of the Torah – as long as they follow the rules set down by our Sages – were themselves given at Sinai. Notably, adds R' Guntzler, the Gematria of "Sinai" also is 600,000. [For the calculation of this Gematria, see the explanation following this Dvar Torah.]

In this light, we can understand the Midrash Yalkut Shimoni with which we began. The census in our Parashah, which was taken not long after the Giving of the Torah, confirms that Bnei Yisrael numbered 600,000 people and that they were all genealogically from the same nation; meaning that they could represent the entirety of Torah. Said Hashem to the nations that demanded the Torah: Can you demonstrate the same? (Meishiv Nefesh)

As mentioned above, R' Guntzler writes that the Gematria of "Sinai" equals 600,000. That Gematria is calculated as follows:

"Sinai" is spelled: Samech (=60), Yud (=10), Nun (=50), and Yud (=10). Multiplying those figures (60 x 10 x 50 x 10) produces 300,000.

Next, spelling out the names of those letters gives us the following:

- Samech = Samech, Mem, Chaf;
- Yud = Yud, Vav, Dalet;
- Nun = Nun, Nun;
- and (again) Yud = Yud, Vav, Dalet.

Adding the hidden letters of each name together (for example, the Mem and Chaf of "Samech"; the Vav and Dalet of "Yud") again produces 60, 10, 50, and 10, which, multiplied together, produces another 300,000, for total of 600,000.

כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבֵית יַעֲקֹב וְתַגֵּיד לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל - *"So shall you say to Beit / the House of Yaakov and relate to Bnei Yisrael." (Shemos 19:3 – Torah reading for Shavuot)*

Our Sages say that "Beit Yaakov" refers to the women.

R' Chaim Yaakov Mordechai Gottlieb z"l (1899-1973 Hungary) explains that Moshe was commanded to speak to the women first because, on the one hand, a woman (Chava) caused mankind's first downfall and, on the other hand, women were major participants in the miracles that are the reasons for most of our holidays. Our Sages teach, for example, that the Exodus occurred in the merit of righteous women. Chanukah and Purim, as well, resulted in large part from the initiatives of women. (Yagel Yaakov p.4)



"Failure is not the end. But a stepping stone towards success. Learn from your mistakes, dust yourself off, and keep moving forward." ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller.

Megillat Ruth

וַיִּצְבָּט־לָהּ קָלִי וַתֹּאכַל וַתִּשְׂבַּע וַתֹּתַר - ***"He handed her parched grain, and she ate and was satisfied, and had some left over."*** (Ruth 2:14)



The midrash says, "If Boaz had known that the prophet would record that `she ate and was satisfied, and had some left over,' he would have fed her fattened calves." Many commentators ask: Is the midrash suggesting that the tzaddik Boaz was motivated by a desire for honor?

R' Shmuel Guntzler z"l (1834-1911; Oyber-Visheve, Hungary) explains: The Gemara (Berachot 20b) teaches that one of the reasons that G-d loves the Jewish People so much is that they recite Birkat Hamazon even when they have eaten only a small quantity of food. According to strict Torah law, one is not obligated to "bentsch" unless he was eating a quantity of food that satisfies him.

Why did Boaz give Ruth a miserly meal of only a few parched grains? R' Guntzler explains that he wanted to test her – was she so pious as to "bentsch" over a small meal, or was she interested only in fulfilling the literal law of the Torah?

However, Boaz's plan failed, since Ruth actually was satisfied with the few grains and therefore was obligated by Torah law to recite Birkat Hamazon. The midrash is informing us that, had Boaz known that his test would fail, he would not have acted in a miserly way and instead would have generously offered Ruth the meat of fattened calves. (Meishiv Nefesh)

Fascinating INSIGHTS



Flowers for Shabbos

We know that people buy flowers for Shabbos and Yom Tov. Where can we find a source for this?

This custom is brought in the Midrash (Shir Hashirim Rabba 2:9. which says just as **a rose is designated for Shabbos and Yom Tov (שושנה זו מתוקנת לשבתות וימים טובים מה**) so are the Jewish people designated for the redemption of the future.



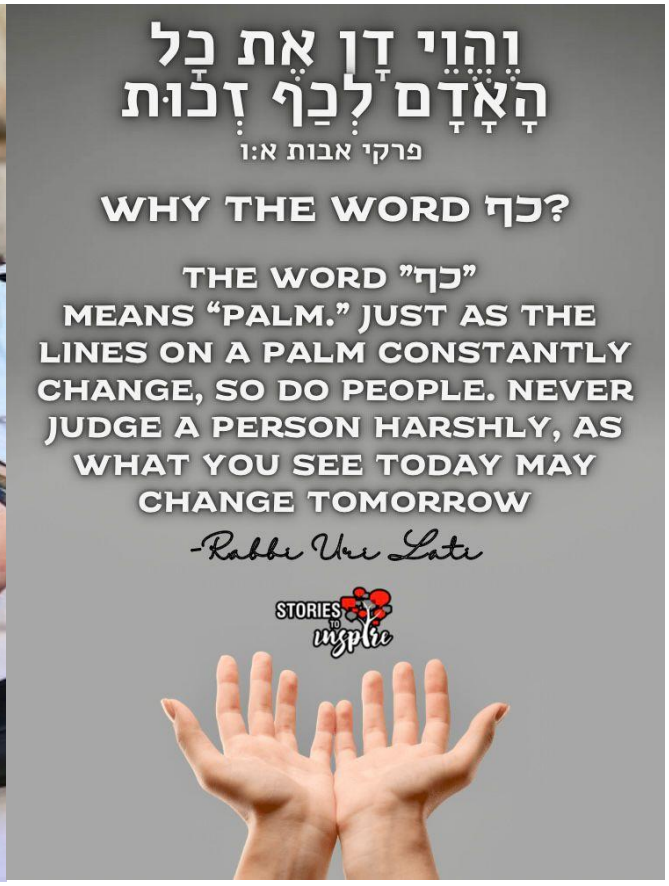
Delicious Dairy

The Torah is what keeps us alive as it is our spiritual sustenance. This explains why it is compared to bread and water since we can't live without it.

In a similar vein, the Torah is called an **עץ חיים**, a tree of life. This is just as one who is drowning clings tightly to the strong tree he encounters, with all his strength, since that is what his life depends on.

It is in this pasuk that we find an allusion to the custom of eating dairy on Shavuos, the Yom Tov of Torah. The first letters of **חַיים לַמחזיקים בַה**, a tree of life for those who grasp it, spell **חלב** !









Should I stay up on Shavuos night?

There's no question that it's a big zchus to stay up on Shavuos night. Now, some people however are ill, they're physically weak, so I'm not telling you what to do. But if you're capable, there's no reason why not because it's a demonstration of what we said before – for an important event it pays to be up all night. There was one time when I was in Williamsburg – the old

Satmerer Rav was still alive then. So I went in to see him because I was going to do something, a job, for him. I was the one who composed the advertisement against the Zionists that was placed in the New York Times – I wrote it for the Satmerer Rav. So I went in to him and he gave me a bracha that I should succeed. And I was up all night writing that article. Over and over again, I worked on it. All night I was up because it was important!

When you're going to accept the Torah and you know how important it is, so you stay up all night. Just like they stayed up that night at Har Sinai. That's our tradition, that they were up all night. They couldn't sleep; they didn't want to sleep, they were so excited. You want to sleep, but l'zeicher, to remember what our forefathers did that night, we act as if we are excited to stay up all night.

Now, we have to know that everything in the halacha is with a grain of salt. It's not a mitzvah min hatorah to stay up. It's not even a takanas chachomim. It's a minhag of the Am Yisroel. And therefore, if you have any chashoshos, any suspicions, about your health, so consult somebody. And if he'll tell you it's better you should sleep, so you go to sleep. But otherwise there's no question that Klal Yisroel is up that night and it makes a tremendous impression on them. They feel like they're walking in the footsteps of our fathers who prepared in that manner by staying up all night waiting for that great day of Kabolas Hatorah.

Nefesh HaChayim - Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin's Major Work

Introduction by his son **Rabbi Itzele of Volozhin**.

"My father would tell me, כל האדם לא לעצמו נברא. רק להועיל לאחריני ככל אשר ימצא בכחו לעשות - 'A man was not created to care only for himself, but rather to be helpful to others to the maximum extent of his abilities.'"

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

In Haggadah shel Pesach we say, **אלו קרבנו לפני הר סיני ולא נתן לנו את התורה דיינו**, "Had Hashem brought us to Har Sinai and not given us the Torah, it would also be sufficient [reason to praise Hashem]."

The Chida (Lev Dovid 31) asks, what benefit would we have gained just from coming to Har Sinai without receiving the Torah? He answers that we were at Har Sinai, we prepared to receive the Torah and we attained high levels of perception at that time, just from the preparation, itself.

Rebbe Tzvi Hirsh of Ziditchov zt'l said that **שמייכל**, smile, is roshei teivos for **כולם יהיו משועבדים לעבדתו יתברך שמו**, "Everyone should be devoted to Hashem's service." This devotion is a reason for joy, as indicated by the roshei teivos, **שמייכל**, smile.

Although the letters of the phrase aren't in the order of the letters **שמייכל** that is because the trick of being happy is even when things aren't happening directly in the correct order. - To be happy even when things seem out of place, is true service of Hashem.

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler zt"l (Michtav Me'eliyahu) says that when you toil at something, you come to feel an attachment to it, a love for it. For example, if you work hard to plant a tree, water it, prune it, etc., you feel an attachment to it.

When you toil in Torah, you develop a love of Torah. That makes you feel that the Torah is a part of you.

The Chofetz Chaim zt"l says that everyone is obligated to toil in Torah according to his own ability.



The minhag is to place trees that don't grow fruit in the beis medresh on Shavuos.

The Chasam Sofer zt'l explains that trees without fruit represent the Yidden who don't have Torah and mitzvos. We place these trees in beis medresh so they know they can also receive the Torah.

About matan Torah, Rashi (Shemos 19:6) writes **לא פחות ולא יותר**, "Not less and not more." The Chasam Sofer (Drashos 264:) says that **לא יותר** means that no one is greater than a person who studies Torah. - **לא פחות** means that no one is too small to receive the Torah.

The Chasam Sofer (Drashos, Shavuos 5562) writes, "The Torah wasn't given to individuals, rather it was given to the entire Jewish nation… so everyone will have a portion in Torah… Therefore, every Yid can be equally joyous on Shavuos… The Torah was given…when we first left the slavery of Mitzrayim. We weren't worthy then for matan Torah. This was to tell us that there are no barriers, and we shouldn't lose hope from receiving our portion in Torah. Even if one is at a very low level, he is equal to the greatest."

We don't eat matzah before Pesach, so we should eat it at the Seder with an appetite. **The Sfas Emes zt'l** asked why we don't do the same before Shavuos. We should stop learning Torah before Shavuos so that on Shavuos, we would be hungry for Torah and study Torah with thirst!

The answer is that Torah is different from all other pleasures. One doesn't become tired of it. On the contrary, the more one studies, the more he loves the Torah. If he learns Torah before Shavuos, he will be even more thirsty for Torah on Shavuos.

We read the *Aseres HaDibros* three times a year: Shavuos, Shabbos *parashas Yisro*, and Shabbos *parashas Va'eschanan*.

The Beis Avraham explains this with a mashal of a very sick person who needed a dose of powerful medications but was very frail, and the strong medication would harm him. So, his doctor divided the medication into three doses.

The nimshal is that hearing the *Aseres HaDibros* is like a spiritual, powerful cure. However, this spiritual experience is too intense for our weak minds. Therefore, the impact is divided into three so the Jewish nation could accept it.

Mishnah Berurah (146:19) writes, "According to halachah, one is permitted to sit, but the Maharam said that it is proper to stand because when one hears the reading of the Torah, one should imagine that he is hearing it from Har Sinai, and at Har Sinai all Yidden stood. [Standing will help him visualize himself receiving the Torah.] However, if someone is weak and it is difficult for him to stand, and by standing, he won't have yishuv hadaas to concentrate on the kriyah, he should sit."

Chiddushei Torah

Rebbe Boruch'l of Mezhibuzh zt'l said that he is more afraid of Shavuos than Rosh Hashanah. On Rosh Hashanah, the judgment is on gashmiyos. So, it will be one more *bilke* (challah) or one less (it doesn't make much of a difference). But on Shavuos, the judgment is for Torah, and how much Torah one will receive that year. And therefore, he is more afraid of Shavuos.

"Emunah is the foundation of the world. Without it, the world would collapse." ~ Rebbe Nachman of Breslov.

The Pele Yoetz (*Yomim Tovim*) writes, "On yom tov, we must bring joy to the poor. Therefore, before yom tov, give tzedakah to the poor – each person according to his abilities.

The *Zohar* says: 'On yom tov, Hakadosh Baruch Hu visits the homes of the poor, and if they don't have enough food, Hashem cries for them.'

The *Zohar* writes, 'If a person is happy himself, and doesn't give to the poor, he will be punished…' Therefore, don't forget to give *tzedakah* to the poor before each *yom tov.* Give tzedakah in accordance with the amount Hashem gave you. Don't be satisfied with giving a little because you should give in accordance with your wealth. And after you help the poor, you can be happy and rejoice, and nothing bad will befall you, and there will be peace in your home."

Regarding Shavuos, the Torah states (Devarim 16:10-11) ... **ועשית חג שבועות לה' אלקיך... ושמחת אתה ובנך ובתך... והגר והיתום והאלמנה אשר בקרבך** - "Make the holiday Shavuos for Hashem your G-d... and be happy...you, your son, your daughter...the convert, the orphan, and the widow that is among you."

Rabbeinu b'Chaya writes, "The obligation [to help the poor for yom tov] applies for all holidays... [Nevertheless], the Torah writes the mitzvah about Shavuos because Shavuos is one day, while Pesach and Succos are seven and eight days.

One might think giving tzedakah before Shavuos isn't as important as giving before the other yomim tovim. Therefore, the *pasuk* emphasizes that we shouldn't be lenient… We must give tzedakah for Shavuos, just as we must for all other holidays…"

One reason for this importance is that the message of the Torah is chesed, to help one's fellow man. So, when you accept the Torah on Shavuos, do so with a desire and plan to help your fellow man.

Chazal (*Pesachim* 68:) say, "All opinions agree that one needs to enjoy [good food] on Shavuos because on this day the Torah was given to the Jewish nation." Rashi explains, "He should be happy with food and drink to show that he is happy with this day that the Torah was given."

Maaseh Rav writes, "**The Vilna Gaon zt'l** was very happy on Shavuos, more than any other yom tov, and he put good foods on his table..."

Shavuos morning, at Shacharis, someone fell asleep because he was tired after an entire night studying Torah. - When he woke up, Reb Chaim Brim asked him, "Did you ever see a chasan sleeping as he stood under the chuppah?"

Someone asked **Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach zt'l** whether he should remain awake all night on Shavuos. He explained that he knows that he will learn much more Torah over Shavuos if he has a regular night's sleep.

Reb Shlomo Zalman replied that although he had a valid point, he should nevertheless study Torah all night. - Reb Shlomo Zalman explained, "This is a great principle: One must keep the customs accepted by all Yidden and talmidei chachamim, and he should educate his family to respect customs.

Lomdim worldwide keep this custom; if you don't, your children and wife will think you are acting incorrectly. Therefore, I advise you to keep the *minhag*, even if it is hard"

One should always eat less than befits his income, dress as befits his income and provide for his wife and children beyond what befits his income. ~ Rambam and Chazal

Shavuos is the yahrzeit of Dovid HaMelech. The meforshim say that Shavuos is also Dovid HaMelech's birthday because tzaddikim are *niftar* on the date they were born. - This is one of the reasons we read Megillas Rus on Shavuos.

The final words of Rus is **וישי הוליד את דוד**, "Yishai gave birth to Dovid." - We want to read this *pasuk* on the day Dovid was born.

The Ben Ish Chai (*Bamidbar* 6) recommends saying Tehillim on Shavuos. He writes, "It is important to say *Tehillim* on Shavuos because Dovid HaMelech *a'h* was *niftar* on this day and the *Tehillim* said on this day will be more accepted in heaven. - Everyone should say the entire *Tehillim* on Shavuos."

The Kaf HaChaim (494:34) writes, "It is ideal to learn *Tehillim* on Shavuos because Dovid HaMelech was *niftar* on this day (as stated in the Yerushalmi)… *Tehillim* that one recites on this day will be answered."

Midei Shabbos BeShabbato by Rabbi Eliezer Chrysler

No Halochos in Megilas Rus? Adapted from the Mo'adim ba'Halachah

This Megilah, says R. Zeira, contains neither Tum'ah nor Taharah, neither Heter nor Isur. So why was it written? To teach us the reward of those who perform Chesed (**Yalkut Shimoni**).

This statement, says the Mo'adim ba'Halachah, is puzzling. To begin with, there is one Halachah which Chazal learn from it openly and unambiguously, because it is the sole source in the entire T'nach.

It is the Halachah pertaining to Kinyan Chalipin (the kinyan of exchange), in connection with which the Pasuk writes ***"And this is what was formerly done in Yisrael with regard to sales and exchanges, to clinch all things (i.e. business deals) a man would***

take off his shoe and give it to his friend; and this was the done thing in Yisrael" (Rus 4:7).

In fact, not only do the Chachamim learn the actual validity of Chalipin from this Pasuk, but they also derive from it a host of details regarding the Halachah, some of them by way of dispute. For example, whether it is the acquirer who gives the object or the seller, whether a K'li (a vessel) must be used or whether fruit and the like is also eligible. And that, when it comes to acquiring something, whichever method of acquiring is customary, is valid.

And there are many others.

Aside from Chalipin and its detailed Halochos, the Chachamim learn no less than six additional Halochos from Megilas Rus. They learn ...

1. ... the prohibition of leaving Eretz Yisrael, unless certain criteria are met - from Elimelech, Machlon and Chilyon, who died in Mo'av primarily for leaving Eretz Yisrael, despite the fact that a famine was in progress at the time.

2. ... the obligation to marry in one's old age, even though one has been married in one's youth and even had children from one's first wife - from Bo'az, who married Rus in his old age, even though, when he was younger, he had fathered many children from his first wife.

3. ... that Birchas Chasanim (Chupah and Sheva B'rachos) requires ten people - from Bo'az at the end of the Megilah.

4. ... various details regarding the Dinim of Geirus (conversion), such as the obligation to teach a would-be Ger a variety of Halochos, some less-important and some more important, and that one neither makes it too difficult for him nor is one overly fussy with him - from Na'omi's dealings with Rus prior to her (Rus') conversion.

5. ... that one is permitted to greet a person using the Name of Hashem - from Bo'az (who actually initiated the custom and) who greeted his harvesters with the Name of Hashem.

6. ... that one should wear nicer clothes on Shabbos than one wears during the week - from Naomi, who told Rus to put on her clothes before going down to the barn where Bo'az was sleeping. She can only have meant that Rus should change into nicer clothes.

In addition to the above, Chazal learn many lessons in Mussar and Midos from the Megilah. For example, they learn from the fact that Bo'az remained in the barn the night after winnowing the harvest, that a Talmid-Chacham should not go out alone at night.

And from Bo'az, who bade the ten elders (that he chose to participate in his wedding with Rus) to be seated, they learn that in the presence of a person greater than oneself, one is forbidden to sit down without his express permission.

But then, the Mo'adim ba'Halachah explains, as far as Midos is concerned, the main message of the Megilah concerns the Midah of Chesed, as we wrote at the beginning. And it is from Bo'az' statement to Rus "Hashem will repay your good deed and your reward will be complete from Hashem ... under whose wing you came to take shelter" that they extrapolate the power of those who perform Chesed.

They find shelter, not in the morning shade, not in the shade of the wings of the earth or in the shade of the wings of the sun, not even in the shade of the holy Chayos or of the Serafim, but in the shade of the One who said and the world came into existence, as the Pasuk writes "How precious is Your kindness Hashem, and in the shadow of Your wings they take shelter" '.

"Hashem is the true source of our strength and success, and everything that we achieve is thanks to His kindness." ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller.

Megilas Rus, What The Medrash Says

● Hashem's Chesed

וַיָּמֻתוּ גַם־שְׁנֵיהֶם - *"And they also died*" (1:5).

From the word "also", the Medrash learns that Machlon and Chilyon did not die before they had lost all their property.

First their horses, their donkeys and their camels died. This should have served as a warning to induce them to mend their ways (to divorce their non-Jewish wives and return to Eretz Yisrael). - And it was only when they refused to take the hint that Hashem struck them down.

● Predicting a Royal and Wealthy Descendent

יִתֵּן ה׳ לָכֶם - *"May Hashem give you* ..." (1:9).

'May all the good things and consolations ', says R. Yossi, 'that Hashem will give to Shlomoh Hamelech, come from you!' (see Torah Temimah).

Na'omi also hints at Shlomoh Hamelech later (chap. 2:12), when she says " **וּתְהִי מַשְׂכֻּרְתֵּךְ שְׁלֵמָה** (and may your reward be complete, but) which can also be read as 'Sh'lomoh' (see also Medrash there on Pasuk 14).

Considering the abject poverty to which Rus and Orphah had subjected themselves, Shlomoh's wealth was indeed an apt blessing and consolation (maybe that explains the insertion of the word 'consolations' by R. Yossi, which otherwise appears meaningless).

● But That's Not Yibum

הַעוֹד־לִי בָנִים בְּמֵעַי וְהָיוּ לָכֶם לַאֲנָשִׁים - *"Even if I was expecting children, would they become your husbands?*" (1:11).

The Yibum to which Naomi was referring was in reality, a borrowed term. After all, Rus had not even been Jewish whilst she was

'married' to Machlon, and in any case, Bo'az was not Machlon's brother.

But these legal flaws apart, the Yibum would have been illegal anyway, since Elimelech (Naomi's husband) had already died, rendering this a case of 'the wife of a brother who died before he was born', to whom Yibum does not apply. As the Ramban explains in Parshas Vayeishev [38:8]), Bo'az acted in the spirit of Yibum, without actually performing the Mitzvah.

● **Tzum Dritten Mohl! Going, Going, Gone!**

שֹׁבְנָה בְנֹתַי לֵכְנָ֑ה - ***"Return my daughters, take leave*** ... " (1:12).

This was the third, and last time, says the Medrash, that Naomi used this expression. - We can learn from here (see Torah Temimah) that one is obligated to dissuade a would-be convert to go through with his plans only three times. Should he still persist, then one is duty-bound to accept him, without another word.

● **The Power of Tears**

וַתִּשֶּׂ֤נָה קוֹלָן֙ וַתִּבְכֶּ֔ינָה עֹ֖וד - ***"And they raised their voices and wept a lot***" (1:14).

Rava explained that Orpah emitted four tears, and it was on account of those four tears that she merited giving birth to four mighty men, Golyas and his three brothers Saf, Madon and Yishbi.

The gates of tears, say Chazal, are never shut ... never mind who it is who is crying, provided the tears are real. No genuine tears ever get lost!

"The only thing that can truly make a person happy is the knowledge that there is a Creator Who loves you." - Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler.

● It Didn't Take Long!

וַתֹּאמֶר הִנֵּה שָׁבָה יְבִמְתֵּךְ אֶל־עַמָּהּ וְאֶל־אֱלֹהֶיהָ "And she (Naomi) said 'Behold your 'rival' has returned to her people and to her gods " (1:15).

The moment Orpah returned to her people, she returned to her gods, Chazal explain.

Orpah had been married to Chilyon for ten years, yet she had hardly turned her back on Naomi, and she had already relinquished all that she had learned.

That's how the Yeitzer-ha'Ra works. He makes you forget in a few minutes what took ten years to learn.

Shavu'os Sapphires - Ta'amei ha'Minhagim

● Special Stones

The Ya'avatz explains that the mountain Har Sinai derives its name from the 'S'neh' (the burning bush), where G-d first appeared to Moshe (indeed, the Pasuk in Sh'mos [3:12] equates the two).

He also refers to members of the ben Chisdai family of Barcelona, who showed him remarkable stones that they took from the mountainside of Har Sinai. On each stone was engraved a perfectly-shaped picture of a bush, and this picture appeared on every side of the stone.

Even more amazing was the fact that however many times one broke up the stone, the same picture could be seen on each side of the fragments. These stones are purchasable in abundance today.

● As Good as New

The Sefarim cite the **Kisvei Ari**, who says that when Yom-Tov arrives each year, history repeats itself and whatever happened on

the original day (Yetzi'as Mitzrayim on Pesach, Matan Torah on Shavu'os ...) happens again.

The question arises however, how it is possible to receive the Torah on Shavu'os, seeing as we already have it?

We can do so, says the Ma'or Einayim, by applying what Chazal say 'Every day Torah and Mitzvos should be fresh in your eyes like the day on which they were given'. Taking this upon oneself on Shavu'os, the anniversary of Matan Torah, is akin to accepting the Torah afresh.

● Making Good

The Magein Avraham attributes the Minhag to stay up the whole of Shavu'os night to learn Torah to the Medrash, which explains that Yisrael at Har Sinai slept the entire night prior to Matan Torah, and G-d had to arouse them in the morning. We therefore rectify that lapse by staying awake.

● Eating Milky on Shavu'os

The Minhag to eat milky foods, says the **Machtzis ha'Shekel**, is reminiscent of the two cooked dishes that we eat on Seider night, one to remind us of the Korban Pesach, the other, of the Chagigah. Likewise on Shavu'os, we eat milky and meaty (which necessitate two separate loaves), to remind us of the two Loaves that were brought on Shavu'os. Among the many ideas that the two Loaves represent is the two Toros - the written and the oral.

● The Greatest Kindness

The Hagahos Minhagim ascribes the Minhag of eating milky on Shavu'os to the colour of milk. White, he explains, hints at the Midah of Chesed. Giving us His holy Torah was a supreme act of Chesed, inasmuch as it reveals to us all the Divine secrets.

The first letters of the words in Tehilim (92:3) "**לְהַגִּיד בַּבֹּקֶר חַסְדֶּךָ**" spell 'Cholov' (milk), a hint connecting Chesed and milk, and the first

letters of the words in Pinchas (28:26 [in connection with the two Loaves on Shavu'os]), **מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה לַה' בְּשָׁבֻעֹתֵיכֶם** spell 'me'cholov', a hint connecting milk with Shavu'os.

● **Eiver min ha'Chai**

Another reason for eating milk foods on Shavu'os is given by R. Nachum Aharon Rokei'ach, who points to the Gemara in Bechoros (6), which cites as the source for the concession of drinking milk (although strictly speaking it ought to be forbidden, since it is Eiver min ha'Chai), the Pasuk in Sh'mos (3:8) which describes Eretz Yisrael as "a land flowing with milk and honey".

It the'efore emerges that, on'y after the Torah (containing this Pasuk) was given, were our ancestors allowed to drink milk. Therefore, we partake of milk foods to remind us of Matan Torah, without which, they would have been forbidden.



Shavuos Thoughts Ideas and Reflections - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

The Gemara understands from the words of Rus (1:16) that Naami tried to dissuade her from converting (Yevamos 47b). She told her about some of the restrictions on Jewish people, like limited travel distance on Shabbos, laws of seclusion with someone of the opposite gender, etc. Rus replied that she will go where Naami can go, sleep where she can sleep, etc.

Why is Rus responding positively and did not say, "Where you cannot go, I will not go, and where you cannot sleep, I will not sleep"?

Rav Moshe Bamberger (Shiras HaLevi) suggests that Rus is teaching us the proper perspective that we should take with our Judaism. Do not look at it as a whole list of restrictions and limitations. Instead, look at it as part of our privilege of having these Mitzvos.

When we can celebrate the privilege of the Mitzvos, we can attain much greater strides in our lives.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

The Bais Aharon of Karlin, zt"l, said, "One can't succeed in Torah without Tefilah, and one won't succeed in Tefilah without Torah. Torah and Tefilah are bound to each other!"



Shavuos Gems

The Kotzker Rebbe, zt"l, said that some of the Meshalim of the **Dubner Maggid** were said with Ruach HaKodesh, and this is one of them: There was once a man who hired a porter to bring his bags to his home from the docks. When the porter arrived at this man's home, he left the bags downstairs and went up to tell him that his bags had arrived. The man said to the porter, "The bags that you brought here are not my bags."

The porter was surprised and said, "How could you possibly know that? You didn't even see what I brought! I left them downstairs!"

The man replied, "I can tell from the way that you are so tired and catching your breath that you must have brought heavy bags. My bags were small and very light, and they contained precious stones

and diamonds. If you would have been carrying those bags, I would not see the sweat on your face."

The Dubner Maggid said, "It is the same with the Torah. If someone says the Torah is not sweet and Geshmak and the most enjoyable thing in the world, that means that they are not learning the Torah that Hashem had in mind for us. They are carrying the wrong packages. - Torah is not a burden. It is the sweetest thing in the world!"

Shavuos Gems

Rav Meilich Biderman once related a story. There was a Talmid Chacham in Yerushalayim who suffered from Alzheimer's disease, R"L, and before his grandchild's Chasunah, the family's doctor gave him a strong medication that would help him think clearly for several hours. They did this so that he could participate in the Chasunah, but when they looked for him at the Chasunah, he could not be found.

After searching for a little while, they finally found him in a local Bais Medresh, learning Torah! He said, "Now that I finally have a clear mind, I want to use it for Torah!"

Rav Meilich said that the lesson for us is that people are very busy, and they don't have much time for learning Torah, but it sometimes happens in a person's day that there is some time for Torah. - "We must be wise and grab these moments and use them for learning Torah!"

Rav Meilich adds, that the **Chofetz Chaim, zt"l**, writes, "A wise person should keep in mind that every time he joins a group of people that are just talking idly, and every time one wastes time reading the newspaper about issues that aren't related to him, HaKadosh Baruch Hu cries over this loss of time. He could have used this time to learn Torah to acquire diamonds and pearls, illuminating his lot

eternally and granting him honor and greatness. And he exchanges this for matters that have no benefit.

When a person thinks about this, he will learn Torah whenever he has a free moment, for this is his good fortune and eternal life!"

When was the Torah given? We don't know for sure. The Gemara says it was either on the sixth or the seventh day of Sivan. Where was the Torah given? We know that the Torah was given on Har Sinai, but where is Har Sinai? No one knows for sure.

Rav Yisrael Salanter, zt"l, said about this, "We don't know when the Torah was given, and we don't know where the Torah was given. This teaches us that every moment and every place is ideal for learning Torah!"

Rav Meilich said, "Sometimes people say, 'I can't learn here. The atmosphere isn't productive for my learning.' Or they say, 'I can't learn now.' - We weren't told the exact date or place of Matan Torah, so we should know that every place and time is ideal for learning Torah!"

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zt"l said, "We are accustomed to thinking that having a love of Torah leads one to toil in Torah. However, the truth is that we see it works the other way around. It is toil in Torah that actually leads to love of Torah!"

"When we feel lost and alone, we must remember that Hashem is always with us, guiding us through our troubles." ~ Rabbi Yisrael Salanter.

Shavuos Treasures

At a Daf Yomi Siyum, **Rav Mendel Weinbach** said something powerful: **The Imrei Tal** quotes the **Zohar** about how important it is to learn Torah withSimchah. The Yeitzer Tov and the the Yeitzer Hara are not forces that have no movement. They are capable of growing in power. But it all depends whether one does a Mitzva with Simchah, which will increase the power of the Yeitzer Tov, or Chas V'Shalom one succumbs to the diversions of the Yeitzer Hara, and does an Aveirah with Simchah, and this will give the Yeitzer Hara more power.

Perhaps, the reason Simchah empowers the Yeitzer Tov or Yeitzer Hara is because, as the Alei Shur (pt.1) puts it, "The heart of a person is drawn by that which gives it pleasure," and the heart of a person is what truly rules over him.

The great Torah Sages would train themselves to have pleasure ONLY in learning Torah. These great people would refuse to take pleasure in this world, except for the pleasure that comes from a deep and clear understanding of the Torah, and in doing Mitzvos. They lived with only the bare necessities and shunned honor, seeking approval, and money, eating bread with salt and sleeping on the floor.

The Vilna Gaon, zt"l, would even go so far as to soak his bread in water and swallow it without chewing, so he didn't feel any pleasure in eating. This way, all their pleasure in life was only in Torah and Mitzvos, and this drew their hearts like a magnet towards the Torah, and away from desiring comfort and self-indulgence.

When learning Torah was not practical, such as while working, they would try to fulfill some Mitzvah, whether in their thoughts or actions, just to keep a connection to the Torah.

One who is able to focus his whole being on Torah will see miracles. As the **Rambam** writes in Hilchos Talmud Torah, not removing one's thoughts from the Torah is essential to becoming great in Torah.

Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, **zt"l**,'s grandson related a story about this, and this happened a few days after Rav Elyashiv had a surgery. He was extremely weak. The grandson reported: While it was my turn to watch over Rav Elyashiv, he requested of me to try to get him released, because he was not able to sleep in the hospital due to the constant noise and lights.

Throughout the night, I saw that Rav Elyashiv was lying down with his eyes closed, but his hands which were waving around in the way of learning Torah, and it testified like a thousand witnesses that Rav Elyashiv was awake and thinking in learning.

In the morning, I strengthened myself and asked Rav Elyashiv if he was able to think in learning even in a time when he is so weak.

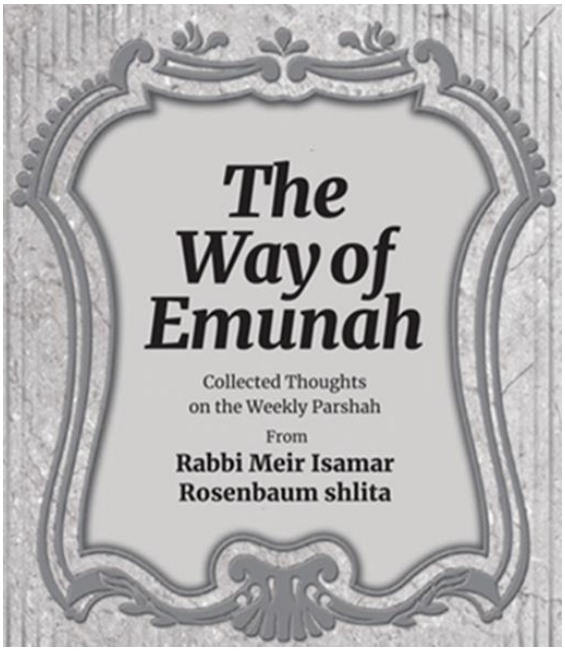
Rav Elyashiv replied that if he is not asleep, then he is thinking in learning at all times. I asked him, "In order to think in learning, one must have his learning clear and in order. What can someone like me do, and many other people like me, whose learning is not always clear and in order?"

Rav Elyashiv responded in these words: "One who is not able to think in learning all the time is truly a pitiful person."

Rav Mendel Weinbach said, "For the rest of us mortals, trying to suddenly focus completely on Torah and eliminate physical pleasures is not a good idea, as it will likely lead to irritability, which is much worse than overindulging. Nevertheless, we can do this for a half hour or one hour a day. Likewise, we can try to maximize the pleasure in Torah and Mitzvos, and focus on enjoying saying a Brachah when eating instead of having pleasure only on the eating itself.

The Vilna Gaon wrote (see the Gra on Mishlei 27:7), "One cannot feel the sweetness of Torah without having first distanced himself from Ta'aivah, desires for physical pleasures and comfort!"





- **All Sins Forgiven**

One year on Shavuos, Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev zy"a said, "Ribono Shel Olam, I love the day of Shavuos more than the Rosh Hashanah! On Rosh Hashanah, You act towards us like a King and ruler, and we crown You and say that You rule over the entire world. Therefore, You do not forgive Your honor, as a king is not permitted to forego his kovod.

On Shavuos, however – the day we receive the Torah – You act towards us like a Rebbi. On this day, You can forego Your honor, and You can forgive us of our sins, and You can grant us a good year of ruchnius."

- **In Yerushalaim for Shavuos**



Sefer M'Zekeinim Esbonen relates that the **Bais Avrohom of Slonim zy"a** once told his chasidim that he was going to travel to Yerushalaim for Shavuos. He explained that the city of Yerushalaim is like a lokshen kugel – if it works out, it is delicious, but if it doesn't, at the very least you still have the lokshen.

His intent was that just being in Yerushalaim for Shavuos is a very good thing.

• Tikkun Leil Shavuos - Shemiras Halashon on this Night is a Segulah for Yiras Shomaym

Sefer Ohr Einayim (Kamarna) writes that from the beginning of the night of erev Shavuos until after Tefillas Mussaf, one must be careful not to speak any senseless words. Rather, one should focus on connecting to Hashem the entire time, as this is a segulah for yiras shomayim for the entire year.

• Learning the Beginning and the End is Considered Like Learning the Entire Thing



Rav Tzvi Elimelech of Dinov zy"a (Sefer Derech Pekudecha) writes: There is a tradition amongst the wise men of Yisroel that if, for some reason, one is unable to learn a sefer in its entirety, he should just learn the beginning and the end, and this is considered as if he learned the entire thing.

Therefore, the common minhag is to say Tikkun Leil Shavuos, as this contains the beginning and end of all the sefarim of Tanach and the six books of Mishnah, and this is considered as he learned the entire written and oral Torah.

"A person who thinks poorly of himself because he is unaware of his strengths, is not humble; he is a fool." ~ R' Yehudah Leib Chasman zt"l.

- **The Tikkun is a Siman for the Entire Torah**

Sefer Siach Sarfei Kodesh relates that the **Dubno Magid zt"l** once spent Shavuos with the **Vilna Gaon zt"l**, and saw him reciting Tikkun Leil Shavuos. The Magid did not recite the Tikkun. Instead, he learned Gemara. - The Gaon asked the Magid why he wasn't saying Tikkun, and the Magid said, "I will answer you with a moshol…" This is the moshol he related:

A young Kollel man was married for several years and his father-in-law began pressuring him to get a job. He asked what type of work he should do, and his father-in-law suggested that he go to the marketplace to see what other people were doing, and he should do the same.

He went to the market and saw that there were shops with merchandise hanging outside them. He decided to do the same. He rented a booth and hung some wares outside, but he had nothing inside his actual shop. People came inside to make purchases but he had nothing to sell them.

The young man went back to his father-in-law and complained that he had done the same thing as everyone else, but he hadn't made any money. His father-in-law explained that the other shops hung some wares outside to advertise what they had inside. Their main merchandise was actually inside the shop.

So too, the Dubno Magid said, the Tikkun contains only the beginning and end of each Parshah. It is only an "advertisement" for the rest of the Torah. The Vilna Gaon, he said, knows all of the Torah, so it is good for him to have this advertisement. But I cannot have the advertisement alone, without also making sure I have the merchandise.

- **Kreplach Represent Hitting the Yeitzer Hara**



Sefer Siach Sarfei Kodesh (Chelek 1, page 238) writes that it is said that the custom is to eat kreplach on days when we "bang" – on Purim when we bang for Haman's name, on Hoshana Rabbah when we bang the Hoshanos, and on erev Yim Kippur when we bang ourselves as we recite Al Chet. But why do we eat kreplach on Shavuos?

He quotes the Bikurei Aviv of Gustinin as answering that Chazal say (Kiddushin 30B) that Hashem created the yeitzer hara and He created the Torah as its antidote. Thus, we bang the yeitzer hara on this day with the Torah.

- **Packing Up Everything One Earned During the Chag**

The custom is not to recite Tachanun from Shavuos until the 12th of Sivan. Thus, we celebrate Shavuos for seven days.

The Tzemach Tzedek of Lubavitch zy"a once asked his grandfather, the **Baal Hatanya zy"a**, why this is so. The Baal Hatanya answered with a moshol of merchants who traveled to a two-day fair to purchase merchandise. - After the fair, they did not go home right away. Rather, they stayed in that town for a few days to pack up everything they bought as well as they could, as they had a long journey ahead of them and needed to ensure that all of the goods were secure.

So too, every Yid acquires many great things on Shavuos, and we need a few days afterwards to "pack up the goods" and ensure that they are well protected so that they will last for the coming year.



To Know The Whole Torah

In Parshas Yisro the Pasuk says, "On this day Bnei Yisroel arrived at Midbar Sinai." Rashi explains why the Pasuk used the words "on THIS day instead of "on THAT day" – to teach us that the words of Torah should be new to you as though they were given TODAY.

The next Pasuk says, "and he camped there, facing the mountain." Rashi explains why the Pasuk uses the singular HE instead of THEY – "because they camped there like one man with one heart."

The unity of Klal Yisroel is obviously very important – but why is it that specifically before the giving of the Torah is it mentioned that we were on this level? It seems that this was necessary for us in ORDER to be ABLE to receive the Torah – but why?

Rebbe Nachman Breslever says that if someone has a hard time understanding the Torah this is because he is lacking in Ahavas Yisroel. Since every Jew is like a letter in a Sefer Torah, if one Jew is "missing" - the whole Sefer isn't kosher! This may be part of the reason we needed to be unified in order to receive the Torah – because in order for us to make up a "kosher Sefer Torah", we all need to be connected!

There is also another interesting idea brought by the mefarshim on the first Mishna of Pirkei Avos. The Mishna says, "Moshe received the Torah from Sinai, he gave it to Yehoshua, Yehoshua to the Elders, The Elders to the Prophets, they gave it to the Anshei Kneses Hagedolah." This is the literal translation – notice that Moshe Rabbenu was the only one who is said to have "received, and he gave it to Yehoshua, but it doesn't say that Yehoshua "gave" it to the Elders, or that the Elders gave it to the Prophets. But it does

say that the Prophets "gave" it to the Anshei Kneses Hagedolah. What is the reason for all of these discrepancies?

The Arizal asks this question, and he answers the following: Moshe Rabbenu was the only one who is said to have received the Torah – this is because he was on such a level that he himself was able to receive it. But Yehoshua wasn't on this level, so it needed to be "given" to him – which means that it was necessary to "force" it to happen because he was on a lower level.

When Yehoshua transmitted the Torah to the Elders, since they were 70 people, collectively they were able to receive the entire Torah, without it being forced. And when they gave it over to the Neviim, since they were much more than 70, they also as a whole were able to contain the whole Torah. But when they gave it over to the Anshei Kneses Hagedolah, since the generations are constantly going to lower levels, they weren't able to contain the whole Torah without it being "forced".

The Arizal finishes of with something amazing: Now, in our generations, there is no way for one individual to contain the whole Torah – the only way for the whole Torah to be present is for it to be spread amongst the whole Klal Yisroel! The Torah knowledge of all the Jews together makes up the whole Torah! If anyone is missing, we don't have the whole Torah! We again see how necessary it is for us to be unified.

The question is, practically how is it possible for us to be unified? The Arizal writes that before davening we should accept on ourselves the Mitzvah of Ahavas Yisroel – to love your fellow Jew as yourself. That is really all it takes – to accept it upon yourself. We accept to love every Jew, even though there are those we don't agree with, those who have different customs than we do, those who viewpoints are the opposite of ours – it doesn't say that we need to agree with everyone, but we are able to love them.

The Chafetz Chaim writes: a father loves to see people who respect his children, and if someone wrongs his children, he will be upset no matter how justified he is. H-shem is our Father, and we are His children – even if we have good reasons to be upset at someone, it doesn't change the fact that H-shem wants us to get along!

May H-shem grant us all true Ahavas Yisroel, which will remedy to whole cause of the galus, and may we be zocheh to the arrival of Moshiach, and a kabalas HaTorah besimcha ubepnimious!

Divrei Torah, Ba`er Heitev.

חג השבועות: "זמן מתן תורתנו"

The Kotzker Rebbe was asked: Why is Shavuos called the 'time of the giving of our Torah' and not the 'time of our receiving the Torah?'

He replied: "The reason is that, whereas the Torah was given to us on Shavuos in the time of Moshe, we continue to receive the Torah in every subsequent generation. The giving of the Torah was only once, on Shovuos. The time of receiving it, though, is not only on Shavuos but every day of our lives." • **Sipurei Chasidim.**

The Weekly Vort ● Equal To Torah

The numerical value of **בני ישראל**, plus the number 8 – corresponding to the word's eight letters (an accepted method of *gematria*) – is equal to the word "Torah" (611). This eludes to the fact that observance and study of Torah is the very essence of Bnei Yisroel and the key to their survival. As R' Saadiah Gaon said, "Our nation is a nation only through Torah." (For Love of Torah)



The *minhag* is to eat *milichig* foods on Shavuos. **The Chasam Sofer** (*Drashos, Shavuos* **תקס"ב**) explains that milk can be separated into three parts. The best part is the butter (the thick cream that rises to the top). Once the butter is removed, there remains some cheese in the milk. When the cheese is removed, all that is left is a watery liquid, which serves no purpose.

The Chasam Sofer says that the creamy butter represents the tzaddikim, and the cheese represents the *beinonim*, the average Yid. The lowly elements of the nation are represented by the watery whey, which doesn't serve much of a purpose. - When the three parts of the milk are mixed in one, it is a refreshing cup of milk, but when they are separated, a part of the milk is discarded.

Hashem didn't want a segment of Bnei Yisrael not to receive the Torah, so Hashem gave the Torah to the entire Jewish nation. - As a nation, even the lowest Yid can have a portion in Torah.

This is a reminder that everyone has a right to acquire the crown of Torah. Everyone can grow in Torah. And Hashem wants the Torah of each Yid.

Someone came to the **Beis Yisrael zt'l** and asked for a brachah for parnassah. The Beis Yisrael replied, "I have a better idea for you. Study Torah, and you will receive a brachah from all of Klal Yisrael. Because in kaddish d'Rabbanan, we say, **...וכל מאן דעסקין באורייתא יהא להון... מזוני רויחי**, "For all those who study Torah…may they have…parnassah in abundance."

Parsha Potpourri, by Rav Ozer Alport

וְחֶצְרוֹן הוֹלִיד אֶת־רָם וְרָם הוֹלִיד אֶת־עַמִּינָדָב 4:19 רות

Megillas Rus ends by tracing the ancestry of Dovid, but there appears to be a glaring difficulty with the record of his lineage. In reward for Yocheved and Miriam refusing to listen to Pharaoh's instructions to kill the male babies, the Torah says (Shemos 1:21) that Hashem made houses for them. Rashi explains that this does not refer to physical houses, but to spiritual ones, as Yocheved merited the houses of priests and Levites through her sons Moshe and Aharon, and Miriam merited the dynasty of kings through her descendants with her husband Calev. However, in the Megillah's record of the ancestry of Dovid, no mention is made of Calev. What happened to Hashem's promise to Miriam?

The pasuk (verse) in Divrei HaYomim (1 2:9) records that Chetzron had three sons: Yerachmiel, Ram, and Calev, yet here it says that Dovid's ancestry went through Ram, not Calev, so how was Miriam's **ברכה** fulfilled? The Maharsha (Sotah 11b) raises this difficulty and suggests that one of Ram's sons married a woman descended from Calev and Miriam, in which case Dovid was only maternally descended from Miriam.

Alternatively, an obscure commentary on Megillas Rus by Rav Vidal HaTzarfasi sug-gests that either Calev or Ram married Miriam but died without children. She then married the other brother to fulfill the mitzvah of yibum - levirate marriage. As such, her child from the second marriage was biologically the descendant of her new husband, but through yibum was also considered a continuation of her first husband.

As a result, Dovid was considered a descendant both of Calev, as mentioned by Rashi, and of Ram, as recorded in the Megillah. Since yibum is the highest form of chesed, as it is performed with the dead solely to give them another chance at perpetuating their name, it is most fitting to find yibum at the end of Megillas Rus, which

according to the Midrash (Rus Rabbah 2:14) was written to teach us the tremendous reward for those who do kindness with others.



הוא היה אומר

R' Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi *zt"l* (Birchas Mordechai) would say: "What is the difference between Orpah and Rus? They both begged their mother-in-law Naomi to allow them to stay with her, numerous times. But Rus did not give up! *'And she (Naomi) saw that Rus strained* (כִּי מִתְאַמֶּצֶת הִיא) *to go with her.'* (1:18)

This is akin to the dictum of *Chazal*: *'It is not comparable learning something 100 times to learning it 101 times.'* (Chagigah 9b)

If one does not give up and 'strains' the extra effort to study one more time, he will be successful. Like Rus who strained and was ultimately successful. How successful? Her grandson was *Dovid Hamelech*!"

On the other holidays we celebrate an aspect of our relationship with Hashem; on Succos we build Succos to celebrate how Hashem protected us, and on Pesach we eat matzah to celebrate the Exodus. But on Shavuos we celebrate the relationship itself, the eternal bond we share with Hashem. ~ Rabbi Shais Taub.

AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE

A PROJECT OF THE Mesorah Heritage Foundation

WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

Prayer Fulfilled - Powerful Moments – R' Yitzchok Hisiger



In the 1950s, R' Avraham Chaim prepared to leave his Williamsburg home on Leil Shavuos to walk to shul to learn all night. Trailing him was his 8-year-old son. "Can I come with you?" asked the boy, his cherubic face practically begging.

R' Avraham Chaim knew that his son wouldn't be able to make it through the night. It would be better for him to stay home. Perhaps next year, when he'd be a bit older, he could come along. - "I think you should stay home tonight," said R' Avraham Chaim. "Maybe next year."

Planting a kiss on his son's head, R' Avraham Chaim closed the door slowly and headed out into the dark streets of New York City. As he walked, R' Avraham Chaim was bothered. Why had he refused his son? The young boy wanted so strongly to stay up so that he could learn Torah. Even if he would learn for only a few minutes, what was wrong with that? Why deny him that opportunity?

Though he had reached the beis midrash, R' Avraham Chaim made an about-face and headed right back home. As he opened the door to his house, he was surprised to encounter his young son standing there, dressed in his suit, all ready to leave. - "How did you know I was coming back?" asked R' Avraham Chaim.

"I davened to Hashem," the boy said simply. "I knew you would come back!"

Hand in hand, father and son departed, heading out for a night of Torah learning. That little boy's name was Shimshon. Years later, he became known as **Rav Shimshon Pincus**, rav of Ofakim, whose tzidkus and hashpaah have impacted Jews across the world. Rav Pincus, even at that tender age, knew — and believed in — the power of tefillah.

Use the power of prayer and believe in it. It could be the secret to your yeshuah.

The First Shavuos After Liberation - The Klausenburger Rebbe by Avrohom Birnbaum



It was a mere fifteen days after the survivors had moved from the fields near Mühldorf into the Feldafing DP camp. In the bare room where the Rebbe lived, one could detect the fire burning in his soul. It was visible in his eyes, in his mannerisms. He was battling the downward pull of despair.

"Shavuos is coming!" Anyone whom he met during those few days before Shavuos heard it from him. "Shavuos is coming! We must prepare spiritually; Yom Tov is almost here!"



The Rebbe, still in a German army uniform… The Rebbe with a bit of stubble slowly growing back on his chin in place of his flowing beard… The Rebbe with no hat or shtreimel, no bekeshe, showed them all that despite everything, Shavuos was still coming! Yes! Shavuos! Yes! Ribbono Shel Olam! They saw his longing, his profound yearning, to accept upon himself the Torah once again, in its entirety, after all that he had undergone.

It was exactly one year since he and most Hungarian Jewry had been mercilessly ripped away from their homes and families forever and sent to Auschwitz. It was just a year, but it was a lifetime ago. In truth, for the survivors, the mere thought of Yom Tov awakened terribly painful memories, as they thought of the Yamim Tovim of the past that they had spent in the loving embrace of their families. Now, everything was gone. They were alone. Was the Rebbe rational? How could they celebrate Yom Tov? This one remembered the beautiful Akdamus, that one remembered the Hallel in shul, a third remembered the cheese

kreplach and cheesecake and those who had lovingly made them… all of it was gone. The thought of Shavuos depressed the survivors to no end, but the Rebbe would not leave them alone; he was relentless.



The Rebbe had lost his wife. The Rebbe had lost his children. The Rebbe, by personal example, embodied the concept of, "Hisnaari, mei'afer kumi — Wake up and raise yourself up from the dust." It was as though the Rebbe stood at the gates of the camp and raised his voice in the age-old cry of "Mi laHashem eilai!"

R' Avrohom Eideles recounts that first night of Shavuos — a night he simply can never forget: It was surreal. There was the Rebbe, barely two weeks after liberation. He was wearing the only clothing available, the uniform of a German soldier, a bit of stubble on his face, as his beard was showing its first signs of growing back. A few of us, young men and bachurim, were standing around him, our eyes still extinguished from any sign of living. We were just existing, not living. The Rebbe, however, was on fire. His eyes were burning with an otherworldly fire — a spiritual fire that we thought had been extinguished and no longer existed in the world after…

There was no siddur and no machzor… nothing but the Rebbe's voice. "Borchu es Hashem hamevorach," the Rebbe's voice split the air, as he started Maariv with such hislahavus, such enthusiasm. Somehow, he managed to sweep us up in his enthusiasm and we began to feel…

it is Yom Tov. It was his tefillos that made us feel human again. All of a sudden, each of us in that room broke down and cried for the first time in who knows how long… Our frozen hearts began to regain their senses, and before we knew it, there was crying and wailing in that room...

In reality, we were thinking about what had been, our homes, our families, the beautiful world that had been snuffed out… The Rebbe, however, was instilling in us another message, "We are going veiter (carrying on)! We are marching on. Life is not over. We must start anew!"

Who can forget the Kiddush on that first night of Shavuos? The Rebbe was on fire. His Kiddush seemed to split the very heavens. There was nothing to eat but a few crusts of bread, and a few potatoes cooked in a can… and then it happened. As the Rebbe was saying Torah, he burst into tears and exclaimed, "Tatteh in Himmel! This is not what we hoped for and longed for! We did not long for the day that the Americans would liberate us. We were waiting for Eliyahu HaNavi and Mashiach to liberate us!" - He repeated this over and over again until we all broke down and burst into tears.

Later, during the seudah, after they sang Atah Vechartanu, the Rebbe changed his tone and began to infuse the survivors sitting around him with chizuk for the future.

Yidel Rosenberg recalled the Rebbe's message at that pivotal time: "The Rebbe stressed that we must once again begin to learn Torah. Learning Torah is the only thing that can ensure the existence and future of Am Yisrael.

"He told us that davka, specifically now, after having seen all that the goyim are capable of doing to us, we must strengthen ourselves in Torah even more! Now that we have seen the diabolical nature of the nations, we can appreciate even more that 'Atah vechartanu mikol ha'amim — You have chosen us from all the nations.' We can

understand that we are different, and distinctive conduct is expected from us.

"The Rebbe became very animated when he told us, 'The Ribbono Shel Olam will have His "minyan," He won't be missing His minyan. I just hope that we will have a role in rebuilding that minyan!'

Already then, two weeks after the liberation, when virtually no one even dreamed that the Torah would once again blossom and grow, the Rebbe's only desire was to have a role in that exalted process."

בס"ד

Menucha

A Shabbos table companion for the whole family

לע"נ ר' ברוך חיים בן סלמון ז"ל

What do you think…?



Where does the saying "Torah is sweeter than honey" come from? Menucha's Answer: It's based on a verse in Tehillim (19:11), **הַנֶּחֱמָדִים מִזָּהָב וּמִפָּז רָב וּמְתוּקִים מִדְּבַשׁ וְנֹפֶת צוּפִים** "…***and they (the words of Torah) are sweeter than honey***…"

Even something like honey, only gives a person limited pleasure. Soon after eating the honey the pleasure goes away. Also, eating too much honey is unhealthy.

Torah, on the other hand, is not like that: the more and deeper a person learns Torah, the sweeter it becomes, and the effect is everlasting. [based on peirush Radak and Ibn Ezra to Tehillim 19:11]



◣ A Teacher Can Forgive - Rabbi Avraham Twerski

Every morning we recite the blessing, "Who teaches Torah to His nation, Yisrael."

On Shavuos, **Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev** exhorted his followers to do teshuvah. - "Although we usually associate Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur with teshuvah, on those days Hashem has the role of Melech, a king, and the Talmud says that a king may not forgive an offence against the crown. But on Shavuos, Hashem is a Teacher of Torah, and a teacher may forgive an offence."

◣ Never Too Late - Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

There are those who explain why we have the custom to eat dairy foods on Shavuos as follows: Milk is different from other drinks. When other liquids spoil, they become unusable. Milk though, when it "spoils", it can be made into cheese and other food products even more valuable than the milk.

This is the message to us as we accept the Torah. You should never despair and give up hope. Even if someone chas v'shalom has become "spoiled", he shouldn't assume that he is lost forever. On the contrary, one can always pick himself up and move forward, even from a lowly situation of being "spoiled" and become even greater than he was before.

◣ Pieces To The Same Puzzle – Chiddushei Harim

Just as the Torah is comprised of five separate books, independent units, nevertheless, they form one Torah. Similarly, Klal Yisrael is comprised of many different factions – Kohanim, Levim, Yisraelim, Chassidim, Misnagdim – each with their own function, all forming one great Nation, cherished by G-d!

◣ Interior Design - Rav Yehudah Zev Segal

Decorating the shul with flowers for Shavuos is a nice custom, but a person must "decorate" himself as well. - This can be done only by accepting the Torah and studying Torah.

◣ Proper Preparations - Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

There are twice the amount of pesukim about preparing for Mattan Torah (26) than pesukim which discuss Mattan Torah itself (13). - This suggests that preparation is the highest level. – As chassidim say, "The preparation for a mitzvah is greater than the mitzvah itself."

◣ Always A Way Home - Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

Reb Leibele Eiger taught that out of all potential things to precede the giving of the Torah, the Torah tells us about Yisro joining Klal Yisroel. - Was there nothing else more fitting?

The lesson for us is that is if Yisro - who was an idolator, and even a leader of idolators, serving as their priest – was nevertheless able to leave his past and become a servant of Hashem, then the Jewish People – who are Hashems chosen nation – certainly have potential to draw close to Hashem, despite what we may have done in the past.

Shavous and the Many Faces of Yosef

There is a commonly-quoted Gemara (Pesachim 68b) that says: - **רב יוסף ביומא דעצרתא אמר ... אי לא האי יומא דקא גרים, כמה יוסף איכא בשוקא** - "*Every year on the day of Shavuos, Rav Yosef would say to his servants, 'Prepare for me a third-born calf.' Rav Yosef explained the reason for this lavish celebration as follows: 'If this day had not caused me to learn Torah and thereby become spiritually elevated, how many 'Yosefs' are there in the market place—and I would have been indistinguishable from them*!'"

The simple reading of this passage is that the Amora Rav Yosef is commenting that if not for *Matan Torah* and his personal Torah learning, he would be "just another Joe" (and he therefore celebrated the occasion of Shavuos by asking his servants to prepare his favorite dish).

Virtually every year on Shavuos, **Rav Ruderman** would say that the Gemara means something deeper than that. "How many 'Yosefs' are there in the marketplace" does not mean "I would be just another 'Joe'". Rather, it means "there would be so many of me—I myself would be so many different types of people." In other words, I would be all over the map, I would be so conflicted without the unifying force of Torah. That which gives unity and focus to my life and makes me into a unified person with unwavering direction is the Torah. Without Torah, I would be so many Joes—A Joe Six Pack, a Joe Ravens fan, a Joe this, a Joe that. I would be all over the place.

This, in essence, is what the Yom Tov of Shavuos is all about. It is a time to appreciate what Torah does for us.

On Shavuos we read the Megillah of Rus. Rus is not a Tale of Two Cities, but it is rather a Tale of Two People. Here we have two sisters—the same gene pool, the same upbringing, the same environment—Orpah and Rus. And yet, Rus went in one direction and made a decision which shaped her whole life thereafter. She became

the Matriarch of *Klal Yisrael*, the great-grandmother of Dovid HaMelech. Orpah went on a different path.

What separated Rus and Orpah? Why did Rus choose what she chose and Orpah chose an entirely different path in life? Rav Moshe Schwab, *zt"l*, said that Orpah viewed the life that Rus was about to choose as involving too much *mesiras nefesh* (martyrdom and self-sacrifice). She was not willing to make that sacrifice. She felt it would be too hard of a life. She returned to what she perceived would be an easier life. Rus on the other hand was willing to make that which at the time seemed like a difficult choice. In the end, beyond the initial brief period of time, it turned out to not involve *mesiras nefesh* at all. It was a much more noble life. It was a much more rewarding life, and a life that was so much better in the end.

That is what we need to tell ourselves all the time. A life of *Yiddishkeit* sometimes seems more difficult, but it is so much more rewarding in the end. Not only in the World to Come, but in This World as well.

We have purpose to our lives. Our lives are so much richer than those who do not have Torah. People make this mistake. They think a Torah observant lifestyle is so difficult, involves giving so much up, and forgoing so much fun and so many pleasures.

That is the difference between Rus and Orpah. Orpah thought she was giving so much up. Therefore, she did not make that decision. Rus recognized that she may be engaged in something difficult for the moment, but in the end, it was going to be rewarding.

L'Havdil – look at athletes. Look at the sacrifices they make. I hate to make this comparison but look at Michael Phelps. He spent more time in a swimming pool than most of us spend in a Beis Medrash. He wound up winning more Gold Medals than anyone in the history of the Olympics. So, in the end he looks back and thinks, "Sure, it was a sacrifice—all those years of training and practice—but it paid off.

In the end, it was all worth it!" He is glad that he made that sacrifice. *L'Havdil*, that is the way we can look at the sacrifice and *mesiras nefesh* we make for commitment to Torah learning and for living a Torah observant life style.

Everything in life that involves sacrifice is worth the hard work. If there is no hard work, it is not worth it. That is also the way it is with Torah. IF YOU DO THIS, if you just try it, you will find out that it will make you happy in This World, and it will be good for you in the World to Come.

This is what Rav Yosef is saying. Where would I be and where would we all be without the Torah? This is the approach that we need to think about before Shavuos. Yes, it is sometimes hard to be a Jew. Yes, it is a life which involves some sacrifice but look at the end.

Rabbi Jeremy Golker – The Beauty of Torah - Ashreinu!

I would like to share an electrifying idea that pertains to Megilas Rus and contains, in my very humble opinion, a key ingredient to successful parenting and chinuch.

Towards the end of the first perek, the Megila shares the famous dialogue between Naomi and Rus where Rus is adamant that she will cleave to her mother-in-law and join the Jewish people.

Noami and Elimelech leave Eretz Yisrael, and they are criticized for it. They go down to Moav together with their two sons. Elimelech and his two sons (Machlon and Chilyon) die. Naomi is left with her two daughters-in-law. Orpoh abandons ship – she turns her back on Noami, [Orpoh literal meaning – 'the back of the neck'.] - Naomi and Rus go back to Eretz Yisrael, to see if Rus is serious about cleaving and clinging to the Jewish people.

So we have the famous dialogue - **וַתֹּאמֶר רוּת אַל תִּפְגְּעִי בִי, לְעָזְבֵךְ לָשׁוּב מֵאַחֲרָיִךְ: כִּי אֶל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכִי אֵלֵךְ, וּבַאֲשֶׁר תָּלִינִי אָלִין עַמֵּךְ עַמִּי, וֵאלֹקַיִךְ אֱלֹקָי.**

'And Rus said, "Do not entreat me to leave you, to return from following you, for wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people and your G-d my G-d.' 1:16

Rashi, citing the Gemara in Yevamos 47b, teaches us the principle that if someone wants to convert to Judaism, we attempt to dissuade them. This is derived from these pesukim.

Naomi tells Rus about the restriction of techum Shabbos, that it is prohibited on Shabbos for Jews to go 2,000 amos beyond the boundaries of his domain. To this restriction, Rus replies **כִּי אֶל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכִי אֵלֵךְ** – wherever you go, I will go", accepting on herself this restriction.

Naomi then tells Rus about the prohibition of yichud, seclusion with a man other than one's husband. To this restriction, Rus responded **וּבַאֲשֶׁר תָּלִינִי אָלִין** – wherever you lodge, I will lodge". Again, Rus accepted this prohibition on herself. And so it continued.



Rav Moshe Bamberger, in his sefer Shiras HaLevi, asks a striking question.- 'Would it not have been more accurate for Rus to have responded "Wherever you may not go, I will not go" and "wherever you do not lodge, I will not lodge".'

Rav Bamberger's answer is spectacular.

Our relationship to Torah and mitzvos should be rooted with a feeling of how beautiful and pleasant they are and how privileged and fortunate we are – **אשרינו מה טוב חלקנו**.

This explains Rus' answer to Naomi. Rus did not see Yiddishkeit as a burden, full of restrictions but as a glorious way of life, an

opportunity being presented to her to keep a life of Torah and mitzvos.

This explains her positive response. **כִּי אֶל אֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכִי אֵלֵךְ** – wherever you go, I will go", **וּבַאֲשֶׁר תָּלִינִי אָלִין** – wherever you lodge, I will lodge". - You can now sense her excitement and enthusiasm.

A friend once told me of a conversation he overheard in the barber's shop. Someone was moaning about a two-day yom tov (what would he say about this year's three-day Shabbos and Shavuos!). Another person in the barber's shop told him "for some, one day is too long and for others two days is not enough". How true; it is all matter of perspective.

Rus teaches us **אשרינו מה טוב חלקנו**, how good is our portion, **ומה יפה ירושתנו** and how beautiful is our inheritance. The feeling of good fortune and excitement is a powerful and beautiful message to internalise as we enter the yom tov of Kabbolas HaTorah.

As we renew our commitment to Torah once again, let us model and convey this message to our children and students. Let our Shabbos tables be places of song and simcha where our children want to be. Let us live with a simchas hachaim that a life of Torah learning and mitzva performance can bring.

"Every person must realize and remind themselves, "I with all my abilities, potentials and talents - both physical and spiritual - am unique in the universe. Amongst all those alive today there is no other me. In past generations too there was no other me. And until the end of time there will be no other me. And if so, The Master of the universe certainly has sent me here on a special mission that could be fulfilled by no one else but me - with all my uniqueness." ~ Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe (1914-2005)

Effort and Dedication

Noami is telling Rus, "My husband has died, my two sons have died, Orpoh has left me, I've got no financial means, I've got nothing else I can give you, go back to your Moabite roots." - Rus made her passionate plea that she wants to join the ranks of the Jewish people.

וַתֵּרֶא כִּי מִתְאַמֶּצֶת הִיא לָלֶכֶת אִתָּהּ וַתֶּחְדַּל לְדַבֵּר אֵלֶיהָ – *'And she (Naomi) saw that she (Ruth) was determined to go with her; so she stopped speaking to her.'* **מגילת רות (א,יח)**

There is a famous gemara **בבא מציעא פד.** - *The Gemara relates: One day, Rabbi Yochanan was bathing in the Jordan River. Reish Lakish saw him and jumped into the Jordan, pursuing him. At that time, Reish Lakish was the leader of a band of marauders. Rabbi Yochanan said to Reish Lakish: Your strength is fit for Torah study. - Reish Lakish said to him: Your beauty is fit for women.*

Rabbi Yochanan said to him: If you return to the pursuit of Torah, I will give you my sister in marriage, who is more beautiful than I am. Reish Lakish accepted upon himself to study Torah. Subsequently, Reish Lakish wanted to jump back out of the river to bring back his clothes, but he was unable to return, as he had lost his physical strength as soon as he accepted the responsibility to study Torah upon himself.

The Vilna Gaon says: **התורה מתשת כוחו של אדם** – *'Torah weakens a person physically.'* And that's why Reish Lakish couldn't jump back.

The same thing happened to Rus. **וַתֵּרֶא כִּי מִתְאַמֶּצֶת הִיא לָלֶכֶת** -That's how Naomi could tell that Rus was 100% genuine. Rus was struggling to walk! This was right after Rus committed herself to a life of Torah and Mitzvos. And that's why Noami ceased speaking to Rus, because she had demonstrated her genuine commitment to Yiddishkeit.

Toras Avigdor Snippets

A sampling of previous Toras Avigdor booklets



What Happened at Sinai

- **The Gentile Testifies**

I was once reading a brochure published by a certain Christian sect in support of 'the truth of the Jewish Scriptures'. They printed a pamphlet with various proofs that the Old Testament – it means our Torah – is true from beginning to end. That it was given at Har Sinai in the year 2448 from Creation to the Jewish nation at Har Sinai and that is the Torah the Jewish nation still has in their synagogues, their shuls.

They wrote there that since the beginning of our history whenever the Torah is raised in the synagogue, the Jews get up and they point to it and they say, **וזאת התורה אשר שם משה לפני בני ישראל** – *This is the same Torah that Moshe put before the sons of Yisroel* . The Jews are testifying that this Torah that they are pointing at, is the same Torah that they received from Hashem at Har Sinai.

We all get up once a week – that's what was written there; the author didn't know about Mondays and Thursdays – we all stand up when the Torah is raised, and we testify: 'This is it! This Torah is the same Torah that our ancestors accepted on Har Sinai.'

- **Testifying to the Words**

That's why, by the way, we don't say it unless we can see the writing. If you see merely the back of the *sefer Torah* you don't say that; you wait till the words are facing you. Because we're not interested in proclaiming something in general, 'this scroll' or 'this book'. No, it's the *words* – every word in that *sefer* is *emes*. And so it's when the writing is turned towards you, you say it.

Now, if you are far away and you can't read the words – you see the script but you can't make out the exact letters – that's good too because you can rely on the people who are nearby. Most likely they're not pulling one over on you. But whatever it is, we are all testifying – it takes place in the synagogue, the place of the Jewish nation. We represent everybody and we're testifying that the words on that scroll, every word, is 'the Torah that was given to us by Hashem, through His servant Moshe, at Har Sinai.'

- **Strong Evidence**

Now, to the *goy* who wrote the brochure, it's pretty good evidence. After all, the Jewish people have been doing this as far back as they've been around. A whole nation, week after week, month after month, year after year, decades and centuries and millennia, should declare that they know by means of tradition? My father heard from his father who heard from his father all the way back to Har Sinai. It's as good as being there.

And believe me it's good evidence; the *goy* doesn't even *begin* to understand how strong this evidence really is because if ever there have been any naysayers, any defectors who would have strayed from the truth, it would have been dragged out into the light. We would have heard about it!

- **The Missing Sin**

Of all the sins that we find that we are blamed for over our long period of time, you'll find that there is one sin that is missing and

that is the sin of disbelieving in the Torah. It's a remarkable thing. Every other sin, yes. But we don't find a single instance where a prophet accused anybody of disbelieving Matan Torah.

And that's very significant. Because you can be sure that if there was even a whiff of such an idea the Neviim wouldn't have kept quiet about it. The Neviim lambast us about everything and the whole nation is blamed even for the sins of individuals; and if someone would have opened his mouth to question the veracity of the story we would have been castigated with the strongest words.

You know what that means? It means that our nation was unified, *b'peh echad.* From the beginning down until about two hundred years ago we were all unanimous; there was no question at all that we received the Torah from Sinai. The whole nation stood behind this tradition without even one defector.

That's a very important point, especially when compared to the other religions. A whole nation saw Hashem and heard His voice! It's unequalled in the claims of all the nations. They make big promises and they tell about big incidents, but never in all their literature is any statement to be found that Hakadosh Baruch Hu appeared to their entire nation and spoke to them. Because even the biggest falsifier has limits to what he can claim. It would be too much to be so bold and have such effrontery to say such a big falsehood. A claim like that wouldn't get anywhere; it wouldn't get any traction.

- **Testimony of Islam and Christianity**

The most Mohammed could do was say that Allah appeared to him in the tent – when he was alone of course – and spoke to him. He came out of his tent and he said, this and this was told to me. So, go believe him.

It was a problem. Why should anyone believe him? That's why he came out with his sword and he said either you believe that Allah spoke to me from Heaven or with the fire and the sword I am going

to destroy you. That's why the Rambam calls him 'the *meshugeneh* who came out of the desert'. Because that's how he spread his doctrines – a *meshugeneh* holding a sword.

J.C. was no different. He, nor his disciples ever claimed that Hashem spoke to him in the presence of the multitude. He couldn't get away with such a thing. Even the 'miracles' of the New Testament didn't take place among a crowd. They always 'happened' in the presence of one or two people. And not important people at all. According to the New Testament two degenerates saw something happen and they came and told their story. So you have to believe two degenerates that this *neis* took place. - The foundation of Christianity stands on the testimony of two degenerates.

So how did Christianity spread in Europe? Did the two degenerates tell their children who told their children who told their children and from them a nation, a nation of degenerates, came? No. Missionaries came to the kings and converted them, and the king said to the ignorant masses: this is it, accept it. The masses didn't know what to do; if the king tells them to accept, they accept it. It's the only way you'll keep your head on your shoulders.

- **Testimony of Millions**

But, *lehavdil elef havdolos,* when our nation heard the Voice of Hashem at Har Sinai, millions heard that Voice! Millions! Millions claim that they were there! That's our history! They saw with their eyes! The only case in history where such a claim is made is by the Jewish people because such a story can't be falsified.

And therefore, when you tell your children about Har Sinai, who told *you* about these things? Millions of parents told it to millions of their children. Children heard from their father what he saw. The mother also spoke about it. Always! They heard it from their grandparents too. And so they believed them; it went into their blood and later, when they had families of their own, they told their children what they had heard from *eidim neemanim.*

It's a remarkable thing, unparalleled, unequaled in history. And that's why we have the confidence to say it boldly to the whole world. Our tradition is intact, *ben achar ben, bas achar bas* and that's why we'll never stop testifying.

And therefore, we get up in the shul and we say with confidence, with boldness, with veracity and assuredness and conviction, **וזאת התורה אשר שם משה לפני בני ישראל** – *'This Torah, these words,* **אשר שם משה לפני בני ישראל** *– it's the same Torah that our forefathers received on Har Sinai!'* And nobody and nothing will ever budge us from this truth.

The Gemara in Shabbos (89a) tells us the source of Antisemitism. The world doesn't hate the Jews because of anything we do, and there is no rational argument we can give them which will make them hate us less.

What is the source of this hatred? Har Sinai. Har Sinai is called thus because it brought about "sinah," hatred of the gentiles for us. Rashi there explains it's because THEY didn't accept the Torah there, and we did. They are jealous of the ability we have to rise above the physical world and cleave to Hashem.

Rav Yonasan Eibschutz writes in Yaaros Dvash that the days that he Davened to Hashem for success in his learning, pouring his heart out in tears – on these days he merited great success, much more than on days that he did not Daven with such fervour.

"Don't think that the key to success in Torah depends on intelligence. Our Tefillos are what make the difference. I got to where I am not through my intelligence, but how much I prayed for success in learning."

The Weekly Vort - The Water Carrier's Gift

In Radin, Poland, lived a pious and kind Jew named Gedalya (Kaplan), the water carrier. Radin was home to the **Chofetz Chaim** and his renowned yeshiva, which was then instituting the "teg" system—assigning students to eat in different homes on specific days. When Gedalya heard about it, he approached the Chofetz Chaim and protested: "It's *bittul Torah*. I'll volunteer to collect the meals so the students can stay in yeshiva and continue learning."

Moved by Gedalya's love of Torah, the Chofetz Chaim accepted his offer. Day after day, for years, Gedalya made the rounds in the community, picking up meals to save the students valuable time for learning. When he became seriously ill and passed away young, the Chofetz Chaim personally cared for his widow and two daughters, grateful for all Gedalya had done.

Years later, in 1911, that love of Torah bore fruit. The Chofetz Chaim suggested a *shidduch* between Gedalya's daughter and a young *talmid chochom*, **R' Moshe Schneider**. He went on to become a *Gedol B'Torah*, founding a yeshivah in Germany and later in London, known as "Schneider's Yeshivah," where many future *Gedolim* learned as *talmidim*. His wife stood faithfully by his side, having inherited her father's deep love of Torah. (Reflections of the Maggid)

וַיִּקֶר מִקְרֶהָ חֶלְקַת הַשָּׂדֶה - ***"..her fate made her happen"*** (Rus 2:3).

The Malbim notes that the fact that Rus was gleaning in the field of Boaz would seem to be nothing more than coincidence. The *pasuk* stresses, however, that it was **her** fate, i.e., the apparent coincidence was divinely arranged with her benefit in mind. By "chancing" upon the field of Boaz, she was implementing the Heavenly plan to build the royal house of Dovid. (Artscroll)



A Thought For Going Into Shavuos

Everyone is aware that the High Holiday period between Rosh HaShannah and Yom Kippur is a period of judgment (Din). However, not everyone is aware that the **Ari z"l and the Shaloh HaKodesh** write that there is judgment on Shavuos as well.

On Shavuos there is Heavenly Judgment that determines the degree of success each of us will have in pursuing our Torah studies during the coming year. Just as the amount of material sustenance each of us will receive for the next 12 months is determined on Rosh HaShannah, so too the amount of spiritual sustenance each of us will receive from our Torah study during the next year is determined on the Day of the Giving of the Torah.

We know how to prepare for Rosh HaShannah. We know we are to pray, we know we are to do mitzvos. These things determine the nature of the Judgment we receive during the season of the Days of Awe. What are we supposed to do on Shavuos in order that the Almighty will say "if this is how he acts then he deserves to be given a year of success in his learning endeavors?"

The Sefarim say that a person's judgment in this matter is dependent on his desire (cheshek) to learn. The more he wants it, the more he shows the Ribono shel Olam somehow that this is important to him and he wants success in his learning endeavors, the more he will receive it. It is this "cheshek to learn" that determines the extent to which the Almighty will allot him success in learning.

This is what we have to demonstrate over the next few days leading up to Shavuos – our desire to learn! One develops a 'cheshek' if one comes to an appreciation of what Torah is and of how important

Torah is to his life. Somehow, in these next few days, we must spend time thinking of the role Torah plays in our lives, the importance that it has. In this way, we can sincerely express to the Ribono shel Olam our desire to grow in learning.

The Chazaon Ish says the blessing of "Ata Chonen L'Adam Da'as" is the blessing where a person should pray for Divine aid in his Torah learning. In this blessing, in the blessing Ahava Rabbah in the morning, and in the blessing Ahavas Olam in the evening – these are the places where our focus and sincerity will be able to demonstrate how seriously we are asking for Divine Assistance in being able to learn and attach ourselves to G-d's Torah.

May we have an elevation this Shavuos and this coming year, may we merit an increase in our level of Torah, Fear of G-d, and performance of mitzvos.

"Hashem is with me; I have no fear." (Tehillim 118:6) When a person requires surgery, they search for the best surgeon. However, when someone steps onto a plane, does anyone ask about the pilot? Not only do we not look for the best pilot, but nobody even bothers to ask who the pilot is. For surgery, people search far and wide for the most skilled surgeon; why isn't it so when it comes to a pilot? The explanation is simple: The pilot is flying together with you; the surgeon isn't performing surgery on himself! The surgeon operates on the patient, not himself. The fact that the pilot is flying together with you assures you that he knows what he's doing – his own life depends on it!

The verse says, "Hashem is with me" – Hashem is flying together with you! - He is with you wherever you are, in every situation. Don't be afraid! ~ Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.

Knowing Your Tachlis and Purpose In Life

The Medrash Rabbah in Parshas Bamidbar says that when *Hashem's* Presence descended upon Har Sinai , 22 rivivos (units) of 10,000 *malachim* descended with Him – each with flags.

This is a strange statement because a flag is a physical item and *malachim* are entirely spiritual. *Klal Yisrael* saw this sight and – the Medrash adds – they began to passionately long for flags for themselves. *Hashem* responded that since they longed for flags, He would grant their wish. Therefore, He gave them the flags.

The question, of course, is: What is so great about flags and especially the nuance of the language of the Medrash – "they passionately longed for Flags" (*nis'avee'sem*)?

The answer is that flags represent a person's *tachlis* (purpose). Even though *malachim* are spiritual beings, when it says they each had their own flag, it really means that each had their own purpose. Chazal say in many places that every *malach* has only one purpose. They only do one thing at a time – that is their sole focus. Every *malach* knows its job and its designated role in existence. When the Medrash says that *Klal Yisrael* "passionately longed" for flags, it does not mean physical flags. They longed for the ability to know their purpose in life and their designated mission.

This is one of the greatest gifts that a person can have in this world – to know what he is supposed to do. In Parshas VaYechi, when Yaakov Avinu takes all his children beside his deathbed and gives them his "blessing," we are often left wondering – what kind of blessings are these? Many of them are not really blessings. The answer is that he tells them about their *techunas ha'nefesh* – the inner qualities of their souls – their essence. He tells them about their strengths and their weaknesses. He tells them what they are supposed to be doing. That is the biggest *bracha* in life – to know what you are supposed to do.

So, the source of the envy that *Klal Yisrael* had for the *malachim* was that they saw that every *malach* understood and was focused on their dedicated mission. This is the attribute for which they longed. *Hashem* said "This is what I am going to do. I am going to give **you** flags as well and group you with others who have the same *tachlis* (purpose) and the same *tafkid* (role). This is a great blessing.

I would like to conclude with an interesting story brought down by the **Tolna Rebbe**, which speaks to this point.



There was a *Yekkishe Yid* (Jew of German descent) named Rav Avrohom Hoffman, who lived in Yerushalayim and worked for the government. He was in *Eretz Yisrael* both before and during World War II. After the war, when Holocaust survivors began arriving in *Eretz Yisrael*, Gerer Chassidim (from Poland) were among those who came. The first time Rav Hoffman saw Gerer Chassidim walking down the streets of Yerushalayim, he saw that their pants were tucked into their socks. For him, this was the strangest thing in the world. Why stick your pant legs into your socks?

He met two Gerer Chassidim and he asked them about this strange practice. They explained, "In Poland, the streets were not paved. The roads were muddy. Socks cost less than pants. If something has to get dirty, better the socks should get dirty than the pants. That is why we wear our pants inside our socks."

Rav Hoffman said, "I have news for you. This is not Poland. The streets in Yerushalayim are not muddy and there is no reason to wear your socks in your pants anymore." This logical observation made no impression whatsoever upon them. Sometime after that, Rav Avrohom Hoffman met the **Gerer Rebbe (the Beis Yisrael)**. He figured that since he could not get a satisfactory answer from the *chassidim*, he would ask the Rebbe himself about this strange custom.

The Rebbe answered: "This is our flag!" This is part of the identification uniform of a Gerer Chassid. When he wears his pants in this fashion, he is proclaiming "I am a Chossid of the Gerer Rebbe." This is my group and this is my *tachlis*. That is what I am proud of and that is the way I fly my flag – by wearing my pants inside my socks.

This is what flags are all about – being part of something that is bigger than the person himself, being part of a group, knowing the *tachlis* of the group, and knowing one's *tafkid* within a specific group.

Shavuos: Reenactment Rather than Mere Commemoration

When we read the *Aseres HaDibros* [the 10 Sayings, which are commonly called the "Ten Commandments"], there are two sets of *trop* [cantillation notes] that are associated with these Biblical passages. The first is known as *ta'am elyon* [the upper notes] and the second is known as *ta'am tachton* [the lower notes]. When we read the *Aseres HaDibros* publically (i.e., with a minyan), as we do on the

Yom Tov of Shavuos, we read them using the *ta'am elyon*. When someone is merely reviewing the Torah portion privately, he reads them with the *ta'am tachton*.

The Chizkuni writes that when we read the *Aseres HaDibros* on Shavuos, we read with *ta'am elyon*. One of the distinguishing features of the *ta'am elyon* is that it parses the associated *pesukim* into ten distinct "commandments" (something which is not apparent when reading with the *ta'am tachton*).

Regardless of our custom, the Chizkuni is informing us of a fantastic concept: *Krias HaTorah* on Shavuos is a reenactment of *Kabalas HaTorah*. On the original day of Shavuos, the Almighty gave us **Ten** "Commandments". So, when we read the Torah on Shavuos, we need to reenact the original scenario. Therefore, we read the Torah portion in a way that emphasizes that there were **ten** *dibros*. For this reason, on Shavuos we read "*Lo Sirtzach*" and "*Lo Sin'af*" as two separate *pesukim;* even though when reading those *pesukim* otherwise, we read them together. There is no such thing in the Torah as a two-word *pasuk*! On Shavuos we are not reading *pesukim;* we are reading **Ten** Commandments.

The Chizkuni adds (this is not our custom) that on Shavuos, when we read the *Aseres HaDibros*, we read it with the *Targum* [Aramaic translation] as well. This too, is part of the reenactment of the *Har Sinai* experience.

Rav Issac Bernstein quotes from a Rav Zev Wolfe Hildenheimer that the latter found a 750-year-old *Shavuos Machzor,* and in that *Machzor*, not only did the Torah reading include the *Aseres HaDibros*, but it also included the *Targum* for the *Aseres HaDibros* along with the reading. This answers one of the great questions of life: Why on earth, on Shavuos, do we recite *Akdamos* prior to the Torah reading? At six o'clock in the morning, when people can hardly keep their eyes open (following being up all night at a *Leil Shavuos Mishmor*), the *Baal*

Koreh reads *Akdomos*. 99.9% of the people in shul do not have a clue about the meaning of *Akdomos* (even with an Art Scroll). Where did this come from? There is no comparable public reading the entire rest of the year!

The answer is that this came from the ancient Jewish custom that on Shavuos they read the Revelation narration including the *Aseres Hadibros* just as Hashem gave it to the Jewish people through Moshe, when they translated the entire section! As a preface to the *Targum* they were going to say during the Torah reading itself, they wrote something called *Akdomos Milin* [words of introduction]. This is how it happened on Har Sinai. This is the reason for *Akdomos*.

The question still is, when did it stop, such that we no longer read the *Targum* of the *Aseres HaDibros,* and we only say *Akdomos*? I don't know where or when that happened, but apparently it was sometime between 750 years ago and the modern era. But at least we understand the source.

Shavuos is a reenactment of *Kabbalas haTorah*. This is why the Abudrahm argues with the Rambam. The Rambam says that a person should **not** stand for the *Aseres HaDibros* (because we do not want to give the impression that some parts of Torah are more important than others). The Abudrahm insists that we **should** stand during the public recitation of the Revelation narrative on Shavuos because "they **stood** beneath the mountain" [Shemos 19:17] and we reenact that scenario with all its details.

We do not merely commemorate the giving of the Torah on Shavuos, we try to make it as real as possible, involving a total reenactment. Just as on Pesach we try to see ourselves as if we are actually leaving Egypt that night; so too, on Shavuos, we try to see ourselves as if we are standing by Har Sinai, receiving the Torah that very day!

Lucky Strike? No Way

I would like to share an insight on the Book of Rus, from a sefer entitled Ikvei Erev by Rav Azriel Langa, a student in the Mir Yeshiva in Europe. Rav Langa escaped through Shanghai with the rest of the Mir Yeshiva, came to America, and was an eighth grade Rebbe in Yeshivas Torah VoDaath. Unfortunately, Rav Langa never had any children. He left behind a number of manuscripts, which friends of the family recently published.

It says in Megillas Rus, **וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתָּבוֹא וַתְּלַקֵּט בַּשָּׂדֶה אַחֲרֵי הַקֹּצְרִים וַיִּקֶר מִקְרֶהָ חֶלְקַת הַשָּׂדֶה לְבֹעַז אֲשֶׁר מִמִּשְׁפַּחַת אֱלִימֶלֶךְ** "...and her fate made her happen upon a parcel of land, belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech" [Rus 2:3]. Rus and Naomi came back from Moav. They literally had nothing to eat. Rus starts picking the gleanings left for the poor (Leket, Shikcha, Peah) in the field of Boaz.

The pasuk uses a very unusual expression to describe what happened. "**וַיִּקֶר מִקְרֶהָ חֶלְקַת הַשָּׂדֶה לְבֹעַז**". "Vayiker mikreh" basically means "And it so happens (that she started picking in the field of Boaz)". We know that Boaz saw her. He was kind to her. Eventually Rus and Boaz married, and they were the ancestors of Dovid King of Israel, from whom the righteous Moshiach will eventually descend.

This is not "Vayiker mikreh". This was not happenstance. This was all pre-ordained. The Master of the World wanted Rus to be the Mother of Royalty.

Therefore, out of all the fields that Rus could have chosen, the Ribono shel Olam directed her to the field of Boaz. So why then does the pasuk use the expression "Vayiker mikreh chelkas haSader L'Boaz" as if this was a lucky chance – a shot in the dark? This was not "mikreh" [happenstance]. This was "Hashgacha" of the highest order! The Almighty is orchestrating the advent of Moshiach!

The answer is that this is a lesson. The lesson is that what appears to us as happenstance ("Mikreh") just LOOKS like that. It LOOKS

like a stroke of luck. However, it is not luck at all! It is all preordained and pre-planned.

Rabbi Langa writes from personal experience, "If a prophet would have predicted in Europe in 1930 that there would be a Holocaust in Europe and the entire student body of the Mir Yeshiva would manage to escape just in time, who would have believed him? Could anyone have predicted the amazing sequence of events and opportunities that enabled the salvation of the Yeshiva students?

(After the Soviets captured Eastern Poland including Vilna early in World War II, they planned to transfer Vilna to Lithuania. However, there was a window of opportunity prior to that transfer when travel was possible between Poland and Vilna. The Mir Yeshiva rushed to Vilna. After the Soviets transferred Vilna to Lithuania, travel between Vilna and Poland ceased. Anyone who was in Vilna was now in Lithuania and was at least temporarily out of harm's way.)

An amazing combination of permits and visas then enabled the escape of the Mir Yeshiva, which planted the seeds of Torah communities in America and Eretz Yisrael.

Rav Shach, Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, R' Nochum Parchovitz, R' Dovid Kronglass – all great future Torah leaders who were saved along with the Mir Yeshiva. Why? They were saved, in part, through an amazing sequence of events that included the timing of both the opening of the gates between Poland and Lithuania and the transfer of Vilna to Lithuania. If someone had predicted at the time that this political event would be a vital link in the chain that led to the salvation of Torah for Klal Yisrael, we might have dismissed him as delusional.

Events might look like ordinary. They may look like "luck," however; they are Hashgacha Pratis. The reason the pasuk in Rus uses these words is to tell us that regarding the history of Klal Yisrael – for good or for bad – nothing is "just a matter of luck".

The Preface to the Story of the Moshiach

On Shavuos we read the sefer of Rus. In spite of it being a small sefer, each chapter is "action packed". In the second chapter, the Navi begins by introducing us to Boaz. History is about to occur. Which history? This is the beginning of the history of the Moshiach. We are about to learn of the first meeting between Boaz and Rus -- the union that would eventually produce King David, from whom the Moshiach will descend.

Each pasuk is laden with great symbolism and significance. When Boaz first arrives "on stage," we learn **וְהִנֵּה־בֹ֣עַז בָּ֔א מִבֵּ֖ית לֶ֑חֶם וַיֹּ֣אמֶר לַקּוֹצְרִ֗ים ה' עִמָּכֶם֙ וַיֹּ֣אמְרוּ לוֹ֔ יְבָרֶכְךָ֖ ה'** - ***"Behold, Boaz arrived from Bethlehem. He said to the harvesters, 'Hashem [G-d] be with you!' And they answered him 'May Hashem bless you!***' [Ruth 2:4]". Why is this exchange of greetings necessary to the plot?

If we were writing a play about this great historical event, would it be so crucial to insert the line "And Boaz came in and greeted his workers and asked, 'How are you?' and they responded 'Fine. How are you?'" This does not make for good script! And yet the Navi found it necessary to include this exchange of "Shalom Aleichem" in this historic chapter.

The Talmud [Makkos 23b] adds significance to this event by explaining that they were performing an enactment of the Court of Boaz. Early in Jewish history, it had not been the case that friends would greet each other with the expression ***"May G-d be with you***," using the 'real' name of G-d (rather than the substitute generic name 'HaShem,' meaning 'the Name').

A specific judicial enactment was required to permit this form of greeting. Prior to the time of Boaz, people never greeted each other in this way, and subsequent to the time of Boaz we no longer perform this enactment. This was a short-term "emergency" enactment.

What was the reason behind this enactment? I saw an insight into this enactment in a commentary on the book of Rus, called **Nachlas Yosef**. At this particular time, the Jewish people were in a sorry state. There was a terrible famine. - The times were so bad that a leader of the people (Elimelech, husband of Naomi) could forsake his people and go off to, of all places, Moav. This was symptomatic of what was wrong with the Jewish people at the time.

What did the "Moetzes Gedolei HaTorah" [Council of Great Torah Sages] of that era decide to do to remedy the situation? They decided that everyone should greet each other with the actual name of G-d.

The import of this enactment was that every single Jew is so important and so holy that it is worthy for him to be greeted with none less than the actual name of G-d. This is a very different way of greeting a person than merely saying "Hi".

This enactment changed the mood. It reestablished the easily forgotten concept that every person is created b'Tzelem Elokim [in the Image of G-d]. This enactment emphasized, "All Jews are princes" and they deserve to be treated as such. The psychological impact of greeting someone with the Name of G-d had an entirely different meaning than that of just saying hello.

The enactment hammered home the idea that we must be careful of how we treat people. People are not merely intelligent animals. The recognition that people are b'Tzelem Elokim suggests an entirely different approach as to how to relate to others. This was the enactment of the Court of Boaz.

The Medrash says that when the time comes for us to move on to the next world (after 120 years, G-d willing), we will all be asked two questions: 'Did you make G-d your King?' and 'Did you make your friend your King?' In other words, did you treat everyone like you would treat the Queen [king] of England, I'Havdil?

A new era was beginning. The times necessitated a new era with a new way of dealing with each other. That is why this chapter is the introduction to the story of the Moshiach. The story of Moshiach must begin with greeting our friends with the Name of G-d, indicating the importance and prestige of our friends, and indicating that they deserve to be treated like Princes.

This, too, must be our preface to the coming of Moshiach, so that after 120 years, we will be able to respond in the affirmative to that question 'Did you anoint your fellow man?'



Midei Shabbos BeShabbato - Rabbi Eliezer Chrysler

No Halochos in Megilas Rus? [*Mo'adim ba'Halachah*].

This Megilah, says R. Zeira, contains neither Tum'ah nor Taharah, neither Heter nor Isur. So why was it written? To teach us the reward of those who perform Chesed (**Yalkut Shimoni**).

This statement, says the Mo'adim ba'Halachah, is puzzling, to say the least. To begin with, there is one Halachah which Chazal learn from it openly and unambiguously, because it is the sole source in the entire T'nach. It is the Halachah pertaining to Kinyan Chalipin (the kinyan of exchange Rus 4:7). - And there are many others.

Aside from Chalipin and its detailed Halochos, the Chachamim learn no less than six additional Halochos from Megilas Rus. They learn ...

1. ... the prohibition of leaving Eretz Yisrael, unless certain criteria are met - from Elimelech, Machlon and Chilyon, who died in Mo'av primarily for leaving Eretz Yisrael, despite the fact that a famine was in progress at the time.

2. ... the obligation to marry in one's old age, even though one has been married in one's youth and even had children from one's first wife - from Bo'az, who married Rus in his old age, even though, when he was younger, he had fathered many children from his first wife.

3. ... that Birchas Chasanim (Chupah and Sheva B'rachos) requires ten people - from Bo'az at the end of the Megilah.

4. ... various details regarding the Dinim of Geirus (conversion), such as the obligation to teach a would-be Ger a variety of Halochos, some less-important and some more important, and that one neither makes it too difficult for him nor is one overly fussy with him - from Na'omi's dealings with Rus prior to her (Rus') conversion.

5. ... that one is permitted to greet a person using the Name of Hashem - from Bo'az (who actually initiated the custom and) who greeted his harvesters with the Name of Hashem.

6. ... that one should wear nicer clothes on Shabbos than one wears during the week - from Naomi, who told Rus to put on her clothes before going down to the barn where Bo'az was sleeping. She can only have meant that Rus should change into nicer clothes.

In addition to the above, Chazal learn many lessons in Mussar and Midos from the Megilah. For example, they learn from the fact that Bo'az remained in the barn the night after winnowing the harvest, that a Talmid-Chacham should not go out alone at night.

And from Bo'az, who bade the ten elders at his wedding with Rus to be seated, they learn that in the presence of a person greater than oneself, one is forbidden to sit down without his express permission. But then, the Mo'adim ba'Halachah explains, as far as Midos is concerned, the main message of the Megilah concerns the Midah of Chesed, as we wrote at the beginning.

And it is from Bo'az' statement to Rus "Hashem will repay your good deed and your reward will be complete from Hashem ... under whose wing you came to take shelter" that they extrapolate the power of those who perform Chesed.

Megilas Rus, What The Medrash Says

- **Hashem's Chesed**

וַיָּמֻתוּ גַּם־שְׁנֵיהֶם מַחְלוֹן וְכִלְיוֹן - *"And also they died"* (1:5).

From the word "also", the Medrash learns that Machlon and Chilyon did not die before they had lost all their property. First their horses, their donkeys and their camels died. This should have served as a warning to induce them to mend their ways (to divorce their non-Jewish wives and return to Eretz Yisrael).

And it was only when they refused to take the hint that Hashem struck them down.

- **Tzum Dritten Mohl! Going, Going, Gone!**

שֹׁבְנָה בְנֹתַי לֵכְנָ -*"Return my daughters, take leave* ... " (1:12).

This was the third, and last time, says the Medrash, that Naomi used this expression. - We can learn from here (see Torah Temimah) that one is obligated to dissuade a would-be convert to go through with his plans only three times. Should he still persist, then one is duty-bound to accept him, without another word.

- **The Power of Tears - וַתִּשֶּׂנָה קוֹלָן, וַתִּבְכֶּינָה עוֹד -*"And they raised their voices and wept a lot*"** (1:14).

Rava explained that Orpah emitted four tears, and it was on account of those four tears that she merited giving birth to four mighty men, Golyas and his three brothers Saf, Madon and Yishbi.

The gates of tears, say Chazal, are never shut ... never mind who it is who is crying, provided the tears are real. No genuine tears ever get lost!

- **It Didn't Take Long!**

הִנֵּה שָׁבָה יְבִמְתֵּךְ, אֶל־עַמָּהּ, וְאֶל־אֱלֹהֶיהָ - "And Naomi said 'Behold your 'rival' has returned to her people and to her gods ... " (1:15).

The moment Orpah returned to her people, she returned to her gods, Chazal explain. Orpah had been married to Chilyon for ten years, yet she had hardly turned her back on Naomi, and she had already relinquished all that she had learned.

That's how the Yeitzer-ha'Ra works. He makes you forget in a few minutes what took ten years to learn.

As Good as New

The Kisvei Ari says that when Yom-Tov arrives each year, history repeats itself and whatever happened on the original day (Yetzias Mitzrayim on Pesach, Matan Torah on Shavu'os) happens again.

The question arises however, how it is possible to receive the Torah on Shavu'os, seeing as we already have it?

We can do so, says the Ma'or Einayim, by applying what Chazal say 'Everyday Torah and Mitzvos should be fresh like the day on which they were given'. Taking this upon oneself on Shavu'os, the anniversary of Matan Torah, is akin to accepting the Torah afresh.

The Greatest Kindness

The Hagahos Minhagim ascribes the Minhag of eating milky on Shavu'os to the colour of milk. White, he explains, hints at the Midah of Chesed. Giving us His holy Torah was a supreme act of Chesed, inasmuch as it reveals to us all the Divine secrets.

The first letters of the words in Tehilim (92:3) **לְהַגִּיד בַּבֹּקֶר חַסְדֶּךָ** spell 'Cholov' (milk), a hint connecting Chesed and milk.

בס"ד

למודי משה

A Novel Insight into Why We Decorate Our *Shul's* With Trees

The *Rema* in *Hilchos* Shavuos (*Orach Chaim* 493:3) writes: "The custom is to spread grass(es) on Shavuos in the *shuls* and in houses, as a remembrance to the joy of Mattan Torah". Due to this, many *shuls* decorate the *shul* with various trees, flowers, grasses etc. Many reasons have been offered to explain this *minhag*.

Last year I heard a very novel and insightful reason for this *minhag* from **R' Shragi Kallus *shlita***. The Gemara in Shabbos (30b) discusses in great length what happened on the day that Dovid HaMelech died. The Gemara says that Dovid knew that he was supposed to die on Shabbos, so he made sure to toil in Torah every second of the day, and this way the *Maloch HaMoves* wouldn't be able to get him.

The *Maloch HaMoves* waited patiently for a time when Dovid HaMelech stopped learning, however, Dovid just kept learning and learning, and there was no time for the *Maloch HaMoves* to attack.

Eventually, the *Maloch HaMoves* lost patience and started doing various tricks to disturb Dovid, but again nothing was working. Eventually, he made a loud rustling noise in the trees, and Dovid went outside to look. Whilst going outside he tripped on a step, and due to the shock, he stopped learning for a second, and at that second the *Maloch HaMoves* took his life.

Because Dovid got distracted and stopped learning for a second his life was taken. We see from here how scary it is to stop learning, even for a second.

R' Kallus suggests that to remind us of this Gemara we adorn our *shuls* with trees on Shavuos. By decorating the *shul* with trees, we

are reminded of this Gemara and realize the severity of interrupting our learning even for a second. Really, we should decorate our *shuls* and *botei midrashim* all year round to remind us of this, however, at least on Shavuos the day of Matan Torah, and the day which is all about Torah, it's of primary importance to have this lesson at the forefront of our mind.

Men Darff Liggen In Gesheft

Rav Gifter once travelled to Mexico to collect money on behalf of the Telshe Yeshiva. Rav Gifter wanted to see a certain individual who was apparently a very wealthy man, in order to ask him for a donation for the Yeshiva. Try as he might, whenever Rav Gifter would come to the man's house, the man was never home. Whenever Rav Gifter appeared — morning, afternoon, evening, or weekends — Rav Gifter was told the fellow was not home — he was "in the office".

Finally, Rav Gifter went to the man's factory. He camped out there early in the morning and was finally able to catch the man. Rav Gifter told him, "I do not understand you. Morning, evening, night — you are never home! What is going to be? What is going to be with your family?"

The person responded to Rav Gifter (in Yiddish): "Men darff liggen in gesheft," loosely translated as, "in order to be successful in business, 'one must live in his business!'"

I do not know if Rav Gifter collected anything in Mexico City during that trip, but when he came back to the Telshe Yeshiva, he gave a *mussar schmooze* to the students and kept repeating this phrase "you need to be totally consumed by your business."

Rav Gifter used this sentence repeatedly as a metaphor for his own students, and for many other Torah students from other yeshivas: "If a person wants to be successful in Torah learning, he must LIVE

in Torah 24/7." Becoming an accomplished scholar in Torah learning requires total devotion. This was the biggest treasure Rav Gifter found in Mexico City — the lesson that when one is devoted to an enterprise — be it business or (*l'havdil*) learning Torah — it must totally consume him.



Chasunah Clothing



From time to time, **Reb Gamliel Rabinowitz** would be visited by a struggling teen. The boy had found his place among the hippies, but every so often he would come to request a *brachah*. Reb Gamliel's *gabbai* tried persuading him not to grant the boy entry, reasoning that it was disrespectful to tend to the needs of a boy who intentionally rebelled. It was a disgrace for his parents, a disgrace to his family, and disgrace to the Rav to extend any admiration to such a rebel, the *gabbai* argued. He must be distanced as much as possible until he shifts his direction in life.

But Reb Gamliel felt otherwise. "He has very little — if any — connection to Yiddishkeit. Severing his last ties can destroy his very last hope for a return. He doesn't connect with anyone other than me, and keeping up this relationship can influence him to change. We

have to keep him, and keep him strong." And so, Reb Gamliel kept extending his wholehearted *brachos* to this teen.

One time, the boy came for a *brachah* with a new appearance. His long dangling ponytail was cut to size, his tattered jeans were substituted with respectable pants, and in place of a thrift-shop T-shirt was a neatly pressed shirt. Someone, or something, must've caused a change. A drastic one.

When he came into Reb Gamliel's room, he was welcomed with the same old smile, and Reb Gamliel offered him a *brachah*, shared some humor, and as usual made him feel comfortable. As he was heading to the door, Reb Gamliel posed the million-dollar question: "What supercharged you into such a dramatic change? The despaired look that used to mask your face is replaced with a glowing, satisfied look. There's no trace of misery crossing your face. How?"

"Let me tell you, "the boy replied, with tears quickly flowing from his eyes onto his clean shirt.

"Several days before Shavuos, I began reflecting on what we say on that holy day: '**תֹּאַר כַּלָּה מְאֹד נִתְעַלָּה**' — we are, in a sense, the mate of the Ribono Shel Olam. As part of Klal Yisrael, me and every part of this nation will in some respect be the *kallah* of Hashem. How will it appear if I show up at the *chasunah* with the shabby clothes that I clothe myself with? That would be very disrespectful. No *kallah* shows up to her special day with such an appearance.

"I thus concluded that, at least superficially, I must change, even if internally I am totally disconnected. But once I changed my external look, I began reflecting on my internal self as well. Changing just my outside didn't suffice. I began with learning just a few minutes every day and performing a minimal number of mitzvos that came my way. Slowly but surely, I felt my heart, which had once been filled with despair and pain, start filling itself with happiness. My feet, which had carried me sluggishly, became energetic. And so I stand here,

climbing the ladder, rank by rank, step by step, determined to do the best I can."

Reb Gamliel was in total shock. With a heart full of joy, Reb Gamliel responded, "The *brachah* I gave you beforehand doesn't suffice. I must offer more." He delivered another *brachah*, but this time, it was with a heart overflowing with happiness, and he *bentched* him well on his new journey. He was beaming to see firsthand the impact that this mindset had on this boy, and how he was able to tap into the spark of his *neshamah* that had not been extinguished.

The Message of the Book of Ruth – Rabbi Yissachar Frand



I found the following idea in Rabbi Mirsky's sefer on the Jewish holidays:

On Shavuos, we read the book of Rus, written by the prophet Shmuel. Rus is one of the 24 books of the Bible. It is a beautiful story. But what is so vital about this narrative that it must be part of Tanach? Furthermore, why do we specifically read it on the holiday of Shavuos?

Rav Shlomo Alkabez, in his commentary to Rus, writes "This megillah was written to authenticate King David and to publicize the concept that a Moabite woman may marry a Jew. Shmuel wrote this book to pre-empt any murmuring that might threaten the monarchy of the anointed king (David)."

There was controversy as to whether Boaz was permitted to marry Rus. Rus was from Moab. The simple reading of "Neither an

Ammonite nor a Moabite shall enter the Congregation of the L-rd" [Devorim 23:4] would seem to preclude her ability to marry Boaz or any other native-born Jew. There was a dispute that raged for generations whether the prohibition included female Moabites or just the males. Boaz made a bold move to demonstrate the permissibility of such a union, even though the closer relative refused to enter such a marriage out of fear that it was prohibited.

Shmuel, the prophet decided to set the record straight and recorded Boaz's public decision to marry this woman — in Tanach. This explains why Rus is read on Shavuos. The story of Boaz's bold decision to marry Rus dramatizes his faith in the veracity of the Oral Tradition. Boaz had faith in the "Halacha of Moshe tracing back to Sinai" that the interpretation of the above cited pasuk in Devorim is "An Ammonite male is forbidden, but not an Ammonite female; a Moabite male is forbidden, but not a Moabite female. "

When a Jew sits down on Shavuos, marking receipt of the Torah, he is confronted with the question of why Boaz did marry Rus. Why was he so confident that he was allowed to marry her? The answer is that he knew it was permissible because of the Oral Law. Shavuos is not merely the holiday celebrating receipt of the Written Torah. As indicated by the story of Rus, Shavuos is also the holiday when we celebrate the receipt of and the veracity of the Oral Torah.

The issue of the veracity of the Oral Torah was an issue in Talmudic times and it is an issue in modern times as well. When we tell people "the Torah says such and such," they question us because they cannot find it in the Written Torah. So much of the divisions that we have with our non-observant brethren boil down to this point: Is there an Oral Law or not?

On Shavuos, we come to this clear understanding that Torah means the Written Torah PLUS the Oral Torah. There is no better narrative than the Megillah of Rus to drive home this lesson.

The Book of Psalms Reflects the Strength of Its Author's Great-Grandfather

The Talmud teaches [Bava Basra 91a] that Boaz – the great grandfather of Dovid HaMelech [King David] – made 120 celebrations for his various children. We are taught he had 30 sons and 30 daughters. He married off all 60 children and not only did he make a celebration for the wedding, but he also made a big celebration for the engagement party as well.

He invited everyone in town to each of these 120 parties – everyone that is except an undistinguished, childless, Jew named Manoach. Manoach eventually became the father of a son who grew up to be the great Shimshon haGibor, leader of the Jewish people.

According to the Gemara, Boaz figured that since Manoach was childless, he would never make any weddings and would not be able to reciprocate. That was why he did not invite him. The Talmud relates that, as apparent punishment, all of Boaz's 60 children predeceased him.

This Gemara is amazingly difficult. Boaz was a righteous person. He was the great grandfather of King David. What does the Talmud mean that he did not invite Manoach because he did not expect to be invited back to the weddings of Manoach's children? Was Boaz, chas v'Shalom, too cheap to add one more couple to his guest list?

The Maharsha provides us with an insight. He writes that in those days, people were so loath to accepting any type of gift from their friends and neighbors that one did not even go to someone's wedding celebration unless he could reciprocate at a later date. Only then would one avoid the stigma of being a "freeloader". Boaz, knowing that Manoach had no children and could not reciprocate, did not invite him. It was not a matter of Boaz being cheap, but rather he

wanted to spare Manoach the awkwardness of being invited to a wedding he could not attend without appearing to be a freeloader!

Apparently, Manoach did feel pain that he was not invited and because of the pain that Boaz unintentionally caused Manoach, he buried his own 60 children.

After Boaz lost his 60 children, he also lost his wife. The commentaries tell us that the "commotion in the city" on the day that Naomi and Rus returned to Bais-Lechem [Ruth 1:19] was because the funeral of Boaz's wife was taking place that very day.

Boaz lost his sixty children and then became a widower. What is such a person supposed to do? Conventional wisdom is that he is supposed to roll over and die. What is there to live for? Imagine it! Heaven Forbid!

Boaz did not do that. What did he do? He remarried. He tried to rebuild. He had a child (Oved), who had a child (Yishai), who had a child (Dovid), who became the founder of the Davidic Dynasty.

That ability to not give up in despair, in the face of overwhelming tragedy, is the strength of the book of Tehillim. When Jews are desperate, what do we grab? We grab the book of Psalms, written by this very Dovid HaMelech, the great-grandson of Boaz. Where does the inner strength of Sefer Tehillim come from? It comes from Boaz. Boaz had the ability to cling to hope in the face of tremendous tragedy.

We pick up a Tehillim and read a chapter. We have an affinity for this special volume even when all hope seems lost because we intuitively know who wrote it and we know the story of where he came from. It is the power and the never-give-up-hope attitude of Boaz that infuses the book of Tehillim with the inner dynamism that even when times are desperate, we turn to it as a source of comfort and a source of strength.

The Shelah HaKadosh writes (Mesechta Shavuos, 30b) that every year, on Shavuos, one is judged whether he has applied himself properly to Torah study and keeping Mitzvos properly. If Hashem sees that this Shavuos we commit ourselves to learn with fewer distractions, we will - Be'ezras Hashem - merit a favorable judgment.

May we be zocheh to much success in our Torah growth which will surely result in success in all else!

Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

"In Hallel we say – 'Ana Hashem Hoshia Na – Please Hashem save us now!', and immediately follow it with, Ana Hashem Hatzlicha Na – Please Hashem, bring us success now!'

Indeed, in order to attain salvation, we require hatzlachah – Success…" ~ Harav Dovid of Shidlovza.

CONGREGATION ISRAEL OF SPRINGFIELD

Rav Eli Mansour

Megillat Rut tells the inspiring story of how Rut refused to allow Naomi to return alone to Eretz Yisrael, and insisted on joining her despite her state of impoverishment. After arriving in Bet-Lechem, Rut goes to collect stalks of grain that were left behind during the harvest, which the Torah requires leaving for the poor. She happened to collect in the field of Boaz, a relative of Naomi's deceased husband, who cares for Rut and eventually marries her.

While telling this emotional story, the Megilla interjects a brief conversation that seems unnecessary as it has no effect on the progression of events. We are told that when Boaz arrived at his field to oversee the harvest, he went over to his workers and

greeted them with the words, "Hashem Imachem" – "May Hashem be with you." The workers then responded, "Yevarechecha Hashem"

The question naturally arises as to why the Megilla found it necessary to add this brief account. Why is it important for us to know how Boaz greeted his workers, and how they replied?

The Midrash tells that Boaz, the leading Rabbi of his time, issued an edict that people should greet each with Hashem's Name. Although it is generally forbidden to use Hashem's Name when exchanging friendly greetings, Boaz made a special enactment that this should be done. This was a time of great hardship and sorrow, as a grave famine struck the country, and Elimelech, the wealthiest man to whom people looked for support and assistance, abandoned his nation and went to live in the neighboring, hostile country of Moab. The people were anxious and despondent.

In an effort to lift the people's spirits, Boaz instructed everybody to greet each other warmly and respectfully, using Hashem's Name. He wanted people to treat each other with respect and honor, to make other people feel that they are even worthy of having Hashem's Name associated with them.

The way to uplift people enduring hardship is to give them respect and treat them with importance, to make them feel that we think highly of them. This is why we read about Boaz's greeting to his workers. He treated his workers with respect and dignity, and even uttered Hashem's Name when greeting them, in order to make them feel important and thereby lift their spirits.

"Shavuos is the time when Heaven asks every Jew again: 'Will you make My Torah your life?' The answer is not given with words alone, but with the direction a person chooses for his heart." ~ Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe.



Why do we not find in the תורה that on שבועות the תורה was given to בני ישראל?

Answers the **כלי יקר**: **ה׳** did not want to write a date of **מתן תורה** since a person is to imagine on each and every day that the **תורה** was given TODAY. The truth is every day that a person learns **תורה** he is **זוכה** to understand and learn new things. So every day really is a **מתן תורה**. - That being the case, how can the **תורה** write a specific day for **מתן תורה**? (**כ״י ויקרא/כג-טז**)

Why is שבועות called זמן מתן תורתנו and not זמן קבלת תורתנו?

The **חידושי הרי״ם** answers: **מתן תורתנו** took place once, over 3300 years ago. However, **קבלת התורה** has never stopped since then. Every day a **איד** has to be the **מקבל תורה** again.

שבועות is the only time when a **קרבן** of **חמץ** is brought in the **בית המקדש (שתי הלחם)**. Why is that?

שבועות is the only **יום טוב** about which the **גמ׳** writes that everyone agrees it is imperative to eat nice foods: **הכל מודים בעצרת דבעינן נמי לכם**. Why is this?

ר׳ משה פיינשטיין זצ״ל explains: On the day of **מתן תורה** one must remind himself that the rules of **תורה** not only apply to the **רוחניות** parts of our life, but also to the **גשמיות** parts of life. Our physical needs also have to be taken care of.

על פי התורה chometzs more **גשמי** than **מצה**. On **שבועות**, which is a day of **מתן תורה**, the **קרבן** is made up of **חמץ** to stress and celebrate that **תורה** very much controls our **גשמיות**. On **שבועות**, everyone agrees that one must eat a **יום טוב סעודה**, to show that our whole life is governed **על פי תורה**. **(ילקוט לקח טוב)**

The **מנהג** is to decorate the **שול** on **שבועות** with grass and flowers as a **זכר** of the grass and flowers that were on **הר סיני**.

Asks **רבי יצחק זילברשטיין שליט"א**; Why don't we blow **שופר** on **שבועות** as a **זכר** of the **תקיעת שופר** that took place at **הר סיני**?

The reason why **ה'** surrounded **הר סיני** with grass and flowers was so that the **אידן** should be **בשמחה** whilst they were **מקבל** the **תורה**. That is why we make a **זכר** of the grass. To teach us that one must be **בשמחה** in order to be **מקבל** the **תורה**. - **(עלינו לשבח/ויקרא/תכד)**

Another reason for the **מנהג** of spreading out grass on **שבועות** is; **משה רבינו** was born on **ז' אדר** and he was kept in hiding for three months until **ז' סיון**. It was on **ז' סיון** that he was placed in the basket and put amongst the reeds -**וַתָּשֶׂם בַּסּוּף עַל-שְׂפַת הַיְאֹר**- reeds are long grass. In order to remember the great **נס** which happened to **משה** when he was placed amongst the grass, we spread out grass in our homes. **(ח' הרי"ם/לקוטי יהודה/כט)**



Did you know ...That the **חיד"א** writes that it is correct to learn **תהילים** on **שבועות**. As it is the **יאהרצייט** of **דוד המלך** on this day his **תהילים** is even more favorable. (**ציונים יקרים/מה**)

דוד המלך was **נפטר** on **שבועות**.

We all know the famous **גמ'** in **מסכת שבת דף ל** that **דוד המלך** asked **ה'** to tell him on which day of the week he was to be **נפטר**. Hashem replied, "You will be **נפטר** on **שבת**."

From then on, every Shabbos, **דוד המלך** sat and learnt **תורה** the entire day. On the day that it was destined for him to be **נפטר**, the **מלאך המות** stood before him, but was unable to overcome him as he was

learning. The **מלאך המות** went outside to the orchard and shook the trees. **דוד** went out to investigate. As he was going up the stairs, a stair caved in beneath him and he stopped learning. At that moment he was **נפטר**.

Asks **ר' לייב Gurwitz זצ"ל**: Why was it necessary for the **מלאך המות** to make a distraction outside in the orchard? Why couldn't he make some distraction in the **בית המדרש** that **דוד** would go to investigate and on the way do something that would cause him to stop learning for a second?

Answered **ר' לייב**: If a **איד** is learning in the **בית המדרש** the **מלאך המות** has no right to cause him to stop learning. However, once a **איד** has left the walls of the **בית המדרש** then his learning can be caused to be interrupted.

"The whole essence of Shavuos is not only the joy of receiving Torah, but the acceptance of responsibility. Torah was not given to angels but to human beings with struggles and weaknesses. The greatness of Kabbalas HaTorah lies in accepting the yoke of Torah despite difficulty, and in making Torah the center around which all of life revolves." ~ Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner

Don't Mess With Me!!

Once, a secular Jew approached **רבי שבתי יודלביץ** and told him, 'Times have changed and we must adapt the **תורה** to modern times.'

Instead of entering into a debate, **ר' שבתי** replied, 'Let me share with you a story: Today, when you would like to purchase a new pair of shoes you just enter a shoe shop and pick a pair off the shelf. It was not always like that. In the olden times one would have to go to the cobbler, have his feet measured and come back a week later to fetch his new pair of shoes.



It was a week before **פסח** and a man approached the cobbler holding the hand of his seven year old son, who was tremendously excited to be ordering a new pair of shoes. The cobbler stands him on a piece of paper and draws around the young boy's feet and tells them to come back on **ערב פסח** in the morning to fetch the new shoes.

The morning finally arrives and, with a big smile on his face, the boy enters the cobbler's shop. The cobbler walks over to the cupboard and removes a shining pair of new shoes and hands them to the boy to try on.

The first shoe slid on with no problem but the second shoe was not as obliging. The boy pushed and squeezed but to no avail. It would not go on. The cobbler realized that he had made a mistake and tried pushing and stretching but nothing helped. Embarrassed, the cobbler turned to the father and said, "I am terribly sorry about the faulty shoe but there is nothing I can do now before **יום טוב**. Straight after **יום טוב** this will be the first job I will see to."

The boy, who understood that his dream of having new shoes for **יום טוב** was about to be dashed, threw himself to the floor and broke out into uncontrollable sobs. The cobbler's heart was moved by the tears of the young innocent child and was desperate to come up with a solution.

After two minutes the cobbler gives a shout, "I have it! I have just thought of a brainwave!"

The child looked up in surprise and stopped crying. The cobbler motions to the child to take a seat and lift up his leg. The father asked in astonishment, "Why the leg?" The cobbler replied calmly,

"Don't worry. I just have to remove the small toe and then you will see that the shoe will fit perfectly. No problem! And your son will be able to have his shoes for **פסח**! And everyone will be happy!"

The father shouts, "Fool! Idiot! You want to chop of my son's toe so that the shoe which you messed up should fit!! The shoe must be cut to fit the foot not the foot cut to fit the shoe!!"

So too, concluded the **רבי שבתי**, the **תורה** is the **נשמה** of **כלל ישראל** and that is our whole existence. And you, with your stupidity and foolishness, would like to cut the **תורה** - the **נשמה** to fit in with the times. Fool! Idiot! The times must be made to fit in with the **תורה** not the **תורה** adapted to the times!

Help! What's My Name!?!

Rav Zicerman, who is a Rov in **ארץ ישראל**, related a story that took place whilst he was in the orphanage that the **Ponevezher Rov** had established. The Ponevezher Rov cared for orphans who had lost their parents during the war. He treated them like his own children, and many times he would give them a goodnight kiss and gives them words of **חיזוק**.

Once, the Ponevezher Rov walked into the dining room and announced, "Precious children! Can each one of you tell me your **פסוק** that you say at the end of **שמנה עשרה** that is a **רמז** to you name?". He then went around to each child listening to him as he recited his **פסוק**.

He then asked "does anyone know why we say the **פסוק**?"

To which one child replied "My Rebbe taught me that it comes from the **של"ה הק'** who writes that it is a **סגולה** for a person to be able to remember his name after 120 years when he stands before **בית של מעלה**."

The Ponevezher Rov nodded with his head as a sign of agreement. He then approached one of the children and said, "Tell me Moishele, how many times a day do you hear your name being called by your rebbes and your friends? Is it not dozens of times a day! If so," he said to the children, "let's try to understand together, how is it possible that your name, that you hear dozens of times a day, you will forget, but a **פסוק** that you recite three times a day you will remember?"

No one had an answer. He then told them to listen carefully to what he was about to say:

"When a person stands before **בית של מעלה**, the fright is so great that a person forgets his very own name! The only thing that stays ingrained in a person is the **תורה** that he learnt during his lifetime. Those **פסוקים** that we say at the end of **שמנה עשרה** are **תורה**. That is why you won't forget it, and it is through those **פסוקים** that you will be able to remember your name."

He then continued, "Children you should know, all the toys and games that you have here are **הֶבֶל הֲבָלִים**. The only thing that is everlasting is **תורה**. Learn the **תורה** with **שמחה** and **חיות**. Do **תורה** and remember what you have learnt and then you will be living a life of eternity."

A Small Chesed?

Rus came, along with the other poor people, to collect grain on Boaz's field. The Midrash (Midrash Rabba Rus 5:6) says that Boaz gave her a small amount of toasted grain.

Boaz only did a small chesed for Rus who needed a chesed. Yet he was richly rewarded, meriting to bring about the seed of Moshiach.

One should not say it is not worth offering help to others if I can only help a little bit or if I can only offer a small amount. That small amount is significant!

Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe (Alei Shur, Vol. I, p. 93) says that even the small things count. Even a nice word or a smile can give new life to someone who has given up on himself! A word of encouragement can bring joy. These are such small things. Yet they are so significant!

In general, there are so many acts of chesed that we can easily do if we look to notice what is needed!





Heaven Danced With You

Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov was born in 1698, and the Baal Shem Tov passed away at the age of 62 in the city of Medzhybizh in a little town in Ukraine. That happened on Shavuos. The Hebrew year was Tof Kof Chaf, which in English would be 1760.

Once the Baal Shem Tov Friday night made Kiddush, and he had his students around him, they were called the Chevraya Kadisha, the holy group.

As he was making Kiddush, he finished Kiddush, he drank, he gave the wine to the people around the table, and he started to laugh. This was very uncharacteristic. He was like kvelling and laughing, nobody made a joke, they didn't understand why he's laughing. They washed Hamotzi, ate fish, finished the fish, and he started to laugh again.

He was just laughing. It was very strange. They served the yoich, the soup, and then the chicken, and he starts laughing again. Nobody felt *azus* enough, I guess, to ask him, so nobody said anything.

But Motzaei Shabbos, one of his closer students went over after Ma'ariv, after Havdalah, and he said, Rebbe, can I ask a question? He said, you were laughing three times after Kiddush, after the fish, after the chicken. What was the laughter all about?

So the Baal Shem Tov said, go to the end of the city and ask Shabsi the bookbinder if he could come over. So he goes to Shabsi the bookbinder, and he says, the Baal Shem Tov asks if you could come over to the Beis Medrash, to the shul in Medzhybizh. So he comes over.

So the Baal Shem Tov tells him, Shabsi, can you share with everybody what happened Friday night in your house?

He says, Rebbe, don't embarrass me, I won't do it again.

He says, no, no, no, it's not embarrassing, I want everybody to know what happened, if you don't mind sharing what happened Friday night in your house. So he says, okay, I'll share.

You know, Rebbe, he says, for me and my wife, Shabbos is an amazing day. And I always saved up money from my bookbinding business to have a little extra to be able to buy wonderful, delicious food and delicacies to celebrate Shabbos. But you know, the last few weeks there's been heavy snows here in this part of the Ukraine, in Medzhybizh, and nobody came to bind their books, and I didn't have any savings. So it came before Shabbos, it was Thursday night, and I tell my wife, not one customer came, I don't even have a kopek. Kopek would be like a penny.

So my wife says, so what do you want to do Shabbos? I said, there's nothing, I can't even afford a candle to be able to light candles, never mind the piece of fish, never mind wine. So Thursday night we spoke and we realized this is the situation, and I shed a tear, my wife shed a tear, and we went to bed hungry. Friday morning I realized for me to stay in the house, it's going to be very depressing. So after Shacharis, I decided I'll just stay in shul and I'll learn.

And I learned the parsha of the week, and I was ma'avir asidra, and I said Shir HaShirim, and I went to the mikvah, and I prepared for Shabbos. And I knew that I'm coming home not to a regular Shabbos, but that's it, there's nothing to do.

So he says, after Ma'ariv I came home, and as I come close to my house I see there's light coming from our windows, beautiful light. I see candles glowing. I open the door and I smell, pshhh, like Seudas Shlomo Besha'ato, such a smell, Gan Eden, Livyoson veShor HaBar. I walk into the house and I see a tablecloth set up with foods and delicacies we never even dreamed of.

My wife prepared our Shabbos meal. So I look at her and I say, where did you get all of this? So she said, I saw your pain Thursday night, how pained you were. So after you went to shul Friday morning, I decided, let me search, maybe I have some old clothes that maybe have something expensive. And I found an old coat that I haven't used many years, and it had golden buttons. So I went immediately, I took off the buttons, and I went to the man who deals with gold, and I got a wonderful sum of money, and I bought candles, and I bought the best food for Shabbos, so we'll have a beautiful Shabbos.

Ah, he says, I can't thank you enough. And we did Shalom Aleichem together and Aishel Chayil together. And when I said **אשת חיל מי ימצא**. I certainly knew who I was talking about. **רבות בנות עשו חיל ואת עלית על כולנה**. I made Kiddush, we were so happy.

I finished my Kiddush, and I turned to my wife and I said, you know, I could not thank you enough for what you have done. And I can't thank Hashem enough for giving me a wife like you and for giving us the gift of Shabbos. So he says, **לאמיר גיין א טענצל**, let's dance.

So she says, sure. And he said, me and my wife, we joined arms and energies, and we danced around the table. We ate the fish and after the fish I was so inspired I looked at her and I said, how did I get so lucky to be married to a person like you? And how did we get so lucky to have a gift like Shabbos? And how could we express thanks that this Shabbos we could still celebrate with so much ecstasy and delight? **לאמיר גיין נאך א טאנץ**. We have to dance a second time. She said, I'm game.

And we danced again around the table for a long time with tremendous joy. We sat down, I ate the chicken, after the chicken I told my wife my heart is swelling with joy and ecstasy. We have to dance again. She said, let's go for it and we danced and danced and danced.

That's what happened in my house Friday night.

So the Baal Shem Tov is listening and he says, Shabsi, I want you to know something. When you and your wife danced after Kiddush and after the fish and after the chicken, you should know you weren't the only ones dancing. Heaven was dancing with you. The Ribbono Shel Olam himself, Hashem himself was dancing with you and all the angels were dancing with you and I too was celebrating with you.

And then he turned to him and he said, is there anything you need? So he said, the one thing we would love is a child, we were never blessed with a child. So the Baal Shem Tov gave him a beracha that the next year his wife should give birth and they had a baby and she named him Yisroel and he became the **Kozhnitser Maggid**. The Kozhnitser Maggid's name was Rebbi Yisroel of Kozhnitz, he wrote a sefer called Avodas Yisroel.

Kozhnitz is a city in Poland, he became one of the luminaries of the Chassidic world in Poland. He was a son of Reb Shabsi who was the bookbinder of Mezhibuzh. A person is sitting alone Friday night, they don't even have children, poor people, they have some candles, gefilte fish and they're dancing. He said, heaven is dancing with you and I also danced with you.

The unique recognition of a person's indispensable, non-negotiable value and the fact that each person is an indispensable note in the cosmic symphony and that heaven dances with you. That's the malchus that Torah can confer upon the Jew. That ability for a person to realize what real royalty means. Royalty doesn't mean that all my circumstances are perfect, that I'm living in an ivory tower, that I have no challenge in the world, I have no struggle in the world.

The real royalty means that the person realizes that wherever you are, wherever I am, I'm never stuck. There's meaning, there's purpose, there's light, there's infinity, there's a mission here. I'm a shliach, I'm an ambassador of the Ribbono Shel Olam in this world. I'm an ambassador of the Ribbono Shel Olam in these very circumstances.



The Essence of Our Life

Shavu'os is a very special day of the year. It is the day we received the Torah Hakedoshah on Har Sinai from Hashem. We all know about the minhag to stay up on Shavu'os night, learning Torah. This is what the Arizal writes about it:

"A person should not sleep on this night at all but should be awake all night and engage in Torah learning. Let it be known that anyone who doesn't sleep on this night at all, even for a moment, and engages in Torah learning all night, it is guaranteed that he will live out the year and will not suffer any damage that year... Furthermore, a person's life in that year is dependent on this..."

Therefore, the minhag has spread among the Jewish people to learn Torah all Shavu'os night.

However, our life being dependent on this night is not just a matter of the night's learning. It also depends on our whole conduct and on the thoughts we have during this day. Shavu'os every year is like it was back then, when we received the Torah.

Every year, the gates of Torah open up before every individual for him to receive siyata d'Shmaya the whole year long, each person as befits him. It depends mainly on how much we desire Torah and have aspirations for it.

The Torah is truly our life and the length of our days. A person's life depends on Torah, and not just when he is learning. The Torah, and only the Torah, is the constant source of our vitality, and the matter of utmost importance to us. For this reason, there is something even more important than learning Torah on Shavu'os night.

It is showing our tremendous joy and good feelings over having received the Torah Hakedoshah, which is our true life, and asking Hashem for Torah, and aspiring for Torah. For Torah divides us from those who have strayed from the path of truth and stumble around in the darkness, pursuing the vanities of this world which will only bring them to pain and suffering and eternal shame.

This may be compared to someone who was tossed into a stormy sea, and the terrible waves are threatening to drown him, and he manages to grab onto a rescue boat. He drags himself into the boat and holds on to it fiercely, with all his remaining strength, and thereby makes it through the raging waves to a safe coast. He loves and cherishes this rescue boat in which a person hides from all the dangers lying in wait for him.

So when Shavu'os comes, we should celebrate and express great joy over the fact that we were zocheh to Toras Chaim, the Torah that saves our very lives.

It is therefore a mitzvah on this day, more than on all other holidays and Yamim Tovim, to make a special seudah with fine food and drink, and to celebrate with great joy.

What are we celebrating? That Hashem separated us from the nations and from those who stumble down a mistaken and deadly path! That He implanted within us eternal life, which is the Torah Hakedoshah!

The more a person recognizes this, the more he feels that Torah and all its mitzvos are his vitality and his happiness and his good fortune, the more he will rejoice on Shavu'os, the more the gates of

siyata d'Shmaya will open for him — to grow higher and higher in Torah learning all year long. To be attached to Torah and to the Source of life itself, which is Hashem Yisborach.

Rabbi Pesach Krohn - Project Mesorah



We are in the middle of counting Sefira. Not only do we count the number of days, but we also count the number of weeks. This type of counting is done with a *cheshbon*. This idea is brought down in the *Gemara* Bava Basra (78b) which tells us **עַל־כֵּן יֹאמְרוּ הַמֹּשְׁלִים בָּאוּ חֶשְׁבֹּון**

Those who rule over their desires, those who are in control of themselves – they make a **חֶשְׁבֹּון**. Maybe we should make a **חֶשְׁבֹּון הנפש**. How can we become closer to Hashem? We should learn something that we don't usually learn. This would bring a closeness to Torah and Yiras Shamayim and to Hashem.

The Pasuk tells us in Rus 1:14 **וַתִּשֶּׂנָה קוֹלָן וַתִּבְכֶּינָה עֹוד וַתִּשַּׁק עָרְפָּה֙ לַחֲמוֹתָ֔הּ וְרוּת֙ דָּבְקָ֣ה בָּ֔הּ** . Noami was destitute and she told her two daughters in law – Orpah and Rus- to leave. Orpah just kissed her mother-in-law goodbye **וַתִּשַּׁק עָרְפָּה֙ לַחֲמוֹתָ֔הּ** , whereas Rus clung to Noami - **וְרוּת֙ דָּבְקָ֣ה בָּ֔הּ**.

Many years later, when the descendants of both Orpah and Rus were on the battlefield, the gemara tells us that Gollias who came from Orpah, was descended from the one who kissed, and he should fall into the hands of the one who attached (Rus).

If this is the case, I think there is a deep lesson here.

Kissing is an external sign of affection. What is deeper than this? – ***Devaikus – being attached***. We have to make this חֶשְׁבּוֹן . How do we become more attached to the Riboino Shel Oam? Not just by kissing the Sefer Torah, but by learning the Torah!

Dr. Jack Cohen - Humility and Self-Awareness

Our Sages relate that of all mountains to give the Torah upon, Hashem chose the smallest of them all, Har Sinai. As the mountain which remained humble, it served as the conduit for which the Torah would be transmitted to the world. A contrasting matter of fact is the site upon which the Beit Hamikdash was built, namely the highest point in the Land of Israel. With the Beit Hamikdash acting as Hashem's resting place and the channel through which G-d and the Jewish people would interact and communicate, it was accorded prominence and grandeur by being situated as such.

The noteworthy question is why the discrepancy. Why would the site where the Torah be given be the lowest mountain, and the place where the Beit Hamikdash stand be the tallest mountain?

Shlomo Hamelech referred to the day of Mattan Torah as the "wedding day" between the chattan (i.e. Hashem) and the kallah (i.e. the Jewish nation). It was a marriage ceremony, which ushered in a future deep relationship that would last for eternity. Mattan Torah spoke to the core relationship which we share with G-d. The Beit Hamikdash, on the other hand, functioned as the home in which we, the Jewish people as the wife, would dwell together with our husband, Hashem.

Considering the contrasting symbolic purposes of Har Sinai and the Beit Hamikdash, we can begin to appreciate their difference. As individuals in a relationship, what is essential to exist is humility. The Giving of the Torah, which spoke to the relationship of the Jews and

Hashem, therefore took place on the humble mountain of Har Sinai to drive home this point: a healthy and real satisfying relationship requires humility. In contrast, the framework for where this honorable and supremely important relationship will exist must be in the most grandiose of places – in the Beit Hamikdash – located on the highest point in Israel.

Fascinating Insights by Rabbi Yehoshua Alt



In Megilas Rus, Naomi says – **הַמר שַׁ-די לַי מַאד**. (Rus 1:20). The *roshei tevos* spell **שלמה**. What appears to be bitter, was setting the way for the birth of Shloime Hamelech, who would build the Beis hamikdash. So, it all turned out for the good. Thus, there is no need to ever doubt Hashem, although an occurrence may seem bad.

With this we can grasp - **מַשְׂכֻּרְתֵּךְ שְׁלֵמָה מֵעִם ה׳** (Rus 2:12). May your payment be in full from Hashem. Which can also be interpreted as referring to Shloime Hamelech. We should merit to see the building of the Beis Hamikdash speedily in our days.

"The greatness of Torah is that it elevates even ordinary acts. Eating, working, speaking, and resting all become meaningful when guided by Torah." ~ Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian.

כלה - Bride

The Pasuk states Hashem gave Moshe the Luchos when He finished (**ככלתו**) speaking with him. Shemos 31:18. Rashi comments that **ככלתו** is written missing a **ו** as it now can be referring to a **כלה** ; bride. That is, just as a Kalla is adorned with 24 ornaments- **קשוטי כלה**, likewise a Talmid Chochom needs to be an expert in the 24 books of Tanach. Indeed, on Shavuos, where we received the Torah, we were the Kalla to our Chosson- Hashem.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman-Torah Wellsprings

Halachah forbids us from eating matzah on erev Pesach, so we will eat the matzah at the seder with an appetite. The custom is to stop eating matzah even earlier (two weeks or thirty days before Pesach) so when we come to the seder, we will eat the matzah with want and love. Bederech tzachus, we can ask, why don't we do the same with Shavuous. On Shavuous, we receive the Torah, so wouldn't it be a good idea to stop studying Torah some days before Shavuous, so we will receive the Torah on Shavuous with thirst and desire?

But the answer is Torah is the exact opposite of the pleasures of this world. People appreciate foods that they didn't have for many days, but Torah becomes beloved through learning it. The more one studies Torah, the more he loves it. If you take a break from studying Torah, it will not increase your love for Torah, it will only decrease it. Therefore, the preparation for Shavuous is specifically by studying Torah, and the more the merrier.

The last words of the **Rebbe of Kotzk zy"a** were: "Whoever devotes himself to Torah, I can guarantee him, in this world and in the next. But those who want to be righteous without immersing themselves in Torah, they will fall into the deep abyss."

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman-Torah Wellsprings

The Giver Earns More

The Sefer Chasidim (187) writes, "There are people who are living solely so others can benefit from them.

There is an old man, living in Bnei Brak (101 years old) and people asked him how he merited long life. He replied, "My mother passed away when I was an infant and my father remarried.

When I was eleven years old, a poor person knocked on the door asking for a donation. At that time my stepmother was salting two chickens. She left the room to find a coin for the pauper. When the pauper saw that she left the room, he grabbed one of the chickens and ran off with it. The family ran after him, but they couldn't catch up with him.

A week later, the stepmother's father came for a visit. The pauper came to their door again and asked for a donation. The stepmother recognized him, and she told her father, "This is the pauper who stole my chicken last week." Her father slapped the thief twice in the face and said, "Aren't you embarrassed to come here again after what you did?" The pauper fled.

The eleven-year-old child saw this happen, and he was concerned that the ganav may have a kapeidah (complaint) against them. He ran after the pauper to appease him. When the pauper saw the child running after him, he thought that the child also wanted to hit him, so he started to run even faster. The child called out, "Stop! Don't run! I promise, I mean no harm." The child gave him a handful of coins (which he had received shortly before from his stepmother's father) and he pleaded with the pauper to say that he doesn't have any kepeidah on their family. The pauper said that he doesn't have any hard feelings at all, and the pauper blessed him with arichus yamim (long life). "This is the secret of my old age," he says.



Rus said, **וַתֹּאמֶר שֵׁם הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי עִמּוֹ הַיּוֹם בֹּעַז** ***'The name of the man, whom I did for him today is Boaz' (Rus 2:19).***

The midrash notices that Rus said that she was doing for Boaz, but wasn't it Boaz who was doing kindness for Rus? The midrash concludes, "We learn from this that a pauper does more for the wealthy, than what the wealthy does for the pauper *(Vayikra Rabba 34:8).*

Fascinating Insights by Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - Judgement day- of a different kind



Shavuos, the day of Torah. What a gift! **The Shelah** writes that we must be especially happy on Shavuos because we merited the **כתר תורה** ....

The following are just some of the many gifts that we can benefit, through Torah.

1) **The Chazon Ish** writes in a letter that one who merits **ידיעת התורה** appears as a man but is like a malach on high.

2) There is nothing that connects someone more to Hashem than Torah, says the Maharal.

3) Our Torah has far reaching results. In another letter the Chazon Ish writes that if the Bnei Torah would toil in **תורה לאמתתה** they

would save many children and men from **הרהור עבירה**; forbidden thoughts of sin, **כפירה**; denial of Hashem, and the like. Thus, our Torah can affect that which our actions can't.

4) It is through Torah that the world continues to exist. For this reason, it is called a **תורת חיים**.

In the Yeshiva of **R' Chaim Voloziner**, there was always a shift learning throughout the night in order that there would always be someone learning. In fact, R' Chaim Voloziner would visit the Beis Midrash a few times throughout the night to encourage those learning. Even when he was old and couldn't give a shiur, he still kept up his nightly visits. Additionally, after Yom Kippur, while everyone would break their fast, he would learn to continue the existence of the world.

We are taught that Shavuos is the day of judgement for Torah. Just as we were judged when the world was created so too with Shauvos as Torah was given on this day. In fact, there were those who were more fearful of Shavuos than Rosh Hashana since on Rosh Hashana our physicality is judged whereas on Shavuos it is our spirituality that is at stake.

The Mishna teaches that we are judged on Shavuos for fruits of the tree. The tree refers to Torah, the tree of life- **עץ חיים**. The fruits of the tree refer to our **חידושי תורה** - novelties of Torah.

Indeed, the **Sefas Emes** says that on Shavuos each Jew receives what he will understand and be **מחדש** in Torah for the year- **מישראל כל אחד ואחד בחג הזה כל מה שעתיד להבין ולחדש בתורה**

"On Shavuos, a Jew should feel pride that he belongs to a people whose treasure is not power or wealth, but Torah." ~ Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky.

The Name שבועות

The names of Yomim Tovim shed light on their essence as Yom Kippur is a day of כפרה; atonement, Pesach is the day Hashem skipped over the houses, Chanuka is a contraction of חנו כה; we rested on the 25th and so on. So why is the term שבועות given to the upcoming Yom Tov?



According to how much preparation one puts in, is how much of an affect it will have on the outcome. This can be compared to a bow and arrow as the more power and aim one puts in, the more damage it will do.

The same applies with spirituality- preparing for Tefila, thinking before talking to someone and so on. The more preparation that is put in, the more it will produce. In fact, the word הכנה; preparation is related to the word כנו; base because preparation is the base of that which everything stands on.

With this we can comprehend why the early pious ones would prepare an hour before Tefila. In light of this, we can understand why the upcoming Yom Tov is termed שבועות; weeks, since it is comprised of the seven weeks of preparation that lead up to it.

"On Shavuos a Jew must feel as though he himself stands now at Sinai. The thunder and lightning are not only descriptions of the past; they represent the trembling awareness that one is standing before the word of the living G-d. When Torah becomes old and familiar in a person's eyes, he has lost the spirit of Sinai." ~ Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz.

The Tree of Life



The Torah is what keeps us alive as it is our spiritual sustenance. This explains why it is compared to bread and water as we can't live without it.

In a similar vein, the Torah is called an **עץ חיים**; a tree of life. This is just as one who is drowning clings tightly to the strong tree he encounters, with all his strength, since that is what his life depends on.

It is in this Pasuk that we find an allusion to the custom to eat Milchigs on Shavuos- the Yom Tov of Torah- as the initials of **חַיִּים לַמַּחֲזִיקִים בָּהּ** ; a tree of life for those who grasp it, spell **חלב**.

The Halachic Challenges of Cheesecake – Rabbi Yehuda Spitz - Ohr Somayach

The upcoming holiday of ***Shavuos***, aside from its most common name, has several others: ***Chag HaKatzir*** (The Holiday of the Harvest), ***Atzeres*** (Assembly), ***Yom HaBikkurim*** (Day of the offering of the first fruits), and ***Zman Mattan Toraseinu*** (The Time of the Giving of the Torah). Yet, in Israel, it has gained a new moniker: ***Chag HaGevinah*** - The Holiday of the Cheese! Amazingly, and only in Israel, will you find a Jewish custom that has become so commercialized.

Interestingly, having cheesecake on *Shavuos* is one *minhag* with which many non-practicing Jews are stringent! Have you ever met someone who turned down a piece of cheesecake? But where does

this time-honoured traditional custom of consuming cheesecake on *Shavuos* come from?

Korban Cheesecake?!



It seems that one of the earliest mentions of such a minhag is by the great **Rema, Rav Moshe Isserles**, who cites the 'prevailing custom' of eating dairy items specifically on Shavuos (Orach Chaim 494, 3). Although there are many rationales and reasons opined through the ages to explain this custom, the Rema himself provides an enigmatic one, to be a commemoration of the special Korban, the Shtei HaLechem (Two Loaves) offered exclusively on Shavuos during the times of the Beis Hamikdash. However, since the connection between dairy food and a bread offering seems tenuous, the Machatzis HaShekel (Orach Chaim 494, 7 s.v. h"h) offers a remarkable glimpse as to the Rema's intent. The halacha states (Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 89, 4 and relevant commentaries) that one may not use the same loaf of bread at both a dairy meal and a meat meal. The reason for this is that there may be some (possibly unnoticed) residue on the bread, and thus one might come to eat a forbidden mixture of milk and meat.

Therefore, to properly commemorate this unique *Korban* which had two loaves of bread, one should have a separate dairy meal aside from the traditional meat meal one has on *Yom Tov*. This way, he will be mandated to have separate breads for each of these meals, as the *challah* meant for the dairy meal cannot be used for the meat meal and vice versa.

It is well known that our tables are compared to the Mizbe'ach and our food to Korbanos. Therefore, serving a food item at a meal is

considered an appropriate commemoration for a Korban. Consequently, by having an additional dairy meal, the outcome is a suitable commemoration for this unique Korban, as now on Shavuos, two separate distinct breads are being served. In fact, the venerated **Rav Moshe Feinstein** (Shu"t Igros Moshe Orach Chaim vol. 1, 160) cites this explanation as the proper one for maintaining two separate types of meals on Shavuos, one milky and one meaty.Terrific! So now we can appreciate that by eating cheesecake on *Shavuos*, we are actually commemorating a special *Korban*! But before we sink our teeth into a luscious calorie-laden cheesecake, we should realize that, potentially, there might be another *halachic* issue involved: the prohibition against baking dairy bread.

Dairy Dilemma

Bread has been mankind's basic staple since time immemorial. Therefore, *Chazal* worried that an unsuspecting person might mistake dairy bread for plain pareve bread and eat it together with meat. He would thus inadvertently violate the prohibition of eating a forbidden mixture of milk and meat. They thereby decreed (*Gemara Pesachim* 30a and 36a) that one may not bake dairy bread unless certain criteria are met: either changing the shape of the dough prior to baking (known as making a *shinui*), thereby making it instantly recognizable to all as milky, or baking dairy bread exclusively in small quantities. The same prohibition and exclusions apply to meaty bread as well, due to bread's propensity to be eaten with a dairy meal.

Let Them Eat (Cheese) Cake!

Although several authorities extend this prohibition to include other baked goods, such as cookies and bourekas, which, if baked milky, might be mistakenly eaten with meat, nevertheless, the prevailing ruling is that the prohibition only applies to bread. Even so, aside from the signs in the bakeries proclaiming which items are dairy and

which are pareve, it is nonetheless a widespread practice throughout Israel that bakeries form the dairy baked goods (cheese bourekas, anyone?) in a triangular shape and the pareve ones in a rectangular shape as an extra safeguard against mix-ups. Since at busy bakeries the potential for mistakes is quite high, this is done as an added precaution, even though *m'ikar hadin* it is deemed unnecessary by most authorities.



So…does this ruling affect our beloved cheesecake in any way?

Actually, not much. In a typical cheesecake, since the cheese aspect of it is quite conspicuous, it would be considered as if produced with a changed shape from standard dough. Additionally, cheesecake is universally recognized as… containing cheese (!), and thus known world-wide as being dairy. No one would make a mistake confusing cheesecake with pareve bread. Therefore, even according to the opinions of those authorities who maintain that the prohibition of dairy bread extends to cakes, even so, they all agree it would be permissible to make plenty of cheesecake for *Shavuos*, even in large quantities.

Thankfully, when it comes time to indulge in a piece of traditional cheesecake on the holiday of *Shavuos*, we can "have our cake and eat it too", both in the literal sense as well as in the spiritual sense; knowing we have fulfilled the *halachic* requirements and are even commemorating a unique *Korban*.

The *Rishonim*, **Rav Avigdor HaTzarfati and Rav Yitzchak Isaack Tirnau** in his *Sefer HaMinhagim* both write a different reason to eat *milchigs* on *Shavuos*. The *pasuk* that describes the holiday of *Shavuos* (*Bamidbar*, *Parshas Pinchas* Ch. 28, 26) states **וּבְיוֹם**

הַבִּכּוּרִים בְּהַקְרִיבְכֶם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה לַה' בְּשָׁבֻעֹתֵיכֶם that one should bring a '***m**incha **ch**adasha **la**'Hashem **B**ashavuoseichem*' of which the first letters spell – '*meichalav*' – with milk, implying that milk products should be eaten on *Shavuos*. This *minhag* is also mentioned by the *Terumas Hadeshen* and *Maharil* , yet, it was not until the Rema codified this *minhag* in *halacha* that it became widespread.



Adorning the Shul with greenery on Shavuos – Rabbi Yehuda Spitz - Ohr Somayach

Festooning with Foliage

In many shuls around the world, *Chag HaShavuos* represents 'going green'. I am not referring to becoming environmentally friendly, but green in a more literal sense. In honour of *Shavuos*, many shuls receive entire forest-like makeovers. With branches forming a *Chuppah*-like canopy over the *bimah*, trees set up next to the *Aron Kodesh*, and greenery abounding, many entire shuls are festively festooned for *Zman Mattan Torah*.

Yet, we find, other shuls do perform some adorning, but in a much more minimalist manner, using only flowers and grasses. And, of course, there are shuls where no special *Shavuos* decorating is done at all.

Minhag Replicating Mattan Torah

The great codifier of *Ashkenazic halachah*, **Rav Moshe Isserlis**, better known as the *Rema*, in *Hilchos Shavuos* (*Orach Chaim* 494: 3)

writes that "*V'nohagin lishtoach asavim b'Shavuos B'Beis Haknesses V'habatim zeicher l'simchas Mattan Torah*", that 'the custom is to spread grass(es) on *Shavuous* in the shuls and in houses, as a remembrance to the joy of *Mattan Torah*'. Mentioned as the tradition of several early *Ashkenazic* authorities, including the *Maharil* and *Terumas Hadeshen*, as well as the *Kehillah* of Worms, the *Rema* codified this *minhag* of greenery on *Shavuos* as proper practice.

There are several rationales given by our luminaries to explain the connection between our adornment of a shul for *Shavuos* and the actual day of *Mattan Torah* - history's very first *Shavuos* - including:

1. The *Levush* explains that since at the time of *Mattan Torah*, the *pasuk* specified (*Shemos* Ch. 19: 8) that the cattle and sheep were prohibited to graze in the area, implying that *Har Sinai* (which was in a desert) became surrounded by grass at that time. Therefore as a *Zecher l'Mattan Torah*, we do the same.

2. The *Maharil*, which seemingly is the earliest mention of this *minhag*, states that the custom is to festoon the shuls specifically using fragrant grasses and flowers. Several *sefarim* source this to the *Gemara Shabbos* (88b) that elucidates the *pasuk* in *Shir Hashirim* (Ch. 5: 13) '*lechayav k'arugas habosem… sifsosav shoshanim*', 'your cheeks are akin to bundles of spices… your lips like flowers', to be referring to *Mattan Torah*. Every *dibbur* that Hashem spoke filled the world with an ethereal fragrance. Therefore, in commemoration, we spread aromatic flowers on *Shavuos*.

3. The *Bnei Yisaschar* cites a *mashal* of the *Midrash Rabbah* about a king in his orchard to explain that *Bnei Yisrael* at *Har Sinai* were "*K'Shoshana Bein Hachochim*, akin to a rose among thorns"(*Shir Hashirim* Ch 2: 2), to mean that in the merit of *Bnei Yisrael's* united and unequivocal declaration of accepting the Torah: '*Naaseh*

V'Nishma, we will do and we will hear', the world was saved. Therefore, to symbolize this, on *Zman Mattan Torah* we adorn our shuls with flowers.

Trees Are Terrific

When discussing this *minhag*, the *Magen Avraham* adds another element: Placement of trees in the shuls, to commemorate the fact that *Shavuos* is *Rosh Hashanah* for *Peiros Ha'Ilan*, tree fruits (*Gemara Rosh Hashanah* 16a). Several later eminent authorities, including the *Elyah Rabbah*, *Shulchan Aruch HaRav*, *Chavos Yair*, *Chok Yaakov*, *Ba'er Heitiv*, *Merkeves HaMishnah*, and Rav Yaakov Emden *zt"l*, follow his precedent, citing this *minhag* as well. Consequently, in addition to the festooning of grasses / flowers, many *Kehillos* add trees, giving their shuls a full forest effect.

Tree-mendous Opposition

On the other hand, we find that the Vilna Gaon forcefully and vociferously opposed this *minhag*, roundly condemning its practice.

His reasons for doing so were that in his day (and nowadays as well) the non-Jews set up trees in their houses of worship as part of their holiday service and festivities. The *Gra* maintained that if we continue to do so as well, it would be violating a basic biblical tenet of "*Chukos HaGoyim*", and is therefore essentially forbidden.

The *She'aris Moshe* (*Moadim U'Zmanim*, *Shavuos* s.v. *taam eisev*) writes simply that **עשב**, grass, stands for the three names of Shavuos - **יום הביכורים - שָׁבוּעוֹת - עֲצֶרֶת**.

"At Sinai, Hashem did not speak only to the generation that left Egypt. Every Jewish soul was present there, because Torah belongs equally to every generation." ~ Rabbi Avraham Yeshaya Karelitz.

The Custom to Learn Throughout The Night On Shavuos - Rabbi Mordechai Perlman - *Ohr Somayach*

The *Arizal* writes: *"Know that whoever does not sleep at all on this night and is involved in learning Torah, he is promised that he will complete the year and that no harm will befall him."* *Mishneh Berurah 494:1*

The Midrash says that the Jewish People slept on the night before Matan Torah, and it was necessary for Hashem to wake them up in the morning.



Why did they all sleep on the eve of this most important day? They knew that at the giving of the Torah, Hashem was going to speak to them. Previously, prophets received prophesy while asleep: Avraham slept during the bris bain habisarim, Yaacov slept as he envisioned the ladder, and Yosef's prophecies occurred to him in a dream. Thus, by going to sleep, they were preparing for Matan Torah. However, this was wrong.

In order to "rectify" this, we now stay awake all night in anticipation of our own Kabbalas HaTorah.

Hashem says *"I will sprinkle upon you pure water and you will be pure"* (Yechezkel 36:25) - "Water" here means Torah. In order to accept the Torah we need to prepare ourselves through purifying our hearts. How do we do that? By bathing in the 'purifying waters' of the Torah.

Our Sages say, "If you listen to the old, you will listen to the new" (Succah 46b). By reviewing Torah that we have learned already, we become receptive to learn more Torah.

The Torah is dear and precious to us. Studying Torah with the utmost of our ability highlights this dearness.

"He gives wisdom to the wise" (Daniel 2:21). A rich man obtains a loan more easily than a poor man: So, too, a wise person gains wisdom more easily than a fool. When we delve into the wisdom of Torah, Hashem responds by giving us more wisdom.

Halacha L'Maaseh - Staying Up Shavuos Night.



Reasons. There is a widespread custom for men and boys to stay up the whole night of Shavuos learning Torah. The Magen Avrohom writes that the reason is to atone for the oversleeping of the Yidden on the morning when Hashem gave the Torah, until Hashem and Moshe Rabbeinu woke them. The Poskim quote from the sages of Kabbalah that learning on Shavuos night creates great spiritual lights in the upper worlds. It also builds up a thirst and love for Torah study so as to intensify one's acceptance of the Torah the next morning.

Rewards. Different rewards are mentioned for those who stay up the entire night learning.

1) He will live the whole year without being harmed.

2) He will merit having Talmidei Chachamim among his descendants.

3) He will atone for a sin of **כרת** - a strict sin that has a punishment of dying prematurely.

4) Atoning for wasting time from Torah study.

5) Denying sleep from one's eyes atones for sins that may have been done by the eyes.

6) The Gates of Heaven are open to parcel out good parnassah - earning enough money to support one's family.

7) To accept prayers on "hard" topics that might not be accepted during the rest of the year.

Q : Is it an obligation to stay up?

A : No, but it is a very praiseworthy custom, and all those whose health and age permit, should do it. Even staying up for part of the night is a good practice.

Shavuos, by Rav Berel Wein



There is a long-standing tradition that connects the book of Ruth with the holiday of Shavuot. The book of Ruth is the book of Jewish kindness and compassion, especially towards those individuals in society who feel themselves weak and disadvantaged because of life and societal circumstances. This includes the widowed and the orphaned, the alien and the stranger, the poor and the otherwise hopeless.

Ruth and Naomi, the heroines of the book and the mothers of Israel are befriended and saved by Boaz, a man of stature and power, who risks a great deal in saving them from penury and abandonment. From this act of compassion and kindness sprouts eventual love, marriage and a child who will be one of the founders of the Davidic line of royalty of the kingdom of Judah and of all messianic hope and yearning.

Judaism views all seemingly small things as being great and important in their own right, for no one can estimate or foretell the

consequences of even the smallest act of courtesy to others. The rabbis give examples of "if only so and so knew the consequences of the small act of goodness that he performed" he would have acted with even greater fervor and intent to do greater good in performance of that act.

In the book of Ruth, the "menu" of the lunch that Boaz gave Ruth to eat is recorded minutely. Had Boaz realized the cosmic and generational importance of this act of kindness of giving a defenseless widowed stranger food he would certainly have provided a more elaborate menu and fare.

The rabbis of the Talmud taught us that goodness, courtesy, kindness, a compassionate "way of the land," precedes Torah. Thus the holiday of Shavuot marked as the commemoration of the granting of the Torah to Israel at Mount Sinai is introduced to us through the book of Ruth. The Torah is not only laws and commandments; it is a value system as well.

To understand and appreciate the Torah itself, its value system must be discerned and appreciated first. Otherwise one runs the risk, in the words of Ramban, of being an obnoxious person and yet seemingly remaining within the limits of Torah law. The book of Ruth, though written many centuries after the granting of the Torah at Mount Sinai, is really the preface to the Torah.

The Jewish people begin with Avraham and Sarah, our father and mother, whose basic characteristic that allowed them to spread the message of monotheism in a pagan world was their kindness and hospitality towards others. The palace of Torah is entered through the garden of goodness.

This goodness and concern for others has been the hallmark of the Jewish people throughout our existence. It has guaranteed that the Torah has remained with us and has forged the eternal link with Mount Sinai that the holiday of Shavuot represents and commemorates. The rabbis of the Talmud again characterized Israel

as being a compassionate and kind generous people. All of this is represented in the book of Ruth and the holiday of Shavuot.

The holiday of Shavuot has many meaningful traditions associated with it However, lest we become lost in the dairy meals and all night study sessions without realizing the true importance of this holiday of Torah, the book of Ruth comes to place it all into proper perspective. The idea of the acceptance of Torah through kind and compassionate behavior towards others is basic to Judaism.

The nineteenth century Mussar movement attempted to make this idea widespread amongst the Jewish society of Lithuania and parts of Eastern Europe. It is worthy of support today, especially in a society that has become more and more self-centered. From nineteenth century Jewish life in the Pale of Settlement to twenty-first century life in our societies there is an enormous distance in time and attitude. But human problems remain constant as do our failures and shortcomings.

The Torah attempts to raise our field of vision to see what can and should be noble in our lives and society. How to pursue this vision is through the actions that we exhibit towards others. The Torah emphasizes this message in myriad ways. The book of Ruth is the perfect guide to this accomplishment. We should be aware that Ruth, Naomi, Boaz, Elimelech, Machlon, Chilyon, Ploni Almoni and all of the characters that appear in the book of Ruth still walk among us. Realizing this will make our acceptance of the Torah on Shavuot most meaningful and sincere.



"Preparation for Shavuos is not measured only by how much one learns, but by how much one longs to receive Torah." ~ Rabbi Yechezkel Levenstein.



Reasons Why We Read "Megillas Rus" on Shavuos



1. The events occurred during the harvest season. Shavuos is the Harvest Festival.
2. Ruth was a convert to Judaism. Conversion is an individual "*Kabbalas HaTorah*."
3. Ruth the Moabite was permitted to marry Boaz, based on a *drasha* (a teaching of the Oral Law) of the verse, "A Moabite may not marry into the Congregation of Hashem" (Devarim 23:4). This hints at the unity between the Written Torah and the Oral Torah.
4. David HaMelech was born on Shavuos. The Megillah of Ruth concludes with David's lineage.
5. To teach the greatness of *Gemillus Chassadim* - acts of loving-kindness.
6. To teach that the Torah is acquired only through affliction and poverty.The name "Ruth" has the numerical value of 606. At *Har Sinai* the Jewish People accepted 606 *mitzvos*, in addition to the 7 Noachide Laws.

"The world thinks that freedom means removing limitations, but the Torah teaches the opposite. True freedom is achieved only when a person binds himself to eternal truth. Therefore Shavuos, the festival of receiving the Torah, is the completion of the freedom of Pesach. Without Torah, liberation becomes emptiness." ~ Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch.

"EAT, SAM, EAT!" - Ohr Somayach International



"Eat, Sam, Eat! It's Shavuot. You want to learn Torah all-night with your friends, right? So eat, my child, you need strength to learn! And besides, it's a Festival, it's a mitzva to eat!"

"But Savta, Shavuot is the time when the Torah was given to the Jewish nation. How can I eat at a time like this ? I want to be completely spiritual, to learn Torah. "But Savta is right once again ! It *is* important for Sam to eat on Shavuot. Regarding other Festivals there is a Talmudic debate as to whether there is a mitzva to enjoy food and drink or if may choose to forgo eating and instead spend the entire day in Torah study and prayer. But on Shavuot all Talmudic sages concur that it is a mitzva to enjoy food and drink. Why? To celebrate the day of the Giving of the Torah.

You may wonder, why celebrate such a spiritual event by eating and drinking? Wouldn't a more appropriate way to honour the Torah be to focus on it to the exclusion of all else?

The great medieval scholar Rashi explains that we rejoice with food and drink to demonstrate that the Torah is pleasurable and beneficial to the Jewish nation. The Torah is not only pleasurable and beneficial to the soul, but to the body as well. So listen to Savta, Sam, and eat and enjoy!

"Shavuos is an עת רצון since on this day, the Yahrzeit of Dovid Hamelech, the Tzaddik's merits work on our behalf." ~ R' Yitzchok Meir Alter ZT"L (Chiddushei HaRim).

A Short Message from Rabbi Ephraim Shapiro



As part of the the Yom Tov prayers, we express the emotion, "V'romamtanu mi'kol ha'leshonos," which in a literal sense conveys that Hashem has "Exalted us above all the tongues [languages and nations of the world] …" Yet, as **Rav Shlomo Heiman zt"l** once noted, perhaps there is an alternative, yet very insightful way to view this phrase. _

At times during our lives, Hashem grants us precious and special moments which can neither be quantified nor qualified. The day of your child's wedding or the birth of a son or daughter are moments where we are at a loss for words. There is nothing we can say to Hashem to properly express the other-worldly sensation we are blessed to be experiencing. There is no dictionary or thesaurus which captures our thoughts and feelings. All we can do is convey to Hashem that we will never forget this moment because it is etched in our hearts higher and more exalted than any words.

The experience of a Yom Tov elicits similar indescribable emotions. It elevates us, exalts us and encourages us to come higher and closer in our unique relationship with Hashem.

"On Shavuos, a Jew should feel pride that he belongs to a people whose treasure is not power or wealth, but Torah." ~ Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky.



Rabbi Shlomo Farhi - Learning from the Flowers

We are all so busy in life, with many things to take care of on a daily basis. Yet, as we will all readily admit, we can never get so overly subsumed in the hustle and bustle of life that we forget about what really matters to us. Take a moment and think to yourself, what are some of the best ways you can show someone that you really love them?

The Torah describes the epic moment of Maamad Har Sinai, when Hashem transmitted the Luchos and the entirety of Torah to the Jewish people. The earth became uniformly silent and deeply still, as the Jews witnessed an overwhelming sight of booming thunder and lightning, raging fire and billowing smoke which surrounded Mount Sinai. It was amid this magnificent scene that Hashem Himself set forth the eternal mission to the Jewish people to become partners with Him in Creation and perpetuate His will in the world. It was an unbelievable moment wherein the greatest mission of all history was handed down from Heaven to earth.

Amidst this impressive scene, we are taught a very peculiar idea. The Midrash relates that Mount Sinai sprouted grass and flowers. And to this very today, florists will tell you that they are inundated with orders from the Jewish communities during the days preceding Shavuos as we buy flowers to fill our homes to commemorate this phenomenon. Yet it is quite strange. Why would this be something which Hashem wished to draw our attention to? With everything going on at Har Sinai, no one would be to blame were the flowers to go unnoticed. Why then did Hashem make a point of having Har Sinai full of beautiful flowers?

As seen in the Torah, there is another famous mountain in Jewish history other than Har Sinai. Har HaMoriah serves as the holy site whereupon the Akeidas Yitchak took place, and upon which the two structures of the Beis Hamikdash stood and where the Third will soon be rebuilt. It is a mountain of extreme holiness and sanctity.

You may ask, though, what is the etymology of Har HaMoriah? Why in fact is it named such? The Gemara (Shabbos 89a) relates the Har Sinai is called such as it engendered the sinah, hatred, of the other nations of the world, for upon that mountain we assumed the role of the Chosen Nation of G-d and forever became the bearers and representatives of G-d's sanctified Name. But what about Har HaMoriah?

The Zohar (Parshas Bo, 156) explains that Mount Moriah is called such because of the Mor, or myrrh, known to be a pleasant-smelling fragrance, which grows there. In recognition of such myrrh, the mountain assumed such a name.

But the obvious question begs. Why would such an important and esteemed site be called after something which appears to be so relatively insignificant or inconsequential? Wouldn't it be more appropriate to call the mountain after something which indicates dedication, sacrifice or commitment? That would seem to be much more befitting considering its stature.

In truth, however, the name Har HaMoriah perfectly fits the mountain. And that is because what communicates devotion and love most aptly are those things which often go unnoticed because they seem so small and underrated. The flowers you buy your spouse, the little note you leave under their pillow and the small act of cleaning the dishes without being asked. Those gestures are what develop and deepen the most special of relationships. Those small thoughts which convey care and concern speak far louder than grandiose acts which overwhelm all those in sight.

Hashem therefore named Har HaMoriah as such, after the myrrh, precisely because it appears as so minor and unimportant. Hashem means to convey that in Yiddishkeit and by His standards, what matters most is not necessarily quantity and volume, but quality and heart. The small things which are done go the longest ways. The extra effort you push yourself to daven with a minyan, the extra thought put in as to how you can adhere to the details of a mitzvah, and the extra care you take to endear and enhance Torah and Yiddishkeit for others mean the world.

Those small gestures, which are generally underappreciated or not even appreciated by anyone, mean everything to Hashem. And that is exactly why Hashem made a point of having flowers adorn Har Sinai. Yes, in the larger scheme of the Giving of the Torah, beautiful flowers are unimportant, but that is precisely the message. What appears to matter so little, matters so much. That is what Hashem values and what He wishes for us to value as well.

Our relationship with Hashem and with our spouses, children, family and friends works all in the same way. The small expressions of love are the greatest expressions of love. Do something small and you are doing something big. On the most momentous day in the history of the world, this is one secret Hashem shared with us. Remember it for the rest of your life, and you can rest assured that all your relationships will always be blossoming as beautiful as ever.

"There are many forms of wisdom in the world, but all human wisdom remains external to a person. Torah is different. Torah enters the essence of the Jew and transforms him from within. Therefore Chazal describe Torah not as information to be studied, but as life itself." ~ Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin.

Fascinating Insights by Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - Counting the 50th



1) We are told **תספרו חמישים יום**; count fifty days of Sefira. So why do we count only 49?

2) When it comes to Yomim Tovim, we are told its date as Rosh Hashana is on the first of Tishrei, Yom Kippur on the tenth and so on. The Bnei Yissoschar is therefore bothered why is Shavuos different in that no date is given as we are just told that it is 50 days after Pesach?

The concept of counting is breaking the infinite into the finite. The word **ספירה**, counting, is rooted in **ספר** - border town. A border sets a limit as it gives boundaries. **ספירה** is also related to **סיפור**; story, as a story is broken up into words, making it concrete.

The number 49 is the higher expression of 7 as it is 7 multiplied by itself. This is because each of the 7 contains the other. For example, the trait of **חסד** also has **תפארת , גבורה** and so on as we see the first day of Sefira is **חסד שבחסד**, the 2nd is **חסד שבגבורה** and so forth.

We see a similar idea in regard to the 7 Ushpizin on Succos. Each of them come every day but there is one main one. The same applies to the Sefiros as each one has 7 days.

The number 7 symbolizes the natural world. To illustrate: observing a block of wood we notice there are 6 points to it- top, bottom and the four sides. Then, there is the 7th within the object which holds it together. Additionally, there are 7 colours in the rainbow, 7 notes in the music scale, 7 days in a week, Shemita is every 7 years, Yovel consists of 7 Shemita cycles and so on.

The number 8 symbolizes transcending nature. In fact, **נשמה** and **שמנה** (number 8) are comprised of the same letters as the **נשמה** is that which is beyond nature. Furthermore, the Bris is on the 8th day, the Kohen Gadol wears 8 garments and so on.

We mentioned before that 49 is the ultimate expression of 7. 50 is above that just as the number 8 is to 7, that which is beyond. Hence, Torah (Shavuos) which is supernatural is at the beginning of the 8th week of Sefira.

This explains why Shavuos has no date since it is beyond time.

Through counting one day at a time, we get to the climactic point of 50, beyond. Hence, the Torah is on the 50th day because Torah is beyond. We asked why don't we count the 50th day. The answer is we do. We count the 50th day of Shavuos, by….not counting it. Since 50 is beyond, the only way to count it is by not counting it since once it is expressed in words, it is finite.

Just to show what Shavuos really is, let us conclude with a story. It was Rosh Chodesh Nissan and the doctor to the king was in town (who was a secular Jew). They brought him to the **Bluzever Rebbe**, the Tzvi Latzadik, to check him. The doctor told him your heart is not beating properly.

The response: ***Shavuos is in 6 days. In a time like that you expect my heart to be beating properly!***

"The greatest preparation for Shavuos is achdus. Chazal teach that Israel camped 'as one man with one heart' before receiving the Torah because division and Torah cannot coexist. When there is arrogance and conflict, the vessel for Torah is broken. Peace between Jews itself becomes a preparation for Divine revelation." ~ Rabbi Sholom Noach Berezovsky.

R' Moshe Sofer zt"l (Chasam Sofer) would say:

לפני מי אתם מטהרין ומי מטהר אתכם - The words of Rabbi Akiva teach us an important lesson. The purpose of the 49 days of Sefirah are for us to purify and sanctify ourselves before we receive the Torah on the 50th day. Thus, **לפני מי** - before 50 (gematria of **מי**) we must purify ourselves.

However, lest one think that if he did not properly prepare himself, he cannot receive the Torah, Rabbi Akiva reinforces our spirit and says, **ומי מטהר אתכם** - even the 50th day (**ומי**) has the power to strengthen and transform a Jew into a holy and spiritual vessel of Torah."

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

Learn Torah or Do A Chessed?

וַיַּעַן בֹּעַז וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ הֻגֹּד הֻגַּד לִי כֹּל אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂית אֶת־חֲמוֹתֵךְ אַחֲרֵי מוֹת אִישֵׁךְ וַתַּעַזְבִי אָבִיךְ וְאִמֵּךְ וְאֶרֶץ מוֹלַדְתֵּךְ וַתֵּלְכִי אֶל־עַם אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יָדַעַתְּ תְּמוֹל שִׁלְשׁוֹם

Boaz said in reply, "I have been told of all that you did for your mother-in-law after the death of your husband, how you left your father and mother and the land of your birth and came to a people you had not known before." (Rus 2:11)

Dr. Meshulam Hart is a well-known and respected paediatrician in Bnei Brak, Israel. He has become very knowledgeable about medical information related to the coronavirus. Since the coronavirus pandemic began spreading around the world, Dr. Hart has been receiving thousands of calls every day from all over Israel and the world asking for his advice. He was even asked by the Gedolei Hador to advise yeshivos how to safely re-open. He has also published instructions on this topic for the public. Dr. Hart asked **HaRav Chaim Kanievsky** the following question, "I have a chavrusa in the afternoon every day for at least an hour". However, in the past few weeks, the telephone rings every minute with people calling for

advice. May I shut off my phone at least while I learn…I'm also obligated to learn Torah." **Harav Chaim** heard the question, thought for a long while and then uttered one word: '**Chessed**.'" Dr. Hart clearly understood that for the current time and in the current situation, since he was one of the few people capable of helping, **his** obligation to do chessed came before his Torah learning. (Yeshiva World News, May 26, 2020)

The Mishna (Meseches Peah 1:1) states, "And Talmud Torah is equal to all of them." We receive part of our reward for learning Torah, in this world. Most of our reward will be given in the next world. Learning Torah is greater than all the mitzvos. The Vilna Gaon in his sefer Shnos Eliyahu writes that every word of Torah learning is a separate mitzvah. The **Chofetz Chaim** writes that a person can usually speak two hundred words a minute. If he speaks two hundred words of Torah learning in a minute, he receives two hundred mitzvos every minute that he learns Torah.

Even before the Torah was formally given, Jews learned Torah. Shem and Ever, Noach's sons had a yeshiva. All our forefathers learned Torah. There are so many stories of people learning Torah both day and night, managing with little sleep because of the preciousness of every word of Torah.

Why is learning Torah so special? Learning Torah enables a person to be as close as possible to Hashem. This is as the **Zohar** (Acharei Mos) states, "Hashem, Torah, and Yisroel are one." In other words, Torah is what connects Bnei Yisrael to Hashem. The **Tana Dvei Eliyahu** (ch. 18) writes that when a person learns Torah, Hashem sits opposite him and learns with him. The Talmud (Gittin 6B) states that when Rebbi Evyasar and Rebbi Yonasan were learning Torah together, Eliyahu Hanavi approached them. They asked him what Hashem was doing at this moment. He said that Hashem was saying, "My son Evyasar says this, and my son Yonasan says this." (from a lecture by **HaGaon Rav Gershon Edelstein**.)

As great as Torah learning is, there are times that it must be temporarily put aside. **Rabbi Yisroel Salanter** was once learning in shul, late into the night, when he heard a conversation between two homeless Jews. (It used to be the custom that the very poor or homeless would sleep in a local shul.) One said that he was very thirsty and asked the other to accompany him outside, to the well, to get a drink of water. The fellow refused to go, saying that he was too tired. Rav Yisroel closed his Gemora and went to the well himself, to get his fellow Jew a drink of water!

The **Rambam** writes (Hilchos Talmud Torah 3:4), if you have a choice to either perform a mitzvah (for example, chessed) or learn Torah, you should learn Torah. However, if the mitzvah cannot be done by others you should perform the mitzvah first and then continue learning.

When Rus came to collect grain from Boaz's field, Boaz gave her special privileges. When she questioned why, he told her that he was very impressed with two things that he had heard about her (Rus 2:11). Rus took such good care of her destitute and lonely mother-in-law, even after her own husband had died. Furthermore, Boaz was impressed that Rus gave up so much to convert to Judaism. Rus was a princess. She gave that up, leaving her family and birthplace to convert. Now she was so poor that she had to gather grain just like the rest of the Jewish poor, by gathering it from other people's fields. The **Targum Onkelos** says that Boaz told Rus a prophecy that he had received. Jewish kings and prophets would descend from Rus because of her two actions. In fact, the pasuk refers to her act of chessed first. We see from Rus the importance of chessed.

The **Sforno** says (Vayikrah 25:38) that doing chessed for someone is not just acting with kindness to <u>one</u> individual. **It is as if one is doing chessed to all the Jewish People!** Despite the importance of doing chessed, **learning even one word of Torah is greater!** We see the importance of learning Torah. Yet, if you are the only one

who can do a time-relevant chessed, then doing the chessed comes first. **We see the greatness of chessed. Rev Henach Leibowitz** zt"l said (as heard from **Rabbi Binyamin Luban**) that if someone else can do the chessed then you should not stop learning Torah. However, if you are the only one who can help, it is your obligation to help. The reward for this chessed will ultimately be greater than the reward you would have received for learning Torah. However, if you constantly do chessed instead of learning Torah, you will be ignorant of Torah. What should you do if you are in a group of people learning Torah and you are approached to do a time-relevant chessed?

If the chessed is needed immediately and there is no one else to do it, then you should quickly volunteer. You should not think, let one of my friend's do it while I continue learning. You should quickly volunteer since all of you have an equal obligation to do the chessed.

Let us take advantage of the special opportunity to learn Torah throughout the night of Shavuos. The night of Kabbalas HaTorah is an especially significant time to learn. However, if we are needed to do a chessed and there is no one else available, we should stop learning Torah to do it. Afterwards, we should resume our learning.

PardasYehuda - Shabbos before Shavuos

Someone once asked the Rebbe, **Rav Menahem Mendel of Vorka**: The Shabbos before Pesach is called Shabbos Hagadol. The Shabbos before Yom Kippur is called Shabbos Teshuva. So, what do we call the Shabbos before Shavuos?

The Rebbe quickly answered. Chazal teach us Derech Eretz is before learning Torah, therefore the Shabbos is to be called, Shabbos Derech Eretz.

Wedding Invitation



The Tur tells us that the **שלש רגלים** correspond to the three Avos. Avraham lines up with Pesach, Yitzchak to Shavuos and Yaakov to Succos. It would seem that Yaakov is more fitting to be with Shavuos since he personifies Torah as he was an **איש תם ישב אהלים**; abiding in tents of Torah. So why is Yitzchak associated with Shavuos?

We see in many places that Matan Torah is linked with a wedding.

1) In the Pasuk **תורה צוה לנו משה**; Moshe taught us the Torah, it is our heritage, the Gemara reads **מורשה** as **מאורסה**; betrothed. The Maharsha says that the Torah became our betrothed at Sinai.

2) The Aruch Hashulchan tells us that the mountain held over our heads at Matan Torah was reminiscent of a Chupa.

3) The words **יום חתנתו**; wedding day refer to Matan Torah.

4) The two tablets of the Luchos correspond to a Chosson and Kalla. Additionally, two is the Gematria of **ב**, which when spelled out spells **בית** - a house, the place of a husband and wife.

5) When we stood at Sinai, our impurity that the Nachash caused was removed- **פסקה זוהמתן**. Likewise, on our wedding day we are forgiven for our sins.

6) The Chosson walks down to the Chupa first and is then followed by the Kalla. This is just as we see at Matan Torah: Hashem- the Chosson- was there first, waiting for His Kalla- the Jewish people.

7) The Shechina was at Har Sinai for a full year. This is just as we have **שנה ראשונה** in marriage.

8) To succeed in Torah, hard work is required. In a similar way, to have a successful marriage, one must work at it.

Marriage is titled **ברית כריתת**, because it is about each side giving of themselves. Similarly, at Matan Torah, Hashem gave a piece of himself; the Torah, and as the Gemara informs us the first word of the ten commandments- **אנכי** - are the initials of **אַנא נַפשי יְהבית כַּתיבת** ; I myself wrote and gave the Torah.

Although there is a disagreement in regard to observing Yom Tov whether it is **חציו לה'** and **חציו לכם**; half devoted to eating and drinking and half devoted to learning Torah, or **כולו לה'** or **כולו לכם**, everyone agrees that with Shavuos **בעינן נמי לכם** ; we also need **לכם**. Thus, each side needs to give up some of the self for the other. This explains why Yitzchak corresponds to Shavuos, since he gave himself up at the **עקידה**.

Unity



A prerequisite for Matan Torah is to be in unity as Rashi tells us by Matan Torah we were **כאיש אחד בלב אחד** Indeed, Shavuos is called **יום הקהל** - unity. Another name for Shavuos is **עצרת** . **עצרת** means assembly, gathering as in **עצרת לה' אלקך** - symbolizing unity. With this we can understand why R' Akiva commented on **ואהבת לרעך כמוך - זה כלל גדול בתורה**; this is a fundamental rule of Torah. Likewise, the Gemara

relates that Hillel said to a convert that the entire Torah in a few words is **מאן דעלך...** ; what is hateful to you do not do to others. A disagreement is recorded as to whether the 10 commandments were given on the 6th of Sivan or the 7th. Combining 6 and 7 we get 13, the same sum as **אחד**, representing unity.

The Mikva of Torah



The Torah has the power to purify us just as we see by a Mikva. For this reason, we go to a Mikva on Shavuos morning.

The Megale Amukos shares an incredible insight: the 40 **סאה** of a Mikva are like the 40 days that Moshe ascended to heaven to receive the Torah. Each **סאה** has 6 **קבין** (plural for **קב**) and each **קב** has 4 **לוגין** (plural for **לוג**). Likewise, in a 24-hour day, there are 4 times of 6 hours. Just as there are 960 **לוגין** in 40 **סאה**, similarly there are 960 hours in 40 days. So, Moshe learned the Torah in the amount of hours that equal the size of a Mikva.

40 **סאה** is the equivalent of 240 **קבין**. With each of the 10 commandments we retreated 12 **מיל**. Returning back to our original place for each of the coming command is another 12 **מיל**. Combining 12 and 12 we come to a total of 24. Multiplying 24 by 10, as there were 10 commandments, we come to a total of 240, the amount of **קבין** there are in a Mikva!

We also see that Torah is likened to a Mikva since it is compared to water. Just as water purifies so does the Torah. However, as the **Gra** points out just as one needs to be submerged in a Mikva for it to purify, likewise, one needs to be submerged in Torah!

Shavuos: Anonymous Jews Can Produce Redeemers, by Rav Yissochor Frand



Megillas Rus begins with the narration that a man from Bethlehem in Yehudah went to live in the fields of Moav, because of the famine in Eretz Yisrael. Chazal, our Sages, criticize this person for abandoning his people in their time of need and fleeing with his family to Moav.

When the Megillah first tells us of this person's departure, he is mentioned anonymously ('a man'). However, we do not remain guessing about his identity for very long. In the very next verse, we are told that "The name of the man is Elimelech".

The question can be asked, why not write this story more 'economically' and tell us the name of the man and what he did in one pasuk? Why the mystery in the first pasuk, followed immediately by the revelation of his identity in the second pasuk?

It is interesting that the very same type of sentence construction occurs in a different place in the Torah: "And a man went from the House of Levi and he married the daughter of Levi" [Shmos 2:1]. The Torah later identifies these mysterious individuals as Amram and Yocheved, the parents of Moshe. So, again, why the initial anonymity? Why not say straight out "And Amram went and married Yocheved"?

The Baal HaTurim in Shmos points out that these two places are the only times in Tanach where the Torah uses the expression "And a man went" (vayelech ish). The Baal HaTurim comments that the pasuk "A man went from the Tribe of Levi" brought about the first redeemer (Moshe) and the pasuk "A man went from Bethlehem

Yehudah" led to the final redeemer (Moshiach – who will descend from King David, a descendent of Rus).

The Shemen HaTov elaborates on this Baal HaTurim. The person who produces the Redeemer can be an anonymous person. One does not need to be the great leader of his generation — an Amram or an Elimelech — to produce the Redeemer. Any Jew is capable of producing a child who will be the greatest personage in his generation and in fact a Redeemer.

One does not necessarily need to be great himself or have superior lineage or wealth or power. Any anonymous Jew can potentially produce the future leader of the Jewish people.

Thunder and Lightning, by Rabbi Naftali Reich



The world had never seen anything like it, nor would it see anything like it ever again. As the Jewish people gathered at the foot of Mount Sinai watched with breathless awe, a thick layer of clouds descended over the mountain. Jagged streaks of lightning rent the heavens asunder, and the sounds of crashing thunderbolts were so earsplittingly loud that the people trembled uncontrollably. Sheets of fire suddenly engulfed the mountaintop, and the entire mountain quaked and discharged thick smoke like a colossal furnace. The eerie blast of a ram's horn grew louder and louder. And then G-d spoke from the mountaintop and pronounced the Ten Commandments.

What was the purpose of this spectacular display of special effects? Wouldn't the experience of actually hearing G-d speak have been

awesome enough? Didn't G-d's voice in itself inspire sufficient fear and reverence in the hearts of the people without the addition of artificial external stimuli?

The commentators explain that the spectacle at Mount Sinai was meant to serve as a metaphor for the future conditions under which the Jewish people would often attempt to study Torah and live by it. It would not take much courage to study the Torah and observe its commandments during tranquil and prosperous times. Who would turn away from the ultimate spiritual fulfillment in the absence of distractions and obstructions?

But rarely if ever does humankind experience such placid times. The world is always in upheaval, torn by wars and migrations, plagued by poverty and deprivation, struggling under oppression and exploitation and, in the best case, distracted by the material mirages of prosperity.

Where does a person find the presence of mind to study Torah and live by it under such daunting conditions? In the memory of the stand at Mount Sinai when the voice of G-d penetrated through the cacophony of the thunder and lightning and the raging fire, and the people heard His words. This is the only way Torah is absorbed, by the extreme effort to overcome external distractions and internal emotional turmoil, by a dedicated perseverance to penetrate to the divine essence of the Torah and through it to connect with G-d.

A young man travelled to a distant city to study with a famous sage. After many days on the road, he arrived at his destination, a large white building on a sun-drenched street. He walked up to the front door and tried to open it, but it was locked. He knocked and knocked for a few minutes, but there was no response. He walked around to the side of the building where he found another door. It too was locked. Here too his loud knocking elicited no response.

Through the open windows high up on the wall, he could hear the sounds of excited young voices engaged in heated arguments and

discussions. He called out to them, but no one heard him. He smelled cooking food and followed the trail of the odors to another window, which was surely a kitchen. Here too he called out at the top of his lungs, but no one came to the window.

Under the kitchen window, he noticed a coal grate. He pulled at it, and it came away in his hands. Gingerly, he lowered himself through the coal grate into the cellar. Covered with soot, he groped his way through the shadows and found the stairway to the upper floors. The sage was waiting for him at the top of the stairway.

"Welcome, my son," he said. "We have been waiting for you. I am happy to see that you have found your way here."

"If you were waiting for me," said the man, "why was the door locked? Why didn't anyone respond to my knocking or my calls?"

The sage smiled. "It was a test, my son. If you had not discovered the coal grate and clambered through the cellar, you could not have been a worthy member of our group."

Avodas Halev from R' Chaim Yosef Kofman Zt"L

1:4 וַיִּשְׂאוּ לָהֶם נָשִׁים מֹאֲבִיּוֹת שֵׁם הָאַחַת עָרְפָּה וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית רוּת

The Gemara in Berachos 7b asks: why was Rus called Rus? Reb Yochanan explains, because she was zoche to have Dovid Hamelech descend from her, **שריוהו** - who sang ,**שירות** to Hashem. The obvious question is, Dovid Hamelech was born three generations after Rus lived and from the time she was called Rus.

So how does Reb Yochanan's answer satisfy the difficulty? Perhaps we might suggest the following machshava. Regarding Megilas Rus, the Gemara in Bava Basra 14b tells us that it is a Megillah that is filled with **פורעניות** (troubles). Yet, we do not apparently see the troubles nor is Megillas Rus considered sad because it has a happy

ending; it led to the birth of Dovid Hamelech. So, again, how does the end justify the whole saga?



The answer is that Rus herself, although she suffered immeasurably, was constantly singing. She was always positive and upbeat even in the face of great adversity. She was positive and upbeat even in the face of great adversity. She was never depressed and was always thanking Hashem. That is why she herself was called Rus. Because her name reflects her "singing" attitude. As a result, Hashem blessed her with a descendant, Dovid Hamelech, who throughout his myriad challenges, unceasingly sang Hashem's praises and composed a sefer called Tehillim that symbolizes a song of praise to the Almighty. Thus, Rus wasn't called **פורעניות** or a derivative of that word, because when a person lives his or her life always upbeat and happy, there can be nothing that can be called bad.

If we internalize this message, realizing that the whole golus is a stepping stone to hasten the arrival of Moshiach, we will be zoche to the reality of the posuk **להגיד בבקר חסדך** - "To speak of Your kindness in the morning," with the future coming of Moshiach - but only if **ואמונתך בלילות** - we maintain our full faith throughout the darkness, like Rus and Dovid did.

"A person who learns Torah with humility draws the Shechinah close. Arrogance pushes wisdom away, but humility makes the heart into a vessel for Torah." ~ Rabbi Simcha Zissel Ziv.

כִּי אֶל־אֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכִי אֵלֵךְ וּבַאֲשֶׁר תָּלִינִי אָלִין עַמֵּךְ עַמִּי 1:16



Rashi explains the dialogue between Naomi and Rus. Naomi was telling Rus, in trying to dissuade her from becoming a giyores (convert), that it is not easy living as a Jew. There are restrictions, for example, T'chum Shabbos. To that Rus responded, "*Where you go, I will go.*" Naomi told her that there are 613 commandments, not only the 7 that she was accustomed to. Rus persisted by saying, "*Your nation is my nation.*"

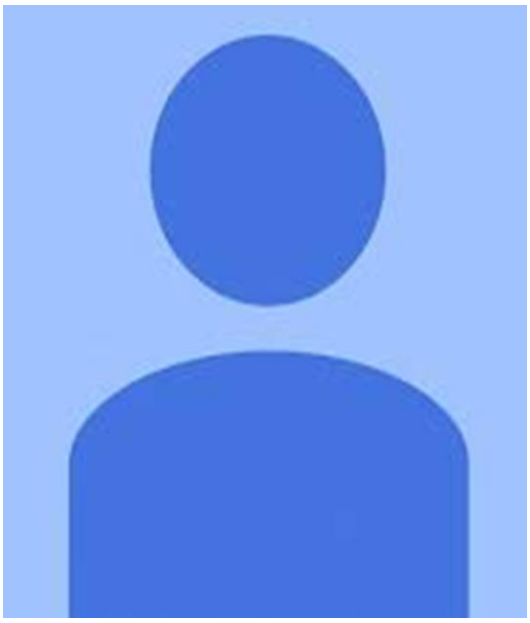
Asks **R' Shamshon Raphael Hirsch zt"l**, why did Rus respond to these questions in the positive, "*Where you go, I will go?*" If she was responding to the restraints of Judaism, shouldn't she have answered the other way, "*Well, if you cannot do it then I too will not do it. Where you don't go and where you don't sleep I won't either*"?

R' Hirsch answers so beautifully and with a message that is timely. Rus with her tzidkus and sincerity was able to realize that when it comes to a Jew, not going is in reality going! The "restrictions" given to us by Hashem are not at all cumbersome restraints. On the contrary, they help us get to the spiritual level that we are supposed to be at, and maintain our status as an **עם קדוש**, clean and pristine. They were indeed positive messages to her. The examples Rashi gave us; halachos d'rabbanan, even gezeiros and harchakos - Rus recognized that even those have our best interests in mind, and adhering to them is critical for our ascension on **מעלות הקדושה**.

As we find ourselves trying to get back to "regular" life, each one in our individual way, let us not forget that the recent limitations were for our benefit. Let's not grow lax in adhering to them. We must

willingly and happily stick to the current advice of our respective Rabbanim and realize that like the Torah's restrictions, they are for our benefit. With this in mind, we can be mekabel the Torah b'simcha and hope for Moshiach ben Dovid, descendant of Dovid Hamelech and Rus, to redeem us b'korov!

וְהִנֵּה הַגֹּאֵל עֹבֵר אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר־בֹּעַז וַיֹּאמֶר סְוּרָה שְׁבָה־פֹּה פְּלֹנִי אַלְמֹנִי 4:1



My Zaida (***Baal Machsheves Halev zt"l***) would often tell over the vort of why the **גואל** - the man who was expected to marry Rus, was called Ploni Almoni - a total anonymous and ambiguous title for a human being. He explained that this man will forever go down in history as a man with no name because he had a chance to become something - to truly make a name for himself - and instead of rising to the occasion, he "dropped the ball!" He let Rus down, but much more than that, he let himself down! Rather than "stepping up to the plate" and becoming the future progenitor of Malchus Bais Dovid - an honour that went to Boaz instead - he turned down the offer and was left to roam the proverbial halls of history, as a nobody, a nothing, a zero, a "Ploni Almoni."

I would just like to add an additional insight to this powerful thought. While on the one hand, Ploni Almoni passed up the opportunity of a lifetime, Boaz, a man in his eighties who had been previously married saw this opportunity and took the initiative. He agreed to marry Rus and carry on his progeny. Not only that, says the **Chofetz Chaim zt"l**, we are left to marvel at his zerizus - his quick thinking and acting. As the posuk says **כי לא ישקט האיש עד אם כלה הדבר היום** - "For the man (Boaz) will not rest until he has

resolved the matter today." He didn't waste a second and got the ball rolling immediately. He married her at once and Chazal say he passed away the very next day. The swiftness of Boaz brought about Mashiach and the Malchus Bais Dovid. Had he waited a day it would been too late.

Chazal say **בכל יום ויום בת קול יצא מהר חורב** - "*Every day a Heavenly voice rings out from Har Chorev.*" It is a calling from up on high. Who hears this bas kol? The meforshim say, everyone in life at certain intervals, hears a calling, a chance to "step up to the plate." The question is what will the person do with it. Will he heed the bas kol like Boaz or just push it off like Ploni Almoni?

May Hakadosh Boruch Hu grant us insight and siyata dishmaya to call the right shots and make the correct decisions with zerizus and alacrity, enabling us to become a real part in His script as *avdei Hashem.*

From the Wellsprings Of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

(דברים טז-י"א) וְעָשִׂיתָ חַג שָׁבֻעוֹת לַה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ... וְשָׂמַחְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ



When we think about the Yom Tov of Shavuos, we are inspired by the fact that it is the day we received the greatest gift imaginable. It is the day the entire world waited two thousand four hundred and forty-eight years for. The Torah is the purpose of the world, and yet we can say that something even greater happened on that very special day, the 6th of Sivan, 2448. The greatest thing imaginable occurred on that day and that is .... we became permanently attached to Hashem!

Up until this point we were good friends! Avraham Avinu discovered Hashem and chose to pass down his ideology of monotheism to his generation and to his children and grandchildren. Yaakov Avinu went down with 70 family members to Egypt, all fearing Hashem and doing His will. The Jewish people multiplied greatly and cried out to Hashem to save them from their enemies who tortured them for 210 years.

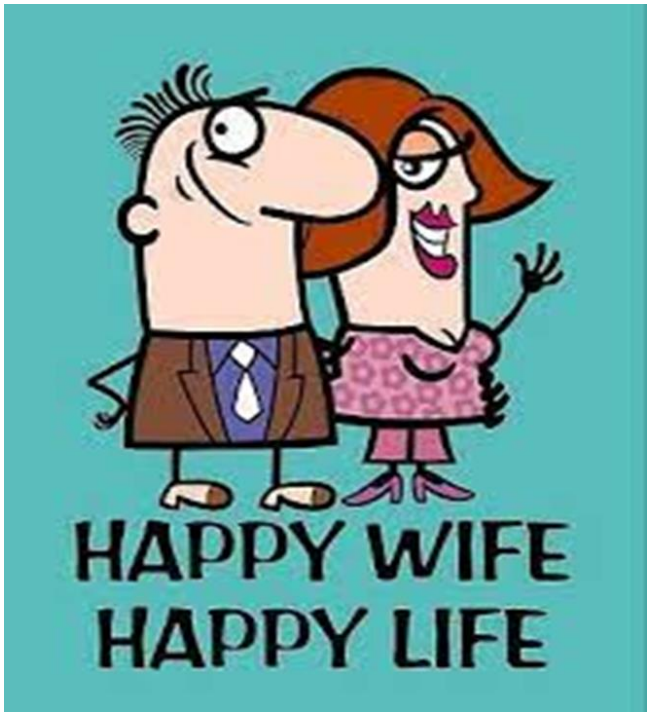
Our relationship was being formed as Klal Yisroel was being purified in fire. Only after Hashem did great miracles for us, revealed His great power and love for His people, and took us out of Egypt, was the relationship fully formed and Am Yisroel became completely devoted to Hashem. But then, just seven weeks later, on Chag Shavuos, our status completely changed. Hashem attached us to Him, the way a man takes a wife and we became one! Shavuos is the nuptials between Bnei Yisroel and Hashem. The Torah is the kesubah - the marriage contract - which tells us how to strengthen and deepen this attachment. The 613 mitzvos are 613 solutions which allow us to get closer to Hashem; because we are permanently attached, we can never, ever lose that connection. We just need to constantly work on tightening the bond.

This connection was truly the greatest gift that we received on Shavuos. The word **שבועות** means promises. It is referring to the promises that Hashem made to us: "*You shall be for Me a Kingdom of priests and a holy nation.*" "*You are children to Hashem, your G-d.*" Hashem promised us that He will always be there for us and no matter what, He will never leave us.

If this is what Hashem has promised us, then what do we promise Him? What is OUR end of the deal? Well, obviously our job is to keep the Torah and do the mitzvos, that is our marriage contract, after all. But there is something that is extremely crucial in upholding the entire relationship. In fact, this is true for all marriages, and no less in the marriage between us and Hashem. It is

actually the one and only mitzvah on the day of Shavuos! There is no lulav, no matzah and no shofar. (And eating cheesecake is not a mitzvah, it is a minhag.) The only mitzvah on this great day of the calendar .... is to be happy. ***"V'samachta b'chagecha - you shall rejoice with the holiday!"*** It is your wedding day. You prepared and prepared for this great day and now, you are only meant to do one thing - BE HAPPY! Show Hashem how thrilled you are to become His kallah, to become permanently attached to Him. Is there any greater way to express our love and appreciation for Him?

Rabbi Ezriel Tauber zt"l tells the story of a man who came to him with a terrible problem. He said that his wife does absolutely nothing around the house. She doesn't cook or clean and just yaps on the phone all day. But on top of that, she is always miserable. She never smiles, never has a good word to say, she is always unhappy, no matter what. The man asked if Rabbi Tauber could help him?



He answered that, yes, he thinks he can help, but only in one area. He could either focus on teaching her to cook and clean and take charge of her domestic responsibilities. That would take some time but he felt that he could manage to make her a functional woman in her home. Or, he said, I could focus on her mood. I could teach her to be happy and positive. With time and lots of training, it is possible to make her into a happy person! Which would the man prefer? The man did not have to think for too long! I want a happy wife, because a happy wife is a happy life. Everything else will fall into place, if she has a smile upon her face! Being happy when you are around your spouse is the greatest way to express your deep love.

On Shavuos, this is our mitzvah, it is our focus, because what does Hashem want from His beloved wife? He wants us to be happy, to show Him how thrilled we are to become His beloved kallah. So let's go out of our way to make this the most beautiful affair. Celebrate this day in the most beautiful manner; not to show off to your friends, but to show Hashem how happy and delighted you are to be His beloved bride, permanently attached to Him through Torah.

Fascinating Insights by Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - Conversion Rate

The Chassam Sofer among others tells us that when the non-Jews were offered the Torah, they refused to accept it. Nevertheless, although the nation as a whole refused to accept it, there were individuals who did want to accept it. The souls of these people are the souls of those in each generation who come to convert to Judaism.



The righteous convert Avraham ben Avraham (1700-1749) whose Yartzheit is on the second day of Shavuos. Logically, this man should have been forgotten as he died long ago, leaving behind no wife, children or any sefer. Yet this great man is surely remembered. His father was a Polish nobleman, yet he did the unthinkable: convert to Judaism. This former Count Valentin Potocki became known as the *ger tzedek* of Vilna, the righteous convert of Vilna. He was a single convert which was done without ulterior motives, as there was no renown or power involved. He needed to hide because if his father discovered him, he would kill him. And so Avraham ben Avraham lived and served Hashem quietly, avoiding notice. He was eventually discovered and

told that if he renounces Judaism, all his glory, wealth and prestige of the counthood would be his. He refused and was condemned to die.

On his way to the stake, he passed by the **Vilna Gaon's** house where he had a second as he was being led to his death. He asked the **Vilna Gaon**: faster or slower. That is, should he hasten to the gallows to fulfil the mitzva of kidush Hashem as it is a mitzva to perform the commandments with enthusiasm and alacrity or should he slow down as it is a mitzva to live and extend life every possible minute? The answer: faster. He followed the answer enthusiastically. He was killed on the second day of Shavuos when yizkor (prayer for the dead) is recited. Thereafter on every Shavuos in the main shul in Vilna, a separate yizkor was recited for Avraham ben Avraham as he left behind no family or descendant to say yizkor for him.

In defiance of an order that no one dare collect his ashes to bury them, the Vilna Gaon sent R' Leizer Shiskes, a Jew disguised as a gentile, to try to gain possession of his ashes. R' Shiskes bribed the guard to hand him the ashes. It was placed in an earthenware vessel and buried in the Vilna cemetery.

The Vilna Gaon blessed R' Shiskes with long life, and he indeed lived until 112. In fact, it was inscribed on the grave of R' Shiskes, "The blessing of the Gaon, the number of the years of his life was 112." When the Vilna Gaon passed away, he was buried in the plot adjacent to Avraham ben Avraham.

Here is a contemporary written account from 1755 (six years after the execution) by R' Yaakov Emden (**ויקם עדות ביעקב**, p. 25b) who lived from 1697-1776: "A few years ago, it happened in Vilna, the capital of Lithuania, that a great prince from the family of Pototska converted. They captured him and imprisoned him for many days thinking they could return him to their religion. He knew that he would not escape harsh tortures and a cruel death if he would not return. They wanted to save him from the death and punishment

that would await him if he held out. He paid no attention to them or to the begging of his mother, the countess. He was not afraid or worried about dying in all the bitter anguish they had done to him.

After a long time, they tried to take it easy on him for the honour of his family. He ridiculed all the temptations of the priests who would speak to him every day because he was an important minister. He scorned them, and chose death of long and cruel agony, to the temporary life of this world. He accepted and suffered all from love and died sanctifying G-d's name." The elder Jews of Vilna, who lived at the time of the *ger tzedek's* martyred death related some strange happenings in connection with that event. Those who had what to do with the *ger tzedek's* death came to a sorry end.

The peasants of a village near Vilna, who happily added wood to the pile, became the victims of a raging fire that burned down their homes and barns. A woman who made a jeering expression at the *ger tzedek*, suffered a stroke that left her face distorted for the rest of her life. A building adjoining the Town Hall, facing the place of execution, was blackened by the smoke of the pile and no amount of washing could erase the black stains. It was then painted over, and the black stains resurfaced. It was given another coat of paint, of a different colour, and the black stains re-emerged again — a silent reminder of the horror that had been perpetrated there. This struck fear and shame in the hearts of the Vilna residents, until the authorities finally had to demolish the building.

"A person can learn Torah for many years and still remain outside of it. The purpose of Torah is not merely to know many masechtos, but to allow the Torah to shape one's character, reactions, speech, and thoughts. The true sign of Kabbalas HaTorah is refinement of middos." ~ Rabbi ישראל Yaakov Kanievsky.

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם שהחיינו וקימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה



Hidden away in caves and crannies, in the thickets of the forests around Buczacz, Poland, a number of Jewish refugees had escaped the Nazi onslaught with little more than the clothes on their backs and the constant worry of how to survive another day. The days were spent searching for food to keep themselves alive. Any money they had with them went to gentiles who delivered bread to them. The hidden Jews divided up whatever bread arrived equally among them all. Their overwhelming fear of discovery led to arguments among the Jews, each refusing to divide the bread next to his hiding place for fear that someone might see and inform on them. putting them all in great danger. Often anti-Semitic gentiles turned in a Jew in hiding to the Germans. They received five hundred rubles for each Jew.

In this heart wrenching place, **R' Shlomo Zalman Horowitz zt"l**, the Rav of Potek, stood revealed in all his strength and courage. He declared that he was not in the least afraid to have the bread division at his hiding place. On the contrary, he said, the merit of this mitzvah would protect him and all those hiding with him - which is exactly what happened. Many hideouts were discovered by the enemy and their occupants were murdered, but through Heaven's mercy the Potekar Rav's hide-out was never discovered. Winter in the forest was cold and miserable and many people perished or fled of their own volition.

By late spring, R' Shlomo Zalman surveyed who was left and was determined to survive. On the first night of Shavuos 5703 (1943), the forest refugees prayed the Yom Tov tefillos and then sat down to a meagre holiday meal. No more were there luscious challos, sumptuous fish, hot nourishing soup and the inviting aroma of the

chicken. They had very little out there in the forest and were prepared to make do as best as they could.

R' Shlomo Zalman made Kiddush slowly and with great concentration, and then recited the blessing "Shehecheyanu."

The words reverberated among the forest trees that Shavuos night. One man could not contain himself. "Rabbi, how, in such a dismal time, can one lie and thank G-d for 'bringing us to this time'? What is so great about 'this time'?"

The Rav took the question seriously, and his enlightening answer spanned three-quarters of an hour while all of the forest refugees sat and listened. He started from the beginning detailing all the suffering they had seen since the war began. He pointed out, one by one, all the instances of Divine providence that was evident every step of the way. Every time they thought they were doomed, a miracle occurred, and they continued to live! Providence, he explained, had shown itself so clearly that his own faith had grown stronger - not weaker - because of the persecutions.

R' Shlomo Zalman looked around at the faces of the huddled mass and exclaimed, "For this I give thanks to Hashem! He has brought us to this time, when I am able to see that my Emunah, my faith has not been damaged at all, that it is actually growing! That is something worthy of saying a blessing over!" (*Shema Yisroel by the Kaliver Rebbe shlit'a)*

"Every Jew has moments when he feels distant and uninspired. Shavuos teaches that the Ribbono Shel Olam nevertheless desires a relationship with every Jew. At Sinai, the entire nation stood together — the greatest scholars alongside the simplest people — because every soul possesses a unique portion in Torah." ~ Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin.

R' Chaim Yosef Halevi Friedman shlit'a (Siach Tzaddikim) would say:



"The custom to eat milk products on Shavuos is based on the fact that milk comes from a cow, and if the person milking the cow does not use a bucket or vessel to collect the milk, it will simply fall on the ground. Similarly, the Yom Tov of Shavuos is the time when Hashem sends down from Heaven, all the pipelines of Torah knowledge, hasmada and toil. If a Jew does not make himself into a vessel to collect these gifts, they simply fall to the ground."

"Akdamus"

The Ashkenazi custom on the morning of the first day of Shavuos is to recite "Akdamus" a piyut, or liturgical poem, composed by **Rabbi Meir ben Yitzchok ZT"L of Worms.**

In it, the author is filled with praise of Hashem, the Torah and the Jewish people. Written in Aramaic, this poem has annually uplifted Jewry over hundreds of years of persecutions, reminding us of our glorious status and of the eternal nature of the Torah and the Jewish people.

The "final solution" of the Jewish question in Hungary got under way with a speed and efficiency that surprised even the Germans: between mid-April and late May 1944, practically the entire Jewish population of the Hungarian countryside was ghettoized and, in the largest deportation operation in the history of the Holocaust, between May 15 and July 9 of that year, over 437,000 people had

been transported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The speed with which the Hungarian authorities cast out Jews from society, then robbed, segregated and deported them, was unprecedented in the entire history of the Holocaust.



R' Menachem Mendel Taub, the Kaliver Rebbe was only twenty-one years of age when he found himself on a transport to Auschwitz. He arrived there, starving and thirsty, on May 25, three days before the festival of Shavuos was to begin. The sight that greeted him was an enduring one; he never fails to mention it when he speaks publicly about his ordeal in the camps. "I will never forget the sight that met my eyes when we came to Auschwitz, three days before Shavuos. I saw, revealed before me, the eternal core of Am Yisroel, unquenchable, even though all of the forces in the universe strive against it."

The Rebbe relates that as they exited the trains, disoriented and bewildered, each group of one thousand Jews was surrounded and enclosed by electrified barbed-wire fences. One touch would kill a man on the spot. Indeed, they saw prone bodies lying at the base of the fence and it was quite obvious that these people had chosen to end their wretched existence and meet their Maker by touching the electrified fence.

Suddenly, they noticed a commotion. A number of men were struggling to reach a certain object which was just beyond the fence. With as much caution as they could muster, they were

reaching through the wire to try to grab a piece of paper. R' Menachem Mendel did not understand what was happening and asked what they were doing. Someone told him that beyond the electric fence, they had spotted a page of a machzor with the poem of Akdamus printed on it, and the men were trying to reach through the fence and get hold of it.

The sight made an incredible impression on the future Kaliver Rebbe. He lifted up his eyes to Heaven and said: "Master of the Universe, who is like Your people, Yisroel? They are a unique nation on earth!" Jews in such a terrible situation, with death staring them in the face; yet at that very moment their faith moved them to risk their lives to get a single page of praise to Hashem.

Rabbi Dovid Gurwitz shlit'a (Mizmor L'Dovid) says:



"The Torah says in Parshas Yisro, immediately following the Aseres Hadibros, **וכל העם רואים את הקלות** - 'All the people saw the sounds.' Rashi explains that all the people were healed, including blind people. According to the Gemara, these words mean that the Jews actually saw the sounds of the Ten Commandments. Each word spoken by Hashem took the form of letters that illuminated the sky like lightening.

The word for sounds, **הקלות** is the gematria 541, the same value of **ישראל**. In essence, we saw ourselves. We are a people of many voices, and it is imperative for each of us to find our voice and refine our character, also looking for the unique voice in others."

From the Wellsprings Of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo



Although Shavuos is one of the shalosh regalim, it does not require the same amount of preparation that Pesach and Sukkos requires. Why?

Because Shavuos has no extra mitzvos other than to REJOICE on this great day! It is a time to show Hashem where your heart is and how much you love Him and His Torah! That is meant to be our focus and as a result, we have no other mitzvos to distract us from this single, all-encompassing goal!

But, as **Rabbi Zev Leff** points out, although we have no extra mitzvos, we do have certain minhagim - five customs that are meant to teach us a deeper appreciation of how to actually acquire the great gift of Torah. **The five minhagim are: Reciting *Akdamos* before laining, eating dairy food, reading Megillas Rus, decorating the home with flowers and greenery, and last but not least, staying up all night to learn Torah!**

Can you find the common denominator between all of the above? They reverberate with the message of toil! AMEILUS! The idea that the important things in life do not happen in a minute! Real growth and real spirituality are a process. It takes time and hard work. This is truly the only way to acquire Torah.

Let's explain. Akdamos teach us that before one can learn Torah, he needs a long and meaningful preface to appreciate what Torah is! Milk products remind us of the foundation of life since milk is the first food that a baby is nourished with. It is because of the milk that this child can grow into a healthy adult. Megillas Rus traces the foundation of Melech HaMashiach - the obvious goal of the entire

world. Decorating the house with greenery reminds us of the preparation and hard work that goes into the planting, sowing, fertilizing and harvesting of food until it becomes ripe. Staying up all night signifies that Torah comes with ameilus! Not by eating or sleeping but by pushing oneself to the limit! Yes, it is a process. It takes time and hard work!

Anything that is truly valuable takes time and a great deal of effort. This is what the customs on Shavuous are trying to teach us. So as we celebrate this unprecedented day, the greatest day in Jewish history, and relive Kabbolas HaTorah on this most beautiful holiday, let us remember HOW we are meant to acquire the Torah. But let us be sure to fulfil the one and only mitzvah on this day of truly being HAPPY, truly rejoicing with the Torah.

We must show Hashem how much we appreciate and are thrilled to be His chosen nation. We must press the "LOVESICK button" for Hashem. Only by expressing our joy and excitement, which is our mitzvah, can we possibly understand and internalize the message of our minhagim - that Torah is worth putting in the time and toil to achieve! May we all be zoche!

R' Boruch Mordechai Ezrachi would say:

"What is the difference between Orpah and Rus? They both begged their mother-in-law Naomi to allow them to stay with her, numerous times. But Rus did not give up! '*And she (Naomi) saw that Rus strained to go with her.*' This is akin to the dictum of Chazal: 'It is not comparable learning something 100 times to learning it 101 times.' If one does not give up and 'strains' the extra effort to study one more time, he will be successful. Like Rus who strained and was ultimately successful. How successful? Her grandson was Dovid Hamelech!"

Concepts in Avodas Halev - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman Zt"L



On the Yom Tov of Shavuos, we read Megilas Rus. In perek א posuk ג, the posuk states: **וַיָּמָת אֱלִימֶלֶךְ אִישׁ נָעֳמִי וַתִּשָּׁאֵר הִיא וּשְׁנֵי בָנֶיהָ**. Elimelech died and his wife Naomi was left alone with her two sons. Two posukim later, it says, **וַיָּמֻתוּ גַּם־שְׁנֵיהֶם מַחְלוֹן וְכִלְיוֹן וַתִּשָּׁאֵר הָאִשָּׁה מִשְּׁנֵי יְלָדֶיהָ וּמֵאִישָׁהּ**. Naomi's two sons also died and now she was bereft of her children - **וּמֵאִישָׁהּ** - and from her husband as well.

Why is it necessary to repeat that she lost her husband? We already know this from two posukim previously? Based on the yesod we said earlier, my machshava is as follows: Yes, Naomi did lose her husband, however, since her children were still alive, she still felt as if a part of her husband was still living, although not physically, but spiritually, since her children followed in the footsteps of her husband. But now that her two sons, Machlon and Kilyon, also passed away, now she truly felt that her husband was dead. There was nothing remaining of him once his children passed away.

On this special Yom Tov of Matan Torah, the day when Hashem gave eternal life to His Nation through the Torah, may we all be zoche to give it over to our children and all future generations, not only to give them life, but so that it may keep us alive for **דורי דורות** as well!

From the Wellsprings Of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo



As we approach the "Grand Finale" of this uplifting period of Sefiras Haomer, we must make sure that we understand the most important message of all. Shavuos is the birthday, as well as the yahrzeit of Dovid Hamelech. Dovid will forever go down in history as The King of Israel, the passionate composer of the Jewish people who gave us the precious gift of Tehillim. Every possible human emotion was put to paper in the words of the Psalms, and through his deep perceptiveness, it was channelled to praise and thank Hashem. Where would we all be today without the soothing and strengthening heartfelt words of Dovid, Melech Yisroel, which have been reiterated and reverberating in the hearts of millions of comforted Jews?

Our beloved Dovid almost didn't make it! When Adam HaRishon saw this lofty soul up in heaven who had no life in this world of his own, he decided to take 70 years from his lifespan of 1000 and give it to Dovid. However, when Adam was nearing his 930th birthday he regretted his offer and wished to renege on the deal. Even after 930 years of life, Adam still wished to have more time to accomplish on this world. Every minute of life is so precious, we must count our blessings that we are alive today! We must count each day of Sefiras Haomer the way we count our most valuable assets. But most importantly, as Dovid Hamelech did with the gift of 70 years that Hashem told Adam he must give to Dovid as promised, we must make every day count! We must utilize the gift of time and approach Shavuous - which literally means weeks, by truly making the most of every week, every day, and every single minute of life.

The Gaon, R' Eliyahu of Vilna ZT"L would say: 2:8

אַל־תֵּלְכִי לִלְקֹט בְּשָׂדֶה אַחֵר וְגַם לֹא תַעֲבוֹרִי מִזֶּה וְכֹה תִדְבָּקִין עִם־נַעֲרֹתָי׃



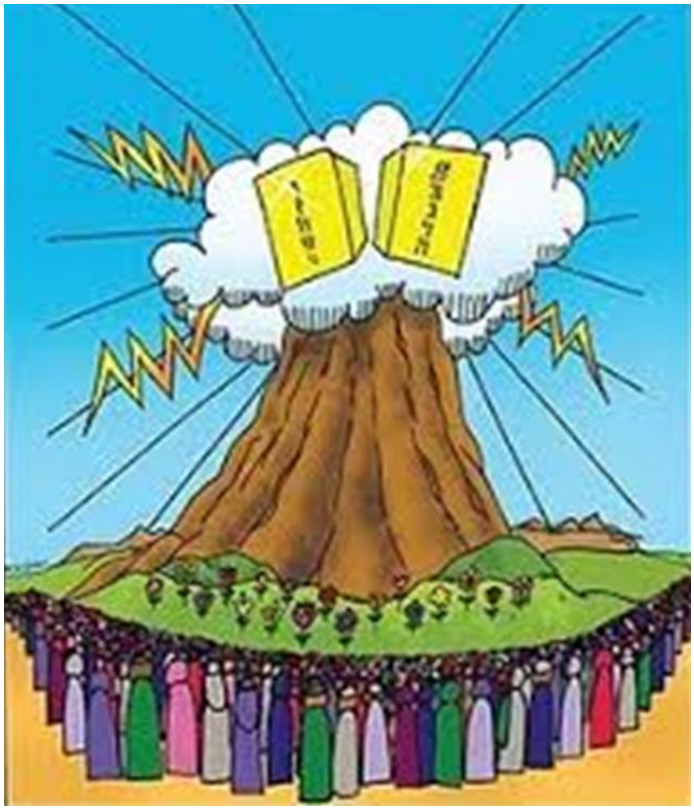
When Boaz saw the modest manner in which Ruth collected wheat in one of his fields, he addressed the young Moabite girl as follows: Do not collect in other people's fields and do not cross into another one of my fields. Rather, continue collecting in this very field because in this field I have a group of female workers and you will be able to work amongst them, whilst in other fields, I do not have female workers and you would be required to work amongst the males. Such a passage has been recorded for all time, so that we learn from it the ways of tznius and kedusha."

R' Nosson Raiz shlit'a (Kaftor Vaferach in the name of R' Yankel Cohen shlit'a) would say:

"Chazal tell us that when Klal Yisroel heard each commandment directly from Hashem, their souls left them out of fear, and Hashem brought a special dew down to revive them.

If so, when Hashem held the mountain above their heads and warned them to accept the Torah, why didn't their souls leave them then as well? Because each דיברה was said with fire, and the people panicked from the flames, whereas there was no fire when Hashem lifted Har Sinai."

Chacham Rabbeinu Ovadia Yosef ZT"L (in Torat HaMoadim) would say:



"One must gather his strength for the recitation of shacharit on Shavuot morning and not fall asleep during the service, for if he does, the reward for having remained awake all night is negated by the loss of his prayer. Very often, if one falls asleep during pesukei d'zimra or birchat Kriat Shema, he cannot remember where he was up to when he fell asleep. One must also make an effort during the reading of the Torah, which includes the reading of the Ten Commandments.

Yalkut Shimoni says: *'The Almighty said to Israel: My children, read the parsha of the Ten Commandments every year (on Shavuot) and I will consider it as if you stood before Me on Mount Sinai and accepted the Torah.'"*

Why Do We Eat Milk and Honey On Shavuos? Written By Harav Moshe Sternbuch

Milk and honey are ready to be consumed without any additives or improvements. Therefore, we have milk and honey on Shavuos to remind us and to impart within us that the Torah too is complete and perfect just as it is without any additions or changes.

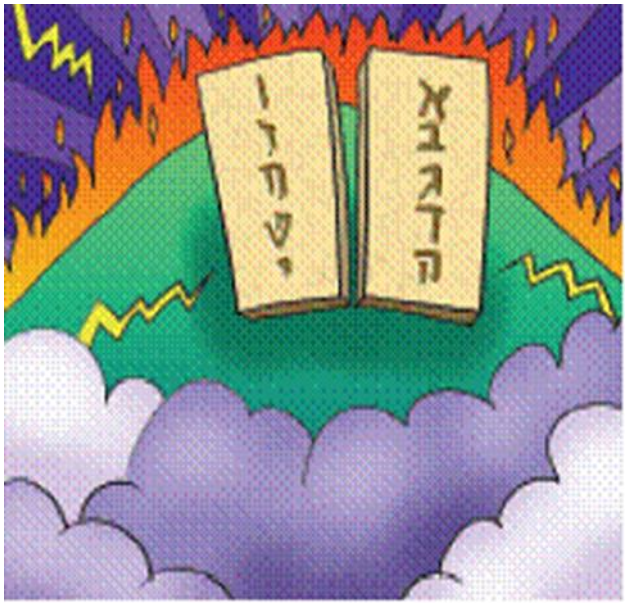
Chacham Yehudah Birdogo ZT"L would say:

"At Har Sinai, the Torah says, *'And Yisroel camped there across from the mountain,'* which refers only to the males. The women, in keeping with the proper observance of tznius remained a little further away.



Thus, when Moshe was instructing the people, he spoke first to the women - 'So shall you say to the house of Yaakov' and then to the men - 'you shall say to sons of Yisroel.' To emphasize that their distance was not any sort of demonstration of disrespect towards the women, they were instructed first, to show that this is the proper path of service of Hashem, by separating the genders."

Shavuos - "I am the L-rd your G-d."



Why did Hashem use the singular form when giving the Ten Commandments to millions of people?

To teach us that each and every Jew must say to himself, "The Ten Commandments were given to me, and I must keep them." One should not think it is sufficient that the Torah is kept by others. (*Midrash*)

1:9 יִתֵּן ה' לָכֶם וּמְצֶאןָ מְנוּחָה אִשָּׁה בֵּית אִישָׁהּ...

The Book of Rus contains the history of the roots of Dovid HaMelech, and since we have a tradition that the day of Shavuos is the birthday as well as the anniversary of the death of King David, we read this sefer on Shavuos. In light of this, we may ask a question on the words Naomi told her daughters-in-law, Rus and Orpah, as she attempted to part with them: **יִתֵּן ה' לָכֶם וּמְצֶאןָ מְנוּחָה אִשָּׁה בֵּית אִישָׁהּ...** *"Hashem shall grant you (the merit) that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband."* The discrepancy seems to be in the word **לָכֶם** which refers to the daughters-in-law, and yet it is in the masculine form, whereas the next word **וּמְצֶאןָ** is in the feminine form.

The Rokeach, Rabbeinu Elazar of Worms ZT"L and **Chacham Yaakov Culi ZT"L (*Yalkut Me'am Loez*)** both propose that the word **לָכֶם** was specifically stated for its letters also form the word **מלך** (king). This is an allusion to the fact that both kings, Dovid HaMelech and his successor Shlomo, would be descended from one of Naomi's two daughters-in-law. The omission of the final letter **ה** from the word **וּמְצֶאןָ** hints that only one of them - Rus - was destined to give birth to a line of kings.

The Rokeach notes that the gematria of the four words of Naomi's blessing: **ה' לָכֶם וּמְצֶאןָ מְנוּחָה** add up to 412, which is equal to **בית** - a reference to the Bais HaMikdash, which would be built by Shlomo HaMelech on the site purchased by his father Dovid, the direct descendants of Rus.

R' Eliyahu Kitov ZT"L adds that the Book of Rus demonstrates the major theme of Shavuos; namely, the conversion of the profane to the holy, the physical to the spiritual, from Moavite to Jewess, the ancestor of Dovid HaMelech and the future King and Messiah. It was Rus' conscious selflessness and self-improvement that allowed her to climb up the spiritual ladder to the sublime heights of pure Torah.

R' Shlomo Hakohen Rabinowitz of Radomsk Hy"d (Tiferes Shlomo) would say:



"We find that Rus converted to Judaism and accepted the Torah. But even before she had a chance to fulfil any mitzvos, Boaz informs her '*May Hashem reward your deed and may your payment be in full from Hashem.*'

He was telling her that Hashem would reward her in full as if she had fulfilled all the mitzvos. In fact, Hashem does this for every Jew. He considers one's intentions to do a mitzvah as if he had actually done it. When we accept the yoke of Malchus Shomayim (Heavenly Sovereignty) wholeheartedly and with the intention of fulfilling each and every mitzvah, Hashem will repay us in this world and in the World-to-Come."

וְרָחַצְתְּ וָסַכְתְּ וְשַׂמְתְּי שִׂמְלֹתַיִךְ עָלַיִךְ וְיָרַדְתְּי הַגֹּרֶן אַל־תִּוָּדְעִי לָאִישׁ עַד כַּלֹּתוֹ לֶאֱכֹל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת׃ 3:3

At the end of Megilas Rus, we read that the great King of Israel, Dovid Hamelech, was in fact, a descendant of Rus, the Moavite woman who was widowed from her husband. The Megilah details how she converted to Judaism and, in an amazing turn of events, ended up marrying Boaz, the Jewish leader at that time, ultimately giving birth to his child and the future Royal dynasty.

The Seforim Hakedoshim explain that when a spectacular event is about to happen in this world, Hashem will often hide the progression of events so that the Satan should not get wind of it and attempt to disrupt it with his considerable powers of impurity. Hence, the great

Davidic dynasty was initiated through a convert to Judaism. Similarly, Moshiach Ben Dovid is destined to come from an unlikely source so as to subvert the Satan.

When R' Sholom Rokeach ZT"L (Sar Shalom), who founded the Belzer dynasty, was a young man, he lived in the home of his father-in-law, the Rebbe of Skolye. One day, soldiers from the Russian Army came to the town to conscript young eligible men to fight for the motherland. They would snatch young men off the streets and drag them away to the army. Naturally, the young men of the town quickly went into hiding, and the Skolye Rebbe begged his son-in-law, who was then still young of years, to do the same. R' Sholom did not wish to disobey his father-in-law's plea, but he had his own idea of how to go about evading the emissaries of the Czar.

He immersed himself in a mikveh, washed and dressed himself in his finest Shabbos clothes, then went out to the garden and sat down to study gemara. His father-in-law observed these actions with bewilderment. He even protested to his son-in-law that he was not properly guarding his life. How could he consider himself hidden if he was out in the open? And in short time, his fears were realized. Without warning, two soldiers burst into the Rebbe's garden and headed straight towards the future Belzer Rebbe!

His heart sinking, the Skolye Rebbe began berating himself for not having seen to it that R' Sholom had been well hidden, but he realized that nothing untoward had happened; R' Sholom's melodious voice was still singing the words of the gemara.

Incredulously, he looked out and was amazed to see the soldiers in the garden, their vicious expressions transformed into blissful smiles. They were admiring the apple tree in the yard, commenting on the extraordinary beauty of the fruit and the heavenly smell. Ignoring their erstwhile quarry and oblivious to their mission, they ran to the tree and quickly picked from it as many apples as they could, filling their bags with their pickings. When they were done,

they cast one last glance at the marvellous tree and then retreated out of the garden, not lifting a finger or even casting a sidelong glance at the young Jewish man who was sitting nearby.

When the Rebbe later questioned R' Sholom about how he had come up with such an unusual plan and in what merit he was saved, he explained that he learned it from this posuk in Megillas Rus (3:3). *"When Rus' mother-in-law, Naomi, came up with the plan to have Rus secretly meet Boaz and persuade him to marry her, she instructed Rus to go to Boaz's threshing floor, telling her, 'Bathe and anoint yourself, don your finery and ... do not make yourself known to the man.'*

I just followed her advice. I washed and dressed and knew that I would not be seen or known to any man!"

R' Aharon Kotler ZT"L would say:



"On Shavuos, it is appropriate to sing the famous words in Tehillim **לולי תורתך שעשעי אז אבדתי בעניי** - *'Had Your Torah not been my obsession, I would have perished in my affliction.'*

Imagine! Chazal record Dovid Hamelech's enormous material wealth. Yet, Dovid, himself, proclaims that he would have drowned in a sea of poverty without Torah, the source of his vitality!"

Torah Gems

It is customary on Shavuos night to recite the Tikkun L'eil Shavuos, which is a compendium of excerpts from each portion of the Torah, Scripture and gemara. However, not everyone says the Tikkun, and many people have the custom to stay up the entire night learning Torah instead.

The Dubner Maggid, R' Yaakov Krantz ZT"L once explained the integral difference between the two customs: Every merchant places samples of his merchandise in his store-front window, as a way of informing potential customers about what he has to sell.



When a customer then requests one of the displayed items, he sells his products until he has sold out all his merchandise. However, it would only make sense to display samples of items if he maintains a stock of that merchandise to back them up. Otherwise, what is the point of the store-front display?

Explained the Maggid, what the Tikkun L'eil Shavuos consists of is small excerpts - or samples - of various portions of the Torah. So, for instance, a person like the **Vilna Gaon ZT"L**, who always maintained an abundant supply of stock of Torah wisdom, he has no problem saying the Tikkun on Shavuos as a way of displaying his merchandise. On the other hand, people who are not on such a level, unfortunately do not contain the requisite amount of stock to back up a sample display, so they must sit and learn instead in order to stockpile Torah.



R' Mordechai Banet ZT"L would say;

"On Shavuos we decorate our homes and shuls with greenery and plants such as those that grow on the river banks, to recall the foliage that Yocheved, the mother of Moshe Rabbeinu, used on the seventh day of Sivan to line the inside of the basket bearing her infant son."

Pearls of Wisdom …A Word for the Ages

Rav Aharon of Chernobyl once addressed Hashem on Shavuos, the day on which the Torah was given. "Hashem," he said, "it is not surprising that the Jews in the desert accepted the Torah. After all, they were very wealthy, having received their wealth from the Egyptians. They were in perfect health, as the *Medrash* teaches us; all illness was removed by You at *Har Sinai*. They were also free people. Thus, the conditions were ideal for them to accept the Torah.

Today," Rav Aharon continued, "the reverse is true. We are destitute. Our bodies are racked with all sorts of illness and pain, and we are subject to all the cruelty of nations determined to destroy us. Yet, I swear to You Hashem, that if You come to us today and offer us the Torah, we would all accept it with the same enthusiasm as the Jews did in the desert, and we would observe it fully!"

Shavuos Treasures

There is a custom to learn all night on Shavuos, and this Minhag has roots that reach back to the earliest era of our nation. It was originated in order to make up for the fact that our ancestors actually had slept the night of Matan Torah, the night before the Torah was given on Har Sinai.

To make up for this, many people stay up all night and study Torah (Midrash Shir HaShirim Rabbah 1:56). The practice is mentioned in the Zohar (Parashas Emor 98a), where it even describes the reward that awaits one who studies Torah all night. One who stays up all night to learn receives seventy Divine Brachos from Hashem above and is crowned with a special Spiritual crown of the Upper Heavens! They are also inscribed in a special Sefer HaZikaron, a Book of Rememberances in Shamayim.



The Arizal writes in Shaar HaKavanos that whoever stays up all night learning is assured that he will certainly live out the year. **The Chofetz Chaim** records this statement as Halachah in the Mishnah Brurah (494:1). Siddur Etz Chaim (page 46a) writes that fulfilling this practice of learning all night makes it as if we ourselves received the Torah when we hear the Laining of Shavuos. It is therefore as if we were actually there at Har Sinai on the day of Matan Torah itself!

Shavuos Gems



Chazal teach us that Tu B'shvat is the new year for trees, and Shavuos is the new year of fruits. It would therefore seem more logical to spread out branches of trees on Tu B'Shvat, and eat fruits on Shavuos. Yet, we do precisely the opposite: we eat fruit on Tu B'Shvat and decorate our homes and shuls with branches on Shavuos!

Explains the **Divrei Yoel, R' Yoel Teitelbaum ZT"L**, when we want to assess the quality of a tree, we examine its fruits. When we want to assess the quality of fruit, we examine the tree from where it came. True, the quality of our fruits are determined on Shavuos. However, we assess the quality of fruit by looking at its origins - the trees.

The lesson is clear: If we act as proper heirs of the generation that received the Torah and sanctified the Name of Hashem, then we realize that we are deeply rooted in their heritage. Their glory will yet be restored to its rightful splendour of former years; the golden chain will continue in all its grandeur. Likewise, the quality of the tree is realized by examining its fruit. If parents send their children to yeshivas concerned that their children attain a knowledge of Torah and mitzvos, and are connected to the golden chain that continues to grow from Har Sinai to this very day, then the parents are themselves strongly attached to this tradition, possessing a deep-rooted connection with the pure faith. On Shavuos we decorate with tree branches which testifies to our connection to our national roots and the glorious tree of which we are the fruits.

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter

ספר התודעה – Akdamus



The Piyut called **אקדמות** was composed by Rebbe Meir Ben Yitzchok who lived in Worms, Germany (11th century), and was the Chazan of the town. It was the same city where Rashi Hakodosh lived, and it said that Rashi learned Torah from Rebbe Meir Ben Yitzchok. The son of this composer was killed Al Kiddush Hashem during the crusades. Rebbe Meir as well went up against the priests in their arguments against the Torah Hakdosha. Rebbe Meir himself a fierce defender of the Torah Hakdosha, and had a great love for his people. These great arguments sapped him of his life, and he died right after the "great argument." He left over a beautiful Piyut which has praise for Hakodosh Boruch Hu, praise for the Torah, and praise for Klal Yisroel who were Mekabel the Torah.

It was accepted in many communities by Klal Yisroel to say this beautiful Piyut on the Yom Tov of Shavuos, with a beautiful melody and with much feeling. In the city of Worms, this Minhag was not accepted, for their pain was aching over the loss of the composer, whom they loved dearly. This Piyut reminded them of his death, which caused them great sadness.

There are ninety stanzas: the first forty are written according to the Aleph Bais (each letter twice) and the remaining stanzas spell the authors' name and a Brocha **מאיר ביר טובים אמן וחזק ואמץ רבי יצחק, יגדל בתורה ובמעשים** – *"Meir, the son of Rebbe Yitzchok,*

may he grow in Torah and in good deeds. Amen, be strong, and of good courage."

The Piyut was composed in Aramaic so that only Klal Yisroel would understand it, those who toil in Torah and the words of the Chachomim who spoke in Aramaic. Each stanza ends with the letters תא to allude to the praise of the Torah that it has no end, as soon as one reaches the last letter of the Aleph Bais, the Tav, it immediately starts again with the first letter, Aleph.

In the generations of Shmad, when Klal Yisroel had a sword upon their neck, they kept their Emunah in Hakodosh Boruch Hu at all times. They strengthened themselves with this Piyut to have complete Emunah and never to give in to their enemies. Initially, they were Mesaken to say this on Shavuos, in the middle of Laining from the Torah. The Kohen would go up to the Torah for the first Aliyah, he would make the Brocha on the Torah, they would read the first Posuk of the Laining and then they would say this Piyut. They would finish the entire Piyut, and then continue reading in the Torah. They did this to teach the Tzibur the Mitzvah of Kiddush Hashem, that we only have the Torah in order to strengthen our Emunah in Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

In later generations the Gedolim were against saying this Piyut in middle of reading from the Torah, so they changed the Minhag to have the Kohen called up for his Aliyah, they open the Sefer Torah and cover it, and before he makes the Brocha, they say this Piyut.

Shavuos Comes from The Word "Shvua" - Oath

On the day that the Torah was given, G-d and the Jewish people made a mutual vow. We swore to G-d that we would never exchange Him for another god and He swore to us that He will never exchange us for another nation. (*Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh*)

Megilas Rus 3:7 ויאכל בעז וישת וייטב לבו ויבא לשכב בקצה הערמה



And Boaz ate and drank, and his heart was glad. He went to lie down at the end of the grain pile. Naomi told her daughter-in-law, Rus, to go down to the threshing floor but not to make herself known to Boaz until he finished eating and drinking.

The Posuk tells us that Boaz's heart was merry. Why does the Posuk tell us that his heart was merry after eating and drinking? The following Divrei Torah will expound on this topic, and perhaps support the P'shat offered in the closing paragraph.

רש"י – 3:7 "וייטב לבו" - ***"And his heart was merry"*** means that he learned Torah.

Why was Boaz happy? - **ויאכל בעז וישת וייטב לבו – רות רבה** 5:15 . He was happy because he recited Birchas Hamozon on the food he had eaten. A second interpretation is that Boaz ate different types of sweets after the meal, for doing so enhances the voice for Torah study. A third interpretation is that Boaz engaged in Torah study during the course of his meal as it says in Tehillim 119:72 **טוב לי תורת פיך מאלפי זהב וכסף** - *"Better for me is the Torah of your mouth than thousands in gold and silver."* A fourth interpretation is that Boaz was searching for a wife, as it says in Mishlei 18:22 **" מצא אשה מצא טוב"** - "*One who has found a wife has found goodness.*".

Rus Rabbah 5:15 **ויטב לבו – שבירך על מזונו- נחמד למראה** - Every Yid is obligated to recite Birchas Hamozon after eating a meal. Why does the Posuk tell us that the great Tzaddik Boaz recited Birchas Hamozon after eating his meal? Boaz was indeed a great Tzaddik.

When a Tzaddik eats, he is eating so that he can perform his Avodas Hashem. This causes his eating itself to be Avodas Hashem. When a Tzaddik eats, it only takes a very small amount of food to be satiated because the Ribbono Shel Olam causes that food to have much Brocha, so that the Tzaddik becomes satiated from that small amount.

The Posuk is telling us that Boaz said **בִּרְכַּת הַמָּזוֹן** over **"מזונו"** – "his food", his small amount of food because the **רִבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם** caused there to be Brocha in his food and he became satiated from it.

ויאכל בעז וישת וייטב לבו Rus 3:7 **משיב נפש**

The sole purpose in a Tzaddik eating and drinking is so that he can have the strength to serve his Creator. The Posuk says that Boaz was of glad heart that day. It was not Shabbos or Yom Tov. Since Boaz was a Tzaddik, obviously there must have been a reason for him to be especially happy on a weekday. That is why the Medrash gives different explanations for his happiness on that day.

כל עיקרן של ישראל אינו אלא התורה, והיא העיקר והסיבה שנגאלו ממצרים - חינוך "The Ikar of Klal Yisroel is only the Torah, and that is the main reason that we were redeemed from Mitzrayim." The heavens and the earth were only created because of the Torah. The reason that Klal Yisroel were taken out of Mitzrayim was so that they would be Mekabel the Torah and keep the Torah. Perhaps now we can understand what the meaning of the words, "*And his heart was merry.*"

The Medrash gives us different explanations for these words, and they all seem to fit together. Boaz was the Godol Hador. His concern was Klal Yisroel. He Davened that the famine should end, and all of Klal Yisroel should have what to eat. He was happy that there was food for Klal Yisroel to eat and that their Tefilos were answered.

He was learning the Torah Hakdosha. When a Tzaddik eats food, that too is Avodas Hashem. The Torah dictates each and every part

of our lives. The Torah tells us how we should eat, and how to Bentch the Ribbono Shel Olam. Boaz wanted a wife so that there would be more people in the world who would follow the Rotzon Hashem. The Torah is our lifeline in this world and in the world to come. May we be Zoche to be Mekabel the Torah Hakdosha properly and follow its "הוראה."

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings



The Torah obligates us to love Hashem **בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך ובכל מאדך**. The Mishnah (Brachos 54) teaches that **בכל מאדך** means, "Whatever measure Hashem gives you, thank Him **מאד מאד**." What are the letters that come before **מאד**? Before **מ** is a **ל**, before **א** is a **ת**, and before **ד** is a **ג**. This spells **גלת**.

The Chasam Sofer tells us that the passuk is implying that we should thank Hashem even for the times of galus. What are the letters after **מאד**? They spell **בנה** (to build) referring to the Beis HaMikdash, as it says **בנה בניתי בית זבול לך..** (I Malachim 8:13). The Torah is telling us to love and praise Hashem when things are very good, like when there is a Beis HaMikdash, and also when things are very bad, as in galus, because we always know that everything that happens is for the best.

When one looks to the future and realizes what will come from it, he sees the good. He realizes that everything will lead to better times, and even to the building of the Beis HaMikdash.

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah - Tu B'Shvat and Shavuos



Many wonder about the apparent reversal of customs that we observe: On Tu B'Shvat, which is the Rosh Hashanah (New Year) for trees, the Nation of Israel is involved with the fruit and yet, Shavuos when we are judged for the fruit we have the custom to bring tree branches into Shuls.

It is brought in the Sefer 'Toros V'Uvdos MiBais Raboseinu' in the name of the **Admor of Satmar zt"l**, where it is explained like this:

The trees hint to parents, the father and mother of the entire family, and the fruit are a hint to children. On Tu B'Shvat, the Rosh Hashanah for trees, we bring the fruit, that is, the children, and we examine the trees, that is, the parents, as to how they are conducting themselves with their children; are they watching over them as they should or chalilah are they abandoning them to the mercy of the street, and they are not checking on the friends that they are associating with to see if they are appropriate for them?

In contrast to this, the holiday of Shavuos when we are judged for the fruit, the children are examined; are they honouring their parents, are they following after them as they should be? (*Umatuk HaOhr – Shavuos*)

Names of the Holiday

Shavuot is referred to in the Torah by many names, but in the Talmud only one name is mentioned.

Chag Shavuot — The Feast of Weeks — It culminates the seven weeks of counting the Omer.

Zman Mattan Torateinu — The Time of the Giving of the Torah — The Torah was taught to the people at Mt. Sinai.

Atzeret — The Holiday of Being Restrained — This name is the only name used for this Holiday in the Talmud. It evokes a hint to Shemini Atzeret which concludes the Holiday of Sukkot. Similarly, Shavuot is in a certain sense not only an independent holiday, but a conclusion of the process of spiritual growth begun on Passover.

Chag HaBikkurim — The Holiday of the First Fruits — On Shavuot, a special Temple offering was brought called "The New Grain Offering." Its offering made it permissible to bring further Grain Offerings from the New Grain. Additionally, during this time, the first fruits of all the Seven Species of Produce with which the Land of Israel is blessed were brought to the Temple in a special ceremony.

Chag HaKotzir — The Holiday of the cutting of the Crop — The crop referred to her is the wheat crop, the last of the crops to be harvested.

"One who toils in Torah creates eternity within himself. Physical accomplishments disappear with time, but every word of Torah learned with effort becomes part of the eternal structure of the soul. This is why the joy of Shavuos is so deep: it celebrates that which death itself cannot erase." ~ Rabbi Aharon Kotler.

וּקְרָאתֶם בְּעֶצֶם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה מִקְרָא־קֹדֶשׁ יִהְיֶה לָכֶם ***"This very day shall be celebrated…"*** *[Leviticus 23:21]*



The words, "this very day," are used in the Torah by only two holidays, Yom Kippur and Shavuot. This is because these two holidays are unique in the sense that they are not merely commemorative celebrations of events in years past, but every year at this time, the same events occur anew. We are not merely celebrating the Receiving of the Torah that occurred back 3,300 years ago. Rather, we are receiving it once more and renewing our original commitment.

כְּתַפּוּחַ בַּעֲצֵי הַיַּעַר כֵּן דּוֹדִי בֵּין הַבָּנִים ***"As an apple-tree among the trees of the forest, so is My beloved among the sons…" [Song of Songs 2:3]***



In what manner can the Jewish people be compared to apple trees? Just as the apple tree produces its fruit before its leaves, so too, the Jewish nation proclaimed, "We will do" before, "We will understand." Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 88a .The apple-tree hastens to give forth its fruit and forgoes the protection of its leaves. Similarly, the Jewish people committed themselves to mitzvah observance even before

they truly understood what was being asked of them, and whether or not they were capable of adhering to it. Perhaps it is this unusual degree of dedication that we seek to recall when we dip an apple in honey and request a sweet new year on Rosh Hashanah; the Day of Judgment when we must muster all the merits we can.

Why Were All Ten Commandments First Taught Simultaneously If They Would Have To Be Repeated Later One By One?



This teaches us that although it is comprised of 613 mitzvot, the entire Torah is one unified body in which all the mitzvot are interdependent. One cannot not pick and choose from among the mitzvot and contend that some have ceased to be relevant, for to do so would destabilize the entire Torah. (*Maharal, Gur Arye, Exodus 20:1*)

וְכָל־הָעָם֮ רֹאִים֒ אֶת־הַקּוֹלֹת֙ וְאֶת־הַלַּפִּידִ֔ם וְאֵת֙ קֹ֣ול הַשֹּׁפָ֔ר וְאֶת־הָהָ֖ר עָשֵׁ֑ן וַיַּ֤רְא הָעָם֙ וַיָּנֻ֔עוּ וַיַּעַמְד֖וּ מֵֽרָחֹֽק ***"All the people saw the sounds, the flames, the blast of the ram's horn, and the mountain smoking. The people trembled when they saw it and kept their distance."*** *Exodus 20:15*

This teaches that all the blind people were miraculously healed and thus "all the people saw the sounds." Additionally, all deaf, mute, lame, and insane people were healed too. *(Mechiltah)*

The Three of Life by Rabbi Elazar Meisels

דרש ההוא גלילאה עליה דרב חסדא בריך רחמנא דיהב אוריאן תליתאי לעם תליתאי על ידי תליתאי ביום תליתאי בירחא תליתאי - תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף פח/א

"A certain Galilean taught in the presence of Rav Chisda, 'Blessed is the Merciful One Who gave us a Torah which is divided into three parts, to a People that is divided into three parts, through one who himself was a third [child,] on the third day, in the third month." Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 88a



A Torah of three parts:

1) The Five Books of Moses

2) The Books of the Prophets

3) The Sacred Writings

To a People that is divided into three parts:

1) Kohanim 2) Levites 3) Israelites

Through one who was a third: Moses, the third child of Amram and Yocheved, born to his mother after Aharon and Miriam. On the third day: After the prescribed "three days of Preparation," before they could receive the Torah. Moshe commanded the Jewish People to "Make yourselves ready by the third day." In the third month: Nissan is called the First Month in the Torah, followed by Iyar and then Sivan.

Maharal explains the significance of the number three in relationship to the Torah as follows: The number three connotes a sense of balance by embracing two items and creating a middle ground between the two. Minus the middle ground, each item represents an extreme. The third item creates a middle ground that unifies and harmonizes the inner edges of the extremes. The Torah asks of us to lead a life of balance and moderation, in which all aspects of the physical universe may be utilized for our pleasure,

but never taken to extremes. Eating is wonderful, but only in moderation; sleep is good, but only within reason; taking a human life is forbidden unless a capital crime has been committed; one must honour his parents, but not past the point where their will conflicts with G-d's, etc.

When all aspects of the Torah and its presentation to the Jewish people echo the theme of three, it symbolizes this central idea of promoting a life of holistic balance.

Additional examples of the number three in Judaism are: ·

- The Hebrew spelling for Moses name contains three letters: **משה**
- Mt. Sinai in Hebrew contains three letters: **סני**
- Three Pilgrimages Festivals: Pesach, Shavuot, Succot
- Three Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob
- The three prerequisites of atonement: Repentance, Prayer, Charity
- Three days may not pass with the Torah being read publicly. Therefore it is read every Monday, Thursday and Shabbat
- The primary commandments of the Passover Seder: Paschal Lamb, Matzah, Bitter Herbs
- Three daily prayers: Shacharit, Minchah, Maariv
- A person should divide his day into three parts and devote one third to Torah study, one third to prayer, and one third to earning a livelihood
- The daily Amidah is comprised of three sections: Avot, Emtzoiot, Hodaah
- Three pillars upon which the universe stands: Torah, Avodah, Gemilut Chassadim

Customs of Shavuot



Shavuot features a number of widespread customs. Following is a short list of the most prevalent, and reasons for their practice:

Studying Torah through the Night

Strangely, rather than spend the night prior to the Sinai revelation steeped in spiritual pursuits, the nation went to sleep instead and had to be awakened by the Almighty with thunder and Shofar blowing to receive the Torah. Although their intentions were pure, for they sought to ensure that they'd be rested the next morning and in a proper frame of mind to receive the Torah, it was seen as a negative that they were able to sleep so soundly and weren't too excited to fall asleep. To rectify this slight shortcoming, many people remain awake throughout the night, studying Torah in anticipation of the Receiving the Torah in the morning.

Going Green

Mt. Sinai was not only a relatively small mountain, it was also essentially barren. Miraculously, in honour of the Revelation, the Almighty caused it to grow lush with flowers and grass. Thus, there exists a custom of decorating the synagogue on Shavuot with flowers and greens, in commemoration of that event. *(Levush Mordechai)*

There used to be a custom to bring trees into the synagogue, but that practice was discontinued by the Gaon of Vilna for it too closely resembled the pagan practice of the non-Jews who celebrate their holiday with trees.

Eating Dairy

There is a custom to eat dairy foods on Shavuot. Some fulfil this by eating a dairy meal. Others prefer to begin a meal with dairy dishes, rinse their mouths well, clear the table of all vestiges of dairy dishes, and resume their meal with meat dishes, in fulfilment of the Talmudic dictum, Tractate Pesachim 109a, *"rejoicing is incomplete without meat."* Among the reasons offered for this custom are:

1. Prior to the Revelation at Sinai, meat was eaten without "Shechitah" — ritual slaughter. Following the Revelation, meat could only be eaten if it was ritually slaughtered. The Revelation occurred on Shabbat and "shechitah" may not be done on Shabbat. Consequently, upon their return from the Revelation, all the Jews could eat was dairy foods. We therefore eat dairy to commemorate the way they immediately implemented all that they'd just learned.

2. Moses received the Torah after spending forty days in heaven studying it. The numerical equivalent of the Hebrew word for milk, "chalav," is forty. By eating dairy, we show our awareness that although it was "given" to us as a gift, it was a gift that had to be earned through dedicated study.

3. The rule is that one loaf of bread may not be used at both a dairy and meat meal. Therefore, by beginning the meal with dairy and concluding with meat, this forces us to use two, not one, loaves of bread throughout the meal. The two loaves evoke memories of special offering of "Shtei HaLechem" — [Two Loaves of Wheat] which were brought in the Temple on Shavuot.

The Scroll of Ruth

Most congregations have a custom to read the Scroll of Ruth following Shacharit on the first [for those who live in Israel,] or second [for those who live outside of Israel and observe two days,] morning of Shavuot. According to the Talmud, the Scroll of Ruth was authored by Samuel the Prophet to dispel slanderous allegations

against King David's lineage. Its four chapters tell the story of how Ruth, a Moabite princess, bravely converts to Judaism, marries Boaz, a prominent descendant of the House of Judah, and bears him a child, Oveid, who is the grandfather of King David. As King David was born and died on Shavuot, it is a fitting time to read the story of his ancestry and the many Divine machinations involved in his emergence as our leader.

Additional reasons for reading the Scroll of Ruth are:

1. To commemorate Ruth's arduous path to Torah and take inspiration from her dedication to truth

2. Ruth's conversion to Judaism was — on a personal scale — a recreation of the monumental acceptance of Torah at Mt. Sinai by the entire Jewish nation many years prior, which is the theme of Shavuos. Just as Ruth "entered under the wings of the Divine" and committed herself to a life of Torah, so did the Jewish nation.

The Poem of Akdamot

It is the custom in Ashkenazic congregations to recite the poem known as Akdamot on the first morning of Shavuot just prior to reading from the Torah, which includes the Ten Commandments. Composed during the First Crusade by Rabbi Meir, son of Rabbi Yitzchak, a leading scholar of the City of Vermaizia, in Germany, it describes the words of the author as he "debated" the truths of Judaism to a hostile audience, a frequent and tragic occurrence in those unfortunate times, and one in which the author himself, was forced to participate. Lest the Christian world learn its meaning and visit even greater catastrophes upon the Jews, its words were disguised for posterity in the Aramaic language, a language not understood by the Christian world at the time.

Akdamut contains ninety lines; the first forty-four begin with a double Aleph-Bet; Aleph, Aleph, Bet, Bet, etc. The first letters of the next forty-six lines make up an acrostic in which the author

expresses the prayer that G-d will bless him with the ability and opportunity, even in the extremely hostile environment in which he found himself, to grow in knowledge of Torah and the performance of good deeds.

Torah Gems



The following story shows how much our Gedolim cherish learning Torah. Once, **the Chofetz Chaim** and the **Rav of Chartkov** needed to speak with **Rav Chaim Brisker,** who was living in Warsaw, about a pressing matter. The two travelled by train to see him, and they arrived as Rav Chaim was in the middle of Davening of Shemoneh Esrei. They stood in the back of the room and waited for him to finish Davening so they could talk with him. In the meantime, a Jewish man entered the room, who apparently was not 'all there', and rudely walked right up to Rav Chaim Brisker and called out, "Rebbe! Why are there so many disagreements in Shas? There is so much Machlokes!"

Rav Chaim was just finishing his Shemoneh Esrei when this happened and he was taking his three steps back. When he was ready, he quietly thought for a moment and then turned to the man and said, "That is incorrect! If you look at the many statements in Shas that are not disputed and have no argument, the number of disagreements is fewer than the statements that have no dispute. Therefore, there is not so much Machlokes in the Gemara!" The man left and the Chofetz Chaim began his discussion with Rav Chaim Brisker, and resolved what had to be taken care of.

On their way back home, on the train to Radin, the Rav of Charkov was surprised to see how quiet the Chofetz Chaim was, as normally the Chofetz Chaim was very talkative, speaking over Divrei Torah and discussing the possible improvements to Yiddishkeit that could be made in the world. However, on this journey, the Chofetz Chaim was silent. For the entire train ride, the Chofetz Chaim sat deep in thought.

Finally, as the train was about to arrive at their station, the Chofetz Chaim seemed to awaken from his trance and exclaimed, "Rav Chaim Brisker is a genius!" It was only then that the Rav of Charkov realized that for the whole trip, the Chofetz Chaim had been reviewing the entire Shas in his mind, and had now finally come to the conclusion that Rav Chaim was correct— the number of disagreements was indeed fewer than the number of places where there is no argument on a statement!

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter

ילקוט ראובני: כשעלה משה למרום מצאה להקב"ה שהיה אומר חוה When Moshe went up high (to Shomayim to receive the Torah) he found Hakodosh Boruch Hu, and He was saying **חוה**. Moshe said to the Ribbono Shel Olam, what is **חוה** ? Hakodosh Boruch Hu responded, because she is **אם כל חי** -*the mother of all life.*

Moshe said to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, 'If so, why not call her **חיה**? Hakodosh Boruch Hu responded because **חוה** is the same Gematria (19) as the Gematria in **מספר קטן** of **אם כל חי**.

"Torah is compared to water because just as water gives life to the body, Torah restores life and clarity to the soul." ~ Rabbi Chaim Shmulevitz.

ותקח נעמי את הילד ותשתהו בחיקה ותהי לו לאמנת – Megilas Rus 4:16 - ***Naomi took the child, and held it in her bosom, and she became his nurse.***

אלשי"ך - The Posuk is telling us that although Na'ami was advanced in age, a miracle occurred, and she had milk with which to nurse Rus's child, **עובד**.

Shabbos 88a – דברים אחדים – כפה עליהן הר כגיגית



Why did Hakodosh Boruch Hu put the mountain over Klal Yisroel's heads when they had already accepted the Torah willingly by saying **נעשה ונשמע**?

There are two types of love: there is love one has for a friend, and love one has for a child. The love for a friend is called **אהבה רצונית**- "when one has a love for a friend he tries to fulfil the Rotzon, the will, of his friend. If something would be inherently good for his friend, but to his friend it would not appear to be good – he would not do it.

The love for a child is called **אהבה עצמית** – this love that one has for his child, is a love that the child is a part of himself. Therefore, something that is inherently good for the child, the father would do even if the child would see it as evil. The father must do what is best for the child at all costs, for the child is a part of him. Hakodosh Boruch Hu's love for Klal Yisroel is immeasurable, greater than that of a father to his son. Hakodosh Boruch Hu raised the mountain over

them and forced them to accept the Torah for Klal Yisroel to know the great love He has for them. Even if he has to force them, He will always do what is best for Klal Yisroel.

אמנם אפשר – כסא דוד



It says in the Sefer Pesach Ha'ohel and the Sefer Leket Yosef that the mountain above Klal Yisroel was like a Chuppah - Klal Yisroel getting married to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. It says in Devorim Rabbah 3:15 that Klal Yisroel receiving the Luchos was like Kiddushin. If so, it seems that the Chuppah (Hakodosh Boruch Hu raising the mountain above Klal Yisroel) was before the Kiddushin (Klal Yisroel receiving the Luchos).

It is for this reason the Chachomim were Mesaken - **על ידי חופה וקידושין** - In the Brocha the Chuppah is mentioned first because that is the order Hakodosh Boruch Hu used when marrying Klal Yisroel.

"The giving of the Torah was not merely a historical event that occurred once at Har Sinai. Every year, on Shavuos, the gates are reopened and the light of Torah shines again into the world. A person who prepares himself properly can receive anew a clarity in Torah and closeness to Hashem that accompanies him throughout the entire year." ~ Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler.

Chabad.org - Why Do We Say Yizkor When We Do?



Yizkor, which literally means "Remember," is the special memorial prayer for the departed that is recited in the synagogue four times a year: on the last day of Passover, on the second day of Shavuot, on Shemini Atzeret and Yom Kippur.

The reason for this prayer is that once a soul has departed from this physical world, it no longer has the ability to do any mitzvahs or acquire more merits. However, those that are still alive in this world, especially their descendants, have the ability through prayer, Torah study and mitzvahs to not only bring merit and elevate the souls of the departed but, if need be, even take them out of *Gehinnom* .

Sorrow on a Day of Joy?

The recital of Yizkor on Yom Tov causes sorrow on a day on which we are commanded to rejoice. So how can we recite Yizkor on these days?

Some explain that the verse in Proverbs states, "*Even with laughter, the heart aches, and its end is that joy turns to sorrow.*" We therefore recite Yizkor so that if we are meant to have any bit of sorrow on the festival, it will be over the memories of the departed.

Others explain that, on the contrary, for those whose parents have passed away, reciting Yizkor provides a certain sense of relief in that they are able to do something for the merit of the departed. So, while there may be some sorrow, there is also an element of relief and joy.

Although Yizkor may at one level elicit feelings of sorrow, the fact that we are doing positive acts in their merit and following in their footsteps brings tremendous merit and joy to the souls of the departed. This in turn causes a tremendous inner joy for the one reciting Yizkor and pledging to do the mitzvahs and good deeds, which is very appropriate for Yom Tov.

May we merit the day when G-d will once and for all wipe away our tears—when we will be reunited with our loved ones with the coming of Moshiach and the Resurrection of the Dead!



The Mashgiach's Shmuz from Rav Yecheskel Levenstien Z"l (מגילת רות)

Rav Zeira said, this *megila* does not contain *tuma v'tahara* nor *issur v'hetter*. Why was it written? To teach us the reward to those that do *chessed*.

There is so much to learn from this Midrash. What was the chessed that Naomi received from Rus? It was small things. The main reason that Russ decided to join her was to alleviate her loneliness. We are not talking about saving one's life or providing with a livelihood. Also it's mentioned that she helped out with the shrouds of her husband. Is that such a great thing?

We can assume that Russ recognized the greatness of Naomi. But still, she sacrificed so much. She was a beautiful princess and probably could have lived a life of luxury had she stayed in Moab. And she committed herself to an uncertain future in poverty with a

strange Nation in a strange land. And all for what? To provide companionship to Naomi.

What was her reward for this chessed?

A *megila* is written in her name. She became the Mother of Royalty. And the entire future of Klal Yisroel is dependent on her progeny, since Moshiach will be descended from her.

We must learn from here that chessed doesn't have to be major things. Even small acts of chessed can reap great rewards. As long as they are sincere.

Story: When Rav Halberstam (Rav of the shul on J and 23rd, Brooklyn) was a young bochur, he went to **ארץ ישראל** and wasn't sure which yeshiva he should learn in. He visited Ponevez and would go there in the morning and learn in the back for the 1st seder. He would walk in at about ten in the morning. The third day, Rav Chatzkel steps over to him and with a stern look admonishes him, "Every day you are coming in late!"

The innocent Chassidishe boy answers, "But I am not at all registered in the Yeshiva". Says the Mashgiach to him, "And that is an excuse?!"

Nefesh Shimshon – Shavuos

The best way to connect to Torah is by learning it lishmah, for its own sake, as it says in Sefer Nefesh Hachayim (4:3). And the ultimate goal of learning lishmah, the purpose of connecting to Torah, is to connect to the Giver of the Torah, to Hakadosh Baruch Hu Himself.

So it says in Sefer Nefesh Hachayim (4:6).

זמן מתן תורתנו



Shavuot is called "זמן מתן תורתנו"- the time of the giving of our Torah. Why isn't this holiday called 'The Time of the Receiving of the Torah'?

The Kotzker Rebbe explained that on that awesome day over 3300 years ago at Mt. Sinai, the giving of the Torah occurred - but the receiving of the Torah actually takes place each and every day!

If We Didn't Get The Torah, What Did We Get On Shavuos? Written By D Fine



I hate to ruin the party, but we did not get the Torah on Shavuos. Bnei Yisrael sinned with the egel hazahav and we did not get the Torah until the following Yom Kippur. So what are we commemorating on Shavuos?

The answer requires one last question. When Moshe warns Bnei Yisrael not to forget Sinai (Davarim 4), he reminds them not to forget the spectacle of the lightning, thunder, and awe-striking

ceremony they saw. Why does he not tell them not to forget the giving of the ten commandments themselves?

The answer is that standing by Har Sinai was to instil in us yiras HaShem (as the pasuk Shemos 20;17 says **וּבַעֲבוּר תִּהְיֶה יִרְאָתוֹ עַל־פְּנֵיכֶם**, and that comes before Torah, for it dictates our ability to receive and forge a connection with the Torah and its Giver. This is what Moshe is warning the people not to forget, for it is the key to Torah. So though we did not get the Torah until yom kippur, on 6th Sivan we became worthy to receive yiras HaShem – and this is what we relive on Shavuos.

וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו ה׳ מִן־הָהָר לֵאמֹר כֹּה תֹאמַר לְבֵית יַעֲקֹב וְתַגֵּיד לִבְנֵי (Shemos 19:3) Written by Oizer Alport



Hashem commanded Moshe to speak to the Jewish men and women about accepting the Torah. This verse was immortalized by Sorah Schenirer when she coined the name "Bais Yaakov" for schools for girls. However, in reference to the men, the Torah uses the phrase the "sons" of Israel. Why when discussing the women does it use the phrase the "house" of Yaakov when "daughters" would seem to be the appropriate parallel?

Rav Meir Shapiro observes that when a person becomes ill, there are hypothetically two ways for a doctor to treat him. The standard procedure is to prescribe medication, although another theoretical option would be to design a room in which the air is full of the necessary antibiotic. The former option has the drawbacks that it

only helps one patient and requires active administration, whereas the latter could benefit many people without any effort on their parts.

Similarly, in fighting the universal illness known as the yetzer hara (evil inclination), men follow the prescription of the Gemora (Kiddushin 30b) to repel it through the study of Torah. Although the latter option isn't currently medically feasible, Jewish women nevertheless use it to ward off spiritual illness. As the backbones of the house, they imbue the entire home with an atmosphere of holiness and spirituality, which automatically benefits not only themselves but also their husbands and children and all who are fortunate to enter their homes.

This is also alluded to in a well-known verse (Mishlei 1:8) **שְׁמַע בְּנִי מוּסַר אָבִיךָ וְאַל־תִּטֹּשׁ תּוֹרַת אִמֶּךָ** – *Listen my son to the rebuke of your father, and don't forsake the teachings of your mother.*

Shlomo Hamelech found it necessary to instruct one to listen to the lessons of one's father, but a mother's wisdom permeates the very air of the house and will be absorbed even without effort. It is to emphasize this connection that the Torah refers to the women not as the daughters of Yaakov but as the house of Yaakov.

Fascinating Insights by Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - Judgement Day- Of A Different Kind

Shavuos, the day of Torah. What a gift! The Shelah writes that we must be especially happy on Shavuos because we merited the **כתר תורה**

We are taught that Shavuos is the day of judgment for Torah. Just as we were judged when the world was created, so too with Shauvos, as Torah was given on this day. In fact, there were those who were more fearful of Shavuos than Rosh Hashana since on Rosh Hashana

our physicality is judged whereas on Shavuos it is our spirituality that is at stake.

The Mishna teaches that we are judged on Shavuos for fruits of the tree. The tree refers to Torah, the tree of life - **עץ חיים**. The fruits of the tree refer to our **חידושי תורה** novelties of Torah. Indeed, the **Sefas Emes** tells us that on Shavuos each Jew receives what he will understand and be **מחדש** in Torah for the year.



How do we get Torah? We need to daven and as Chazal tell us **יעשה אדם ויחכם...יבקשו רחמים מה** - what should one do to become a scholar; plead for mercy from Hashem.

The Yom Tov of Shavuos is *Mesugal* to request and beseech to find our portion in Torah that was given to us by Sinai. If we ask for it, we can get it and as the Sefer Chasidim tells us if one requests something like **לימוד תורה** and the like, and pours out his soul, Hashem listens to his Tefila even if he has no **מעשים טובים**.

"The custom of remaining awake on Shavuos night hints to a deeper truth. A Jew must never spiritually sleep through life. Torah demands alertness — an awareness that every moment carries purpose and every action can become a כלי for holiness." ~ Rabbi Moshe Feinstein.

The Torah Any Times Newsletter

Rebbetzin Tamar Taback - Torah and The Woman



The Sages teach that King Solomon's ode to the Jewish woman at the end of Proverbs is actually extolling the praises of the Torah and that the Jewish woman is merely the analogy for the beauty and power of Torah.

"Why is the Torah compared to a woman?" you may wonder.

In the book of Ruth, Boaz encounters the lonely convert whose selflessness and modesty in the field and granary left him so moved that he says to her, "the entire nation knows that you are a woman of valor" (Ruth 3:11). This is the only time in the whole Torah that the title "Aishes Chayil" is used to refer to an actual woman.

The Vilna Goan furthers the connection between the Aishet Chayil and Shavuos by making a correlation between the twenty-two verses of the poem (which are arranged according to the aleph-bet) and the forty-nine days of preparation leading up to the giving of the Torah (the period of the counting of the Omer). The numerical value of the word Chayil, "valour", is 48. This is reminiscent of the Mishna in Tractate Avot, "there are forty-eight ways to acquire the Torah" (*Avot* 6:6). Like a woman who must be legally acquired, the Torah is Hashem's gift that comes to one who prepares for it. The 48 ways delineate a serious path of vessel-building and inner refinement so that we are worthy to receive this priceless gift. The one extra day of the 49th day of the Omer serves to convert the many steps into its gestalt.

Therefore, the Torah, whose instructions guide us in living an elevated life within the physical world, is compared to a woman.

Without the Torah, we remain incomplete and unsatisfied. With her, we are in ever-growing soul connection and rapture.

Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein - My Daughter, Ruth



As Boaz is told by his servant overseeing the harvesters that Ruth, a young Moabite girl, has entered his field to harvest grain, he approaches her and says, "Hear me well, my daughter. Do not go to glean in another field, and do not leave here, but stay close to my maidens" (*Ruth* 2:8). The Midrash explains that Boaz told this to Ruth as the other harvesters had conspired to physically evict her from the field. Believing her to be a Moabite, they were vehemently opposed to her collecting from the field along with Jews. But Boaz reassured Ruth that she had nothing to worry about. She would be safe under his auspices as he was looking after her well-being.

As Ruth heard the kind-hearted words of Boaz, she bowed to the ground and said, "Why have I found favour in your eyes that you should take special note of me even though I am a foreigner?" (*ibid.* v.10). Herein lays the number one key ingredient in chinuch: noticing a student and giving him or her recognition. When Ruth felt that Boaz was especially looking after her and caring for her, she said, "You have comforted me…you have spoken to the heart of your maidservant…" (*ibid.* v.13).

How do you console someone who feels left out? When you see a child at risk, how do you open the conversation?

I was once asked by a parent, "What did you do to help my daughter? What is the template? You changed her whole life!" I said to her, "Look in *Megillas Ruth*. The Pasuk says that Ruth was comforted because Boaz spoke to her heart. He realized that she was special." The key to parenting and *chinuch* is to making children feel cared for and special. "Rebbe loves me! Morah loves me!"

But how exactly did Boaz speak to Ruth's heart? What did he say which so powerfully and effectively made her feel special?

One word – **"*Biti*,"** my daughter. Boaz's opening words to Ruth say it all.

How different would it be if when a parent wished to call over his or her child, they would say, "My daughter, Miriam, come here right now! My son, Chaim, come here right now!" If the same parent would open a conversation with the words, "My daughter," or "My son," their feelings would change and their child's response would likely be positively different.

But why in fact did Boaz give Ruth so much attention? What did he see in her that no one else did?

Boaz realized where she had come from and how much she had given up. She was a female Avraham Avinu. She left her homeland, her birthplace and her father's house. She gave up everything and loyally clung to Naomi as the two of them journeyed to Eretz Yisrael.

Two people can be looking at the same facts and yet see worlds apart. The young men working on Boaz's field saw Ruth and said, "She is a Moabite girl!" They negatively focused on Ruth's past and shunned her for it. That was as far as they saw. But Boaz looked beyond. Boaz focused on Ruth's positive qualities and noticed how far she had come to develop into who she was today. She was a Moabite princess and gave it all up to join the Jewish people! For the

young men, Ruth's background was something which stained her record; for Boaz, it was the greatest source of admiration and respect. That is the difference between the making of Mashiach and throwing a child over the fence.

I was once speaking to a boy who had been setting aside two minutes to learn every day. But it was for two minutes. Some time later, I again spoke to him, and he told me, "Rabbi, you should know that I am now learning ten minutes a day." Hearing this, I knew that he had improved, but I felt that he could do more.

But then he said something which caught me off guard. "Rabbi, why are you getting so bent out of shape? Look at the percentages. I am now learning five times as much as I was before!"

As he said this, it all of a sudden hit me. I realized how every person deserves to be looked at. You can say, "Ten minutes? Big deal!" Or you can say, "Ten minutes? You are on a mission. You are learning five times more than the last time we spoke. At this rate, if you keep on multiplying your time spent learning by five, you will soon reach a full day of learning! That's amazing!"

That was how Boaz looked at Ruth. He didn't see ten minutes; he saw "times five." He saw how far she had come and thoughtfully addressed her as, "My daughter." Boaz teaches us the proper way to look at a person, how we are to address them, and what it means to care for someone else when no one else does.

Remember, every successful person experienced days of doubt, delay, and uncertainty. What separated them was not perfect circumstances, but their ability to continue despite it all. So keep striving, keep pushing, and keep going – your resilience will turn your struggle into strength. ~ Inspired by the teachings of Rebbe Nachman (1772-1810)

Megillas Rus – A Lesson About the Basics By Rabbi Yehudah Prero



The Megilla of Ruth is read on Shavuos. Ruth, a Moavite, was the daughter-in-law of Na'omi. Na'omi's husband Elimelech and her two sons Machlon and Kilyon died when the family was living outside of the land of Israel. After the death of her husband and children, Na'omi decided to return to her homeland. Ruth insisted on going with her mother-in-law. The two returned to Israel as paupers. Ruth went out to the fields, hoping to collect the part of the harvest which by Jewish Law goes to the poor. Ruth went to the field of Boaz, who was a relative of Elimelech, Ruth's deceased father-in-law, and one of the most respected men of his generation. Boaz, upon finding out that Ruth was collecting in his field, made sure that Ruth collected all that she needed to bring home in order for her and Na'omi to live.

When Boaz met Ruth, he explained to her why he was dealing with her in such a kindly fashion (2:11). He said, *"It has been told to me all that you have done for your mother-in-law…and that you left your mother and father and your birthplace and you went to a nation that you did not know."*

The Targum explains that Boaz was also telling Ruth through prophecy that she would merit having the kingship of Israel descend from her on account of these two deeds. The Targum states that Boaz mentioned the deeds in this specific order: First, that she supported her mother-in-law; Second, that she left her idols and

parents and converted to a nation she did not know. From the words of the Targum and the order in which these deeds were listed, there seems to be an implication that the first act, the support of Na'omi, is at least equally responsible for Ruth meriting her great reward.

A question that arises upon reading this is how Boaz could equate these two actions. One action was an incredible act of self-sacrifice. Ruth, our Sages tell us, was the daughter of the king of Moav. Ruth, after the death of her husband, did not return to the comfort of the palace life in which she was raised. Instead, she decided to convert and become part of the Jewish nation! Ruth went from being a princess in a royal court to becoming a pauper, destitute, and dependent upon charity for her very sustenance. The other action of Ruth was an ordinary kindness. It was a daughter-in-law helping her elderly mother-in-law. What was so special about this everyday act that because of it, Ruth would merit to be the mother of Jewish royalty, and even more outstanding, that the act was placed on the same plane as Ruth's extraordinary self-sacrifice in her decision to convert?

The answer is that Boaz is teaching us that ***even the smallest and seemingly most mundane act, if done with the proper intentions, can be elevated to an act of great self-sacrifice***. Ruth, by performing the act of kindness with a pure heart and with every fibre of her being in a desire to do the will of Hashem, raised her small act of kindness above everyone else's similar acts of kindness. Because of this act of kindness, she merited having the monarchy of Israel descend from her. When approaching Shavuos, the day we celebrate the acceptance of the Torah, many of us have lofty goals, ideals, and aspirations which we greatly desire to fulfil. Boaz should remind us that we need to remember the potential greatness in everyday, ordinary acts. When these acts are done properly, we can merit great reward.

Loving the Torah

We know that one of Yisro's names was **חובב** since **שחבב את התורה**; because he loved the Torah. Many others also loved the Torah, so why is this unique name given only to Yisro?

Yisro worshipped every Avoda Zara. Consequently, he was immersed in impurity to the extreme. So, when he became Jewish and experienced the Torah, he loved it with such an intensity that couldn't be matched by anyone else (on a certain level).

Is it any coincidence that Matan Torah is in Parshas Yisro, the one who loved the Torah.

Shavuos: Mitzva Lite and Minhag Heavy! - by Rabbi Ephraim Sprecher

Where is the section called, "Hilchot Shavuot" in the Shulchan Aruch? In fact, Hilchot Shavuot does not appear, because Shavuot does not have its own section in the Shulchan Aruch. Instead, the last chapter of Hilchot Pesach is called, "Seder Tefillat Chag HaShavuot", and it contains just 3 short sentences. The Shuchan Aruch simply lists the order of davening for Shavuot, and which Torah portions are read, and the prohibition of fasting on the Yom Tov. What is obvious is the lack of any specific Halachot for Shavuot. There is no Matza, no sitting in a Succah, no shaking a Lulav, and no blowing of the Shofar. There is nothing that marks Shavuot as a unique Yom Tov from the Halachic perspective of the Shulchan Aruch. The Rama adds some Shavuot customs but not Halachot. The customs that he mentions are putting out plants in the Shuls and houses and eating dairy foods. Even staying up all night on Shavuot is only a custom but not Halacha.

What is responsible for this odd situation on Shavuot? Where are the missing Mitzvot of Shavuot? The Shtei HaLechem and Bikurim were **only** brought during the time of the Beit HaMikdash. Why are

there so many Minhagim on Shavuot? What makes this Festival different from all others? The Gemarah in Pesachim 68 discusses the best way to celebrate Yom Tov, and quotes a dispute between R' Eliezer and R' Yehoshua. R' Eliezer says that Yom Tov should be spent either KULO LASHEM, entirely praying to G-D and learning Torah, or KULO LACHEM, entirely as a day of eating and drinking and other physical enjoyment. R' Yehoshua says that the Festivals should be divided in half, CHETZYO LASHEM V'CHETZYO LACHEM, half for G-D and half for us. But even R' Eliezer agrees that Shavuot must also include physical enjoyment thru feasting, because it is the day on which G-D gave us the Torah.

Rashi there explains that we need to show that we are still joyful that we accepted the Torah, and therefore we need to celebrate in a physical way by eating and drinking. We can say that Shavuot can't be only a day of ritual Halachic structure. In order for us to demonstrate our joy and happiness for accepting the Torah, Shavuot must include our human input. The part of Shavuot meant for physical human enjoyment is described in the Talmud as being for eating and drinking. It seems that this concept on Shavuot has expanded, as generations of Jews have added customs to the celebration of MATAN TORAH.



To show our joy for the acceptance of the Torah anew every year, we imbue this Festival with delicious new meaning, such as eating cheesecake, cheese blintzes, and decorating the Shul with flowers. These customs demonstrate our love for the Yom Tov when G-D gave us His Holy Torah.

Dairy Foods



Shavuot is a Yom Tov. On Yom Tov we have the mitzva of Simcha. One of the traditional forms of Simchat Yom Tov is festive meals with meat and wine. [Note for vegetarians and others who prefer not eating meat: Meat as Simcha is subjective - if you don't like meat, then you need not have it on Yom Tov; if you enjoy eating meat dishes, THEN it is proper to honour and enjoy Yom Tov in that way. In fact - one's favourite dish takes priority for Simchat Yom Tov over a meat dish that one likes less (or not at all).

In the time of the Beit HaMikdash, Simcha is associated with the korban called Shalmei Simcha. Additionally, we all know of the custom of eating dairy foods on Shavuot. Some people will have a dairy meal on Yom Tov night and a meat meal for lunch. This has a certain logic, since the night-time is more Shavuot-specific and the day is more generically Yom Tov. Other families will have meat at night and dairy during the day. Still others will make Kiddush and HaMotzi, have some dairy dish (blintzes, perhaps), then bench. Following a short break and a change of tablecloth, they will wash again with new Lechem Mishneh, this time for a meat meal. Each according to one's custom.

There are many "reasons" for the custom of dairy dishes on Shavuot. Some of the reasons might have produced the custom, while others might be merely additional symbolisms after the fact. Furthermore, some reasons explain why we eat dairy, while others make sense only in the context of having BOTH dairy and meat dishes. The pasuk in

Shir HaShirim (4:11) alludes to Torah as "honey and milk under your tongue". Some mix honey and milk - yogurt or sour cream do well - to match the pasuk. To commemorate the first Shavuot celebrated in the Midbar when our ancestors ate only dairy dishes. This is because eating kosher meat after receiving the Torah requires much preparation...

Har Sinai is called Har Gavnunim (T'hilim 68:16) and the word GAVNUNIM is similar to G'VINA (cheese). The numeric value of the word CHALAV (milk) is 40, alluding to the forty days and nights Moshe spent on Har Sinai receiving the Torah. Having both dairy and meat dishes as mentioned above requires strict attention to the laws of separation of milk and meat. These laws, of course, are based on the Torah's prohibition of "meat in milk" as presented by the phrase "Do not cook a g'di in its mother's milk". This phrase (twice) follows, in the same pasuk, the command to bring Bikurim to the Beit HaMikdash. Shavuot, as the beginning of Bikurim-bringing season, is Yom HaBikurim. Therefore, we eat both dairy and meat dishes, with proper attention to the strictures of halacha, specifically on Shavuot.

Halachically (especially when handling food with our hands), it is improper to use the same loaf of bread for both meat and dairy meals because of the food residue that might adhere to the bread. Therefore, a dairy meal and a meat meal will require two loaves of bread, reminiscent of the Two Loaves offering of Shavuot. Some suggest that having a dairy dish and a meat dish is like the "two cooked foods" of the Pesach Seder. Shavuot is not only its own Holiday; it is also the culmination of Pesach - hence, "two foods" on Shavuot as well as Pesach.

According to our tradition, Moshe Rabeinu was born on the 7th of Adar and was successfully hidden by his parents for three months. It was on the future Shavuot that baby Moshe was placed in the basket on the river and found by the daughter of Par'o.

Tradition further tells us that Moshe refused to nurse from an Egyptian wetnurse. Hence, Miriam's suggestion that Yocheved, Moshe's mother, be hired to nurse him. He, from whose mouth all of Israel learned Torah, could not drink "mother's milk" from a non-Jew. We remember this with dairy dishes on the day of Matan Torah. It might also be suggested that the day of the receiving of the Torah is like the birth of the Nation of Israel, and we have milk to symbolize the spiritual infancy of the People of Israel. The Torah commands us to bring in the Beit HaMikdash **לַה' בְּשבועותיכם וביום הבכורים בהקריבכם מִנחה חַדשה** The initial letters of this phrase spell the word **מחלב** - "from milk". Dairy dishes on Shavuot provide us with much food for thought as well as culinary pleasure.

Fascinating Insights - Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - A Green Desert



The Rema tells us that it is customery to spread greenery in shuls and homes for Shavuous. The reason for this is because on Har Sinai at Matan Torah, the mountain was full of flowers and greenery.

The question is, that if the Torah was given in the desert, then how could there be any greenery there?

The answer is, that it was a miracle.

On Shavuos in 1932 the Yomtov fell out on Shabbos. **Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Ehrenreich**, the Shimloyer Rav (1863-1944 killed in Auschwitz) said the following at Shalosh Sedudas.

Since the Shechina descended onto Har Sinai when we accepted the Torah, that area became sanctified. As a result, a miracle occued and grass and greenery grew there. We also see this idea by Aaron Hakohen, that when his stick was in the Ohel Moed, it blossomed and brought forth almonds. So we can infer from this, that the sanctity of a place can change nature.

We can learn from this, that someone that sins, may despair from becoming better. He might feel rejected and fall into a deep depression and give up hope.

The truth is, that one must never despair or give up hope, because one can always elevate oneself and become better.

If a wasteland, which is symbolised by a lack of life (מִדְבַּר סִינַי) equating to a person full of sins – being devode of kedusha -sanctity, therefore if a desert wasteland can grow greenery, then surely a person who is a sinner, is able to transform himself and become great again by rectifying his past.

Shavuos Thoughts - Ideas and Reflections by Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

Why do we read the Book of Rus on Shavuos? **R' Chaim Friedlander** explains that the Torah isn't a book of knowledge whose students study it to become scholars. We received the Torah to follow in its ways and fulfil it. The Book of Rus is a guide and 'How-To' for doing *mitzvos*. Rus and Boaz epitomized looking at the world with the perspective of *chesed* (kindness) in mind, and they did *mitzvos* (particularly acts of *chesed*) with effort, motivation and passion. We also see the reward given for one who does *chesed*, as Rus merited the Davidic Reign from her children.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman-Torah Wellsprings

The Purpose of Mattan Torah – Emunah

The purpose of mattan Torah is to believe in Hashem. As the **Vilna Gaon *zt'l*** (*Mishlei* 22:19) writes, "*The Torah was given, primarily, so that they will place their trust in Hashem.*" Similarly, the **Ramban** writes, "If one doesn't believe that everything that happens to us is miraculous and that the concept of nature doesn't exist, he doesn't have a portion in the Torah."

The Degel Machanah Efraim writes, "The main thing is *emunah*. My grandfather, **the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l***, would emphasize the importance of *emunah*. *Emunah* is the basis of *avodas Hashem* and the foundation of the Torah.

As Dovid HaMelech said, **כל מצותיך אמונה** (*Tehillim* 119:86) - 'All your mitzvos are about *emunah*.

Everything is for the Good



Another aspect of emunah, which we acquire with *mattan Torah*, is the belief that everything is for the good.

When Naomi left Beis Lechem to live in Moav, she was a wealthy woman; she was married and had two sons. When she returned to Beis Lechem, Eretz Yisrael, more than ten years later, she was a poor, childless widow. The women of Beis Lechem were shocked to see her so distraught and broken. Naomi told them (*Rus* 1:20), "Don't call me Naomi (pleasant). Call me bitter because Hashem made my life very bitter."

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* writes another reason Naomi felt so bitter. When Noami returned to Eretz Yisrael, she hoped that her husband's wealthy nephew, Boaz, would help her settle down in Eretz Yisrael. Noami didn't want to speak with Boaz directly. As the Chasam Sofer writes, "It isn't the way of *tzanuah* women to meet with men.

And, indeed, we never find Naomi meeting or speaking to Boaz. Naomi planned to approach Boaz's wife and ask her to speak to her husband on her behalf. However, when Naomi arrived in Beis Lechem, the *levayah* of Boaz's wife was taking place. Naomi's plans and hopes were dashed. But ultimately, it was all for her benefit, as the Chasam Sofer writes. "The petirah of Boaz's wife was for Naomi's benefit because Rus came and took her place [Rus married Boaz]. And from this marriage, Rus bore a child, which Naomi raised as her own.

So, it was Hashem's plan, and for the good. But at the time, Naomi didn't realize that. She thought it was bad for her [because she relied on Boaz's wife to be her contact]. Therefore, she said, , **כי המר שק"י לי מאוד** *'Hashem made it very bitter for me.'*

The *roshei teivos* of **הַמר שַק"י לַי מַאוד** spell **שלמה** . This hints that although Naomi thought matters were bitter for her, ultimately, it was all for the good, preparing the way for the birth of Dovid HaMelech and Shlomo HaMelech [descendants of Boaz and Rus].

It was also good for Boaz that exactly at this time, Rus arrived. As Chazal say, **הקב"ה מקדים רפואה למכה** - *"Hakadosh Baruch Hu prepares the cure before the affliction"* Before Boaz's wife died, Rus arrived to take her place.

The Gemara (*Bava Basra* 91.) states, "The day Rus came to Eretz Yisrael, Boaz's wife died." **The Rashbam** says, "This teaches us that Hakadosh Baruch Hu prepares the *refuah* before the affliction. Therefore, one should trust in Hakadosh Baruch Hu."

The Joy of Mattan Torah



We must also be happy on Shavuos. That is the spirit of the entire day. The Torah tells us (*Shemos* 19:1-2): **ביום הזה באו מדבר סיני**, "On this day (rosh chodesh Sivan) they arrived at Midbar Sinai. **ויסעו מרפידים ויבאו מדבר סיני** "They travelled from Refidim, and they arrived at Midbar Sinai."

Or HaChaim asks that the pasuk isn't written in order of the events because it begins with the nation arriving at Midbar Sinai, and then it goes back and tells us that they travelled there from Refidim.

The Or HaChaim (*Shemos* 19:2) answers that the Torah couldn't contain its excitement, and it immediately proclaimed, "They came to Midbar Sinai!" Afterward, the Torah relates the details of where they came from, and where they travelled to, etc.

As the Or HaChaim writes: "Ever since the world was created – the entire world…was waiting anxiously, 'When will Bnei Yisrael come to *midbar* Sinai?' When they arrived at Har Sinai, the Torah couldn't contain itself to tell the order of events. It immediately let us know, **ביום הזה באו מדבר סיני**. The beloved Jewish nation came to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, who loves them.

The Shlah HaKadosh writes, "One is obligated to be very happy on Shavuos because on this day we receive the crown of Torah." How can a person not rejoice on this day, the day that Hashem elevated us from among all nations to be His chosen nation? Who wouldn't rejoice when the Creator of the world chose him — a human being made of flesh and blood — to be beloved to Hashem?

This is the spirit of joy that we should feel on this holy day.

Chiddushei Torah

Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l* found an indication in Shulchan Aruch that the *mattan Torah* that we receive every year on Shavuos, there is kabbalas haTorah, along with all the details of the original mattan Torah. This repeats itself each year:



What does it mean that we receive the Torah each year, again? We received the Torah about 3,300 years ago. Don't we already have the Torah? What do we receive on Shavuos that we don't already have?

The answer is that each year, new chidushei Torah comes to the fore, new questions and answers, and new Torah insights.

Moshe Rabbeinu received the entire Torah on Har Sinai. As Chazal say, "Moshe received on Har Sinai even what a student will ask, many years in the future." These sections of the Torah become revealed, each chidush at the right time.

This explains what we receive on Shavuos. On this day, each individual gets his portion of Torah for that year. He receives the ability to be *mechadesh chadashim.*

וְהִגְבַּלְתָּ אֶת־הָעָם סָבִיב - ***"You shall set boundaries for the people around [the mountain]…"*** (Shemos 19:12)

It is important for the people to recognize that their intellect is limited and that not all spiritual realms are within their intellectual grasp. (***Beis Yitzchak***)

One Year on Shavuos

After *Shacharis*, the **Ropshitzer Rav *zt'l*** gave a large Gemara to one of his chassidim and said, "Today, you said *ahavas olam* with a lot of *kavanah*, and your tefillos were answered. You asked for Torah, and you will receive it. Now start learning."

On Shavuos, Hashem wants to give us many brachos, but it is up to the individual to take advantage of it. If we don't apply ourselves to Torah study, we aren't present to receive the blessings that Hashem is giving us.



When you come to a *chasunah*, how can you figure out who the *mechutanim* are? There's a simple sign. Those who are davening fervently at the *chuppah* for the couple's success are the *mechutanim*.

The same is on Shavuos. Who are *mechutanim* with the Torah? Those who cry and beg Hashem for success in Torah, they are *mechutanim* with the Torah.

A wealthy person paid a lot of money so he could get a son-in law, a *talmid chacham*. He was very proud of his son-in-law. He called him, "My *nachas*." He would walk with his son-in-law on the street, showing off his son-in-law to his friends. Someone asked him, "You're always speaking about 'your *chasan*,' and you tell us how special he is. But what about your daughter? What about her?" The wealthy man replied, "A daughter? I don't have a daughter."

The friend was shocked. "How do you have a son-in-law if you don't have a daughter? The wealthy man explained, "I watch wealthy

people, proudly walking around with their scholarly sons-in-law, so I also wanted a son-in-law, a *talmid chacham*. I paid a lot of money and got one. I don't have a daughter, but at least I have a son-in-law a talmid chacham…"

The *nimshal* is, before Shavuos, everyone takes haircuts, cuts their nails, and puts on new clothing… They want to be the *chasan*… but they mustn't forget that without the *kallah*, which is the Torah, they don't have anything, at all.

New Sweetness in Torah



In *birchas haTorah* we say, **נותן התורה** "Who gives the Torah." Why don't we say **נתן התורה**, "Who gave us the Torah"? The Ta'z (*Orach Chaim* 47:5) writes, "It seems to me… that **נותן התורה**, 'Hashem *gives* the Torah' [in the present tense] implies that Hashem gives us the Torah, even in the present. We don't say **נתן התורה**, that Hashem *gave* us the Torah in the past. Hashem is always giving us His Torah, each day anew. When we study Torah, Hashem grants us the ability to find newness in it."

The Ta'z compares it to the Gemara (*Eiruvin* 54), which says that just as a nursing child always tastes new flavours whenever he nurses, similarly, someone who studies Torah always finds new pleasures in Torah.

So, this can be another explanation of what we receive on Shavuos. We accepted the Torah approximately 3300 years ago, and every year, on Shavuos, we receive the ability to find newness in Torah, new pleasures, and new enjoyment.



One *erev Shavuos*, **Reb Meir of Amshinov *zt'l*** said to one of his chassidim, "Chazal say, 'who is a fool? The person who loses what is given to him' (*Chagigah* 4). Therefore, I encourage you, don't be a fool. On Shavuos, we receive the Torah for the entire year. Don't miss the opportunity."

The Kedushas Levi would sweat profusely from fear when he took out the *sefer Torah* to read on Shavuos. The congregation knew to wrap the *sefer Torah* with extra layers, so it wouldn't get wet and ruined from his sweat. Before he came to the beis medresh on Shavuos morning to daven Shacharis, he exclaimed, **איך גיי זעך זעהן מיט די לעבעדיגן**, "I'm going to meet with Hashem!"

Tehillim



Chazal tell us that tzaddikim are *niftar* on the date they were born. We know that Dovid HaMelech was niftar on Shavuos, and therefore, we can assume that Dovid was born on Shavuos, too. Some say that this is the reason we read *Rus* on Shavuos. The final *pasuk* is **וישי הוליד את דוד** "Yishai begot Dovid." We want to read this *pasuk* on Shavuos, on the day Dovid was born.

Since Shavuos is the day Dovid HaMelech was born and was niftar, it is an ideal time to say Tehillim.

As the Ben Ish Chai (*Bamidbar* 6) writes, "It is important to say *Tehillim* on Shavuos, because Dovid HaMelech *a'h* was *niftar* on this day, and the *Tehillim* that one says on this day will be more accepted in heaven. Therefore, everyone should say the entire *Tehillim* on Shavuos."

Similarly, the **Kaf HaChaim** (494:34) writes, "It is ideal to learn *Tehillim* on Shavuos because Dovid HaMelech was *niftar* on this day (as stated in the Yerushalmi)… *Tehillim* that one says on this day will be answered."

Parsha Pages - Reasons for Eating Dairy Products On Shavuos



1) By eating a dairy meal and then a meat meal, we must have another bread to accompany the meat meal. This is in commemoration of the two breads of the new crop of wheat, which were brought to the Sanctuary on Shavuos. (Ram"a in O.Ch. 494:3)

2) Since the bnei Yisrael were restricted from eating non-kosher foods at Har Sinai on Shavuos, they could not heat food in their cooking vessels, as the flavour of the non-kosher items would be absorbed into that which was prepared. They had no choice but to eat cold dairy products.

3) The Torah is compared to milk and honey in Shir Hashirim 4:11, "Dvash v'CHALAV tachas l'shoneich." (Kol Bo)

4) Regarding Shavuos the Torah says, "Chadoshoh LaShem B'Shavuoseichem" (Bmidbar 28:26), whose first letters spell CHALAV. (Nachal K'dumim and Matteh Moshe)

5) CHALAV has the numerical value of 40, and the Torah was given over in its entirety to Moshe during a period of 40 days and nights. (N'zirus Shimshon)

6) Immediately after mentioning Shavuos as the holiday on which one brings the first-ripened offerings to the Beis Hamikdosh, it mentions the law of not cooking meat with milk.

7) Milk can only be stored in simple earthenware vessels. If stored in silver or golden vessels, it spoils very quickly. Likewise, the Torah resides with one who is not haughty, but rather, is modest (Yalkut Shimoni on Megilas Rus).

8) We know that Moshe was placed among the bulrushes when he was three months old. He was found by Bisyoh the daughter of Paroh who attempted to have him nurse from an Egyptian wet-nurse, but Moshe refused. Since his holy mouth would eventually communicate directly with HaShem, he would only nurse from a bas Yisrael. This occurred on the 6th of Sivan, three months after his birth. We likewise consume kosher dairy products on that date. (Sefer Matamim)

9) Upon accepting the Torah, the bnei Yisrael had the status of a newborn. Newborn babies feed exclusively on milk. (Sefer Matamim)

10) Milk is symbolic of humbleness. On the day of the receiving of the Torah we eat humble food to indicate that we receive the Torah while acting humbly. (It was common to sit on the ground while hearing a Torah lecture during the era of the mishneh and gemara.) (Rabbi Pinchos of Koritz)

11) Until Matan Torah milk from a live animal was prohibited. A ben Noach has seven mitzvos including "eiver min hachai." Milk from a "chai" was likewise prohibited. Only after the Torah was given were

we taught by a verse that milk is permitted as per the gemara B'choros 6b. (found in Birkas Chaim). The verse in Breishis 18:8 says that Avrohom served butter and milk to his guests. We see from here that a ben Noach was permitted to consume dairy products even before the Torah was given. A possible answer is that Avrohom served them dairy products that were taken from a dead animal.

12) Milk embodies the characteristic of "chesed" (possibly because although taken from an animal, it does not require slaughtering of the animal), and the Torah is called "chesed" in Mishlei 31:26, "v'soras chesed al l'shonoh." In T'hilim 92:3

13) The Torah says "L'hagid Baboker Chasdechoh." The first letters of these three words spell CHALAV. (Bnei Yisos'chor)

14) The 365 negative precepts correspond to the days of the solar year. The 66th mitzvah is to not eat meat and milk that were cooked together. Counting Rosh Chodesh Nison as the first day of the first month (Shmos 12:2), the 66th day is Shavuos. Therefore, we eat both dairy and meat products, but are careful not to mix them. (Otzar Haminhogim)

15) In T'hilim 68:16 and 17 Har Sinai is called "har GAVNUNIM." Literally this means a mountain which protrudes as the bulge of a hunch-back, as we find in Vayikra 21:20, "O gi'bein." However, "har GAVNUNIM" can also be translated "mountain of CHEESE," as in the word G'VINOH. Just as cheese was a liquid that curdled and solidified, so too Har Sinai petrified upon having the Holy Torah given upon it. (Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropolia)

16) King Shlomo actualized the building of the Beis Hamikdash, and regarding this the verse says, "Choshak Livnos B'Yerusholayim" (M'lochim 1:9:19 and Divrei Hayomim 2:8:6). The first letters of these three words spell CHALAV.

17) **The Chasam Sofer** in his Droshos page #288 writes that milk has different components within it. There is the fatty cream that

rises to the top. From it comes the richest and choicest of dairy products, butter. The less fatty component is used for making cheese and other curd-based products. The last level is a watery run-off, called "mei Chalav," which is useless (at least in the days of the Chasam Sofer). These three components correspond to the different levels of the bnei Yisrael. Because HaShem holds all the bnei Yisrael so dearly and does not want the lowest level of the people to be negated, He looks upon the bnei Yisrael as a whole. Similarly, we drink milk without the components separated to symbolize this concept.

18) Yom Tov meals are always fleishig. On Shavuos we not only celebrate the Holiday, but also the completion of counting the omer. By eating dairy foods we differentiate between the two. (Medrash Menachem)

19) Constant Torah study weakens a person (gemara Sanhedrin 26b). A dairy meal invigorates and restores one's strength that was expended for Torah study

20) Just as a baby who nurses delights in its mother's milk every time, so too, one who studies Torah will always discover new insights and greater depth when he studies or reviews. (Ol'Los Efrayim)

21) The Torah is compared to both milk and honey (Shir Hasheirim 4:11). The Rambam writes that honey has the effect of warming a person and milk cools him off. The Torah has the power to warm up a person who has grown cool and lackadaisical about his Torah observance and mitzvoh fulfilment. The Torah also cools off the warmth of improper passions and pursuit of sin. We therefore eat dairy and sweet foods. (Lechem Osher)

22) We are considered new born upon accepting the Torah. Just as a newborn receives ALL its nourishment needs solely from its mother's milk, so too, our souls can receive all their spiritual nourishment from the Torah. We likewise nourish our bodies with

dairy and our souls with diligent Torah study on Shavuos. (Imrei Noam)

23) We must revitalize our spirits with a renewed acceptance of the Torah daily, but all the more so on Shavuos itself. This new spirit is called "Lev CHodosh B'kir'b'chem" (Yechezkel 36:26). These words' first letters spell "Chalav." (Imrei Yehudoh)

24) Even though milk is best served fresh, even if it sours and curdles, it can be used to make cheese or similar products. Man is at his best when he is fresh and unsullied from sins. Nevertheless, through the power of the Torah he Can repent and return to the proper use and be of great value. (Imrei Yehudoh)

25) Just as the angels who visited Avrohom (Breishis 18:8) consumed meat and dairy, we rise to the level of angels on Shavuos, so we likewise consume both dairy and meat meals. (Noam Elimelech)

26) In the merit of the dairy food Avrohom served his angelic guests the bnei Yisrael in the desert had manna. The manna alleviated any need for consuming their time in pursuit of income to pay for food. This freed up their time for total immersion in Torah study. On Shavuos we also consume dairy foods to recall the merit of Avrohom's act, which allowed for unencumbered Torah study. We likewise pray for ease in receiving our sustenance so that we can readily pursue Torah study and mitzvos. (N'zirus Shimshon)

27) We should have such excitement as if the Torah was just given to us today (see Dvorim 11:13). Dairy foods spoil very quickly. Their freshness is paramount. This is symbolic of the proper outlook towards the Torah, especially on the anniversary of when it was given. (Chasam Sofer)

28) We have the custom of serving a festive meal upon the completion of a mitzvah that has taken quite a bit of time to complete, as for example, the completion of a volume of gemara. We have just completed the counting of the Omer, which has taken 49

days. We therefore have a festive meal for this on Shavuos. Had the meal been a meat meal it would not be distinguishable as being for the completion of the Omer, as all Yom Tov meals are "fleishig." We therefore have a dairy meal in honour of completing the counting of the Omer. (Otzar M'forshei Hamedrash)



Sefer Rus Questions with Answers

1. In the Book of Ruth, where is the number 10 mentioned? (2 answers)

(1) After Machlon and Kilyon married, they dwelled in the land of Moab for 10 years. (Ruth 1:4)

(2) When Boaz wished to have the fields of Naomi redeemed, he gathered together 10 men. (Ruth 4:2)

2. In the Book of Ruth, where do we find mention of a dress?

Naomi instructed Ruth to visit Boaz at the threshing floor, but first told her to wear a dress. (Ruth 3:3)

3. What generic term for "a person" appears in the Book of Ruth? Where else is this term used to refer to an unknown place?

"Ploni Almoni" is the generic term used to refer to the relative of Naomi who should have redeemed her field and married Ruth. (Ruth 4:1)

When David was running from Shaul he found refuge in the city of Nov. David explained he is on a special mission from the king and that the men have gone to a mekom ploni almoni – "a hidden, secret place." (1-Samuel 21:3)

4. In the Book of Ruth, in what context is a shoe mentioned?

When Boaz and the redeemer wished to transfer the responsibility of redemption, a shoe was removed in the exchange. (Ruth 4:7)

5. Aside from Naomi, Ruth and Orpah, which 3 other specific women are mentioned in the Book of Ruth?

Ruth is blessed by comparing her to the matriarchs Rachel and Leah, and to Tamar. (Ruth 4:11-12)

6. In the Book of Ruth, who kisses whom? (2 answers)

(1) Naomi kisses her two daughters-in-law before encouraging them to return to their country. (Ruth 1:9)

(2) Orpah kisses Naomi when she decides to return to her land. (Ruth 1:14)

7. In the Book of Ruth, who is referred to as gibor chayil – "A mighty man of valour"? What 4 others in the biblical Prophets are described that way?

In the Book of Ruth, Boaz is called gibor chayil. (Ruth 2:1)

In the Prophets:

- *Yiftach the judge (Judges 11:1)*
- *Kish the father of King Saul (1-Samuel I 9:1)*
- *Yiravam ben Nevat, the first king of the Kingdom of Israel (1-Kings 11:28)*
- *Na'aman the general of Aram (2-Kings 5:1)*

8. In the Book of Ruth, who is referred to as aishes chayil – "A woman of valor"? In which other biblical book does this expression appear?

Boaz calls Ruth aishes chayil (Ruth 3:11). This expression also appears in King Solomon's Book of Proverbs 12:4, 31:10.

9. In the Book of Ruth, where do two words appear in a row with the same root (shoresh)? (9 answers)

• The events happened in the days of "shefot hashoftim" – "judging of the judges." (Ruth 1:1)

• Ruth decided to stay with Naomi when she said, tailchi ailech – "[where] you go, I will go." (1:16)

• talini alin – "[where] you sleep, I will sleep" (Ruth 1:16)

• amaich ami – "your nation is my nation" (Ruth 1:16)

• Elokayich Elokai – "your G-d is my G-d" (Ruth 1:16)

• tamuti amut – "[where] you die, I will die" (Ruth 1:17)

• Boaz informed Ruth that hugad hugad – "It was surely told [to me]" about her deeds. (Ruth 2:11)

• Boaz reassured Ruth that lega'alaich uge'altich – "[If the redeemer does not wish] to redeem you, then I will redeem you. (Ruth 3:13)

• Boaz asked the redeemer tigal ge'al – "[if you want to] redeem [the field], then redeem it." (4:4)

10. Who mentioned in the Book of Ruth was the grandfather of a High Priest?

Aminadav, an ancestor of King David (Ruth 4:19), was also the father-in-law of Aharon the first High Priest. Aminadav was thus the grandfather of Elazar the second High Priest (Exodus (6:23).

11. In the Book of Ruth, what city is mentioned seven times? Where is this place first mentioned in the Bible?

Beit Lechem is mentioned seven times. Beit Lechem first appears in Parshat Vayishlach as the burial place of the matriarch Rachel (Genesis 35:19).

12. In this Book what event occurs bachatzi halayla – "at midnight"? What two biblical events occurred at midnight?

• At midnight, Boaz awakened to discover Ruth at the bottom of his bed. (Ruth 3:8)

• In Egypt, the plague of the Firstborn occurred at midnight. (Exodus 12:29)

• Samson awakened at midnight to escape from the people of Gaza who were waiting in ambush to kill him. (Judges 16:3)

An Incredible Tapestry Of 7's Has Been Woven Into The Creation. By Rabbi Yaakov Salomon

In the beginning... G-d created 7's.



Oh sure, He created light and dark, the heavens and earth, too. But for reasons unknown to us, He seemed to have a special affinity for the number 7. The fact that the Torah begins with a verse containing 7 words and 28 letters (divisible by 7) is hardly remarkable. But when placed within the context of the overwhelming number of associations in Judaism with '7', a fascinating tapestry begins to unfurl. Let's take a closer look at this phenomenon.

Why "Shavuos?"

Every spring, Jews around the world celebrate the holiday of Shavuos, commemorating the most seminal event in the history of mankind, G-d's revelation at Mount Sinai.

Shavuos. Curious name for this holiday, no? Shavuos means "weeks," underscoring the 7-week period between Passover and Shavuos in which we count each day (and week) in anticipation and preparation for re-living the Sinai revelation. But why call it Shavuos -- "weeks"? Why not call the holiday "Torah," or "Sinai," or "Commandments," or "Tablets" Of what significance is "Weeks"?

Time contains many different entities. Nearly all of them are related to natural phenomena. Days, nights, months, seasons and years are all directly determined, in some way, by the constellations. There is one exception -- the week. The formulation of a week seems to be totally arbitrary. Who needs it? Let one day just follow the previous one. And why 7 days?

The concept of a week and its constitution of 7 days is one that is strictly G-d-invented, and human adopted. While we may quibble about creation -- how, when, by whom, why -- the world has consensually agreed to the concept of a week.

Why "7"?

Kabbalah teaches that seven represents wholeness and completion. After 7 days, the world was complete. There are 6 directions in our world: north, south, east, west, up, and down. Add to that the place where you are, and you have a total of 7 points of reference.

Shavuos, marking the emergence of the Jewish people into a nation, by virtue of their receiving and accepting the Torah, also marks a completion. Perhaps that is why the holiday is called Shavuos-"Weeks." We want to identify this holiday as a completion of the process of Jewish nationhood.

No one is certain why G-d chose the number "7" to signify completion. All we can do is speculate, observe and marvel. In honour of our own completion of the 49-day period leading up to Shavuos, we present 49 allusions to the number "7" within Judaism. How many of these do you recognize? How many more can you add?

The Magnificent Sevens!

1. Shabbos is the 7th day of the week.

2. There are 7 weeks in the counting of the Omer before Shavuos. (Leviticus 23:15)

3. In Israel, there are 7 days of Passover and of Sukkos. (Leviticus 23:6, 34)

4. Every 7th year, the land lays fallow during *Shmita* (Sabbatical year). (Leviticus 25:4)

5. After 7 cycles of Shmita, we have a Jubilee year *(Yovel)*. (Leviticus 25:8)

6. When a close relative dies, we sit Shiva for 7 days.

7. On Sukkos we shake 7 species - 1 Lulav, 1 Esrog, 2 willows, and 3 myrtles.

8. Yitro, the first real convert to Judaism, had 7 different names, and 7 daughters

9. Moshe was born and died on the same day - the 7th of Adar.

10. Our Sukkah is "visited" by 7 guests - Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Yoseph and Dovid.

11. The Menorah in the Temple had 7 branches.

12. Achashvarosh, King of Persia during the miracle of Purim, held a party for 7 days.

13. 7 holidays in the year: Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Sukkos, Chanukah, Purim, Passover, Shavuos.

14. In addition to the 613 Commandments, the Sages added 7 more.

15. There are 7 Noachide Laws pertaining to all humanity.

16. At every Jewish wedding, 7 blessings are recited *(Sheva Brachot)*.

17. Each Shabbos, 7 people are called to the Torah reading *(Aliyot)*.

18. The first verse in the Torah contains 7 words (and 28 letters).

19. Our Matriarch Leah had 7 children - six sons and one daughter.

20. There were 7 days of preparation for the construction of the Tabernacle in the desert.

21. Traditionally, the bride circles the groom 7 times under the Chuppah.

22. We wind the Tefillin straps around the arm 7 times.

23. Moses was the 7th generation after Abraham.

24. Each plague in Egypt lasted 7 days.

25. In Pharaoh's dreams there were 7 cows and 7 stalks of grain.

26. The Biblical contamination period typically lasts 7 days. (Leviticus 13:4)

27. G-d created 7 levels of heaven. (Hence the expression, "I'm in 7th heaven!")

28. On Shabbat and holidays, we recite 7 blessings in the silent Amidah.

29. There are 7 special species of produce by which the Land of Israel is praised: wheat, barley, grapes, pomegranates, figs, olives, and dates.

30. The world has 7 continents.

31. The 7 weeks of the Omer correspond to the 7 "sefiros," the 7 behaviour traits in which we serve G-d:

kindness, strength, beauty, triumph, splendour, foundation, and kingship.

32. Noah sent the dove and the raven out of the Ark for 7 days to inspect the weather conditions.

33. 7 nations warred with Israel: Canaanites, Hittites, Hivites, Amorites, Perizzites, Jebusites, and Girgashites.

34. On Yom Kippur, the High Priest sprinkled the blood in the Temple 7 times.

35. The Jewish New Year of Rosh Hashana occurs, surprisingly, in the 7th month -- Tishrei.

36. The Jewish calendar has a cycle of intercalation containing 7 leap years during a 19-year period.

37. There are 7 notes on the musical scale.

38. A Kohen participates in burying 7 relatives: father, mother, sister, brother, son, daughter, spouse.

39. We dance 7 circles *(hakafot)* on the holiday of Simchat Torah.

40. The smallest allowable dimension of a Sukkah is 7 by 7 cubits.

41. The world has 7 seas.

42. Joshua led the Jewish People around the walls of Jericho 7 times before the walls fell.

43. Jacob worked for Laban for 7 years (twice) in order to marry his daughters.

44. The Holy Temple contained 7 gates of entry.

45. We recite 7 blessings every day before & after the "Shema" -- 3 in the morning; 4 at night.

46. The Talmud lists 7 female prophets: Sarah, Miriam, Deborah, Hannah, Avigail, Chuldah, Esther.

47. A Jewish servant regains freedom after working for 7 years.

48. We conclude our Yom Kippur prayers by proclaiming 7 times, "The L-rd is G-d!"

The Minhag of Decorating Shuls and Homes on Shavuos



Rome's Great Synagogue Decorated with Flowers for Shavuos

The Rama (Orach Chaim 494:3) writes that on Shavuos there is a Minhag to put greenery and flowers in the Shuls and houses as a reminder for the joy of receiving the Torah, and the Mishnah Brurah (10) comments that we do this because Har Sinai grew grass and flowers before the Torah was given on it.

In the town of Ostrow there lived a very pious man by the name of Reb Hersch Shmulkes who learned Torah all day and night while living in abject poverty, in a dilapidated old shack. The Jews of the village had no idea that there was a great Torah scholar living in their midst, except for **Reb Pinchas of Koretz**— who did not reveal this to anyone.

One Shavuos, Reb Meir Margolis, Reb Yaakov Yosef, and Reb Pinchas of Koretz were learning the laws and customs that related to Shavuos, and the question arose as to the source of the Minhag of spreading grass on the floor of the Shul on Shavuos. Reb Pinchas suggested that they go visit Reb Hersch to wish him a good Yom Tov, adding that perhaps he knew of a source for this custom.

Not knowing who Reb Hersch really was, the two could not understand why they would ask him such a question, but they did not want to refuse Reb Pinchas. When they got to the broken-down

shack, they saw Reb Hersch sitting on a rickety bed learning Shulchan Aruch, and he invited his guests in to sit on a wobbly wooden bench.

Reb Pinchas of Koretz asked Reb Hersch if he knew of a source for spreading grass on the Shul floor on Shavuos, and without hesitation, Reb Hersch replied, "The Gemara (Eiruvin 22a) relates that Rav Adda bar Masnah decided to learn in the Yeshivah of Rav, and his wife, who agreed to let him go, asked him how she will feed the children while he was gone. He answered, 'Is there no grass left in the field?' **אֲמַרָה לֵיהּ דְּבִיתְהוּ: יָנוֹקֵי דִּידָךְ מַאי אֶעֱבֵיד לְהוּ? אֲמַר לַהּ: מִי שְׁלִימוּ קוּרְמֵי בְּאַגְמָא?**

" Reb Hersch continued, "What did he mean by this response? He surely did not expect his family to eat grass! He was implying that just as Hashem provides grass for the animals to eat without them having to earn a livelihood, He would provide for her as well. Those who put their trust in Hashem and rely on Him to sustain them, will be supported by Him.

When the Jews accepted the Torah at Har Sinai, they said that they were willing to learn Torah day and night, but wondered how they would be provided for. Hashem showed them the mountain all covered in grass, and taught them this lesson, that Hashem will provide for those who put their trust in Him, just as He provides for the animals. Spreading grass on the floor in Shul reminds us of this."

The three visitors were greatly inspired by the vast Torah knowledge of Reb Hersch, and from then on, the community of Ostrow recognized the Tzadik's greatness. Many offered to support him and help him with better living conditions, but not wanting to take any gifts, he turned down all offers, leaving his reward intact for the World to Come!

(Torah U'Tefilah as compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.)

Forever, Hashem, Your Word Stands Firm in Heaven. (Tehillim 119:89) By R' Shmuel Winzelberg



The Nesivos Shalom writes that just as the Torah is eternal, so too is the giving of the Torah eternal. Each and every year we receive the Torah on this day of Shavuos, anew. This is why we say in the Shemonah Esrei and in Kiddush, **זמן מתן תורתנו**, the time of the giving of the Torah— in present tense, and not **לזכר** as a remembrance to the past— as if Hashem only gave the Torah to us once.

Rather, Hashem gives us the Torah every year, and we observe this on the 6th of Sivan— not on the 7th of Sivan as when it was given on Har Sinai. Our focus is not on the original giving of the Torah but on the renewal of the giving of the Torah every year. *(Torah U'Tefilah - Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.)*

Brooklyn Torah Gazette

Ruth's Chessed by Jack E. Rahmey

The gematria for Rus is 606. If you add 7 for the seven Noahide (universal) laws that all nations must obey, the total is 613. This signifies that Ruth was a true convert, the epitome of someone accepting the Torah. For this reason, we have the custom to read Megilas Ruth on Shavuot.

Another great quality of Ruth was her chessed as she refused to abandon her mother-in-law Naomi. She could have easily gone back to her father's palace, where she would have lived as a princess of

Moab. Instead she stuck with Naomi, so that Naomi would not be alone.

Ruth said to Naomi: "Wherever you go, I will go; wherever you will lodge, I will lodge; your people are my people, and your G-d is my G-d; where you die, I will die, and there I will be buried. Thus may Hashem do to me, and more! If anything but death separates me from you."

This was the ultimate form of chessed and the essence of what being a Jew is all about — caring for one another.

Ruth was a princess, but she offered to go and beg in the fields so as to spare Naomi that embarrassment. Also, as the ultimate hesed she married Boaz, a much older man, so that she could have a child through *yibum* and give Naomi happiness after losing her husband and two sons.



We learn from this that there are two paths that we can choose to follow. Ruth decided to follow the Torah and not abandon her mother-in-law and in doing this chessed, she merited to become the mother of the Davidic dynasty. However, her sister-in-law Orpa chose a different path. She returned to her pagan Moabite gods, and according to the Talmud (Sota 42b), Goliath the Philistine — who was ultimately killed by David — was her descendant.

We learn from this that in our own lives we must make decisions that will carry us on the right path of Torah. Where we live and where we send our children to be educated all have consequences in terms of whether or not our families stay on the Torah path, and whether or not we grow in that direction. When we make sacrifices for Torah,

it will ultimately bring us a great reward, as it says in Pirke Avot: "lefum tzaara agra — according to the suffering is the reward!"

When B'nei Yisrael they left Egypt and journeyed to the Sinai desert, it says: "vayahanu bamidbar, vayihan sham yisrael neged hahar — and they camped in the dessert, and he camped there opposite the mountain." First the passuk writes that "they camped" in plural. But when it writes that B'nei Yisrael camped at Har Sinai, it switches to singular.

Rashi comments on the usage of the singular form: "k'ish ehad, b'lev ehad — Like one man, with one heart." This is because at Har Sinai, B'nei Yisrael were like one person, with one heart. That unity gave us the merit to receive the Torah!

There is nothing greater in Hashem's eyes than seeing B'nei Yisrael unified in harmony as one close nation, just as a father loves seeing his children close to one another, getting along and unified as one.

May we all continue to be special in Hashem's eyes and in the eyes of the Nations so as to make a Kiddush Hashem, as we celebrate the acceptance of the greatest gift any nation could ever receive, our holy Torah. May we also continue be as one nation, and always be concerned for the welfare of our fellow Jews, and make sacrifices for those close to us, as the passuk says: "ve'ahavta lere'aha kamoha — Love your friend as you love yourself!"

Butterflies rest when it rains to protect their wings; so too Shabbos is our rest – the shelter where our weary wings find refuge from the storms of life. It is the canopy that shields us, the calm that restores us, the gentle pause that gives us the strength to carry on. ~ Inspired by the teachings of the Sefas Emes, Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter (1847-1905)

Kabbalat HaTorah



Kabbalat HaTorah means receiving the Torah (by us). Matan Torah means the giving of the Torah (to us, by Hashem). How come we call Shavuot, Z'man Matan Torateinu - instead of Z'man Kabbalat Torateinu?

The Kotzker Rebbe explains that Matan Torah occurred on that specific Shavuot day. But Kabbalat HaTorah differs from person to person. There cannot be a specific day to mark when each of us receives the Torah.

HaGaon HaRav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, ztz"l

Question: Why do we read Shir HaShirim on Pesach, Megilas Ruth on Shavuos and Koheles on Succos before we read the Torah portions?

The rule is that whatever is more common is done first. On Purim we do read first the Torah section and then the Megilah, which fits the rule. The Rav answered that if we read Shir HaShirim, Ruth and Koheles after the Torah reading, it is possible that people would think that these were a second Haftarah which would need the seven blessings for a Haftarah. Therefore, they are read beforehand.

On Purim, there is no Haftorah, so no one would make such a mistake.

Vedibarta Bam - A Compilation of Torah Insights in Question & Answer Format By Moshe Bogomilsky

The word *Shavuot* (**שבעת**) is an acronym for the four titles of the festival. The "**ש**" is for "*Shavuot*" —**שבעת** The "**ב**" is for "*Bikkurim*" — **ביכורים**. The "**ע**" is for "*Atzeret*" — **עצרת**. The "**ת**" is for "Torah" —**תורה** . (**הגר״א**)

מאכלי חלב Dairy Meal

QUESTION: Why is it customary to eat a dairy meal the first day of *Shavuot*?

ANSWER: 1) In The Song of Songs (4:11) Hashem says to the Jewish people, "The sweetness [of Torah] drops from your lips; like honey and milk it lies under your tongue." Since the Torah is compared to milk, we eat a dairy meal on *Shavuot*, when the Torah was given. (**ר׳ פנחס זצ״ל מקוריץ**)

*** * ***



Honey is made by the bee, and milk is a by-product of blood (see *Bechorot* 6b). Both the bee and the blood are forbidden to be eaten.

Thus, both milk and honey originate from a source which is *tamei* — spiritually unclean — and after the product is developed it is *tahor* — halachically clean for human consumption.

Torah is compared to milk and honey because of its power to elevate and purify even one who has fallen into a state of spiritual contamination.

Also, the comparison of Torah to milk teaches us that just as milk keeps best in earthenware and spoils quickly in silver or golden utensils, Torah remains with humble people and despises conceited and arrogant people. (**עוללות אפרים**)



וילך איש מבית לחם...הוא ואשתו ושני בניו...ושם שני בניו מחלון וכליון...וימת אלימלך...ותשאר היא ושני בניה...וישאו להם נשים מאביות...וימותו...מחלון וכליון ותשאר האשה משני ילדיה

"A man went from Bethlehem, he, his wife, and his two sons...the man's name was Elimelech and his two sons were named Machlon and Chilion...Elimelech died...and she was left with her two sons...They married Moabite women...Machlon and Chilion died, and the woman was bereft of her two children." (1:1-5)

QUESTION: Why are Machlon and Chilion referred to as *"banim"* — "sons" — the first three times and then called *"yeladeha"* — "her children"?

ANSWER: In Hebrew, the term *"yeled"* — "child" — denotes

1) biological offspring, 2) someone immature. The Hebrew word for son is *"ben,"* and is associated with the word *"boneh"* — "builder" — i.e. one who continues to build that which his father started (see *Bereishit* 5:28, Rashi). A son represents continuity. Moreover, when a person is blessed with sons, and his sons in turn have sons, the name of the family is built up and perpetuated.

Consequently, to Elimelech and his wife, Machlon and Chilion were *banim/bonim* — builders — perpetuators of the family tradition from whom they would have *"nachas."*

Unfortunately, a sudden turn of events shattered all their hopes and left them in dismay. Their two sons married non-Jewish women. Now, their children would not be considered Jews, but Moabites. By intermarrying, Machlon and Chilion would not only fail to build the home of Elimelech, but actively prevent it from continuing.

Therefore, they were no longer *banim* (*bonim* — builders) but merely *yeladim* — biological offspring — who, regardless of their age, acted like children and brought shame and disgrace to their prominent family. (**פון אונזער אלטען אוצר**)

***"ויאמר בעז לנערו הנצב על הקוצרים למי הנערה הזאת" "Boaz then said to his servant who was overseeing the harvesters, 'To whom does that young woman belong?' "* (2:5)**



QUESTION: Isn't it improper for a *tzaddik* like Boaz to make an inquiry about a young woman?

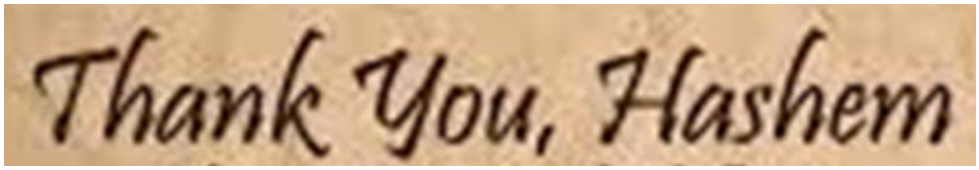
ANSWER: Boaz, as the proprietor of the field, would visit it on a regular basis. However, this time Boaz noticed the Divine presence *(shechinah)* in his field. Upon realizing that the harvesters did not perceive that the Divine presence was among them, he proclaimed in excitement, "*Hashem imachem*" — "G-d is with you!" Not understanding, they took his statement as a greeting and responded, "*Yevarechecha Hashem*" — "May G-d bless you."

Realizing that he had been misunderstood, Boaz turned to the servant who was overseeing the harvesters and asked him, "To whom does this young woman belong. Undoubtedly the presence of Hashem I see here is due to her." (**ר' יצחק זצ"ל מוואַרקאַ**)

Alternatively, instead of asking "*Lemi hana'arah hazot*" — "To whom does this young woman belong?" he should have just said "*Mi hana'arah hazot*" — "Who is this young woman?"

Boaz was a widower. Noting her modesty and perceiving that the *Shechinah* was with the young woman, he was impressed with her spiritual stature, and therefore inquired, "To whom does she belong?" wanting to know if she was marriageable. (**אגרת שמואל**)

Megillah Treasures - An Inside Look



Rav Dovid Feinstein notes that in *Megillas Rus* we can learn a powerful lesson in how one should react to favours that one receives from others. It goes without saying that one should thank the one he benefitted from, but that is not all. One must realize that ultimately the Source of all blessings is Hashem. It is not nearly enough to thank the agent, one must thank the Giver of all good. It is human nature to thank the one who helps and not realize that Hashem was really behind the entire scene.

As the Sages teach in *Bava Kamma* (92b): *'The wine belongs to the king, but thanks are given to the waiter'*, instead of to the master.

In *Megillas Rus* (2:20), we see that Naomi realized this concept. When Rus informed Naomi that the man who had been kind to her was Boaz, Naomi thanked Hashem for His kindness in bringing them together— **ברוך הוא לה'**!

We should realize that nothing that happens is ever coincidental and that everything is in the hands of the Creator. One's good fortune is a sign that he has been the beneficiary of Hashem's kindness and should show proper thanks to Hashem. (*Kol Dodi al Megillas Rus*, Introduction)

"you are the one who can fill the world with sunshine."

Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface - R' Shmuel Winzelberg



The *Kedushas Levi* asks why the holiday of Shavuos is called *Atzeres* - **עצרת** when the only time *Atzeres* is mentioned in the Torah is regarding Shemini *Atzeres*?

The *Kedushas Levi* answers that there are three aspects to a holiday. The first aspect is the plain, simple meaning that every holiday has two types of service to the Creator, Blessed is He. The first is by performing the mitzvah that is relevant to the specific holiday, for example, eating *matzah* on Pesach. The second is the prohibition to do work.

This is not so regarding the holiday of Shavuos where we have but one mitzvah, which is, that we hold ourselves back from doing work—**נעצרין מעשיית מלאכה**, and for this reason the holiday is called **עצרת**.

Chazal say, איזהו עשיר השמח בחלקו – 'Who is wealthy? It is someone happy with his portion.'

The Tiferes Shlomo zt'l and the Sfas Emes zt'l both explain that this also means to be satisfied with one's spiritual portion. This is the portion Hashem prepared for you, so be happy with it. This is the way Hashem wants you to serve Him.

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember

Two great *tzaddikim*, **Rav Shmelke of Nickolsberg** and his brother **Rav Pinchas, the *Baal Hafla'ah***, used to learn Torah together, *b'chavrusah*. The two brothers would learn straight for long periods of time, and had no set time to stop learning— not even to eat, sleep, or take care of any other needs.

Day and night, as soon as they opened their *Gemaras*, they entered a new realm that consisted only of the pure pleasure of learning. They would learn as long as they had the energy for it, until their bodies gave way and passed out from exhaustion, often some 20 hours after they began.

One day, in the early hours of the morning, after spending the entire day and night learning, the brothers had an argument about a *Gemara* in a different *Masechta*. Rav Pinchas got up from his seat to get that particular *Masechta*, and Rav Shmelke remained in his seat and continued to learn. Suddenly Rav Shmelke heard a loud thud. Not thinking anything of it he kept on learning.



After a short while had passed and Rav Pinchas had still not returned, Rav Shmelke realized that the thud must have been his brother collapsing from exhaustion. Rav Shmelke, who wanted to continue to learn, now had a dilemma. Should he wake Rav Pinchas or should he leave him alone, since he did after all collapse on the floor. After thinking it over, Rav Shmelke decided that he would go see how Rav Pinchas was lying. If he was totally sprawled out on the floor, then he truly was left without an ounce of strength, and he will leave him be. However, if he sees that Rav Pinchas put his hand underneath his head, that means he had enough energy and the wherewithal to make

himself comfortable! When Rav Shmelke entered the library he saw Rav Pinchas lying on the floor with his hand underneath his head. He leaned over to him and yelled, "Get up lazy one!", and gave him a soft kick to arouse him. He continued and said, "What will you do in your grave if you spend your lifetime sleeping!" Rav Pinchas woke up and the two brothers resumed their learning!

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

We find that many *Mitzvos* are *Zeicher L'Yetzias Mitzrayim*, *a rememberance to leaving Mitzrayim*. However, we don't find any *Mitzvos* that are *Zecher L'Ma'amud Har Sinai*, *a rememberance to standing by Har Sinai*.

Rav Aharon Kotler, *zt"l*, asks, since the whole point of leaving Mitzrayim was to receive the *Torah*, aren't we focusing on the wrong thing? Mitzrayim is only a means to the end of receiving the *Torah*! Shouldn't we be concerned with remembering *Har Sinai*? He answers that memories are needed for something that happened in the past and isn't here right now.



We can't move the past forward, so we take ourselves back in time. This applies to *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, where remembering is appropriate. However, *Ma'amud Har Sinai* is something that can happen every moment of every day. When a person learns the way he should, that moment itself is no less special than when we actually stood by *Har Sinai*!

Learning *Torah* in purity and holiness can actually bring the same *Kedushah* of *Ma'amud Har Sinai*— even today. Everyone can constantly enjoy hearing the words of *Hashem* anytime, anywhere! (*Kol Me'Heichal*, Shavuos 5766)

Rabbi YY Jacobson - Smile Back

While Sarah would oftentimes pick her son, Dovid, up from school, on one particular day, he decided to walk home. It was a short walk, just a couple blocks, and Dovid as a nine-year-old boy was certainly capable of independently doing so.

But this day was not like every other day, because today, it was pouring rain. The sky soon began to roar with thunder, as lightning pierced through the clouds. Sarah couldn't contain her worries and soon enough, jumped into her car and sped off to find Dovid and give him a lift home. But as she turned the corner, lo and behold, she noticed Dovid. He had already left school and begun to walk home himself, in the heavy rain. But, to Sarah's surprise, he walked so ever slowly, a skip in his step and a smile glued to his face. He was celebrating and literally dancing in the rain.



Suddenly, though, a booming sound of thunder echoed from the sky as Sarah jumped out of her seat. Lightning soon followed, creating a picturesque scene of dark clouds and striking light zipping in between. Sarah glanced turned over at her nine-year-old Dovid, who could do nothing more than smile and continue walking. Sarah was confused, and yet again, when lighting struck for the second time, she noticed Dovid looking up to sky with a beaming smile.

Rolling down the window, Sarah yelled out, "Dovid, I can take you home!" But Dovid didn't like that idea. "Mommy, please, I want to walk home myself!" Sarah couldn't understand. "Why are you smiling, Dovid?" "Mommy, don't you see, G-d keeps on taking pictures of me! Every time He takes a picture, as the lightning flash goes off, I smile!"

If you smile as you read this, hold that smile. That is a Jewish emotion. That is a Jewish attitude. The world is smiling at me, people are smiling at me, Hashem is smiling at me. It's our job to smile back.

Selections on Megilas Rus – by Zvi Akiva Fleisher

Ch. 1, v. 1: וַיְהִי בִּימֵי שְׁפֹט הַשֹּׁפְטִים – **וַיְהִי** phonetically alludes to the anguished cry 'woe'. 'Woe' to the generation that judges its judges. This is a great embarrassment. (Medrash Rus)

This is also alluded to in the first letters of the words **וַיְהִי בִּימֵי שְׁפֹט הַשֹּׁפְטִים**, which spell out **בושה**. (**Chid"o**)

Ch. 1, v. 1: וַיְהִי רָעָב בָּאָרֶץ – The medrash says that there was a famine, a shortage, of spirituality. This is alluded to in the words, **וַיְהִי רָעָב בָּאָרֶץ** whose numerical value is the same as Yerusholayim, the holy spiritual city. (Based on Rokei'ach)

Ch. 1, v. 1: וַיֵּלֶךְ אִישׁ מִבֵּית לֶחֶם יְהוּדָה לָגוּר בִּשְׂדֵי מוֹאָב – Why did he choose Moav?

Medrash Rus 1:4 relates that Elimelech was stingy and feared that because of the famine people would continuously come to him for sustenance, and this would wipe out his fortunes. What better place to go than to the nation that was famous for being stingy. (Rokei'ach)

Ch. 1, v, 2: שְׁדֵי־מוֹאָב וַיֵּהְיוּ־שָׁם – The final letters of these words spell **יבום**, a harbinger of what the future held for Rus. (Rokei'ach)

Ch. 1, v. 4: שֵׁם הָאַחַת עָרְפָּה

The letters of this name spell **הערף** - the nape. Orpoh turned the back of her neck on Naomi and returned to her nation and its gods.

The letters of her name also spell **פרעה**, as the evil inclination is embodied in the name Paroh. (Toldos Yaakov Yoseif on parshas Bo) They also spell "**פה רע**." Even though she kissed her mother-in-law good-bye (verse 14), she had a bad mouth. (Rokei'ach)

Ch. 1, v. 4: וְשֵׁם הַשֵּׁנִית רוּת – The numerical value of **רוּת** is 606. As a bas Noach she already had 7 mitzvos, and upon accepting Judaism she was responsible for an additional 606 mitzvos. (Rokei'ach, Rabbeinu Bachyei on parshas Va'yeiro)



The letters of the name **רוּת** are the same as **תור** - a type of bird that is accepted as a sacrifice upon the altar. Just as a "tor" is accepted as a sacrifice, so too, Rus was accepted into "k'hal Yisroel," to marry a born-Jewish man. We do not exclude Moabite women from being married to bnei Yisroel, "Moavi v'lo Moavis." (Zohar Chodosh)

Was her name Rus at birth? The Holy Zohar writes that her name was originally Gilis, and only after converting was it changed to Rus.

Ch. 1, v. 4: וַיֵּשְׁבוּ שָׁם כְּעֶשֶׂר שָׁנִים – We translate "k'esser" as approximately ten. A novel insight: The medrash says that Elimelech was so wealthy that he was able to support the nation for ten years of famine. Since he shirked his responsibilities, Hashem punished his family in kind. They lived among a foreign nation for ten years.

Translate "k'esser" as "just like." Just like the ten years that he could have supported his people, his family resided in Moav for ten years. (Ba"ch)

Ch. 1, v. 6: כִּי שָׁמְעָה בִּשְׂדֵה מוֹאָב – From whom did she hear? The medrash says that she heard from merchants who came from Eretz Yisroel. Some interpret this to mean that she deduced this from the fact that they came with agricultural goods for sale. (If agricultural goods were being exported it was a sign that not only was the famine over, but that there was a reasonable amount of growth.)

Alternatively, the Holy Zohar writes that she heard from an angel.

Ch. 1, v. 6: פָּקַד ה' אֶת – The numerical value of these words is the same as Torah, 611. The final words of the verse follow through in this theme. **לָתֵת לָהֶם לָחֶם** can be interpreted as, " to give them bread," bread meaning Talmud, as per the gemara Chagigoh 14a. (Rokei'ach)

Ch. 1, v. 7: וַתֵּלַכְנָה בַּדֶּרֶךְ – The word **בַּדֶּרֶךְ** seems superfluous.

1) This teaches us that they did not turn off the main road to stop in communities to rest or find food.

2) Alternatively, that they travelled even though it was Yom Tov, the first day of Pesach.



3) That they discussed the laws of conversion to Judaism on the way, as "derech" means Torah, "V'hodato lo'hem es ha'derech" (Shmos 18:20). "Va'teilachnoh" contains the word form "halacha."

4) That they were so destitute that they wore no shoes and walked directly on the road. (Medrash Rus) **וַתֵּלַכְנָה** has the same numerical value as **ויחפות** barefoot- 510. (Rokei'ach)

Ch. 1, v. 9: לָכֶם - Why is the male form used? (We find this numerous times throughout Megilas Rus, and each one deserves an explanation.)

The letters of **לָכֶם** spell "**מלך**." This was a blessing that they should merit to have the royal lineage come through them. (Rokei'ach)

Ch. 1, v. 9: וּמְצָאן - This word is missing the letter Hei at the end. This alludes to the fact that even Rus, who would wed, would have a short-lived marriage with her husband, as he died the same night. (Rokei'ach)

Alternatively, this alludes to the fact that only one of them would find a husband and fulfilment. (Medrash Rus)

We likewise find the letter Vov missing from both **שְׁבָנָה** and **בְּנֹתַי** in verse 11 and 12, the Hei at the end of **לֶכְנָ** in verse 12.

All of these allude to the fact that only one of the two, Rus, would find fulfilment, and that only Rus cried to an extreme at the thought of forsaking Naomi. (Holy Alshich)

Ch. 1, v. 12: שְׁבְנָה בְנֹתַי לָמָּה – This is the third time that Naomi said "shovnoh" (see verses 8 and 11). The Medrash Rus says that this alludes to the rule that when one comes to convert, we push him off three times (see gemara Y'vomos 47b).



Ch. 1, v. 12: בְנֹתַי לָמָּה כִּי – The first letters of these three words form **כלב**, a dog. These words allude to the fact that not only was Orpoh harassed by men, but also a dog attacked her. (Medrash Rus). (Rokei'ach)



Ch. 1, v. 14: וְרוּת דָּבְקָה בָּהּ – The numerical value of **וְרוּת** is 612, the same as "bris." Rus committed herself to the covenant of the Torah, alluded to in the word **בָּהּ** spelled Beis-Hei. Rus cleaved to the 5 books of the Torah, "b'Hei." (Rokei'ach)



Ch. 1, v. 16: אַל־תִּפְגְּעִי־בִי – Do not attempt to kill me, as in **וַיִּפְגַּע־בּוֹ וַיָּמֹת** (M'lochim 1:2:25). Rus so strongly wanted to cling to the Jewish nation, that forsaking it was equal to death.



Ch. 1, v. 16: אַל־תִּפְגְּעִי־בִי – Don't dissuade me. I am committed to accepting all 613 mitzvos. "Al tifg'i bi" has the numerical value of 613. (Rokei'ach)



Ch. 1, v. 16: כִּי אֶל־אֲשֶׁר תֵּלְכִי אֵלֵךְ וּבַאֲשֶׁר תָּלִינִי אָלִין – Going refers to action, while sleeping refers to inaction. I will commit myself to both the positive and restrictive mitzvos. (GR"A)



Ch. 1, v. 17: אֶקָּבֵר כֹּה – The final two letters of "ekoVeiR" and the Word "ko" spell "brochoh," a blessing. Rus told Naomi that if she

would merit to be buried alongside righteous people, בַּאֲשֶׁר תָּמוּתִי אָמוּת, then she would have the blessing of rising at the time of "t'chiyas ha'meisim." (Rokei'ach)

Alternatively, we have the letter Kuf of "eKo'veir" and "ko." This alludes to Rus accepting upon herself to recite 100 daily blessings.

Ch. 1, v. 18: כִּי־מִתְאַמֶּצֶת הִיא לָלֶכֶת - Naomi stopped attempting to dissuade Rus only after she saw that Rus walked with great effort. At that point Naomi realized that Rus was totally committed to joining the Jewish nation. This is because commitment to Torah weakens a person physically, as we find when Reish Lokish committed himself to learn Torah (gemara B.M. 84a). (Chid"o)

Ch. 1, v. 19: וַתֵּלַכְנָה שְׁתֵּיהֶם - Once again we have a grammatical problem with the gender of this word. This teaches us that they walked to Beis Lechem with great strength and alacrity, as a man would. (Rokei'ach)

Ch. 1, v. 20: מָרָא - This word is spelled with an Alef.



The GR"A in his commentary on Yeshayohu writes that Hashem uses three mediums to send punishment upon the world. They are water, wind, and fire. He thus explains that when Hashem said that He was sending "all My plagues" (Shmos 9:14) in the form of hail, it is because the plague encompassed these three aspects, water as the ice component, wind that brought the hail, and fire within the balls of hail.

Perhaps this is why "moro" is written here with an Alef. This is because Noami alluded to the three components of punishment that

Hashem sends on mankind, in the form of Mayim - Mem, Ruach - Reish, and Aish - Alef. She felt that she had undergone "all My plagues." (Nirreh li)

Ch. 1, v. 22: בִּתְחִלַּת קְצִיר שְׂעֹרִים – Some say that because this took place at the beginning of the harvest of barley, a little while before Shovuos, we read this Megiloh on Shovuos.

Ch. 2, v. 1: וּשְׁמוֹ בֹּעַז – This word can be broken into two, "bo" and "oz," – in him there is strength. What is the strength? This is also alluded to in his name, whose letters can be switched to read **עזב** he forsook his evil inclination. (Rokei'ach)

Ch. 2, v. 4: ה' עִמָּכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ יְבָרֶכְךָ ה' – The medrash says that Boaz instituted incorporating Hashem's Name when blessing his fellow man. Note that Boaz said Hashem's name first, while the harvesters first said the blessing, and only then Hashem's Name.

This is because the gemara says that when one sanctifies an animal he should say, "chatos laShem," and not "laShem chatos." We fear that he might die immediately after he utters Hashem's Holy Name and will not complete his sentence and will have uttered Hashem's Name in vain.

However, the gemara says that one who is first to bless his friend is granted long life. Boaz, who was the initiator of the blessing, was therefore able to mention Hashem's Name ahead of the blessing, while the harvesters had to first say the blessing.

This explains why the first to greet says "Sholo'm a'leichem," and the second person reciprocates with "a'leichem Sholo'm."

Ch. 2, v. 6: הַשָּׁבָה עִם־נָעֳמִי – The second letters of these three words spell **שמע**. Rus has already accepted Hashem of Yisroel. (Rokei'ach)



Ch. 2, v. 12: יְשַׁלֵּם – The hidden letters of the letters of this word, i.e. Vov-Dalet of Yud, spelled Yud-Vov-Dalet, etc., have the numerical value of "olom habo." (Rokei'ach)



Ch. 2, v. 12: יְשַׁלֵּם ה' פָּעֳלֶךְ – The numerical value of these words is the same as Rus, 606, the number of mitzvos that are increased to one who converts to Judaism, over the 7 mitzvos that every person has. (Rokei'ach)

I'geres Shmuel says that we can either interpret these words as a blessing or as an assurance that it will be so.



Ch. 2, v. 12: וּתְהִי מַשְׂכֻּרְתֵּךְ שְׁלֵמָה – The word "shleimoh," spelled without a Yud, can also be read Shlomo. Your reward will be your descendant, King Shlomo. (Yalkut Shimoni)

Indeed, Rus lived so long that she actually merited to see Shlomo as king with her own eyes, as related in the gemara B.B. 91b, based on the verse in M'lochim 1:2, "va'yosem ki'sei l'eim ha'melech."



Ch. 2, v. 13: אֶמְצָא־חֵן בְּעֵינֶיךָ אֲדֹנִי – Rus alluded to her finding favour in his eyes by virtue of her truly accepting Hashem. The final letters of these four words spell **אנכי** the first word in the Ten Commandments. (Rokei'ach)



"If you judge people, you have no time to love them."



Ch. 2, v. 14: וְטָבַלְתְּ פִּתֵּךְ בַּחֹמֶץ – The gemara Shabbos 113b says that Boaz alluded to Rus that she would have a descendant who would be bitter like vinegar, King Menasheh. Since there were unfortunately numerous kings who turned away from the proper path, why is specifically Menasheh hinted to here? The allusion to vinegar is that just as vinegar becomes sharper and sharper as it ages, so too the king who is alluded to is one who would become worse and worse over an extended period of time, accurately describing Menasheh.

Sifsei Tzadik says that Boaz wanted to comfort Rus. Just as sharp and bitter vinegar on its own is inedible but is useful when bread is dipped into it and it is consumed, as it cools off a person who is very hot, so too, in the end Menasheh will repent.



Ch. 2, v. 17: וַתַּחְבֹּט אֵת אֲשֶׁר־לִקְּטָה וַיְהִי כְּאֵיפָה שְׂעֹרִים – She banged the grains off the stalks so that she would not have to carry home a very large amount. Even with the banging and only bringing home the grains, she had about an "eifoh" measure. The Ibn Ezra writes that this is an enormous amount for a woman to carry.

Ch. 2, v. 18: וַתֵּרֶא חֲמוֹתָהּ אֵת אֲשֶׁר־לָקֵטָה – Rus didn't come home and proudly show off the great volume of grain that she painstakingly collected. Rather, Naomi looked into her bags and saw the great amount. (Rabbi Shlomo haLevi Alkabetz)

Ch. 2, v. 19: אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂתָה עִמּוֹ – Rus did not say "asher ossoh imi," that did for me, but rather, "asher osisi imo," that I did for him. This teaches us that the recipient of alms does more for the donor than the donor does for the recipient. (Medrash Rus 5:9)

Ch. 3, v. 1: אֲבַקֶּשׁ־לָךְ מָנוֹחַ אֲשֶׁר יִיטַב־לָךְ – Medrash Rus relates that Boaz had 30 sons and 30 daughters. Every last one of them died during his lifetime, and all after they married. This was because Boaz was a friend of Monoach (who would in the future become the father of Shimshon), but since Monoach had no children during the years that Boaz made weddings for his children, he never invited Monoach to the weddings, stating, "Why should I invite him? He will not reciprocate because he has no children." Hashem was very displeased with this and punished Boaz by taking away all his children during his lifetime.



We can thus say that Rus told Noami that she should pursue marriage with Boaz. Naomi might respond that it would be an effort in futility, since even if they would have children, the children would eventually die shortly after they would marry because Boaz would not invite Monoach. Therefore, Rus pre-empted this by saying that she would search for Monoach and invite him to the wedding, and in turn **אֲשֶׁר יִיטַב־לָךְ** – it will go well for you.

Ch. 3, v. 2: וְעַתָּה – "And now" connotes alacrity. Naomi told Rus that she should act on the plan immediately and not procrastinate. Indeed, things moved along very quickly, and Rus was married to Boaz the next day. This was none too soon as Boaz died on the night of his marriage to Rus.

Ch. 3, v. 3: אַל־תִּוָּדְעִי לָאִישׁ – There was a span of 490 years between the destruction of the two Bo'tei Mikdosh. **תִּוָּדְעִי** has the numerical value of 490, the number of years that Hashem's positive countenance was not shown to His nation. (Rokei'ach)



Ch. 3, v. 4: וְגֹלְיָת – This word can also be read "v'Golyas," - and Goliath. Look at the extreme span of the outcome of Orpoh forsaking Naomi and Rus clinging to her. Rus would bring about the lineage of Melech Hamoshiach, while Orpoh would give birth to Golyas.

Ch. 3, v. 7: וַיִּיטַב לִבּוֹ – Rashi says that his heart was gladdened because he toiled in Torah study. Boaz was in the main involved in agricultural pursuit, winnowing and storage of his grain. Nevertheless, even then his mind was on the study of Torah, and as expressed by Rashi, OSAK baTorah, he TOILED. How unfortunate is the person who not only doesn't think of Torah for even a fleeting moment when involved in business, but he even thinks about his business during the time he prays and studies Torah. (Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin)

Ch. 3, v. 13: לָ֔יְנִי –The Rokei'ach says that "night" mentioned here is an allusion to exile. He further adds that the letters of this word are the final letters of four exiles, Bo'veL, ModaI, YovoN, RomI.



C. 3, v. 15: הָבְּ֣י – This word has the numerical value of 17. Boaz alluded to Rus that she would have 17 generations of descendants who would be kings from the time of the building of the Beis Hamikdosh. (Rokei'ach)



Ch. 4, v. 22: וְעֹבֵ֔ד – This is the 85th and final verse of Rus. The numerical value of Boaz is 85. Every verse except 8 begins with the letter Vov. The eight exceptions teach us the greatness of Rus, the daughter of king Eglon, who left her nation and joined in marriage with Boaz, who was circumcised on the eighth day, and built the family from whom Melech haMoshiach will emerge, bb"a.



Pass or Fail By R' Ilan Meirov

When I was 18 years old, I had the zechus to go **to Rabbi Matisyahu Salamon's** house in Lakewood. While I was there, he discussed a very interesting topic. He asked the following question: " If someone comes over to you and asks you to do him or her a favour, would you say yes right away?" Even if it is your best friend, you wouldn't say yes right away. You would say, ' I would be more than happy to help you, but what do you want me to do?'

That is the logical way of conducting oneself. So, if that is the case, how could it be that when Hashem offered the Yidden the Torah, they said **נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע** straight away without knowing what was in it? They didn't use the principle of 'Think twice before you speak.' How did they agree to do something that they may not be able to keep?"

Reb Mattisyahu answers with a foundation in Jewish life. "If Hashem commands you to do something, He would give you the ability to do it. Hashem gave every single one of us the strength to elevate ourselves to the stature of a complete man."

8 Shavuos Practices of Rav Chaim Kanievsky zt"l by Rabbi Yair Hoffman

1. Rav Chaim zt"l did not put grasses, trees, or plants in his home nor in the Lederman shul on Shavuos. This was in accordance with the view of the Vilna Gaon (see Mishna Brurah 494:10).
2. Rav Chaim zt"l avoided getting a haircut on Erev Shavuos itself, because of the danger involved in letting blood that day. He was concerned
3. Rav Chaim zt"l stayed up all night on Shavuos and studied. (See MB 494:1)
4. After Chatzos, Rav Chaim zt"l would recite the tikkun leil shavuos.
5. After alos hashachar, and before shacharis Rav Chaim would immerse in the Mikvah. When the infirmities of age made this too difficult, he stopped.
6. He would have the Megillah of Rus read from a klaf and with a bracha.
7. He would consume milchigs in the morning seudah on Shavuos – without having meat in the same meal.
8. When he was able to do so, he would stand during the recitation of akdamus.

These halachos were culled from the Schroen Edition of the Siach Sifsosainu Shavuos Siddur written by Rav Lipa Israelson shlita, Rav Elyashiiv zt"l's grandson.

Milchigs on Shavuous - Rabbi Shloime Zalman Hoff Shlit'a



There are various reasons given as to why we have milchigs on Shavuous. I heard the following reason: In the haftarah of Re'eh, the *navi* proclaims: **הוֹי כָּל־צָמֵא לְכוּ לַמַּיִם וַאֲשֶׁר אֵין־לוֹ כֶּסֶף לְכוּ שִׁבְרוּ וֶאֱכֹלוּ וּלְכוּ שִׁבְרוּ בְּלוֹא־כֶסֶף וּבְלוֹא מְחִיר יַיִן וְחָלָב** *"Ho! Everyone who is thirsty, go to water, even one with no money, go, buy and eat; go and buy wine and milk without money and without price" (Yeshayahu 55:1).* Radak (ad loc) explains that water, wine, and **milk** are all metaphors for Torah and *chochmah*:

Water is a metaphor for Torah and for *chochmah*: just as it is impossible for the world [to survive] without water, so too, it is impossible for the world [to survive] without *chochmah;* and just as one who is thirsty yearns for water, so too, the rational soul yearns for Torah and for *chochmah*, as it is stated in the prophecy of Amos: *"not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of Hashem" (Amos 8:11) ...*

Torah is compared to wine, for just as wine gladdens the heart – as it is stated: *"wine gladdens the heart of man" (Tehilim 104:15)* – so too, words of Torah, as it is stated: *"the statutes of Hashem are upright, gladdening the heart" (ibid. 19:9).*

Torah is compared to milk, for just as milk sustains the nursing baby and enables it to grow, so too, words of Torah sustain the soul and enable it to grow.

To summarize: Torah is like water because it is necessary for survival; Torah is like wine because it gladdens the heart; and Torah is like milk because it promotes growth and development.

Also, the Torah is compared to milk, as the verse says, **דְּבַשׁ וְחָלָב תַּחַת לְשׁוֹנֵךְ** *"Like honey and milk [the Torah] lies under your tongue"* (Song of Songs 4:11).

Just as a mother's milk has enough nutrients to sustain her baby's entire body, so too, the Torah provides all the spiritual nourishment to nourish the human soul.

There is an amazing Gemarah [Eruvin 54b] that says:

"וְיַעֲלַת חֵן" — שֶׁמַּעֲלָת חֵן עַל לוֹמְדֶיהָ. "דַּדֶּיהָ יְרַוֻּךְ בְּכָל עֵת" — לָמָּה נִמְשְׁלוּ דִּבְרֵי תוֹרָה כְּדַד? מָה דַּד זֶה כָּל זְמַן שֶׁהַתִּינוֹק מְמַשְׁמֵשׁ בּוֹ — מוֹצֵא בּוֹ חָלָב, אַף דִּבְרֵי תוֹרָה, כָּל זְמַן שֶׁאָדָם הוֹגֶה בָּהֶן — מוֹצֵא בָּהֶן טַעַם

"And a graceful roe" *is expounded as follows:* ***That*** *the Torah* ***bestows grace upon those who study it. "Let a nursing mother satisfy you at all times"; why were matters of Torah compared to a nursing mother? Just as*** *with* ***a nursing mother, whenever a baby searches*** *for milk to suckle,* ***he finds milk in it, so*** *too, with* ***matters of Torah. Whenever a person meditates upon them, he finds*** *new* ***meaning in them.***

The more a child feeds from the mother, the more milk is produced. Similarly, the more a person thirsts for Torah, the more will become available!

Somebody once asked, that just like on erev Pesach we refrain from eating matzah so that we will have cheshek for it later, shouldn't we also refrain from learning Torah before Shavuous, so that it will have much more meaning?

Just as we mentioned above, Torah is compared to milk. The more a person learns, the more Torah will flow forth. However, if we stop learning chas v'sholom, the well of Torah could dry up!

Don't stop learning and enjoy the milchigs!

Rabbi Yaakov Galinsky – V'Higadeta

I once the went to visit **The Chazon Ish**. It was the year 1950, the year of Operation Magic Carpet - when almost 50,000 Yemenite Jews immigrated to Eretz Yisrael.

When I entered the room, I found the Chazon Ish pouring over an old sefer Torah -- in fact it looked ancient. It was opened on the table in front of him. He was so immersed in what he was doing he didn't notice I was there.

A long moment later, he raised his head, an expression of joy on his face and his eyes gleaming. I mustered the courage to ask, "Rebbe, what has made you so happy?"

"The Jews of Teiman have a mesorah, a tradition, that when the prophets warned that the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash was imminent, and the Jewish people would be exiled, their ancestors left Eretz Yisrael and emigrated to Yemen before the calamity struck.



Twenty-five hundred years ago they established a community in Yemen, and they took with them a Sefer Torah from Eretz Yisrael.

"Now they have returned, and they brought with them an old sefer Torah, whose mesorah can be traced back to the beginning of their settlement in Yemen from that first sefer Torah 2,500 years ago! I ask if I could see it, and they brought it to me. And look! Even though the Yemenite Jews were isolated from the rest of the community, it's exactly the same as every other sefer Torah, down to the letter.

"We are fortunate to have an unbroken chain of tradition passed down from the giving of the Torah at Har Sinai. If I had the strength I would stand up and dance with this sefer Torah!"

I was reminded of the Gemara's statement "Who is a heretic? Someone who says, 'Of what use are these rabbis to us? They can't permit us to eat a raven, nor forbid a dove. [since they can't make a ruling outside the dictates of the Torah]" (Sanhedrin 99b)

This is why we're so fortunate! We can boast that from the time the Torah was given to us at Har Sinai until today, that the raven is still prohibited, and the dove is still permitted!

The Chafetz Chaim used to say, "It's exciting to think that Moshe Rabbeinu wore the same tefillin that we do, that he observed the same Shabbos." The same torch is still burning, having been passed down from generation to generation from then until today!

A Brief History of Tikkun Leil Shavuot Rabbi Dr. Andrew Schein



One of the popular customs on Shavuot is to stay awake all night learning Torah. This custom is not mentioned in the Mishnah, the Gemara, by the Gaonim, the Rambam, the Tur, in the Shulchan Arukh (though see below) and by the Rama.

What is the basis for this custom and how did it develop? The Zohar (on Vayikra 23), which records that a select group of people, Hasidim, used to stay awake the night of Shavuot learning Torah in order that the bride

(the Shekhinah? the Jewish people?) would be adorned appropriately to meet the King (G-d) in the morning.

In Spain, in the 14th and 15th centuries it is possible that there were some individuals who stayed awake all night on Shavuot, but it was definitely not a common practice. R. David Abudraham (Spain, late 13th, early 14th century) in his book on prayers and customs, makes no mention of the custom even though he records in detail the prayers and customs of Shavuot.

In the 16th century there was a new stage in the development of the custom. In the beginning of the 1530s, R. Yosef Caro (1488-1575), a refugee from Spain and the future author of the Shulchan Arukh, was living in Turkey. On one Shavuot night (in 1530 or 1534), R. Caro studied with Shlomo Alkabetz (the composer of Lekhah Dodi.) Apparently, R. Caro was one of the individuals who knew of this custom to stay awake on Shavuot night, but he did not want to impose this custom on everybody and hence he left it out of the Bet Yosef and the Shulchan Arukh.

After R. Yosef Caro moved to Sefat (1537), the custom of learning all night on Shavuot became widespread in the town. R. Avraham Galanti (d. 1589) recorded that all the congregations in Sefat would gather on the night of Shavuot to stay awake and learn Torah until the morning when everybody would go to the mikveh and pray.

From Sefat, the custom spread to the Mediterranean basin, and from there northwards throughout Europe. Towards the end of the 17th century, the Magen Avraham (R. Avraham Gombiner, 1637-1683, Poland, Orah Chayyim 494) wrote that most scholars stayed up all night to study Torah. And a little bit afterwards, R. Yaakov Reischer (1661, Prague -1733, Metz) in his commentary on the Shulchan Arukh (Chok Yaakov, Orah Chayyim 494) noted that the custom had also spread to the general population.

There are several reasons why the custom spread. First, R. Caro was a great rabbi, and coupled with Rav Alkabetz's testimony concerning

his learning with R. Caro, knowledge of the custom became well known.

Secondly, in Sefat in the 16th century, it became popular to regularly arise at midnight to recite tikkun hazot, prayers to mourn the destruction of the Bet ha-Mikdash and to pray for its redemption. This custom was independent of staying awake on Shavuot night, but still, if one regularly practiced the tikkun hazot, then one would naturally be more inclined to stay awake on Shavuot night as well.

Thirdly, there developed the claim, which was attributed to the Ari (for example, see Mishnah Bruruah 494:1), that if a person stays awake the entire night and learns Torah throughout the night, then no harm will come upon the person in the following year. (The Ari was born in Jerusalem in 1534, came to Sefat to live in 1569 or early 1570, and died on July 15, 1572.)

There were two new developments with the spread of the custom to Europe. One, while the Magen Avraham's quotes the Zohar as the source for the custom, he suggested a new rationale for the custom. The Magen Avraham writes that the simple reason for the custom is to rectify a mistake of the generation who left Egypt who slept the night before G-d declared the Decalogue at Mount Sinai. This idea is based on the Midrash of Shir Hashirim (Chapter 1, 12:2), which records, "Israel slept all night, because the sleep of Shavuot is pleasant and the night is short. R. Judan said: Not a flea worried them. G-d came and found them sleeping, so He began to rouse them with trumpeters, as it says in Shemot 19:16, 'there were thunders and lightings'… It was for this that He taunted them through the mouth of Yeshayahu, in Isaiah 50:2."63

Meir Bar Ilan notes that this Midrash was known for generations, but prior to the Magen Avraham nobody had felt that there was a need to rectify this error by staying up all night. It seems that the Magen Avraham was looking for a new non-mystical reason for the

custom in order to replace or complement the mystical reason of the Zohar. This new reason also adds a new sin to the generation who were at Mount Sinai, which prompted Eliyahu Kitov to defend the Jews who left Egypt. He writes, "This is not a condemnation of the Jews of that generation- all of whom eagerly awaited hearing the Divine Word. They were however, physically weak, and they feared that they might lack sufficient strength for hearing the Divine teaching without sufficient rest the previous night….It is for this reason that also today not all stay awake during the night."

A second development concerns what is to be studied during the night. R. Moshe Cordovero (1522-1570, Sefat, Shlomo Alkabetz's brother-in-law) recorded a specific order of study, first sections of the Torah, then Nevi'im (Yechezkel), Ketuvim (Shir Hashirim, Ruth and Tehillim chapter 68), Mishnah (usually Pirkei Avot), the poem Azharot, and lastly, mostly Kabbalah.

This order was considered the appropriate study to adorn the bride based on the rationale of the custom in the Zohar. R. Isaiah Horowitz (1565, Prague -1630, Sefat, in the Shelah) slightly changed this order to briefly include all the books of Tanakh and the Talmud and other small variations. This basic order has remained until today as the official tikkun leil shavuot.

However, already by the end of the 17th century, R. Yaakov Reischer (Chok Yaakov 494) asserted that the official order was only for the "simple" people who did not know how to learn. This contention implies that people can learn what they choose. This explanation is incorrect historically since in Sefat everybody followed the official order, but it seems that for those of the non-kabbalistic bent, the official order was not sufficiently appreciated, and they wanted to study other subjects. Accordingly, the custom of staying awake on Shavuot night and studying Torah began as a kabbalistic practice and started to become popular in the 16th century. The custom was quickly accepted even amongst the non-kabbalistic population, but

for them a new non-mystical reason for the custom was proposed and the learning was changed from being a set order to being at each person's discretion.

21 Things the Torah is Compared To by Yehuda Shurpin



The Torah is multifaceted, and so it makes perfect sense that Scripture and the sages employed a range of metaphors to describe different aspects of the Torah. Below is a list of 21 things Torah is compared to.

1. Water

Perhaps the most common metaphor for the Torah is water. The verse states, "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come for water." The Talmud explains that water is a reference to Torah.

Another comparison: just as a fish cannot live out of the water, so too the Jewish nation cannot exist without the Torah.

2. Wine

Just as wine gladdens the heart, so too does learning Torah. And just as wine becomes better as it ages, so too the Torah that we learn and retain in our minds becomes more enhanced as time progresses.

3. Oil

The Torah brings light into the world like oil. Just as with olive oil, the more it is crushed the better it becomes, so too the more you go over any topic in Torah, the better your understanding becomes.

4. Light

The Torah is called light, for it enlightens the person regarding what he should do and brings light into the world.

5. Milk

Just as milk keeps best in cheap utensils and spoils quickly in silver or golden utensils, so too the Torah remains with humble people and is repelled by the arrogant.

6. Honey

In addition to the Torah being sweet like honey, it is significant that honey is made by bees. - Honey originates from a source that is spiritually impure, i.e., not kosher, yet after the product is developed, it is pure and fit for human consumption. Thus, Torah is compared to honey because of its power to elevate and purify even one who has fallen into a state of spiritual contamination.

7. Bread

Physical bread nourishes the body when it is ingested and absorbed within it, when it is transformed into one's own blood and flesh. Similarly, when the soul comprehends and joins with the Torah, the Torah then becomes food for the soul.

8. Fire

Scripture compares Torah to both fire and water (see above).

9. Bee

Just like a bee, whose honey is for its owner but it stings others, so too the Torah is sweet for those who learn it but stings those who transgress it.

10. Goad

Just as a goad (used to direct cattle) drives the ox to the field where it will produce life-sustaining food, so do the words of Torah direct those who study them to "the paths of life."

11. Wood

The Torah is likened to a tree, for just as a small piece of wood can ignite a large piece, minor Torah scholars can sharpen great Torah scholars and enable them to advance in their studies. As Rabbi Chanina said: "I have learned much from my teachers and even more from my friends, but from my students I have learned more than from all of them."

12. Fig Tree Unlike many other fruits, figs don't all ripen at the same time on a tree, and they need to be picked slowly day after day. So too Torah is acquired by learning it day by day.

13. Bird

Just as a bird has a sweet voice, so too the sound of Torah is sweet.

14. Nut

A nut has a hard shell on the outside and is softer on the inside. Likewise, the outer part of Torah is the doing of the mitzvahs, and the inside contains the multiple layers of meaning and ways of explaining the Torah.

15. A Loving Doe

Just as a doe is beloved by its mate at every moment, so too the Torah is beloved by those who learn it every moment just as the first time they learned.

16. Kings

Just as a king has the power of life and death, so too the Torah has in it the power of life and death.

17. Pillars

Just as pillars hold up a building, so too the Torah is the pillar that supports the world.

18. Fragrance

Just as one who enters a shop that sells fragrances leaves with a fragrant scent, so too, being around Torah learners will rub off a "sweet scent" onto you.

19. Rain

Just as a steady rain can erode a strong rock, so too Torah can soften the hardest of hearts.

20. Salt

The mystical aspects of the Torah are compared to salt, while the revealed aspects of the Torah are compared to bread and meat. Just as salt doesn't have much of a taste on its own, but gives taste to the meat and bread, so too the mystical aspects of the Torah may not always be fully comprehended, but they add taste and flavour to the rest of the Torah.

21. Sword

A sword, if you know how to use it, will not injure you. Likewise, if you know how to expound upon Torah, it will not cause you harm. But if you don't know the rules of how to expound upon it, but do so anyway, it can cause you harm.

Rebbetzin Chaya Sora Gertzulin

מִקְרֶה – coincidence. But we know that there are no coincidences in life. That all is בְּיַד ה' – in HaShem's hands. In fact, our rabbis teach that the word מִקְרֶה alludes to that very idea. The Hebrew letters of מִקְרֶה can be rearranged to form the phrase רַק מֵה' – meaning only from G-d.

While it may not always be visible to us, there is a reason and purpose for all that transpires. רַק מֵה' – It's all part of HaShem's master plan.

בס"ד

למודי משה

Klal Yisroel's Redeemers Can Be Born from Anyone



Megillas Rus begins with the narration that a man from Beis Lechem in Yehudah went to live in the fields of Moav, because of the famine in Eretz Yisroel. *Chazal* criticize this person for abandoning his people in their time of need and fleeing with his family to Moav.

When the *Megillah* first tells us of this person's departure, he is mentioned anonymously ('a man'). However, we do not remain guessing about his identity for very long. In the very next *pasuk* we are told that: **ושם האיש אלימלך** - "The name of the man is Elimelech".

The obvious question is, why not tell us in the first *pasuk* who he was? Why the mystery in the first *pasuk*, followed immediately by the revelation of his identity in the second *pasuk*? It is interesting that the very same type of sentence construction occurs in a different place in the Torah:

וילך איש מבית לוי ויקח את בת לוי - "And a man went from the house of Levi and he married the daughter of Levi" (*Shemos* 2:1). The Torah later identifies these mysterious individuals as Amram and Yocheved, the parents of Moshe. So, again, why the initial anonymity? Why not say straight out "And Amram went and married Yocheved"?

The *Baal HaTurim* in *Shemos* points out that these two places are the only times in *Tanach* where the Torah uses the expression "And

a man went" (**וילך איש**). The *Baal HaTurim* comments that the *pasuk* "A man went from the house of Levi" brought about the first redeemer (Moshe) and the *pasuk* "A man went from Beis Lechem Yehudah" led to the final redeemer (Moshiach – who will descend from Dovid HaMelech, a descendent of Rus).

The *Shemen HaTov* elaborates on this *Baal HaTurim*. The person who produces the redeemer can be an anonymous person. One does not need to be the great leader of his generation — an Amram or an Elimelech — to produce the Redeemer. Any Jew is capable of producing a child who will be the greatest personage in his generation and in fact a Redeemer.

One does not necessarily need to be great himself or have superior lineage or wealth or power. Any anonymous Jew can potentially produce the future leader of the Jewish people.

There's No Such Thing as Luck



The following insight is from the sefer Ikvei Erev written by Rav Azriel Langa, who was a *talmid* in the Mir Yeshiva in Europe. Rav Langa escaped through Shanghai with the rest of the Mir Yeshiva, came to America, and was a Rebbe in Yeshivas Torah VoDaas.

The *pasuk* in *Megillas* Rus says: **ויקר מקרה חלקת השדה לבעז אשר ממשפחת אלימלך** - "...and her fate made her happen upon a parcel of land, belonging to Boaz, who was of the family of Elimelech" (Rus 2:3). Rus and Naomi came back from Moav. They literally had nothing

to eat. Rus starts picking some *leket, shikcha* and *Peah* from a field belonging to Boaz.

The *pasuk* uses a very unusual expression to describe what happened. **ויקר מקרה** basically means "And it so happens (that she started picking in the field of Boaz)". We know the end of the story. We know that Boaz saw her. He was kind to her She told Naomi about it. Eventually Rus and Boaz married and they were the ancestors of Dovid HaMelech, from whom the righteous Moshiach will eventually descend.

This is not **ויקר מקרה**. This was not happenstance. This was all pre-ordained. The Ribbono Shel Olam wanted Rus to be the mother of royalty.

Therefore, out of all the fields that Rus could have chosen, the Ribbono Shel Olam directed her to the field of Boaz. So why then does the *pasuk* use the expression **ויקר מקרה** as if this was a lucky chance? This was not *mikreh* [happenstance]. This was *hashgacha protis* [divine providence] of the highest order! Hashem is orchestrating the advent of Moshiach!

The answer is that this is a lesson. The lesson is that what appears to us as happenstance (*mikreh*) just LOOKS like that. It LOOKS like a stroke of luck. However, it is not luck at all! It is all preordained and pre-planned.

Rabbi Langa writes from personal experience, "If a prophet would have predicted in Europe in 1930 that there would be a Holocaust in Europe and the entire student body of the Mir Yeshiva would manage to escape just in time, who would have believed him? Could anyone have predicted the amazing sequence of events and opportunities that enabled the salvation of the *talmidim* of the *yeshiva*?

(After the Soviets captured Eastern Poland including Vilna early in World War II, they planned to transfer Vilna to Lithuania. However, there was a window of opportunity prior to that transfer when travel

was possible between Poland and Vilna. The Mir Yeshiva and many others rushed from various parts of Poland to Vilna. After the Soviets transferred Vilna to Lithuania, travel between Vilna and Poland ceased. Anyone who was in Vilna was now in Lithuania and was at least temporarily out of harm's way.)

An amazing combination of permits and visas then enabled the escape of the Mir Yeshiva, which planted the seeds of Torah communities in America and Eretz Yisroel. Rav Shach, Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz, Rav Nochum Parchovitz, Rav Dovid Kronglass – all great future Torah leaders who were saved along with the Mir Yeshiva. Why?

They were saved, in part, through an amazing sequence of events that included the timing of both the opening of the gates between Poland and Lithuania and the transfer of Vilna to Lithuania.

If someone had predicted at the time that this political event would be a vital link in the chain that led to the salvation of Torah for Klal Yisroel, we might have dismissed him as delusional. Events might look like ordinary. They may look like "luck," however; they are *hashgacha protis*. The reason the *pasuk* in Rus uses these words is to tell us that regarding the history of Klal Yisroel – for good or for bad – nothing is "just a matter of luck".

שהחינו on Megilas Ruth

Rav Elyashiv asked why it is that we say a **שהחינו** when we read Megilas Ruth? All the Megilos that we read are not obligations of the individual but rather on the **ציבור**, just like the reading of Maftir and the Haftorah on Yom Tov, which of course there is no **שהחינו**. However, we do not have the authority to override the custom that the Vilna Gaon established.

Standing During the Reading of the עשרת הדיברות

Rav Elyashiv held that it was prohibited to follow the custom of standing during the reading of the Ten Commandments. The reason for his position was that by standing, we are acting as if this section of the Torah is holier, more special than the rest of the Torah. The Rav quoted Rambam who held that it was prohibited to stand for the reading of the Ten Commandments: "And so it is fitting that, in any place that the custom is to stand, it should be prevented from happening because it can result in a lessening of our belief principles. One could think that one section of the Torah is more important than another. Such a position is very severe, and all measures should be taken to block any opening that could result in such an evil belief. It is entirely wrong to give any precedence to one part of the Torah over any other part."

Similarly, the Rav's established custom was not to stand during the reading of the Thirteen Traits of Hashem on a public fast whether they were being read from the Torah or the congregation was repeating them.

During the period of Selichos in Elul, however, the Rav stood during every recital of the Thirteen Traits of Hashem. Almost always, the Rav received the aliyah for the Song at the Sea and the Ten Commandments, which meant, of course, that he was standing. One time, though, some else received the aliyah for the Song at the Sea, and the Rav remained seated during its recitation. The Rav was asked how one should behave when everyone in the shul does stand for these occasions since the general rule is that an individual is not allowed to change the public's custom.

The Rav answered that those who are standing are acting not according to halacha, and, therefore, one should not stand. Then, someone brought from Tractate Derech Eretz Raba (Chapter Seven) that one is not supposed to be sitting where others are standing.

The Rav answered that such situations are not dealing with standing that is not according to halacha.

It was suggested that one could stand from the beginning of the Torah reading and then not show that he has stood specifically for the **עשרת הדיברות** and, at the same time, he is following what the congregation is doing. The Rav answered that it is not necessary to look for ways out of the problem.

The Consolation to the Children of the Cohen Family from the Gaon and Tzaddik, Harav Avigdor Nebenzal, shlit"a



Twenty years ago, a school bus full of Jewish children was driving along a road near the Gaza Strip. Suddenly, a large roadside bomb exploded. Two children were killed, and many were injured, including three children of the Cohen family.

One of them, a six-year-old girl, lost both legs. But she did not lose her happy disposition. Her twelve-year old sister lost one foot, and became very sad, because she deeply understood the implications of her loss. Their nine-year-old brother lost one foot. He was fitted immediately with a prosthetic device and began walking.

I took upon myself to become involved in their rehabilitation. I brought the singer, Yehoram Gaon to sing for them, but instead of singing, he burst out crying, and his eyes poured out tears instead of melodies. I visited the three children often in Tel Hashomer Hospital and through the various stages of their hospitalization, and

I brought them toys to make them laugh, such as an electronic mouse that spoke English, and the like.

On one of my visits I said to them, "Tell me, children, what is the fanciest toy you would like? The young girl who had lost both legs said, "I want an electric car." I told her, "You will have it." I made a phone call to America, and in the course of time the electric car arrived. I asked the sad twelve-year-old, "what present are you ordering?" She answered, "a portable computer."

In those days it was a very expensive item, costing about $1,000. I phoned a friend in America, and he sent a portable computer (used). Afterwards I asked the nine-year-old boy, "and what do you want?" The boy, who in the meantime had already been fitted with an artificial foot, shouted, "I want a scooter, an electric scooter!" That too was a very expensive item in those days. I answered, "you will have it!!!" Again, I made a phone call to America, and the electric scooter arrived.

Then I turned to my teacher and rabbi, one of the tzaddikim of the generation, Harav Avigdor Nebenzal, shlita, with a question. "Your Honour, Rabbi, the Cohen children have received from me the most expensive toys. What is the biggest spiritual gift I can give them?"

Rav Nebenzal pondered, and then replied, "Tell the children that, be'ezrat Hashem, they will get their legs and feet back!"

I asked, "how?" He answered, "When the complete redemption comes, all the miracles that happened at Mt. Sinai will again occur to the Jewish People. As we know, in Egypt there were many Jews who, because of the cruel blows and torments of the Egyptians, had lost eyes, legs, and ears. But at Mt. Sinai, all of them were healed, for it is written, and all the people stood [on legs] …and all the people saw [even those who had been blind] the sounds [even those who had been deaf]. And all the people shouted [even those who had been mute], we shall do and we shall hear!

The Rabbi continued, "Ramban explains that at Mt. Sinai all the Jewish People became prophets — and a prophet, in order for the spirit of prophecy to rest upon him, must be one hundred percent healthy and whole. "So, when the complete redemption comes — soon — you, the Cohen children will also be prophets, and before that, Hashem will return your legs and feet."

When the children heard this, they were so happy! And I felt that those words from Rav Nebenzal were a bigger present to them than a portable computer, bigger than an electric car — even bigger than an electric scooter!

Staying Awake All Night on Shavuot by R. Ari Enkin



There is a widespread custom to remain awake all night on Shavuot immersed in Torah study. Zohar, Emor; Magen Avraham 494. The Arizal teaches that those who do so will live out all their allotted years and be saved from every trouble and woe. Sha'ar Hakavanot, Chag Hashavuot; Mishna Berura 494:1; Be'er Heitev, OC 494:7; Kaf Hachaim, OC 494:6. See also Pele Yoetz, s.v. "Atzeret." Although the custom of staying awake all night on Shavuot is certainly commendable, it might just be that it is overemphasized. This is especially true considering that observing this custom often results in a laxity in other, more important duties.

There are a number of other, often neglected halachic concerns with staying up all night, as well. For example, one must be very careful not to get distracted from one's Torah studies with idle talk and

certainly not gossip. Siddur Ya'avetz 175:11; Kaf Hachaim, OC 494:11; Pele Yoetz, s.v. "Atzeret."

So too, many of those who stay up all night are too busy catching up on sleep the next morning and neglect to eat the daytime yom tov meal before midday, which is to be preferred. Aruch Hashulchan, OC 288:2; Ohr L'tzion 3:18, n. 11. There are also halachic issues with eating and drinking as it gets closer to sunrise. The Brisker Rav, expressed his surprise that people are so particular to stay awake the entire night of Shavuot, which is a custom, while the halachic requirement to remain awake discussing the Exodus from Egypt on the Seder night until one is overcome by sleep is largely ignored. The custom of staying awake all night on Shavuot was not widely observed in Brisk.

It is also noted that those who choose to sleep at night on Shavuot can "make up" the time by studying that many hours on Shavuot day. Uvdot V'hanhagot L'beit Brisk vol. 2, p. 79, cited in She'eilat Shlomo 1:26–27, 222. See also the personal practice of Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, cited in the book Hashakdan, vol. 2, p. 240.

Make no mistake, this writer is not dismissing the custom of staying awake all night on Shavuot nor suggesting that those who regularly observe it cease doing so. This paper is merely intended to offer a contextual and historical perspective on the custom. Those who are unable to remain awake all night on Shavuot might want to consider remaining awake until midnight, or at least until a later hour than usual. Nitei Gavriel, Shavuot 14, n. 9. It is also meritorious to simply wake up at dawn and recite Shacharit at sunrise even if one must sleep most of the night beforehand. Ibid., 16:6. Every person should evaluate for himself each year whether or not it is worthwhile for him to remain awake on Shavuot night lest "his gain be offset by his loss." Avot 5:14, 15.



The Joy of Mattan Torah

Chazal (*Pesachim* 68:) say, "All authorities agree that one needs to enjoy himself on Shavuos because on this day the Torah was given to the Jewish nation." Rashi explains, "This means he should be happy with food and drink to show that he is happy with the Torah given on this day." Let us understand why we are so happy on Shavuos:

The Seder HaYom (*Shavuos*) writes, "One should be very happy on Shavuos because it's the day the Torah was given to Bnei Yisrael. The body should rejoice because one uses his body to study Torah and perform mitzvos. The *neshamah* also needs to rejoice, and the neshamah rejoices when it understands Torah. The neshamah enjoys learning Torah and keeping the mitzvos."

These words explain why we need to enjoy hearty meals on Shavuos and learn a lot of Torah. We make good meals because the body deserves to rejoice, for we use the body to serve the holy King of the world! The neshamah must also rejoice on this day. The neshamah delights when one studies Torah and performs mitzvos.

From the Chassidic Masters

וַיַּעֲמֹד הָעָם מֵרָחֹק "***The people remained far off***" (Shemos 20:18)

Even when a Jew is travelling away from the Almighty, he must still hear His voice and see the sounds. (***Rav Shmelke of Nikolsburg***)

Shavuos Is a Day of Happiness

The Shlah HaKadosh (18) writes, "One is obligated to be very happy on Shavuos because we receive the crown of Torah on this day."

A bachur once asked the **Chazon Ish**, "How can one be happy?" This bachur would often come to the Chazon Ish "to speak in learning" to discuss the topics he was studying in yeshiva. (Later in his life, he became a rosh yeshiva.) But apparently, he was going through a hard time and wanted to know the path to happiness.

The Chazon Ish responded, "Hashem chose us from among all the nations; He took us out of Mitzrayim and gave us His Torah. Think about these matters, and you will become happy."

The bachur replied, "I don't feel connected with these ideas."

The Chazon Ish replied, "But you should." These are the happiest thoughts and the ideas of joy we should always contemplate, especially on Shavuos, the day Hashem chose us to be His beloved nation. We receive an abundance of gashmiyos and ruchniyos from this day. The entire world is ours. We should rejoice immensely.

ויחן שם ישראל When *Bnei Yisrael* came to *Har Sinai* to receive the Torah, all the *shevatim* were unified as one, as the *pasuk* writes in singular form, **ויחן שם ישראל** , *and Yisrael camped there*, **כאיש אחד בלב אחד** , *like one man with one heart*. Through this merit, our forefathers were able to receive the Torah.

Rabbi Yitzchak m'Vorka zl (1779–1848) says that the route of the word **ויחן** is **חן** - ***favour.*** No one person is absolutely perfect. Everybody has their shortcomings and chesronos. However, if we ignore these issues and concentrate only on a persons **חן**, then this will bring us to have true unity!

Growth in Torah

Reb Menachem Rikanti zt'l yearned and pined to know Torah. For this purpose, he fasted many days and he davened a lot. However, he was born with a weak mind, and he wasn't succeeding in Torah. But he never gave up. He continued to fast, daven, and try. When he was in his eighties, he had a dream that an elderly person gave him a cup of water and told him to drink it, which he did. In the morning, he was a new person. His heart was open to understanding Torah, and within a year or two he wrote his holy sefarim.

The Chazon Ish zt'l taught that we shouldn't lose hope on a child's ability to grow in Torah.



The Chazon Ish explained that when his grandmothers lit the Shabbos lecht, they davened that their descendants should succeed in Torah. And the moment these tefillos will be answered, everything will turn around.

The Chazon Ish said that a person can cross the street, and when he began crossing the street, he had a weak mind, and when he reached the other side of the road, he is wise, sharp, and he can understand Torah because that was the moment that the tefillos were answered.

R' Yehuda Zev Segal ZT"L (Manchester Rosh Yeshiva) would say: "Decorating the shul with flowers for Shavuos is a nice custom, but a person must "decorate" himself as well. This can be done only by accepting the Torah and studying Torah."

The Chasan & Kalloh

The Pela Yoetz (*Atzeres*) writes, "How good it is to pour out your heart [before Hashem on Shavuos] that your children should earn the crown of Torah, **ללמוד וללמד לשמור ולעשות**, that they will learn Torah teach it, and keep the Torah."

On Shavuos, Hashem gives us many brachos, but it is up to each individual to take advantage of it. If we don't devote ourselves to Torah study, we won't discover the treasure Hashem gave us. Shavuos is a chasunah between the Jewish nation and the Torah. Who among the Jewish nation can be called the chasan? Those who continue learning Torah after Shavuos, they are the chasan.

Before Shavuos, everyone takes haircuts, cuts their nails, and they put on new clothing. They want to be the *chasan* but they mustn't forget that without the *kallah*, which is the Torah, they don't have anything, at all.

Annual Mattan Torah



The Torah was given in the year 2448. Nevertheless, on Shavuos we aren't only celebrating the gift we received 3334 years ago. On Shavuos we celebrate that Hashem gives us the Torah again because each year, there is another matan Torah.

Birchas haTorah is written in the present tense. We praise Hashem **נותן התורה** "Who gives the Torah." Why don't we say **נתן התורה** "Who *gave* us the Torah"?

The Ta'z (*Orach Chaim* 47:5) elaborates, "It seems to me that **נותן התורה**, 'Hashem *gives* the Torah' implies that Hashem gives us the Torah even in the present. We don't say **נתן התורה**, that Hashem *gave* us the Torah in the past. Hashem is always giving us His Torah, each day anew."

The holy sefarim tell us that this is how it is with all the yomim tovim. They aren't solely commemorations of past miracles, rather, the miracles and the salvations of the past repeat themselves each year. And each year, Hashem gives us the Torah again.

The Aruch HaShulchan (284) writes that this is true with all episodes mentioned in Tanach. The stories discussed there, which happened thousands of years ago, on a certain level, reoccur every year. I think the explanation is as follows:

When the Torah writes stories that happened years ago, it appears that it is without any purpose. But the truth is that what occurred in the past continues to happen in the present.

One example is *yetzias Mitzrayim*. We are obligated to imagine ourselves leaving Mitzrayim in every generation, including our generation. This is because *yetzias Mitzrayim* continues to occur. Similarly, when Navi tells a story of the past, it continues to occur.

This is the *segulah* of the holy Torah. Therefore, we say, the episodes of the history, **לא ישוב ריקם** aren't irrelevant in today's world. They continue to this day."

As the Meor Einayim teaches: Every year, on Pesach, Hashem redeems us from tumah. On Shavuos, Hashem grants us *sechel* (wisdom) on how to serve Him. On Purim, Hashem saves us from our enemies, and on Chanukah, Hashem enables us to remain strong with our religion.

The miracles and the episodes of the past repeat themselves annually. The Machatzis HaShekel says, "It is known that whatever

happened to our forefathers happens again, in the present, when that time of year arrives."

Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l* quotes this *Machatzis HaShekel* as an indication that every year on Shavuos, there is a *kabbalas haTorah*. On Shavuos, we aren't only commemorating the past. Each year, we accept the Torah again!

Aseres HaDibros



The Shevet Mussar (34:19) discusses what one should have in mind when hearing the Torah being read in beis midrash. He is referring to *Krias Hatorah* the entire year, not only when one hears the Torah on Shavuos morning.

He writes, "Imagine that the *bimah* is Har Sinai and that you are receiving the Torah from Har Sinai. Hakadosh Baruch Hu and His *malachim* are present, and Moshe Rabbeinu is the *baal koreh*. The entire nation is standing around Har Sinai to hear Torah from his mouth."

This imagery is also discussed in *Shulchan Aruch* (Orach Chaim 146:4). There, it states that there are opinions that one should stand while listening to the Torah reading, and the *Mishnah Berurah* (141:19) explains, "According to halachah, one is permitted to sit, but the Maharam said that it is proper to stand. This is because when one hears the reading of the Torah, one should imagine that he is hearing it from Har Sinai, and at Har Sinai all Yidden stood."

From these sources we derive that when we hear the Torah reading in beis midrash, it should seem like we are receiving the Torah on

Har Sinai. We should imagine that we are receiving the Aseres HaDibros. The Midrash (*Psikta* 12, *Yalkut Shimoni Yisro* 271) states, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu says to the Jewish nation, 'My children read this *parashah* [of *matan Torah*] each year and I will consider it as though you stood before Me on Mount Sinai and received the Torah." We see that when we read the Aseres HaDibros, it is counted as if we heard it from Har Sinai. It is like experiencing matan Torah once again.

Mattan Torah

Mattan Torah is called a chasunah (*Taanis* 26: based on the Pasuk *Shir HaShirim* 3:11, **יום חתונתו**. Therefore, many customs of a *chasunah* resemble *mattan Torah*.

Shavuos morning, at Shacharis, someone fell asleep because he

was tired after an entire night studying Torah. When he woke up, Reb Chaim Brim asked him, "Did you ever see a *chasan* sleeping as he stood under the *chuppah*?"

Tikun Leil Shavuos

Reb Shalom Ber of Lubavitz *zt'l* writes that he has a note handwritten by his grandfather, the **Tzemech Tzedek *zt'l***, with the following notation:

"I guarantee that whoever stays awake all Shavuos night and studies Torah will merit the crown of Torah."

So, one of the benefits of remaining awake and studying Torah this night is that it is mesugal that you will love Torah, and you will merit knowing it and attaining the crown of Torah.

L'Maaseh

Rav Shlomo Halberstam, the Bobover Rebbe, zt"l, would relate this story. Rav Abishel of Frankfurt had a Gemara in his possession that was quite special. On one side of the page was an explanation on a particular Tosafos that he had acquired in a very unusual way, and this is the story behind it:





One year before Shavuos, the city of Frankfurt had a shortage of meat. For some reason, every animal that was Shechted in honor of Yom Tov was found to be Treif. In order to meet the demand for meat, it was decided to send the butcher to a nearby city to purchase meat. Since the butcher was not considered to be very pious, a respectable Shochet went along on the trip to ensure that only Glatt Kosher meat of the highest standard was purchased. The two men hired a wagon and set off. In the middle of the night, however, the butcher suddenly became extremely hungry. He insisted on stopping the wagon and search for water for Netilas Yadayim, as there wasn't any water in the wagon, and he was famished.

The Shochet assured the butcher that under the circumstances, he was permitted to eat bread without washing his hands, as it would be extremely dangerous to leave the wagon in the middle of a dense forest, especially in the pitch blackness.

Although the butcher was not the most learned of men, he refused to accept the Shochet's "ruling," as he was very scrupulous about this particular Mitzvah, and he refused to eat without washing.

Disregarding the Shochet's protests, he jumped out of the wagon and took off to look for water. Fifteen minutes later, the Shochet heard the most terrifying screams in the distance, followed by complete silence.

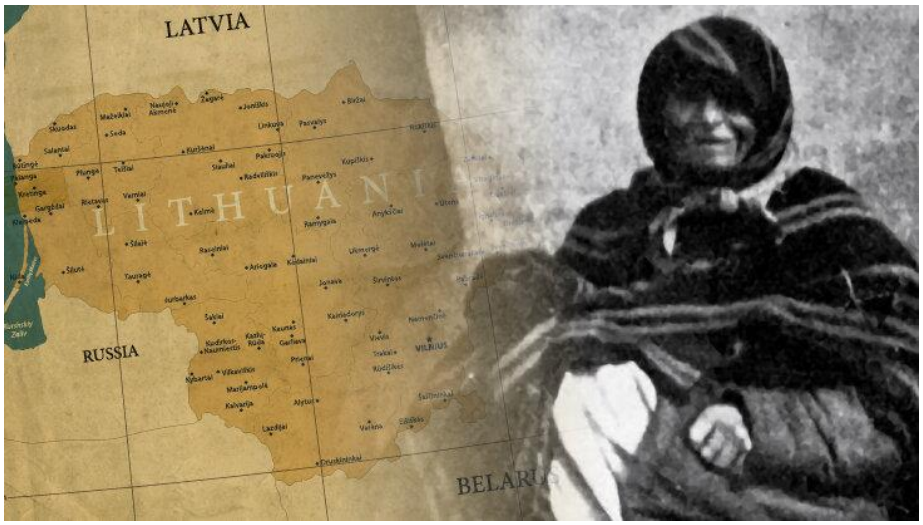
After a while, he realized that the butcher wasn't coming back. Apparently, he had been murdered by robbers who lurked in the forest and hunted those who were passing through. The residents of Frankfurt were not yet aware of what had happened, and that night, Rav Abishel was in the middle of learning, when suddenly, the butcher appeared before him. He said, "I am coming from the next world. Unfortunately, I have many Aveiros that are preventing me from entering Gan Eden. I am even being punished for endangering my life by leaving the wagon in the middle of the night in search of water for Netilas Yadayim. However, there is one Malach who is coming to my defense before the Heavenly Court, pleading that I was Moser Nefesh, as I gave up my life for the Mitzvah. The Bais Din Shel Maalah therefore decided that you will be the one to decide whether I was Moser Nefesh or not."

Rav Abishel replied, "I don't believe that you are really coming from the next world. The only way you can convince me is if you bring proof. Right now, I am learning an extremely difficult Tosafos. If you are truly coming from Shamayim, go back up and ask the Baalei HaTosafos themselves for the explanation."

An hour went by, and the butcher reappeared. He apologized for the delay and explained that because he had never learned Tosafos during his lifetime, it took time for him to understand what the Baalei HaTosafos were saying. This was the explanation Rav Abishel wrote in his Gemara, as he heard it from the butcher.

The Bobover Rebbe would like to relate this story, because he had personally seen the Gemara with the written explanation that came directly from the Baalei HaTosafos in Shamayim!

The Mass Expulsion of Jews From Lithuania During Shavuot 1915 by Larry Domnitch Aish.com



One of the largest single expulsions of Jews since Roman times occurred in May 1915.

The First World War was a time of tragedy, trial and tribulation for world Jewry. In May 1915, during the holiday of Shavuot, one of the largest single expulsions of Jews since Roman times was executed. Over 200,000 Jews in Lithuania and Courland (Latvia) were abruptly forced from their homes into dire circumstances.

With the advance of the German army on the Eastern front in the spring of 1915, retreating Russian forces vented their fury against the Jews and blamed them for their defeats. They levelled spurious accusations of treason and spying for the enemy and sought to prevent contact between Jews and German forces by expelling Jews near the war front. Throughout the provinces of Poland multitudes of Jews were expelled. Many also fled from their homes in fear of pogroms.

By late March, German forces approached Lithuania as Russian forces continued their retreat. On May 11, at the town of Kuzhi, the local Jews were accused of hiding German troops in their homes prior to a German attack in that town. Proofs were brought following an investigation by three members of the Duma (Russian Parliament) that the charges were absurd and false. But the accusations had already spread throughout Russia via newspaper reports and became

another pretext to persecute Russian Jewry. The mass expulsion from Lithuania soon commenced.

While preparing for the upcoming Shavuot holiday, notices appeared calling for the Jews living in areas closer to the war front to leave their homes over the next two days. Many notices gave them 24 hours or less.

Ordered to move eastward, Lithuanian Jewry, whose legacy goes back of hundreds of years, made a hasty exit in just a few days. Even the sick and the infirmed were included in the decree. Those who did not comply faced execution.

With the evening of Shavuot, May 18th, approaching, multitudes of Jews headed out into an environment of unknown perils in a desperate search for refuge. Out in the open fields and roads facing numerous dangers, they recited Kiddush over wine and organized *minyanim* for the holiday prayers.

In Courland, Jews faced a similar fate, although the expulsion was enforced a day or two later.

As the exodus commenced from the town of Keidan, according to one eye-witness, "People bid farewell. On their last night in Keidan, they slept on their bundles as cannon fire shook the walls or their homes." Thirty carts filled with men, women, and children headed towards the city of Homel. From there they would be forced further East.

A Jewish military physician watched as hundreds of Jews of the town of Keidan hastily gathered their belongings. In shock and despair, he asked them why they were being expelled. They responded, "Because we are Jews!" With tears in his eyes he replied. "I risk my head for them, and they exile my brothers." Such was the case for so many Russian Jews who valiantly served in the Tsar's army while their families faced persecution.

In the town of Ponevezh, "There was real pandemonium. Household goods, hurriedly bundled into bags, tablecloths, baskets, trunks -

everything was jumbled together. Children lost their parents, who frantically raced around, searching for them; the wails of children, the groans of the sick, wailing, shouting. They had brought the residents of the alms-house. Blind old men with shaking hands, stricken by paralysis, old women with knapsacks... The fatally ill were laid on pitiful rags at the very roadbed." The Ponevezh alms-house had been home to 43 elderly people. The youngest of them was 67, the oldest 97. Jewish communities aided refugees arriving at their towns, giving food, lodging, and sometimes employment. The *Yekapo* organization, an abbreviation for the "Jewish Community Relief War Victims" would wait at train stations and other locations to offer aid. Sometimes, the very communities assisting the refugees would soon become refugees themselves, forced out by the same decree.

Some exiles went to Vilna, where there was no expulsion. One rabbi described the reaction of the Vilna community to their arrival, "It was the first day of Shavuot and the Jews of Vilna went to synagogue not knowing that the first train with all those expelled had already arrived. Notwithstanding that it was a holy day, meeting places where quickly organized and each Jewish family of Vilna was required to bring something edible… In the course of two hours, thousands of kilograms of bread, sugar, meat, cheese, eggs, boiled meat and herring were collected."

The expulsion decree did not last. Soon after, commander in chief of the Russian armies, Nikolai Nikolayevich, told his commanders to stop the mass expulsions of Jews. The local economy had been damaged and the image of Russia had suffered as well. He proposed that Jews should be expelled only from one specific place at a time in "unusual cases".

The long-term impact of the expulsion was significant. With the dismantling of Jewish communities, the religious life of Russian Jewry markedly declined. The religious institutions that are the

lifeline of the community – the *cheder* (Jewish school), the mikveh, the synagogue and the yeshiva – were diminished by the massive sudden dislodging of Lithuanian Jewry. Jewish life in Russia would never be the same.

Due to the severity of the expulsions, the Pale Settlement which forcibly confined Russia's Jews since the end of the 18th century officially ended with a decree in August 1915, allowing Jews to move to Eastern Russia. The intention was not to free the Jews from the confinement of the Pale but to keep them out of the proximity of the war front due to irrational suspicions of Jewish disloyalty.



Jewish burial near the Galician theatre of war, 1915

In one small vacant Lithuanian synagogue on the first day of Shavuot, Jewish refugees had gathered to pray. According to an eye-witness account of the expulsion, as recorded in the book, *Milchomo Shtoib* (War Dust), the Rabbi of the town of Shavel, the eminent Rabi Meir Atlas, arose and stood before the shocked

and traumatized group and offered the following consoling words: "Children, it will pass. Thousands of years of pain and suffering have already passed. This is the will of G-d. And now, let us say *Hallel.*

May the memories of the righteous who endured and suffered on Shavuot 1915 be for a blessing.

Ruth and Orpoh

וַתִּשַּׁק עָרְפָּה לַחֲמוֹתָהּ וְרוּת דָּבְקָה בָּהּ"And Orpoh kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth cleaved to her." (Ruth 1:14)



The initial difference between Orpoh and Ruth was very slight, barely discernible. Both women accompanied Naomi at the outset of her journey home, both were keen to remain with her and both of them withstood her first attempt to persuade them to return. They both stated categorically, ***"But we will return with you to your people***". (1:10)

Naomi, complying with the laws of conversion, which demand two further attempts to dissuade the prospective ger from going through with the conversion, made a second attempt. At first, the reaction of Ruth and Orpoh was again the same. They both broke into sobs, and it is then that the posuk writes "And Orpoh kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth cleaved to her". The difference between

them seems barely discernible, yet it conveys two vastly contrasting characters. The deep contrast between them only emerges in the following pesukim.

Orpoh kissed her mother-in-law, a sign of fondness, a sign of love, a sign that she felt a close affinity to Naomi and that she was perfectly willing to accompany her. "But Ruth cleaved to her." Orpoh was not averse to returning to her land – Ruth was determined to go all the way. She had made her decision and there was no going back.

It was that unwavering determination that underlined Ruth's character and turned her into one of the greatest women in Jewish history, the greatest of all geyrim, who had the z'chus not only to become the Mother of the royal family of David ha'Melech, but to sit next to her great-great-grandson Sh'lomoh ha'Melech on a throne that he specially had made for her. Orpoh was lacking neither in goodwill nor in keenness. What she did lack however, was Ruth's determination.

That is why she was able to turn her back on Naomi and all that she represented. She returned "***to her people and to her god***" (1:15). "If she is able to leave me and go back to Mo'ov," Naomi predicted, "she will have no qualms about returning to her gods – she will revert to her idolatrous way of life." And indeed, Chazal inform us that that very same night, she reverted to her former immoral ways.

Ruth and Orpoh were at one stage on a very similar level of righteousness. But Ruth's determination led her to go from strength to strength, to rise in sanctity, while Orpoh's lack of determination allowed her to drop from one level of tum'ah to another. Like two paths that begin at the same point and move apart at a very slight angle, the two women began with a comparable potential for greatness but ended up "miles" apart.

No wonder Ruth became the mother of the Jewish Royal Family, whereas Orpoh became the mother of Goliath and his three brothers. And that is what prompted R. Yitzchak (Sotoh 42b) to

write: 'Let the children of the one who kissed come and fall into the hands of the one who cleaved' (Goliath into the hands of David).

Now or Never



The Ma'aseh la'Melech (at the beginning of Parshas Vayeishev) quoting the **Chofetz Chayim**, explains how the entire lineage of Malchus Beis Dovid depended upon the z'rizus (the alacrity) of Bo'az.

The moment Naomi and Rus indicated that the time was ripe to take action, he took matters in hand, organized the meeting in Beis-din with P'loni Almoni, completed the sale of Naomi's property and went on to perform Yibum with Rus - all within twenty-four hours (as Naomi had predicted he would).

Chazal inform us that on that same night Bo'az died.

Now imagine what would have happened had Bo'az delayed by as much as a day - or even a few hours. There would have been no Oved, Dovid's grandfather and ultimately no Malchus Beis Dovid!

Who would have thought that 'Z'rizim makdimin le'mitzvos' could be as crucial as that?

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer would say about **Rav Shach** and how much he loved learning *Torah*: "Rav Shach is so immersed in his learning, that if you would be able to see inside Rav Shach's veins, you would not see blood flowing there— you would see *Rashbas* and Rav Akiva Eigers!"

Rabbi Eli Mansour



Shavuos is famously known, among other things, as the Yahrtzeit of King David. Less known is the fact that the second day of Shabuot marks the Yahrtzeit of another very important, and inspiring, Jewish figure.

A young man named Valentin belonged to the prominent Pototzki family in Poland, a fabulously wealthy family of devout Catholics who owned the spectacular Lancut Castle. Valentin traveled from Poland to Paris to study in a seminary, aspiring to become a minister. But while in Paris, he happened to come across an elderly Jew whose eyes were practically glued to the pages of a certain book. Valentin was struck by the man's devotion to his studies, and so he approached the man, inquired about what he was reading, and discovered, for the first time, the Jewish religion. This encounter triggered a lengthy, unlikely process which culminated – remarkably – in Valentin's conversion to Judaism.

His family, naturally, was shocked, and mortified, upon hearing the news. Valentin was summoned back to Poland, and sharply reprimanded by his family. They brought leading Catholic figures to speak to him and try to change his mind and return to Catholicism, but he refused. They offered him great wealth if he returned and threatened to leave him with nothing if he remained a Jew.

"No matter what you offer me," Valentin said, "I am remaining a Jew. I have found the truth, and it is worth more than anything."

Finally, Valentin was threatened with death. He heroically accepted his fate, rather than give up his new belief and lifestyle.

On the second day of Shabuot, 5509 (1749), Valentin – whose name had been changed to Abraham – was tortured to death and burned.

The Chafetz Chaim, who lived over a century later, reportedly said that if ten Jewish men had been present at his execution and recited Kaddish, Mashiah would have come!

It is not coincidental that Abraham's execution occurred on Shabuot – the time when we read the story of another great person who gave up everything to become a Jew. Rut belonged to the family of the king of Moav, enjoying regal wealth, luxury and prestige, and she married into a wealthy, aristocratic Jewish family that had emigrated to Moab. After the tragic death of her husband and father-in-law, she could have very easily returned home to her life of royalty.

But instead, she decided to join her mother-in-law, Naomi, and go to Eretz Yisrael and embrace Torah, even though this meant subjecting herself to abject poverty. Upon returning to Eretz Yisrael, Naomi and Rut did not even have food to eat, and Rut had to collect gleanings from Boaz's field just so that she and her mother-in-law would not starve to death. This is what Rut endured for the sake of joining Am Yisrael and committing herself to a life of Torah observance.

On Shabuot we also recall another famous convert. The Torah reading on the first day of Shabuot comes from Parashat Yitro – which is named after the priest of Midyan who sacrificed his life of wealth and fame in order to join Beneh Yisrael in the desert. Like Rut and Valentin Pototzki, he was willing to give up everything for the sake of Torah.

As we celebrate Matan Torah on Shabuot, we must stop to reflect upon the priceless treasure which we have been privileged to receive. The stories of Yitro, Rut and Valentin remind us of just how incalculably precious the Torah is, that nothing we can possibly have in this word will ever come anywhere close to the value of Torah.

Often, we complain about the difficulties entailed in religious observance. The prices of kosher food, the cost of Torah education,

the loss of profit on Shabbat and Yom Tob, the inconvenience of praying three times a day – these, among many other things, make Torah life challenging. But the stories told above should put all these challenges in perspective, and reinforce our firm belief that what we gain by learning and observing the Torah far outweighs the costs and inconveniences.

The Gemara (Shabbat 88b) relates that at the time the Torah was given, the angels in heaven protested, insisting that something as precious as the Torah must remain with them. But they were wrong. The Torah belongs to us, the Jewish People. We are so beloved by Hashem that He gave us this precious treasure – which even the heavenly angels want but cannot have.

One of my Rabbis in high school would tell the class, "Boys, you have won the lottery of life!" The Torah is more precious than anything we could ever have – and Shabuot is the time to reflect upon the great privilege we have been given, the ability to study and live by Hashem's Torah.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman - Torah Wellsprings

If He Can…

Reb Leibele Eiger taught that out of all the potential things to precede the giving of the Torah, the Torah tells us about Yisro joining Klal, Yisroel. Was there nothing else more fitting?

The lesson for us is that Yisro who was an idolator and even a leader of idolators, serving as their priest nevertheless was able to leave his past and become a servant of Hashem.

The Jewish People, who are Hashems chosen nation certainly have potential to draw close to Hashem Despite what we may have done in the past.

The "Countdown" to Chag HaShavuos Begins

As we approach Chag HaShavuos, we must try to recapture the spark that we felt at Har Sinai so many years ago, so we can experience our own "Kabbolas HaTorah" this year as well. Here is a wonderful vort from the **Kotzker Rebbe zt"l** who said the following: The Ribono shel Olam chose Har Sinai upon which to give the Torah, for it was the lowest of the mountains. Why didn't Hashem simply choose a valley in which to give the Torah? That is a low place, surely it would demonstrate the humility needed for the Torah!

Explains the Kotzker, to be considered an 'undistinguished' valley and not boast about it, is not a remarkable characteristic. But if one is considered a 'mountain' possessing the same virtues and distinctions of which others boast, and yet does not behave with conceit and vanity - that is considered extraordinary humility!

Overslept

We all know the Jews woke up late on the morning of Kabolas HaTorah. That is one reason we stay up all night, lest we "re-enact" that episode.

However, the Pirkei D'Reb Eliezer states that it was HaKadosh Boruch Hu's intention that we experience such an event. This is to instil in us the ability to learn Torah in a state of hurry and tumult. We cannot always plan our learning with calmness. Things happen, schedules change, and if we were to wait for the "right moment" to learn, it might never come (Pirkei Avos 2:5). Thus, we must be ready to learn at a moment's notice, when things are hectic, or when an opportunity presents itself that we did not plan for.

Maaseh avos siman l'banim – just as they were able to wake with a start and run to learn, we can too.

Torah Tavlin



R' Shraga Feivel Schiff shlit'a (Menahel Bais Shraga) would say: - *'When the Jewish people sit, and busy themselves with the joys of Torah, the Holy One Blessed be He, says to all his heavenly hosts: 'Look at at my beloved children as they forget their own sufferings and become immersed in my delight.'*

We forget our pain and suffering and learn Torah - what is the pain of sitting and learning Torah? Chazal tell us that from the time of Moshe Rabbeinu until Rabban Gamliel, people did not learn Torah except while standing; when Rabban Gamliel died, sickness came into the world, and they learned Torah sitting down. Hashem is now praising us, the Jewish people, that we forget our pain of sitting and delve in the Torah of Hashem."

טוֹב לִי תּוֹרַת פִּיךָ מֵאַלְפֵי זָהָב וָכָסֶף Tehilim 119:72

One year, during the Yom Tov of Shavuos, the bochurim in Yeshivas Ner Yisroel were singing with enormous enthusiasm, **טוֹב לִי תּוֹרַת פִּיךָ מֵאַלְפֵי זָהָב וָכָסֶף** - (Torah from Your mouth is better for me than thousands of pieces of gold and silver).

In Tehillim, these words ring out and on Shavuos the students and faculty were not only filled with this feeling but demonstrated as much with their dancing and singing.

The day after Shavuos, **R' Dovid Kronglas zt"l**, gave a shmuess in the Beis Medrash. He shook his head as he recalled the previous day's enthusiasm and asked, "What was so special about these words of Dovid Hamelech? All he said was that the Torah that emanated

from Hashem is more valuable than gold and silver. Well, of course it is! Don't yeshivah boys feel the same way? Weren't you all singing it with tremendous enthusiasm just yesterday, on Shavuos?"

"The difference," pointed out R' Dovid, "is that King David did not these words on Shavuos. He said them on an ordinary weekday. They are not reserved for special holidays! No, these words apply when one can make thousands in gold and silver. In other words, when you have the opportunity to make the big money - millions and millions - and you trade it in for Torah from the mouth of Hashem - then your statement reaches an entirely different level."

One Crown or Two - Harav Avrohom Hecksher



Every king or queen has just one crown on their head- there is no need for two. And yet, when the Yidden said **נעשה ונשמע**, they each received from the **מלאכים** 2 crowns- one for **נעשה** and one for **נשמע**. Why was one crown not enough?

Lots has been said and written about the importance of **אחדות**. The Yidden are not individuals but rather all part of one big, united family; one team, one **קהילה**. And that is so true. But some people, sometimes, perhaps misunderstand that to mean that each single person has no individual importance, no value, no **חשיבות**. They think that we are only worth something as one collective unit, but me as an individual, little me, I'm really not so important.

That's a HUGE mistake! Yes, we join together to make one big strong collective family unit, the precious family of **כלל ישראל**, but on the

other hand, each individual member of this family is so important and **חשוב** as an individual.

נעשה refers to the action- doing the **מצוה**. In this aspect, everyone is the same. We all eat the same **מצה**, hear the same type of **שופר**, shake the same type of **לולב**. We are all one unit, doing the same thing. But **נשמע** refers to the understanding behind the mitzva, the thought, the preparations, the excitement and the thrill. In this respect, everyone is is different, everyone is individual, every person unique.

When the **מלאכים** gave each Yid 2 crowns -one for **נעשה** and one for **נשמע** - they were teaching us a tremendous lesson. Every Yid is important both as a member of the **כלל**, and also as an individual. Everyone is unique, important, special, and precious. [**שם משמואל**]

That's also why the Yidden are compared both to the stars in the sky and the sand on the beach. Each grain of sand is worthless, unimportant, and weak. The strength, power and importance of sand lies only in their collective state. When there are millions of grains of sand together, then as a unit they can act as a barrier to the waves of the sea.

Stars on the other hand are so different. There are millions of stars, but each and every one is a planet on its own. Each one is big, mighty, and powerful, and plays an important part in **בריאת העולם**.

Each person reading this - man or woman, adult or child - each one of you is part of a family, part of a class, part of a school, part of a community, part of a **קהילה**. But besides for that, each one of you is important as a **יחיד**, an individual, a **בן יחיד** or **בת יחידה** to the **בורא עולם**. And each one as an individual has a unique and important **תפקיד** to fulfil in this world.

Think about this, internalise understand it, and then you will truly worthy of putting not one, but **two** crowns on your head!

L'Maaseh



When **R' Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt"l**, Rosh Yeshivah of Mir, first arrived in Eretz Yisroel, he slept at the home of **R' Leizer Yudel Finkel zt"l**, his uncle and Rosh Yeshivah, where he had an excellent opportunity to observe his uncle's saintly ways. R' Nosson Tzvi told his talmidim that he rarely ever saw R' Leizer Yudel waking up in the morning. He was always up early learning Torah. But early one morning, he finally merited seeing his uncle start his day.



Getting out of bed, R' Leizer Yudel went over to his bookshelf and lovingly extended his arms over the whole Shas on the shelves. He passionately kissed their worn covers and begged Hashem to inspire him to study Torah and teach it to others.

R' Nosson Tzvi said over in his own words the story of when he first came to the Mir. "At the time, my name was Nate. I was a tall and lanky kid wearing a Chicago Cubs baseball cap and was exhausted from the trip. It was well over 24 hours since I left Chicago O'Hare Airport. I was anxious to get settled and get a good night sleep.

I was related to the Rosh Yeshivah, R' Leizer Yudel, and relieved to see him coming down the corridor. I greeted him with a smile and Shalom Aleichem. But his response surprised me: 'So tell me a Chiddush on what you've been learning.'

"I couldn't believe it. Couldn't the entrance exam wait until the morning? As it was, I was coming from Arie Crown Day School in

Chicago. The level of learning in the Mir was certainly quite a jump from my high school. 'I don't really have a Chiddush,' I said. The Rosh Yeshivah looked at me and instead of inviting me into his apartment, directed me to the Beis Medrash. 'Don't Come back until you have a Chiddush,' he told me.

I felt like crying, I could not believe this was happening. Slowly I walked up the steps, sat down on one of the benches and stared blankly at the pages of the Gemara. "A half hour passed and once again I went down to R' Leizer Yudel. 'Well do you have a Chiddush?' I admitted that I did not and again I was sent back to the Beis Medrash.

Now I began to worry, maybe I had made a terrible mistake by coming to the Mir. Maybe I would never fit in. But all the while, regardless of my nervousness and negative thoughts, I knew somehow, by the love and caring that emanated from the Rosh Yeshivah, that this was a test that I must and would pass. So I went back to the Beis Medrash to develop an original Torah thought. And finally I did!

"A half hour later, I emerged with 'Efsher ah diyuk in ah Rashi' (perhaps a thought on Rashi). Hesitantly, I approached R' Leizer Yudel once more to share my Chiddush. This time, his face broke into a wide grin. He smiled at me, opened his arms and placed a kiss on my forehead. 'Shalom Aleichem! Welcome to the Mirrer Yeshivah!'

"After eating and talking for a while with the Rosh Yeshivah and his Rebbetzin, I was shown to my room. I thanked them for their warmth and hospitality and laid down to sleep. A short while later, the door opened. R' Laizer Yudel was checking to make sure I was sleeping and although I gave no indication that I was still awake, I peeked out from under my covers to witness something incredible.

Located directly above my bed was a set of Shas. R' Leizer Yudel spread out his arms wide until his hands were able to touch both ends of the collection of Gemaros. And then with deep emotion, he

hugged and kissed them. Then, he whispered, so as not to wake me up, 'Torah, ich hub dir azoi leeb!'" (Torah, I love you so much!) That memorable first day and night remained etched in R' Nosson Tzvi's memory forever. Nate quickly became Nosson Tzvi and he learned and learned and learned. And he never stopped. His modest beginnings gave him unusual insight into the hearts and souls of even novices in learning. When they were afraid to dream on their own, he would dream for them. He believed in his talmidim and thus helped them reach inconceivable heights.

Sefardic Torah By Joël Mizrahi



It is customary to read Megilat Rut on Shavuot, and there are a variety of explanations as to the reasons behind it. Additionally, there is a common Sephardic minhag before starting the berachot to an aliya to the Torah, to announce **ה' עמכם** (G-d is with you), with the congregation responding **יברכך ה'** (G-d should bless you) – some will use Hashem's name (Adon-ai), while others will say Hashem.

This greeting/dialogue originates in Megilat Rut, perek bet, pasuk daled, with Boaz greeting his workers in the field:

וְהִנֵּה־ בֹעַז בָּא מִבֵּית לֶחֶם וַיֹּאמֶר לַקֹּוצְרִים ה' עִמָּכֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ יְבָרֶכְךָ

Rabbi Haim Jachter lists three possible explanations as to why this dialogue is recorded and what it teaches us.

Snubbing Snobbery - based on the Ibn Ezra's explanation that it is just a friendly greeting, it teaches us the importance of not behaving differently to lower social classes, notwithstanding their socioeconomic situation. Boaz did not feel superior to these workers, who were clearly on a different economic class, and this attitude also led him to connect to Rut, who was impoverished as well.

Promoting Respect – the Malbim says in the name of Chazal, that Boaz instituted that people should greet each other with Hashem's name, to promote respect in a time when people were acting with disrespect amongst each other. This reminded them that Hashem was watching them, so that they would improve their behaviour.

Observance of Torah & Mitzvot – according to Dr. Yael Ziegler, the dialogue between Boaz and the workers can be read as a question and answer – "Is G-d with you?" (i.e. are you observing the laws of the Torah with regard to picking in the fields?), with their response being that G-d will bless Boaz for keeping the laws.

When Sephardim get an aliya to the Torah and reiterate the dialogue between Boaz and his workers with Hashem's name, it is a reminder not to 'play the game' of the social ladder with regard to preference of prestigious aliyot, but to always keep in mind to respect and honour others, and to pledge to Hashem to keep his Torah & Mitzvot.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman – Milchigs on Shavuous

A cow is milked every day. It is impossible to push it off for tomorrow, or the milk of that day will be forfeited. There's a custom to eat milichigs on Shavuos. Perhaps this is to remind us to grab every opportunity for Torah and mitzvos, because what we don't take in the present, we won't have later on!



Rav Chaim ben Betzalel Sefer Hachaim, Igeres Hatiyul, Av Beis Din Freidberg (Sivan 6, 5348 / 1588 - 435th Yahrzeit) Author of Sefer Hachaim and Igeres Hatiyul. Elder brother of the Maharal of Prague.

Studying With Eliyohu Hanovi

In Adas Tzaddikim it relates that when the **Rema** became Av Beis Din Cracow, he took Rav Chaim as his segan (assistant rav) and that when the Rema travelled, Rav Chaim acted as chief rabbi in the Rema's place as Av Beis Din.

Rav Chaim's wife passed away. The Rema was so dependent on Rav Chaim and the communal responsibilities so great that all shidduch suggestions for Rav Chaim were discounted. Everyone anticipated the Rema's approval of some match.

Rav Chaim, seeing how things were going, took matters into his own hands. Tradition has it that he made a secret match through a shadchan with a local baker. The simple, but pious, baker supplied his illustrious son-in-law to be, with all the seforim he would need along with a hidden room to study undisturbed.

The Rema returned one day to find Rav Chaim melancholy. He surmised that it was for lack of a suitable match and proposed that he would indeed find Rav Chaim a new wife. Rav Chaim staged that he wished to visit his family and left with intentional fanfare. He was escorted by the Rema and the townspeople out of the city limits where he dressed in simple clothes, gathered a minyan at the baker's residence and married his daughter in a clandestine chuppah. After the wedding, he set himself up in the room provided by his father-

in-law and studied happily and undisturbed for some two years until he was discovered.

There was a plague in Cracow and someone assumed that the secretive baker's son-in-law whom no one knew must be the culprit behind some crime that made Cracow guilty. Such was the desperate calculation of people trying to find some reason why the plague had struck their city.

Rav Chaim was summoned before the Rema and was found to have been hiding all this time! Consequently, Rav Chaim was released and cleared of all charges. "Why did you hide; what was your sin? And why are you laughing?" asked the Rema when he saw Rav Chaim laugh.

"I hid because the communal responsibilities were too much for me and it disturbed my Torah study," Rav Chaim explained. "I laughed because these simple people were so quick to judge me and I can see they were just all too happy to whip me soon as you gave them the word. Apparently, my sin was that my Torah study was so good that I almost grew arrogant. But then, Hashem put me in a situation where I would be shamed!"

When the Rema went to visit him to see what he meant, he overheard Rav Chaim studying with someone else. But when he came inside, Rav Chaim was alone. "I command you to reveal who was here!" said the Rema.

Rav Chaim admitted he had been studying with Eliyahu HaNavi. "And he is still here with us," said Rav Chaim. Eliyahu then told the Rema that he studied with Rav Chaim, not because Rav Chaim was greater than the Rema, but because the Rema's greatness and strength in Torah was too much for him [Eliyahu Hanavi]!

"If you can't yet do great things, do small things in a great way."

Rav Avrohom Mordechai Alter Gerrer Rebbe, Imrei Emes

(Sivan 6, 5708 / 1948 - 75th Yahrzeit)





Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter (1866 - 6 Sivan 1948), the son of the ***Sfas Emes***, was the third Rebbe in the Gur dynasty. A position he held from 1905 until his death in 1948. He was the spiritual leader of over 250,000 Chassidim in pre-WW II Poland.

In 1940, he managed to escape with three of his sons to Eretz Yisrael (then Palestine), although the vast majority of his followers did not survive. He was one of the founders of the Agudas Yisroel in Poland. He began to rebuild the Gerrer community in Yerushalayim, but he died there during the siege of Yerushalayim on Shavuos, 1948. He was known as the *Imrei Emes*, after the title of his major book.

A Tzaddik Is Born

Rav Avrohom Mordechai Alter of Warsaw was the **Chiddushei HaRim's** eldest child, and, like all the other children of Rav Yitzchok Meir of Ger, he was unwell.

The Chiddushei HaRim had lost all his other children and now Rav Avrohom Mordechai, just thirty years old, was sick again; death was calling at his door and it looked like he would succumb and leave the world with no son as his heir.

The doctors had given up hope, and it seemed like Rav Avrohom Mordechai was already in the final throes of death, when his childhood friend, Rav Yaakov Arye of Radzimin, leaned over and whispered in his ear, "I have one piece of advice left for you, my dear friend: ask Hashem to grant you life, long enough to merit having a son you don't yet have!"



The Chiddushei HaRim also approached the sickbed and told his dying son, "You must know that it is a mitzva to desire to live, as it says, 'Choose life – uvocharta vachaim!' Please, my son, strengthen yourself – choose life and get well!"

Rav Avrohom Mordechai strengthened himself and with Herculean effort and his last strength, he sat up and cried out, "Ribbono Shel Olam, please grant me the gift of life so that I can have a son – I shall name him Yehuda, as it says, 'This time – odeh es Hashem – I shall thank G-d!"

A miracle occurred and Rav Avrohom Mordechai recovered! The next year, he did indeed have a son, and with Rav Chaim Meir Yechiel, the Seraph of Mogolintza, as his sandak, the baby was brought into the bris of Avrohom Avinu and named "Yehudah Leib" as promised!

Rav Avrohom Mordechai told his wife, Esther, "I named him Yehuda and he will cause all the hearts of Klal Yisrael to praise and give thanks – lehodos LaShem!"

The Sefas Emes used to say about himself, "My father named me Yehuda, which means "thanksgiving", because he was healed from his sickness in my merit, and I feel this within me as well; each day and night I never tire of ceaselessly giving thanks – lehodos LaShem!" (Marbitzei Torah BeOlam HaChassidus.)

Rav Yisrael of Mezhibuzh Baal Shem Tov Hakadosh, Besh''t (Sivan 6, 5520 / 1760 - 263rd Yahrzeit)



Rabbi Yisrael the son of Eliezer (1700-1760), popularly known as the Baal Shem Tov (Besht), was born in Okup, Ukraine.

The Simcha That Cancelled The Decree

It was on Rosh HaShana before the blowing of the shofar and the holy Ba'al Shem Tov was made aware of a terrible judgment on high. No matter what the holy Tzaddik tried, still, the Ba'al Shem Tov was unable to cancel the decree or sweeten the harsh judgment. All his efforts were in vain; the prosecution's case was too strong and the decree remained.

While the Ba'al Shem was closed in his room battling the verdict, the Ba'al Shem Tov's holy brethren of Chassidim, known as the Chevraya Kadisha, waited outside, wondering as to the delay for blowing the shofar. They could sense that something was wrong and felt some kind of fear in the air. One of the assembled congregants was a little

off. His lack of sense and judgment caused him to wonder at the sombre, tense air surrounding the Chassidim. He decided to act and to do something to dispel the air of fear.

He went and dressed up in an animal costume and began to prance about. His silly antics caused great mirth and soon the Chassidim were laughing at his jokes and the air of fear was replaced with laughter and joy.

No sooner had this happened when the Tzaddik's door opened and the holy Ba'al Shem Tov entered for tekios, and he motioned to begin blowing the shofar.

Later, the Ba'al Shem Tov explained that it was possible to cancel the decree only through simcha. However, his own fear and the air of suspense and foreboding of the Chassidim together prevented the Ba'al Shem Tov from the needed simcha. Finally that act of silliness and mirth did what he had been unable to do and it caused them all to forget the fear and suspense; the simcha cancelled the decree and sweetened the judgment.

"This," explained the Tzaddik, "is the meaning of the pasuk in Koheles 2:2: "For what kind of simcha is this?" The words ma zo, which usually translate as "what kind" and "what is this", can also mean insignificant or trivial. Even a simcha which is trivial or insignificant, with no true inner depth can make an impression on high." (Nesivos Sholom I Maamar 15:5 p. 288)

Why Do We Eat Milk and Honey on Shavuos?

Milk and honey are ready to be consumed without any additives or improvements. Therefore, we have milk and honey to remind us, and to impart within us that the Torah too is complete and perfect just as it is without any additions or changes. - **HaRav Moshe Sternbuch**

בס"ד

Menucha

A Shabbos table companion for the whole family

לע"נ ר' ברוך חיים בן סלמון ז"ל

Ask Around Your Shabbos Table

We know that the Torah refers to Shavuos as "Chag Shavuos" - The Holiday of Weeks (Shemos 32:22).

Since on Shavuos we received the Torah, why doesn't the Torah call Shavuos "Chag Matan Torah"!?

Answer: The goal is not to just receive the Torah, but to bring the Torah inside of our hearts. The word Shavous means "weeks". The Chag of Shavous is 'built' from the seven weeks that precede it when we purify our middos so that that Torah can enter inside of our hearts. [**Nesivos Shalom**]

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב זצ"ל- נפטר כ׳ט שבט תשע׳ד



There is a maamar chazal brought from the gemarah in Brachos 7b which asks why was Rus called Rus?

מַאי "רוּת"? אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹחָנָן: שֶׁזָּכְתָה וְיָצָא מִמֶּנָּה דָּוִד שֶׁרִיוָּהוּ לְהַקָּדוֹשׁ בָּרוּךְ הוּא בְּשִׁירוֹת וְתִשְׁבָּחוֹת. *'she had the privilege that David, who inundated the Holy One, Blessed be He, with songs and praises, would descend from her. The name* **רות** *is similar in Hebrew to the word inundate [riva].'*

She was called Rus because she would have a descendant [Dovid Hamelech] who would saturate Hashem **בְּשִׁירוֹת וְתִשְׁבָּחוֹת**.

The Chasam Sofer says that Dovid Hamelech went and composed the sefer Tehillim. Some periods throughout his life were good, and sometimes he went through major challenges, and yet he always sang **שִׁירוֹת וְתִשְׁבָּחוֹת**. His Emunah was so steadfast that he saw only good in any situation. He understood what it meant to be from the **עם ה'**. He understood that Hashem's **השגחה פרטית** is upon us constantly.

'Where did he get this from' asks the Chasam Sofer? From where did he derive that inspiration? From his ancestress – **רות**.

She joined Klal Yisrael. She had Emunah in Hashem and realised what it meant to be part of the **עם הנבחר**. Dovid Hamelech saw everything that Rus went through to become part of **עם הנבחר** and derived his inspiration from that, which enabled him to sing **שִׁירוֹת וְתִשְׁבָּחוֹת** in whatever situation he was in.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series



Shavuos is the yartzeit of **Dovid Hamelech**. He writes in Tehilim 103:3-5 - **הַסֹּלֵחַ לְכָל־עֲוֹנֵכִי הָרֹפֵא לְכָל־תַּחֲלוּאָיְכִי** - *Who forgives all your iniquity, Who heals all your illnesses.* **הַגּוֹאֵל מִשַּׁחַת חַיָּיְכִי הַמְעַטְּרֵכִי חֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים** - *Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with kindness and mercy.* **הַמַּשְׂבִּיעַ בַּטּוֹב עָדְיֵךְ תִּתְחַדֵּשׁ כַּנֶּשֶׁר נְעוּרָיְכִי** - *Who sates your mouth with goodness, that your youth renews itself like the eagle.*

'Riboino Shel Olam, You have saved my life, you have forgiven me from all my aveiros, You pulled me out of Gehennim, you have given me parnasso – and not only that, but You have renewed my strength like an eagle.'

Rashi explains **כנשר הזה שמחדש כנפיו ונוצה משנה לשנה, ויש מדרש אגדה על מין נשר שכשמזקין חוזר לנערותו** that this is a type of **נֶשֶׁר** that every year, it sheds its old feathers, and grows new ones on its wings with which it has the strength like a young bird. Not just any bird, but like the eagle that can fly higher than any other bird.



Perhaps this is why before **מַעֲמַד הַר סִינָי** Hashem tells Klal Yisrael - " **וַיִּסְעוּ מֵרְפִידִים** - I can see that you are somewhat depressed as 50 days ago, you were serving idols, and now you want the Torah? Therefore, **וָאֶשָּׂא אֶתְכֶם עַל־כַּנְפֵי נְשָׁרִים** – I have renewed your strength. Shed those old wings and use these new ones to move forward with which you can soar to the ultimate hights.

With that, Hakadosh Baruch Hu should give us the **סִיַּעְתָּא דִשְׁמַיָּא** that we should be able to soar to those heights, and accomplish so much in this coming year – so that eventually, Hashem should take us **עַל־כַּנְפֵי נְשָׁרִים** and we should be zoche to the **גאולה שלמה**.

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series

In the *Haggadah Shel Pesach*, we say, **אילו קרבנו לפני הר סיני ולא נתן לנו את התורה דיינו** - "***If Hashem brought us to Har Sinai and He didn't give us the Torah it would also be enough***..."

Every year, my *shver* would say that he doesn't understand these words. what would we gain from coming to Har Sinai without receiving the Torah? How could a Yid live without Torah?

I myself, really didn't understand the question, as prior to Matan Torah we had already been in a place called Marah – where we had already been given the mitzvos of Shabbos, Kibbud Av v'Eim, Dinim (Choshen Mishpat) and Parah Adumah. So, we had plenty of Torah to be getting on with. So, what does it mean - **ולא נתן לנו את התורה?**

In the last year of my shver's life, he was excited to find that **Reb Eliyashev's** grandfather – **The Leshem** points out that that there were two parts to what The Riboino Shel Olam actually gave us –

1. He gave us the actual Torah. This is fact -there is no question about this. A Yid can't live without Torah. This is not only what we are thanking Hashem for.

2. In every generation, we know that even a *Bas Kol* doesn't pasken the halacha – because **תורה לֹא בַשָּׁמַיִם הִיא** – Hashem gave the Torah to Klal Yisrael. Not just as an information and user manual, including mitzvos and ways that we can become closer to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, but He also said, that when you are going to have a *shaaloh*, and you are going to want to know how to *pasken*, I am giving over the power of 'P'sak', to you, Klal Yisrael. Your Rabbonnim, chachamim and Av Beis Din in every generation will be able to pasken the halacha. Not only will that be the halacha, but the *Beis Din shel Maaloh* and the whole of nature will have to conform to whatever that p'sak is.

So, **אילו קרבנו לפני הר סיני ולא נתן <u>לנו</u> את התורה**– If You would have given us the Torah, but You wouldn't have made us in charge (to pasken) – that would have been sufficient, because we would still have had the Torah! We still would have had a way of life and a connection to You - **דיינו**.

[**The Chida** (*Leiv Dovid* 31) ***zt'l*** answers that when they stood at Har Sinai, they prepared themselves to receive the Torah, and as a result of their preparations, they perceived divine secrets of the Torah, even before the Torah was given.]

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Don't Give Up



There are some that explain why we have the custom of eating dairy foods on Shavuos as follows: Milk is different from other drinks. When other liquids spoil, they become unusable. Milk though when it spoils it can be made into cheese and other food products even more valuable than the milk.

This is the message to us as we accept the Torah. You should never despair and give up hope. Even if someone chas v'shalom has become spoiled, he shouldn't assume that he is lost forever. On the contrary, one can always. pick himself up and move forward even from a lowly situation of being spoiled and become even greater than he was before.

The Pele Yoetz (Atzeres) writes, "How good it is to pour out your heart before Hashem on Shavuos, that your children should earn the crown of Torah, ללמוד וללמד לשמור ולעשות - that they will learn Torah, teach it, and keep the Torah."

The Kaf HaChaim (494:34) writes, "It is ideal to learn Tehillim on Shavuos because Dovid HaMelech was niftar on this day (as stated in the Yerushalmi)… Tehillim that one recites on this day will be answered."

The Ben Ish Chai (Bamidbar 6) writes, "It is important to say Tehillim on Shavuos because Dovid HaMelech a'h was niftar on this day, and the Tehillim that one says on this day will be more accepted in heaven. Therefore, everyone should say the entire Tehillim on Shavuos."

The Chasam Sofer zt'l (Drashos, Megilas Rus), talks about the minhag of putting trees that don't grow fruit in the beis medresh on Shavuos.

The Chasam Sofer zt'l explains that these fruitless trees represent the Yidden who don't have Torah and mitzvos. We want them to know that they can also receive the Torah.

למודי משה

Why Hashem Transformed Har Sinai Into a Barrel



The Gemara in Shabbos (88a) teaches that when the Jewish people were encamped at the foot of Har Sinai, Hashem lifted the mountain above them like a barrel and threatened them that if they won't accept the Torah:

שם תהא קבורתכם – "***there will be your burial place***". If Hashem's intention was to frighten them so that they would accept the Torah, why did He transform the mountain into a barrel, which isn't particularly scary, instead of simply picking it up and leaving it looming over their heads like the scary mountain that it already was?

Rav Moshe Soloveitchik of Zurich in his sefer V'HaIsh Moshe explains that a person who is trapped inside a barrel is technically capable of surviving for a long period of time. However, his life will be incredibly limited, as he is barely able to move or experience any variety in his life. Similarly, if the Jews had declined to accept the

Torah, they would have theoretically been able to survive in this world just like the other nations of the world. However, just like the person trapped in the barrel, their existence would have been limited to fulfilling mundane needs, without any possibility of growth or spirituality.

Hashem transformed the mountain into a barrel to symbolize that if they refused to accept the Torah, they could continue to survive, but their lives would be limited and empty.

When Hashem said that if they didn't accept the Torah they would be buried there, He didn't mean that the mountain would crush and bury them, but that they would live as if they were trapped in barrels, which is the spiritual equivalent of death.

An Important *Shalom Bayis* Lesson from R' Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg



There is a widespread custom to stay up at night on Shavuos engaged in Torah study. The *Magen Avraham* (494) suggests that this custom developed because the Medrash teaches that the Jewish people at Har Sinai overslept on the day of the giving of the Torah, and Hashem had to wake them up to present it to them.

To rectify their mistake and to prevent ourselves from making a similar one, we demonstrate our eagerness to receive the Torah once again by remaining awake the entire night. In Yerusholayim, many of those who stay awake proceed to the Kosel just before dawn, where they can receive the Torah together with countless other Jews who have also travelled there from their respective neighbourhoods.

For many years, **Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg** adopted this practice, staying awake on Shavuos night to learn Torah in his *yeshiva*, Torah Ohr, and then walking with his students to the Kosel for the *Shacharis*. The trip from his *yeshiva* in the Mattersdorf neighbourhood of Yerusholayim to the Kosel is quite lengthy, and one year toward the end of his life, Rav Scheinberg's wife expressed her concern that he no longer had the energy required for the long round-trip walk, and she suggested that he remain behind and *daven* locally.

Rav Scheinberg disagreed with her and felt that he was physically capable of making the trip, so to resolve their difference of opinion, he decided to conduct the *Goral HaGra*, a special procedure transmitted through oral tradition to a few select individuals in every generation, which involves opening a *Tanach* and receiving guidance from Hashem based on the *pasuk* to which it opens.

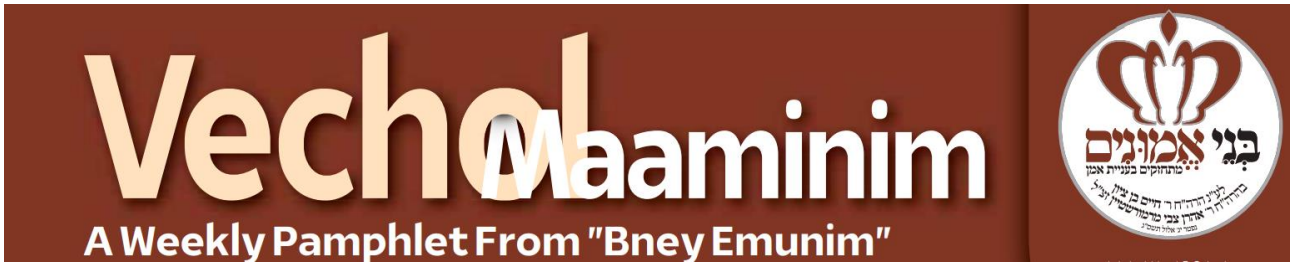
In Rav Scheinberg's case, the *pasuk* to which he opened was (*Tehillim* 29:11): **ד' עוז לעמו יתן** – "***Hashem will give strength to His nation***", which he interpreted as a Divine message that Hashem would give him the strength he needed to make the arduous journey to the Kosel.

When one of Rav Scheinberg's *talmidim* heard about this incident, he pointed out that the end of that very same *pasuk* states: **ד' יברך את עמו בשלום** – "***Hashem will bless His nation with peace***". He suggested that perhaps the Heavenly response was from the latter half of the *pasuk*, not the former, and was an indication that the Rosh Yeshiva should opt for *shalom bayis* [marital harmony] by heeding his wife's advice.

When Rav Scheinberg heard his *talmid's* interpretation, he was astonished. He explained that just because he and his wife disagreed on the proper course of action, their difference of opinion was in no way personal and had no bearing on their *shalom bayis*. He decided to utilize the *Goral HaGra* to clarify the appropriate course of

conduct, but regardless of the response it gave, the sublime peace that reigned between them would remain intact and unaffected.

In addition to opening a window into the life of a great Rav, this fascinating story also contains a universal lesson for each of us, that differences of opinion between rational, intelligent people are healthy and normal, and as long as we do not allow them to become personal, they should have no bearing on our underlying relationships with others.



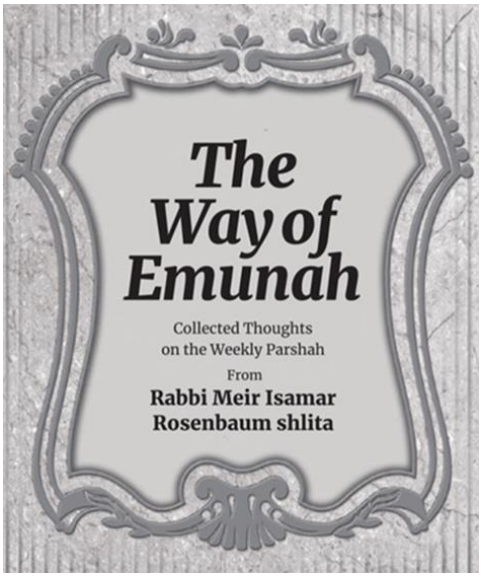
Dovid Hamelech Answered Amen from Childhood

לוּלֵא הֶאֱמַנְתִּי לִרְאוֹת בְּטוּב־ה׳ בְּאֶרֶץ חַיִּים ***Had I not believed in seeing the good of Hashem in the land of the living***! (Tehilim 27:13)

Harav Eliyahu Hakohein of Izmir, author of Shevet Mussar, explained that in this passuk, Dovid Hamelech testified of himself that already from an early age, he was careful to answer amen.

Chazal say (Sanhedrin 110b) that a child in Am Yisrael merits life in Olam Haba from when he says amen, and that is what Dovid Hamelech says in this passuk: **לולא האמנתי** – if I would not have habituated myself from an early age to answer amen after each brachah, I would not have merited "to see the good of Hashem in Eretz Chaim" – in Olam Haba, because we merit Olam Haba in the zechus of answering amen. [Minchas Eliyahu Ch. 32]

Real change, enduring change, happens one step at a time.



The Chasam Sofer's Tefillah on Shavuos

Rav Yitzchok Slomo Ungar zt"l, Rov of Chug Chasam Sofer-Bnei Brak related that when the **Chasam Sofer zy"a** is spoken about amongst Belzer chasidim, his name is uttered with reverence and he is referred to as "**der heilige Chasam Sofer**". This is because of the following story:

Shortly before Shavuos, two Belzer chasidim traveled to the capital city of Vienna for business. They did not have enough time to get home for yomtov, so they decided to spend Shavuos with the Chasam Sofer in Pressburg.

On the night of Shavuos, they stayed up learning Torah. They then davened K'Vasikin together with the Chasam Sofer. On Motzoei Yomtov, they went to the Chasam Sofer's home to bid him farewell. The Chasam Sofer asked them, "Where are you from? Who is your Rebbe?" They answered that they were from Belz and were chasidim of the **Sar Shalom**.

The Chasam Sofer said, "I have heard that your Rebbe says strange divrei Torah. For example, I heard that he said that Og Melech Habashan means fattening, salty cookies because 'Og' means a cookie, 'melech' means salt, and 'bashan' means fat."

The chasidim replied, "We never heard anything like that from our Rebbe!"

He told them, "If so, you are 'shvache (weak) chasidim.'" When they got back to Belz, they went to see the Rebbe, and they told him that they had been in Pressburg for Shavuos.

The Sar Shalom asked, "What did you see in Pressburg?" They told him that they had learned Torah all night and had davened Vasikin, which was not the custom in Belz. They also related what the Chasam

Sofer had said about the Rebbe's "strange Torah" and how he had called them "shvache chasidim" because they had never heard this devar Torah.

The Rebbe responded, "It's true. You are shvache chasidim!" The Rebbe then asked them about the tefillos in Pressburg, and they said that they had never davened Vasikin on yomtov before and they also had never felt so uplifted during davening before.

The Sar Shalom said, "Halevai, if only we could have as much hisorerus and enthusiasm during Kol Nidrei as the heilige Pressburger Rov has during Vasikin on Shavuos."

From then on, Belzer chasidim always refer to him as "***der heilige Chasam Sofer***!"



The Smoke of The Mountain Blinded the Eyes of The Nations

The pasuk states (Shemos 20:15): **וְכָל־ הָעָם֮ רֹאִים֒ אֶת־הַקּוֹלֹת֙ וְאֶת־הַלַּפִּידִ֔ם וְאֵת֙ קֹ֣ול הַשֹּׁפָ֔ר וְאֶת־הָהָ֖ר עָשֵׁ֑ן** "***And the entire nation saw the thunder…and the mountain smoked***."

We may ask what the purpose was for the smoke?

The Chidushei Harim zy"a explains that the purpose of the smoke was to blind the eyes of the people who were not worthy to see this holy sight. These people who needed their eyes blinded were the gentiles, who were aware of what was happening and were giving an "ayin hara" to the Jewish people through their hatred and jealousy. The smoke worked like tear gas to blind them so that they should not see and they should not be able to put an ayin hara on Klal Yisroel.

A Segulah to Remember One's Learning

Sefer Siach Zekeinim relates that once after the Shavuos night tish of **Rav Shimon of Amshinov zy"a**, the **Zamatcher Rov zt"l** told him that the **Ropshitzer Rebbe zy"a** once saw a young man crying as he recited the words: **והאר עינינו בתורתך** ("***Illuminate our eyes with Your Torah***.")

After davening, the Rebbe went over to the man and told him, "I was in Shomayim and I saw that your prayer was accepted. Now take a Gemara and start to learn!"

The Amshinover Rebbe enjoyed this story very much and he laughed. He then related a story: A man once approached **Rav Yaakov Dovid of Amshinov zy"a** and asked for a segulah to have a good memory. Rav Shimon explained that in Vorka, they did not make use of segulos; however, Rav Yaakov Dovid said, "I have a segulah for you."

This surprised all of the chasidim, who had never before heard the Rebbe speaking about segulos.

Rav Yaakov Dovid said, "Dovid Hamelech says in Tehillim (119:16): **בְּחֻקֹּתֶיךָ אֶשְׁתַּעֲשָׁע לֹא אֶשְׁכַּח דְּבָרֶךָ** '***With Your laws I shall rejoice; I shall not forget Your words***.'

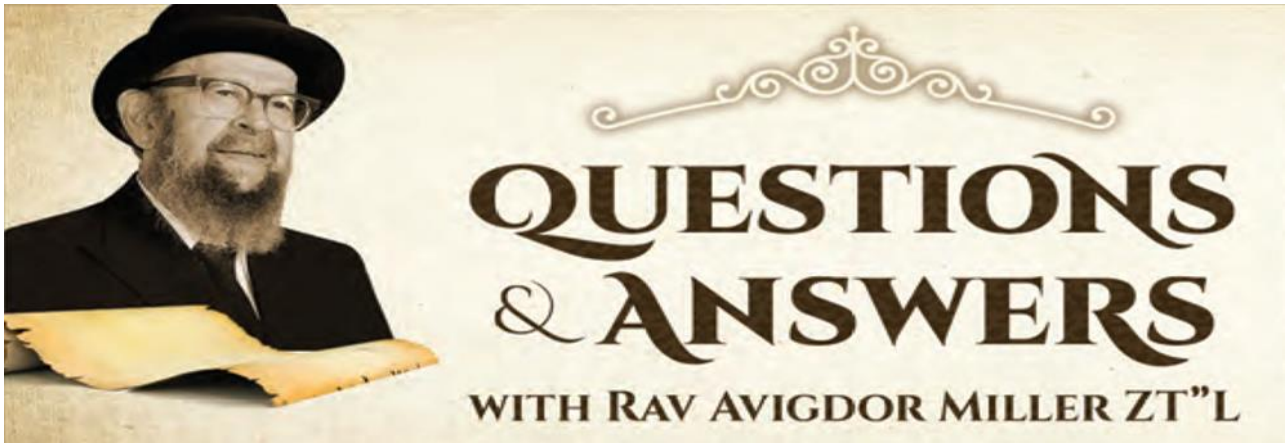
If one learns Torah with joy, he won't forget it!"

"Parshah Pshetl"- Rabbi Y. Schechter

Shemos 19:5 **וְעַתָּה אִם־שָׁמוֹעַ תִּשְׁמְעוּ בְּקֹלִי וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת־** – **מהר"י שטייף בְּרִיתִי** – "***And now if you hearken well to Me and you will keep My Covenant***."

Why is there a double Loshon of hearing –**שמוע תשמעו?**

If one listens to Torah once, he will be Zoche to want to hear another Chiddush of Torah.





In your opinion, what was the greatest event in all of history?

Besides for the creation of the world out of nothing I would say that the greatest event in history is unquestionably Ma'amad Har Sinai. That's why the **Rambam** says, gadleihu al kol gedulah - you should elevate that event above all other great things. Elevate Matan Torah above everything else because that was the grandest moment in history!

That's what the Torah says (Devorim 4:9-10), הִשָּׁמֶר לְךָ - Be careful וּשְׁמֹר נַפְשְׁךָ מְאֹד and guard yourself very much. What about? פֶּן־תִּשְׁכַּח אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר־רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ- that you shouldn't forget the thing that your eyes saw at Har Sinai, יוֹם אֲשֶׁר עָמַדְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ בְּחֹרֵב - the day that you stood before Hashem your G-d at Har Sinai.

The Rambam says it's a command not to forget Ma'amad Har Sinai; it's a mitzvah to remember how we were standing at Har Sinai.

In all of history it only happened once! At least two million people were standing in front of Har Sinai, and they heard the voice of Hashem. נַפְשִׁי יָצְאָה בְדַבְּרוֹ - When He spoke, they fainted from happiness. They were delirious; they were intoxicated with happiness, and they fell down on the floor. They had to be revived.

Do you ever think about that? Maybe on Shavuos. Maybe. Shavuos is an especial day for remembering but it's true every day. Don't stop

talking about it, the Rambam says. Gadleihu al kol gedulah; talk about it more than anything else in the world. You have to talk about Ma'amad Har Sinai and make it great. We should speak about it to our children and grandchildren - **והודעתם לבניך ולבני בניך**. The Torah says, you should inform your children and your children's children and always remind them of Ma'amad Har Sinai.

You grandfathers, do you speak about it to your grandchildren? Think about that when you become grandfathers. If you're looking for a conversation piece, bring up Matan Torah. "But we know all about it," they say. Say it anyhow!

You should always continue to speak about Matan Torah all the days of your life because that's the most important day in history that we have to remember.

I Love to Learn by Rabbi Ari Bensoussan



Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt"l, the late and esteemed Rosh Yeshiva of Mir Yerushalyim, was a man of extraordinary strength and perseverance. For the last 28 years of his life, he lived with the degenerative disease of Parkinson's. But for Rav Nosson Tzvi, it may have been a debilitating illness, but it was not demoralizing. It robbed him of his ability to control his muscles, but he was in full control of his life. And his life's accomplishments speak right to that.

After Rav Nosson Tzvi passed away, a man from Jerusalem came to visit the family and lend them his comfort. This Jew, though, had something in common with Rav Nosson Tzvi that many others did not. He also suffered from Parkinson's disease.

"Your father," the man began, "will force me to endure a very strong judgment before the Heavenly Court after I pass away.

Before I developed Parkinson's," he explained," I was known as the 'Masmid of Beis Yisroel,' a neighborhood in Jerusalem. I would learn day and night, as much as I could. However, ever since I have gotten sick, it has become extremely difficult for me to concentrate, even slightly, on my learning. I am bedridden and on medication, and my mind is often numbed.

"But I just want you to know, that your father, Rav Nosson Tzvi, had Parkinson's much worse than I do, and he still never stopped learning. Every day, he walked to the Yeshiva and davened, despite the enormous effort and energy he needed to exert. People would beg him to take medication to alleviate the pain, but he would always tell people, 'My body is my problem; my brain belongs to the Jewish people. I need to be clear-headed to offer guidance and encouragement to my fellow Jews. I cannot take that away from them.' And so, your father would sit on the couch and throb in discomfort, as throngs of people would line up to see him.

Once, a student of your father, said, "Rebbe, I cannot bear to see you like this. Why is Hashem doing this to you?"

Rav Nosson Tzvi replied, "You know, I love learning Torah so much that before I got sick, I couldn't ever think of how Hashem will give me reward for learning. I personally enjoyed it too much. But now that it is so difficult for me to concentrate and learn, and I do it nonetheless, I know that I will receive reward…"

For all of us, the privilege to learn Torah, for even a few minutes, is an opportunity not worth giving up for anything else. And if it comes with any among of difficulty and struggle, then how much greater our reward will be.



Shavu'os!!!

Shavu'os by our father Rav Shimshon zt"l was very special. There was a special excitement. Our father took the best possible advantage of every part of the chag.

I will write a few things I saw by our father on Shavu'os. This will give us a glimpse of the greatness of this day, and show us how much a person should take advantage of this special day.

It began with a special seudah that was prepared in honor of the chag. On Erev Yom Tov, our father made sure that special foods would be prepared, things that were not served for every Yom Tov. This was as it says in the Gemara, that Rav Yosef asked them to make a special dish for him in honor of Shavu'os.

Then came the night's learning, which was with tremendous fire. Some years he would learn Gemara, and would do so in shul with the tzibbur. Other years he would learn Kabbalah, in which case he would stay at home to learn.

When he did that, he would prepare at home a tray with cups of hot drink, and we, the children, would go with the tray to the shul to give it out to the people learning there. This way our father made sure they would not fall asleep at night while learning.

When it got close to alos hashachar, our father went to immerse himself in the mikveh, which is a very great thing to do at the end of Shavu'os night, according to Kabbalah. (He discouraged children from coming, saying that this is not the time for children to go to the mikveh.)

The morning davening was conducted in a very loud voice and with great excitement. It seemed as if he was trying to arouse the tzibbur so they would not sleep, and therefore davened with such energy.

The peak was in the berachah of Ahavah Rabbah. He would recite it very slowly, and the whole tzibbur with him. He would pour out his soul and plead from the depths of his heart, like a son before his father, on this great day when the gates of Heaven are open.

And in Kri'as HaTorah, he would really wake up the tzibbur. He would shout, "How can people sleep now? We are now receiving the Torah!!!"

I remember once sitting on the other side of shul, and from where he was sitting, he noticed that I was falling asleep. He shouted at me with such a loud voice, "Dovi, how can you sleep now???" I was pretty embarrassed, but I understood that he wasn't really yelling at me, he was rather trying to wake up everyone who was falling asleep. I was only the excuse for yelling...

Every year, our father made sure to get maftir on Shavu'os, which is the haftarah of Maaseh Mervakah from Yechezkel. At that time he truly looked like a malach, he simply was not in this world. It was a sight that someone who never saw it cannot understand.

And, of course, he didn't waste the remaining time of the chag by sleeping excessively. We slept what we needed, and went back to learning, to gain more and more kinyanim of limud haTorah on the day of Matan Torah.

Rav Shimshon set the example for us, of what Shavu'os should be like. Let us follow in his footsteps, each person according to his own level and abilities.

Wishing you all the best, with all my heart

Harav Yosef Dov Pincus

The Essence of Our Life

Shavu'os is a very special day of the year. It is the day we received the *Torah Hakedoshah* on *Har Sinai* from *Hashem*. We all know about the *minhag* to stay up on Shavu'os night, learning Torah. This is what the **Arizal** writes about it:

"A person should not sleep on this night at all, but should be awake all night and engage in Torah learning. Let it be known that anyone who doesn't sleep on this night at all, even for a moment, and engages in Torah learning all night, it is guaranteed that he will live out the year and will not suffer any damage that year.... Furthermore, a person's life in that year is dependent on this...."

Therefore, the *minhag* has spread among the Jewish people to learn Torah all Shavu'os night. However, our life being dependent on this night is not just a matter of the night's learning. It also depends on our whole conduct and on the thoughts we have during this day. Shavu'os every year is like it was back then, when we received the Torah. Every year, the gates of Torah open up before every individual for him to receive *siyata d'Shamaya* the whole year long, each person as befits him. It depends mainly on how much we desire Torah and have aspirations for it.

The Torah is truly and actually our life and the length of our days. A person's life depends on Torah, and not just when he is learning. The Torah, and only the Torah, is the constant source of our vitality, and the matter of utmost importance to us.

For this reason, there is something even more important than learning Torah on Shavu'os night. It is showing our tremendous joy and good feelings over having received the *Torah Hakedoshah,* which is our true life, and asking Hashem for Torah, and aspiring to Torah. For Torah divides us from those who have strayed from the path of truth and stumble around in the darkness, pursuing the vanities of this world which will only bring them to pain and suffering and eternal shame.



This may be compared to someone who was tossed into a stormy sea, and the terrible waves are threatening to drown him, and he manages to grab onto a rescue boat. He drags himself into the boat and holds on to it fiercely, with all his remaining strength, and thereby makes it through the raging waves to a safe coast. He loves and cherishes this boat so much! His whole life depends on it.

This is how it is in our world. The whole world is a stormy sea that threatens to take a person's soul and put him to eternal death.

Torah and *mitzvos* are the rescue boat in which a person hides from all the dangers lying in wait for him. So when Shavu'os comes, we should celebrate and express great joy over the fact that we were *zocheh* to *Toras Chaim*, the Torah that saves our very lives.

It is therefore a *mitzvah* on this day, more than on all other holidays and *Yamim Tovim*, to make a special *seudah* with fine food and drink, and to celebrate with great joy.

What are we celebrating?

That *Hashem* separated us from the nations and from those who stumble down a mistaken and deadly path! That He implanted within us eternal life, which is the *Torah Hakedoshah!*

The more a person recognizes this, the more he feels that Torah and all its *mitzvos* are his vitality and his happiness and his good fortune, the more will rejoice on Shavu'os, the more the gates of *siyata d'Shmaya* will open for him – to grow higher and higher in Torah learning all year long. To be attached to Torah and to the Source of life itself, which is *Hashem Yisborach.*

Just Be Happy

It is said in the name of the **Vilna Gaon** that the reason everyone agrees a festive meal must be held is because Shavu'os is different from other holidays, each of which has a special *mitzvah* to do.

Pesach has *matzah,* Rosh Hashanah has *shofar,* and so forth. But Shavu'os has no special *mitzvah* to do on that day. The only thing we need to do on Shavu'os is to be happy, to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *simchas Yom Tov,* which is expressed by holding a festive meal. This why all views concur that a *se'udah* must be held on Shavu'os. - And why doesn't Shavu'os have a special *mitzvah?*

The simple explanation is because it is merely a continuation of the days of *Sefiras Ha'Omer*. We count the *Omer* for forty-nine days, and the fiftieth day is the holiday of Shavu'os.

Sefiras Ha'Omer is all about building ourselves in preparation to receive the Torah on Shavu'os. We build one row on top of another, seven and then another seven, until the person is completely built when Shavu'os comes.

Counting the *Omer* and the holiday of Shavu'os at its conclusion are a matter of **תחילתו השתדלות וסופו מתנה**. It starts with our own efforts and ends with a gift from Heaven. During the days of the *Sefirah* a person builds himself. But Shavu'os itself is a matter of – **וירד ה' על הר סיני** - *Hashem* opens the gates of heaven and comes to give us His Torah.

Shavu'os is the day we received the Torah, and like it was back then at *Har Sinai,* so it is every year. *Hashem* opens the gates of heaven and pours out a great flow of Torah, completely independent of our deeds. Therefore, we were not commanded to perform any *mitzvah* on this day.

In order to leave Egypt, the Jewish people needed to demonstrate *mesirus nefesh* though the blood of *korban Pesach* and the blood of *milah*. So every year, on Pesach, we have certain *mitzvos* to do, which

are related to this. But to merit receiving the Torah at Sinai, the Jewish people did nothing. The Torah was given as gift.

I Want Torah



Although the Torah is given to us totally as a gift and we don't need to demonstrate *mesirus nefesh* in order to receive it, there is one thing that is required of a gift's recipient, and that is to want the gift. This is a necessary precondition for giving to take place.

The only thing that the Jewish people did when they received the Torah was to want it and desire it. Moshe led the people out of the camp toward *Hashem* to receive the Torah, and they went. Since they really desired the Torah, they received it.

The same is true today. Unlike Pesach, where the main *avodah* is connected to *matzah*, the *avodah* on Shavu'os is just to want the gift of Torah and to value it. *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* is waiting to see, so to speak, what we will do with His holy Torah.

This may be compared to someone who wants to give his friend a precious diamond. But he will give it to him only he knows that his friend will guard it well and appreciate its value. If he knows that the recipient of the diamond is going to play with it in the sandbox, there is no way he will give it to him.

Similarly, on Shavu'os we don't have to do any special *mitzvos*. We just have to want the *Torah Hakedoshah*, that's all. This is the main *avodah* of the day.

Megilas Rus - What the Medrash Says



❖ ***"Go, my daughter***" (2:2).

R. Yanai commented that Rus was already forty, yet the Pasuk refers to her as 'bas' . 'One only calls a woman 'bas' up to the age of forty (see Torah Temimah).

❖ ***"And she went and she came***" (2:2).

R. Elazar explained that Rus would go and come back, go and come back, until she found decent people to travel with (see also Rashi).

❖ ***"May Hashem be with you***" (2:4).

From here we see that Bo'az instituted the concept of greeting with the Name of Hashem.

❖ ***"It was surely told to me (hugeid hugad li)"*** (2:11).

Bo'az had been told about Rus exemplary behaviour in the house, as well as in the field.

❖ "***And she ate and was satisfied and she left over***" (2:14).

He hinted to her, says R. Elazar … ***"and she ate***", in the days of David; "and she was satisfied" … in the days of Shlomoh; "and she left over" … in the days of Chizkiyahu.

According to others, "she ate "and was satisfied and she left over refers to the days of David and Shlomoh, to the days of Chizkiyahu and the days of Rebbi respectively. Because so said Mar - the stable-hand of Rebbi was wealthier than Shavur Malka, King of Persia.

The Medrash, on the other hand, connects the three phrases with this World, the days of Mashi'ach and the era of Techi'as ha'Meisim.

❖ ***"And Naomi said to her daughter-in-law 'May he be blessed to Hashem"*** (2:20).

One should never cease blessing an old man, says R. Yochanan. Bo'az was eighty years old and had no Children; but as soon as Naomi prayed on his behalf, he had children.

❖ ***"And Rus the Moabite woman said*** … " (2:21) .

Do we not know that Rus was from Mo'av?

To be sure, we do, says the Medrash. But the Pasuk wanted to stress the fact that she was. Bo'az had told her to stick to his girls yet quoted him as having said 'to his boys', a mistake that reflected Moabite culture.

Shavuos Thoughts Ideas and Reflections - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

Shavuos is the only Yom Tov of the Shalosh Regalim that does not have Chol HaMo'eid. **The Nesivos HaMishpat** offers an insight as to why this is so.

The first days of Yom Tov correspond to events that happened in the past, like Yetzias Mitzrayim, when we left Mitzrayim. The last days of Yom Tov correspond to the future, the times of Moshiach, and days of Chol HaMo'eid correspond to the Galus that we live in.

The message of Shavuos, which celebrates our receiving the Torah, is not bound in time. It is not only a part of the past or the future. Torah is a constant and is always current, and therefore, there is no need for intermediate days of Chol HaMo'eid.

Parshah Pearls *(Adapted from Rabeinu Bachye)*

Birchas Kohanim, "*So you shall bless (Koh sevorchu) the B'nei Yisrael*" (6:23).

הקב״ה gave the Kohanim twenty-four gifts of Kehunah, says R. Bachye. Together with Birchas Kohanim, a total of twenty-five (the Gematriyah of "Koh"). Hence the Torah begins Birchas Kohanim with the words "koh sevorchu" (see also Ba'al ha'Turim). The first Pasuk of Birchas Kohanim contains fifteen letters, the second, twenty, and the third, twenty-five - 'Koh' (present), 'hoyoh' (past) and 'yehi' (future), respectively.

This teaches us that the **רִבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם** whose Name is mentioned in each of the three Pesukim rules over all three time periods; the present, the past and the future, says R. Bachye. He also points out that the hint begins with the present, because, he explains, G-d exists in the present, as if none of His years have passed, as the Pasuk says in Tehilim (120:28) "But You are the same, and Your years never end."

And this is what we have in mind when we say each day "Hashem Melech (present), Hashem Malach (past), Hashem Yimloch … ".

Birchas Kohanim comprises a total of sixty letters, hinting at the Pasuk in Shir ha'Shirim (3:7) "… sixty mighty men from the mighty men of Yisrael, all of them wielding their swords, trained in warfare".

The three Pesukim contain three words, five words and seven words, respectively. This hints at the love with which G-d blesses us, and to which the Kohanim refer in the B'rachah - by dividing the letters of 'be'Ahavah' as follows - 'Beis Alef' (3) 'Hey' (5) and 'Beis Hey' (7)

"A man is not finished when he is defeated. He is finished when he quits."



Kabalas Hatorah!

The Ponivitch Rov used to visit and give chizzuk to the children of an orphanage. The children there lived off his warmth and hugs. He would come around and kiss each child. It was something out of this world. He treated each child as his own.

HaRav Yitzchok Zilberstien שליט״א said over that he heard from a big Rov who remembers something that the Ponivitch Rov said that is etched in his heart until today.

The Ponivitch Rov once came and spoke to the boys during their meal and he asked, "Why do we say a special possuk for our name and the end of Shmoneh Esrei?

A boy answered that his Rebbe taught them that the **Shela HaKadosh** says that otherwise a person will forget their name in the world to come.

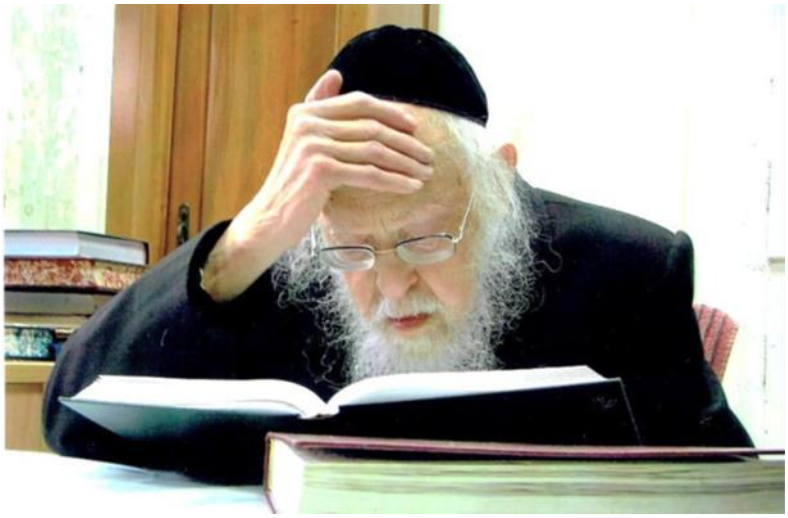
The Ponivitch Rov confirmed that this was the correct answer. The Ponivitch Rov continued and asked the boys, "You hear your name tens of times each day, if so, why wouldn't you remember your name?" - This time the boys did not have any answer.

The Ponivitch Rov said, "I will explain it to you. In the next world nothing exists! Except for one thing - the Torah that you keep. All other norishkeit that a person was involved in in this world, will have no place in the World to Come. The Judgement will be so fierce that even his name he will not remember. However, saying a possuk from Tanach is something of value in the Next World. That will be the only thing that has meaning in the Next World.

The Ponivitch Rov was teaching the boys what is the priority and *tachlis* of life.

They say, that **Rav Elyashiv** would finish the words of Asher Yatzar, "Rofei Chol Basar Umaflie La'asois… Amar Abaya."

This was part of the tremendous hasmada that Rav Elyashiv had which is what made Rav Elyashiv - Rav Elyashiv.



Rav Elyashiv was once giving shiur on the sugya in Shabbos of Shema Yateh. There is an issur to read by the candlelight on Shabbos since one may come to tilt the candle which would violate an issur min HaTorah.

One of the listener's piped up and asked wittingly. Could it be that a person wearing his striemel and bekashheh could forget that it's Shabbos. Rav Elyashiv's answer left all the attendees with a greater appreciation for the love of Torah.

Rav Elyashiv said, "Imagine you are learning a Tosfos and the flame starts flickering and you can't see what the Tosfos says. It will bother you to no-end that Chas V'shalom this alone can cause a person on Shabbos to not be able to withhold himself and he will fiddle with the flame."

Dovid Hamelech knew he was going to die on **שבת**, so each week he sat and learned the entire **שבת**. The **מלאך המות** tried to kill him, but he could not, until the **שטן** pulled a stunt on **דוד המלך** and caused him to trip. **דוד המלך** stopped learning for a moment and the **מלאך המות** killed him right then.

Harav Nisan Kaplan Shlita asks - why couldn't the **מלאך המות** kill **דוד המלך** while he was eating, drinking etc.?



The answer is; with any break that a person takes during his learning, if the purpose of the break is solely to take care of himself to be able to continue learning, i.e. eating, drinking, sleeping… it is not viewed as **בין הסדרים**, but rather as one long continuous **סדר** - of **לימוד תורה**. They will be a part of the armour and protection of his **לימוד התורה**. Therefore, **דוד המלך** was protected during all the times that he was caring for himself, since they were part of his **לימוד תורה**.

Someone once asked the chofetz Chaim what the Chofetz Chaim did to be become a Talmid Chochom. The Chofetz Chaim told him "I did not turn over worlds, I simply learned from the morning until the afternoon, took a short break and then I learned again until the night."

A relative of the Chofetz Chaim once related that when they got home from someplace or another, before he even had a chance to take off his jacket the Chofetz Chaim was already sitting and learning.

I once asked **מו"ר הגר"י ברקוביץ שליט"א** what a person can do to be **זוכה בדין** to have a year of Hatzlacha B'Torah.

The Rov said two things;

1) To learn Torah on Shavuos **מתוך שמחה**.
2) Have extra Kavana in the words **והאר עינינו**.

זכרו תורת משה
לעילוי נשמת ר' משה בן החבר צבי זצ"ל ור' משה יצחק בן אברהם צבי הכהן זצ"ל
HEARTWARMING STORIES FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE
בס"ד
שבועות ה'תשפ"ג
Vol. #110

My Child

R' Bentzion Klatzkin, a great man who lives in Eretz Yisroel, was *Baruch Hashem* bentched with a large family of sixteen children.

One day, he was approached by a neighbour of his with a request. "Being that I'm married for many years and haven't been bentched with any children, would you be willing to give me one of yours? I'll raise him like one of my own. You won't have to be concerned about anything; we'll make sure he'll be taken care of in the best possible manner."

"Sure!" responded R' Bentzion. "Come right over to my house tonight by supper, and let me know which one you desire."

And so, the neighbor came that night to R' Bentzion's house to choose his future adoptee.

"I would like Chezky," he decided. "He looks like a fine boy; I think he would be a good choice!"

"My Chezky?!" wailed R' Bentzion. "My Chezky?! How can I possibly give up my Chezky? He's 'Chezky'!"

"OK, so you don't want me to take Chezky," said the neighbour. "I understand. So, I'll settle with Shmuly."

"Shmuly?! Shmuly?! He's my Shmuly!! I can't give him away. You'll have to choose a different one."

"Maybe you'll be happier if I'd choose one of your daughters?" said the man. "If so, I'll take Gitty."

"I can't give up my Shmuly. He's too precious to me! Choose a different one!"

But the same thing happened again. R' Bentzion wailed about "his Gitty," "his Berel," and every one of his children. The neighbor realized that R' Bentzion wasn't able to give up any of his children.

"You have to understand," R' Bentzion explained, "that although I'm bentched with so many children, each of them is so special in their own way. I simply can't depart with any of them. I feel your pain, but the love, affection, and connection that each of my children have to me is so unique and precious that I can't depart from any of them."

How much more so when it comes to the love and passion that Hashem has for us! Hashem loves us far more than the love that any father has for his child. Hashem's love is infinite and immeasurable. It will never be diminished or lessened. It's so intense that it's the greatest love that can possibly be attained in this world.

Hashem's Child!

This moving story was heard from **R' Ezriel Tauber**:

The Beis Din in Flatbush was crowded as they were preparing for a *geirus*. The Av Beis Din was questioning the potential *gioris* to see her sincerity to Hashem.

He asked the halachically required questions: "Do you realize that it is hard to be a Yid?" asked the Av Beis Din.

"Yes!" she replied. "And I nevertheless agree and desire to be one!"

"Do you know that the punishment for desecrating the will of Hashem is very harsh? There are severe punishments for that."

"Yes, I'm aware!" she confined. "And I nevertheless am ready to commit and accept this."

The other rabbanim used various techniques to dissuade her, but she was determined and firm in her decision.

Finally, the Av Beis Din asked her the final question: "You know that you might not have neither *Olam Hazeh,* this world, nor *Olam Haba*, the next world? Are you still steadfast with your decision?"

There was a hush of silence in the room, doubting her conclusion.

Her firm response pierced the silence in the room: "I don't need *Olam Hazeh*, and I don't need *Olam Haba*. All I need is to be the CHILD OF HASHEM!" (*Just One Word: Emunah*)

How lucky are we that Hashem chose each and every one of us. Each of us is especially loved and cherished by Hashem.

The fact that there are many Yidden in the world doesn't diminish the personal love Hashem has for each Yid. We are individually loved, treasured, and dear to Hashem.

A Yid!

The great *mashpiah*, **R' Erlanger,** relayed the following story:

Once, a priest was very ill. He wondered why he was suffering so, and he went to pose his question to the **Baal Shem Tov**. The Baal Shem Tov responded: "The cause for your illness is the endless sins that you performed."

The priest asked him, "And what about you? How do you control yourself? What do you do to resist your improper behaviour?"

The Baal Shem Tov replied, "I'm old and frail, so I can't sin!"

When the priest left, the Baal Shem Tov's student at his side asked him: "Rebbi, why didn't you tell him that you are a Yid and that's how you can control yourself? Why tell him that you're old when that's not the underlying reason?"

Sarcastically, the Baal Shem Tov replied: "Go explain to a *goy* what it means to be 'A YID!' A *goy* can't fathom the greatness that there is in a Yid. Therefore, I told him a reason that he would understand."

My *rebbi* explained that the Baal Shem Tov was telling him that while he can't explain to him the greatness of a Yid, "at least we must tell a YID what it means to be a YID!" The greatness is so great we must familiarize OURSELVES with its greatness.

Its greatness can prevent stumbling and lift our spirit, causing us to fully commit to Hashem's mitzvos.

As the people who were born into Hashem's kingdom, we have to be so thankful that we got this great present without struggle! This is the greatest treasure that we possible can imagine.

Coming or Going?

וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתָּבוֹא וַתְּלַקֵּט בַּשָּׂדֶה אַחֲרֵי הַקֹּצְרִים -***And she went, and she came, and she gleaned in the field***. (Megillas Rus. 2:3)



This is a very difficult Pasuk to understand. The Pasuk appears to not be in the correct sequence.

Rashi mentions this anomaly, and explains the reason – '*We find in Midrash Rus [Rabbah]: Before she went, she came; Scripture says: And she came, and she gleaned?*

But rather, she marked the roads before she entered the field, and she went and came and returned to the city, in order to make signs and markings so that she would not stray in the paths and know how to return.'

Why do we need to know this? What difference does this piece of information tell us?

Rabbi Falk Zt'l in his sefer on tzniyus explains as follows and bases his pshat on a Rashi later on:

Noami tells Rus that she should go down to the field to meet Boaz, and she tells Rus that she should put on her makeup and dress in all her finery וְרָחַצְתְּ וָסַכְתְּ וְשַׂמְתְּי שִׂמְלֹתַיִךְ. (3:3)

The Pasuk then says - וַתֵּרֶד הַגֹּרֶן וַתַּעַשׂ כְּכֹל אֲשֶׁר־צִוַּתָּהּ חֲמוֹתָהּ - ***And she went down to the threshing-floor, and she did all that her mother-in-law had commanded her***. (3:6)

However, Rashi explains that she didn't quite follow exactly what Noami had requested - *She did not do so, but she said, "If I go down when I am dressed up, whoever meets me or sees me will say that I am a harlot." She therefore* ***first went down to the threshing-floor and afterwards*** *adorned herself, as her mother-in- law had charged her."*

Rabbi Falk says, that we see that Rus was extremely careful about tzniyus.

This same Rus was very scared that if she would go out at night to the field to collect grain, and as she didn't know her way around, she would end up lost, wandering the area at night, and it might appear as though she was soliciting, and this would be a breach of tzniyus!

So she was careful to map out her route while it was still light, and leave markers so that she would know exactly where to go immediately!

"One sincere moment of accepting Torah can transform an entire life. Great changes often begin with a small opening in the heart." ~ Rabbi Nachman of Breslov.

"The purpose of learning is not only to become knowledgeable, but to become different — gentler, purer, and closer to Hashem." ~ Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel.

Short And Sweet Story Of The Week With Rabbi Mordechai Levin

The great leader of Klal Yisroel, **Rav Eliezer Shach ZT"L**, died in 2001.

A year later, **Rav Aron Leib Shteinman**, his successor as Gadol Hador, eulogized him in Ponovezh Yeshiva. He said then that all the great leaders of Klal Yisroel first spent many years in anonymity toiling in Torah study. Only then did they ascend to greatness.

He quoted the **Chazon Ish** as saying that the **Chofetz Chaim** was engrossed in learning for 60 years, and only after that he led Klal Yisroel.

Rav Shteinman said that the same scenario played out for the Chazon Ish, for the **Brisker Rav**, for **Rav Yaakov Yisroel Kanievsky** (the Steipler), and for **Rav Shach**. Each one spent decades in relative anonymity engrossed in Torah study, until accepting the mantle of Gadol Hador and becoming the Torah Leader of his generation.

Comment: As we celebrate Chag Shavuos, and Kabbalos HaTorah, we must recommit to Torah study. We must recognize that true greatness results only from Torah knowledge. We are lucky to have great Torah leaders who have dedicated their entire lives to Torah study, and whose wisdom now guides us and protects us.

"Sometimes it takes 'darkness' for one to truly appreciate the everyday blessings that we experience." -The Ben Ish Chai

"On Shavuos, a Jew should feel pride that he belongs to a people whose treasure is not power or wealth, but Torah." ~ Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky.

This Time It's Personal - Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss

When HaShem spoke the first two commandments at Sinai, everyone died and was resurrected. Contrast this to the splitting of the sea where people were able to point and say, "This is my G-d!" yet no one died. Why is this so?

R' Eliyahu Meir Bloch z"l says there is a very key difference. At the Reed Sea, people saw something miraculous, but they didn't necessarily know what they were seeing. Yes, it was Divine, but they didn't have a full grasp of what they were seeing.

At Sinai, however, it was different because it was the giving of the Torah. Torah is something that can be connected to by each person on his or her own level. Whether a great genius or a great simpleton, there's wisdom in the Torah to which they can relate. That's why they died, because the Torah touched them directly and the connection was dramatic.

We celebrate the holiday of Shavuos to commemorate the day we made it personal. Now, it's our job to continue making it personal every day, as it says, "Each day [the Torah] shall be new in your eyes," exciting and fresh and making the personal connection.

Sefirah

We count 49 days until Shavuos, yet we do not count the 50th day (though it mentions counting 50 in the Torah.) One explanation is that Torah is not about a destination, such as "knowing" the whole Torah, but rather about the journey of growing and infusing ourselves with Torah knowledge every day. It's about developing ourselves, and to that there is no end.





In the third month from the exodus from Egypt, on this day they came to the desert of Sinai. Rashi, quoting the Midrash comments that it could have said, "Bayom HaHu," on that day, but instead it says, "Bayom HaZeh, on THIS day, so that when we learn Torah it should be fresh and new for us, as if it was just given today.

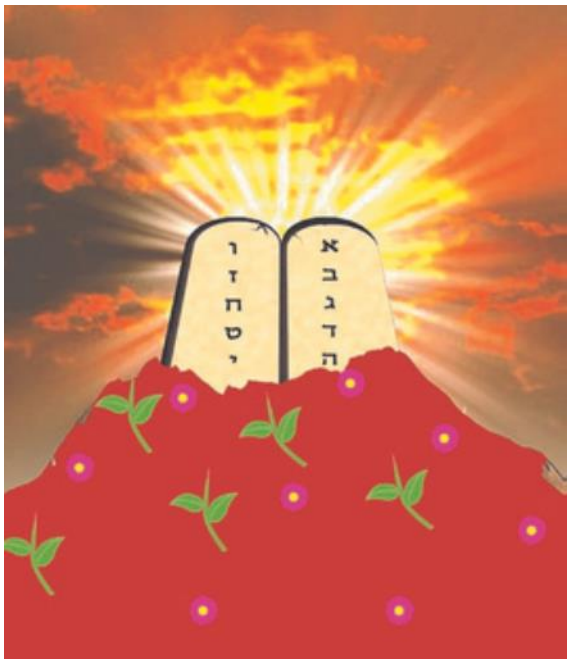
Hashem understand the human need for excitement and newness and conveys to us through this posuk that the Torah can be new and fresh every single day. In it, you will see new things each time you learn it properly, and you will gain a new appreciation for its depth. However, there's also another human proclivity. That is towards pessimism and giving up.

It's possible that a person who wakes up one day and realizes the value of Torah will also feel, "Now it's too late. All those wasted years are too much." Therefore, Hashem says, "Hayom HaZeh, TODAY" you enter the place of Matan Torah.

Don't think about what came before or you will never start. Instead, recognize that the opportunity comes to you fresh TODAY, one you never had before – now seize it!

The name Atzeret [meaning "contained"] symbolizes the fire of Torah that is "contained" in the bones of every Jew. ~ Rav Boruch of Mezhibuz zt"l.

Parsha Thoughts by Mordechai Sapoznick



The Shulchan Aruch writes that on Shavous it is a minhag to decorate our shuls and homes with greenery (flowers) to remember getting the Torah on Har Sinai that was covered with greenery.

Why did Hashem choose to cover Har Sinai with greenery?

Greenery brings pleasure to people's senses. Hashem wanted Bnei Yisroel to accept the Torah with pleasure and joy, so He covered Har Sinai with greenery. The greenery in our shuls and homes remind us of the joy of getting the Torah. [Dvar Torah from **ספר עלינו לשבח**]



מסיני בא וזרח משעיר למו

Chazal tell us: Every single day a Bas Kol - a Heavenly voice rings out from Har Sinai and reminds us all ... Oy Labriyos L'elbona shel Torah. My dear children, do you realize how insulted the Torah is because you do not appreciate her? Do you not realize that every day is a gift in the Wonderland of Toras Hashem?

Chag HaShavuos is a day to once again recognize that gift. It is the day that we make a promise, a shavua. We promise ourselves that we will not get distracted by the nonsense of this world.

The Yetzer Hara tries in every way to take our minds off of the spiritual. To keep us so busy with everything and anything. The Torah is the way to come back. "Barasi Yetzer Hara, Barasi Torah Tavlin."

The Torah is the remedy, the cure for every single spiritual ailment. The only way to access the Torah is to LEARN it, to LIVE it and to LOVE it!

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld - A Special Day

The calendar date of the 2nd of Sivan is a special day. In fact, it is called Yom Ha'meyuchas, a day of entitled status and heritage. But it's very strange. There is actually nothing unique about the 2nd of Sivan, except for the days that preceded it and follow it.

The day before was Rosh Chodesh Sivan, and the days after—the three days preceding Shavuos—are known as the *Sheloshes Yemei Hagbalah*, and are given special status in preparation for the Giving of the Torah.



The Vizhnitzer Rebbe, R' Yisroel of Vizhin, asks how then the 2nd of Sivan would hold any special status. What is special about it when, in fact, what's special are the days before it and after it, but not it unto itself?

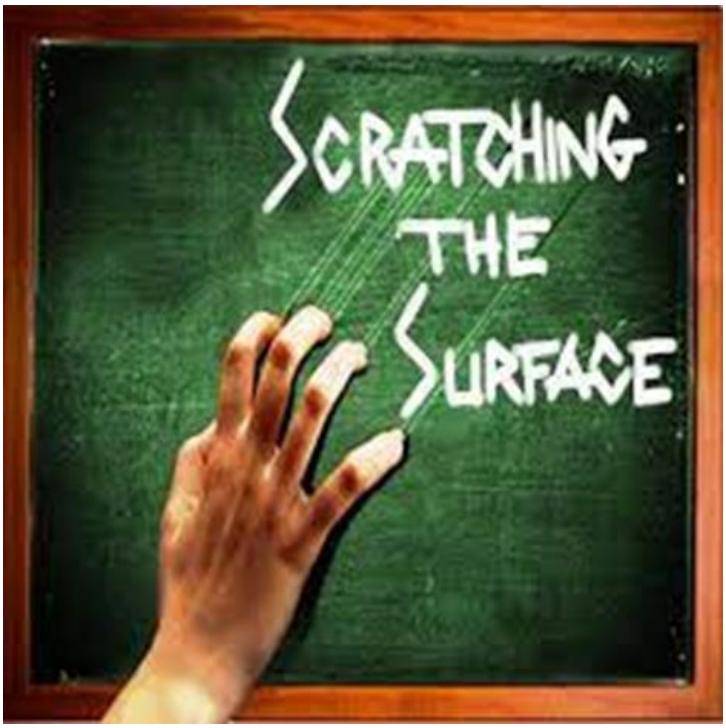
The Vizhnitzer Rebbe explained that herein lies a tremendous lesson. Oftentimes, people feel like they are a nothing and don't deserve anything. They won't get anywhere in life, given their life's circumstances, including their family, job and anything else. "I'm not going to get anywhere…" they tell themselves. They don't feel, "I'm good at this, or good at that…" They don't feel that they are special or will get anywhere in life or make their mark on the world.

That person explains the Vizhnitzer Rebbe, who views themselves that way is the person of true worth and true significance. He is

very much a superior person. And that is yichus. Yichus doesn't mean that you are important "because it's Rosh Chodesh or because it's the Sheloshes Yemei Hagbalah." You are special because of who you are.

The 2nd of Sivan is called Yom Ha'meyuchas and viewed as a special day because of who we are. It's not because of an outer, exterior motive or factor. We are special simply because we are who we are. And often the person who feels that they are a nothing and cannot get far in life can get to the farthest places. Remember that.

The 2nd of Sivan reminds us that anyone who believes that they cannot get anywhere can get amazingly far.



Timeless Truths – Rabbi Moshe Bamberger

The verse in Tehillim (19:8) says, תּוֹרַת ה' תְּמִימָה –"The Torah of Hashem is perfect."

The reason is that it is so deep, so profound, that people – despite their greatest efforts – have not even begun to scratch its surface. – The Ba'al Shem Tov.

"No child is too young to gain from the study of Torah. Even he doesn't understand anything it will still get him used to the sound of learning." - Chacham Ovadia Yosef

The Torah is for Everyone



The *minhag* is to eat *milichig* foods on Shavuos. **The Chasam Sofer** (*Drashos*, *Shavuos* תקצ״ב) explains that milk can be separated into three parts. The best part is the butter, the thick cream that rises to the top. Once the butter is removed, there remains some cheese in the milk. When the cheese is removed, all that is left is a watery liquid, which serves no purpose.

The Chasam Sofer says that the creamy butter represents the tzaddikim, and the cheese represents the *beinonim*, the average Yid. The lowly elements of the nation are represented by the watery whey, which doesn't serve much of a purpose.

When the three parts of the milk are mixed in one, it is a refreshing cup of milk, but when they are separated, a part of the milk is discarded.

Hashem didn't want a segment of Bnei Yisrael not to receive the Torah, so Hashem gave the Torah to the entire Jewish nation. As a nation, even the lowest Yid can have a portion in Torah.

"A rabbi who replies to people's questions works harder than a doctor dealing with a case of life and death. The doctor is responsible only to the patient, but the rabbi is responsible to G-d." ~ R' Moshe Feinstein.

Sterling Character - The Lowest Mountain

Ga'avah, conceit is an extremely bad quality, and it is forbidden to act in this way, even slightly. (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 29:3) - The Medrash teaches us that when Hashem was preparing to give us the Torah, all the mountains stepped forward and declared why they thought the Torah should be given on them.

One mountain said, "I am the highest mountain. The Torah should be given on me." Another mountain said, "I am the steepest mountain, and therefore the Torah should be given on me." Hashem rejected all the mountains and chose Har Sinai, because it was the lowest of the mountains and it was the most humble.

The Kotzker Rebbe, zt"l, asked, if Hashem wanted to teach us humility, why did He give the Torah to us on Har Sinai, which was a mountain? Why wasn't the Torah instead given in a valley?

The Kotzker answers that true humility comes when someone really has something to brag about, and nevertheless, he remains humble.

Hashem gave the Torah on a mountain. If someone is a "valley", meaning, he has no real skills, qualities, or talents, and he does not act haughty about his status, that is not anything great, as he has nothing to even speak of. However, if someone actually has skills, qualities, or talents to be proud of and to have Ga'avah about it, he is, so to speak, a "mountain", and nevertheless, he remains humble and quiet, that is a great quality! - Therefore, Hashem gave the Torah on a mountain, but He chose to give it on a humble mountain.

Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt"l, was known for his tremendous humility. His sister was once asked, "What makes your brother so special?" She responded, "What makes my brother special is that he never looks at himself as being so special."

However, Rav Moshe's humility was not from any weakness. When necessary, he could be firm and strong, if that course of action was needed.

Once, when Rav Moshe was deciding a Halachic argument between two individuals, he caught someone offering testimony that was clearly lies. Rav Moshe reprimanded the man and asked him to leave the room. Another time, Rav Moshe stated a Halachah that one of the litigants did not agree with. The man even had the Chutzpah to accuse Rav Moshe of creating a false Halachah in order to finish up with the case. Rav Moshe stood up and looked at this individual and exclaimed, "My name is Moshe Feinstein. True, I do not know how to learn, but go out in the streets and ask if I am a liar!"

In another case, Rav Moshe decided that a certain woman could be released from her Agunah status, and she was free to get married. Some Rabbanim who were involved in the case disagreed with Rav Moshe, and kept bringing arguments as to why he could not rule as he did. When it reached a certain point, Rav Moshe raised his hand and quieted the opponents. - He said, "I am the Gadol HaDor, and the Halachah is like I have said it is!" And that was the end of the arguing!

Rav Moshe was full of humility, but he knew his place and position in Klal Yisroel, and that is not Ga'avah!

Better Than a Computer - ArtScroll / Mesorah

Rav Chaim Kanievsky knew the entire Torah, frontwards and backwards. When it came to Torah, his memory was like a computer. In truth, it was much better.

A man came to him saying that he once learned that the entrance to Gan Eden is in the Me'aras HaMachpelah, where our Avos are buried, in Chevron. "I have checked all over and cannot find the source anywhere," he said. "I have even asked many talmidei chachamim but none of them knew the source either."

At the time, Rav Chaim was on his way to Minchah, walking towards the Lederman Shul. He thought for a second, then he took a step

towards the shul and said, "No, it is not in Bavli." Then he took another step and said, "No, it is not in Yerushalmi." After a third step he said, "No, it is not in Midrash Rabbah."

With each step he was able to review these entire massive works and know if this quote was mentioned there or not. After just a few moments, he smiled and exclaimed, "Zohar. It is in the Zohar, Parashas Lech Lecha." He even told the man the exact place in the Zohar where it could be found.

Another time, someone asked him how many times the name "Moshe" is mentioned in the Torah. A few moments later Rav Chaim gave the man the number. The next day the same man returned and said, "Last night, I did a computer check and it gave a number very similar to yours. But the number it gave was greater by two than the number you told me."

Rav Chaim laughed and said, "The reason for that is simple. The computer does not read the nikkud, the vowels, it only reads the letters. The letters משה, mem, shin, hey, appear in the Torah many times. Usually, it is referring to the name of Moshe Rabbeinu. But there are two times that these same letters appear, but with different vowels. In one place, the word is pronounced מִשֶּׂה, meaning 'from the sheep'; and in the other it is pronounced מַשֶּׁה, meaning 'of a loan.' Your computer can't tell the difference!"

Rav Chaim's mind worked better and more efficiently than any computer!





Your Torah-Around the Year with Reb Meilech

by Yisroel Besser

The main avodah and best way of preparation are by believing in the power of the Yom Tov and contemplating what it means that the hashpa'ah of Mattan Torah is coming down yet again. If we know that He will speak to us again, says the **Kozhnitzer Maggid**, then we will ensure that our ears are clear, so that when the voice rings out, we will be able to hear it.

"Naaseh," the **Satmar Rav** would quip — if a person does his part to prepare himself accordingly for Yom Tov — then "nishma," he will merit hearing that call on Yom Tov.

Reb Meilech sticks his hand under his jacket, touching his heart. "It's not enough to clean your ears," he says. "If you want to hear clearly, you have to clean your heart. Di hartz! Oy, di hartz…"

There was a wealthy man who, even though he was blessed with material bounty, was limited intellectually. He came to one of the great yeshivos one day and asked to meet with the Rosh Yeshivah. As was the custom of wealthy men, he came looking for a suitable chassan, a bachur whom the Rosh Yeshivah considered to be exceptional.

"Of course," he assured the Rosh Yeshivah, "I will see to his every need, treating him with generosity and respect."

The Rosh Yeshivah suggested a particularly accomplished bachur, and the wealthy man headed back to his hometown, accompanied by his new chassan.

This gvir showed his chassan to a spacious apartment and assured him that delicious meals would be delivered at his convenience. There was an account opened for him to use at the local stores, so

that he could buy whatever he felt he was lacking. "Now, you can sit and learn with complete peace of mind," said the gvir.

The bachur wondered when he would meet his kallah, but reasoned that perhaps her father wanted to get to know him first.

That Shabbos, the gvir walked his new chassan to shul, proudly introducing him to the other members of the kehillah and boasting of his accomplishments to the talmidei chachamim.

The bachur spent the next week learning in the shul, his every need attended to — but there was still no evidence of a kallah. After another Shabbos, he finally asked his benevolent host when he would get to meet the young woman whom he was meant to marry.

The man looked confused. "When will I get to meet your daughter?" asked the chassan again.

"I have no daughters, just seven sons," replied the gvir!

Now the chassan was confused. "If you have no daughters, then why did you bring me here?" he asked.

"I just saw all the other wealthy men in shul coming to shul with their sons-in-law," the gvir explained, "each one boasting of the talmid chacham that they had brought into their home, and I thought it would be nice to have a chassan to bring to shul as well!"

We marvel at his foolishness, but are we so different?

Reb Meilech lifts his hand and begins to check off an imaginary list, using his fingers. "Flowers. Blintzes. A haircut. Cheesecake," he says in English, and smiles. "Nice clothing. - If we invest so much in the chasunah, but there is no kallah, then we are just like that fool!"

A chasunah requires two sides; a chassan is not enough if there is no kallah. The clothing and food symbolize the relationship between us and the Torah, and only when two parties are coming

together is that celebration in place. These are the days to prepare, to make sure that the kallah, the Torah itself, will have a chassan ready to greet and cherish her.

We've been standing for seven weeks and counting down, saying the berachah and counting and reciting the tefillos night after night, anticipating this great day. For this? To dress nicely and enjoy delicious meals?

"Find your kallah," Reb Meilech says, his voice rising, ***"find your kallah. Where's your Torah?"*** He is quiet for a moment, then repeats the question. ***"Where," he asks, "is your Torah?"***

The First Shavuos After Liberation - The Klausenburger Rebbe by Avrohom Birnbaum



It was a mere fifteen days after the survivors had moved from the fields near Mühldorf into the Feldafing DP camp.

In the bare room where the Rebbe lived, one could detect the fire burning in his soul. It was visible in his eyes, in his mannerisms. He was battling the downward pull of despair. "Shavuos is coming!" Anyone whom he met during those few days before Shavuos heard it from him. "Shavuos is coming! We must prepare spiritually; Yom Tov is almost here!"

The Rebbe, still in a German army uniform… The Rebbe with a bit of stubble slowly growing back on his chin in place of his flowing

beard… The Rebbe with no hat or shtreimel, no bekeshe, showed them all that despite everything, Shavuos was still coming! Yes! Shavuos! Yes! Ribbono Shel Olam!

They saw his longing, his profound yearning, to accept upon himself the Torah once again, in its entirety, after all that he had undergone.

It was exactly one year since he and most Hungarian Jewry had been mercilessly ripped away from their homes and families forever and sent to Auschwitz. It was just a year, but it was a lifetime ago. In truth, for the survivors, the mere thought of Yom Tov awakened terribly painful memories, as they thought of the Yamim Tovim of the past that they had spent in the loving embrace of their families. Now, everything was gone. They were alone.

Was the Rebbe rational? How could they celebrate Yom Tov? This one remembered the beautiful Akdamus, that one remembered the Hallel in shul, a third remembered the cheese kreplach and cheesecake and those who had lovingly made them… all of it was gone. The thought of Shavuos depressed the survivors to no end, but the Rebbe would not leave them alone; he was relentless.

The Rebbe had lost his wife. The Rebbe had lost his children. The Rebbe, by personal example, embodied the concept of, "Hisnaari, mei'afer kumi — Wake up and raise yourself up from the dust." It was as though the Rebbe stood at the gates of the camp and raised his voice in the age-old cry of "Mi laHashem eilai!"

R' Avrohom Eideles recounts that first night of Shavuos — a night he simply can never forget: It was surreal. There was the Rebbe, barely two weeks after liberation. He was wearing the only clothing available, the uniform of a German soldier, a bit of stubble on his face, as his beard was showing its first signs of growing back. A few of us, young men and bachurim, were standing around him, our eyes still extinguished from any sign of living. We were just existing, not living.



The Rebbe, however, was on fire. His eyes were burning with an otherworldly fire — a spiritual fire that we thought had been extinguished and no longer existed in the world after… There was no siddur and no machzor… nothing but the Rebbe's voice. "Borchu es Hashem hamevorach," the Rebbe's voice split the air, as he started Maariv with such hislahavus, such enthusiasm.

Somehow, he managed to sweep us up in his enthusiasm and we began to feel… it is Yom Tov. It was his tefillos that made us feel again. All of a sudden, each of us in that room broke down and cried for the first time in who knows how long… Our frozen hearts began to regain their senses, and before we knew it, there was crying and wailing in that room...

In reality, we were thinking about what had been, our homes, our families, he burst into tears and exclaimed, "Tatteh in Himmel! This is not what we hoped for and longed for! We did not long for the day that the Americans would liberate us. We were waiting for Eliyahu HaNavi and Mashiach to liberate us!" - He repeated this over and over again until we all broke down and burst into tears.

"The Rebbe stressed that we must once again begin to learn Torah. Learning Torah is the only thing that can ensure the existence and future of Am Yisrael. "He told us that davka, specifically now, after having seen all that the goyim are capable of doing to us, we must strengthen ourselves in Torah even more! Now that we have seen the diabolical nature of the nations, we can appreciate even more that 'Atah vechartanu mikol ha'amim — You have chosen us

from all the nations.' We can understand that we are different, and the beautiful world that had been snuffed out…

The Rebbe, however, was instilling in us another message, "We are going veiter (carrying on)! We are marching on. Life is not over. We must start anew!"

Who can forget the Kiddush on that first night of Shavuos? The Rebbe was on fire. His Kiddush seemed to split the very heavens. There was nothing to eat but a few crusts of bread, and a few potatoes cooked in a can… and then it happened. As the Rebbe was saying Torah, The Klausenburger Rebbe Later, during the seudah, after they sang Atah Vechartanu, the Rebbe changed his tone and began to infuse the survivors sitting around him with chizuk for the future.

Yidel Rosenberg recalled the Rebbe's message at that pivotal distinctive conduct is expected from us. "The Rebbe became very animated when he told us, 'The Ribbono Shel Olam will have His "minyan," He won't be missing His minyan. I just hope that we will have a role in rebuilding that minyan!'

Already then, two weeks after the liberation, when virtually no one even dreamed that the Torah would once again blossom and grow, the Rebbe's only desire was to have a role in that exalted process."

How it Works

This is how things operate:

According to how much a person turns toward Hashem, so is the help he receives — in every matter.

Fortunate is the one who trusts in Hashem. ~ Ramchal.

Rus, The Eishes Chayil - Rav Chaim – The Life and Legacy of the Sar HaTorah, Rav Shmaryahu Yosef Chaim Kanievsky by Naftali Weinberger

In line with trying to give girls a Biblical name, around Purim time Rav Chaim Kanievsky would suggest the name Esther; around Chanukah he would recommend Yehudis (based on the Midrash of Yehudis on Chanukah); and Rus was the name he chose for Shavuos.

Rav Chaim had a special love for Megillas Rus, and toward the end of his life, he asked one of his children to take some of his money and buy him a Megillas Rus written on parchment.

He once told his daughter, Rebbetzin Rus Tzivyon, that the name Rus was the favorite name of his father, the Steipler. He advised the parents of many of his granddaughters and great-granddaughters who were born during Sefiras HaOmer, from after Pesach until Shavous, as well as other people whose daughters were born around Shavuos time, to name the babies Rus.

He explained that Rus was the mother who saw more nachas from her progeny than any other personality in Tanach, as the Midrash states (Yalkut Shimoni, Rus, Remez 596) that Rus merited seeing the birth of her great-grandchildren, David and Shlomo.

Rav Chaim would invite his daughter, Rebbetzin Rus Tzivyon, to visit every Shavuos, saying that this was "her Yom Tov."

Every year since her childhood, he would invest the effort to come up with a new chiddush (original thought) on Megillas Rus, in her honor, and present it after the day meal on Shavuos.

One year, he explained how the entire song of Eishes Chayil describes Rus, and he quoted a Midrash to that effect (Midrash Zuta, Rus 4:1). Another time, he pointed out that we don't find any Midrash that says Eishes Chayil refers to any other woman.



The numerical value of the Hebrew word "Torah" (תּוֹרָה) is 611. If we add the two commandments that Hashem spoke to the Jews directly, not through Moshe, we get 613. - 613 is the total number of mitzvos in the Torah.

There is a hint of that in the famous verse that says (Devarim 33:4): תּוֹרָה צִוָּה לָנוּ מֹשֶׁה — Moshe commanded us the Torah." From Moshe we got the Torah — that is, 611 mitzvos. The other two we heard directly from Hashem.

למודי משה



Intriguing Questions and Answers for Shavuos

Q: Why Were Klal Yisroel Tired When They Arrived at Har Sinai, Surely they Were Brought by the Clouds of Glory?

It says in *Parshas Yisro*: **ואשא אתכם על כנפי נשרים ואביא אתכם אלי** – "I will carry you on the wings of eagles and bring you to Me" (19:4). The *Targum Yonosan* explains this *pasuk* to mean: The Clouds of Glory (*Ananay HaKavod*) brought Klal Yisroel to Har Sinai to receive the Torah.

If so, how are we to understand the Gemara in Shabbos (86b). The Gemara in Shabbos teaches, that on the first day that Klal Yisroel arrived at Har Sinai nothing was said to them, because of **חולשא דאורחא** – they were weak from travel. If they were brought to Har

Sinai by the Clouds of Glory, why were they tired? (*Panim Yafois, Vayechi d.h. yehi don, Beis HaLevi, Beshalach,* and others asks this question.)

A : **1) The *Imrei Emes*** explains that the reason they were tired was not because of the journey, but because they accepted upon themselves the yoke of Torah. The Gemara in *Bava Metzia* (84a) relates how Reish Lakish used to be able to jump over rivers, however, once he accepted upon himself the yoke of Torah, he was no longer able to. Rashi explains: **דמשקבל עול תורה תשש כוחו** – "Once he accepted upon himself the yoke of Torah, he became weak". The *Imrei Emes* explains that the same thing happened to Klal Yisroel, once they accepted upon themselves the Torah, they became weak.

With this he explains a *pasuk* in Rus. The *pasuk* says: **ותרא כי מתאמצת היא ותחדל לדבר** – "She saw that she was struggling and she started to speak to her". The *Imrei Emes* explains: When Naomi saw that Rus accepted upon herself the yoke of Torah to the extent that it made her weak, she saw that it was a real *kabbolah* [acceptance], and she then started speaking to her.

However, this *peshat* is very difficult, as the Gemara clearly says that the tiredness was because of the journey and not the acceptance of Torah?

R' Dovid Avraham Mendelbaum (in his *sefer al hadaf*, Shabbos 86b) answers: In *Kiddushin* (2b) we find that Torah is referred to as *derech* [path]. In light of this, the Gemara makes perfect sense. **חולשא דאורחא** – tiredness from the way, refers to Torah which they accepted, which is also called *derech*. And the Torah is what caused them to be tired.

A **2)** Perhaps we can also answer: It's true they were brought to Har Sinai with the Clouds of Glory, however, they were still tired due to the journey - like we find people get tired after travelling on a plane.

Although, it could be that there is a difference between the Clouds of Glory which was a spiritual journey, and travelling by plane which is more physical journey.



Q: What Was the Point of Har Sinai Being Covered in Smoke?

It says by Matan Torah (*Shemos* 19:18): **והר סיני עשן כלו מפני אשר ירד עליו ה' באש** – "Har Sinai was covered in smoke because Hashem descended on it in fire." The question is, what was the purpose of this?

A **1)** The *Kesav VeHakabolah* writes: Hashem made Har Sinai be covered in smoke, **לבל יוכלו העם להסתכל בשכינה ויזונו עיניהם ממנה** – "so that the people wouldn't look at the Shechinah, and have their eyes become effected because of it".

A **2)** The *Chasam Sofer* (*Yisro*) writes it was covered in smoke, to reinvoke the *zechus* of the furnace of Avraham Avinu at the *bris bein habesorim*.

The *Chiddushei HaRim* (Chag Matan Torah) writes that on Shavuos there is a special reason to smoke, in order to remember that by Maamad Har Sinai, the mountain was entirely covered in smoke.



Q: What Was the Purpose of the Loud Noise by Har Sinai?

In *Parshas Yisro* by the *parsha* of Matan Torah the *pasuk* says: – *"It was on the third day in the morning, and there were loud noises and thunder and heavy clouds above the mountain. The sound of the shofar was very strong, and all the people in the camp trembled" (Shemos 15:16). What was all the loud noise about, what was its purpose?*

A **1)** That night Klal Yisroel were sleeping, as sleep is very sweet on the short nights of Sivan. Hashem came to give the

Torah and found everyone sleeping, therefore, He decided to sound an alarm clock and wake everyone up by making all sorts of noises. (*Medrash Shir HaShirim, Perek* 11)

A **2)** Rabbeinu *Bechayeh* in *Parshas Yisro* quotes Rabbeinu Chananel who says that all the noise was the voice of *malochim* who come to praise Hashem every morning.

A **3)**The noise was the sound of the *malochim* crying, as they were upset that the Torah was being taken away from them and being given to Klal Yisroel. *(Shach al haTorah).*

A **4)** Torah needs to be given, **באימה וביראה וברתת ובזיע** – "with fear, trembling, shaking and sweat", and the loud noise was for this reason. Like we find: **ויחרד כל העם אשר במחנה** – "The people in the camp trembled." (*Shem MiShmuel,* Shavuos)



Q **: Where Did the Smoke by Matan Torah on Har Sinai Come From?**

From the aforementioned *pasuk* it seems that Hashem descended on the mountain in fire, and this fire gave off smoke, to the extent that the entire mountain was covered in smoke. Asks R' Chaim Paltiel: The Gemara in *Yoma* (21b) says that, "fire that comes from Heaven doesn't emit smoke", if, so how come here there was smoke?

A **1)** R' Paltiel answers, normally fire from heaven doesn't emit smoke, however, by Har Sinai it was done to specially to create fear.

A **2)** *Rabbeinu Bechayeh* because of this question, explains that the smoke by Har Sinai wasn't because of a burning fire, rather, the mountain itself miraculously gave off smoke, therefore, it says, **והר סיני עשן כולו** – "**the mountain** of Sinai was all smoke".

A **3)** The *Alshich* writes, that Hashem made a special miracle that the heavenly fire gave off smoke, in order to create a partition between the Shechinah and Klal Yisroel so that they wouldn't look at the Shechinah and become blind.



Q **: How Does Staying Up All Night Atone for Not Waking Up in the Morning?**

The *Magen Avraham* (*Orach Chaim* 494) quotes the *Zohar* which records that many *talmiday chachomim* used to spend the entire night learning in preparation of receiving the Torah.

The *Magen Avraham* (*Orach Chaim* 494:1) cites the famous Medrash in *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* which documents that on the day that Bnei Yisroel were to receive the Torah at Har Sinai, they overslept.

Therefore, in order to "make-up" for this mishap and show how much we really do appreciate and love the Torah we stay up the entire night learning and preparing to accept it.

The Gemara in *Yoma* (22a) relates: Originally, they never used to perform a lottery to determine who would perform the mitzvah of *terumas hadeshen,* as they were scared that the person who was picked would sleep in and not make it. The Gemara asks: That for the offering up of the *avorim* and *pedorim* [limbs] they made a lottery, even though it was at night at a time when people sleep?

Rashi explains: It's easier for a person to stay up late at night and wipe sleep from his eyes, then it is for one to get out of bed early in the morning.

The question is, if so, how does staying up all night fix the mishap of oversleeping in the morning, staying up all night is easier than waking up early? Seemingly, what we should Shavuos morning is, we should go to sleep and wake up earlier than normal?

A **1)** Perhaps we can answer as follows: We find that Torah is compared to water. The *Chofetz Chaim* would explain, there is a special halachah in *Hilchos Berachos* regarding water. By all foods, if one eats them, whether he is hungry or not he recites it's *berachah*. If one eats an orange, whether he is hungry or not he recites *ha'eitz*. However, when it comes to water, one only makes a *berachah* if he is thirsty. If one isn't thirsty, and he drinks water to help swallow a pill etc. no *berachah* is made. Torah is compared to water, as Torah requires thirst, if one doesn't have a thirst, an unquenchable thirst for Torah, then he won't be able to acquire Torah.

Klal Yisroel's sleeping in on the day of Matan Torah, showed a tremendous lack of thirst for the Torah. On Shavuos night we stay up all night long learning Torah to demonstrate our unquenchable thirst for Torah. This is the perfect *tikkun* [rectification] for Klal Yisroel's mishap. Klal Yisroel showed a lack of thirst, so we stay up all night learning to show how we do in fact have this great thirst for Torah.

A **2)** It's true waking up early would be more ideal, however, *Chazal* know how hard it is to get up and they were scared that if they would tell people to wake up early, people may end up making the same mistake Klal Yisroel made by Har Sinai. Therefore, although the most ideal *teshuvah* would be waking up early, they didn't want to risk it. Therefore, the closest thing they could do which they thought would work is to tell us to stay up all night. Although, it doesn't fix the mishap completely, it's the best they felt they could establish.

A **3)** Or, we could say, it's true getting up early would be the most ideal *teshuvah*, however, Shavuos night is such a special time for learning, it just doesn't make sense to tell people to go to sleep.

Q: Why Do We Learn on Shavuos Night, Surely, We Should Refrain from Learning, So That We Accept the Torah on Shavuos Morning with Great Appetite?

On *erev* Shabbos there is a halachah that one should refrain from eating too much in order that he enters Shabbos with appetite. Similarly, on *erev* Pesach we find one should refrain from eating *matzah* so that he enters Pesach with appetite. The question is: Why don't we find the same thing by Shavuos, we should refrain from learning on *erev* Shavuos and on Shavuos night, so that we accept the Torah with great appetite? Why do we do the exact opposite and learn all night?

A: We can answer based on the *Sefas Emes*. The *Sefas Emes* (Shavuos 5660) writes:

Normally the more one has of something the less he desires it, however, Torah is the exact opposite and the more one learns the more he has appetite for it. Therefore, on Shavous we learn all night, as the more one learns the greater his appetite.

We can explain that when it comes to eating, after eating one is full, however, when it comes to Torah it's the exact opposite, the more one learns, the hungrier he gets and the more he wants to learn. Therefore, he can't make a *berachah*. It's true that one derives great benefit from learning Torah and it's very enjoyable and satisfying, however, one can't recite a *berachah achronah*, as he still desires more Torah and more Torah and is never satisfied. (*Madanay Asher*)

Wishing You An Uplifting Kabbalas HaTorah and Enjoyable Yom Tov!!!__

"Shavuos is the wedding day between Hakadosh Baruch Hu and Klal Yisroel." ~ Maharal of Prague.

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

They told over a story about a rosh yeshivah from overseas. He spoke about a certain prestigious Chassidishe yeshivah in New York — maybe not the very top, but among the better ones.

The rosh yeshivah said: "I have a bochur there who simply does not belong in this yeshivah. He only got accepted because his father is connected to the leadership of the community. This boy is not on the level of the yeshivah at all.

"And suddenly, for the past few weeks, he's been getting 100% on every single test. One hundred percent! The maggid shiur told me this had been going on for two or three weeks already."

"I shook my head. I know this boy. He's not a '100% boy.' He's not even more than a 50% student.

"The rebbi showed me the tests — every one marked 100%.

"So I said, either he got hold of the answers somehow, or he's copying from another student. It simply cannot be. I know this boy."

They decided to investigate.

The rosh yeshivah himself wanted to watch what would happen. He arranged for the maggid shiur to hand out the test while he observed discreetly from above.

He watched as the boy received the test and immediately began writing. Writing and writing and writing.

The rosh yeshivah then came downstairs, took the paper directly from the boy's hand, checked it himself — and it was perfect. 100%.

"I was stunned," the rosh yeshivah said. "I couldn't understand it. I went straight into my office and felt I owed it to the parents to tell them what was happening. This was extraordinary — a boy who

had always been a 50% student was suddenly getting 100% for weeks in a row."

"I called the house. The father wasn't home, so the mother answered. "I told her, 'I felt obligated to call. Your son has been getting perfect scores for several weeks."

"The mother replied, 'Rebbi, about a month ago the maggid shiur sat with the boys before shiur and shared a story. He told them that fifty years ago the **Satmar Rebbe** had once visited their town and davened Shacharis there. He described the tremendous avodah during the tefillah — the crying, the shouting, the intensity, the pouring out of the heart. Fifty years later, people still could not forget it. Just remembering it sent a tremor through a person.'

"That was the story the rebbi told the boys."

"My son came home that Friday night and repeated the story to us. I could see that he wanted to imitate that kind of avodah. So I told him: 'Don't do it in yeshivah — they'll think you're strange. But I can see you really want this.'

"So I made a deal with him. Every morning I would wake him up at six o'clock. From Ahavah Rabbah until the brachah of "Baruch Atah Hashem," he would stand in his room and daven with crying and emotion, just as he imagined the Satmar Rebbe had done.'

"And for the past month, every single day, he has been doing it — crying and pouring out his heart during Ahavah Rabbah.'

"And"- the mother concluded, "that is what transformed the boy in yeshivah."

"A person who learns Torah on Shavuos night shows that Torah is beloved to him." ~ Ben Ish Chai.

Project Mesorah - Rabbi Paysach Krohn

A good *Erev Shabbos* my dear friends of Project *Mesorah*, this is your friend Rabbi *Paysach* Krohn speaking to you.

Take a look if you can at *Medrash Tanchuma* in *Yisro Siman Ches*. It says over there that everybody at *Har Sinai* was healed. The blind were able to see, the lame were able to walk, and the deaf were able to hear. *Hashem* gave the *Torah* to everybody, and everybody was in perfect health.

I once heard that ***Rav Elyashiv*** said that when they read the *Aseres Hadibros* on *Shavuos*, people should have in mind those *cholim* that they should have a *refuah shleimah*. And that's a beautiful thing to do.

So make a list of a number of people, don't make it too long otherwise you're not going to be listening to the *Aseres Hadibros*, but make a list of people and have them in mind when the *Aseres Hadibros* are being read on *Shavuos*. And that's a *segulah* for a *refuah*, that's what *Rav Elyashiv* said. So have that in mind, and *Der Eybershter* should help that everybody should have a *refuah shleimah*.

Have a *freilichen Shabbos* and a *freilichen Yom Tov*, and we should all be *zocheh* to complete health and complete *refuois*, not only for ourselves but for everybody in *Klal Yisrael*. Have a great *Shabbos* and a great *Yom Tov*.

"On Shavuos, the world is judged regarding the Torah. The question is not only how much a person knows, but how precious Torah is in his eyes — whether it is his life itself or merely one part of life." ~ Rav Yitzchok Hutner.

Aspiring To Great Heights When He Was Young - And He Fulfilled His Ambition

רבי מאיר שפירא זצ"ל once arrived at a train station. Throngs of people lined the platform to give **שלום** to the **גדול** and introduce themselves. A young Rov, after giving **שלום** to **רבי מאיר**, introduced himself as the son-in-law of the **Shotzer Rebbe**. **רבי מאיר** felt very close to the Shotzer Rebbe as he had grown up in the town of Shotz.

רבי מאיר looked at him and asked a strange question, "Is your Rebbetzin perhaps here with you?" The young Rov replied that in fact she was. **רבי מאיר** said he wished to speak to her. The young Rov hurriedly called over his wife.

רבי מאיר lowered his gaze and addressed the woman. "Do you remember that as a small child I would learn with your father in your home?"

The woman replied that she remembered those days well. "Do you recall how I would play with your siblings and yourself?" Once again the woman replied in the affirmative.

"Do you recall how I would share my grand plans about how one day, all the **אידן** in the world would learn the very same **דף** of **גמרא**, a **דף היומי**, and thus be connected in the most powerful and meaningful way? And maybe..." **רבי מאיר**'s voice dropped to a whisper "you recall how all the children would laugh at my idea, mockingly calling it 'dach hayona' deriving immense satisfaction from the joke." -The woman didn't reply.

"Do you know that I came close to losing confidence in my plan and dropping it entirely as a result of those taunts? This is the reason I asked to meet with you....I just wanted you to tell you one thing: Never laugh at the ambition of a child." (**עלינו לשבח**)

The Weekly Vort

No Din Torah – Because of Torah

Zvi was a staunch *chassid* of the **Sfas Emes of Ger**, while his business partner, Dov, was a *misnaged* (opponent of chassidus). They enjoyed an amicable relationship over the years.

Once a dispute arose over a sum of money, leading to a bitter argument. The two agreed to have the matter decided via a Din Torah, to be presided over by the Sfas Emes.

When the two partners entered the room of the Sfas Emes on the appointed day, the Sfas Emes closed the Gemara from which he had been studying and prepared to receive them. To everyone's utter surprise, Dov announced, "Rebbe, there is nothing to judge. I waive all my claims!" and he exited.

The argument had been so heated – why did Dov retreat from his position so suddenly?

Dov explained, "When we came into the room, the Rebbe was learning, and when he had to close the Gemara in order to hear our case, I saw a look of acute pain on his face. His yearning for Torah was so intense, and the loss of time from Torah study caused him such anguish, that I decided that no amount of money in the world is worth causing the Rebbe this pain. Therefore I withdrew my claim!"

"Every year on Shavuos there is a renewed light of Matan Torah. The revelation of Sinai never ceased; it returns again each year, and according to a person's preparation, so does he receive from that original light." — Sfas Emes.



Is Reading *Megillas* Rus An *Chiyuv* or a *Minhag*?

The Gaon held that reading *Megillas* Rus on Shavuos is a full *chiyuv*. However, the *Rema* and the *Radvaz* both discuss whether a *berachah* should be recited when reading these *Megillos* and they conclude that reading these *Megillos* has no source in the Gemara and doing so is simply a *minhag*.

The *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* (490:17) adds that if reading these *Megillos* would have been a genuine obligation, it would have been obligatory to write them on *klaff* like *Megillas* Esther.

The *Rema* further notes that this *minhag* never spread universally throughout Klal Yisrael, and the *Radvaz* records that many communities do not read *Megillas* Rus at all on Shavuos. The *Rema* (490:9) cites the *Avudraham* who writes: **דנוהגין לומר רות בשבועות** – "The custom is to recite Rus on Shavuos".



The Definition of True *Kabbolas HaTorah*

ותלך ותבא ותלקט - *"She went, and she came and gleaned in the field behind the reapers"* (Rus 2:3).

Rashi quotes a Medrash which questions the sequence of the above *pasuk*. Rus seems to have: 1) **ותלך** - Gone to the field. 2) **ותבא** - Returned home. 3) **ותלקט** - Then gathered the gleanings.

Did Rus really go to the field, return home, and only then gather the gleanings?

The Medrash explains that Rus first went to the field (as the *pasuk* says) but along the way she marked the path. She then, even prior to collecting, went back home, once again marking the path. Only after she was certain she knew the route back and forth, did she return to do the actual gathering of the gleanings.

Now we can understand the *pasuk* - **ותלך ותבא ותלקט**. She went [marking the way], then, she went back [marking the way] – and only then did she return to collect.

While this now makes for a good and proper read of the *pasuk*, why were we informed of this? Why do we have to know about Rus [her anxiety] and her marking the directions…? Does knowing this about Rus help us, the reader of *Tanach*, in any way?

Rav Doniel Pransky suggests that this tells us something significant about Rus; she was a woman who left nothing to chance. She was obsessively concerned about making sure everything was under her control. Rus went back and forth marking the path. She updated her GPS with the latest maps and directions. She was meticulous in her planning and ever so careful to leave nothing to chance…

And it is this same woman who is so painstaking in her planning, who earlier (when accepting the Torah) was able to say: "Do not press me to leave you, to return from after you, for wherever you go, I will go, and wherever you lodge, I will lodge" (1:16).

The same woman who went back-and-forth marking the path – needing to know exactly where and how she will go, was still willing to break [out of] that mold when it came to *kabbolas haTorah*, when she required willingness to change her life and lifestyle and live by a new set of rules. Rus understood that *Kabbolas haTorah* requires becoming – to a degree – a *hefker* and blank slate, where a new set of rules govern although that means change of conduct, behavior and even deeply ingrained fears and concerns. The woman who needed to know everything, was willing to not know where she will go or where she will lay her head at night.

She then becomes the perfect illustration/example of *what must be done* and *what can be done* – to be *mekabel* the Torah!

The Delayed Wedding

In the story of Rus, we encounter the tragic decisions of Machlon and Kilyon, two brothers who sinned by marrying Moabite women. The *Alshich* points out a striking difference between them: Kilyon, the younger brother, essentially disappears from the narrative. He is forgotten, erased from the annals of Jewish legacy. Machlon, on the other hand—despite committing the very same transgression—is remembered. More than that, he becomes the ancestor of Dovid Hamelech and, ultimately, Moshiach. Through his wife Rus, and the spiritual force of *yibbum*, *malchus beis Dovid* (the royal lineage of King David) itself emerges.

This should make us pause. They both committed the same sin. So why is Machlon rewarded with such extraordinary merit, while Kilyon vanishes?

The *Alshich* offers a remarkable insight:

He notes that, by the natural order of things, the older sibling typically marries before the younger. Yet in this case, it was Kilyon, the younger, who married first. What does that tell us?

It tells us that although Machlon ultimately succumbed to the same sin, he initially resisted. He held himself back. He knew it was wrong, and so he waited. He struggled and he fought. Even if only briefly, he told his *yetzer hara*: *No*. He did not act immediately. It was during that hesitation, that inner conflict, that his younger brother proceeded and married first.

In other words, Machlon didn't fall right away. He tried, and he delayed. He battled within. And even though he eventually gave in, that brief resistance was enough to change everything.

From that small act of restraint came the merit that led to the birth of Dovid, to kingship, to the lineage of Moshiach.

The implications of this are staggering.

He failed, but not immediately. He tried to stand strong. And that moment of resistance was eternally significant.

Just imagine the power of a single moment of self-control. The spiritual impact of delaying an impulse. We're not even talking about total victory; just the refusal to give in *right away*.

Think of a daily struggle. Take one moment at a time, one decision at a time. Each small act of control accumulates. Each pushback carries spiritual weight. Each delay could open the gates of tremendous *berachah*.

Who among us doesn't need more blessing in their lives? Who wouldn't want more spiritual merit on their side?

We *can* do this. You *can* do this. (Rabbi Meir Simcha Sperling)

Riddles for Shavuos

Why do we keep two days of Shavuos in *Chutz La'aretz*, surely Shavuos is 50 days after Pesach, and there is no doubt of when it is?

The Rambam (*Hilchos Kiddush Hachodesh* 3:12) explains that really we should not have Yom Tov Sheini on Shavuos since it is the fiftieth day of the *sefirah*. However, in order not to differentiate between the other Yomim Tovim we do it. According to this, Yom Tov Sheini of Shavuos is the same as any other Yom Tov.

The *Chasam Sofer* (*Teshuvos O.C.* 145 and *Y.D.* 250) says that since *Chazal* said we should do a second day Yom Tov this means it is not because of doubt of the date. This means it was instituted as a definite day for Yom Tov and therefore is stricter than a regular Yom Tov Sheini that is only kept as a doubt.

What reason does the *Mishnah Berurah* bring down for the *minhag* of eating milky food on Shavuos?

The Mishnah Berurah (Hilchos Shavuos, siman 494, s.k. 12) writes that he heard in the name of a gadol echod a reason for why we eat milky foods on Shavuos:
Klal Yisrael stood at Har Sinai and received the Aseres HaDibros (which according to Rav Saadya Gaon contained the entire Torah). After that they returned home, and they had nothing readily available to eat. Preparing kosher meat requires a lengthy process: Shechting with a checked knife, removing cheilev and blood, salting, and cooking in new utensils — since the pots they had used that very day before Matan Torah were now forbidden. They therefore chose dairy as a temporary measure.
To commemorate this, we eat dairy on Shavuos.

The Chofetz Chaim asks a strong question on this: - This reason implies that had they had more time, they could have prepared meat. But the Gemara (Shabbos 86b) establishes that the Torah was given on Shabbos. Even with unlimited time, they could not have shechted on that day — since shechitah is prohibited on Shabbos (Shabbos 75a). They had already been commanded regarding Shabbos at Marah (Sanhedrin 56b), and at Matan Torah they heard the mitzvah of Shabbos in the Aseres HaDibros. The inability to prepare meat had nothing to do with time pressure — shechitah was simply forbidden!

The Chofetz Chaim answers: What we have to say is, this reason that is given for eating milky food follows the opinion of R' Elozor ben Azarayah who learns that Matan Torah occurred on erev Shabbos. According to this view, Klal Yisrael descended from Har Sinai on Friday afternoon. Shechitah was technically permitted — but there was not enough time before Shabbos to complete the lengthy preparation process. Hence, they ate dairy, and to commemorate this we have the minhag to eat milky foods on Shavuos.

In a number of places *Chazal* compare Torah to water (*Bava Kamma* 17a; *Avodah Zarah* 5b; *Bava Kamma* 82a). The Gemara teaches: אין מים אלא תורה - "water refers to nothing other than Torah."

The question is, why would *Chazal* compare Torah to water, which is something that has no taste. Surely, *Chazal* should compare it to something sweet and appealing, which would help inspire and give people a *cheshek* [desire] to learn Torah?

Believe it or not, the Medrash Rabbah (*Shir HaShirim* 3:1) offers no less than fourteen reasons:

i) Just as water extends from one end of the world to the other, similarly, Torah spans the entire world like it says -**ארכה מארץ מדה**.

ii) Just as water gives life to the world, similarly, Torah gives life to the world like it says - **כי חיים הם למוצאיהם**.

iii) Just like Torah comes from Shomayim, similarly, Torah comes from Shomayim like it says - **כי מן השמים דברתי עמכם**.

iv) Just like water is with great noise like it says - **קול ה' על המים** – similarly, Torah is with great noise like it says - **ויהי ביום השלישי בהיות הבקר ויהי קולות וברקים**.

v) Just like water revives the soul, so does the Torah.

vi) Just as water purifies a person from tumah like it says - **וזרקתי עליכם מים טהורים וטהרתם** – so too, Torah purifies from tumah like it says - **אמרות ה' אמרות טהורות** . And just like water purifies the body like it says - **את בשרו במים ורחץ** – similarly, Torah purifies the body like it says - **צרופה אמרתך מאד**.

vii) Just as water covers the nakedness of the sea, similarly, Torah covers the nakedness of Yisrael like it says - **ועל כל פשעים תכסה אהבה**.

viii) Water falls drop by drop and forms streams and rivers. So too, Torah: A person learns two halachos today, two tomorrow, until he becomes like a flowing spring.

ix) Water is not pleasant when one is not thirsty. Similarly, Torah offers nothing to one who does not genuinely crave it — a person connects to Torah only when thirsting for it.

x) Just as water leaves high places and flows to lower ones, Torah departs from those with haughty spirits and dwells with the humble.

xi) Just as water cannot be preserved in silver or gold but only in a simple container, similarly, Torah endures only in one who makes himself like a simple container.

xii) A great person is not embarrassed to ask a lesser person for water. So too in Torah — a great person is not embarrassed to ask a younger person to teach him a single perek, a single statement, a single pasuk, or even a single letter.

xiii) Just as one who does not know how to swim will eventually be swallowed by the water, one who cannot navigate Torah and rule from it will ultimately be lost in it.

xiiii) Just as water makes plants grow, similarly, Torah makes those who toil in it grow.



Why is Torah compared to honey, is there nothing else which is sweet?

The *Chofetz Chaim* in his introduction to *Likutei Halachos* raises this question and offers a remarkable answer:

Honey has a unique natural property: If bread, meat, or any other food falls into honey and remains there for a prolonged period, it transforms entirely and becomes honey. Even if the fallen substance was originally prohibited, some *poskim* rule that it reverts to a permitted state, having been so thoroughly converted.

This, says the *Chofetz* Chaim, is precisely the point. The *pasuk* is not merely saying Torah is pleasant. It is saying Torah's power to transform a person is greater even than honey — for if a person

diligently cleaves to Torah as he should, even if his soul was deeply corrupt, the Torah sanctifies and purifies him until he becomes an entirely different person.



The Gemara in *Megillah* (29a) relates that a *Bas Kol* called out to all the other mountains and said that you are blemished compared to Sinai. The Gemara explains that the blemish was that they were too haughty.

The question is, why didn't Hashem resolve the dispute about which mountain to give the Torah on and join them all together, and give the Torah on all of them, like what happened with stones that wanted Yaakov Avinu to rest his head on them?

i) From the Gemara in *Megillah* it's clear that the other mountains had a blemish, i.e. they were to haughty, therefore, Hashem didn't want to use them, as He wanted to use a mountain free from any blemishes.

ii) The *meforshim* say that the reason the Torah wasn't given on the taller mountains is because the non-Jew's places idols on the top and Hashem was worried that if the Torah was given on these mountain, the non-Jew's would start associating it with their idols. Therefore, he chose a small humble mountain which never had *avodah zorah* on the top of it and this helped alleviate any such concern.

iii) By Yaakov Avinu, the stones had good intentions, like they said: "I want the *tzadik* to rest his head on me", the stones wanted the merit of serving a *tzadik,* therefore, Hashem rewarded them and made them one big stone. When it came to the mountains, however, they didn't have good intentions, they wanted the Torah to be given on them to show off, therefore, they didn't deserve a special miracle.



The Medrash relates that Klal Yisrael were asleep when the time of Matan Torah arrived, and they had to be awakened. This is striking: When a person anticipates something precious, he cannot sleep from excitement. How did Klal Yisrael manage to fall asleep on the night of the greatest moment in human history?

Many great answers have been given to explain this:

i) The Kedushas HaLevi explains that Klal Yisrael expected the nations of the world to delay things. Hashem went from nation to nation offering them the Torah; perhaps they would accept, and the process would take time. Therefore, Klal Yisrael thought there was no urgency to stay awake. In the end, the nations of the world refused without hesitation — there was no delay — but Klal Yisrael weren't expecting this, so they slept.

ii) The Likkutei Maharich, in the name of the Apta Rav explains that their hearts burned so intensely with longing — the anticipation was so overwhelming — that their souls literally could not bear to remain awake. They were consumed by yearning to the point of physical collapse. Had they remained conscious, they could not have survived the intensity of anticipation until the moment of revelation.

iii) The Yismach Yisrael explains that Hashem deliberately caused them to sleep — to demonstrate that no matter how much a person prepares, he still needs siyata diShmaya.

iv) The Chida (Devash Lepi, Maareches 300, ois 42) brings down a peshat that the malochim had argued: "How can flesh and blood receive what belongs in Heaven?" and when the neshomah is connected to the body, there was room for the malochim's argument. Therefore, to counter the malochim's argument Klal Yisrael went to sleep so that their neshomos would ascend above, unencumbered by the body. In that state — neshomas above, without physical form — they demonstrated that the neshomas of Klal Yisreal were closer to Hashem than the malochim themselves, and more deserving of Torah.

v) The Shem MiShmuel (Shavuos) explains that Klal Yisrael understood that to receive the Torah, they needed to be reborn like it says: **אני היום ילדתיך** – "This day I have given birth to you." Sleep is the nearest analog to death (the Gemara says sleep is one-sixtieth of death). By sleeping, their life-force receded to a minimal point; upon waking, they rose as new beings — like newborns — formed entirely for Torah.

vi) Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (Avodas Yisrael) writes: Chas vesholam to say about such a holy nation that they were lazy and fell asleep on this special day. Rather, what happened was, that from the second of Sivan they had been preparing with total spiritual and mental exertion. When the night before Matan Torah arrived, they were exhausted — not from sloth, but from the intensity of preparation. They feared that if they did not rest, their minds would not be clear enough to receive Torah properly. So, they intentionally slept, to refresh their thoughts for the holy moment ahead.



The Medrash (Yalkut Shimoni, *Remez* 951) relates that before Hashem gave the Torah to Klal Yisrael, He offered it to the other nations of the world, however, they refused to accept it. Did every single person refuse, or were there some people from these nations who were happy to accept it?

It is said over in the name of R' Avrohom Ben Avrohom the Ger that when the nations of the world were asked if they wanted the Torah, they did a vote. The majority voted not to accept the Torah, however, there were a minority that did want to accept the Torah, and throughout the generations, this minority converted and became Jewish.



What's the *chiddush* that Torah is more valuable than "gold and silver", if it's more valuable than gold, obviously it's more valuable than silver?

We say in *Tehillim* (119:72): **טוב לי תורת פיך מאלפי זהב וכסף** – "Torah is more precious than thousands of gold and silver pieces." The difficulty is, if Torah is more valuable than gold, obviously it is more valuable than silver. If, so, why doesn't the *pasuk* simply say "Torah is more precious than gold"?

The *Hafla'ah* in his introduction to *Kesubos* asks this question.

The *Madanay Asher* (Shavuos 5785) suggests an interesting answer:

Once upon a time there was a person standing by the seaside and he was filling it up with cups of water, and he told people that he wants to add water to the sea. A bystander who oversaw this started laughing, saying, "do you think your tiny cup of water will do anything, I will show you what you need to do." This person then went and got a big bucket and started filling up the sea. At the seaside there was a third onlooker who began to laugh at both of them, and particularly at the second person who understand how deep and vast the sea was and still wanted to add to the sea. The sea is so deep and vast and neither a cup of water, nor a big bucket is going to make any difference.

The same thing is with the Torah, the Torah is so precious and valuable, that anything compared to it is considered insignificant. Both gold and silver compared to Torah are negligible. Therefore, Dovid HaMelech says: The Torah *hakadosha* is so holy to me, more than anything, more than gold and silver, and he isn't careful to say silver before gold, as when it comes to Torah gold and silver are all the same, they are both negligible compared to the value of Torah.

Is there a special *inyan* to smoke on Shavuos? And does it apply nowadays?

The Torah tells us: וְהַר סִינַי עָשַׁן כֻּלּוֹ מִפְּנֵי אֲשֶׁר יָרַד עָלָיו ה׳ בָּאֵשׁ — "And Har Sinai was completely covered in smoke, because Hashem descended upon it in fire." (*Shemos* 19:18)

What was the purpose of the smoke?

i) The *Kesav VeHakabolah* explains that if Klal Yisrael would have looked at the Ribbono Shel Olam directly it would have ruined their eyes. Consequently, He covered to mountain with smoke so that Klal Yisrael wouldn't be able to look at Him directly.

ii) The *Chasam Sofer* (Yisro) writes it was covered in smoke, to reinvoke the *zechus* of the furnace of Avraham Avinu and the *zechus* of the *bris bein habesorim*.

The *Chiddushei HaRim* (*Chag Matan Torah*) writes that on Shavuos there is a special *inyan* to smoke, in order to remember that by Maamad Har Sinai, the mountain was entirely covered in smoke.

(Obviously this is only at a time when smoking was considered *shaveh l'kol nefesh,* nowadays this has changed, and it would seem that nowadays smoking is forbidden on Yom Tov. Feel free to consult your rav before concluding on this complicated topic.)

"When Klal Yisroel said 'Naaseh v'nishma,' they rose above ordinary human calculation. They showed that the deepest connection to Hashem begins not with understanding everything, but with trust and submission to His will." ~ Rav Dessler.

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman



Reb Shalom Ber of Lubavitch zt'l writes that he has a note, handwritten by his grandfather, the Tzemach Tzedek zt'l, with the following notation:

"I guarantee that whoever stays awake all Shavuos night and studies Torah will merit the crown of Torah."



Pele Yoetz (Atzeres) writes, "How good it is to pour out your heart [on Shavuos] that your children should earn the crown of Torah, למוד וללמד לשמור ולעשות to learn Torah, to teach, and to keep the Torah."



The Kaf HaChaim (494:34) writes, "It is ideal to learn Tehillim on Shavuos because Dovid HaMelech was niftar on this day (as is stated in the Yerushalmi)… Tehillim that one recites on this day will be answered."



Wine takes time and effort to prepare. The same is with oil. But milk is immediately available. One milks an animal, and there is milk.

We eat milk and milichigs on Shavuos to remind us that Torah is readily available. תורה מונחת בקרן זוית, the Torah lies in a corner, and whoever wants to can come forward and take it, study it, and acquire it.



Reb Avraham ben Avraham *zy'a hy'd*

The second day of Shavuos is the *yahrtzeit* of the *ger tzedek* of Vilna, Reb Avraham ben Avraham *zt'l*, who was killed *al kiddush Hashem*. His father, Count Pototski, was legendarily wealthy.

Someone asked Reb Avraham why he chose to become a Yid, as it meant forfeiting all his father's wealth.

He answered, "Friday night, when the Shabbos oil lamps go out, they give off a scent. That scent gives me more pleasure than all the wealth I enjoyed in my previous life."

In those days, it was forbidden to convert to Judaism. Especially when a child of the famous and wealthy Pototski family converted, the goyim viewed it as a great insult to the church. Thus, while Reb Avraham lived among Yidden, he had to conceal his true identity from them, so no one should find out about his past.

But someone found out and informed the government. Reb Avraham was arrested and sentenced to death, r'l. The *ger Tzedek* knew who reported him to the government, but he said he wouldn't take revenge.

He said, "In this world, I didn't take revenge. Do you think that I will take revenge in the next world?"

Reb Avraham ben Avraham was a student of the Vilna Gaon *zt'l*. The Vilna Gaon told him that he had the ability (in a *ruchniyus* manner) to save him, but the *ger tzedek* declined, preferring to die *al kiddush Hashem*.

Reb Alexander Zuskind *zy'a*, the author of *Yesod Veshoresh HaAvodah*, went to the square where the pyre was prepared to burn the *ger tzedek*. He wanted to answer amen to the *brachah* the *ger tzedek* would say when being *moser nefesh al kiddush Hashem*. - It was *mesirus nefesh* for the Yesod v'Shoresh HaAvodah to be there because if someone saw him, they were liable to burn him at the stake as well, *chalilah*.

The Vilna Gaon commented that had ten people answered amen to the ger tzedek's brachah, the world would have reached its perfected state of rectification, and Moshiach would have come.

Reb Shlomo Zalman Auerbach said that he heard *ish mipi ish* [from a direct source] from the Vilna Gaon *zt'l* that when the *ger tzedek* said this *brachah*, a fire came forth from beneath Ma'aras HaMachpeilah and burned up all *kelipos*. Had there been a minyan answering amen, the world would have reached its complete *tikun*. - **זי"ע**

After Kabbalas HaTorah, HaKadosh Baruch Hu told Moshe (Devorim 5:27), **לך אמר להם שובו לכם לאהליכם** – *'Go say to them, "Return to your tents'*.

Hashem wanted to hint to them and tell them: "True, you received the Torah and you said, 'Na'aseh V'Nishma' [We will do and we will listen], but now, when you return to your tents, I want to see how you conduct yourselves and what you do when you are in your homes." ~ (**Rebbe Bunim of Peshischa**)

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

During a certain period in his life, the **Brisker Rav, zt"l**, needed to take daily walks for health reasons, and a student would accompany him. Before they would go out, the Brisker Rav would tell his student to 'pack up provisions' and get ready to go for the walk.

What were the provisions that the Brisker Rav required? - A new question of Rav Akiva Eiger. - The student would prepare the topic, and then the two would set out, discussing it as they walked!

Rav Avigdor Miller Zt"L - The Most Happy Day

A Day of Happiness

I remember when I was learning in Slabodka that it was the *minhag* of the yeshivas in Europe that Shavuos was the happiest day of the year; there was a wild excitement, even more than Simchas Torah. And I use the word "*minhag*" deliberately because we were trained for that; we were prepared for the day by our *rebbeim.*

And so it wasn't a wildness of *hefkeirus* — in some places you see that on Simchas Torah; frivolity, even drunkenness. No, that's nothing. In Slabodka on Shavuos we became wild with excitement, with gratitude and *ahavas Hashem.*

I remember it well; it was something unique, more than any other day of the year.

Now, it doesn't mean that there weren't other days that had their own special outpouring of emotions. Rosh Hashana was *tziternesh,* a trembling at Yom Hadin. And *Neilah?* Ooh ah! It was tremendous in the Slabodka Yeshiva. Everybody was weeping and shouting; you would think they would raise the ceiling from the noise. It was something indescribable; they went *arois fun de keilim.*

And so there were other special days, special emotions, yes, but Shavuos was the *happiest* — a great *simcha* of love of Hashem. And that's something we should study because it wasn't just something that happened that way.

The Avodah of Shavuos

Hashem is not satisfied with the minimum. Just like at Har Sinai, when you accepted the Torah with a fiery enthusiasm, Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, – *the same heart you had at Har Sinai, that's what I want always* (Devarim 5:26). I want the same enthusiasm. I don't want cold Jews who keep the Torah. I want fiery *na'aseh v'nishma* Jews, and it should be forever. And any reduction in the heat of

that *Kabolas haTorah,* I'm not satisfied. It's too big of a gift for that."

Shavuos is a special occasion to study the most important of all subjects — the subject of appreciating that great gift that Hakadosh Baruch Hu gave to us. That's how it becomes the happiest day on the Jewish calendar.

And we live more happily in this world because of the Torah, no question about that. When you live with the regimen of the Torah, you're guaranteed against many misfortunes. Torah is constructed for the purpose of reinforcing a man's life, giving him a wholesome and healthy lifestyle; *Torah u'mitzvos* mean *shalom* and good health.

There's no question that fulfilling the Torah is the best plan for a man's wellbeing in this world.



Greater than Riches

There are two pessukim. One says, **וְכָל חֲפָצֶיךָ לֹא יִשְׁווּ בָהּ** – *all of your desirable things cannot equal to the Torah* (Mishlei 3:15). All the things that people love in this world — people love wealth, they love honor, they love pleasure, they love their wives, their children — it's nothing compared to the Torah.

Here's a millionaire — a true story — a multimillionaire who's going from one of his places where he has a big business to another place, a big business, and he has a minute in between. That minute in between, he takes a sefer and learns. And he knows that those few words are worth more than all his property that he has.

וְכָל חֲפָצֶיךָ לֹא יִשְׁווּ בָהּ – Whatever he has is not equal, **לְדָבָר אֶחָד מִן הַתּוֹרָה** – to that one mishnah he learned (Yerushalmi, Peah 1:1). Nothing is more desirable than the Torah.

Greater than a Spouse

A yeshiva bochur once told me he was going out with a girl and she heard something like that, so she said to him, "I won't play second fiddle to a Gemara." He came and told me this story.

I told him, "If that's so, then drop that shidduch." Because she doesn't understand. A wife is second fiddle to a Gemara. And, by the way, a husband is second fiddle to the Torah too. Same thing. Because **וְכָל חֲפָצֶיךָ לֹא יִשְׁווּ בָהּ** – everything in the world, everything you love, is subservient to the Torah.

One Line of Greatness

It means when you sit down and open a Gemara, it's such a tremendous happiness, such a great achievement, that it outdoes, it far outdoes all the good things together. When you're sitting down to learn one line of the Gemara, it's considered better than all the *mitzvos* and *maasim tovim* that Hakadosh Baruch Hu could give you to do.

I know that's a very difficult idea for us to accept. It's very far away from our ideals today because we're far from *emes*. We think maybe it's just propaganda —But actually it's 100% *emes*. To sit and learn a line of Gemara is better than all the *mitzvos*.

Toras Nashim

Women encourage their husbands to learn Torah. They say, "Chaim, go to the shiur," "Chaim, go to the yeshiva." **נָשִׁים בְּמַאי קָא זָכְיָן** – How do women achieve that greatness? – **בְּאַתְנוּיֵי גַּבְרַיְהוּ בֵּי רַבָּנָן** – They encourage their husbands to learn (Brachos 17a). She says, "Go out of the house, go to the beis hamedrash."

Also, **בְּאַקְרוֹיֵי בְּנַיְהוּ לְבֵי כְּנִישְׁתָּא** – she sends her children off to the cheder, and when they come home, too, she encourages them more to learn more.

And the children sit at night and they learn. They get into the habit. – **כָּל בַּיִת שֶׁנִּשְׁמָעִים בּוֹ דִּבְרֵי תוֹרָה בַּלַּיְלָה** – A house where you hear divrei Torah at night, **שׁוּב אֵינוֹ נֶחֱרָב** – that house can't be destroyed (Eiruvin 18b). It's a blessed house. It's forever.

A Full Partner

And she's blessed even more than the house because she gets one hundred percent credit in all the Torah that is learned. You know, in the olden times everybody knew that. That's why women up till a hundred years ago strove to marry bnei Torah. You went in small towns in the stores, women stood in the stores alone and the husbands were sitting in the beis hamedrash all day long. There were very many eidims on kest in the small towns. That's how it used to be.

Every beis hamedrash was like a yeshiva because the women tried their best that the husbands should be lamdanim. And every woman knew that she is going to go to Gan Eden holding onto her husband's kapoteh. That's how they used to say. It's not a joke! She knew that she would go to Gan Eden with her husband's merit of his Torah.

אִשְׁתּוֹ כְּגוּפוֹ – A husband and a wife are not two people. They're two parts of a personality. Consider your face; it gets credit from what your feet walked. If your feet walk in a good place, your face remains intact. If your feet walk where there is traffic, your face won't remain intact. And so the wife, when she urges her husband to go and learn, and does other things to facilitate his learning, so she has a full partnership in all of his Torah. And that's going to be the greatest happiness.

The Torah of Gratitude

And so learning on Shavuos is not only for the mitzvah itself. It's an expression of gratitude, of happiness, of appreciation for the gift of Torah. And it's for after Shavuos too. If you have a minute

to learn, to learn one word of Torah, just one word, it's worth everything; it's more than all of your possessions, all your properties. But it's also a great expression of gratitude.

And so even though you're a busy man making a living, whenever you have a chance, you go back to your learning, even for a few minutes.

How to Influence People

Naomi had a profound influence on Rus. Despite being a princess with every conceivable material pleasure at hand, Rus was somehow inspired to abandon everything and follow Naomi into a life of poverty and hardship, gleaning in the fields.

What did she see in Naomi that influenced her so greatly that she was able to achieve such extraordinary strength?



Rabbi Elya Svei (1924-2009) explains this based on a Midrash (Rus Rabbah 2:5): "Naomi's name derives from this that her deeds were pleasant (na'im) and sweet (ne'imim)." - When Rus saw in Naomi a sweetness and pleasantness beyond measure, she was willing to cast aside all the earthly pleasures to follow such a personality as Naomi's.

"The entire purpose of Yetzias Mitzrayim was for Kabbolas HaTorah. Freedom without Torah is empty freedom; true liberty is when a Jew becomes bound to the will of the Creator." ~ Maharal of Prague.

Akdamus Milin



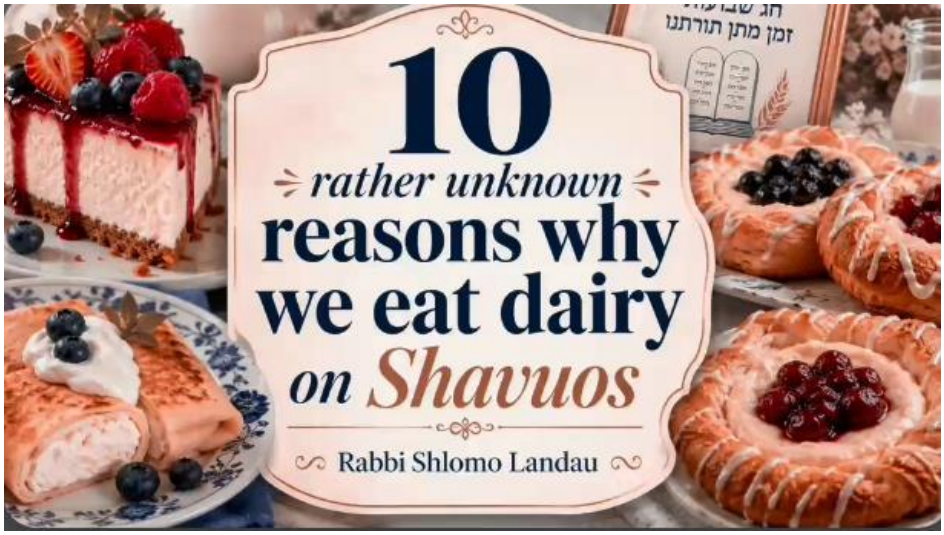
The Sambatyon River is a raging wall of chaos for the six days of Creation work week, resting only on Shabbos. No one was foolhardy to attempt to cross it because, during the week, it meant certain death, and, on Shabbos, it would be a chilul, desecration of Shabbos, since it would entail either taking a boat or going out of the techum, permissible boundary of Shabbos.

To save a life, it would be permissible to cross on Shabbos, but it would mean remaining there forever, since the dispensation of pikuach nefesh does not apply to the return trip. But it did happen many years ago, as the town, home to Rav Meir Shliach Tzibur (Rebbe of Rashi), was about to undergo a challenge from their ruler from which they quite possibly would not be able to survive.

Rav Meir knew that Rav Dan, who lived on the other side of the Sambatyon, would be able to repeal the decree. Rav Meir and Rav Dan acutely understood what this meant: neither would be able to return home, because, on the return trip, pikuach nefesh was not in force.

In order not to leave their wives as agunos, abandoned wives, they divorced them and bid their final farewells. Rav Meir wrote a brilliant poem entitled Akdamus Milin which he gave to Rav Dan to give to the people of his town whom he would never see again.

We all have such moments when we are up against a wall and must make a decision that is definitive and life altering. We will have to cross our own raging Sambatyon, but we know that, once we get to the other side, all will be calm.



It is almost Shavuos, and of course, one of the most beloved customs of the Yom Tov is eating dairy foods. Cheesecake, cheese blintzes, ice coffee, and every imaginable dairy delicacy suddenly make their annual appearance.

Most people know one or two reasons for the custom. But there are actually many fascinating explanations, some of them relatively unknown. Here are ten beautiful reasons why we eat dairy on Shavuos.

1. Dairy Became Permissible at Har Sinai

Until Har Sinai, humanity was only obligated in the **שֶׁבַע מִצְוֹת בְּנֵי נֹחַ** — the Seven Noahide Laws. One of those laws is **אֵבֶר מִן הַחַי**, the prohibition against consuming something taken from a living animal.

Some explain that milk, which comes from a living animal, may have fallen under that prohibition before the Torah was given. Then the Jewish people stood at Har Sinai and received the Torah, where Eretz Yisrael is described as: "**אֶרֶץ זָבַת חָלָב וּדְבָשׁ**" - A land flowing with milk and honey."

Suddenly, milk was not merely permitted. It became associated with holiness and blessing. To commemorate that moment of permission and transformation, we eat dairy foods on Shavuos.

2. Torah Nourishes the Soul the Way Milk Nourishes the Body

There is almost nothing in creation as complete and self-sufficient as mother's milk. It contains every nutrient, every form of hydration, and every element necessary for an infant's survival and growth.

So too, Torah. Torah provides the spiritual nourishment, direction, strength, and vitality that a Jewish soul needs to thrive. On the day we received that ultimate spiritual nourishment, we commemorate it with dairy.

3. "חָלָב" Has the Numerical Value of 40

The Hebrew word חָלָב (milk) has a numerical value of 40. Forty is deeply connected to Torah: Moshe Rabbeinu ascended Har Sinai for forty days to receive the Torah — three separate times.

There were forty generations from Moshe Rabbeinu until Ravina and Rav Ashi, who finalized the Gemara.

The Gemara begins with the letter מ (40): "מֵאֵימָתַי…" And it concludes with מ: "…שָׁלוֹם"

The number 40 represents the transmission and continuity of Torah, and therefore we commemorate it with חָלָב.

4. Har Sinai Was Called "Har Gavnunim"

Har Sinai had several names. One of them was: "הַר גַּבְנוּנִים" — the mountain of majestic peaks. The word גַּבְנוּנִים resembles גְּבִינָה (cheese). Therefore, we eat dairy products to remember Har Sinai.

Interestingly, גְּבִינָה has the numerical value of 70, corresponding to: "שִׁבְעִים פָּנִים לַתּוֹרָה" - "There are seventy facets to Torah."

5. Moshe Rabbeinu Refused to Nurse from Egyptian Women

Moshe Rabbeinu was born on the seventh of Adar. Three months later, when his mother could no longer hide him, she placed him in a basket along the Nile River — on the sixth of Sivan. Shavuos.

Basya, the daughter of Pharaoh, rescued Moshe and attempted to find an Egyptian woman to nurse him. But Moshe refused.

Chazal explain: "הַפֶּה שֶׁעָתִיד לְדַבֵּר עִם הַשְּׁכִינָה יִינֵק טֻמְאָה?" - "The mouth that would one day speak directly with the Divine Presence

should nurse from impurity?" - Eventually, he nursed from his own mother.

The very mouth through which Moshe would later transmit the Torah to Klal Yisrael was sustained through holiness and purity. To commemorate that event, we eat dairy on Shavuos.

6. Dairy and Meat Required Two Loaves of Bread

There was once a widespread custom to begin the Shavuos meal with dairy foods and then continue with a meat meal afterward. However, halachically, bread used at a dairy meal may not later be used with meat. That meant an entirely new loaf of challah had to be brought to the table.

As a result, two loaves of bread became necessary. This corresponds to the special korban brought on Shavuos in the Beis HaMikdash called: **שְׁתֵּי הַלֶּחֶם** — the Two Loaves.

Our dairy and meat meals symbolically recreate that offering.

7. The Jewish People Were Reborn at Har Sinai

Chazal teach that at Har Sinai, the souls of the Jewish people actually departed from their bodies and were revived by Hashem. In a sense, Klal Yisrael was born anew on Shavuos. And what sustains a newborn child? Milk.

We therefore eat dairy foods to commemorate our national rebirth as Hashem's people.

8. "We Saw the Sounds"

At Har Sinai, something supernatural occurred:

"**וְכָל הָעָם רֹאִים אֶת הַקּוֹלוֹת**" - The entire nation saw the sounds." - Sight and sound merged together.

Interestingly, dairy products also require "seeing." Halachically, milk must be supervised through **חָלָב יִשְׂרָאֵל**, where a Jew actually sees the milking process.

To commemorate the fact that at Sinai we "saw," we eat a food connected to **רְאִיָּה** — seeing.

9. "חָלָב" Hidden in the Korban of Shavuos

On Shavuos, a special offering was brought in the Beis HaMikdash:

"**מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה לַה' בְּשָׁבְעֹתֵיכֶם**"

The initials of: **חֲדָשָׁה לַה' בְּשָׁבְעֹתֵיכֶם** spell **חָלָב** — milk.

Even within the korbanos of Shavuos itself, there is a hidden allusion to dairy.

10. Dairy Represents Gratitude for Torah

Perhaps the most beautiful reason of all. - Shavuos changed the destiny of the Jewish people forever. Torah became the lifeblood of Jewish continuity, survival, meaning, and eternity.

How do we express gratitude for that gift? Through dairy — because **חָלָב** is also understood as an acronym for:

"**לְהַגִּיד בַּבֹּקֶר חַסְדֶּךָ**" - To speak of Your kindness in the morning."

Dairy reminds us to pause and recognize the incredible kindness Hashem showed us by giving us the Torah.

So yes, enjoy the cheesecake, the blintzes, the pasta, and the ice coffee. But as you do, take a moment to reflect on the depth behind the custom.

And perhaps this year, our Shavuos — our Kabbalas HaTorah — will be elevated with a little more meaning, a little more appreciation, and a little more purpose.

A Gut Yom Tov!

One of the many reasons that's given why we eat dairy products on *Shavuos* is because *Moshe Rabbeinu*, according to our tradition, was born on the seventh day of *Adar*.



The *Torah* says in *Parshat Shmos* that after his mother gave birth to him, **וַתִּצְפְּנֵהוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה יְרָחִים**, she hid him for three months, so that the Egyptians would not fetch him and grab him and plunge him into the Nile. After three months, she couldn't hide him anymore. *Rashi* explains because it was a premature birth, before seven months, so after three months she creates a basket, she puts him in the basket and places him in the Nile, hoping that maybe, maybe somebody will have compassion and save this boy.

And of course, *Miriam* stands there to see what's going to happen, she was all of six years old. And then we all know the rest of the story: the daughter of Pharaoh, *Batya*, comes down to bathe in the Nile, she fetches the basket, she opens it up, and instead of killing the kid or just ignoring the child, what does she do? **וַתַּחְמֹל עָלָיו**, she feels compassion. And that's when *Miriam* seizes the moment, *Miriam* hiding in the bushes runs over and says should I find for you a Jewish wet nurse to nurse the baby. And the daughter of Pharaoh says absolutely.

And of course, *Miriam* knows who's the right wet nurse, she goes and brings the mother of the baby and the arrangement is a fabulous one because *Moshe's* raised by Pharaoh's daughter in the palace and yet he's nursed by his own mother *Yocheved* who was hired so to

speak by *Batya* as the wet nurse of this baby. So *Moshe* gets his milk.

Now which day did this happen? If he was born on the seventh day of *Adar*, three months she hid him, after three months she can't hide him anymore. So the next day she puts him in the Nile, on which day is that? *Shavuos*.

Of course there was no holiday of *Shavuos* at the time, but that would be the holiday of *Shavuos*. And what happens on that day? Number one, *Moshe Rabbeinu* was saved from death. Number two, equally important is he gets to be nursed by his own mother, especially as *Rashi* says, she tried giving *Moshe* to many women, but he would not nurse from the Egyptian women, and it was only his mother who he nursed from. And as a result of that, the custom is that we eat *milchigs* on *Shavuos*, whether you drink milk or a coffee or eat products that ultimately come from milk.

So *Moshe* on *Shavuos* is not just the day he gives the *Torah*, but it's also a day where he got a second lease on life. It wasn't his birthday, but it was his rebirth in the sense that his life was saved.

Davening for Ruchniyus

If someone prays for something that brings honor to Hashem — like success in Torah or any matter of ruchniyus — and pours out his heart in tefillah, Hakadosh Baruch Hu listens to those prayers, even if he lacks merits. ~ Sefer Chasidim (131)

Shavuos is an especially powerful eis ratzon for these tefillos.

"On Shavuos, a person is not merely receiving the Torah again — he himself becomes a different person through it." ~ Rav Chaim Shmulevitz.

Ohr HaChaim Gems on Megilas Rus

וְהִנֵּה־בֹ֣עַז בָּ֔א מִבֵּ֖ית לָֽחֶם - "And behold, Boaz came from Beislechem" (Rus 2:4)

When Boaz arrives at his fields to check on his workers, the Pasuk states: "And behold, Boaz came from Beslechem, and he said to the reapers, 'May Hashem be with you!'" And they answered him, "May Hashem bless you.!"

The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh interprets the opening words "Hinei Boaz" (Behold, Boaz) by addressing a profound grammatical and historical question: Why does the pasuk record Boaz himself coming to his field from Beislechem, instead of having his overseer deal with the harvesters and the poor?

The Ohr HaChaim explains that Boaz went to the field out of deep personal piety and concern for the community. He did not rely on his hired workers or overseers to manage the harvest; rather, he came himself to fulfill the mitzvah of ensuring that the poor (such as Rus) were treated with dignity, and that the laws of Leket (gleanings left for the poor) were correctly handled.

When the text says "Hinei Boaz", it is highlighting divine providence and intentionality. Boaz's physical presence emphasizes that he was not just a passive, wealthy landowner, but an active, righteous leader who involved himself directly in the welfare of his people and the less fortunate, setting a spiritual tone for his entire field.

"The joy of Shavuos is the joy of discovering that Torah is life itself." ~ The Chazon Ish.

"One moment of true kabbolas haTorah can change the direction of an entire lifetime." ~ The Steipler Gaon.

"Hashem imachem"

In Megilas Rus (2:4), when Boaz arrives at his fields to check on his workers, he greets them by saying: "Hashem imachem" (**ה' עמכם**) - "May Hashem be with you."

His workers respond with: "Yevarechecha Hashem" (**יברכך ה'**) - May Hashem bless you."

The Ohr HaChaim Rus explores the halakhic and spiritual significance of this pasuk, specifically focusing on the phrase "Hashem imachem" (**ה' עמכם**) - "May Hashem be with you." - The Ohr HaChaim explores the dynamics in the field.

Rus was a beautiful and vulnerable young woman gleaning in the fields. The fields were a public, traditionally rough environment filled with hired harvesters. Boaz was highly concerned that as these men worked in close quarters, their yetzer hara (evil inclination) might lead them to harbour improper or lustful thoughts toward Rus.

By walking up to his harvesters and publicly declaring "Hashem imachem" - "May Hashem be with you", Boaz was doing much more than offering a friendly greeting. He was intentionally establishing an atmosphere of holiness, reminding the workers of the constant, watchful presence of the Divine.

This public reminder was a protective measure. By invoking Hashem's name so prominently, Boaz elevated the moral standard of the workplace, actively deterring the harvesters from entertaining impure thoughts about the vulnerable newcomer.

"On the night of Shavuos, the gates of understanding are opened in a special way. Every moment a person learns then leaves an eternal impression upon his soul." ~ Ben Ish Chai.

Inspiration Daily – The Tefiloh of the Shelah HaKadosh

I'm sure many of you recited the beautiful Tefiloh of the Shelah HaKadosh, where we daven for our children on erev Rosh Chodesh Sivan. But what do we do after that? When can we daven, and where do we daven for our children after that one special day of Tefiloh? Where else can we find such focus?

R'Shmuel Wosner, the Baal Shevet HaLevi, the great Posek Hador that passed away a few years ago was once asked how he was zocheh to have (according to this accounting) over 60 children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren, that were poskim, Talmidei Chachamim, Rabbonim, etc? - Where did that come from?

R' Shmuel Wosner said, "It didn't come from one or two tears, one or two cups full of tears, but rivers and rivers of tears when I said the words, **לֹא־יָמ֣וּשׁוּ מִפִּ֗יךָ וּמִפִּי֙ זַרְעֲךָ֔ וּמִפִּי֙ זֶ֣רַע זַרְעֲךָ֔**. The words are in **וְבָא לְצִיּוֹן**, "***The words of the Torah should never be removed from your mouth, your children's mouths, your grandchildren's mouths, forever and ever***".

As we march toward Shavuos and are about to receive the Torah once again, we have to cry rivers of tears that Hakadosh Baruch Hu should give us the zechus to have our children love Torah and to never, ever leave it.

"Hashem did not choose Har Sinai because it was mighty or beautiful. He chose the smallest mountain to teach that the Torah can only remain with one who flees from pride." — Kedushas Levi.

"Torah is not inherited automatically; every generation must accept it again from Sinai." ~ Rav Yitzchok Hutner.

Mind-boggling! 😳

The mishna at the beginning of Peah states that the study of Torah outweighs them all (i.e. all of the other mitzvos). The Vilna Gaon, in Shenos Eliyahu, explains why this is so:

It is because every word of Torah study is a fulfillment of a mitzvah on its own, and that mitzvah is equivalent to all the other mitzvos combined!

Thus, a single page of Gemara contains the opportunity to fulfill hundreds of mitzvos, each of which is equivalent to all the other mitzvos! ~ R' Chaim Kanievsky zt"l.



משל למה הדבר דומה

World renowned speaker, **R' Elimelech Biderman *shlita***, related the following story about his grandfather, the *tzaddik*, **R' Pinchas Menachem Malach *zt"l***, who was known for his relentless diligence in *Torah* study. For most of his life, he was accustomed to staying awake for many late hours, immersing in his studies. In his later years, however, his physical strength began to wane, and he no longer possessed the stamina required to maintain his rigorous, late-night learning sessions.

Yet, his deep love for *Torah* never faded. Every single night before going to sleep, he would take out various *seforim* and prepare them on his table.

Bewildered by this nightly ritual, his son finally asked, "*Tatteh*, why are you taking out all these *seforim* if you aren't going to learn from all of them?"

R' Malach answered. "My son, I'm taking out the *seforim* that I would have learned had I had the strength to learn!"

Although he lacked physical capability, setting the *seforim* out was an expression of his burning desire to learn. And because his

yearning was so genuine, he explained, *Hashem* considered it as if he had actually learned from them.

The essence of *Shavuos* is the heart's longing for *Torah*. When *Klal Yisroel* stood at *Har Sinai*, and accepted the *Torah* with the enthusiastic declaration of *"Na'aseh V'Nishma,"* it demonstrated a powerful commitment and desire that preceded their actual understanding or ability to fulfill the *mitzvos*.

We still possess that strength! True *Torah* dedication is not only measured by *limud Torah*, but by the relentless desire to connect with it, even when the body can necessarily keep up.



Rabbi Doniel Staum - Quiet Greatness



One of the remarkable beauties of Megillas Rus, which we read on Shavuos, is how profoundly different it is from so many other narratives in Tanach.

Throughout Tanach, we encounter open miracles, dramatic revelations, supernatural events, and extraordinary moments that alter the course of history. Even in the Book of Esther, where Hashem's Name does not explicitly appear and the miracles remain hidden, the storyline itself is filled with astonishing twists and improbable turns. The entire narrative carries an atmosphere of suspense and grandeur.

Megillas Rus is different. There are no open miracles, no splitting seas, no plagues, no prophetic spectacles, and no dramatic overturning of nature. Instead, it is the story of ordinary people navigating the quiet struggles of everyday life.

It is a story about grief and poverty, loyalty and kindness. It is the story of human beings confronted with difficult choices and moral crossroads. Some rise to the occasion, while others fall short. Elimelech abandons his people during famine, while Ploni Almoni has an opportunity for greatness but retreats from responsibility. The Megillah does not present perfect heroes living in mythical conditions. It presents real people wrestling with real life. And within that ordinary world emerge the true heroes of the story: Ruth and Boaz.

Neither performs miracles. Neither conquers armies. Their greatness lies elsewhere. Ruth demonstrates extraordinary faithfulness and dignity amidst immense personal loss. Boaz embodies compassion and moral responsibility in moments where no one would have blamed him for turning away. Together, they

seize quiet moments of opportunity and transform them into eternity.

That is the message of Shavuos and Kabbalas HaTorah.

Spiritual greatness is not found only in loud moments of inspiration, thunderous revelations, or emotionally overwhelming experiences. It is found in the daily struggles of life. In the silent decisions no one applauds; in maintaining faith when life feels uncertain; in choosing kindness when bitterness would be easier; in remaining compassionate, resilient, and emotionally present despite disappointment and pain.

The greatness of Torah emerges through the stillness and quietness of ordinary living: to be a *mensch*. To be a *ben Torah*. To become an *eved Hashem* in the way one carries oneself through the unnoticed moments of life.Megillas Ruth teaches us that redemption often begins with simple acts of *chesed* and loyalty.

May we merit this Shavuos to internalize both the grand majesty of Matan Torah and the quiet greatness of living a Torah life each and every day.

Rabbi Joey Haber - The Power of a Jewish Woman

What is the unique power a Jewish woman possesses?

When Hakadosh Baruch Hu prepared to give the Torah to Klal Yisrael, He instructed Moshe Rabbeinu: "So shall you say to the House of Yaakov" (*Shemos* 19:3), which Chazal explain refers first to the women (see Rashi, ibid.). Only afterward does the Torah say, "And you shall speak to the house of Israel," referring to the men.

Why were the women addressed first? - **Rabbeinu Bachye** writes a remarkable phrase: **הָאִשָּׁה הַטּוֹבָה הַכּוֹלֶלֶת מִדּוֹת טוֹבוֹת כּוֹלֶלֶת כָּל הַתּוֹרָה, כִּי הִיא הַכְּנָה אֶל הָאָדָם לְהַגִּיעַ אֶל הַצְלָחַת הַתּוֹרָה וְהַמִּצְוֹת**

"...A good woman who encompasses good traits encompasses the entire Torah, because she is the preparation for man to reach success in the Torah and the commandments..."

"A good woman is the reason Torah exists." An astonishing statement. Why would the transmission of Torah itself begin with women?

Perhaps the answer lies in understanding one of the deepest forms of strength a person can possess.

The story is told about a father speaking to his young son after the boy had failed at a project he had worked on for months. Discouraged and defeated, the son came to his father and said, "I invested so much into this, and it didn't work."

The father replied: "I will tell you the truth. In my life, I have attempted many things and many of them failed. The reason people nevertheless consider me successful is not because everything worked out. It's because I never allowed myself to stay down. No matter how many times life knocked me over, I got back up and kept moving forward."

That, perhaps, is the hidden strength of a Jewish woman.

The power to continue—even when exhausted.

A single young woman who goes through disappointment after disappointment in *shidduchim* and still refuses to surrender hope—that is strength. A newly married woman striving to build a Torah home amidst the ordinary struggles of life—that is strength. A mother raising children while balancing responsibility, worry and endless emotional demands—that is strength. A grandmother who continues to nurture generations with warmth and wisdom—that is strength.

The fortitude of a Jewish woman is found in the quiet refusal to collapse beneath life's pressures.

That is why Torah begins with "Bais Yaakov." Women create the atmosphere in which Torah can survive. A home is built in the space where people grow. And perhaps that is what Rabbeinu Bachye means when he says that a good woman is the reason Torah exists. Torah does not flourish in despair. Torah flourishes where there is faith.

The energy a woman brings into a home shapes the spiritual climate of that home. And therefore, before Torah could be given to Klal Yisrael, Hashem first addressed the women. Because long after inspiration fades, long after dramatic moments pass, it is often the quiet endurance of the Jewish woman that sustains the Jewish nation.



Rabbeinu Bachya (Shemos 18:21) teaches that the essence of learning Torah lies in yosher hamiddos — the cultivation of upright character traits. These, he says, are the true fruits of the tree of wisdom. He writes:

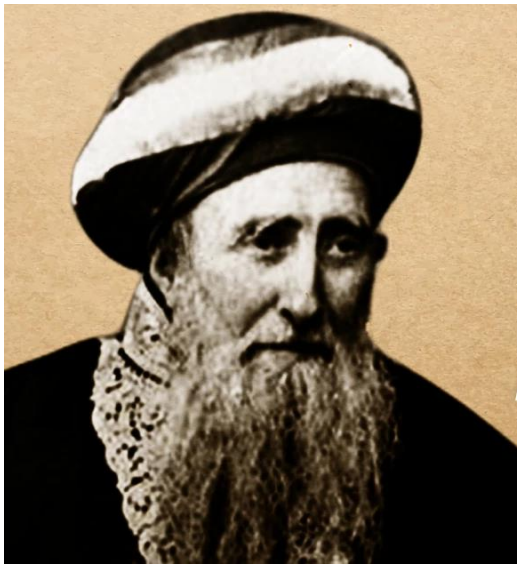
"See how great the importance of good middos is. The tzaddikim and nevi'im of the Torah were not praised for their wisdom or knowledge, but for their middos. Noach is described as a tzaddik tamim. Avraham Avinu is called tam, Yaakov is referred to as an ish tam, and Moshe Rabbeinu is praised as being exceedingly humble (anav me'od).

This underscores that the primary purpose of chochmah (wisdom) is the development of character, just as the purpose of a tree is not the tree itself, but its fruit."

Have a wonderful Shavuos and Shabbos,

Rabbi Shraga Freedman





There is a little-known but particularly powerful segula *(spiritual remedy) for meriting children, revealed by the great Sage, Rabbi Chaim Falaggi. Discover below this* unique segula *with extraordinary power, to be performed on the eve of* Shavuot *!*

A guide and an advocate

Rabbi Chaim Falaggi was born in 1788 in Izmir, Turkey. President of the city's Rabbinical Court, appointed Chief Rabbi of the Ottoman Empire by the Sultan, and a prolific author, Rabbi Chaim Falaggi was the undisputed and revered leader of the Turkish Jewish community of his time. His influence extended far beyond the borders of the Empire, and his erudition made him a sought-after authority on *Halakha* matters from around the world, including Switzerland, Poland, Tunisia, Syria, Morocco, and Germany.

Beyond his considerable influence on the Jewish world of his time, Rabbi Chaim Falaggi was renowned for his tireless advocacy for the poor, widows, and orphans, whom he championed throughout his life. He denounced certain practices among the wealthy that were detrimental to the needy and instituted several laws to guarantee their protection, sustenance, and the education of their children. Going so far as to personally support impoverished Torah scholars, he founded a hospital, schools, charitable funds, and numerous other institutions aimed at strengthening the structures of his community and ensuring the well-being of the poorest members of society.

A *Segula* with sole power

Rabbi Chaim Falaggi's profound concern for others, coupled with his mastery of sacred texts, particularly those of *Kabbalah* , enabled him to reveal in his time a *segulah (* spiritual remedy) of

extraordinary power, to be performed on the eve of *Shavuot* , that would grant offspring to childless couples. Hundreds of Jewish couples throughout the centuries have testified to its efficacy and were blessed with children after applying it. Several recent testimonies from infertile couples who have had children also attest to its truthfulness.

It is considered an incredibly auspicious time for *Zera Shel Kayama* (having children), finding a marriage partner (*Zivug*), and securing a livelihood.

Here is its content as described by the Rav in one of his works: "On the eve of *Shavuot*, take 91 coins and add 13 more to reach a total of 104 (twice the numerical value of the word *Ben*, 'son'). Give this sum to *Tzedakah* to help the poor and scholars in need. You will thus benefit from offspring and contribute to hastening the Redemption."

ו) ערב שבועות יפריש צ״א פרוטות וישלים עד שיעור שני פעמים ב״ן, ויתנם לתלמיד חכם עני ועניו, והוא תיקון לעון אדם הראשון, ועון העגל, ולפגם הברית, והוא סגולה לחשוכי בנים ומקרב הגאולה, (ספר מעשה הגלגלה דף ק״ט ע״ב).

HaRav Chaim Palagi, zt"l, the great Mekubal, writes in his sefer, "HaShem will give great reward to all who donate 104 coins, or any multiple of 104, to the poor on this holy day so the poor can buy their holiday needs, for this day is the culmination of the days of Sefirah and part of the sheloshet yamei hagbalah (the three days preceding Shavuot)." On this day, the Gates of Heaven are open to the requests of those who care for the neediest in their midst and ensure that they are provided for on Yom Tov.

Our Sages add that on this eve of the festival celebrating the giving of the Torah, it is good to dedicate this sum to Torah scholars in need.



The Pele Yoetz states that according to the Zohar if one only knew what goes on in shamayim on Shavuos night and what can be achieved in regards to children, joy, long life, abundance of parnassa... he/she would not stop praying.

"Shavuos teaches that growth in Torah begins not with brilliance, but with yearning." ~ Rav Wolbe.

"Kabolas haTorah means allowing the truth of Torah to become one's inner reality." ~ Rav Dessler.

Project Mesorah - Rabbi Paysach Krohn

A good *erev Shabbos*, my dear friends of Project Mesorah, this is your friend Rabbi Pesach Krohn with a special *beracha* for *Shavuos*.



The *pasuk* tells us in **תהלים קיט פסוק קס,** *pasuk* 160: **ראש דברך אמת**, your very first utterance is truth. Now let's watch something fascinating about the first three words in the *Torah* and also the first *pasuk* in the *Torah*.

The first three words of the *Torah*, *Bereishis Bara Elokim*, the letters end in *emes*. *Bereishis* ends with a *tav*, *Bara* with an *aleph*, *Elokim* with a *mem*, that's *emes*. And then in the first *pasuk* in the *Torah*, every single *nekudah* is there, says *Rabbeinu Bachaye*: the *kamatz*, the *pasach*, the *tzere*, except for the 'oo' sound, the *shuruk*. Why? Because *shuruk* is spelled *shin*, *reish*, *kuf*, and that's the *osiyos* of *sheker*.

And *sheker* cannot be found in any which way, even in the mixed-up letters of the *nekudos* in the first *pasuk* of the *Torah*. So therefore let's make now a commitment that as of *Shavuos* we're going to be very careful with the *middah* of *emes*. We'll pay loans on time, we'll come on time to appointments, and we won't over-exaggerate. *Rosh devarcha emes*, and as we start the *Torah* again on *Shavuos*, we should make sure that our words are always *middas ha-emes*.

And you know something? *Rabbeinu Bachaye* adds also, it says: **קרוב ה' לכל קוראיו לכל אשר יקראוהו באמת**. Hashem is close to all those who

can say they are people of *emes*. So let us make, we all want our *tefillos* to be *nitpallel letov*, let us make sure that from now on, that our *tefillos* will be able to be associated, we can say to Hashem, look, we are people of *emes*. So Hashem should be close to us, **קרוב ה' לכל קוראיו לכל אשר יקראוהו באמת**.

And so to the men I say **ישמך אלוקים כאפרים וכמנשה**, to the women **ישמך אלוקים כשרה רבקה רחל ולאה**. And to everyone: **יברכך ה' וישמרך יאר ה' פניו אליך ויחנך ישא ה' פניו אליך וישם לך שלום**. Let's make a commitment from *Shavuos* on, we'll be *emes*, we'll come on time to appointments, medical appointments or any other appointments that we make, and we'll come on time to *shul*, because if you come late that's a *middah* of *sheker*. And also let's pay loans back on time.

And so to all of you at Project Mesorah, let's make a commitment of *emes* as of the *Yom Tov* of *Shavuos*, *Rosh devarcha emes*, and we'll have a true, wonderful, long, happy and healthy life.

Have a *gut Yom Tov* and an elevated *Yom Tov*.

The Shelah Hakadosh writes that just as Rosh Hashanah is a day of judgment for the world, Shavuos is a day of judgment for Torah, since it was the day it was given.

Because of this, it's a momentous time to reflect on our connection to Torah and to strengthen our commitment to learning and living it.

"On Shavuos, the Torah is not only given again — the person himself can become new." ~ Sfas Emes.

"The greatest preparation for Kabbolas HaTorah is to feel that without Torah, one is lacking life itself." ~ Rav Yerucham Levovitz





Horav Yisroel Friedman Shlita - Letters Of Chizzuk During The Coronavirus Pandemic

רב ישראל פרידמן רב קלויז טשארטקוב מנשסתר

מכתב התחזקות

ג' סיום תש"פ מ"ז למסב"י

In Megillas Rus it is written that when Rus asked Boaz to perform Yibum with her, he told her that he had to get permission from Ploni Almoni who had first right. The possuk tells us, that the next morning, this very person happened to pass by the gate where Boaz was sitting, enabling Boaz to then ask him for permission to perform Yibum.

The Medrash highlights this incident, that the person whom Boaz needed to contact, just "happened" to pass by the next morning, and the Medrash continues: "Even if this person would have been at the other end of the world, Hashem would have arranged it that he be brought there, in order not to delay the righteous actions of Boaz. Boaz played his part and did all that he could, Rus did all that she could and Naomi also did all that she could. Upon which Hashem said I too will do my part." - **בועז עשה את שלו ורות עשתה את שלה ונעמי עשתה את שלה, אמר הקב"ה אף אני אעשה את שלי**

This same expression we find in Parshas Bamidbar. Hashem instructed Moshe Rabbeinu to count Shevet Levi from thirty days old, and Moshe asked how could he go into their tents to see how many babies were in each one, to which Hashem told him "You do what you can and I will do what I can" ."**עשה אתה שלך ואני אעשה שלי**" Moshe went outside each tent, and a Heavenly voice proclaimed how many babies were in each tent.

This concept is a great chizuk, a person has to know that we are not expected to achieve more than we are capable of doing. A person has to try his best, and then he will get siyata dishmaya to overcome the difficulties he encounters. This applies to limmud HaTorah as well. Sometimes a person feels like giving up, he thinks that he is unable to understand what he is learning and it is beyond him, but one has to bear in mind the above concept - **עשה אתה שלך ואני אעשה שלי** — "You do your part and Hashem will do His Part"!

When a person does his part, he merits brocha above the laws of nature, as Chazal have told us (Ovos Ch. 6, 2) **כל מי שעוסק בתורה הרי זה מתעלה** — "Everyone who learns Torah will become elevated", and the Tiferes Yisroel explains that Chazal stressed that this applies to "everyone" who learns Torah, not merely to those who are more gifted. Every person who learns Torah, regardless of his capabilities, will become elevated.

The famed gaon and poisek the Maharam Shik zt"l testified about himself, that as a young bochur, his comprehension was so weak that he was unable to understand a single blatt of gemara, it was simply too hard for him to understand. Yet he did not give up, and he persevered until he finally merited that the gates of wisdom were opened for him and he understood his learning.

The Mishna in Mesechta Ovos tells us that Rabbon Yochonon Ben Zakai had five main talmidim, and he would extoll their many virtues and achievements. Writes the Maharam Shik on this Mishna as follows: "It would appear that the reason why Rabbon Yochonon Ben Zakai would extol their many virtues and achievements, was in order that we should appreciate that these talmidim did not inherently possess these lofty madreigos, rather it was through their great toil and effort that they merited to achieve such great heights.

Therefore Rabbon Yochonon Ben Zakai extolled their achievements so that others should copy their example. If their madreigos would simply have been the result of their higher superior intellectual

powers, what is there for us to learn from them? It must be that their madreigos were a result of their diligence and not because they possessed superior intelligence, and this is what we must learn from them.

This concept also lies behind the minhag to decorate the shuls on Shavous, with trees. The Mogein Avrohom explains the reason for this minhag is that on Shavous, the world is judged, to determine the quality and quantity of fruit that the trees will produce, therefore we place trees in shul to remind us to daven that the trees should produce good fruit.

The meforshim question this explanation, because according to the Mogein Avrohom we should place only fruit trees in the shuls, and we don't see people being particular to do so. Rav Menachem Mendel of Strizov zt"l addresses this dilemma in his sefer Sova Semochos, and he offers a beautiful insight into this minhag. (It is especially significant to quote from this sefer, as Rav Menachem Mendel was niftar during a cholera epidemic in the year 1831. He announced that he was giving up his life to be a kappora for Klall Yisroel. Straight away he became ill and was niftar and the epidemic stopped!)

The Torah tells us in Parshas Bechukosei, that when Yidden keep the Torah properly they will be rewarded **ועץ השדה יתן פריו** and Rashi tells us that even non fruit bearing trees will produce fruit. Explains Rav Menachem Mendel of Strizov, that we place non fruit trees in shul to remind us of this promise.

When a Yid keeps the Torah properly, even trees that are unable to produce fruit will also give forth delicious sweet fruit, and the same applies to us as well. Even those who feel that they are barren of Torah and they cannot understand and grow in Torah, they can also merit to produce beautiful fruit and grow in Torah and Yiddishkeit. (The same explanation is also given by the Chasam Sofer).

This can serve as an inspiration to us in the present situation where our normal seder hayom has been disrupted, and people are faced

with many difficulties and impediments. Despite this, we must not despair, and we have to be mechazeik ourselves and to believe that even in the present difficult situation we can produce beautiful and sweet fruit and grow higher in Torah and Yiddishkeit.

In the sefer Ginzei Yisroel, is recorded the words the Chortkover Rebbe zt"l said on Shavous, during the First World War. During the War, fierce fighting took place in the city of Chortkov, and much of the town including the Chortkover Rebbe's own home was destroyed, and he was forced to flee from Chortkov to faraway Vienna. Many of his chassidim were also exiled from their homes, and were scattered far and wide.

The Rebbe said on that Shavous as follows: "It would appear to me that the reason why Hashem chose to give us the Torah in the midbar, a place which is totally barren and desolate, is to teach us, that in every time and every place we are obligated to learn and to keep the Torah. We have no excuse to exempt ourselves, even in our present situation that we are suffering various hardships, and we are strangers and refugees in foreign lands, undergoing many trials and tribulations, for our situation is not worse than being in a desolate wilderness surrounded by poisonous snakes. The giving of the Torah in the midbar is a lesson to all generations that they should not be negligent in their observance of the Torah and mitzvos because it is the Torah which gives us life."

With the above, we can understand the possuk in Parshas Voeschanan: "And you shall inform and teach your children and their children the day we stood in front of Hashem in Chorev" **והודעתם לבניך ולבני בניך יום אשר עמדת לפני ה' אלקיך בחורב**. The possuk specifically exhorts us to remember that we received the Torah in a place called **חורב**. Throughout the entire parshas Yisro, the place of mattan Torah is only referred to as Midbar Sinai and Har Sinai, not once is it referred to as Chorev. So why, when we are instructed

to always remember mamaad Kabbolas HaTorah, is the place referred to by its other name, Chorev?

The name Chorev is first mentioned in Parshas Shemos. When Moshe Rabbeinu came to the burning bush, we are told **ויבא אל הר האלקים חרבה** - "He came to the mountain of Hashem at Chorev". The Ibn Ezra and the Abarbernel both explain that the area was called Chorev from the term Churban, denoting that the entire area was totally desolate. The area was so dry and arid that nothing could grow there.

Thus the Torah wants us to remember that we accepted the Torah in a place which was Chorev, desolate and arid, and therefore when we see that sometimes things are not going as we would want and the person is in a tight spot, he still has to accept on himself to fully keep and uphold the Torah.

We can also derive a chizuk from this. As soon as Klall Yisroel agreed to accept the Torah, the parched and desolate Chorev became transformed, and Har Sinai and the surrounding area became a luscious meadow with beautiful green grass. Thus the Remo writes "It is customary on Shavous, to decorate the shuls and houses with greenery **זכר לשמחת מתן תורה**. We have to make a zecher how a desolate area became transformed, and in a wilderness where nothing could grow, blossomed forth beautiful green meadows. This is a lesson to us that when a person accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah, Hashem will make his other problems fade away, because "if you do your part Hashem will do His part" **עשה אתה שלך ואני אעשה שלי**.

This point is stressed by the famed Rebbe of Sochatchov the Avnei Nezer zt"l. He once said as follows: "If a person has disruptions and disturbances which interfere with his ability to learn Torah and keep the mitzvos, he should be mechazeik himself with all his strength and attempt to remove those obstacles from in front of him. If he does so, he will see that these difficulties and obstacles will be

transformed into something positive, for how can it be that Hashem should create a situation to prevent a person from Torah and mitzvos?

Rather the truth is that they are toi'vos, and the person has to overcome the difficulties and delve into the Torah and mitzvos, and then he will see with his own eyes how all these difficulties were really for the good".

His words are a light to the eyes in this difficult period, in which many people are silently wondering to themselves the question of the Avnei Nezer "How can it be that Hashem should create a situation to prevent a person from Torah and mitzvos?" The Avnei Nezer provides us with the answer to this question as well, it is our responsibility to take all these difficulties and transform them into toi'vos.

Indeed, many people have acquired new found appreciation, and have strengthened their personal avoda. If until now, a person could at times be lost amongst the crowd, the quarantine has made us aware "**אם אין אני לי מי לי**" and we have to rise to the challenge, how each of us as an individual is responsible for our own growth bein odom lemokom and bein odom lechaverio.

In the introduction to the sefer Sova Semochos, a story is related about Rav Menachem Mendel of Strizov, whom we mentioned earlier, which can serve as a chizuk to us. One year, he travelled to Lublin, to spend Yom Kippur in the presence of his Rebbe, the Chozeh of Lublin zt"l. A young bochur who was staying in the same accommodation as Rav Mendel, asked to walk together with him to the Beis Hamedrash, to which he agreed. Erev Yom Kippur this young boy lay down to rest and he slept until late into the night.

Rav Mendel wanted very much to go to shul for Kol Nidrei, but did not want to leave the young boy by himself, nor did he want to wake him up, in keeping with a kabbalistic custom he observed, never to wake a person up. Thus he spent the night of Yom Kippur davening

by himself **ביחידות** in the inn! Rav Mendel was very upset over what had happened, and he davened with a broken heart

Rav Mendel was embarrassed to show his face the next morning in shul, and tried to conceal himself from the gaze of the Chozeh, by hiding in a corner, but it was to no avail. In the middle of tefillas Nishmas, the Chozeh walked over to the corner where he was standing, and made a sign to Rav Mendel that he should go to the omud and be the sheliach tzibbur for Shacharis!

After Yom Kippur was over the Chozeh revealed that a difficult decree had been hanging over Klall Yisroel, and there was no one who was able to annul this decree. Only Rav Mendel, who because of his great distress over having to daven **ביחידות** had davened with a broken heart, was found worthy of annulling the decree. This is the madreiga mentioned in Tehillim "**קרוב ה' לנשברי לב ואת דכאי רוח יושיע**." "Hashem is close to those who are broken hearted and He saves those who are crushed in spirit".

This concept we find (**סוטה ה**.) regarding the Torah as well. The gemora tells us that the reason why Hashem chose Har Sinai was because it did not hold itself high like other mountains, and Hashem dwells amongst those who are humble.

Rav Aharon Karliner once mentioned to his father Rav Osher of Stolin zt"l the words of the medrash, that when Hashem placed His Presence on Har Sinai, "I don't know whether Hashem elevated the mountain until the Heavens, or whether Hashem left the heavens and descended to Har Sinai? Said Rebbi Yehoshua Ben Levi, from the words of the possuk "**וירד ה' על הר סיני**" it is evident that Hashem descended onto Har Sinai."

Rav Osher Stoliner had a great hissorreus from this medrash and he exclaimed: "My son you have revived me! What would we do if we had to elevate ourselves up to the heavens? But if Hashem lowered Himself to give us the Torah, there is hope for us that Hashem will elevate those who are low **מגביה שפלים**."

When a Yid accepts upon himself the Torah, he can ask that he be worthy receive the brocha of the Torah. On Shavous the Rebbes in Rizhin would bless their chassidim "that they merit to accept the Torah with both escorts, "a long life on the right hand side, wealth and kovod on the left hand side" **אורך ימים בימינה, ובשמאלה עושר וכבוד**.

In this vein the Chortkover Rebbe zt"l explained the statement of Chazal that all agree that on Shavous **דבעינן נמי לכם** one is obligated to eat and drink and have simchas Yom Tov. Many seforim ask why this is so, one would expect that on the day of Kabbolas HaTorah one should spend the entire day in the Beis Hamedrash learning Torah without interruption, but yet all agree we are specifically commanded to also enjoy simchas Yom Tov on Shavous.

Explains the Rebbe as follows: "The entire world was only created for the Torah, that's why before the giving of the Torah the whole world came to a standstill, as the medrash (**שמות רבה כט, ט**) tells us: "The birds didn't chirp or fly, the ox did not call, the angels did not fly, the waves of the sea did not move, the people did not speak." The entire world had gone into "lockdown" and was dependent on the Yidden accepting the Torah.

Thus when the Yidden accepted the Torah they gave new life to the world and only then could the world open up again and resume its daily routine. Therefore Klall Yisroel have the right to ask for life and all their other needs. This is why especially on Shavous all agree that we need to eat and drink and have simchas Yom Tov because it is an auspicious time to daven for all our needs."

וה' יזכנו לשמור את התורה ומצוותיו בהרחבה, ונזכה לראות עת ימלוך עלינו ועל כל ישראל, במהרה בימינו אמן סלה

ידידכם ישראל פרידמן



Shavuos – The Day Torah Became Our Life

Shavuos commemorates the most transformative moment in history — **מעמד הר סיני**, the giving of the Torah to **כלל ישראל** at **הר סיני**. It was the day we proclaimed **נעשה ונשמע**, accepting the Torah with complete devotion and meriting an unparalleled revelation of the **שכינה**.

We stood at Har Sinai and heard the voice of **ה׳**, an experience filled with holiness and eternal significance. Yet with this in mind, the **גמרא במסכת פסחים** presents something astonishing.

The Halachic Puzzle

Regarding every other **יום טוב, חז״ל** teach that a person may choose how to spend the day: either entirely immersed in **רוחניות** — Torah and **תפילה**, or through enjoying the physical **שמחת יום טוב**.

But Shavuos is different. The Gemara says: **הכל מודים דבעינן נמי לכם** — Everyone agrees that on Shavuot there must also be a dimension of physical enjoyment. A person must eat, drink, and celebrate physically.

Why?

Of all days, Shavuos — the day of **קבלת התורה** — seems like the day most suited to pure spirituality. Why insist on physical enjoyment?

A Parable: The Man at Sea

Imagine a man lost deep at sea. His ship is shattered in a violent storm. The waves tower, the sky is black, the wind deafening. He fights just to keep his head above water. There is no shore, no stars, no compass — no direction.

Suddenly, a small piece of wood floats beside him. To an observer, it is nothing. To the drowning man, it is life itself. He clings to it with everything he has.

This is Torah. People often think Torah is an "addition" to life — inspiration, wisdom, spirituality. But Torah is not decoration. - Torah is life. Without it, a person may survive physically, but internally he drifts — directionless, empty, pulled by every wave of society, temptation, confusion, and despair.

Torah in the Darkness

In the concentration camps, the Nazis stripped Jews of everything — food, dignity, family, warmth, humanity. People were starving, freezing, collapsing from exhaustion. Yet in that unimaginable darkness, there were Jews who risked their lives for one thing: **תורה**.

A story is told of a young boy caught whispering **גמרא** by heart to another prisoner. A Nazi officer beat him savagely and screamed:

"What are you saying?"

The boy, trembling and bleeding, answered: "I am learning Torah"

The officer mocked him: "Your G-d has abandoned you. Your Torah cannot feed you. It cannot save you. Why cling to it?"

And the boy replied words survivors never forgot: **לחם מונע מיהודי למות. - אבל תורה נותנת לו סיבה לחיות** — ***"Bread keeps a Jew from dying, but Torah gives him the reason to live."***

Knowledge Without Light

A story is told of a great **צדיק** who visited a secular university. He walked through an enormous library filled with thousands of books — philosophy, science, literature, history. Everyone expected him to be overwhelmed. Instead, he quietly said: **כל כך הרבה חכמה — וכל כך הרבה חושך**.

They were shocked. Darkness? Here?

He explained: "When a person has information but no divine truth, he may know many things — but he still does not know how to live. - That is Torah."

The Answer to Our Question

Torah is not meant to be reserved for certain times or places. It is meant to be a way of life — direction, fulfillment, purpose. So on most Yamim Tovim, one may choose between spiritual or physical focus. But on Shavuos — **יום קבלת התורה** — we demonstrate that Torah is not separate from life. - It infuses life.

Therefore: Eat. Drink. Celebrate. But do so together with Torah.

❤️ **The Heartbeat of a Jew**

This Shavuos, let us remind ourselves: Torah is not just something we learn. Torah is something we live. It is our heartbeat. It guides us through darkness. It gives meaning to every part of existence.

Wishing you an uplifting and beautiful Yom Tov.





Appreciating Shavuos – Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hoff

The Gaon explains the nusach of the tefillah we say on Yom Tov: **"אתה בחרתנו מכל העמים, אהבת אותנו, ורצית בנו."** - All the tefillos of the Yamim Tovim begin with this introduction.

In the Gaon's siddur it is brought that these three phrases correspond to the three major Yamim Tovim:

● **"אתה בחרתנו מכל העמים"** refers to **Pesach**, when Hakadosh Baruch Hu took Klal Yisrael out of Mitzrayim and showed the nations of the world the chashivus of Klal Yisrael — that we became the chosen nation.

● **"אהבת אותנו"** refers to **Shavuos**.

● **"ורצית בנו"** refers to **Sukkos**, when Hakadosh Baruch Hu was mochel Klal Yisrael after Yom Kippur and showed His appeasement and goodwill toward them.

The special nature of **Shavuos** is the midah of **"אהבת אותנו,"** the love that brought Hakadosh Baruch Hu and Klal Yisrael together at Ma'amad Har Sinai.

The truth is that the nature of Shavuos is fundamentally different from Pesach and Sukkos.

On **Pesach**, Klal Yisrael were in galus, suffering under a terrible shibud, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu, with great rachamim and great nissim, took them out.

On **Sukkos**, we commemorate the way Hashem cared for Klal Yisrael in the midbar — the Ananei HaKavod, the protection and guidance He provided.

But on **Shavuos**, nothing "happened" in the sense of a crisis or danger. Klal Yisrael were not in trouble, and there was no need for Hashem to intervene to save them or protect them. Shavuos is a completely different inyan.

"אהבת אותנו" means that Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted closeness. He wanted a relationship of *yedidus*, of deep connection. There was no external need, no emergency, no crisis. It was an initiative of the **רִבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם** Himself — a desire to draw close to Klal Yisrael.

On Shavuos, so to speak, Hakadosh Baruch Hu "left His place in Shamayim" and descended to be with Klal Yisrael together. The

giving of the Torah was a revelation of the chavivus and chashivus that Hashem has for Klal Yisrael. He wanted them to have a special, intimate shaychus with Him — not only that He looks after them in times of need, but that He desires a deep, ongoing closeness.

That is the essence of Kabbalas HaTorah: - Hakadosh Baruch Hu coming down to be with Klal Yisrael, to form a bond of love and connection that goes beyond protection or rescue — a relationship of nearness, of togetherness, of **אהבת אותנו**.

Talmud Torah

You know, the **Sfas Emes** has a very interesting vertl about the minhag of learning on Leil Shavuos.

The way we usually understood the minhag, kipshuto, is that we learn all night to show our chashivus for Torah. We demonstrate our love for Torah, perhaps to repair something that Klal Yisrael didn't do properly at the time of Matan Torah.

But the Sfas Emes says an andere zach. And I want to share with you an interesting vertl that **Reb Gustman zt"l** once discussed.

A bochur asked him the following question:

We know that on Erev Pesach there is a din not to eat matzah, **כדי שיאכל מצה לתיאבון** — so that when Pesach night arrives, a person eats the matzah with a strong appetite.

So the bochur asked:

If so, shouldn't we say the same about Shavuos?

On Erev Shavuos, maybe we shouldn't learn the whole day, so that at night we should learn with a gevaldige cheshek?

That was the question.

Reb Gustman answered that the shailah is based on a misconception.

I'm not talking about the halachos of bittul Torah, but the shailah itself is mistaken.

Why?

Because the nature of limud haTorah is fundamentally different from the nature of physical desires.

Gashmiyus vs. Ruchniyus

In inyanei gashmiyus, the more a person has, the less he wants. A man eats stuffed chicken — he's finished with it. He buys a new car — he's excited for a day or two, then he wants a different one.

That's the nature of gashmiyus: it never truly satisfies. But inyanei ruchniyus, and especially limud haTorah, are exactly the opposite.

The less a person learns, the less he wants to learn. If he learns only once in a while, there's no cheshek. It's not like a new car that excites you after years of waiting.

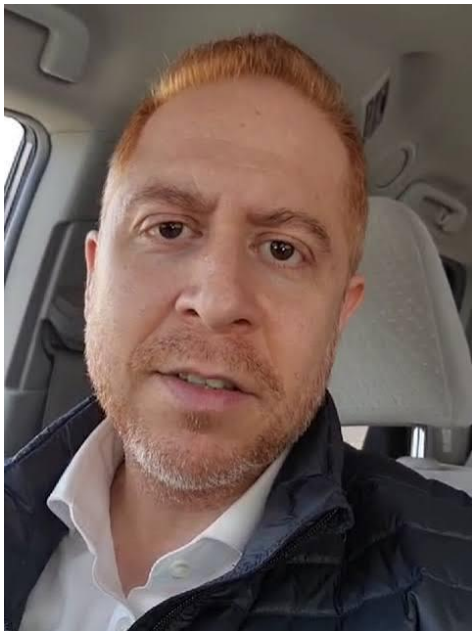
Torah is fahrkehrt — the more a person learns, the more he wants to learn. A little learning awakens a desire for more. The first step is hard, but once he begins, he wants another step, and another, and another.

So how does one create cheshek for Torah? - Only by learning Torah. If you want to learn on Leil Shavuos with cheshek, and you don't learn the whole day, you'll come into the night weak and sluggish. If you want to learn with fire on Leil Shavuos, the only way is to learn beforehand.

That's how Torah works.

"The joy of Shavuos is that a human being can attach himself to something eternal." ~ Slonimer Rebbe.

Nothing Is Free - R' Yitzchak Sakhai



Tonight, as we prepare ourselves for Shavuot, we pause to remember what this Yom Tov truly represents. Shavuot is not merely the anniversary of receiving the Torah — it is the celebration of becoming *Am HaTorah*, a nation defined, shaped, and uplifted by Hashem's greatest gift.

But to appreciate that gift, we must confront a simple truth: it is easy to become spiritual "robots." We perform mitzvot, we follow halachah, we keep the routine — yet sometimes we forget *why*. Shavuot invites us to rediscover the heart behind the mitzvot, the joy behind the structure, and the meaning behind the discipline.

The Chacham's Question — What Happened?

At the Seder, the Chacham asks: "**מה העדות והחוקים...?**" What are all these mitzvot? Beneath his question lies a deeper one: *What happened?* We began with seven mitzvot, and now we have hundreds. Life seems more demanding, not easier.

Many people quietly feel this. After weeks of Pesach preparation, after measuring grams of matzah and leaning exactly the right way, it hardly feels like "freedom." Women hear "*Avadim hayinu… now we are free*" and think: *Free? Really?*

The Haggadah answers with one phrase:

"לטוב לנו" — Hashem gave these mitzvot for our good.

But how? How is more obligation "good"?

The Angels' Message — Torah Is a Gift

When Moshe ascended to receive the Torah, the angels argued with him. Moshe responded: *Do you have parents? Do you work? Do you*

struggle? The angels weren't foolish; they knew Torah wasn't for them. Their message was deeper:

If we could have Torah, we would keep it. Since we cannot, take care of it — it is precious.

The nations of the world also misunderstood Torah. Yishmael rejected it because of "do not steal," Eisav because of "do not murder." They misunderstood their own blessings — and therefore misunderstood Torah.

Only Am Yisrael understood the truth: **When the Creator offers a gift, you accept it.** That is the meaning of: **"נעשה ונשמע" — We will do, and we will listen.** We recognized that anything Hashem gives must be good.

Why Shavuot Is "Zman Matan Torateinu"

The Torah wasn't actually given on the 6th of Sivan. It was supposed to be — but Moshe said the people weren't ready, so Hashem delayed it. The Luchot were ultimately given on Yom Kippur.

So why do we celebrate Shavuot as *Matan Torah*?

Because the *matana* — the acceptance — happened on the 6th. Hashem waited because gifts are not forced. The Gemara teaches that "**יום השישי**" in Bereishit hints to this very day — the day the world was waiting for us to say *yes*.

Torah as Structure — The Real Path to Freedom

We often misunderstand freedom. We think freedom means "doing whatever I want." But that is not freedom — that is chaos. Even in the "freest country," you cannot drive without a seatbelt. Freedom without boundaries is danger, not liberty.

Torah gives us **structure**, and structure gives us **freedom**.

When people struggle emotionally, the first question is: *What is your daily schedule?* A life without structure becomes unstable and unhappy.

Moshe taught Bnei Yisrael eating times after Egypt because slaves had no control over food. When they became free, they ate constantly out of trauma — like survivors who slept with bread under their pillows. Freedom requires boundaries.

Torah is that boundary. Torah is that structure. Torah is the roadmap that keeps us from becoming lost.

Meaning vs. Meaninglessness

My brother just told me an incredible true story. He heard this from a *Rav* that is in that has an organization for outreach, like *Kiruv*. And he said over that he met someone that had just become *baal teshuvah* in Israel. And he saw that the boy's doing really well and asked them, what made you change your life from total secular Judaism to becoming a *Torah* Jew?

So he tells them, well, there's a funny story actually if you want to hear it. And he's like, yeah, sure.

He tells them, listen, I used to work in a department store in Tel Aviv. And one morning I came to work to open up the shop and shop let's say opens at 10:00. 9:45 there's an older gentleman behind the door waiting to get in. So I open the door, he gets in and I'm like, I wonder what he wants, you know? He comes in and he goes, takes three pairs of socks and he purchases them and leaves.

Okay, nothing weird. Only to find him the next day again early, again behind the door. I open the door, comes in, three pairs of socks, purchases them and leaves. And this goes on three days, four days, five - every single day, three pairs of socks.

Buys them and leaves. Comes back the next day and I'm thinking to myself, is this guy selling socks by the beach? Maybe we could sell it to him wholesale, we'll tell him but you can't, you're in Tel Aviv, people do weird things. I'm not going to, you know what I'm saying? But it goes on for like a year. Every single day, the guy's buying three pairs of socks.

What's going on? So finally one day I said, sir, you don't mind if I ask, I'm sorry, I just have to know. I've seen you every single morning early and you buy three pairs of socks every day. What's with the socks? Why are you buying three pairs of socks every day?

And he says, no problem, I'll tell you. He says, look, I'm a very, very wealthy man. I'm extremely wealthy. I grew up in a very poor family, and my entire life my dream was to be wealthy. That was my goal. That was it.

And I swore to myself, I'm gonna be wealthy. I'm gonna work three jobs, four jobs if I have to, save all of my money, I have to make it. I want to be wealthy. I want to be filthy rich to be able to do whatever I want, whenever I want.

And *Baruch Hashem*, yes, I worked very hard in my life, I had three jobs, sometimes four jobs, I barely slept, I saved up all of my money, I barely spent anything until I had enough. And I was in my mid-60s, single, no family, all alone. But I was rich. I made it.

I'm a billionaire! So I have my routines. I really have fun with myself every day. Every morning, my routine is I buy three pairs of socks. I go home and I prepare myself a wonderful breakfast.

I put my new socks on, and I have my wonderful breakfast with my new socks. When I'm done with breakfast, I take off my socks and I roll them into a nice ball. And I have a trash can right there in my home, and I try my luck. Will I make it? Will I not? And I shoot a basket and if it goes in, goal! I made it! Okay.

Then I put on the second pair of socks, wait until lunchtime. Then I have my lunch with my second pair. Then I take it off after I'm done, make it into a ball, and I shoot for the basket. And guess what I do for dinner? Same thing.

That's what I do for fun. Well, in the middle of the day, if I have things that I need to take care of, I take care of, but this is what I look forward to. I have the best time.

So the guy says, when I heard this, that made me *Baal Teshuvah*. That is what changed my life. I said, I don't want to be some guy rolling socks when I'm in my 60s, throwing them into a trash basket.

We laugh. This guy had his routine.

There's so many others that have their routine. Some people have very classy routines, they're on the green playing golf. Some people have other routines, they have their clubs or whatever it is, they make it. They might even have families.

But at the end of their life, when they look back, they don't have much to look at. Many of the wealthiest people in the world that can own anything are not very happy. The ones that are semi-happy are those that actually had structure. Like who's this guy, Warren Buffett? Never bought any expensive cars. You look at him, you want to put something in his hand. You know, he had like Burger King every morning and it's like for the past 50 years. But he had a routine, every day he went to work and he had his structure, etc.

Torah was given to *Am Yisrael* for that structure in a different way, in a very spiritual way. This is your structure.

This is what you need to do in order to be successful and happy in life. *Shavuot*, receiving the Torah, has to be dealt with in an extremely high... it's the happiest day. This is when we became *Am Yisrael*.

There you can't, you can't compare to anything else. But many of us, including myself, for years go on thinking, okay, *Mattan Torah*, but behind in our subconscious we're thinking like, okay, you know, the day we got the Torah, now I can't eat this with that, I can't do this with that, I can't go here, I can't do that, I can't do this, I can't do that. So it's a lot of can'ts. But once you look at it the way we just explained it tonight, it's a lot of cans.

Because when you're successful in here, when you're healthy in here, at the end of the day everyone just wants to be happy in life. People

that go crazy purchasing things, it's because they think that's going to bring them happiness. *Am Yisrael* doesn't need that. We can literally be happy at a *Seder* night going through the motions, going nuts about the measurements and about how many cups, about how many *matzahs*, how many etc., and we're happy and we fight each other, we do *Dayenus*, whatever.

Why? Because the *Torah* really is **כי חיינו ואורך ימינו**, it's our life, it brings joy to us. But we have to recognize what it is within the *Torah* that gives us that joy, and that's the structure that it gives us. It gives us a way of life, a road to follow so that we're not constantly on this autopilot listening to the ways of the world. By ways I mean GPS.

Shabbat — The Taste of the Gift

Shabbat is the weekly reminder of what Torah gives us: Family. Rest. A couch, pajamas, a sefer. A world without noise.

Rav Netanely zatzal used to say simply: **"ברוך השם שאני יהודי."** - We forget how profound that is.

Shavuot — Receiving the Gift Again

Shavuot is not only the day we received Torah — it is the day we *receive it again*. The day we remind ourselves that Torah is not a burden but a blessing, not a restriction but a roadmap, not a weight but wings.

Tonight, we stand again at Sinai. We hear again the question: *Do you accept My Torah?* And we answer again: **"נעשה ונשמע."**

May we receive the Torah with joy, with clarity, with gratitude — and may that acceptance bring us closer to **פני משיח צדקנו במהרה בימינו.**

A New Understanding of "אַחַת שָׁאַלְתִּי"

The pasuk says: **"אַחַת שָׁאַלְתִּי מֵאֵת ה', אוֹתָהּ אֲבַקֵּשׁ"**

Everyone asks: why the repetition? If I asked for one thing, then that's what I'm requesting.

But perhaps we can explain: In life, a person asks Hashem for many things — parnassah, comfort, success. But in gashmiyus, once he gets it, he no longer appreciates it. He wants something else.

But there is one thing that a person asks for, and the more he has it, the more he wants it: **שִׁבְתִּי בְּבֵית ה' כָּל יְמֵי חַיַּי** - Torah.

A person who is zocheh to learn Torah — the more he has it, the more he desires it. That is the meaning of: **אַחַת שָׁאַלְתִּי... אוֹתָהּ אֲבַקֵּשׁ**

The one request whose desire grows after receiving it. **אַחַת שָׁאַלְתִּי מֵאֵת ה' — אוֹתָהּ אֲבַקֵּשׁ.**

Story of R' Mordechai Gifter *zt"l* from his youth in Telshe.

It was *Shavuos* morning and after a long night of learning, **R' Mordechai Gifter *zt"l*** and his *chavrusa* went out on a walk. One of the city laymen spotted them and berated them for not learning on the day of *Shavuos*.

They responded that they had already spent the whole night learning and were not out to enjoy a bit of air, however, the laymen was not buying it.

Shaking his head, he shot back at them, "Have you ever seen a drunkard say I had enough to drink?!"

Taking it to heart, R' Gifter would add that just as food satisfies the stomach, *Torah* satisfies the soul.

Know Your Worth! - R' Moshe Malka



We all know *Chag Shavuos*, the *Yom Tov* of *Matan Torah*. *Hashem* chose *Har Sinai* from all other mountains to be the place to give us the *Torah*. To teach us to be humble.

Other mountains were bigger, more powerful and larger. However, *Har Sinai* had humility. A smaller mountain, and that's why that was the place. And the question has been asked: if humility is the prerequisite to receive the *Torah*, give us the *Torah* in a valley, somewhere down underneath.

Why on a mountain in the first place? A mountain also has some kind of height over the valley. Why would *Hashem* put it on a mountain?

And the answer is: to receive the *Torah*, you need to know your value. You need to feel like a mountain. You need to have confidence that you're the son of *Hashem* and you are now entrusted with His treasure called the *Torah*, like *Hashem* told *Am Yisrael*: *V'atem Tehiyu*, you shall be *Mamleches Kohanim*.

Every person is a *Melech* and a *Kohen* serving the Creator of the world. If you go to England, the princes and the princesses, the Williams and Elizabeths, you think they just have regular attire at the dinner table? They wear special clothing, they have special rules, they act in a special way because they know they are royalty.

And therefore, one must know his worth. A mountain has to know I'm a mountain, I'm important, I'm above.

Now, it doesn't have to be too high up, too high and too haughty is no good. But sometimes when you do something you shouldn't, you feel low, you feel like you belong in the valley. Gedaliah Fernster once said: don't let success get to your head, and don't let failure get to your heart. Be even-keeled.

Don't be a valley and don't be the biggest mountain around. No need to be the BMOC, 'the big man on campus.' Be the small mountain, and that's where *Har Sinai* receives the *Torah*. In short, have confidence, not arrogance.

What is the difference between confidence and arrogance? Well, they sound similar. I'm a mountain, I'm bigger than you, valley, you know who I am, you know who you're talking to, could be a little arrogant. One of our students in our *Yeshiva*, Moshe Abecassis, put it in one line. He said: 'arrogance is showing your worth, confidence is knowing your worth.'

You see? You need to know how important you are. Confidence, knowing your worth, no need to flex, no need to get angry, no need to show. Arrogance is showing your worth. That's a sign that there's nothing really inside.

And with that, we'll wish you happy *Chag Shavuot* and receive the *Torah*. And don't forget: when you are loyal to *Hashem*, loyal you are royal. *Chag Sameach*.

"Hashem gave the Torah in the desert to teach that only one who makes himself humble can truly acquire it." ~ Chofetz Chaim.

"At Har Sinai, every Jewish soul received its own portion in Torah — and that gift returns each Shavuos." ~ The Sfas Emes.

Medrash U'Maaseh - Rabbi Fyvel Shuster

Rav Yitzchak Yaakov Leuchter zt'l Learns a Lesson of Ahavas Torah in Auschwitz

Welcome back to **מדרש ומעשה**, sharing a story for the **יום טוב** of **שבועות**, which is coming up.

שבועות is an expression of **עם ישראל**'s love of **תורה**. Meaning, it's a **יום טוב** in which we're supposed to be happy, like on all of our **ימים טובים**, but the **שמחה** is supposed to be related to the content of the **יום טוב**. On the **יום טוב**, which is about receiving **תורה**, it's supposed to involve the **שמחה** that we have because we love **תורה**, and developing and expressing a love for **תורה**.

The **טאלנער רבי** learned in a school in **בית וגן**. In the early years of the school, it was known as the **תלמוד תורה** of **בית וגן**, and it was headed by the **מנהל**, the principal, Rabbi **יצחק יעקב לייכטער**. As a young man, he was in the concentration camps and came out to become a very influential educator in **ארץ ישראל**. He said that when he came to the concentration camps, it was already towards the end of the war, and there were some Jews who had managed to survive who had been in the camps for quite a few years, and obviously, they were walking skeletons, right, they were barely alive even though they managed to survive.

When he came, they placed him in a bunk, and he saw that on one of the boards that they were given to sleep on near him, there was a man who lay there exhausted. He wasn't even sure if the man was really still alive. Suddenly, that person opened his eyes and said with his, like, last strength, he said, "**בחור'ל**," he said, "young man, **האסט מיר געבראכט עפעס א יידיש ספר?** Did you perhaps bring with you a Jewish book?"

Because he was a new arrival at the camp, he thought maybe he managed to bring a **ספר**. "A **קליינע משניות'ל?** Did you manage to smuggle in a small **משניות?**

אדער a גמרא? Maybe a גמרא?" So, ר' יצחק יעקב said that he had actually taken with him a few small volumes of משניות, but as he was being transported, he lost all but one of them.

He still had a tiny משניות סדר קדשים. So the man's eyes lit up, and he asked if he could please borrow that משניות. He took the משניות and kissed it, and he sat on the edge of that board in the bunk, and he started to learn משניות with fire and with חיות, in a lively, vital way. And it was like he was a man with tremendous thirst who was slaking his thirst after having gone through a desert without having had water for so long.

After a few hours, he put down the משניות and returned it. The next morning, when the Nazis came to wake everyone up for labor, so ר' יצחק יעקב saw that that man didn't wake up. That was his last evening. He had united with the תורה, he had exited that world of the nightmare, and elevated himself joyfully with that תורה, with learning the תורה with that thirst being the one thing that he wanted most of all, perhaps sensing that it was the end of his life in this world.

As we approach מתן תורה, we have to try to think of what we get excited about, what we yearn for, how we approach the תורה in a world where we can learn תורה in endless forms and formats. We don't have to wait for a new inmate to Auschwitz to maybe have smuggled in a tiny משניות. We have to learn from those lessons of those people, and try on שבועות to try to be מקבל תורה בשמחה, to try to add in some more energy, some more vitality, some more שמחה in learning of תורה by taking some time to think about what it means to us, and what it has meant to us always, and what it means for our future. Wishing everyone a יום טוב of שמחה, of קבלת התורה, and may we be זוכה to be able to bring the קרבנות of יום טוב, the שתי הלחם, in the בית המקדש on שבועות with the coming of משיח צדקנו.

כל טוב.

TORAH TAVLIN
STORIES AND SAYINGS, WIT AND WISDOM FROM OUR TORAH LEADERS

Shavuos Torah Gems

ויחנו במדבר ויחן שם ישראל נגד ההר וכו' (יתרו יט-ב)

The words **במדבר סיני** are numerically equivalent to the word **בשלום** (378). Rashi quotes the **Mechilta** that when Bnei Yisroel came to Har Sinai, all the **שבטים** were united as one man with one heart - " **כאיש אחד בלב אחד**". In this merit they were **זוכה זו** to receive the Torah.

The Chidah, R' Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai ZT"L, adds that because we read the Parsha of **במדבר** on the Shabbos before Shavuos, it is appropriate that we attempt to make **שלום** among one another before receiving the Torah.

Torah Gems

ויחן שם ישראל נגד ההר וכו'. ומשה עלה אל האלקים וכו' (יתרו יט-ב'ג')

When the Jews came to Har Sinai, they camped at the foot of the mountain. The word "camped" is expressed in its singular form as opposed to the plural form, which teaches us that the people were united - one man with one heart.

The very next Posuk says, "And Moshe ascended to Heaven and Hashem called to him from the mountain." This teaches us that Yisrael set themselves to the task of preparing the camp, and Moshe ascended to prepare himself for his approaching prophecy.

How is it possible to describe the activities of Moshe and the people in one breath? Moshe Rabbeinu is preparing for the world's greatest revelation, and the people are digging latrines and pounding in tent pegs!

R' Chaim Shmuelevitz ZT"L answers that when Bnei Yisroel pitched camp, each one was concerned not with his own place, rather he took the time to worry about his neighbor. The most distressing aspect of the enslavement in Egypt was, that due to the strenuousness of

the work, the people didn't have enough physical and emotional strength to do chessed with one another. But as soon as they had the opportunity, they immediately began. Each one was making sure that his neighbor had a good place to camp, that all of his needs were taken care of. Therefore, Moshe Rabbeinu was able to ascend to Hashem to get the Torah. They had demonstrated their true nature.

May we always be a nation that does Chessed, and each and every day be able to receive the Torah anew.

