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ON SHAVUOS - 5766

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From: [torahweb@torahweb.org](mailto:torahweb@torahweb.org) Sent: May 30, 2006 Subject: Rabbi Hershel Schachter - Is G-d Still Talking to Us?

<http://www.torahweb.org/thisWeek.html>

**Rabbi Hershel Schachter**

**Is G-d Still Talking to Us?**

One Shabbos morning the students came to the beis medrash for Shacharis and there was a strange looking fellow, obviously not a student, and obviously missing some of his marbles, putting on tefillin. It didn't seem that he simply had not realized that it was Shabbos, so we all stayed away from him. When Rav Dovid Lifshitz arrived, he walked over to the young man and spoke to him softly in Hebrew. He pointed out that today is Shabbos and tefillin are not worn. The young man responded that he knows that, but he had received a nevuah (a prophecy) that he should wear tefillin today, despite the fact that it was Shabbos! Reb Dovid was not phased by his reply. He simply continued the conversation and asked, "in what language was this nevuah"? The young man replied - in English. Whereupon Reb Dovid told him softly, "you must be mistaken. Nevuas are only given in Hebrew." Whereupon the young man thanked him for his clarification and he proceeded to remove his tefillin.

We were stunned watching all of this! You have to master abnormal psychology to be able to convince a meshugena that he's wrong. The possuk in Sefer Melochim (I:5:11) says that King Shlomo was blessed with wisdom, and was "wiser than any other person". The rabbis understand this to imply afilu min hashotim - that he was even wiser than the meshugaim!!

G-d gave His Torah and promised that he would supply us with prophets from time to time (Devorim 18:15) to guide us. When Maamad Har Sinai is described, the chumash says (Devorim 5:22) that Hashem spoke to the Jewish people in a loud booming voice, ("kol gadol") and He did not stop ("velo yasaf"). The rabbis (Shemos Rabba 28) understand this to refer to the fact that G-d continues to communicate to us both through the prophets as well as through the talmedei chachamim.

But not any old crackpot who sets himself up as a "novi" is to be listened to. Our tradition (see Rambam Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah chap. 7) has prerequisites that must be met before one qualifies to be recognized as a novi. Likewise our tradition has guidelines regarding the substance of the prophecy (ibid chap. 8 - 10). If one tells us that he has received a prophecy

to permanently do away with any one of the mitzvos, or to worship avoda zarah even if only temporarily, we know that he is a false prophet.

Similarly there are guidelines regarding a rabbi rendering a halachic view. There is room for chiddush, but no room for shinui. One of the thirteen principles of our faith is that the Torah laws can not change. But at the same time the medrash tells us (see Yalkut Shimoni to Sefer Shoftim 5:8) that Hakadosh Baruch Hu cherishes chidushei Torah, and it is for that reason that the talmedei chachamim engage in milchamta shel (the battle of) Torah, in order to come up with such chidushim. It is a fine line that distinguishes between chiddush and shinui [1].

If a learned G-d fearing individual comes up with original insights by applying the middos (rules and regulations) shehaTorah nidreshes bohem which were transmitted by the Torah shebeal pe (oral Torah), then we have the right to assume G-s is still communicating with us via the psak of the rabbi. And the psak of the rabbi is binding because we believe that "G-d will reveal His secrets to those who fear him" (Tehillim 2:14, see Sotah 4b.)

When the Torah (Shemos 20:1) describes the proclamation of the ten commandments, the expression used is that "G-d spoke all of these words (kohl hadevorim)" and our tradition has it that the word kohl is referring to the fact that everything intelligent any future talmid chacham will come up with was implicitly included in the Torah that G-d gave us at Har Sinai.

When Rambam formulates what he considers to be the thirteen principles of our faith (commentary to Mishna, Sanhedrin Perek Chelek) he writes that not only do we believe that at one time (maamad har Sinai) G-d revealed Himself to us, and gave us His Torah, but also that the Torah as we observe it today is min hashomayim. There are individuals who consider themselves Orthodox who believe that at one time the Jewish people did have a Divine Torah, but the amoraim misunderstood the tannaim, the rishonim misunderstood the Talmud, and the achromim misunderstood the rishonim. "But don't get me wrong," they would say "- I'm Orthodox! And therefore I feel that the laws of the Shulchan Aruch are all binding, even though I think everything is in error." This is not the Orthodox position. If one is really convinced that a certain psak is really in error, he is not permitted to follow it [2]. To err is human, and a Shulchan Aruch which is full of mistakes is a man-made Torah as opposed to a Divine one. Rav Chaim of Volozhin was fond of signing off his teshuvos, "the G-d of truth gave us a Torah of truth, and our eyes are only focused on the truth."

We believe that G-d protects His Torah from errors. Any mistakes made over the years by poskim, will ultimately be corrected. The psak of the rabbis is binding because we have the right to assume that G-d has behind the scenes "revealed His secrets to those who fear him."

The story is told of the Rav Yechezkel Landau, author of the Sheilos uTeshuvos Nodah Beyehuda, that on one occasion he was presented with a "shaila" in hilchos treifos. After thinking for a few moments he insisted that the shaila was not real, that the organ of the animal must have been tampered with after the shechita. When the guilty baal habayis finally admitted to the charge, Rabbi Landau explained how he knew: for many years whenever he would pasken a shaila, he would have a very comfortable and confident feeling that from heaven they had assisted him to pasken correctly. On this occasion, even though he had formulated a clear-cut halachic opinion, he did not feel comfortable issuing his psak. He felt that on this occasion he was not receiving any Heavenly assistance, and he wondered why. He quickly came to the conclusion that Divine assistance not to err in psak is a miracle of sorts, and G-s is not in the practice of performing miracles unnecessarily. Obviously in this instance there was no need for any Heavenly assistance; the shaila was a fake!

I recently read a fascinating article encouraging the Conservative movement to adopt as its new slogan the slogan of some Christian group: "g-d is still speaking." The writer states that she is a Conservative Jew because she believes this to be true, that G-d is still speaking. And she concludes her essay with the complaint, "why do so many Conservative

leaders seem too often to be listening only to what G-d said to generations past (Jewish Week, May 12, 2006, pg. 27).

This has always been the position of the Orthodox. That's where all of the chiddush always is. G-d is still speaking to us through the rabbis' further development of the Torah shebeal peh. But just as we only follow the instructions of a prophet if who he is and what he has to say are within certain bounds; so too the rabbis are entitled, and indeed encouraged, to be "mechadesh" if what they have to say is within the bounds of the middos of the Torah shebeal peh.

The mishna in Avos tells us that G-d created the entire world with ten pronouncements. The Chafetz Chaim pointed out (Sefer Chomas Hados, chap. 11) that rabbis of the Talmud felt that whatever was initially created directly by the word of G-d was stronger, healthier, and better than the offspring of that initial creation. Tradition has it (see Rashi to Breishis 1:21) that after mashiach will come, there will be a seudah for the tzadikim, and the levyassan will be served. This refers to the original fish created by G-d's words. Although that fish will be preserved for over five thousand years it is assumed that it will be either tastier or healthier than any of its offspring, even though they will be fresher.

Similarly, the rabbis say (Berachos 34b) that at that meal for the tzadikim, special wine will be served, made from the original grapes created (during the six days of creation) directly by the word of G-d. Wouldn't it make more sense to make some wine from freshly grown grapes? Obviously the rabbis' tradition was that those original grapes, created directly by the word of G-d, were clearly superior to any others.

The Talmud (Avoda Zarah 8a) transmits a tradition that Adam Harishon brought as a sacrifice that original ox created by the word of G-d. That animal was obviously considered "the choice", to be preferred over any of its offspring.

With respect to Torah, however, this is not the case. We do not consider those laws of the Torah directly dictated by G-d to Moshe Rebbeinu as more important than the laws developed by the rabbis of the later generations. King David says in Tehillim (119:72) that the Torah from G-d's mouth (tov li Toras picha) is to be preferred over thousands of gold or silver pieces. Does the Torah "from G-d's mouth" refer only to the text of the chumash dictated word for word and letter for letter by G-d? Rav Chaim of Volozhin pointed to the story related in Gittin (6b) that two amoraim expressed differing views regarding the Biblical story of the pilegish begivah. Soon after, Rav Avyasar met Eliyahu Hanavi who told him that just then Hakadosh Baruch Hu was also learning that parsha in Sefer Shoftim, and He Himself said over the two suggestions of the two amoraim. Apparently, any honest intelligent chiddush which a later talmid chacham comes up with will also become "Toras picha" by virtue of the fact that Hakadosh Baruch Hu will say that over also.

[1] See Rav Soloveitchik's essay "The Halachic Mind", footnote 98 [2] It goes without saying that when evaluating a psak, one must factor in any discrepancy between his own knowledge and qualifications vs. those of the posek espousing the psak in question, and what such a discrepancy may indicate regarding which person is the one who is in error

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## Young Israel of Long Beach

The Yom Tov of Shevuos represents the quintessential moment in the history of the Jewish nation. Yet one is struck by the fact that from the Torah's perspective, Shavuos is not completely independent but rather inextricably linked to the Yom Tov of Pesach. This is demonstrated by the fact that the Torah never mentions the specific date on which Shavuos is to be observed but instead instructs us to count the forty-nine days of Sefirah beginning with Pesach and ending with the fiftieth day, which is designated as the holiday of Shavuos.

On the most obvious level it can be said that the need for this interdependence reflects the reality that, without the freedom from bondage that Pesach celebrates, it would have been impossible for the Jewish nation to come to Mount Sinai to receive the Torah. It is equally true that, without Kabbolas HaTorah, the exodus from Egypt would have been inconsequential, if not meaningless.

On a somewhat deeper level, the linkage between Pesach and Shavuos reflects a process of growth which commences on Pesach and reaches its full actualization on Shavuos. Rashi, in Shemos (3:11), states that in response to G-d's initial urging that Moshe go to Egypt to save the Jewish people, Moshe argues: What have the Jewish people done to deserve such a miracle? Moshe further states during the latter part of his interaction with HaShem, "Please, my Lord, send through whomever You will send!" (4:13). The commentators find Moshe's posture incongruous with our traditional appreciation of Moshe as being the unequivocal defender of Israel – under all circumstances.

They explain that quite to the contrary, Moshe was indeed interceding on behalf of the Jewish people. Moshe was arguing that the Jewish people lacked merit because they were being passive as evidenced by their not taking the initiative to call out to Hashem to free them from their slavery. Rather, it is HaShem who is taking the initiative. Thus, under such, spiritually inferior circumstances, the exodus from Egypt could not be, by definition, the final redemption for Klal Yisroel. Moshe proposes that Hashem withhold redemption until such time that the Jews themselves call out to him and through their own initiative come to the realization that their salvation can only be achieved through their active pursuit of G-d's intercession. When that level is attained, Moshe says "Send through whomever You will send!" – meaning, don't send me to achieve only an interim redemption. Rather, send the ultimate redeemer, a reference to the Messiah who will bring about a final and lasting redemption.

Despite Moshe's protestation, Hashem took the Jewish people out of Egypt under these less than ideal circumstances in the hope that over the course of the next fifty days they would achieve a level of growth that would allow them to take on the role of initiators in their relationship with HaShem. In fact, the desired goal was achieved at the time of Kabbolas HaTorah, when the Jews declared "Na'aseh V'nishma". The Jews were in effect saying we are ready to take the initiative and pursue our relationship with G-d. This is reflected in their response, which placed the "Na'aseh" before the "Nishma", and thereby indicated their readiness to even preempt any direction from HaShem.

This entire process of growth can be explained both in the anomalous manner in which the Torah refers to Pesach as Shabbos, as stated, "You shall count for yourselves on the morrow of Shabbos" (VaYikra 23:15), and in the insistence that the Minchas HaOmer be brought "lirtzonchem" - of your own will (VaYikra 23:11). Why the special emphasis on one's will? We know that all sacrifices must be brought of the donor's free will.

It is possible that Pesach is referred to as "Shabbos" in this context because the day of Shabbos comes exclusively from HaShem, with no input from the Jewish nation in determining the advent of Shabbos. This status is reflective of the situation that existed when the Jewish people left Egypt, with the Jews being passive and HaShem active in the process of redemption. Through the days of Sefirah the goal was to attain a level of "lirtzonchem" - so that by the time of Shavuos the circumstances would

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**SHAVUOS**

**By Rabbi Dr. Chaim Wakslak**

have changed and it would then become the will of the Jewish people to actively pursue HaShem.

The Torah's use of the term "Shabbos" as a substitute for Pesach is somewhat amazing given the historical difficulties that have arisen from the misinterpretation of the term. The Tzidukim refused to accept the interpretation of the Sages and insisted on translating "Shabbos" not as Pesach but literally as Shabbos Bereshis". Therefore, every year the Tzidukim would begin the counting of the Sefirah on a Sunday. The Talmud tells us that our Sages went to great lengths to reject and dispel the practice of the Tzidukim.

This debate between the Sages and the Tzidukim might be explained by referencing the conceptualization of the period between Pesach and Shavuos as a period designed to engender growth from passive to active.

The Sages, who believe in an active process of Rabbinic interpretation of the Torah, embrace the definition of "Shabbos" in the context of Sefirah as a reference to Pesach, for it then supports the movement from passivity to activity. It follows that the active acceptance of Torah is then consistent with their interpretation, which is based on an active process as reflected in the dictates of the orally transmitted Torah.

In contrast, the Tzidukim, who rejected the oral tradition and were solely dependent on a literal interpretation of the written Torah, were more than willing to reject the development of the Jewish nation from a passive state of exodus to an active acceptance of the Torah. By refusing to translate "Shabbos" in the context of Sefirah as referring to Pesach they lose the entire context of the growth process which begins with the passivity of Pesach and concludes the active acceptance of the Torah. This approach is very consistent with their rejection of the very active and dynamic process of the oral tradition, and consequently resulted in passive acceptance and literal interpretation of the Torah.

Also, by using the concept of transition from passive to active, one can also explain why during Pesach we eat Matzah and are prohibited from possessing or eating Chometz, while on Shavuos we actually bring two loaves of bread to the Bais HaMikdash to accompany the special sacrifices of the day. What has changed to explain why during Pesach Chometz is taboo, while on Shavuos, chometz is not only acceptable, but assumes a position of prominence? The answer may lie in the fact that Matzah represents passivity as we arrest the active process of allowing the leavening to take place and the dough to rise. In contrast, on the Yom Tov of Shavuos we make two loaves of actual bread which become part of the day's offerings, because Shavuos is reflective of the active status that we have attained in pursuing HaS hem.

The Yom Tov of Shavuos can also be said to be the culmination of another type of development, which commenced at the time the Jewish people left Egypt. The redemption from Egypt represented the emancipation of the "guf", the physical being of the individual, while the experience of Krias Yam Suf, the splitting of the sea, was the time in which the "neshama", the soul of the person, was redeemed. This dichotomy can be said to be reflected in the fact that, during the Pesach experience, there was an emphasis on the body, as reflected by the circumcision which took place prior to eating the Korban Pesach and the entire emphasis on eating the Korban Pesach, Matzah and marror, which are mitzvos dependent on physical activity. In contrast, seven days after the exodus, (with seven representing a "period of Shabbos" when a Jew experiences a "neshoma yesaira"), during the parting of the sea, the Jewish people experienced an elevation of spirit and soul which brought forth an emancipation of the soul and allowed them to sing a divinely inspired song to G-d. This is something that they were unable to do immediately following the exodus for their souls were still enslaved. Furthermore, our sages tell us that during the crossing of the sea a maidservant experienced a level of prophecy which rivaled that of the most outstanding prophets, once again reflecting the spiritual heights attained at the time of krias yam suf.

The emancipation of the "guf" and the "neshama" reached the pinnacle of attainment during the time of Kabalos HaTorah as reflected in the response of the Jewish nation as they declared "Na'aseh V'nishma". Through "Na'aseh" we were making a commitment to dedicate our bodies to the service of HaShem, and through "Nishma" we were also dedicating, that which is not tangible - our intellect, spirit and souls - to the service of HaShem. This commitment was sealed with the giving of the Aseres HaDibros. The Sefas Emes (Parshas Ki Sisa, 5656) writes that the letters engraved on the tablets represent the "neshama" and the actual "luchos" represent the "guf". The Torah tells us that, with regard to the first set of "luchos", both the tablets themselves and the writing were directly the product of HaShem. This reflected a confirmation of the status of Klal Yisroel at that time in that they had attained both an emancipation of "guf" and "neshama". It can also be said, that this reality of dual emancipation represented the underpinnings of Moshe's argument when confronted by the angels who found the giving of the Torah to humans incomprehensible. The gist of Moshe's response was that the Torah's actualization is not exclusively in the spiritual realm but can also find expression in the physical "guf".

The experience of Shavuos is not only to recall a historical event, but it is also an opportunity to recreate and relive the dimensions of Mattan Torah. It is incumbent upon us to re-dedicate our body and spirit to the service of HaShem which can only be achieved through the study of Torah and observance of Mitzvos.

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Subject: Rabbi Frand on Shavuos

"RavFrاند" List - **Rabbi Frand on Shavuos**  
**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 [Messiah]. 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 [verse] is laden with great symbolism and significance. When Boaz first arrives "on stage," we learn "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 of England, l'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?'

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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (# 330). The corresponding halachic portion for this tape is: Sefer Rus and Its Halachic Implications? The complete list of halachic portions for this parsha from the Commuter Chavrusah Series are: Tape # 013 - Yerushalayim in Halacha Tape # 058 - Yom Tov in Yerushalayim Tape # 101 - Teaching Torah to Women Tape # 147 - Sefiras HaOmer, Shavuos & the International Dateline Tape # 194 - Can One Charge for Teaching Torah Tape # 240 - An Early Start for Shavuos? Tape # 284 - Birkas HaTorah Tape # 330 - Sefer Rus and Its Halachic Implications Tape # 374 - Bathing on Shabbos and Yom Tov Tape # 418 - Shavuos Issues -- Late Ma'ariv / Learning All Night Tape # 462 - May A Child Carry A Sefer on Shabbos Tape # 506 - Shavuos: Two Days, She'cheyanu, & Other Issues Tape # 550 - Opening Cans On Shabbos and Yom Tov Tape # 594 - Omer Davar B'Sheim Omro - Giving Proper Credit Tape # 638 - Eruv and the Big City Tape # 682 - Carrying on Yom Tov Tape # 726 - Returning Pidyon Haben Money Tape # 770 - Let Them Eat Cheesecake Tape # 814 - Oy, The Eruv is Down. Now What?

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From: Kol Torah [[koltorah@koltorah.org](mailto:koltorah@koltorah.org)] Sent: May 31, 2006 2:45 PM To: Kol Torah Subject: Kol Torah for Shavuot

KOL TORAH A Student Publication of the Torah Academy of Bergen County Parshat Shavuot 6-7 Sivan 5766 June 2-3, 2006 Vol.15 No.34

## Preparing for Kabbalat HaTorah

## by Rabbi Steven Finkelstein

The Torah states in Shemot (19:2), "VaYis'u MeiRephidim VaYavo'u Midbar Sinai VaYachanu BaMidbar, VaYichan Sham Yisrael Neged HaHar," "And they traveled from Rephidim and arrived in Midbar Sinai, and they camped in the desert, and Israel camped there opposite the mountain."

This pasuk can be divided into three segments. Each segment causes leaves us with a question. Firstly, why is it necessary for the Pasuk to tell us that they left Rephidim and arrived in Sinai if we already know that from the previous Pasuk? Secondly, isn't it clear that if they were staying in the desert, they would also be camping there? And finally, why does Hashem switch from describing Israel in plural to describing Israel in singular?

Looking at these questions, it becomes clear that the purpose of the Pasuk is not to give us the details of Bnei Yisrael's arrival in Midbar Sinai. This Pasuk is actually an introduction to Kabbalat HaTorah. In fact, the Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh sees in each of these three segments a necessary preparation for a Jew to properly receive the Torah.

"And they traveled from Rephidim." The Gemara in Berachot tells us that the reason Amalek was able to challenge us at Rephidim (17:8) was that we were weak in our conviction to acquire Torah. Leaving Rephidim is symbolic of our reinvigoration and rededication to the pursuit of Torah.

"They camped in the desert." As the Midrash Rabbah teaches us, Torah will only be acquired by someone who makes himself barren like a desert. Camping in the desert is a reminder that humility is a prerequisite for the acquisition of the Torah.

"And Yisrael camped there opposite the mountain." As Rashi explains, the Pasuk refers to Yisrael in the singular to teach us that in order to receive the Torah, Bnei Yisrael need to be a united group.

Each year, Chag HaShavuot provides us with the opportunity to relive Kabbalat HaTorah. In order to fully appreciate this experience, we too must reflect on the example of our ancestors. We can look back at this Pasuk and remember that it is only through building our enthusiasm for Torah and Mitzvot, becoming humble people and by working to unite all of Klal Yisrael that we will be prepared to once again receive the Torah into our hearts and lives.

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We wish all our readers a happy Shavuot!

## Shavuot

### Modesty and Torah

#### Rosh Hayeshiva Rav Mordechai Greenberg shlita

Sefer Bamidbar opens: "Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness of Sinai." (Bamidbar 1:1) What is the previous verse? "These are the commandments that Hashem commanded Moshe to Bnei Yisrael on Mt. Sinai." (Vayikra 27:34) Chazal comment in Yalkut Shimoni (I:684):

At the time that Bnei Yisrael received the Torah, the nations of the world were jealous of them. They said: Why are these worthy of drawing closer [to G-d] than all the [other] nations? G-d said to them: Bring your genealogical books just as Bnei Yisrael bring, as it says, "They established their genealogy according to their families." This is what it says, "These are

the commandments," and adjacent to it, "Count the heads" – they merited to take the Torah only on account of the genealogy.

Why were the nations jealous; who stood in their way? After all, G-d went around to all the nations and they refused to accept the Torah?!

The sefer G'leilei Zahav explains this issue based on a Midrash in Parshat Bamidbar (Rabbah 13:3):

"A man's pride will bring him down low" (Mishlei 29:23) – this is [Mt.] Tavor and Carmel, who came from the end of the world, proud to say, "We are high and G-d will give the Torah on us." "But a lowly spirit will support his honor" – this is Sinai that lowered itself to say, "I am low." Therefore, G-d placed His honor on it, and gave the Torah upon it, and it merited all this honor, as it says, "G-d descended upon Mt. Sinai."

Chazal taught us that one who is haughty cannot receive the Torah. Only one who has the traits of his Master, to despise haughtiness and choose the trait of humility and low-spiritedness can receive the Torah. Thus, it says in Masechet Megillah (29a): "Why do you prance, O you mountains of majestic peaks" - Why do you want to adjudicate with Sinai? All of you are blemished relative to Sinai ... Rav Ashi said: This teaches that one is haughty is blemished." A haughty person who learns Torah – it does not remain with him. Chazal also say (Ta'anit 7b): Why is the Torah compared to water? Just as water leaves a high place and goes to a low place, so, too, words of Torah are not upheld other than in one whose mind is low-spirited.

This is the nature of Israel that they inherited from their forefathers: "Not because you are more numerous than all the peoples did Hashem desire you and choose you, for you are the fewest of all the peoples." (Devarim 7:7) Chazal taught: I desire you – because even when I give you greatness you minimize yourselves.

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### **Pesachim 68**

#### **EATING AND DRINKING ON SHAVUOS**

QUESTION: The Gemara says that even Rabbi Eliezer -- who maintains that one's activities on Yom Tov may be dedicated exclusively to Hashem with no personal physical pleasure -- agrees that there are three days on which one must experience physical pleasure as well: Shavuos, Shabbos, and Purim. The Gemara explains the reason for each one: Shavuos is the day on which the Torah was given. Shabbos requires "Oneg Shabbos" as the verse commands. Purim is a day of "celebration and joy."

The reasons for the requirement to eat and rejoice on Shabbos and Purim are straightforward. Why, though, does the fact that the Torah was given on Shavuos require one to eat and experience physical pleasure on that day? On the contrary, the day on which the Torah was given should be a day completely dedicated to Hashem. It would seem that the appropriate way to show our appreciation for the Torah would be to spend the entire day immersed in Torah study.

Moreover, the Mishnah in Avos (6:4, 6:6) teaches that "the way of Torah" is for one to eat only bread with salt and to minimize his physical pleasures. Why, then, is the festival of Shavuos not completely dedicated to spiritual activities?

ANSWERS: (a) The festival of Shavuos is not designated as the day that celebrates \*learning\* Torah, but rather the day that celebrates the \*receiving\* of the Torah, \*Kabalas ha'Torah\*. In fact, all three days that the Gemara mentions are days of Kabalas ha'Torah. The Gemara in Shabbos (88a) teaches that on Purim, the Jewish people renewed their acceptance of the Torah. Shabbos was the day of the week on which the

Torah was given (ibid.), and that is why we mention Kabalas ha'Torah in the Shemoneh Esreh on Shabbos morning.

On the days that represent Kabalas ha'Torah, we must eat and experience pleasure in order to show that the Torah is not a burden to us. Fasting, and avoiding physical pleasure on those days, would show that we feel that observing the Torah is a burden. Therefore, on the day on which we received the Torah, we must emphasize our joy by celebrating and experiencing pleasure.

This is the same reason why Rav Yosef, who was blind, made a festive meal when he learned that a blind person is obligated to fulfill the Mitzvos (Kidushin 31a, Bava Kama 87a). He wanted to show that he was happy to be obligated in Mitzvos. Similarly, a young man's Bar Mitzvah is celebrated with a festive meal to show his joy in accepting the Torah and Mitzvos. (M. Kornfeld)

(b) The Torah was given to man in order to enable him to utilize the physical world in the service of Hashem. A Jew is not supposed to live an ascetic life, severed entirely from the physical pleasures of the material world. Hashem placed the Jew's Neshamah into a physical body, fusing the holy with the mundane and charging him with the obligation to uplift and sanctify his physical existence and the physical world in which he lives. The Torah enables the Jew to sanctify the physical world, in contrast to the Nochri who does not have the ability to uplift the physical world and infuse it with spirituality. The Nochri's spirituality is divorced from the physical world. For example, the Nochri's spiritual leaders practice celibacy, while the Kohen Gadol is obligated to be married when he performs the holiest service on the holiest day of the year (Yoma 1:1). It is therefore logical that on the day on which we received the Torah, which teaches us how to utilize the physical world in the service of Hashem, we are to partake in physical pleasures of food and drink. (Heard from Rav Kalman Weinreb, shlit'a.)

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### **Sivan - The Mystical Power of Three**

**by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller**

We are entering the Hebrew month of Sivan. The central event to take place in this month (and arguably in all recorded history) is G-d giving the Torah to the Jews at Mount Sinai. Sivan is the third month of the Hebrew calendar if we begin our count from Nissan, the month of our liberation from Egypt, which is the way months are counted in the Torah. Three is a portentous number in Judaism. Moses was the third child in his family. The Israelites began the three-day process of preparing themselves to receive the Torah on the third of Sivan. G-d divided the Jews into three groups with different roles: the Kohanim, the Leviites, and the rest of the Jews, Yisrael. Before we explore the mystical connotation of the number three, we have to understand what "truth" really is. Truth means a lot more than mere verbal accuracy. The mystical name for truth is Tiferet, which literally means "harmony" - not exactly the association most of us have with truth. What's the connection?

Truth is a synthesis of the whole.

The Maharal, the famous renaissance-era Kabbalist, defines truth as: the entire picture. It includes past, present and future; it includes internal reality and its external counterpoint. It is a synthesis of the whole - harmony. If something is true at all, it must be true spiritually, physically, mathematically, and philosophically. If an idea "works" on one level, but doesn't on any of the other levels, it is not truth in the purest sense of the word. We humans are mortal, which pretty well cuts us off from any foolproof vision of the future. Our access to anything that took place before we were born is colored by other people's interpretations of the past. Add a healthy scoop of emotional subjectivity even to our observations of the present, and it seems that our search for truth is doomed. Transcendent truth, by definition, comes from a place above time and space. The Maharal

regards transcendent truth as the only real truth. The only time we had access to it was at Mount Sinai, when we heard the voice of God.

**ABOVE AND BEYOND** From this perspective, we can begin to examine the significance of the number three. The Maharal tells us to imagine a link chain. When you hold it up, the first link touches the second one. The second one touches both the first link and the third one. The third one touches the second one and not the first. Thus the third link is the first in the series that doesn't have any connection to the first link. The number three thus symbolizes something new, but not disconnected. The Maharal refers to this quality (new, but not disconnected) as "nivdal", which means in Hebrew separate or transcendent; it is part of a process, but also beyond it. Thus, for example, Moses, the third child in his family, was connected to the heritage of monotheism that Abraham initiated, but he took it a step further, giving his people a sense of nationhood based on the Torah. The month of Sivan is connected historically to Nissan, the month of liberation. In Sivan, however, the Jews went a step beyond physical freedom and became spiritually autonomous, defined only by the Torah, God's word. Nivdal. Connected but new. Part of the process, but also beyond it.

**ON THE TRAIN PLATFORM** What does it mean to live with transcendence? I recently had an experience that gave me new insight into seeing how deeply this seemingly abstract concept affects me in my day-to-day thinking. I was in New Jersey, heading to Secaucus at the Metrotrack station. It was about 2:00pm and the platform was almost empty. The only fellow travelers in sight were two women and a man. Suddenly, one of the women, standing quite close to me, lost her balance and fell backwards. I immediately bent over to help her get up. Although her eyes were open, she made no response. She was unconscious. The second woman on the platform approached. She asked me if I knew first aid. I replied that I didn't, and she claimed that she also didn't know first aid, but she bent down and took the prostrate woman's pulse. When she saw that there was no pulse, she immediately began administering C.P.R. Clearly, she knew what she was doing. In the meantime I called 911. Five minutes passed. The woman looked at me, exhausted. Copying what I had seen her do, I relieved her. Soon, a policeman appeared. I was appalled. We needed a medic, not a policeman! He began to administer mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, clearly the only first aid response he knew. The platform suddenly shook with the vibrations of an arriving train. The woman who began the C.P.R., the one person who really knew what to do, muttered something about intubations and boarded the train. I looked on in horror. A person was dying, and she found it necessary to catch her train! Within a few minutes the ambulance crew finally arrived. Later, when recounting the episode, I was bothered by how the woman who was, by default, supervising the rescue effort could have simply left to catch her train. How important could a business meeting or a shopping date or even a chemo session be when compared to saving a life? The answer illustrates the opposite of nivdal. If I had asked her that question the day before, she would certainly have answered, "Saving a life is more important." She certainly knows the transcendent truth. The problem is that when the train actually roared into the station, she was caught up with the reality of here and now. Physical reality is so vivid and immediate, that it eclipses transcendent reality.

Receiving Torah is a commitment to go beyond the immediate, and to get to the essence of truth.

And what would nivdal look like? Imagine that the woman who knew CPR had an appointment for a job interview for her dream job. Imagine that the train to that place came only once every three hours. Imagine that she had been unemployed for six months, and really needed that job. And now imagine that it was so clear to her that saving a life is more important than any of the above, that, when her train came, she chose to stay with the woman until the medics arrived, and she knew, without hesitation or regret, that that was the right choice. That's nivdal. It is living connected to the higher truth that the mere external reality conveys. Receiving Torah is the ultimate nivdal. It is a commitment to go beyond the immediate, the vivid,

and the seemingly real, and to get to the transcendent, inclusive picture that is the essence of truth.

**MAZAL OF THE MONTH -- GEMINI** Moses was not the only one who brought the Jewish people to a place where they could hear the truth. His brother Aaron acted as his spokesperson from the early days in Egypt, when he arrived at Pharaoh's palace with the outrageous demand that he free the Jews. Each one of them played a role in expanding our consciousness in a specific and unique way. Moses was the ultimate lawgiver. He transmitted the commandments that teach us where the lines have to be drawn if we are to rise above pseudo truth and enter the realm of absolute transcendental truth. His brother Aaron approached each Jew with love, and brought forth the hidden yearning to live a life higher and more encompassing than the every day. Justice and love were intertwined; it is no coincidence that this month's sign is Gemini, the twins.

**THE BOOK OF RUTH** Each of the three pilgrim festivals (Pesach Shavuot and Sukkot, which were celebrated in ancient times by a nationwide trek to Jerusalem) has a specific focus. On each, a different Megillah is read, narrating a particular aspect of the story of our relationship with God. On Shavuot, we read the story of Ruth, the Moabite princess who abandoned everything safe and familiar to follow her mother-in-law Naomi to Israel, to a life of physical rigor and spiritual truth. Her story is the story of all of us this month, as we try to move beyond our limited grasp of truth and move closer to the whole picture we saw at Sinai.

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### **WHY DAIRY ON SHAVUOT**

**by Rabbi Shraga Simmons**

Six fascinating reasons behind this popular custom.

Ahhh... the sumptuous delight of blintzes and cheesecake. Eating a dairy meal on Shavuot has become an enduring tradition. But what's the source for this? Here are six fascinating reasons:

**Reason #1** When the Jewish people received the Torah at Mount Sinai, included was special instructions for how to slaughter and prepare meat for eating. Until then, the Jews had not followed these laws, thus all their meat - plus the cooking pots - were now considered "not kosher." So the only alternative was to eat dairy, which requires no advance preparation. This raises the question, however: Why didn't the Jews simply slaughter new animals, "kasher" their pots in boiling water (hagala), and cook fresh meat? The answer is that the revelation at Sinai occurred on Shabbat, when slaughter and cooking are prohibited. Amazingly, that day at Sinai was the first time the Jews ate dairy products. There is a general prohibition of "eating a limb from a live animal" (ever min hachai), which logically should also include milk, the product of a live animal. Ever min hachai is actually one of the Seven Noahide Laws which the Jews observed prior to Sinai (and which has applied to all humanity since the days of Noah). However, upon receiving the Torah, which refers to the Land of Israel as "flowing with milk and honey" (Exodus 3:18), dairy products became permitted to the Jews. In other words, at the same moment that their meat became prohibited, dairy became permitted. They ate dairy on that original Shavuot, and we do today, too. (See technical clarification at the end of this article.)

**Reason #2** Torah is likened to milk, as the verse says, "Like honey and milk [the Torah] lies under your tongue" (Song of Songs 4:11). Just as milk has the ability to fully sustain the body of a human being (i.e. a nursing baby), so too the Torah provides all the "spiritual nourishment" necessary for the human soul.

**Reason #3** The gematria (numerical value) of the Hebrew word for milk, chalav, is 40. We eat dairy foods on Shavuot to commemorate the 40 days that Moses spent on Mount Sinai receiving instruction in the entire Torah. (Moses spent an additional 40 days on Sinai, praying for forgiveness following the Golden Calf, and then a third set of 40 days before returning

with a new set of stone tablets.) The numerical value of chalav, 40, has further significance in that there were 40 generations from Moses who recorded the Written Torah, till the generation of Ravina and Rav Ashi who wrote the final version of the Oral Torah, the Talmud. Further, the Talmud begins with the letter mem - gematria 40 - and ends with mem as well.

Reason #4 According to the Zohar, each one of the 365 days of the year corresponds to a specific one of the Torah's 365 negative commandments. Which mitzvah corresponds to the day of Shavuot? The Torah says: "Bring Bikkurim (first fruits) to the God's Holy Temple; don't cook a kid in its mother's milk" (Exodus 34:26). Since the first day for bringing Bikkurim is on Shavuot (in fact, the Torah calls Shavuot "the holiday of Bikkurim"), the second half of that verse - referring to milk and meat - is the negative commandment corresponding to Shavuot day. Thus on Shavuot we eat two meals, one of milk and one of meat, taking care not to mix the two. Interestingly, we are instructed not to use the same loaf of bread for a meat meal and then later at a milk meal, lest some of the meat substance had splattered on the bread. Thus by eating two meals - one of milk and one of meat - we inevitably have two loaves. This corresponds to the special "Two Loaves" that were offered in the Temple on Shavuot.

Reason #5 An alternative name for Mount Sinai is Har Gav'nunim, the mountain of majestic peaks. The Hebrew word for cheese is gevina, etymologically related to Har Gav'nunim. Further, the gematria of gevina (cheese) is 70, corresponding to the "70 faces of Torah."

Reason #6 Moses was born on the seventh day of Adar, and stayed at home for three months with his family, before being placed in the Nile River on the sixth of Sivan. Moses was rescued by Pharaoh's daughter, who adopted Moses and took him to live in Pharaoh's palace. But right away a problem arose: what to feed the baby. In those days, there was no bottled baby formula, so when the birth mother wasn't available, the caretaker would have to hire a wet nurse. In the case of Moses, he kept refusing to nurse from Egyptian women. The Talmud explains that his mouth needed to be kept totally pure, as it would one day communicate directly with God. Finally Pharaoh's daughter found one woman who Moses agreed to nurse from - Yocheved, Moses' biological mother! Appreciate the irony: Pharaoh's murderous decree against Jewish babies was specifically intended to prevent a new generation of Jewish leadership. So what happened instead? Moses, the upcoming great Jewish leader, was raised, educated and trained - right under Pharaoh's nose, in Pharaoh's own home, at Pharaoh's expense! And on top of it all, Moses' mother got paid a salary! The eating of dairy foods on Shavuot commemorates this phenomenon in the early life of Moses, which occurred on the sixth of Sivan, the day on which Shavuot falls.

Sources: Reason #1: Mishnah Berurah 494:12; Talmud - Bechorot 6b; Rabbi Shlomo Kluger (HaElef Lecha Shlomo - YD 322) Reason #2: Rabbi Meir of Dzikov - Imrei Noam Reason #3: Deut. 10:10; Rav Menachem Mendel of Ropshitz Reason #4: Talmud - Makkot 23b; Chidushei HaRim; Rema (OC 494:3, YD 88:2) Reason #5: Psalms 68:16; Midrash - Bamidbar Rabba 13:15; Rebbe of Ostropole; Reb Naftali of Ropshitz; Rabbi Dovid Meisels Reason #6: Talmud - Sotah 12b; Yalkut Yitzchak Technical clarification for "Reason #1": If the Jews ate dairy for the first time at Mount Sinai, this raises the question how Abraham could have fed dairy products to his three guests (Genesis 18:8). The answer requires a technical understanding of the prohibition of ever min hachai, "limb from a live animal." One way is to define a "limb" as a piece of meat which contains bones and/or sinews. It is this type of ever min hachai which has always been forbidden to non-Jews. This prohibition does not include milk, because although milk comes from a live animal, it does not contain bones or sinews. Hence, Abraham was permitted to feed milk to his non-Jewish guests. There is a second, expanded definition of ever min hachai, which encompasses all products from a live animal - including milk. It is this definition which is prohibited to Jews. Thus it was not until the giving of

the Torah, with its reference to "land of milk and honey," that dairy products became permitted to Jews. This distinction is spelled out clearly by the great Rabbi Shlomo Kluger, in "HaElef Lecha Shlomo" (Yoreh Deah 322). Another point to clarify: How were the Jews able to obtain milk on Shabbat, since milking an animal falls under the prohibited activity of mefarek? The answer is that the Jews already had milk available from before Shabbat, which they had been using to feed the various animals that accompanied their journeys in the wilderness.

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**The "Great Fire" at the Giving of the Torah**

**Summarized by Shaul Barth Translated by Kaeren Fish**

The Gemara (Shabbat 88b) teaches:

R. Yehoshua ben Levi also said: What is meant by, "His cheeks are as a bed of spices" (Shir Ha-shirim 5:13)? With every single word that went forth from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, the whole world was filled with fragrance. But since it was filled [with fragrance] from the first word, whither did the [fragrance of the] second word go? The Holy One, blessed be He, brought forth the ruach (wind or spirit) from His store-chambers and caused each [fragrance] to pass on [thereby making room for the next].

The problem that the Gemara describes is a real one: at the time of the giving of the Torah, Bnei Yisrael heard the Commandments from God, and perceived the profundity and significance of each one. The commandments are indeed so profound and so comprehensive that one single commandment – when a person truly plumbs its depths – is sufficient to fill him up completely. Thus, after Bnei Yisrael understood the full significance of "I am the Lord your God," uttered by the Holy One Himself, and were filled to the brim, as it were, with the positive energy of that commandment, how did they have the capacity to absorb any more? G-d granted them "spirit" from His treasury – i.e., a special Divine influence – in order that they would be able to receive and absorb the rest, too.

Following the intensity of Shavuot, how can we approach Shabbat? With all the uniqueness and importance of Shabbat, how can we speak about Shabbat and understand it when we are still bursting with the experience of receiving the Torah on Shavuot? This being our situation this year, let us talk about Shavuot.

We know that at Sinai, Bnei Yisrael committed themselves with the words, "We shall do and we shall hear." Opinions are divided as to when exactly they said this: according to Ramban, it was after God's revelation at Sinai and after receiving the Book of the Covenant, which was what they referred to in their declaration. According to Rashi, on the other hand, their declaration preceded the revelation and the giving of the Torah.

Tosafot (Shabbat 88b) question why G-d had to coerce the nation by holding the mountain over them like a cask, when they had already declared, "We shall do and we shall hear." The answer given there is that "Even though they had already declared 'We shall do' before 'We shall hear,' [G-d held the mountain over them] lest they retract their commitment when they see the great fire." According to the Ramban's view, the question is

irrelevant, since Bnei Yisrael made their declaration only after they had already seen the great fire. But we need to examine this answer in light of Rashi's interpretation.

What lies behind Tosafot's answer is a great and important principle. Bnei Yisrael were obligated, prior to the giving of the Torah, to observe only the seven Noachide laws. Despite the difficulties that these laws may sometimes create and the exertion that they may require, the demands that they make are not too great. The concern was that Bnei Yisrael, after promising "We shall do and we shall hear," would see the great fire and become afraid: "If the Torah that we are about to receive is so great and so powerful – perhaps it is better not to receive it." Perhaps, after the awesome experience of Revelation, Bnei Yisrael would have second thoughts when they realized the extent of the commitment that they were about to take upon themselves. For this reason, after they declared their initial readiness to accept the Torah, G-d had to hold the mountain over them as a threat, so that they would not backtrack when they perceived the power of the Torah.

Often, people want to learn Torah and live a religious life, but they don't want to do it with full commitment. People fear that getting into Torah too deeply will change them into something that they want to stay away from. However, we learn from Tosafot that there can be no observance of commandments without real engagement and in-depth commitment and study. If a person will backtrack when seeing the "great fire," then he cannot receive the Torah. A person who wants to receive Torah needs not only the aspect of "We shall do and we shall hear," but also the ability to confront and connect with the great fire that accompanies the acceptance.

The Magen Avraham questions why we celebrate Shavuot on the fiftieth day of the Omer, while in fact the Torah was given on Shabbat – which was the 51st day. The Maharal answers that what we are in fact celebrating is God's desire to give us the Torah, and to obligate us to receive it, even though perhaps Bnei Yisrael may have hesitated and faltered a little when they saw the great fire. When Bnei Yisrael were exposed to the great power of the Torah, it frightened them and caused them to have second thoughts about their commitment. Yet G-d nevertheless desired to give them the Torah, and even to force it upon them. It is God's readiness to give, and not Bnei Yisrael's readiness to receive, that we celebrate on Shavuot.

(This sicha was delivered on motzai Shavuot / leil Shabbat, 5762 [2002].)

Chag sameach!

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WEEKLY-HALACHA FOR 5766

**By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt**

Rav of Young Israel in Cleveland Heights

A discussion of Halachic topics.

For final rulings, consult your Rav

SHE'ALOS U'TESHUVOS

**QUESTION: Within the same meal, may one eat cheese or other dairy food and then eat meat immediately thereafter?**

DISCUSSION: According to the basic Halachah it is permitted to eat meat or chicken immediately after eating cheese or any other dairy food, even during the same meal; there is no requirement to recite Birkas ha-Mazon or a berachah acharonah between the dairy and the meat. The only separation required is to clean and rinse the mouth and teeth, wash the hands and clean the table [or change the tablecloth] to make sure that no dairy residue or crumbs remain. While there are scrupulous individuals who wait at least an hour(1) between eating dairy and meat in addition to

reciting Birkas ha-Mazon or a berachah acharonah between them - and their custom is based on the Zohar and quoted by several poskim(2) - it is not required by the Halachah.(3)

**QUESTION: Does the same Halachah apply to hard cheese as well?**

DISCUSSION: When "hard" cheese is eaten, however, the Halachah is different. Shulchan Aruch quotes an opinion that requires one to wait a full six hours before eating meat after eating hard cheese. This view maintains that the taste and oily residue of hard cheese lingers in the mouth long after the cheese has been consumed, just as the taste and residue of meat lingers long after consumption.(4) In addition, other poskim hold that hard cheese can get stuck between the teeth just as pieces of meat do.(5) While other poskim do not consider either of these issues to be a problem with hard cheese and permit eating meat immediately after eating hard cheese, Rama and the later poskim(6) recommend that one be stringent and wait six hours between consuming hard(7) cheese, and meat or poultry.

**QUESTION: How do we define "hard" cheese concerning this Halachah?**

DISCUSSION: Exactly how to define "hard" cheese is another controversial subject. All poskim agree that cheese which has been cured for at least six months before being packaged and refrigerated is considered hard cheese. (8) While many of the hard cheeses sold in the U.S. [or used in the making of pizza] are not aged for six months, there are several brands of cheese that advertise that they have been cured for 10 months or longer and those are surely considered hard cheeses. Parmesan cheese, for instance, is aged for at least a year, if not longer. The poskim are also in agreement that cheeses which are not aged six months but are cured long enough to become wormy,(9) are considered as hard cheese.(10)

There are, however, some poskim who maintain that all hard cheeses, including all kinds of American (yellow) cheese, etc., are considered hard cheese and one who eats them should wait six hours before eating meat.(11) While some individuals follow this opinion, the widespread custom follows the more lenient view.(12) It is appropriate, though, to wait at least one hour between eating any hard cheese and meat.(13)

**QUESTION: On erev Shavuos, when should women light the Yom Tov candles?**

DISCUSSION: There are two basic customs governing the time of candle-lighting on Yom Tov. Since it is permissible to light candles on Yom Tov proper, women have two options. Some women(14) light at the same time that they light on erev Shabbos, approximately 18 minutes before sunset. Although they could delay the lighting till later, it is meritorious to usher in the Yom Tov by lighting candles as is done on every erev Shabbos. Other women(15) light candles on Yom Tov after the men come home from shul and before the meal begins. Since the purpose of candle lighting is primarily to enhance and honor the meal, they light as close to the meal as possible. Each one of these customs has valid halachic sources and reasons, and women may continue the practice of their mothers.

On the Yom Tov of Shavuos, however, there is a good reason for women to light candles on Yom Tov itself and not before sunset. This is because the Torah commands that Shavuos commence on the fiftieth day of the counting of the omer. The fiftieth day does not begin until nightfall. Since most women have the custom of reciting the blessing of shehecheyanu along with their candle lighting, it would be considered as if Shavuos had begun for them before nightfall of the fiftieth day.(16) It would be better, therefore, for the women to light candles after nightfall.(17)

Alternatively, women who do not wish to light after nightfall should light before sunset but only but only if their custom is not to recite shehecheyanu at the time of their lighting. The recital of shehecheyanu represents the unconditional acceptance of the Yom Tov, and it should be recited, therefore, only at the time that the Yom Tov is actually accepted. (18) The blessing of shehecheyanu may be omitted at candle-lighting time because the widespread custom of women to recite it then has no halachic

source. Indeed, some poskim(19) are of the opinion that women should not recite shehecheyanu at that time. Although the custom of most women is to recite shehecheyanu(20) and we need not object to their custom,(21) those women who do not recite shehecheyanu may light the erev shavuot candles before sunset.

A woman lighting candles after sunset should recite the blessing first and then light the candles.(22) A woman lighting candles before sunset has the choice to light first and then recite the blessing as she does every Shabbos, or to recite the blessing first and then light the candles. Both customs have legitimate sources and reasons.(23)

When Shavuot falls on Friday night, and women light candles for both Shabbos and Yom Tov, the blessing must be said for both occasions. If a woman forgot that it is also Shabbos and lit candles for Yom Tov only, she must light another candle and recite the blessing over Shabbos and Yom Tov. (24) If she forgot that it is Yom Tov and lit candles for Shabbos only, she should ask her husband or another person to light candles for Yom Tov and that person should make the blessing.(25)

**QUESTION: Besides for cooking and baking, what other types of food preparation are prohibited on Shabbos but permitted on Yom Tov?**

**DISCUSSION:** The following types of food preparation are permitted on Yom Tov - provided that the food will be used on that same Yom Tov day [or, if Yom Tov falls on Friday and an eiruv tavshilin was made, for Shabbos]. It is permitted to:

- \* Peel eggs, fruits or vegetables at any time (not only just before mealtime) and without restriction, either with a knife or with a peeler. (26)
- \* Debone chicken, fish or meat.(27)
- \* Remove melon or fruit seeds from the melon or fruit.
- \* Vegetables may be diced, either with a knife or a vegetable dicer.(28)
- \* Grind or mash cooked potatoes, onions, bananas or apples, even with a grater or a masher.(29)
- \* Sort cutlery in order to set the table.(30)
- \* Oil, mayonnaise or other liquids can be added to egg or tuna salads or any other food mixture without restriction.(31)
- \* Prepare instant potatoes or baby cereal.
- \* Squeeze excess oil out of canned tuna or fried fish [not only just before mealtime].
- \* Prepare whipped cream or mayonnaise, using either a fork or a rotary beater.(32)
- \* Make pudding, jello, ice cubes,(33) or salt water.(34) L'chatchilah, these food items should be prepared before Yom Tov.

FOOTNOTES: 1 Some wait an half an hour; see Peri Hadar on Peri Megadim Y.D. 89:16. 2 See Minchas Yaakov 76:5 and Beur ha-Gra Y.D. 89:2. See Darkei Teshuvah 89:14 who rules like these poskim. 3 Mishnah Berurah 494:16; Aruch ha-Shulchan Y.D. 89:9. 4 Taz Y.D. 89:4. 5 Peri Chadash Y.D. 89:2. 6 Chochmas Adam 40:13; Aruch ha-Shulchan Y.D. 89: and Mishnah Berurah 494:16 and Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 15. Sefaradim, however, do not follow this stringency; see Yabia Omer Y.D. 6:7. 7 If the hard cheese is softened through boiling or cooking, it is no longer considered hard cheese; Darkei Teshuvah 89:43. But if it is merely fried or baked [as in pizza], it is still considered hard cheese; Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (Sefer ha-Kashrus, pg. 280; Meor ha-Shabbos, vol. 3, pg. 426). 8 Shach Y.D. 89:15. 9 These "worms" are kosher and are permitted to be eaten as long as they remain within the cheese; see Rama Y.D. 84:16. 10 Taz Y.D. 89:4; Chochmas Adam 40:13. 11 Harav Y.Y. Weiss, quoted in Teshvos V'hanhagos Y.D. 1:388; Harav S.Z. Auerbach, quoted in Meor ha-Shabbos, vol. 3, pg. 427; Harav Y.S. Elyashiv, quoted in Sefer ha-Kashrus, pg. 280; Shevet ha-Levi 2:35. 12 Ma'asei Ish 5, pg. 22, quoting Chazon Ish; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (Feiffer), pg. 138, quoting Harav A. Kotler; Yagel Yaakov, pg. 148, quoting Harav M. Feinstein; Debreciner Rav in Pischei Halachah, pg. 108; Mi-beis Levi 6; Harav C. Kaniewsky, quoted in Nezer ha-Chayim, pg. 213; Mesorah, vol. 20, pg. 91, ruling by Harav Y. Belsky. 13 Harav Y.E. Henkin, written ruling published in Yagel Yaakov, pg. 148. 14 Mateh Efrayim (625:33); Be'er Heitev 503:4 quoting the Shelah. 15 Minchas Shmuel (30). See Mishnas Ya'avetz (34) for a full explanation of the two customs. 16 See L'horos Nasson 7:31 who explains that even if women are exempt from the counting of the omer, they are still commanded to

accept the day of Shavuot on the fiftieth day of the counting. 17 Harav Y.M. Tikutinsky in Luach Eretz Yisrael, quoting Harav S.Z. Zlatnik. 18 Consequently, women may not make a precondition that they are not accepting the Yom Tov (which otherwise may be done when needed) if shehecheyanu will be recited; see Kaf ha-Chayim 514:112, Tzitz Eliezer 10:19. 19 See She'ilas Ya'avetz 107, Kaf ha-Chayim O.C. 263:40 and Moadim u'Zemanim 7:117 quoting the Brisker Rav.. 20 Mateh Efrayim 581:4;619:4. 21 Sha'arei Teshuvah 263:5; Mishnah Berurah 263:23; Aruch ha-Shulchan 263:12. 22 Mateh Efrayim 625:33 and Elef l'Mateh 50. 23 Mishnah Berurah 263:27. 24 Responsa Maharam Brisk 2:44. See also Kinyan Torah 6:11. 25 Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 44:5. 26 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 4, note 27); Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (Mevakshei Torah, Yom Tov, vol. 1, pg. 257); Be'er Moshe 8:203. 27 O.C. 510:2 and Beur Halachah, s.v. ha-borrer. 28 Mishnah Berurah 504:19. 29 Harav Y.S. Elyashiv (Mevakshei Torah, Yom Tov, vol. 1, pg. 251); Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 7:2. See also Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 2, pg. 73, quoting Chazon Ish and Harav Y.Y. Kaniewsky. 30 This is permitted only for cutlery that was used on Yom Tov night and will be used for the next morning's meal. 31 Since Kneading is permitted on Yom Tov; O.C. 506:1-3. 32 Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 11:31-32. 33 Harav S.Z. Auerbach (Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 12, note 29, and Tikunim u'Miluim). 34 Mishnah Berurah 473:21.

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From: **Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Shabbat Shalom Parsha Column** [[Shabbat\\_Shalom@ohrtorahstone.org](mailto:Shabbat_Shalom@ohrtorahstone.org)] on behalf of Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Shabbat Shalom Parsha Column [[parshat\\_hashavua@ohrtorahstone.org](mailto:parshat_hashavua@ohrtorahstone.org)] Sent: May 31, 2006 7:04 AM To: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin's Shabbat Shalom Parsha Column Subject: Shabbat Shalom: Shavuot by Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Shabbat Shalom: Shavuot By Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel-Over the past number of weeks, we have written about Shavuot as the culmination of Pesach, the zenith and ultimate expression of our redemption. And from this perspective, the various additions which come with Shavuot, the aspects of Judaism which the festival ordains and proclaims, become indubitably clear as indelibly linked to redemption. First and foremost, the gift of our Torah (Bible), the 613 Divine Commandments which - as Rav Saadiah Gaon so wisely expresses it - all fit under the general rubric of the Ten Commandments revealed at Sinai. It was this revelation which took place - at least according to the Pharisaic Sages - on the sixth day of the month of Sivan, precisely seven weeks after our exodus from Egypt; hence Shavuot is defined by our liturgy as the Festival of the Giving of the Torah. And there can be no redemption without repentance, without the return of the people of Israel to the Torah of Israel. (Maimonides, Laws of Repentance 7,5, based on Deuteronomy 30:1-10)

The second necessary prerequisite for redemption is the return - or ingathering - of the exiles, of those who forcibly or voluntarily left their national homeland. The prophets (for example, Isaiah 11:11) and our daily liturgy ("Blessed art thou, O Lord, who gathers the scattered of Israel") see the return of expatriate Jews to their ancestral country as a sign of oncoming redemption, and Maimonides even sees it as the sign par excellence (Laws of Kings 11,1). Hence it should come as no surprise that the Scroll of Ruth, which we read on Shavuot, begins with the return of Naomi and Ruth to Israel after Naomi had left Bethlehem with her husband and 2 sons during a period of famine for what had appeared to be the more fruitful and lush fields of Moab more than a decade earlier.

The third factor in redemption is the return of each individual to his familial homestead, the Israelites' acquisition of a portion of land in Israel

which he received from his ancestors and which he will bequeath to his descendants. During the Sabbaths prior to the Festival of Shavuot we always read the last Torah portions of the book of Leviticus, including the portion of Behar, which describes the redemption adumbrated by the fiftieth Jubilee year (paralleling the 50th day after the Passover, Exodus, coming after the count of the seven Sabbatical years which parallel the sefirah count of seven weeks): "and you shall count for yourself seven Sabbaths of years, seven years seven times...forty-nine years... And you shall sanctify the fiftieth year... It shall be Jubilee for you. And every individual shall return to his homestead and every person shall return to his family..." (Lev 25:8-10).

The Bible also calls for the kinsman of an individual who had been forced by poverty to sell off his lands to redeem those lands for his impoverished relative - to make it possible for the Jubilee year to truly proclaim freedom and redemption for all. (Lev. 25:26,27)

The Festival of Shavuot (Deut. 16:10) is also called by the Bible the Festival of the first fruits (Numbers 28:26); and it is this harvest period - from the barley to the wheat harvest - which is majestically depicted during the three months which are the time-span for the developing autumnal relationship between the widower Boaz and the widowed Ruth (2-4). The verses cited in the portion of Behar are brought to vivid life in the Scroll of Ruth, as we see how the impoverished Naomi and her widowed daughter-in-law Ruth divested of their familial homestead - gather the produce so vital for their daily subsistence at the corner (peak) of the field of their Kinsman Boaz.

Naomi inspired and spurred on by the family story of Judah and Tamar, is anxious that her faithful daughter in law be impregnated by Boaz so that she bear seed of an Israelite since Naomi is a Moabite and her son died, leaving her childless; in such a way, Naomi will find comfort in the thought that at least the fruits of her womb would find their continuity as future progeny of Israel. Ruth, however, is not satisfied with entering into Jewish history bearing Jewish seed; she wishes to have a real share in the land of Israel as well. And so she visits Boaz in the silence of the night while he is sleeping on the threshing floor during the busiest period of the harvest - in accordance with her mother-in-law Naomi's advice - but not merely to become impregnated by him and to conceive his child; she requests that he become her redeemer, that he restore to her and Naomi their ancestral land, thereby suggesting that he marry her and that their son will rightfully inherit the land of her deceased husband. Ruth realizes that her entry into Jewish eternity requires not only her journey to live in Israel ("where you will go, I will go"), not only her acceptance of Torah (your nation is my nation, your G-d is my G-d), not only her bearing the seed of an Israelite, but also her acquisition of a portion of the land of Israel that she can bequeath to her future generations. Jewish redemption is bound up in the Torah of Israel, the seed of Israel, and the land of Israel!

But there is yet one more crucial aspect of redemption: the Gentile must be welcomed back into the fold of Israel. When G-d first elected Abraham as the paterfamilias of the family-nation of G-ds covenant, G-d said to the "Father of a multitude of nations" that "through you shall be blessed all the families of the earth." (Genesis 12:3). All of the prophets then prophesied that at the end of the days "the Torah will come forth from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" to teach the seeking nations "to turn their swords into ploughshares, their spears into pruninghooks" (Isaiah 2, Micah 4). Despite all of this, however, Abraham's charge concerning the "families of earth" seemed empty and even sarcastic, after all, Abraham didn't even succeed with his nephew and adopted son Lot, who forsook the patriarch as soon as his shepard's clashed with Abraham: And where did Lot run off too? Sodom, a den of inequity and immorality!

But G-d has cosmic patience, and Lot's great great grand-daughter is none other than the Moabite Ruth who returns to Abraham's bosom as a Jew-by-choice (Ruth 1:16,17). Boaz is profoundly impressed by this virtuous and modest woman who industriously garners grain at the corner of his field, but when he inquires after her, he is told (despite her sincere conversion)

that "she is a Moabite maiden" (Ruth 2:6). Even Ruth herself internalizes the Israelite assessment, crying out to Boaz, "why do I find favor in your eyes, seeing that I am a stranger?" (2:10). To which Boaz responds, "It has been told, yes told to me all that you have done for your mother-in-law..., and that you left your father and your mother, the land of your birth, and have gone to a nation you did not know yesterday and the day before. May G-d reward your deeds..." (2:11,12). You, Ruth, are an Abrahamic figure, who discovered G-d and Torah traditions by yourself, and with great commitment and sacrifice!

Redemption must include the other, the Gentile world, joining Israel in accepting a G-d of peace, justice and morality. G-d cares about every one of his children, not only Abrahamic seed, and in a global village, each of us is dependent upon the other for freedom and life. The Festival of Shavuot reminds us that true redemption must incorporate the Torah, the ingathering of errant and wandering Jews, a share in the land of Israel for every Jew, and the acceptance of the other, the Gentile, under the protective wings of the Divine Presence of Peace.

Shabbat Shalom and Hag Matan Torah Sameach!

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From: [jmrlist@jewishmediaresources.org](mailto:jmrlist@jewishmediaresources.org) Date: Wed, 31 May 2006 12:40:44 To: <[jmrlist@jewishmediaresources.org](mailto:jmrlist@jewishmediaresources.org)> Subject: Rosenblum in Mishpacha: "Celebrating Shavuot Alone"

### **Celebrating Shavuot Alone**

**by Jonathan Rosenblum**

Mishpacha May 31, 2006

Matan Torah is the most important event in human history. Had our ancestors not accepted the Torah, all of Creation would have returned to its original formlessness. Yet most Jews Shavuot have barely heard of Shavuot, the celebration of Matan Torah. In Eretz Yisrael, the contrast between Shavuot and the other yomim tovim could not be more stark. Most Jews celebrate Pesach and Sukkot in one form or another. Almost all families sit down to a Seder. And even in non-religious neighborhoods, many families build sukkahs. On Yom Kippur, the streets fall largely silent, and a large majority of the population fast. In short, the rhythms of the Jewish calendar are felt. Shavuot is the glaring exception. It lacks any special customs in which all can join. Eating cheesecake will not bring a secular Jew any closer to the essence of the day. Staying up all night learning Torah and the long Shavuot morning davening offer few attractions to those for whom these activities are not already part of their lives. Nor can secular Israelis attach some universal message (however distorted) to Shavuot. It is not a celebration of human freedom, like Pesach; nor of the courage required to battle external tyrants, like Chanukah; nor a call to repentance and self-examination, like Yom Kippur. Shavuot is only about the acceptance of Torah. For those Israeli Jews for whom Torah has long since ceased to be relevant, the holiday offers nothing. The tragedy of Shavuot in Israel of 5766 is that we - the religious community - will once again be celebrating alone. Yet the receipt of Torah required the entirety of Klal Yisrael - k'ish echad b'lev echad. And today something is lacking in the kabbalos HaTorah of each and every one of us, as long as the study and observance of Torah is the province of only a small percentage of Jews. PART OF OUR OWN KABBOLOS HATORAH this Shavuot must be a resolve to spread knowledge of Torah among our fellow Jews. Last winter, I spoke in a shul in Detroit, which I was told is packed one night a week with around 200 pairs of religious and non-religious Jews sitting together over one of the classic texts. Over 11,000 American Jews are participating in such partnerships, either in person or over the telephone, through Torah Umesorah's Partners in Torah program. Sadly, the list of non-religious Jews waiting for a partner is always longer than the number of mentors available. If such a program can take hold in America, and more recently England, it can take hold in Eretz Yisrael as well. Just within the last couple of weeks, a determined young American avreich named

Rabbi Yisrael Ehrman has signed up 200 mentors for a program in Israel patterned on Partners in Torah called Yedidim. Apart from programs like Yedidim, and Lev L'Achim's outreach efforts involving nearly 2,000 avreichim on a weekly basis, we have to find a way as a community to convey to secular Israelis that the Torah has something to say about every aspect of life and its relevance is not confined to the beis medrash. That will not be easy message to get across. The media will not assist us. Yet unless we demonstrate that the Torah is a Torah of life – all of life – we will continue to find it hard to receive a hearing. Consider a hypothetical 35-year-old secular Jew, with a wife and three children. One day he awakens with a vague feeling that something is amiss with his life, or that the modern state of Israel cannot be the Jewish polity for which his ancestors prayed throughout the millennia of galus. He is seized by the desire to make his life more Jewish, and feels the need for a connection to Hashem. Yet he has never opened up a Gemara, his wife does not yet share his feelings, and his bank balance is negative. He is not, in short, a candidate to take up the life of a kollel yungeman tomorrow or to send his children to chareidi schools in Bnei Brak or Jerusalem. If we give him the impression that anything less is not being a serious Jew, he is lost. The moment of spiritual awakening will pass with nothing to show for it. FINALLY, we have to acknowledge that within the ranks of the Torah community as well there are too many who are not experiencing the sweetness of Torah. In a society in which long-term Torah learning is the norm, young boys who find themselves struggling to keep up with classmates may come to feel trapped in a system in which they sense themselves to be doomed to failure. Too many of those will grow to reject a society that they feel has consigned them to the also-ran category. Often times, the solution is no more complicated than providing one-on-one tutoring with an avreich who can provide the individual attention and warmth that an overwhelmed rebbe often cannot. A Har Nof neighbor of mine, Rabbi Yaakov Rushnivesky, has developed an entire program of individual tutoring called Chavrutah. Warmth and constant encouragement are his tools. But he has approached the task with eyes of a veteran educator. Each tutor himself has a supervisor with whom he discusses biweekly each student's progress and any problems that have developed. Rabbi Rushnivesky also recognized that success ultimately depends on working hand in hand with rebbes. A whole month's progress in private tutorials can be wiped out by one harsh remark from a classroom rebbe. When rebbes are involved in the process they can generate wonderful synergy's with the private tutors. To that end, Chavrutah recently sponsored a Shabbat Iyun for the entire educational staff of the Har Nof's largest cheder and their wives. Recognized authorities lectured on the effect of diet on learning disorders and the use of Ritalin. But the primary message was the miraculous results that a rebbe can achieve by building a talmid's self-esteem and establishing a personal relationship. In the relaxed Shabbos atmosphere, the overworked rebbeim were able to soak up the message of relating to each talmid as an individual.

Chavrutah offers a prototype that can and should be emulated in communities all around the world. If we give just a little thought this Shavuot to all those, within and without, who are not joining us for Kabolos HaTorah, perhaps next year we will not find ourselves celebrating alone again. You are subscribed to the Jewish Media Resources mailing list. To subscribe to or unsubscribe from this list, go to <http://six.pairlist.net/mailman/listinfo/jmrlist> See our site at <http://www.jewishmediareources.org>