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Nachum Tzvi ben Moshe,

Ya'akov ben Meir,

Sara Tziv'ya bas Avraham and

Faiga Malka bas Yona -

Heshie's Grandparents who perished

(second day of Shavuos) **al Kiddush HaShem** in the Shoa.

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Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

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Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

Dvar Torah :: Shavuot

Why is it important to enjoy the meal at a wedding?

The Gemara in Berachot 6b tells us, "כל הנשקה מְסַעֲדָתָּהּ... זוֹכֶה לְתוֹרָה" – "whoever enjoys the meal at a wedding and makes the bride and groom happy... acquires Torah". What is the source for this? In the biblical account of the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai the term 'קול- voice' is mentioned 5 times. Similarly in Jeremiah chapter 33 verse 11, with reference to a bride and groom that same word 'קול' is mentioned five times. A beautiful teaching but does it actually make sense? I could have understood perhaps some of the more spiritual elements of the wedding ceremony being linked to acquiring Torah but why the physical activity of eating the meal?

I'd like to suggest the following peirush: Here we find an outstanding example of that Torah-true character trait of empathy.

Anyone who has hosted a simcha, a wedding or bar or bat mitzvah knows how much effort goes into creating the menu. All the considerations relating

to the options for the food, the financial investment, the tasting, etc. But it's a long run up for a short jump -after so many months of planning it's all over within a few hours. That is why it's so important that as guests at a wedding, if we enjoy the meal, we must let the hosts know that we appreciated their choice of food – that will give them so much encouragement and make them feel good. If you relate to others in this way you are showing you can be 'Zocher Latorah'. The reason is, that our consideration for others in our tradition is always seen as an integral part of the way in which we connect spiritually with our creator.

The previous Gerer Rebbe was once asked 'what should the name be for the Shabbat before Shavuot?' After all the Shabbat before Pesach is called Shabbat HaGadol. The Shabbat before Yom Kippur is Shabbat Shuva, so what about the Shabbat before Shavuot? In an instant he replied: It should be called 'Shabbat Derech Eretz' – the Shabbat of menchechkite, of being considerate, of being a decent human being -because the Mishna tells us 'Derech Eretz Kadma la'Torah' – 'being a good person precedes the Torah'. That is why the Shabbat before Shavuot should be 'Shabbat Derech Eretz'. This forthcoming festival of Shavuot it is going to be so different from others. We won't be in our shuls to enjoy our beautifully adorned synagogues, full of flowers and plants. We won't be able to enjoy a communal tikun leil. Most Jewish people around the world will be in their own homes and the reason for all this is: 'Derech Eretz Kadma la'Torah' – it is because of our consideration towards those in our society. We are looking after ourselves and we are looking after everyone else. Let us take the very same message forward for all years to come and if indeed we show that beautiful empathy towards those living around us we will all be 'Zocher Latorah', we will have the privilege of embracing a Torah way of life. May it be a shining light to guide us with meaning and joy throughout our lives.

I wish you all Chag Sameach

Rabbi Mirvis is the Chief Rabbi of the United Kingdom. He was formerly Chief Rabbi of Ireland.

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Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

From the teachings of the Rosh Yeshiva

Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner Shlit"a

Ask Rav Aviner

Visit our blog: www.ravaviner.com

Ha-Rav answers hundreds of text message questions a day. Here's a sample:

Popping Pimple on Shabbat

Q: Is it permissible to pop a pimple on Shabbat?

A: No, since blood comes out. If blood does not come out but only other debris, it is permissible.

Giving Tzedakah at Night

Q: What is the source that it is forbidden to give Tzedakah at night?

A: The Arizal, but the basic Halachah is that it is permissible and proper to do so.

Faith in the Redemption

Q: What is the difference if we are in the Redemption or not?

A: It is the difference of what we believe. The Torah directs us what to do, what to believe, what to think and how to feel.

Torah Learning in Yeshiva

Q: Regarding one who comes to learn for a few years in Yeshiva: what is worthwhile for him to learn, and in what quantity – in-depth Gemara learning, broad Gemara learning, Halachah, Emunah, Musar, Tanach, etc.?

A: There are 3 answers: 1. He should follow what is customary in the Yeshiva where he learns. The two of us cannot decide in place of your Rosh Yeshiva. 2. A person learns Torah in a place that his heart desires (Avodah

Zarah 19a). But if a person's heart does not desire, he should bring himself to a level that his heart does desire. He should discuss it with his Ra'm in Yeshiva. 3. There is an order to Torah learning in Yeshiva for thousands of years, and who are we to change it? The essence is to learn Gemara in depth, and to learn a little of the rest.

Tevilat Kelim for Flower Vase

Q: Does a flower vase require Tevilah in a Mikvah?

A: No. Only a utensil which comes in contact with food.

Civil War in the U.S.A.

Q: A Rabbi said that there will soon be a civil war in the United States, and Jews should therefore make Aliyah. Is this true?

A: We do not have prophets which can reveal the future to us. But it is correct that Jews should make Aliyah.

Yom Ha-Atzmaut and Charedim

Q: A feeling of hatred against Charedim arises in me every Yom Ha-Atzmaut, since they belittle the State and the army. How can I look at them positively?

A: 1. They have many positives. 2. At the same time, theirs is a mistake within a good intention.

Change the Prayer for the State of Israel

Q: Should we change the expression "The beginning of the sprouting of our Redemption" in the Prayer for the State of Israel, since perhaps we are already after the beginning?

A: No. It is impossible to know where we are in the process. As long as we have not arrived at the Complete Redemption, it is possible to call it "the beginning".

Shemirat Ha-Lashon and Har Ha-Bayit

Q: Instead of Ha-Rav writing so much about the prohibition to enter the Temple Mount, isn't it preferable to focus on not speaking Lashon Ha-Ra?

A: We need to address both issues, and many others as well. "We will do and we will obey everything which Hashem spoke" (Ha-Rav receives 400 text message questions each day. 398 are on various subjects and about 2 of them are usually about the Temple Mount – M.T.).

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from: Jewish Media Resources list@jewishmediaresources.com

Jewish Media Resources :: Seed of Redemption

Jonathan Rosenblum, May 26, 2020

Breaking Free To Geulah

Mashiach can only come from a seed other than the one that gave birth to Kayin

Rav Aaron Lopiansky, rosh yeshivah of the Yeshiva of Greater Washington, recently published Seed of Redemption, his English adaptation of Rav Yosef Lipovitz's Nachalas Yosef on Megillas Rus. Just in time for Shavuot.

When Nachalas Yosef was presented to Rav Gedaliah Nadel, one of those closest to the Chazon Ish, "he read it breathlessly from beginning to end, sobbing uncontrollably. [When he finished], he said, 'it is 500 years since a sefer of this kind was written; undoubtedly, it was written with ruach hakodesh,'" according to an eye-witness account.

Nachalas Yosef weaves the words of Chazal together in a seamless tapestry, not as isolated comments. The commentary demonstrates that Chazal's words are not fanciful extrapolations from the text, but careful explications of the verses, which peel back layers of meaning..

Rav Lipovitz, a close talmid of the Alter of Slabodka, introduces his commentary with two essays on recurrent themes throughout the megillah. The first focuses on chesed. "Rav Zeira said, '[The megillah was written] to teach me how much reward lies in store for people who perform deeds of kindness'" (Rus Rabbah 2:14).

Chesed, as defined by the Rambam in Moreh Nevuchim, is acts of benevolence toward one's fellow man to whom no duty, or even sense of duty, exists. The paradigmatic act of chesed was Hashem's creation of the world, which obviously did not emanate from a preceding obligation. Every

act of chesed, then, attests to the Creator, for it flows from the breath of the Divine within us. Avraham was able to deduce the existence of the Creator "from himself," from his own middah of chesed.

Not only is chesed the foundation stone of the world, and necessary for its continuation, it is through chesed that the world will come to final establishment of the Davidic kingdom with the coming of Mashiach. Thus the centrality of chesed to the story leading to the birth of Dovid Hamelech. The second essay describes the period of the Judges, which was in many ways the antithesis of a world of chesed. Chazal ask how the nation degenerated so rapidly following the death of Yehoshua. They find a hint in the description of Yehoshua's burial. Nowhere does it say that the people mourned Yehoshua, after burying him north of Gaash (Yehoshua 24:29–30).

Nowhere else in Tanach is a place called Gaash mentioned. That absence leads Rav Berachiah to deduce that the meaning of the verse is that the people were too preoccupied (nisgaashu) to mourn Yehoshua. They were involved instead in their properties, fields, and vineyards. (See Rus Rabbah Psicha 2)

Materialism and self-absorption were the culprits. The entire period of the Judges is described as one in which each man did what was straight in his eyes. They acted without any consideration of anyone but themselves.

Chazal found in a verse in Mishlei (19:15) — "Laziness begets slumber, and the deceitful soul starves" — stages of decline. Because Yisrael was lazy in paying their respects to Yehoshua, and were deceitful to Hashem, even to the point of idol worship, Hashem starved them of the Divine spirit.

Overindulgence in material pleasures led to a slackening of chesed, and ultimately to spiritual slumber.

But because Hashem can neither destroy His rebellious people nor return them to Egypt nor exchange them for another, He must instead bring upon them famine to awaken them from their spiritual slumber. Megillas Rus begin with a terrible famine. (Perhaps today we could substitute plague for famine.)

THE EVENTS of Megillas Rus all foreshadow the process culminating in Mashiach. The first verse tells us "va'yeitzei ish — a man went out," a phrase that appears in only one other place in Tanach — with respect to Amram's taking back his wife Yocheved. The earlier event led to the birth of Moshe Rabbeinu, the Redeemer of Israel from Egypt, and the second va'yeitzei ish, for which Elimelech is sharply criticized by Chazal, ironically sets in motion the process leading to the final Redeemer.

Particularly subtle is Nachalas Yosef's treatment of Orpah. She and Rus are sisters. Orpah does not feign her love for Naomi. Her tears upon parting from Naomi are genuine. For each tear shed, say Chazal, she was rewarded with another gibur as a descendant.

Her decision not to accompany Naomi followed normal human logic. There was little she could do to significantly improve Naomi's fate, and by joining her mother-in-law she would be dooming herself to self-extinction, for who would marry a daughter of an enemy nation. She was, in essence, following the halachic principle, "Your life takes precedence."

It was Rus's decision that was unnatural, or above nature, as it were. For Rus, the ideals she saw embodied in Naomi were not just enhancements of life, but ideals for which it was worth sacrificing one's life. Naomi's truth was the higher prophetic truth from which the ultimate tikun haolam derives. As David told Golyas, the descendant of Orpah, "You come against me with the sword and spear, and I come with the Name of Hashem...." (I Shmuel 17:45). The strength of Israel in all our battles is not the born of human logic but of steadfast clinging to Hashem.

Breaking free of any trace of self-absorption, as Rus did, is the key to the messianic process. Boaz, the male forebear of Dovid Hamelech, and through him Mashiach, is introduced, "And his name was Boaz." Evildoers, however, are introduced by their name first: "Golyas is his name" (I Shmuel 17:4). Since the wicked act primarily out of their self-interest, their name comes first.

Boaz greets his harvesters, "May Hashem be with you." That usage of Hashem's Name in routine greetings is one of three rabbinic decrees to be endorsed by the Heavenly Court (Yerushalmi Berachos 9:5). The greeting serves as a reminder that we all have a common Father and are made in His Image. As such, it hints to the tranquillity and universal brotherhood that will characterize the messianic era.

When Boaz awakens at midnight and finds Rus sleeping at his feet, he could have cursed or shamed her, for her apparent brazenness. Instead he blesses her, "Your last chesed is greater than your first." The Targum translates the first chesed as her conversion, the very conversion that made it possible to enter the Jewish People and marry Boaz.

But what does conversion have to do with chesed? Unlike other converts — e.g., Yisro, Rachav, and Naaman — Rus did not convert because she witnessed the overwhelming power of Hashem. But rather she saw the sweetness of Naomi's ways. Her recognition of Hashem, like that of Avraham Avinu, was through chesed.

And it was her good intentions — her second chesed in coming to the granary — that Boaz discerned. So too were Tamar's intentions good when she risked everlasting shame by hiding her identity from Yehudah in order to give birth to Peretz. The latter's geneology through Boaz to David is emphasized in the megillah's closing verses.

Similarly, did Lot's daughters sacrifice themselves out of the best of intentions — to preserve humanity. The verse refers to them as nimzoas in Sedom, and Chazal expound that they are the ancestors of two metzios (precious found objects) — Rus the Moabite and Na'amah the Ammonite, who form the matriarchal line to Mashiach.

Chazal take note that Lot's daughters did not express a desire for children from their father, but rather "seed." In so doing, they hinted to a process going back to the beginning of human history. When Chavah gave birth to Shes, she referred to him as "zera acher — a different seed." Chazal explain: a seed from a different place, i.e., from Mashiach.

Mashiach can only come from a seed other than the one that gave birth to Kayin. Kayin viewed the world as a zero-sum game. In his worldview, anything that elevated Hevel must diminish himself. Mankind built on the seed that brought forth Kayin will inevitably implode. Only from "another seed," one steeped in chesed, will Mashiach come.

May that seed of redemption come to fruition speedily in our days.
Chag samei'ach.

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subject: Weekly Torah Message From Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald
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Rabbi Buchwald's Weekly Torah Message

"The Anonymous Holiday"

(updated and revised from Shavuot 5760-2000)

Rabbi Ephraim Z. Buchwald

This Thursday night, Friday and Shabbat, the joyous festival of Shavuot will be celebrated, marking the giving of the Torah at Sinai (in Israel it is celebrated only on Thursday and Friday). On the Hebrew calendar, it is the sixth and seventh days of Sivan.

According to traditional calculation, the Torah was given at Sinai 3332 years ago, in the year 2448 on the Jewish calendar, corresponding to the year 1313 BCE. Because this Shabbat is Shavuot, the normal Torah portion for the week is postponed until next Shabbat, and instead, this Friday we will read from Exodus 19:1-20:23, and on Shabbat day from Deuteronomy 14:22-16:17—readings which concern the festival of Shavuot.

Despite the tradition that the Torah was given on the holiday of Shavuot, many of the commentators are astounded that nowhere in the Torah is there any mention that the Torah was given on that day.

Rabbi Yehudah Nachshoni, in his observations on the weekly parasha, cites a number of traditional commentaries and their remarks regarding this peculiar omission.

Rabbi Nachshoni notes the writings of the Akeidat Yitzchak, who suggests two reasons for the seeming omission. In his counting of the mitzvot, says the Baal Akeida, the Bahag did not count the existence of G-d among the 613 mitzvot, simply because the existence of G-d is a given, and the most fundamental principle of all the mitzvot. If there is no Commander, there can be no commands. So, obviously, there is no need to count the existence of G-d among the 613 commandments. Similarly, with Shavuot, says the Akeida, the giving of the Torah is such a primary philosophical principle, and so self-evident, that for the Torah to mention it would be extraneous.

A second reason recounted by the Akeida, is that most of the holiday mitzvot depend upon time, but the giving of the Torah can never be constrained by time. As it says in the book of Joshua 1:8: **לֹא יִמּוּשׁ סֵפֶר הַתּוֹרָה הַזֶּה מִפִּיךָ, וְהָגִיתָ בּוֹ יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה**, This Torah shall not depart from your mouth, and you should contemplate upon it both day and night. The words of the Torah need to be fresh and beloved in our eyes at all times as if they were newly given. Consequently, Scripture did not fix a time for the giving of the Torah, and only mentions the mitzvah of bringing bikurim, the first fruits, that are observed on the festival of Shavuot.

The Abarbanel, goes even further, arguing that the relationship between Shavuot and the giving of the Torah is merely coincidental. Shavuot is a holiday of thanksgiving to thank G-d for the harvest and the first fruits. While it is true that on the sixth of Sivan the Torah was given to the Jewish people, that is not really what necessitates the celebration. Rather, the first fruits and the harvesting of the wheat are the reasons to rejoice. The Abarbanel suggests that while there is no specific mention in the Torah to celebrate the Revelation, there are certain symbolic allusions in the celebration of the festival of Shavuot that relate to the giving of the Torah. The Abarbanel notes that on Passover an offering of the first barley is brought, which is a coarse food for animals, whereas on Shavuot the Shteit ha'Lechem, the two loaves of bread and the first offering of the very fine wheat are brought. The implication, clearly, is that the Exodus was the coarse liberation, while Shavuot and the giving of the Torah is the refined elevation. Similarly, the fact that we count the Omer from the second day of Passover until Shavuot, shows how much we long for Shavuot and yearn for the Torah.

As published in Shiurei Ha'Rav, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, delivered some impromptu remarks concerning the study of Torah to his class at Yeshiva University, that put the centrality of Torah and the festival of Shavuot into proper perspective. Rabbi Soloveitchik commented on the ceremonial blessings that are recited at the completion of the learning of a Talmudic tractate. Jews, he noted, yearn for both kedusha, sanctity, and Torah. Just as Jews always refer to Shabbat in their prayers as the day to which they long, by referring to the other days of the week as, today is the first, or the second, or the third day in the Shabbat cycle, so does the counting of the Omer reflect the Jews' awareness that the ultimate goal of the exodus from Egypt was really receiving the Torah.

So it is with the Jews yearning for mastery of Torah. Torah is not only to be studied, it must be an all-encompassing involvement. That is why the blessing that Jews recite every morning is, **לְעִסוּק בְּדַבְרֵי תוֹרָה**, Blessed art thou, L-rd our G-d, **לְעִסוּק**, to be involved in, to make our business, our careers, in the words of Torah.

Usually, when a Jew makes a blessing and departs from an activity, such as leaving a Sukkah after eating and drinking, and then re-enters the Sukkah to again eat or drink, the Sukkah blessing must be recited again. But, the blessing for Torah is recited only once in the morning, and never again, even though a Jew may open the Torah to study many times a day. The reason for this is that the obligation of Talmud Torah, of studying Torah, never ends.

This is what is meant by the verse from Joshua that was cited above, **וְהָגִיתָ בּוֹ**

יִזְמַן וְלַיְלָה , You should be aware and conscious of the mitzvah of Torah study all day and all night.

Rabbi Soloveitchik explains that there are two kinds of awareness. The first is acute awareness, while the second is latent awareness. Acute awareness is obviously lacking when one thinks about other matters, but latent awareness is always present, even though one may be engaged in other matters. Rabbi Soloveitchik notes insightfully, that when a mother plays with her child, there is acute awareness of the child. But, even when the mother is at work at a job, or distracted by some other activity, there is always a latent awareness of the child, and so it remains throughout the mother's lifetime. This is an awareness that typical parents have that can never be extinguished. The infant is the center of gravity of the parents' lives. That is why parents often feel that they cannot live without their child.

Says Rabbi Soloveitchik, the same is true with regard to Torah. A Jew may not be acutely aware of Torah at every moment during each 24 hour period, but the latent awareness never ceases. לְעִסוֹק בְּדַבְרֵי תוֹרָה , to engage in the words of Torah, implies that even when Jews are mentally involved in something else, they are always aware of Torah. This awareness of Torah becomes part of a Jew's innate consciousness. Just as one is always aware of one's existence without having to confirm it by constantly repeating: "I exist, I exist," so must a Jew be aware of the Torah.

Concludes Rabbi Soloveitchik, it is for this reason that we make a special siyum, conclusion ceremony, at the end of learning a Talmudic tractate, by saying the words, הִקְרַן עִלָּךְ , Hadran alach, "We shall return to you." As far as acute awareness is concerned, we are through with the tractate, we are leaving this chapter, but the latent awareness remains, and for that reason, we still return again to learn. It is similar to the mother who leaves her child and says, "I'll be back." She does not say this merely to encourage the infant, she is expressing a basic truth. A mother leaves only to return, otherwise, she would never leave.

We pray that this Shavuot will be an all-embracing celebration of Torah, not only of holding it, but making it an intimate part of our lives. With Torah as our guide, we will surely be blessed.

May you be blessed.

Please note: The wonderful festival of Shavuot commemorating the giving of the Torah at Sinai 3332 years ago is observed this year on Thursday evening, May 28th, and continues through Saturday night, May 30, 2020.

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subject: Rabbi Riskin on the Weekly Torah Portion

Shavuot

Ruth, the righteous proselyte

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – The Scroll of Ruth contains one of the most idyllic stories in the Bible, a tale of "autumnal love" between a widow (Ruth) and a widower (Boaz), within the backdrop of diaspora inter-marriage, conversion to Judaism, and the agricultural life in ancient Israel. The Rabbinic Sages ordained that we read this Scroll on Shavuot, the Festival of Weeks, the anniversary of the Torah Revelation at Sinai and the celebration of the first fruits brought to the Temple in Jerusalem. And since Shavuot is the climatic zenith of Passover, the development of a newly-freed group of slaves in the Sinai desert into a Torah-imbued nation firmly ensconced in their own homeland of Israel, the reasons for this special reading are many: Boaz and Ruth are the great – grandparents of David, the Psalm-singing military hero who united the tribes of Israel and first envisioned the Holy Temple in Jerusalem, Ruth the Moabite is Jew-by-choice whose commitment to Torah Judaism makes her worthy of being the great grand-mother of the prototype of the eventual Messiah-King, and the last three chapters of the story takes place between the beginning of the barley harvest (just before Passover) and the very end of the wheat harvest (not long after Shavuot). I would wish to

ask three questions on the Scroll of Ruth, the answer to which I believe will provide an extra dimension of our understanding as to why we read this particular Scroll on Shavuot, the festival which serves as harbinger to redemption.

Firstly, from a narrative perspective: the first chapter spans the ten years the family of Naomi is in Moab, and the last three chapters describe the happenings of the three month period between the barley and wheat harvests.

Why did the author give so much text space to such a small span of times? Secondly, the midrash (Ruth Rabbah) tells us that Ruth and Naomi arrive in Bethlehem at the precise time of the funeral of Boaz's wife, and that Boaz died immediately after he impregnated Ruth; that is how the Rabbinic Sages account for the fact that Boaz is not mentioned in the last verses of the Scroll (Ruth 4:14-22), which specifically deal with the birth of Oved, son to Boaz and Ruth as well as father to Jesse. Why do the Sages see fit to sandwich these joyous verses recounting such a significant love story between two seemingly tragic deaths – without the text itself mentioning those deaths explicitly or even hinting at a mournful mood? And finally, can we possibly glean from between the lines of the Scroll what precisely occurred between Boaz and Ruth during the night they spent together on the threshing floor. What did her mother-in-law Naomi suggest that she do – and what did she do in actuality?

If Shavuot is truly the Festival of Redemption – and redemption links humanity to the Eternal G-d of all eternity – the period which is eternally Sabbath – then the Scroll of Ruth must deal with the eternal rather than the temporal. Israel is the eternal homeland of the Jewish people – and any diaspora experience can only be temporal at best and destructive at worst. The first chapter opens with a famine in Israel, and an important personage (Elimelech) who leaves Bethlehem (literally the house of bread) with his wife and sons to seek "greener pastures" in the idolatrous Moab. As happened with Father Abraham, Diaspora proved far more dangerous (Genesis 12:10-20), the two sons, Mahlon (lit. sickness) and Kilion (lit. destruction) marry Hittite wives – and since the children follow the religion of the mother, the Israelite line of Elimelech and Naomi – seems to have ended! The father and his sons all die in Moab – their earlier spiritual demise expressing itself physically; fortunately one daughter-in-law clings to her mother-in-law Naomi, converts to Judaism ("Where you will go" – to Israel – "there shall I go, where you will lodge, there shall I lodge," – maintaining the same sexual purity as you – "Your people shall be my people, your God my God" – Ruth 1:16), and returns to Bethlehem. Only now – in Israel – can eternal history begin, and so the next three chapters, and the next three months, are far more significant than the previous ten years, which had almost destroyed the family line.

The midrash tells us that Boaz's wife has died just as Naomi and Ruth return – and that Boaz will die three months later. But death in itself is not tragic for Judaism: after all, every individual must die sooner or later. The only relevant question is to what extent the individual, when alive, participates in Jewish eternity. Naomi sends Ruth to glean the forgotten grain and harvest the produce in the corner of the field – agricultural provision which the Torah provides for the poor Israelites. Divine Providence sent Ruth to Boaz's field – and Boaz was a Kinsman of Elimelech. Boaz seems to be attracted to this comely proselyte –stranger and gives her his protection. Naomi understands that participation in Jewish eternity means having a child with Jewish parentage in Israel; she therefore instructs Ruth to wash and anoint herself, dress in special finery, visit the place on the threshing floor where Boaz will be spending the night at the height of the harvest season, and lie down at his feet. She also warns Ruth not to reveal who she is (Ruth 3:3,4). In effect, she is suggesting that Ruth tempt Boaz as Tamar had tempted Boaz's forbear Judah generations earlier – and at least enter Jewish history by bearing his child (see Genesis, chapter 38).

Ruth senses that Boaz loves her – and so she holds out for higher stakes than a mere "one night stand." She tells him exactly who she is, and she asks that he "redeem" her by marriage and by restoring to her Elimelech's previously

sold homestead in Israel. Ruth understands that true eternity means bearing a child on your own piece of land in Israel – not in the sly, but as a respected wife and householder. Boaz complies, and Oved, the grandfather of King David, is born. Ruth’s commitment to Torah – the land of Torah, the laws of Torah, the loving-kindness of Torah, the modesty of Torah – catapults this convert into the center stage of Jewish eternity.

And this for a very important reason. According to the Midrash of R. Yishmael, the reason the Torah was given at Mt. Sinai – a desert galut – and not on Mt. Moriah in Jerusalem, is because had the Torah been given in Israel the Jews may have thought that the Gentiles have no place in Torah. The truth is the very opposite: Rav Shimon ben Elazar maintains that in the future (Days of the Messiah) the Gentiles will all convert, and Maimonides, at the very conclusion of his Mishneh Torah, rules that at the End of the Days “everyone will return to the true religion”, which for him was certainly Judaism. The truth is that to a partial extent the issue is in dispute between two Prophets, Isaiah (chapter 2) maintaining that all the nations will rush to our Jerusalem Temple, declaring “Let us learn from the Jewish ways, let us walk in the Jewish paths, for from Zion will go forth Torah and the word of God from Jerusalem” (to the entire world), while the Prophet Micha quotes Isaiah’s words almost verbatim, and then concluding, “each nation will walk in the Name of its (individual) god and we will walk in the name of the Living Lord our God forever” – ethical absolutism (in accordance with the Torah demands of ethical absolutism – compassionate righteousness, moral justice, universal peace) and ritual pluralism!

I am ready to accept either view, and according to everyone at least the Biblical ethic will reign supreme. And the truth is that God initially blessed Abraham with becoming a great nation through whom all the families of the earth will be blessed with peace and security (Gen 12:1-3) – the Gentiles will certainly adopt our ethical outlook!

This is the vision of Shavuot and this is why we read about the righteous proselyte Ruth on Shavuot!

Shabbat Shalom!

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

from: Rabbi Chanan Morrison <chanan@ravkooktorah.org>

to: rav-kook-list@googlegroups.com

subject: [Rav Kook Torah]

Rav Kook Torah

Shavuot: 7 Tips for Success in Torah Study

While much of Orot HaTorah, a collection of Rav Kook’s thoughts on Torah study, discusses philosophical matters, the book also contains a number of practical lessons on studying Torah.

Below are seven pieces of advice for budding Torah scholars.

1. Daily Talmud study is good for the soul

In a letter to his son, Rav Kook wrote:

“Do not belittle the importance of a daily study session of Talmud and its major commentaries. This is a holy service, over which the greatest scholars of Israel toiled throughout the generations.”

2. Traditional Talmudic study, a prerequisite for greatness in Torah

Writing to his younger brother, he noted:

“I have never met a truly great Torah scholar except those who devoted their principal efforts in the study of Talmud and Rishonim, learning and reviewing them in their proper order.”

3. Write down a summary of what you learn

In a letter to his son, he suggested:

“It is advisable to make a habit of writing down a summary of each Talmudic topic, together with the various opinions, even if you do not add any original thoughts of your own. And you should certainly record any new insights and explanations that come to you.”

4. Review your studies!

Rav Kook wrote to his younger brother, R. Shmuel Kook:

“I was quite alarmed when I realized that you only review your Talmudic studies three times. I know from personal experience that it is impossible to attain mastery of Talmud with only three reviews. I implore you to accustom yourself to review each chapter of Talmud at least ten times before starting the next one.”

5. The CliffNotes to Shas: learn the Rif

“You should undertake to learn the entire Alfasi Code (הלכות רב אלפס) on a simple level, with competent proficiency. This goal is not difficult to accomplish if you follow a set study schedule. It does not even require a demanding pace.

The labor of studying the Alfasi Code is very pleasant in and of itself. It is also rewarding, due to the gratifying feeling that this approximates the goal of mastering the entire body of Halakhah, while using a medium that is as close as possible to the original Talmudic text. It is only when we encompass all of the details that we are able to truly observe and appreciate the striking beauty of the magnificent structure of Halakhah as a whole.”

6. Don’t forget ‘spiritual’ Torah topics

“Spiritual Torah subjects, in all of their width, depth, and breadth, must also have a place in the yeshiva curriculum. Aggadah and Midrash, both exoteric and esoteric, works of philosophy and theoretical Kabbalah, ethical tracts, Jewish thought, Hebrew grammar, piyyut, and poetry... are also fundamental areas of Torah study.

While these are not the primary topics of study, it is inconceivable to preclude them for securing a pivotal role in the curriculum, especially in our generation.”

7. Learn what interests you

“Each person should engage in his own field, in the occupation where one feels most adept. This principle is especially true with regard to Torah study. Even though circumstances may make it difficult to keep to the area that interests you, you should be resolute and not abandon the particular area of study that cultivates your spirit. Do not yield to social pressures to limit your study to those fields of Torah that society honors [such as Halakhah or Talmud], if your interests lie in other areas of Torah.”

(Orot HaTorah, chapters 9 and 14)

<https://oukosh.org/halacha-yomis/>

The Gerald & Karin Feldhamer

OU Kosher Halacha Yomis

I know that according to many poskim the brachos of Elokai Neshama and Hamaavir Sheina are not recited in the morning if one did not sleep. How long must a person sleep at night to justify reciting the brachos?

The Mishnah Berurah (46:24) quotes the Chayei Adam (7:8) that if one slept at night for a duration of sixty breaths, he may recite the brachos of Elokai Neshama and Hamaavir Sheina in the morning. How long is a duration of sixty breaths? The Chayei Adam writes that it is the length of time it takes to walk 100 amos. Since it takes 18 minutes to walk 2,000 amos, 100 amos would take slightly less than a minute. The themes of these brachos are emotions of hakaras hatov for the neshama’s return after temporarily departing while we sleep. The Chayei Adam explains that even during a very short sleep there is “a taste of death”, and the brachos are warranted.

However, the Mishnah Berurah elsewhere (Beiur Halachah 14, s.v. Dovid) quotes three different opinions about the time length of sixty breaths: three hours, thirty minutes, and three minutes. Many poskim write that regarding these two brachos thirty minutes is required (Dirshu M.B. footnote 30). The Elya Rabba writes that even if one dozed off for this duration at a table, he may recite these brachos.

If one did not sleep at all, some poskim allow the recitation of these brachos (Oruch Hashulchan 46:13 and Yechaveh Da’as 3:33). However, the Mishnah Berura recommends listening to someone else (such as one’s wife) recite these brachos and answering Amen. If there is no one available to recite these brachos, he can fulfill the bracha of Elokai Neshama with the second bracha of Shemoneh Esrei, provided one has in mind to be yotzei in this

manner (MB 6:12). Alternatively, sefer Even Yisroel (9:63) writes that if a person sleeps in the morning for more than 30 minutes before Chatzos (halachic midday), the bracha can be recited when waking up. Subscribers can also ask their own questions on Kashrus issues and send them to grossmany@ou.org. These questions and their answers may be selected to become one of the Q and A's on OU Kosher Halacha Yomis.

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com

From Jeffrey Gross <jgross@torah.org>

reply-To neustadt@torah.org, genesis@torah.org

To weekly-halacha@torah.org

Weekly Halacha :: **Shavuos: Questions And Answers**

Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya

Question: What are the Yom Tov restrictions in regard to flowers?

Discussion: Flowers, while still connected to the ground, may be smelled and touched, provided that their stems are soft and do not normally become brittle. 1 Flowers in a vase may be moved on Shabbos and Yom Tov. 2 They may not, however, be moved from a shady area to a sunny area to promote blossoming. If the buds have not fully bloomed, the vase may be moved but just slightly, since the movement of the water hastens the opening of the buds. 3 One may remove flowers from a vase full of water, as long as they have not sprouted roots in the water. 4 Once removed, they may not be put back in the water if that will cause further blossoming. Water may not be added to a flower vase on Shabbos. 5 On Yom Tov, however, a small amount of water may be added but not changed. 6 Flowers should be placed in water before Yom Tov. In case they were not, they may not be placed in water on Shabbos if the buds have not blossomed fully. If the buds are completely opened, however, some poskim permit placing them in water on Yom Tov while others do not. 7 One may not gather flowers or create an arrangement and place it in a vase on Shabbos, even if the vase contains no water. 8

Question: Does one recite a blessing over the pleasant fragrance exuded from flowers in a vase?

Discussion: Just as one may not derive pleasure from food or drink before reciting a proper blessing, so too, one may not enjoy a pleasant fragrance before reciting the appropriate blessing. 9 There are two different types of blessings that can be recited over pleasant fragrances exuded from flowers: 1. Borei atzei vesamim: Recited over fragrant shrubs and trees or their flowers (e.g., myrtle, roses¹¹).

2. Borei isvei vesamim: Recited over fragrant herbs, grasses or flowers.

The blessing is recited immediately before one intends to smell the pleasant fragrance. B'diavad, one may recite the blessing within a few seconds after he smelled a pleasant fragrance. 12

But a blessing over a pleasant fragrance is recited only over an object whose purpose is to exude a pleasant fragrance. If the object is primarily for another purpose — even if the object is sweet-smelling — no blessing is recited. 13 Although flowers in a vase exude a pleasant fragrance, since people usually buy flowers for their beauty, one who walks by and smells them does not recite a blessing. If, however, the flowers are picked up and smelled, a blessing must be recited.

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 hour¹⁴ 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 poskim¹⁵ — it is not required by the halachah. 16

Question: Does the same halachah apply to hard cheese as well?

Discussion: When “hard” cheese is eaten, the halachah is different. Shulchan Aruch quotes an opinion that requires one to wait a full six hours between eating hard cheese and meat. 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. 17 In addition, other poskim hold that hard cheese can get stuck between the teeth just as pieces of meat do. 18 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 poskim¹⁹ recommend that one be stringent and wait six hours between consuming hard²⁰ cheese, and meat or poultry. (See tomorrow's Discussion for a definition of “hard cheese.”)

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. 21 While many of the hard cheeses sold in the United States are not aged for six months, there are several brands of cheese that advertise that they have been cured for ten 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 that are not aged six months but are cured long enough to become wormy²² are considered “hard” cheese. 23 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. 24 While some individuals follow this opinion, the widespread custom follows the more lenient view. 25 It is appropriate, though, to wait at least one hour between eating any hard cheese and meat. 26

Question: Why do some women omit the blessing of shehecheyanu when they light Yom Tov candles?

Discussion: The validity of the custom to recite shehecheyanu at candle-lighting time, a prevalent long-standing custom, 27 has been extensively debated by the poskim. 28 The preferred time to recite shehecheyanu is right after the recitation of Kiddush, while the cup of wine is still being held aloft. Since ladies listen and answer amen to the shehecheyanu which is recited after Kiddush, there is no halachic reason for them to recite this very blessing when they light candles. There are other halachic objections as well. Still, since many women are inspired by the important mitzvah of candle-lighting and feel the need to express their joy at that time, the custom evolved of reciting shehecheyanu at candle-lighting time. Most poskim feel that while we do not encourage this practice, we need not object to it and the ladies who recite their own shehecheyanu at candle-lighting time may continue to do so. 29

Sources: 1. Mishnah Berurah 336:48. 2. Rav M. Feinstein (quoted in Sefer Hilchos Shabbos, pg. 64). 3. Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Shalmei Yehudah, pg. 73); Bris Olam, pg. 32. 4. Rav S.Z. Auerbach, quoted in Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 26:26. 5. Mishnah Berurah 336:54. 6. O.C. 654:1 and Aruch ha-Shulchan 654:2; Shemiras Shabbos K'hilchasah 26:26. 7. See Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 336:48; Shulchan Shlomo 336:12; Yechaveh Da'as 2:53. 8. Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:73. 9. O.C. 216:1. A berachah acharonah, however, was not instituted for pleasant fragrances; Mishnah Berurah 216:4.

10. One who does not enjoy a particular fragrance does not recite a blessing. 11. Mishnah Berurah 216:17. 12. Halichos Shlomo 1:23-38. 13. O.C. 217:2. See also Mishnah Berurah 217:1; 216:11. 14. Some wait an half an hour; see Peri Hadar on Peri Megadim, Y.D. 89:16. 15. See Minchas Yaakov 76:5 and Beirur ha-Gra, Y.D. 89:2. See Darchei Teshuvah 89:14 who rules like these poskim. See also Igros Moshe, O.C. 1:160. 16. Mishnah Berurah 494:16; Aruch ha-Shulchan, Y.D. 89:9. 17. Taz, Y.D. 89:4. 18. Peri Chadash, Y.D. 89:2. 19. 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. 20. If the hard cheese is softened through boiling or cooking, it is no longer considered hard cheese;

Darchei Teshuvah 89:43. But if it is merely fried or baked (as in pizza), it is still considered hard cheese; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (Sefer ha-Kashrus, pg. 280; Me'or ha-Shabbos, vol. 3, pg. 426). 21. Shach, Y.D. 89:15. 22. These "worms" are kosher and are permitted to be eaten as long as they remain within the cheese; see Rama, Y.D. 84:16. 23. Taz, Y.D. 89:4; Chochmas Adam 40:13. 24. Rav Y.Y. Weiss, quoted in Teshuvos v'Hanhagos, Y.D. 1:388; Rav S.Z. Auerbach, quoted in Me'or ha-Shabbos, vol. 3, pg. 427; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv, quoted in Sefer ha-Kashrus, pg. 280; Shevet ha-Levi 2:35. 25. Ma'asei Ish 5, pg. 22, quoting Chazon Ish; Kitzur Shulchan Aruch (Feiffer), pg. 138, quoting Rav A. Kotler; Yagel Yaakov, pg. 148, quoting Rav M. Feinstein; Debreciner Rav in Pischei Halachah, pg. 108; Mi-Beis Levi 6; Rav C. Kanievsky, quoted in Nezer ha-Chayim, pg. 213; Mesorah, vol. 20, pg. 91, ruling by Rav Y. Belsky. 26. Rav Y.E. Henkin, written ruling published in Yagel Yaakov, pg. 148. 27. Match Efrayim 581:4; 619:4. 28. See Sh'eilas Ya'avetz 107, Kaf ha-Chayim 263:40 and Moadim u'Zemanim 7:117 quoting the Brisker Rav. 29. Sha'arei Teshuvah 263:5; Mishnah Berurah 263:23; Aruch ha-Shulchan 263:12; Emes l'Yaakov, O.C. 585:2; Halichos Shlomo, Moadim 2:9-22. Weekly-Halacha, Text Copyright © 2013 by Rabbi Neustadt, Dr. Jeffrey Gross and Torah.org. Rabbi Neustadt is the Yoshev Rosh of the Vaad Harabbonim of Detroit and the Av Beis Din of the Beis Din Tzedek of Detroit. He could be reached at dneustadt@cordetroit.com Weekly Halacha © 2020 by Torah.org.

from: Naaleh Torah Online <contact@naaleh.com> via naaleh.ccsend.com
date: May 27, 2020, 9:13 PM
subject: New Shavuot Classes

Shavuot & Rut: Inner Dimensions

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by

Mrs. Shira Smiles

A name conveys the essence of whatever is being named. The name most often used in our liturgy for the holiday of Shavuot is Zman Matan Torateinu, the time of the giving of the Torah. We read the Book of Ruth on Shavuot, for, just as we accepted the Torah as our way of life, so too did Ruth.

Ruth clung to Naomi. She declared with every fiber of her being that she would not be separated from Naomi or her God. It is this same kind complete dedication to God that must form the cornerstone of our own lives. In fact, this was the Sinai experience. Rav Soloveitchick, in trying to reconcile contradictory timelines for matan Torah presented by Rashi and Ramban, explains that when we received the Torah at Sinai, we underwent our own two step conversion process. The dveikut of our hearts and minds, the essence of our commitment, was actualized at the foot of the mountain, on Shavuot day. This clinging to Hashem, constituted the marriage ceremony between Hashem and Bnei Yisroel. This spiritual, essential intimacy is what we celebrate on Shavuot. Every year we reenact this experience and reaffirm our intimate connection to Hashem. We did not actually get the luchot at that time, nor did we offer the sacrifices that would consummate the union until later.

The next two interrelated names are Chag Hekatzir, the harvest festival, and Chag Habikurim, the first fruit festival. Much of the action in the Book of Ruth involves different aspects of the harvest, from Ruth gleaning in the fields to Boaz's commitment on the threshing floor. From the kindness Ruth shows Naomi, to the acts of kindness Boaz shows his destitute relatives, we are shown how the members of Bnei Yisroel should act. This contrasts with the negative behavior of Elimelech, Machlon and Chilyon who died after running away from the suffering of their brethren. It is from this that we learn that proper middot must precede the acquisition of Torah as Ruth did before her conversion.

We have forty nine days, including three intense days of separation and preparation to elevate ourselves to be proper receptacles for the Divine Presence. The Netivot Shalom points out that on Rosh Hashanah we get judged on all things physical, but on Shavuot we get judged on the spiritual abundance we will receive. This is derived from the Chazal that states on this day the world is judged for the fruit of the tree. The tree is symbolically Hashem, while the fruit represent the souls of Bnei Yisroel. On this day,

Hashem is deciding how much Torah and how much intimacy with Him we will achieve in the coming year.

Bikurim are the first fruits the newborn produce of the trees. In a similar way, at Mount Sinai each Jew was born anew, a "first fruit" of his Maker. As the Netivot Shalom points out in the name of the Berditchever Rebbe, the entire purpose of this festival is the message of renewal, as it is written, "At the time of the giving of the Torah you will offer a new offering to Hashem." The simple explanation for the name Shavuot lies in the command to count seven weeks from Pesach. But it also means oaths, for on this day we took an oath to be loyal to Hashem, and Hashem took an oath to be loyal to us. However, there is yet another oath relevant to the festival, the oath of Boaz when he realized Ruth was at his feet. The Maayan Beis Hashoevah proposes that Naomi was trying to rectify the relationship of Judah and Tamar through their descendent, Boaz. Although our commentators say it was Divinely ordained, there was still the hint that perhaps Judah suffered a lapse. Naomi sensed that this stain needed to be removed to enable the full strength of the royal dynasty she knew was destined to descend from Boaz and Ruth to come to fruition. She knew that the only way to completely rectify a misdeed is by finding oneself in a similar situation. Boaz stopped himself by invoking the name of Hashem, by taking an oath that he would in fact marry Ruth if the closer relative refused to do so. This gave him the strength to rein in his passion, rectify the lapse of Judah, and provide the purity necessary for the future Davidic dynasty.

The final name is the Festival of Atzeret, of being reined in and closed up with Hashem. This means selflessly focusing on the other. This was the relationship of Boaz to Ruth. Boaz gave Ruth six barley grains to seal the deal symbolizing the future righteous descendants destined to be born from Ruth.

Boaz recognized that the nation needed the traits Ruth possessed as a Moabite to establish a lasting monarchy. A king needs some arrogance but he also needs to be altruistic. When Boaz gave Ruth these six barley grains, he symbolically transferred the future Davidic line to her, whether it would be through this other unnamed relative or through himself. This selflessness exhibited by both Boaz and Ruth, Boaz in his willingness to remove himself from the royal lineage and the young Ruth in agreeing to a levirate marriage to begin with and then marrying the elderly Boaz, is the kind of selfless devotion of a true marriage. This is the dveikut we hope to establish and renew between our neshamas and Hashem every Shavuot.

<https://www.ou.org/torah/parsha-series/torah-tidbits/>

RABBI JUDAH MISCHEL SHAVUOT SPECIAL

Mashpiah, OU-NCSY Executive Director, Camp HASC Dedicated L'Ilyu Nishmas HaChaver Shlomo Michael ben Meir z'l

Matan Torah

The Holy Ba'al Shem Tov would often travel the countryside visiting isolated shtetlach, sharing words of encouragement and inspiration with the Jews gathered to hear his messages, as well as those fortunate to meet the tzadik along the way. Once he related the following story, as a small crowd of simple townspeople stopped to listen with rapt attention.

"In a certain village lived Shimkeh, a day laborer who was barely managing to support his family and put bread on the table. Awakening before dawn, his prayers were often rushed and incomplete. He would often arrive late to Maariv and, exhausted from the day, rarely made it through the prayer without dozing off. He often wished he could learn Torah and invest energy in his Avodas Hashem, but he was just too emotionally and physically drained.

"In the same shtetl, there lived a young ben Torah, Reb Moische, a budding scholar who received a weekly stipend to sit and learn without any financial responsibilities or worries. He was blessed with the freedom to spend his days and nights in the Beis Medrash, davening with devotional intent and learning with intense focus.

“Every evening following Maariv the two would cross paths on the dirt path of the shtetl. Shimkeh, broken from his daily grind, walked bent over. One night, feeling slightly embarrassed to see his scholarly neighbor, he sighed deeply: how he yearned to have the freedom and peace of mind to serve Hashem the way his holy neighbor did! Meanwhile, Reb Moishe the masmid greeted his neighbor with a dismissive smirk. What could he possibly have in common with an am ha’aretz who slept through davening?”

“Years passed, and both Reb Moishe and Shimkeh left the world and arrived before the Beis Din shel Ma’alah, the Heavenly Court. With his head held high, Reb Moishe placed all of his years of uninterrupted limmud haTorah, impressive davening and careful mitzvah observance on the right side of the scales. As the judges were about to hand him a unanimously favorable verdict and Divine reward, a malach approached. Without saying a word, the malach placed on the left scale the selfrighteous smirk that used to pass over Reb Moishe’s face when he saw his shlepper neighbor. With a sudden thud, the smirk threw down the scale, outweighing all his zechuyot, merits.

“Soon thereafter, Shimkeh arrived before the heavenly court, humble and teary-eyed. He said before the Beis Din Shel Ma’alah: ‘I stand before you shamefaced; I spent most of my life shlepping, working hard to make ends meet. I regret that I wasn’t able to focus on learning and davening the way I would have liked.’ Before he could even finish speaking, a malach came forward and placed on the scale Shimkeh’s krechitz, the heartfelt sigh that the sincere shlepper had emitted when he yearned to be more. That holy sigh weighed down his entire scale of judgment to the side of good.”

The Jews who had gathered around the Ba’al Shem Tov wiped tears from their eyes and sat still for some time, contemplating its message.

HUMILITY

Chazal teach us that as opposed to revelation taking place on the highest peak, in the most grandiose setting, the Torah was given on Har Sinai, a small, modest mountain. This lowly mountain stood among the higher ones like a person bent over in humility. With this image, we learn the importance of approaching learning and spiritual work with the midah, the character trait, of humility.

The Chid’ah, Rebbe Chaim Yosef David Azoulay zy’a (d. 1806), in Sefer Nachal Kedumim, explains an oft-quoted drasha of Chazal in this light: Vayichan sham Yisrael neged ha’har — “Israel encamped there, opposite the mountain.” (Shemos 19:2) The word Vayichan “encamped” is unexpectedly in the singular, as if to say, ‘And he, Am Yisrael, encamped there....’ Rashi adds, K’ish echad b’lev echad — “...as one person with one heart”. Through internalizing the message of the place where the Torah was given, and embodying these traits of humility and modesty, the millions of Jews that had gathered together around the mountain became a unified vessel to receive Hashem’s Torah. Their humility joined them as one.

Rebbe Leibele Eiger of Lublin teaches that the word vayichan is a term of chein, ‘grace’. Because at Mount Sinai we all saw each other’s good points and found grace in each other’s eyes, we were unified in receiving the Torah. Shavuos celebrates Uba’u kulam b’vris yachad; ‘Naaseh v’nishma’ amru k’echad — “They all came together in the Covenant of the Torah; ‘We will perform it and then we will understand it,’ they said as one.” We all have different entry points, and there are infinite pathways to draw near, but the Torah and the closeness with Hashem belong to all, equally, as one.

REBBE YISRAEL BA’AL SHEM TOV

Shavuot also marks the Yahrzeit of Rebbe Yisrael Ba’al Shem Tov zy’a, the revolutionary Tzadik and founder of the Chasidic movement, whose contributions have left an indelible impression on the way all of us live and experience Yidishkeit. The Ba’al Shem Tov’s empowering teachings and perspectives open wide the gates of Gan Eden for all, from the learned intellectual to the hard-working simple person who sighs in yearning for closeness with the Ribbono Shel Olam. The light of the Baal Shem Tov tips each of our scales toward the good.

This Yom Tov, may we recognize the chein in ourselves and each other, and renew our commitment to serve Hashem with sincerity and simplicity, modesty and humility, and celebrate our receiving of the Torah all together, k’ish echad b’lev echad.

From: Stuart Halpern <shalpern@yu.edu>

Sent: Wednesday, May 27, 2020 9:16 PM

Subject: **Ruth as a cure for loneliness**

How to Cure Loneliness

The Book of Ruth delivers an ancient prescription to a thoroughly modern condition

BY STUART HALPERN

No one is laughing at the U.K.’s Minister for Loneliness now. When Tracey Crouch was appointed to the position by then-Prime Minister Theresa May in early 2018, more than a few snickers could be heard across the pond. This past month, former U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy published *Together*, documenting the early signs of an American “social recession” he witnessed during his 2014-2017 tenure. Even prior to quarantines and social distancing, the nation’s former top doctor was already lamenting the isolation felt by so many across the U.S. “Overcoming loneliness and building a more connected future is an urgent mission that we can and must tackle together,” he wrote during those hazy pre-pandemic days.

Synagogue doors are still shuttered, which means we won’t get to read the biblical Book of Ruth on the upcoming holiday of Shavuot, but if you’re looking to fight isolation, loneliness, and the other social plagues of the moment, look no further than this short but stunning tale. More, perhaps, than any other biblical text, Ruth’s story feels incredibly raw and relevant, a prescription for all of us who are aching to connect in a society that grows increasingly more alienating.

In case you haven’t read the book in a while, here’s a refresher: Set around 1100 BCE, it begins during a famine, the economic recession of biblical times. An absence of centralized and unifying political leadership forces individuals to seek their own means of survival. An Israelite couple, Elimelech and Naomi, leave their homes to seek sustenance in the neighboring nation of Moab. After settling there, Elimelech dies, as do the couple’s two adult sons. While mourning the losses of their husbands, the sons’ Moabite widows, Ruth and Orpah—the latter being Oprah Winfrey’s actual first name—summon the psychological strength to salvage what remains of their future. Orpah decides to remain in Moab. But Ruth offers an altruistic affirmation so lyrical it has been sung millennia later by musical luminaries Bing Crosby, Mahalia Jackson, and Leonard Cohen.

“Whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.”

Having pledged allegiance to her mother-in-law, the pair travel the 50 miles to Bethlehem—literally meaning the House of Bread—where food is newly available. Seeing the formerly wealthy Naomi walk back into town, her former neighbors can’t believe their eyes. They exclaim aloud, upon seeing the bedraggled old widow and her unrecognized companion, “Is this really Naomi?”

In a heartbreaking comment, Naomi replies that her name, which translates to “pleasant,” should be changed to Mara, or “bitter,” a fitting description of her state of mind. It should come as little surprise, then, that no one rushes to Naomi’s aide, leaving Ruth as the family’s sole breadwinner. The newly arrived immigrant goes to work in the fields, collecting the grain left there, per Torah law, by the wealthy landowners obliged to care for the poor. Though in John Keats’ poetic imagining Ruth “stood in tears amid the alien corn,” the biblical text portrays no sadness on Ruth’s part, only a gritty determination to keep her word and feed herself and Naomi.

Eventually, Ruth’s efforts are rewarded. She happens upon the field of Boaz, a distant relative of Naomi’s, and they marry. Their union produces communal restoration in the form of the eventual King David, and, in the Christian tradition, Jesus. World history, it turns out, hinged on Ruth’s

decision to remain faithful to Naomi. The book ends shortly after an emotionally and physically revived Naomi, the once-wailing widow now radiant with joy, embraces the baby born to Ruth and Boaz as if it were her own. His name is Oved, or “worker,” an indication that everything that happened in the book happened because of the hard work of human beings, not necessarily the miraculous intervention of God. Indeed, the Almighty is rarely mentioned in the book; the story of Ruth is the most intimate, human-scale domestic drama in the Bible, a book otherwise dedicated to the heroic ploys of larger-than-life prophets, kings, and conquerors.

The book’s approachable scale is the first clue that the story it tells is one that modern readers may find particularly relatable. But look inside and you’ll be shocked by how ahead of her time Ruth truly was. First of all, long before we learned to accept nontraditional families as valid and valuable, Ruth and Naomi give us a reminder that the family unit comes in all shapes and sizes. They’re two women, both widowed and poor, living together in a patriarchal society dominated by wealthy men and reminding us that staying together and offering the mutual support we so desperately need can literally save our lives.

Science eventually caught up with Ruth’s wisdom: In recent decades, researchers have discovered how loneliness impairs judgment, increases stress, depression, and mortality rates, while friendship improves both psychological and physical health, including the body’s ability to overcome heart disease and viruses. Not that we need clinical studies to remind us why human interaction is so important: Open the window at 7 p.m. each night and you’ll hear people clapping and cheering, not only to thank our health care workers but also to remind ourselves that we are all in this together, and that even though we may not be able to see and talk to friends and neighbors, they are still there, waiting for the opportunity to reconnect.

But Ruth isn’t just a paragon of making your own family, even amid devastation. She’s also the embodiment of another virtue, giving, that physicians are now confirming can do much to boost both emotional and physical well-being. “Giving and serving others doesn’t just strengthen our communities,” writes Murthy. “It enriches our lives and strengthens our own bonds to the community and our sense of value and purpose.” Small acts of selfless kindness like Ruth’s lay the foundation for our individual and communal salvation.

Finally, Ruth delivers one more crucial lesson for us reading her story today: If you want it, work for it. Naomi’s self-pity, while understandable, led her nowhere. Ruth’s resilience, on the other hand, gave both women the happy ending they so richly deserved. Ours is a culture quick to assign blame and claim the mantle of victimhood; Ruth teaches us to forgo these tempting feelings for the harder yet ultimately more effective virtue of never, ever giving up.

There’s a theological lesson in there, too: Pleased with the tremendous character shown by this impoverished immigrant, God grants her not only a husband and a son but the privilege of becoming the mother of Judaism’s most illustrious family, the one, we’re told, that would eventually bring about the Messiah. The moral of the story is clear: Work hard, believe in yourself, be true to your friends, find your family when you can, and you will bring about redemption, not only to you but, one day, to the entire world. Rabbi Dr. Stuart Halpern is Senior Adviser to the Provost of Yeshiva University and Senior Program Officer of YU’s Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought. He has 16 edited books including *Gleanings: Reflections on Ruth and Proclaim Liberty Throughout the Land: The Hebrew Bible in the United States*. He is currently editing a volume on the reception history of the Scroll of Esther in America.

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Shavuot: Always Receiving

Shavuot (Exodus 19:1 - 20:23)

by **Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein**

The year was 1935, and the Spanish government was making elaborate plans to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the Rambam’s birth – seemingly a great honor and proud moment for Jews everywhere.

Yet, while many Jews around the world welcomed the initiative and prepared celebrations of their own, some had reservations. These concerns were addressed to the leading Torah sage of the time, Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinsky. Here is his extraordinary response:

“We do not need to commemorate the Rambam’s birth, for he lives on wherever teachers and students discuss his words; his teachings upon which we meditate every day are his eternal remembrance. This has been an everyday occurrence for many generations – the wellsprings have not ceased to this day.”

Stamps and statues. Plaques and paintings. Buildings and bridges. Google Doodles. These are the traditional ways we commemorate the great people of the past. And the 1935 Spanish government sought to celebrate the legacy of the great Maimonides, Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, the Rambam, in much the same way. But we Jews aren’t in the habit of memorialising our leaders and teachers. Rav Chaim Ozer’s objection was based on the fact that we live with the Rambam – with his writings and teachings – every day. His philosophical ideas and halachic rulings form part of our collective Jewish consciousness. To commemorate an 800-year anniversary is to live in the past – Torah is about living in the here and now. The Rambam is not a historical relic; he is a figure of the present.

What, then, is our approach to history? Jewish history is rich and replete with important events. The Torah is filled with mitzvot that are a remembrance of the past. Our holy days are linked to historical events. And yet, there is tension between the past and the present. The Torah is very much about how we live life today. It seems to be rooted in both the present and the past.

This vignette about the Rambam provides a window into understanding the Torah’s approach to history. We do more than remember the fact that the Exodus from Egypt took place – we relive that liberation. The Rambam himself codifies – based on the Talmud – that a person is obliged in every generation to see themselves as if they had personally gone out of Egypt. And it’s not just once a year. We live by the Exodus daily – by its messages of faith in God, of the importance of freedom and of resisting tyranny, and of dedicating that freedom to something greater than ourselves.

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler, quoting from the writings of our sages, says Jewish time is not linear, but cyclical; that every year, when, for example, Pesach comes around, it’s not that we are remembering an event that happened in the distant past, but rather we experience the same spiritual energy that was unleashed in the world at the time of the original Pesach.

Similarly, when we keep Shabbat each week, we commemorate the anniversary of the creation of the world. But we also re-experience what it means that God is our Creator, that we owe Him everything, and that the world is constantly being renewed and refreshed by God’s pulsating energy into the molecules of the universe. We re-experience the same energy that G-d unleashed into the world on the seventh day of creation – the energy of rest and rejuvenation and returning to source that was introduced on the very first Shabbat of human history.

This same principle applies to every one of the events that are recorded in the Torah, and that we are called on to remember. We are not merely remembering; we are reliving and re-integrating the experiences, and making them part of our daily lives – tangible and relevant in every way.

Arguably, no festival embodies this idea quite like Shavuot, which is the anniversary of the giving of the Torah exactly 3 331 years ago. The Kli Yakar points out that when the Torah calls on us to celebrate the festival of Shavuot, it does so without mentioning it is the anniversary of the giving of the Torah at all. We infer that Shavuot is the anniversary of the giving of the Torah from the date on which the festival takes place (the 6th of Sivan), but

there's no explicit mention of it. Why would the defining dimension of Shavuot not be directly stated by the Torah?

He answers that the Torah did not want us to fixate on one day as the anniversary of the giving of the Torah, to relate to this day as a memory of the distant past.

Our relationship with the Torah is immediate and visceral. We receive it – we incorporate it into our lives – each and every day. When the Jewish people are approaching Mount Sinai to receive the Torah, the verse says, “In the third month of the children of Israel leaving the land of Egypt, on this day they arrived in the desert of Sinai.” Rashi notes that it says “this day” and not “that day”. “That day” would imply an event in the past, “this day” implies that it's happening today. Right now. Let us stop for a moment now and realise that at this moment in time we are actively receiving the Torah from God.

The Shema speaks about “these words that I command you today” (Deuteronomy 6:6). Rashi, on that verse says, that “today” means that the words of Torah should always feel as new and fresh to us as the day they were given. This is not some ancient, dusty manuscript stored away in a museum somewhere. This is a living Torah, a Torat Chaim. It gives us our mission and purpose; direction and guidance on how to live and why to live, and what our ideals are. It is something of immediate relevance, every moment of every day.

The Talmud cites the verse in Proverbs which compares our relationship with the Torah to a suckling infant with its mother; the more we draw out of it, the more life-giving nutrients are produced. The Torah is an endless reservoir of spiritual sustenance; no matter how deep you go, you can always go deeper. A small child, for example, can learn the first verse of the Book of Bereishit: “In the beginning God created Heaven and Earth”, and understand it in a very basic way. And the greatest Torah sage of the generation can learn that same verse with all of its nuances and mystical meanings in a much deeper way. In each case, it's the same Torah being learnt. But there's always something new in it.

There's a unique offering which was brought in the Temple on Shavuot – two loaves of bread, made from the newly ripened first grains of the wheat harvest. The Torah calls this offering the Mincha Chadasha – the “new offering”. Why this focus on newness? By now, the reason should be clear. Shavuot is a celebration of freshness and renewal. It's a celebration of renewed inspiration and renewed challenge. It's a celebration of Torah, today.

We must live life dynamically, not statically. We do not remain in frozen perfection like the angels; we struggle constantly to become better people. We do not remain set in what we know and what we've experienced; we must always search in Torah for new knowledge and fresh inspiration. This is the way God wants us to live – and He sets the example. As we say in the morning prayer service, God “renews the works of creation in His goodness, at every moment of the day, always”.

And just as God recreates the world from afresh, moment by moment, every single day, we should be recreating our own personal world on a similar basis, always looking for renewed inspiration, receiving the Torah into our lives that is as fresh as the day it was given. Shavuot is a great place to start.

<https://www.dafyomi.co.il/shabbos/points/sh-ps-086.htm>

Point by Point Summary of the Daf (Summary of the Daf)

[Matan Torah discussion in Shabbat 86-88 is the Daf Yomi for this coming Sun.-Tues!]

86...

1) WHEN WAS THE TORAH GIVEN?

- (a) (Beraisa): The Aseres ha'Dibros were given on the sixth of Sivan;
- (b) R. Yosi says, they were given on the seventh.
- (c) (Rava): All agree that Benei Yisrael came to Midbar Sinai on Rosh Chodesh Sivan: 1. It says "Ba'Yom ha'Zeh Ba'u Midbar Sinai", like it says "Ha'Chodesh ha'Zeh Lachem Rosh Chodoshim" - just like the latter refers to Rosh Chodesh, also the former.
- (d) All agree that Matan Torah was on Shabbos - it says "Zachor Es Yom ha'Shabbos

Lekadsho", like it says "...Zachor Es Yom ha'Zeh" - just like the latter refers to the day itself [that it was said], also the former;

(e) They argue about which day [of the week] was Rosh Chodesh.

R. Yosi holds that Sunday was Rosh Chodesh: 1. On Sunday Moshe did not address Benei Yisrael, because they were weary from travelling; 2. On Monday he told them "VAtem Tiyhu Li Mamleches Kohanim"; 3. On Tuesday he told them the Mitzvah of Hagbalah (fencing off Har Sinai); 4. On Wednesday he told them to abstain from relations.

(b) Chachamim hold that Monday was Rosh Chodesh: 1. On Monday Moshe did not address Benei Yisrael, because they were weary from travelling; 2. On Tuesday he told them "VAtem..."; 3. On Wednesday he told them about Hagbalah; 4. On Thursday he told them to abstain from relations.

(c) Question (against R. Yosi): "VKidashtem ha'Yom u'Machar" (there were only two days of abstention)!

(d) Answer (for R. Yosi): Moshe himself decided to add a third day (so all of Yisrael would be Tehorim). 1. (Beraisa - R. Yosi): Moshe himself decided to do three things, and Hash-m agreed to all of them - he added a day of abstention, he separated from his wife, and he broke the Luchos. (Tosfos - even though the Gemara brings Moshe's 'source' for each, in every case it is not a real Drashah or Kal va'Chomer, for we say that Moshe himself decided.)

(e) Question: What did he expound to justify adding a day?

(f) Answer: It says "Ha'Yom u'Machar" - today should be like tomorrow, i.e. a full day, including the night; 1. Hash-m said this during the day, so "Ha'Yom" could not mean today (Wednesday, according to R. Yosi) - rather, it means Thursday (in addition to the rest of today), and 'Machar' refers to Friday).

(g) Question: What is the source that Hash-m agreed?

(h) Answer: The Shechinah did not descend until Shabbos.

(i) Question: What did he expound to justify separating from his wife?

(j) Answer: He made a Kal va'Chomer - Hash-m spoke with Benei Yisrael only once, and he fixed a time, yet He required them to abstain from relations - "V'Hayu Nechonim...Al Tigshu [El Ishah]"; 1. Hash-m speaks with me at all times, without fixing a time - all the more so I should abstain!

(k) Question: What is the source that Hash-m agreed?

(l) Answer: It says "Lech Emor Lahem Shuvu Lachem l'Ohaleichem" (Benei Yisrael should return to their wives) "V'Atah Po Amod Imadi" (but you should remain with Me. Tosfos - surely, Moshe intended to separate before Hash-m said this - otherwise, Miryam and Aharon would not have disapproved). 1. Some learn from "Peh El Peh Adaber Bo" (this rebutted the disapproval of Moshe's separation).

(m) Question: What did he expound to justify breaking the Luchos?

(n) Answer: Korban Pesach is just one of 613 Mitzvos, it says "V'Chol Ben Nechar Lo Yochal Bo" (one estranged from Hash-m may not eat it) - all the more so, the entire Torah should not be given to Benei Yisrael, for they are Mumarim (on account of the Egel)!

(o) Question: What is the source that Hash-m agreed?

(p) Answer: Reish Lakish expounded "Asher Shibarta" - Yeishar Kochacha (your strength should be increased) for having broken them.

2) WHEN THE TORAH WAS GIVEN - QUESTIONS ON THE VARIOUS OPINIONS

... 87b 3) WHAT DAY OF THE WEEK WAS ROSH CHODESH SIVAN THAT YEAR?

88 1) QUESTIONS ON THE OPINION OF REBBI YOSI ...

KABALAS HA'TORAH

(a) (Rav Avdimi bar Chama): "Va'Yisatzvu b'Sachtis ha'Har" - this teaches that Hash-m bent Har Sinai over Yisrael like a bowl; (Aruch - like a wicker basket with holes - if we say that Hash-m let Yisrael see outside, i.e. [the emptiness of] life without Torah, this explains the continuation '...If not, you will be buried there - PF) 1. He told them, if you accept the Torah, good - if not, you will be buried there. (Maharal, Netzach Yisrael 11 - even though Benei Yisrael previously said 'Na'aseh v'Nishma', Hash-m wanted Kabalas ha'Torah through coercion, lest Yisrael think that transgression of Torah nullifies the acceptance. Medrash - Hash-m acted like a rapist, who must marry the girl and may never divorce her.)

(b) (Rav Acha bar Yakov): This is a great Moda'ah for Kabalas ha'Torah! (Someone forced to do something against his will tells witnesses that he is coerced and does not intend for his deed to take effect - we can say that we never intended to accept Torah! Maharal - the Moda'ah shows that Yisrael were not worthy of Torah.)

(c) (Rava): That is true - however, at the time of the miracle of Purim, "Kiymu v'Kiblu ha'Yehudim", Yisrael [willingly] affirmed what they already accepted [through coercion]. (Tosfos - the covenants and oaths Moshe imposed on Yisrael were also through coercion; Yisrael willingly made a Bris with Yehoshua, but it was limited to the Isur of idolatry.)

(d) Question (Chizkiyah): "Mi'Shomayim Hishmata Din Eretz Yor'ah v'Shokotah" - if the land was afraid, why was it quiet?!

(e) Answer: At first it was afraid; after Yisrael accepted the Torah, it was quiet.

(f) Question: Why was it afraid at first?

(g) Answer: Reish Lakish taught, "Yom ha'Shishi" - Hash-m created the world on condition that Yisrael will accept His Torah on the sixth of Sivan; if they will not, the world will revert to emptiness. (Tosfos Avodah Zarah 3A - R. Yosi can explain, this refers to the sixth day from the second of Sivan, when Hash-m began discussing Matan Torah with Yisrael; alternatively, Moshe added a day to enable receiving the Torah in greater Taharah, this is like acceptance.)

(h) (R. Simai): When Yisrael said 'Na'aseh' before 'Nishma' (agreeing to observe before hearing the Mitzvos), 600,000 angels came, they tied two crowns [of radiance of the Shechinah] on every Yisrael, one for Na'aseh and one for Nishma; 1. When Yisrael sinned [with the golden calf], twice this number of damaging angels came, each removed one crown - "Va'Yisnatzlu Venei Yisrael Es Edyam me'Har Chorev".

(i) (Rav Chama bar Chanina): They put on the crowns at Chorev (Sinai), they removed them at Sinai; 1. They put them on at Sinai, like R. Simlai taught; they removed them at Sinai - "Va'Yisnatzlu...".

(j) (R. Yochanan): Moshe merited to receive all of them - right after this it says "U'Moshe Yikach Es ha'Ohel" (he took the crowns; alternatively, Ohel is like "B'Hilo Nero Alei Roshi", the radiance went to Moshe's head. Maharsha - Na'aseh represents Mitzvos Ase, the crown of Kehunah (from Midas ha'Chesed); Nishma represents Lavim, the crown of Malchus (from Midas ha'Din) - Hash-m made Yisrael "Mamleches Kohanim v'Goy Kadosh"; Moshe received the crowns (he was Melech, and Kohen Gadol during Chaunkas ha'Mishkan) on account of learning in the Ohel, i.e. the crown of Torah. The crowns were removed at Chorev, the two Churbanos ended the Malchus and [Avodah of] Kehunah of Yisrael.)

(k) (Reish Lakish): In the future, Hash-m will return them to Yisrael - "U'Fduyei Hash-m Yeshuvun...v'Simchas Olam Al Rosham", the joy that used to be on their heads.

(l) (R. Elazar): When Yisrael put 'Na'aseh' before 'Nishma', a Bas Kol (voice from Heaven) said 'Who revealed to My children this secret that the angels use' - "Borachu Hash-m Mal'achav Giburei Cho'ach Osei Devaro Lishmo'a b'Kol Devaro", first Osei (they accept to do) his word, afterwards they hear it. (Maharsha - usually, people are not so resolute to do His will, for the Yetzer ha'Ra incites - Yisrael overcame this.)

(m) Question (Rav Chama bar Chanina): What do we learn from K'Sapu'ach ba'Atzei ha'Ya'ar...?"

(n) Answer: Yisrael are compared to an apple tree - just like its fruit precedes its leaves, Yisrael put Na'aseh before Nishma.

(o) A Tzeduki (heretic) saw Rava engrossed in learning; Rava's fingers were under his leg, he was pressing on them [without realizing], they were bleeding. 1. The Tzeduki: You are a hasty nation! You put your mouths before your ears, and you persist in your haste! You should have heard [the Mitzvos] first - then, you can accept if you see that you can keep them! 2. Rava: We go with a pure heart (We knew that Hash-m would not demand more than we are capable of) - it says about us "Tumas (from the root Tam', pure) Yesharim Tanchem";

88b It says about people [like you] who are full of accusations "V'Selef Bogdim Yeshadem" (Maharsha - those who seek to be straight receive Hash-m's help, those who seek to be crooked are given the opportunity).

(p) Question (R. Shmuel bar Nachmani): What do we learn from "Libavtini Achosi Chalah Libavtini b'Achas me'Einayich"?

(q) Answer: At first [when Yisrael accepted Torah], we drew close to Hash-m with one eye; later [through keeping Torah] we drew close with both. (Maharsha - Na'aseh v'Nishma corresponds to an intellectual vision, fulfillment in practice corresponds to physical vision.)

(r) (Ula): A bride that had Zenus (extramarital relations) at the Chupah is Aluva (audacious).

(s) (Rav Mari, son of Shmuel's daughter): He learns from "Ad sheha'Melech bi'Msivo Nirdi [Nosan Reicho]" (Yisrael made the golden calf while still at Har Sinai); 1. (Rava): Yisrael retains its dearness to Hash-m - it says, "Nosan Reicho" (gave its scent), it does not say 'stank'.

(t) (Beraiisa): "V'Ohavav k'Tzeis ha'Shemesh bi'Gvuraso" - this is one who is disgraced and does not disgrace; he hears [others recounting] his shame and does not answer, he serves Hash-m from love and happily accepts afflictions. (While the moon was suggesting that it should be supreme, the sun was silent - as a result, the sun became supreme.)

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subject: Insights to the Daf: Shabbos 86-90 Rosh Kollel: **Rabbi Mordecai Kornfeld SHABBOS 88**

1) ON WHAT DAY DO WE CELEBRATE SHAVUOS

QUESTION: The TUR and SHULCHAN ARUCH (OC 494:1) write that Shavuos is celebrated on the sixth of Sivan, fifty days after the day of on which the Omer offering was brought (the second day of Pesach). This implies that the month of Iyar in the year that the Torah was given was not a full (Malei) month, but was 29 days long. If Iyar of that year had been 30 days long, then Matan Torah would have been on the fifty-first day after the day of the Omer offering, and not on the fiftieth.

The Gemara seems to conclude that according to the Rabanan, who maintain that the Torah was given on the sixth of Sivan, there indeed were 51 days between Pesach and Shavuos (since the Gemara (87b) resolves the Beraisa which conflicts with the opinion of the Rabanan by saying that Iyar of that year had thirty days). How, then, can it be that Shavuos is on the sixth of Sivan and yet it is only fifty days after the day of the Omer offering?

Moreover, it seems that according to both Rebbi Yosi and the Rabanan, the Torah was given on the fifty-first day after Pesach. According to the Rabanan, Iyar was thirty days long, as we explained above, and according to Rebbi Yosi, Iyar was 29 days long, but the Torah was given on the seventh of Sivan, 51 days after the day of the Omer offering.

ANSWERS:

(a) The MACHTZIS HA'SHEKEL explains that this question applies only if the Jewish people left Egypt on a Thursday. If they left on a Thursday, then there indeed were 51 days between the second day of Pesach (Friday) and the day they received the Torah (Shabbos). The Seder Olam, however, says that they left Egypt on a Friday, and thus the Torah, which was given on a Shabbos, was given fifty days later. (The Seder Olam also states that the Man started to fall on a Monday. Even though the Gemara derives from verses that the Man started to fall on a Sunday, this inference is not explicit in the verses, and the simple understanding of the verses does not imply that the Man started to fall on a Sunday). We rule like the Seder Olam, and not like the Gemara.

It should be noted that according to the Seder Olam, the tenth of Nisan (the day on which animals were designated for the Korban Pesach) was not Shabbos but Sunday, contrary to what the TUR (OC 430) quotes in the name of the Seder Olam (since the Jews left Egypt on a Friday, five days before that day was Sunday, as the PERISHAH points out).

(b) The SEFAS EMES explains that according to the TUR, the Jewish people left Egypt on a Thursday (as he says in OC 430), and that the Torah was given on a Friday and not on Shabbos, as the Pirkei d'Rebbi Eliezer (ch. 46) maintains.

The Sefas Emes points out, however, that the Tur himself (OC 292) states that the Torah was given on Shabbos.

(c) The RIVASH (#96) writes that the festival of Shavuos has nothing to do with the day on which the Torah was given. Shavuos comes fifty days after the day of the Omer offering, whether or not it falls on the day that the Torah was given. The reason why we call Shavuos, "Zeman Matan Toraseinu," is because according to our calendar system (in which Iyar has 29 days), the festival occurs on the sixth of Sivan, which is the day of the month on which the Torah was given (according to the Rabanan, whose opinion we follow).

Unlike the actual day on which the Torah was given, our sixth of Sivan occurs fifty days after the Omer offering, while the original day of Matan Torah was 51 days after the Omer offering (because they left Egypt on a Thursday and received the Torah on Shabbos, as the Gemara here states).

(d) The MAGEN AVRAHAM (OC 494) says in the name of SEFER ASARAH MA'AMAROS that by adding a day on his own, Moshe Rabeinu alluded to the second day of Yom Tov which is observed outside of Eretz Yisrael. Thus, the Torah was actually supposed to have been given on the fiftieth day after the Omer of that first year, which is why our holiday begins on the fiftieth day after the Omer. The Torah was actually given on the fifty-first day to symbolize that the fifty-first day after the Omer would also be observed as Yom Tov (when the Jews would go into exile). Just as Moshe

Rabeinu made that day into the day of Kabalas ha'Torah, the Rabanan would later make that day into Yom Tov.

The BEIS HA'LEVI (Parshas Yisro) expands on this idea. He explains that even though the Jewish people received the Torah on the fifty-first day, the Torah was given on the fiftieth day. The explanation for this is as follows. The Gemara (88b) says that the Mal'achim did not want the Torah to be given to Moshe Rabeinu. What was their argument? What did they intend to do with the Torah themselves? As Moshe Rabeinu argued, none of the Mitzvos of the Torah are relevant to heavenly entities; they are relevant only for humans!

The Gemara in Bava Metzia (61a) states that the verse, "Lo ba'Shamayim Hi" -- "the Torah is not in the heavens" (Devarim 30:12), means that the authority to expound and elucidate the Torah is not in the heavens, but was given to the Sages. The Mal'achim argued that this authority should not be given to man, because they did not think that it was appropriate for man to have the power to legislate in Torah matters.

Moshe Rabeinu's decision to delay the giving of the Torah by one day was based on a Hekesh, as the Gemara explains ("just as the second day of Perishah was a day that follows a night, so, too, the first day must be a day that follows a night"). By his application of a Hekesh to derive a Torah law (i.e., the day on which the Torah should be given), Moshe Rabeinu asserted that the Torah was given to man to expound. The Gemara adds that indeed, Hash-m agreed to Moshe's action.

Therefore, even if the Halachah follows the view of Rabbi Yosi who says that we received the Torah on the seventh day of Sivan, that day was the day of Kabalas ha'Torah, when the Jews received the Torah. The day before, though, was the day of Matan Torah, when Hash-m gave man the ability to make decisions that affect Torah law. (The CHASAM SOFER in Toras Moshe (Shavuos) offers a similar explanation.)

2) FORCED TO ACCEPT THE TORAH

QUESTION: The Gemara relates that at Har Sinai, Hash-m held the mountain above the heads of the Jewish people, and the people accepted the Torah under duress. The Gemara explains that because of this involuntary acceptance of the Torah, the Jewish people had a "Moda'ah Rabah l'Oraisa" -- a claim of immunity for any transgressions that they might commit. This "Moda'ah Rabah" lasted until the Jewish people willingly accepted the Torah during the time of Purim, nearly a thousand years later.

If the Jewish people had this claim of immunity due to their forced acceptance of the Torah, why were they punished during the interim years for their sins, before they accepted the Torah willingly?

In addition, what does the Gemara mean when it says that they were forced to accept the Torah? The Torah itself relates that the Jewish people exclaimed, "Na'aseh v'Nishma," which implies that they willingly accepted the Torah!

ANSWERS:

(a) TOSFOS (DH Moda'a) answers that although the "Moda'ah Rabah" vindicated them from punishments for most sins, they were punished for the sin of Avodah Zarah. This because the Jewish people did accept upon themselves, willingly, the prohibition against idolatry.

Why, though, does the Gemara say that their acceptance of the Torah was involuntary when the Torah teaches that they said, "Na'aseh v'Nishma"? Tosfos explains that initially, before they stood at Har Sinai, they said "Na'aseh v'Nishma" and expressed their intention to accept the Torah willingly. However, when they stood at Har Sinai, Hash-m had to hold the mountain over their heads lest they change their minds out of fright when they saw the mountain afire and the full awe of the Divine presence (which caused their souls to leave their bodies).

(b) The MIDRASH TANCHUMA (Parshas Noach) explains that they willingly accepted Torah she'Bichtav, the Written Torah. The punishments that they received until the time of Purim were given for laws of Torah she'Bichtav that they transgressed. The "Moda'a" was for Torah she'Ba'al

Peh, the Oral Torah, which they were forced to accept. They did not accept it willingly due to the considerable difficulty involved in fulfilling all of its laws.

(c) The RAMBAN and RASHBA explain that when they accepted the Torah, they accepted to observe the Mitzvos only in Eretz Yisrael. Eretz Yisrael was given to them only on the condition that they fulfill the Mitzvos (see Tehilim 105:24). The "Moda'a" went into effect only after they were exiled from the land (see Sanhedrin 105a), as they did not willingly accept to keep the Torah outside of Eretz Yisrael.

On Purim, they accepted the Torah out of love even in Galus. They wanted to express their desire to never again be distanced from Hash-m, and thus they accepted the Torah in such a way that even if they must go into exile again, they will still remain loyal to the Torah. Thus, the "Moda'a" was no longer in force.

The explanation of the Ramban is consistent with his explanation (Vayikra 18:25, Bereishis 26:5) that the primary goals of the Mitzvos are fulfilled only in Eretz Yisrael. Although we must observe the Mitzvos outside of Israel as well, nevertheless the fulfillment of the Torah does not accomplish as much in the spiritual realms when done outside of Eretz Yisrael as it accomplishes when done in Eretz Yisrael.

3) AGADAH: A NATION THAT PUTS ITS MOUTH BEFORE ITS EARS

The Gemara relates that a Nochri said to Rava, "You are a hasty nation, who put its mouth before its ears [when you said 'Na'aseh v'Nishma' and accepted to do the Mitzvos even before you heard what those Mitzvos are]." The PIRCHEI NISAN (in Koheles Yitzchak, Parshas Yisro) uses this Gemara to explain a Gemara earlier.

In the Gemara earlier (77b), Rabbi Zeira asked Rav Yehudah why, when the flock walks along, the goats go before the sheep. The commentators explain that the Jewish people are compared to sheep, and the Nochrims are compared to goats (sheep are white, which represents purity and holiness, while goats are dark, which represents impurity and depravity). The Pirchei Nisan suggests another explanation for the metaphor.

The Gemara in Bechoros (35a) states that a person is permitted to make a blemish in a Bechor before its head emerges from the womb, so that when it is born it will not have the Kedushah of a Bechor (see Insights to Bechoros 3b). The Gemara describes how one makes such a blemish. For a goat, one should blemish its ear, because its ear is the first part of its body to emerge at the time of birth. For sheep, one should make the blemish on its lips, because the lips are the first part of the sheep to emerge.

The Jewish people are compared to sheep because they put their mouths first, before their ears, when they said "Na'aseh v'Nishma." The other nations, in contrast, put their ears first; they wanted to hear what was written in the Torah before they accepted it. Therefore, they are compared to a goat, whose ear emerges first at birth.