

## INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON SHAVUOS - 5759

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From: torahweb@torahweb.org May 06, 1999 weeklydvar Torah@torahweb.org Subject: Rabbi Mordechai Willig - Sefirat Haomer

Rabbi Mordechai Willig

Veahavta Le-Raiacha Kamocha

The Gemara in Yevamot (62b) relates the story of the death of Rabbi Akiva's talmidim. Twelve thousand pairs of his students dies during one period, but because they did not respect one another. The Me'iri comments that these talmidim dies between Pesach and Lag be-Omer, and for this reason it is customary not to marry during this period.

A number of questions can be raised concerning this matter. First, why does the Talmud refer to twelve thousand pairs of talmidim rather than twenty-four thousand talmidim? Second, how is it possible that Rabbi Akiva's talmidim did not have basic respect for one another? Third, why was this tragedy singled out for perpetual commemoration during the period of Sefirah? Finally, how did the custom of refraining from marriage (in contrast to other forms of aveilut which were not originally practiced) reflect the tragedy of the sefirah period?

Perhaps the answer to these questions is as follows. Although Rabbi Akiva's students were generally respectful to one another, they were deficient in one area. Each talmid had a chavrusa, a friend and study partner, with whom he would learn all day, under Rabbi Akiva's guidance. The unique relationship, which blossoms when two individuals join in the difficult and incessant challenge of attempting to master the divine law to the best of their abilities, should also produce a paramount mutual respect, far beyond the standard requirement to honor a friend. Rabbi Akiva's students lacked this lofty, but essential part of the chavrusa.

For this reason, the Gemara tells of twelve thousand pairs of talmidim, highlighting the lack of sufficient respect accorded to one member of the pair by the other. This lesson is so important that it bears constant reinforcement during sefirah, which is not only the anniversary of the tragedy, but also the period of preparation for the reacceptance of the Torah on Shavuot.

Each year during sefirah we read of the mitzvah to love one's friend as oneself (Vayikra 19:18). The obvious question is raised; how can one be expected to love every Jew as oneself? Rabbi Akiva's famous comment, cited by Rashi, that this mitzvah is a great rule in the Torah ("Ba-Torah"), also requires explanation.

The Chasam Sofer raises an additional question. The above statement of

Rabbi Akiva seems to contradict his famous ruling (B.M. 62a): "Your life takes priority over your friend's." How can this be reconciled with the command to love your friend as yourself?

To answer this question, the Chasam Sofer reinterprets the word "Ba-Torah" in Rabbi Akiva's first statement. It does not mean that loving a friend is a great rule which is written in the Torah. Rather, it means that it is a great rule concerning the study of the Torah. While in the area of physical survival and attainment one's own life and possessions have priority, in the spiritual realm one must share his Torah knowledge equally with others.

Perhaps this idea can be modified in light of the above. Rabbi Akiva refers to the special chavrusa relationship which is critical to the study of Torah, while a person cannot be expected to love every Jew as he loves himself, he must love and honor his chavrusa as himself in all ways and at all times and not only while sharing Torah knowledge. Otherwise, the relationship is not a truly spiritual one, and its members are worthy of punishment for not internalizing the spirituality of Torah. In this respect, Rabbi Akiva's statement reflects the terrible tragedy of his students' death, which illustrates the importance of loving one's chavrusa as oneself and the catastrophic results of loving this command.

The Talmudic passage containing the story of Rabbi Akiva's talmidim continues and promises peace to one who loves his wife as himself and honors her more than himself. At first glance, this statement is puzzling. After all, a person is commanded to love everyone as himself. Why then is his wife singled out?

In light of the above interpretation of Rabbi Akiva's statement and the deficiency of his students, the answer is clear. Indeed, the command to love one's friend as oneself is limited to a deep spiritual relationship between two people. A man's relationship with his wife must be a spiritual one that reflects the ideals of Torah, and, as such, requires that he love her as himself, and honor her even more than himself (see Rashi). If a husband loves and honors his wife in a way which reflects his recognition of the deep spiritual nature of their relationship, he is promised peace and happiness in marriage. Otherwise, he is doomed to suffer misery and tragedy, just like Rabbi Akiva's students; they did not recognize the full measure of the spiritual nature of their relationship with one another, and as a result, did not love and honor each other sufficiently.

It is perhaps for this reason that the custom evolved to avoid marriages during the sefirah period. Since other aspects of aveilut were not practiced, the establishment of the custom to abstain from marriage was not a form of mourning for the death of Rabbi Akiva's students. Rather, it was felt that this period was not a propitious time for marriage. At a time when the true meaning of a deep one-to-one Torah relationship was ignored, it is not appropriate to begin such a relationship between husband and wife. While the command to love and honor another as oneself may be limited to one-to-one relationships, it is clear that all relationships based on Torah require mutual love and respect, commensurate with the intensity and spirit of the relationship. Let us attempt to develop appropriate levels of love and honor towards all Jews in general, and towards spouses, parents, rebbeim, and fellow talmidim in particular. In this zechut, may we merit a true commemoration of kabbalat ha-Torah and the hastening of our ultimate redemption.

From: torahweb@torahweb.org May 14, 1999 weeklydvar Torah@torahweb.org Subject: Rabbi Benjamin Yudin - Shavuot

Rabbi Benjamin Yudin

A Healthy Tension before Mattan Torah

The parasha of Bamidbar is read annually before the yom tov of Shavuot. In Shulchan Aruch O"C 428, we find minu ve-ratzu which means count and celebrate Shavuot. The Torah teaches that the mandate to count Benai Yisrael is couched in the phrase "Se'u et rosh" which means literally "lift the head" or "elevate" the nation of Israel. How is counting an elevation? The Ramban in his commentary (4:13) explains that counting each individual is acknowledging that each person has self-worth, importance, and dignity. You

are not only important because you are part of the nation of Israel, but you have your own purpose and mission as well.

It is interesting to note that each person's EKG is different one from another, and no two people have the same fingerprints. Our Rabbis couch this idea as "Kesheim she-ein partzufeihe shavin kach ein dei/Eoteihem shavin." By this they mean that each person is unique not only physically, but in intelligence and character as well. Because each person possesses a unique temperament, his spiritual challenges and his yetzer ha-ra are also relevant only to him. Therefore, each person's service of G-d is different from everyone else's.

While the book of Bamidbar begins with the important message of the worth of each man individually, each person is counted as part of Benei Yisrael. This dual nature might well be compared to a symphony orchestra. The ultimate beautiful end result is the integration and blending of each instrument. However, unless each musician fine-tunes his or her instrument, and practices to perfection, the sum which is even greater than all its individual parts will be lacking. "Minu ve-ratzu" might therefore require that we develop our own individuality to be able to join the collective kabbalat ha-Torah of Shavuot. Moreover, this directive of "minu ve-ratzu" - really thrusts a major philosophic difficulty on thinking Jews. On the one hand we have stressed our own individual avodat Hashem. On the other hand, the greatness of kaballat ha-Torah is "ke-ish echad be-leiv echad," joining with the rest of the Jewish nation. How is one to budget his time and energies between their own needs for growth and those of others? The Maharsha in his commentary (Sanhedrin 99b) suggests that "adam le-amel yulad" (People are born to work,) le-amel is an acronym for "Lilmod al menat le-lamed" - to study and master in order to share and teach to others. What scale should we use to determine how to balance our personal studying, which as we know never ends, and our communal responsibility, which likewise seems never ending?

Rav Shimon Shkop zt"l in his introduction to Sha'arei Yosher writes that just as in the physical/ material realm we are commanded "Asser te-aaser" (Devarim 14:22), to tithe our possessions on behalf of the Levites, and the poor (depending on the year) and are promised that doing so will bring us blessing, so too regarding the realm of the soul - we are to give a tenth of our time to helping others. (Giving to others is the best way to insure one's wealth). Moreover, the more we give, the more we are promised G-d will bless us.

Similarly, the Meshech Chachmah in his commentary on "Va-yachel Noach ish ha-adamah" ("Noach debased himself as a man of the earth" û Bereishit 9:20) cites the midrash which contrasts the Torah's depiction of Noach, first as "a righteous man" and subsequently as a "man of the earth," with its description of Moshe Rabbeinu, who is initially referred to as "an Egyptian man" but who ultimately becomes a "man of G-d." He explains that there are two different ways to serve G-d. One is to isolate oneself from the community and focus completely on oneself. The other way is to be involved in and with the needs of the community. Logic dictates, reasons Rav Meir Simchah ha-Cohen of Devinsk, that the former will excel to develop himself and his true potential, while the latter, involved with the needs of others, will not be able to attain that level of greatness and maturity. The reality, points out the midrash is just the reverse. Through our helping others, we ultimately help ourselves the most. May we all be zocheh to reach out and spiritually touch not only those around us, but ultimately ourselves, ensuring our successful personal and communal kabbalat ha-Torah.

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From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@virtual.co.il]

I have heard that song before - An Ohr Somayach "Special" Publication for Shavuot 5759 by Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

"What a beautiful melody!" Taking a solitary stroll through a forest in order to get away from the pressing affairs of state in his palace, the king was captivated by the strains of the melody coming from some distant, invisible, shepherd's flute. He hummed the tune to himself on his way back to the palace, but by the time he got back into the business of ruling his

country he had completely forgotten it.

Haunted by the memory of the beautiful melody, the king was unable to resume his usual routine. Watching his ruler's growing aggravation, one of his advisors suggested a plan for enabling him to hear the melody once again. A royal proclamation would be issued throughout the land, offering a generous reward to the shepherd who could play the desired tune for his majesty.

Shepherds by the dozens lined up in front of the palace, each awaiting his turn to play his favorite melody for the king in the hope that this was the one his majesty had heard and the reward would be his. One after the other they departed the royal chambers in disappointment, as the king positively declared that the tune he played was not the one that he heard while walking in the forest. One frustrated shepherd got up the nerve to challenge his sovereign:

"Is your majesty capable of playing on this flute the melody he heard?"

When the king replied in the negative, the shepherd closed in with what he thought was a victorious thrust.

"Then how can your majesty be so certain that the melody just played is not the one he heard?"

"My dear fellow," parried the king, "I may not have such a fine ear for music as to be able to play that melody, but when I hear it once again you may be sure that I will recognize it!"

Both Pesach and Shavuot celebrate great moments in the history of the Jewish nation. The "Season of our Freedom" offers us an opportunity to relive the great Divine revelation enjoyed by our ancestors on the eve of their liberation from Egyptian bondage, when the Almighty Himself slew the firstborn of their masters and did a "pass-over" on the Jewish homes. This was a powerful experience of intimacy with Hashem. There was, however, one problem with it. Jews had not really prepared themselves with spiritual growth for this Divine revelation. It was handed to them on a silver platter by the Creator, who had fulfilled His promise of liberation. When one is not properly prepared through his own efforts, it is impossible for him to internalize such an experience and truly incorporate it into his consciousness. This is why the liberated slaves had to wait seven weeks until they reached the "Season of the Giving of Our Torah." During these weeks, they would grow spiritually day by day, and thus properly prepare themselves for the next great revelation at Sinai which they would be capable of internalizing and incorporating.

But why is it necessary to first be exposed to a "silver platter" revelation which cannot be internalized, if it will not last?

The parable of the king supplies the answer. If someone has never before heard the sweet melody of Divine revelation, he is incapable of searching for its replay. Only after the Heavens had virtually unfolded before our ancestors on the first Pesach Eve were they capable of envisioning what spiritual horizons they could reach. Then they could begin a seven-week process of growth through effort, confident that when they would hear the sweet melody of the Divine voice speaking to them at Sinai, they could say, like the king, that they had heard this song before.

This concept, prevalent in the writings of Chassidic masters such as "Bnei Yissaschar," is applied as well to solving another dilemma:

While yet in his mother's womb, our Sages teach us, a Jew is taught the entire Torah by an angel. When he is about to enter the world, the baby is gently struck by that angel and caused to forget all that he learned. If it is the will of Hashem that we gain Torah knowledge through our own efforts, what purpose is there in prenatal education doomed to be forgotten?

Torah knowledge is not like any of the human sciences and philosophies. It is Divine in nature and cannot be acquired through ordinary human effort. Only if a Jew has once heard the melody of Torah before birth is he capable of recognizing it when he eventually learns it through his own efforts.

We connect these two epic seasons of revelation - Pesach and Shavuot - with the counting of the days and weeks of the Omer. These days and weeks help us relive the days and weeks of the move our ancestors made from a transient "silver platter" revelation to a lasting earned one. So when we finally reach the last station in this growth, we too are capable of making it a

permanent part of our consciousness.

"Return us to Your Torah," a Jew prays three times a day. How can you return to where you have never been? The answer is that we have all heard the melody of Torah before. Our souls heard it at Sinai, and we learned it in our mother's womb. That is why a Jew prays only for Divine assistance in achieving what that king sought - an opportunity to hear that melody again - so that we can gaze with wonder and joy at the déjà vu experience and proudly proclaim: "I have heard that song before!"

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From: Kenneth Block[SMTP:kenblock@worldnet.att.net]  
To: yitorah@vjlists.com Subject: NCYI Weekly Divrei Torah - Shavuot  
Shavuos Rabbi Moshe Boruch Parnes  
Young Israel of Dayton, OH  
6-7 Sivan 5759 May 21-22, 1999 Daf Yomi: Succah 50-51

On the second day of Shavuos, we read Megillas Ruth, the Book of Ruth. Ruth, a convert to Judaism, became the ancestor of King David and of the dynasty that bore his name. Melech HaMoshiach, the Messiah, is destined to descend from the progeny of Ruth.

Ruth was a member of the Moabite nation. This nation had a long history of being fiercely belligerent toward the Jewish people. Prior to our entrance into the land of Israel, as we passed by the country of Moab, the Torah relates that the people of Moab were repelled by our very proximity to them. Although we did not threaten Moab militarily, their king Balaak brought the evil non-Jewish prophet Bilaam to Moab to curse the Jewish people. Although Bilaam's curses were changed by HaShem into blessings, Bilaam, Balaak and the Moabite nation were instrumental in inciting us to sin, thus causing a great plague to befall us, killing 24,000 people.

The ingrained hatred of the Moabites was so strong that the Talmud in Tractate Yevamos 16B relates that when the Beis Hamikdash was being destroyed, all the soldiers of the invading army from every nationality dispersed to loot the Beis Hamikdash of the gold and silver stored there. The Moabites ignored this booty and concerned themselves with finding and burning the Torah scrolls.

Given this incredibly intense hatred that the Moabites displayed for our people, we must wonder why G-d chose to bring forth the most illustrious of Jewish families from a daughter of this wicked nation. Certainly Ruth was a righteous woman, but weren't there righteous women among the twelve tribes of Israel through which G-d could develop the line of David? Before attempting to answer this question let us understand something about the Torah itself.

Torah is compared to fire and is called in Parshas V'zos HaB'rocho, Aish Dos, the fiery Torah. Fire has beneficial characteristics in that it produces heat and light which are life-sustaining qualities. Similarly the Torah has the capability to excite and ignite the passion of a person to rise to great heights of holiness. Also, Torah, like the light of fire, guides us along the passageways of life.

However, fire has a destructive side as well. When left unattended, it can consume life and property. What can possibly be the connection between Torah and this destructive aspect of fire?

We must understand that Torah, in the wrong hands, used for the wrong purposes, can be exceedingly destructive. The Mishna in Pirkei Avos warns us not to use Torah for our own ends. Chazal, our Sages, tell us that if Torah scholars in their capacity as judges wrongfully execute a judgment, terrible punishments will occur. How can we be certain that we will study the Torah for the proper purpose of serving HaShem and doing His bidding?

The key to ensuring proper perspective when studying Torah can be expressed in one word, humility. If a person humbles himself in front of HaShem and uses the Torah as guidebook for living life, he can be certain that his Torah will be beneficial to him and to the entire world. The more a

person progresses in Torah, the greater is his ability to misuse its wisdom and the more humble he must become.

This understanding brings us back to Ruth and gives us an insight into why HaShem chose a Moabite convert to be the matriarch of the family of King David. Ruth's life was one long lesson in humility. She left the country of her youth where she lived the life of a noblewoman. She departed forever from the comfort of her family and from the familiarity of her surroundings to follow her former mother-in-law to a foreign country of strange language and culture where people practiced a religion at complete variance with that of her people. She entered into a life of abject poverty and was forced to glean leftover grain stalks together with other mendicants. She made all of her terrific sacrifices and suffered all her humiliation for one purpose only, to live the life of the Torah. Any other considerations were completely inconsequential to this brave woman.

This perhaps is the reason that HaShem chose to integrate Ruth so deeply into the majestic fabric of the tapestry of families that comprises the Jewish people. No person could serve the house of David and the Jewish people as a more humbling reminder of the appropriate use of Torah knowledge and authority. A Jewish king is required to serve as a constant example for his subjects of the ultimate supremacy of HaShem and his Torah. However, the opportunity for misuse of power is enormous. Monarchs have in their hands the jurisdiction over life and property. They can control and set the agenda in daily life. They have the ability to lead the nation to the zenith of holiness, to which we ascended under the leadership of Kings David, Solomon, and Chizkiyah, or to the nadir of wickedness to which we descended during the reign of Yerovam ben Nevat. Precisely because of their unequalled centrality in Jewish life did the Creator make the roots of the ruling family so humble. This humility serves to put their authority into the proper perspective and helps them, and others who study the Torah and are in positions of leadership, to realize that the ultimate authority is HaShem.

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<http://www.vjholidays.com/shavuot/sacks.htm> Pre-Election Thoughts  
(On Shavuot)

Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

As I write these words (on May Bank Holiday, Erev Lag ba-Omer) I'm just getting ready to spend a week in Israel where, as Visiting Professor at the Hebrew University, I'll be meeting and teaching not only Israeli academics, but also the future rabbis and educators of British and American Jewry.

My visit coincides with the last week of the Israeli election campaign. Thus far, not much in policy terms divides the leading candidates. But a great deal divides Israeli society. Religious and secular, Ashkenazi and Sefardi, sabras and new immigrants - the rifts run deep. Civility is at a minimum. Politics has become partisan rather than an exercise in pursuit of the common good. Groups demonize their opponents. One side describes the other as a threat to democracy. The other sees its counterparts as a threat to the Jewish character of the state and calls them "Hebrew-speaking gentiles". Doubtless Israel will survive. Yihyeh beseder, as we have learned to say. Israel is not the Balkans. Let's not over-react.

But the historical precedents are not good. Only twice before, in the days of the First and Second Temples, has the Jewish people known independence, sovereignty, statehood. On both occasions it failed to sustain them because of its inability to contain internal conflict. In the First Temple period, after a mere three generations of kingship, the kingdom split in two: Israel in the north, Judah in the south. Both were defeated, the north by the Assyrians, the south by the Babylonians. In the days of the Second Temple, not long after the stunning victory of the Maccabees, Jews were once again riven by dissension, religious and political. The two attempts to recover

independence from the Romans - the Great Revolt in 66 C.E. and the Bar Kochba rebellion sixty-six years later - ended in disaster, not least because Jews (valiant fighters then as now) proved totally incapable of a unified force. Josephus, an eye-witness of the destruction of Jerusalem, paints a vivid picture of Jews within the beleaguered city more intent on fighting one another than on fighting the enemy outside. Plus ca change . . .

The questions raised by our past and present are profound. We coped with poverty. Can we cope with affluence? We endured slavery. Can we endure freedom? We knew what it was to sustain ourselves in exile. Can we do the same in our own land? Jews survived powerlessness. But can we handle power? Above all, can the Jewish people create a self-governing nation cohesive enough to transcend the conflicts of class, culture and creed that destroyed national unity in the past? This is the question that haunts the pages of Jewish history.

It would be wrong to over-dramatise. Wrong too, to forget the monumental achievements of Israel thus far. In a mere fifty years it has fought and won wars in which its very survival was at stake. It has rescued, housed and integrated Jews from more than a hundred countries. Its population has grown almost a thousand per cent. It has developed one of the great economies of the modern world. (Shimon Peres used to dream that Israel would one day become the Hong Kong of the Middle East. Earlier this year, visiting Mr Tung Chee-Wha, the new Chinese governor of Hong Kong, I heard him express his admiration of Israel's hi-tech economy. His dream? That Hong Kong should become the Israel of the Far East!) And of all the new nation-states created since the Second World War it has sustained the most open and lively democracy. This is an astonishing record. Even Herzl, who used to say, "If you will it, it is no dream", never dreamed of such things. The Israeli novelist David Grossman began a speech on Israel's fiftieth anniversary with the words, "Israel is the only utopia which has actually happened." All this is wondrous in our eyes.

But there is an ancient tradition in Judaism -one of the greatest of our contributions to the civilization of the West - called prophecy. The prophets were not magi, seers, oracles, mystics. They were political realists as well as visionaries. They were far and away the most acute observers of their age. They foresaw the future because they were rooted in the past and thus protected against the myopia of the present. Their intense religiosity - their sense of the presence of G-d in history - made them immune to short-termism, the occupational disease of politicians, past and present. They had a foothold outside of time, so they could understand their times - almost as an air traveler today can see geography in a way unimaginable to those who have never flown.

A politician asks, What shall we do tomorrow? A prophet asks, Where will it end? In the midst of affluence he sees decay. In the midst of catastrophe he sees consolation. While others see a solid building, he sees the eventual ruin. While others weep over the ruins, he sees the rebuilding. Like an engineer he detects the hairline fault that will one day become a fracture. Like a botanist he identifies the seed that will one day be a tree. Today, Israel needs its prophets, and they are nowhere to be heard.

The prophets understood one thing about a Jewish state, obvious at a distance but barely visible close to hand. From the dawn of history, Jewish existence has never been quite like that of other nations. We were a small people at the crossroads of empires - strategically situated between Europe, Asia and Africa, occupying tenuous space, always liable to attack, never able to rival the surrounding powers in numbers or military might. Israel has always survived against the odds. It has had to call on supreme resources of energy, morale and dedication. If an artist were to paint a picture epitomizing Jewish destiny, it would surely carry Zechariah's superscription: "Not by might nor by power but by My spirit."

Jews cannot survive for long without a double measure of that spirit. The idea put forward by "post-Zionists" today, that Israel can become a secular liberal democracy without any specifically Jewish character is a farce destined to end in tragedy. Israel is not Switzerland - and even Switzerland owes much of its character to its strong Calvinist traditions. Equally mistaken is the view taken by many religious Israelis, that Judaism can survive in a

Jewish state behind ghetto walls, in essentially sectarian forms. It may be able to do so in the Diaspora, where questions about the Jewish character of the public domain simply do not arise. It cannot do so in Israel, where religious issues are part of the very texture of national culture and debate.

And so, on Shavuot 5759, we find ourselves retracing our steps back to the very first Shavuot and to our birth as a nation under the sovereignty of G-d, with the Torah as the first ever written constitution assented to by an entire people, in the great, eternal covenant whose words have echoed through our history ever since. No other nation ever became a nation prior to possessing a land and a state. And to this day Israel is the supreme example of a people whose very existence as a state depends on its integrity as a nation with a collective vision, a shared faith.

This is Israel's next great challenge, and it is ultimately a spiritual one - not in a narrow sense but in the full majesty set out once and for all time by Israel's prophets. They foresaw a society of justice to the weak and compassion to the poor, of ethical beauty and spiritual grandeur, in which "each of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and fig-tree", a society to inspire its citizens and compel the admiration of a sometimes hostile world.

It can be done. No one who knows the achievements of Israel thus far can doubt that it can be done. And no one who knows the history of Israel can doubt that this is the challenge for which we have waited for two, three, four thousand years. Is it on the current agenda of any of the political parties? Perhaps not. That is why at least some religious voices in Israel must make the move from politics to prophecy. For if not now, when?

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From: Shlomo Katz[SMTP:skatz@torah.org] Hamaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by Shlomo Katz Contributing Editor: Daniel Dadusc Shavuot 6-7 Sivan 5759 May 21-22, 1999

Sponsored by The family of Russell Kwiat on his earning an M.B.A. The Sigeman family on the yearzeit of Avraham Eliyahu ben Shalom Zelig Perel a"h and by The Unger family on the first yearzeit of Dr. Saly Unger a"h

The special offering brought in the Bet Hamikdash on Shavuot was the "Korban Shte'i Ha'lechem"/"The Offering of Two Loaves of Bread." This offering was brought from wheat. The gemara (Menachot 69b as explained by Rashi) asks: If a ship carrying wheat was lifted by a storm and the wheat rained down from heaven somewhere else, may that wheat be used for the sacrifice? When the Torah (Vaykira 23:17) required that this sacrifice be brought "from your dwelling places," did it mean to exclude wheat that came from outside of Eretz Yisrael or even wheat that was grown in Eretz Yisrael, but that most recently came from the heavens? Why does the gemara even ask this question? R' Avraham Shimon Halevi Ish-Horowitz z"l (1877-approx.1942; mashgiach of Yeshiva Chachmei Lublin) wonders. Such an occurrence is far-fetched at best. Why does the gemara, in general, discuss many far-fetched situations? He explains: In fact, much of the halachic material in the Talmud deals with situations that never have and never will occur. However, the nature of Torah study is to investigate what Hashem's Will would be in every conceivable situation. When one studies the Torah, his physical mind attaches itself to the Will of G-d. Whether one is studying the laws of the animal or flour sacrifices, the laws of bailments and torts, or the laws of ritual purity and impurity, it is all the Will of Hashem. Studying these laws elevates a Jew higher and higher without limit, whether or not he will ever have an opportunity to practice what he has learned. (Naharei Eish: Likutei Dibburim No. 86)

At the time of the giving of the Torah, Hashem said to Bnei Yisrael, "Give me a guarantor." They said, "Our ancestors will be our guarantors," but Hashem rejected them. They said, "Our prophets will be our guarantors," but Hashem rejected them too. Finally Bnei Yisrael said, "Our children will be our guarantors," and Hashem accepted them. Thus it is written (Tehilim 8:3), "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings you have established strength [i.e., Torah]." (From the Midrash) R' Yaakov Abuchatzzeira z"l (Morocco; 1807-1880) asks: Why does Hashem need a guarantor that Bnei Yisrael will keep the Torah? He is everywhere and can easily punish anyone who fails to observe the Torah's laws! Also, why were the children better guarantors than

the ancestors and the prophets? He answers: The gemara (Shabbat 88b) relates that when Moshe ascended to the Heavens to receive the Torah, the angels objected, saying that the Torah should not be given to mortals. "What is frail man that You should remember him," they asked (in the words of Tehilim 8:5, the same chapter as quoted in the above midrash). Moshe answered the angels by demonstrating that the Torah contains practical mitzvot which are irrelevant to purely spiritual beings such as they. What were the angels thinking? R' Abuchatzzeira asks. Surely they knew that the Torah is made up of practical mitzvot! The answer is that the angels wanted to divide the Torah in two, with the practical part of the Torah being given to man and the mystical part remaining with the angels. No, Moshe told them, the two parts belong together. Just as the human body clothes the soul, so the practical side of the Torah clothes the mystical side. And, just as the soul needs the body in order to function, so the mystical part of the Torah needs the practical side. [Based on this idea, R' Abuchatzzeira explains the discussion between Moshe and the angels in greater depth.] Although the angels acquiesced to Moshe's argument, they were not convinced that man could be holy enough to receive the Torah. It was to show the angels their mistake that Hashem demanded guarantors. Why did He accept the children as guarantors rather than the adults? Because adults, no matter how holy, have still sinned. Even the Patriarchs and other prophets were not perfect. Children, however, are completely pure, for Hashem does not hold them accountable for their deeds. So pure are they that Chazal teach that the world exists only because of the Torah study of children. (Doreish Tov: Drush Rishon Le'matan Torah)

"Zman Matan Toratenu" In the prayers and in kiddush, we refer to Shavuot as "Zman Matan Toratenu"/"The time of the giving of our Torah." But is it really? It is generally accepted that the Torah was given on the seventh day of Sivan, while the first day of Shavuot - the only day in Israel - falls on the sixth of Sivan! How then can we call the sixth day, "The time of the giving of our Torah"? R' Yerachmiel Zeltser shlita has collected 100 answers to this question, three of which are presented here: #69. The work Divrei Nechemiah explains: "Zman" does not mean "day," it means "time." The sixth day of Sivan may not be the day when the Torah was actually given, but it is the "time" that is propitious for receiving the Torah anew each year. This is because Hashem would have given the Torah on the sixth of Sivan if Moshe had not asked Him to delay one day (as related in the gemara, Shabbat 87a). What makes the sixth of Sivan a good time for receiving the Torah is the fact that it is the "fiftieth day" of the Omer. The days of the Omer represent the first 49 of the 50 "Gates of Understanding," and after we have ascended through those 49 gates we are ready to receive the Torah. The proof that the "time" for receiving the Torah is determined by the Omer count and not by the calendar date is the fact that before we had a fixed calendar (i.e., during the era when the new month was announced based on witnesses' sighting of the new moon), Shavuot could fall on the fifth, sixth or seventh day of Sivan. #41. R' Avraham Mordechai Alter z"l (the "Gerrer Rebbe"; died 1948) explains similarly that our practice is based on the rule, "That which Heaven gives It does not take away." Thus, once Hashem planned to give the Torah on the sixth of Sivan, the resulting spiritual aura became a permanent feature of that day, even though the Torah was not given then. #86. Chazal teach that the soul of every Jew who would later be born was present at the giving of the Torah. Indeed, those disembodied souls far outnumbered the living people who were present. Based on this we can answer: True, the Torah was given on the seventh of Sivan, but that detail is irrelevant to us (the embodiment of those souls) because souls exist "above" time. As far as the soul is concerned, what determines when the Torah should be given is not the calendar date, but one's preparedness to receive the Torah. This, as noted above, is determined by the completion of the Omer count. (Ner L'meah: Shavuot)

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Metho -16: Is Sefirat Ha-omer a Time-bound Mitzva?

Yeshivat Har Etzion Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash (Vbm)

Talmudic Methodology by Rav Moshe Taragin

Is Sefirat Ha-omer a Time-Bound Mitzva?

Among the list of mitzvot considered 'zeman geramah' (time-related), Sefirat Ha-omer would seem to be the most 'classic.' First of all the mitzva is performed at night and not during the day - itself sufficient to confer 'zeman geramah' status upon the mitzva. Second, the mitzva can be performed only during the weeks between Pesach and Shavu'ot. Finally, we might even give some consideration to the fact that the very purpose of this mitzva is to measure time between two festivals and two korbanot. This association with time might secure its status as zeman geramah. This shiur will explore the question of Sefirat Ha-omer's definition as zeman geramah. The Rambam, in Hilkhot Temidin U'mussafin 7:20, excuses women from the mitzva of Omer presumably because it is defined as zeman geramah. The Chinuch, as well, in mitzva 306 excuses women from the mitzva. As stated above, this would be the most intuitive or obvious position and indeed is the one that is adopted by most of the Rishonim. The Ramban, however, in his commentary to Kiddushin (34a) lists several mitzvot which are NOT zeman geramah and among them, cites Sefirat Ha-omer. Presumably women might be obligated to count Sefira. (Interestingly enough, the Ramban does not address this issue directly). Given the introduction, how could the Ramban possibly have not considered Sefira as zeman geramah?

In truth, we might render Sefira a zeman geramah for one of two reasons: 1) The counting is performed at night. 2) The counting is only performed during a specific period during the year - namely between Pesach and Shavu'ot.

If the Ramban is to reject the Omer's definition as zeman geramah he would have to 'contend' with each of these factors.

Is the mitzva to count the Omer limited to the night or can there also be a mitzva to count during the day? The mishna in Megilla (20b) lists ketzirat ha-omer (cutting the barley which would ultimately compose the korban Omer) as a mitzva to be fulfilled during the night of the 16th of Nissan. The ensuing gemara (Megilla 21a) extrapolates to counting the Omer which is also performed at night. No possibility of a secondary counting during the day is mentioned. This gemara suggests that the Omer may be counted only during the night time and would warrant a zeman geramah status for the Omer. Alternatively, the gemara in Menachot (66a) claims that if the cutting of the Omer was forgotten at night, it may be performed (bedi'eved) during the day of the 16th. If we are to maintain the association between cutting the Omer and reciting the Omer, we might similarly allow the Omer to be counted during the day, if forgotten at night. Tosafot in Megilla (20b) cite the position of the Behag who allows counting during the day (albeit without a berakha). This would lend some support for the Omer's classification as a non-zeman geramah mitzva.

Even the Rabenu Tam, cited by Tosafot in Megilla, who rejects the Behag's leniency, might not necessarily define the Omer as zeman geramah because it must be counted at night. The Rabenu Tam wrestles with the gemara in Menachot which seems to license counting the Omer during the day. At first he suggests a machloket between two different sugyot: Megilla (21a) might not tolerate a day-counting while Menachot (66a) might allow it. He suggests ruling in accordance with the gemara (and mishna) in Megilla. Subsequently he suggests differentiating between COUNTING and CUTTING. Even if we validate a day-counting we might reject a day-counting because the counting of the Omer must be performed in the manner of temimot - "complete" counting. In Parashat Emor the Torah refers to the counting of the Omer as 'sheva shabbatot temimot' - seven complete weeks. Now, this need for completeness might refer to the inception of the Omer (to count from its very onset rather than delaying and STARTING the count late), or to its conclusion (wait until the 7 weeks have completely expired to finish the count). The Rabenu Tam reads this word as referring to the COUNTING OF EACH DAY. Only by

counting at night, as the day begins, can a person insure a counting of complete days. Hence even if we embrace a day-cutting, we would deny a day-counting.

How does this theory impact upon the Omer's designation as zeman geramah? If the scheduling of a mitzva at night is due to alternate reasons, do we still consider that mitzva as a zeman geramah? It would have been feasible to count the Omer during the day, but this might compromise the type of counting we are expected to perform. Had the day begun at dawn, we might have counted at that stage. Being that nothing formal schedules the counting of the Omer during the evening, can we consider this a form of zeman geramah?

Interestingly enough, it would appear that Tosafot do not accept this distinction. The gemara in Menachot (92b) exempts women from 'semikha' (leaning upon an animal before its sacrifice) because of a pasuk. Tosafot suggest that they should be excluded because semikha is zeman geramah; it can be performed only immediately prior to shechita which itself can be performed only during the day. This type of scheduling constraint is sufficient to assure semikha's status as zeman geramah. There are no formal reasons dictating semikha's scheduling during the day; peripheral reasons (the need to be proximal to shechita) necessitate this schedule and we still classify this as zeman geramah, according to Tosafot. Quite possibly the Ramban argued with Tosafot and refused to consider sefira a zeman geramah because it is performed at night. This scheduling doesn't reflect an internal trait but merely external factors.

What about the second factor - the Omer being considered a zeman geramah because it must be enacted in the intervening weeks between Pesach and Shavu'ot? Why might the Ramban not accept this definition? Regarding this aspect as well, two issues suggest themselves. The Avnei Nezer (Orach Chayim 384) asserts that we might obligate women for the Omer DESPITE its being defined as zeman geramah. After all, women must eat matza even though this is clearly a of zeman geramah mitzva. The gemara derives the obligation of women to eat matza from a comparison between chametz and matza - just as women are obligated in chametz (being a lo ta'aseh for which women are obligated), similarly they are responsible to eat matza. Many have taken this gemara as a source for obligating women in ALL Pesach mitzvot. For example the Chinukh obligates women in the mitzva of sippur yetziat Mitzrayim since they maintain a comprehensive obligation for all Pesach mitzvot. Might we extend this clause to include women in counting the Omer judging it similar to a Pesach mitzva? After all, the Torah demands that we begin counting the Omer 'mi-macharat ha-shabbat' - the day after "Shabbat" - which in this context refers to Pesach. The Me'iri in Pesachim questions the lack of a She-hecheyanu for the mitzva of counting the Omer. One answer he provides is that we have already recited a She-hecheyanu during Pesach and do not have to repeat one for the Omer. This ruling highlights the status of the Omer as a Pesach mitzva. Might this status be responsible for women's obligation to count the Omer according to the Ramban? Though the logic seems viable, the language of the Ramban suggests otherwise. The Ramban claims that the Omer cannot be defined as zeman geramah. According to the Avnei Nezer the mitzva is in fact a zeman geramah but one which women are not excused from (since we view it as a Pesach mitzva)!!

An additional reason might be found to disregard the 'period-of-year' limitation in defining Omer as zeman geramah. The son of the Maharam Chalavah, cited by the Rabenu Tam in his commentary to Bava Kamma, (see also Rav Yerucham Fishe Perle in his introduction to the Sefer Hamitzvot of the Rabenu Sa'adiah Ga'on) explains as follows. The designated time period in which we the Omer is a product of when the new barley is harvested and when the Korban Omer is sacrificed. As the time factor is not inherent, but rather a derivative of another factor, we cannot define this as zeman geramah. Whereas the Ramban did not explicitly claim that women are obligated in Sefirat Ha-omer (he merely defined the Omer as non-zeman geramah), the Maharam Chalavah actually obligates women to count sefira.

The Seridei Eish 2:116 (Rav Yechiel Weinberg) suggests another intriguing way by which we might neutralize the time period as a zeman geramah factor. Most mitzvot which are zeman geramah are absolute and independent acts which happen to be bounded within a certain time. The Omer, however, is a mitzva to count the actual time period. Necessarily it cannot be performed outside of this period. Does this make it more or less of a zeman geramah? The Seridei Eish suggests that it diminishes the status of zeman geramah.

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From: Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky[SMTP:rmk@torah.org] Drasha Shavuos -- The Untouchables by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

A unique aspect of the holiday of Shavuos struck me as I was explaining the customs of the holidays to some beginners. They began to review the various holiday laws with me. "OK," began one young man. "So on Pesach you've got the matzoh, and the mitzvah of telling the story of the Exodus." "Correct," I nodded. "And on Sukkos you've got the lulav, esrog and eating the entire holiday in a sukkah right." Again I gave an approving nod and smiled. The student continued. "And what special observance does the Torah tell us to do on Shavuos?" I hesitated. Sacrifices aside, what special mitzvah observance do we do to commemorate the receiving of the Torah?

I was reluctant to respond with, "we stay up all night and learn" or "we eat blintzes at the holiday meal," --beautiful customs that are in no way comparable to the level of a Torah-ordained command. In fact, the Torah tells us in Parshas Re'eh how we celebrate the holiday. "You shall count seven-weeks for yourselves. Then you shall observe the holiday of Shavuos for Hashem. You shall rejoice before Hashem, your son your daughter, your servant your maidservant, the Levite in your cities, the proselyte, the orphan and the widow who are among you" (Deuteronomy 116:13-15). Why is there no physical act in commemoration of the Yom Tov? There is no Torah-prescribed requirement to blow Shofar, read a special Torah portion (the reading of the 10 Commandments is Rabbinically ordained), or special ritual to commemorate the event. There is only all-inclusive rejoicing. Why is joy the only way to celebrate? And why is every type of citizen mentioned? Aren't the poor and rich, widowed and orphaned included in every command? My grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, of blessed memory, passed away 13 years ago. At the end of the shloshim period of mourning, his student, Rabbi Yitzchok Chinn, Rabbi of Gemilas Chesed Congregation of McKeesport, Pennsylvania, eulogized him. He related the following story:

Reb Yaakov spent his summers at in Camp Ohr Shraga in Ellenville, NY. One summer, a young boy asked Reb Yaakov a most difficult question, "Rebbe," he inquired, "where is my neshama (soul)?" Reb Yaakov turned to the boy and asked him, "Where is your arm?" The boy stuck out his arm. "Good!" said Reb Yaakov. "I want you to shake it." The boy began to shake his arm up and down. Reb Yaakov smiled, "Good, now shake your other arm." The boy began flapping his arms. "Wonderful! Now show me your leg." The boy lifted his foot. "Now shake it!" While flapping his arms, the boy shook his leg. Then Reb Yaakov smiled. "Now your other leg!" The boy began to jump and shake and rock and sway. And as he watched the youngster move with every part of his very essence, Reb Yaakov gave him a tremendous smile and exclaimed, "That is your neshama!"

The only way to commemorate the receiving of the Torah is to celebrate the receipt of our nation's soul. We cannot celebrate the soul with a physical commemoration. The soul of the nation celebrates by shaking every one of its parts: poor or rich, wealthy or poor, free or slave, son or daughter with unmitigated joy. The only way to capture the essence of our very being and our gratitude for the gift that infused us with boundless spirituality is through a rejoicing that permeates every part of the Jewish body; its arms, legs, and

torso --- The Torah. The observance is not relegated to eating an item, telling a story, hearing a shofar or sitting in a booth. Like the Torah we received, the celebration encompasses every aspect of our lives. And that is done through joyous simcha.

Dedicated by Ruth and Lionel Fisch in honor of the birth of their granddaughter Jillian Emily Fisch to their children Dr. and Mrs. Joseph Fisch Chag Sameach \_ 1999 Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky Drasha is the email edition of FaxHomily which is a Project of the Henry and Myrtle Hirsch Foundation Drasha, Copyright (c) 1999 by Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and Project Genesis, Inc. Drasha is the e-mail edition of FaxHomily, a Project of the Henry and Myrtle Hirsch Foundation. Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky is the Associate Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore, <http://www.yoss.org/>. Project Genesis: Torah on the Information Superhighway [learn@torah.org](mailto:learn@torah.org) 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B <http://www.torah.org/> Baltimore, MD 21208

From: Jeffrey Gross[SMTP:jgross@torah.org] Subject: Shavuot - Birchot Ha-Shachar Weekly-halacha for 5759 Selected Halachos Relating to Shavuot By Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your local Rav.

**BIRCHOS HA-SHACHAR ON SHAVUOS MORNING** The widespread custom of staying awake the first night of Shavuot to study Torah presents a halachic problem - what to do about four of the morning blessings, Birchot ha-shachar, which cannot be recited unless one slept during the night. The other sixteen blessings may be recited as usual(1), but the following four blessings present a problem:

**AL NETILAS YADAYIM** - The Rishonim offer two basic reasons for the Talmudic law(2) of washing our hands in the morning and then reciting the proper blessing: The Rosh tells us that washing is necessary because a person's hands move around in his sleep and will inevitably touch some unclean part of the body. The Rashba says that since each one of us becomes a biryah chadashah - a "new person" - each morning, we must sanctify ourselves anew in preparation to serve Hashem. This sanctification is similar to that of a kohen who washes his hands before performing the avodah in the Beis ha-Mikdash. [In addition to these two reasons, there is still another reason for washing one's hands in the morning - because of ruach ra'ah, the spirit of impurity that rests on one's body at night and does not leave the hands until water is poured over them three times(3). Indeed, touching various limbs or organs of the body is prohibited before hand-washing, due to the danger which is caused by the spirit of impurity(4). This third reason alone, however, is insufficient to warrant a blessing(5), since a blessing is never recited on an act which is performed in order to ward off danger(6).]

Does one who remains awake all night long need to wash his hands in the morning? If we follow the Rosh's reason, then washing is not necessary, for as long as one remains awake he knows that his hands remained clean. If we follow the Rashba's reason, however, washing may be required, since in the morning one becomes a "new person," whether he slept or not(7). [In addition, it is debatable if the spirit of impurity that rests on the hands is caused by the nighttime hours - regardless of whether or not one slept - or if it rests upon the hands only during sleep.(8)] Since this issue remains unresolved, the Rama suggests a compromise: washing is indeed required, as the Rashba holds, but a blessing is not recited, in deference to the view of the Rosh. Not all the poskim agree with the Rama's compromise. In their view, the blessing should be recited(9). Since we again face a difference of opinion, it is recommended that one of the following options be exercised:

Immediately after alos amud ha-shachar, one should relieve himself and then wash his hands, followed by Al netilas yadayim and Asher yatzar. In this case, all poskim agree that washing is required and a blessing is recited(10). This is the preferred option. One should listen - with intent to be yotzei - as another person, who did sleep, recites the blessing.

**BIRCHOS HA-TORAH** - The poskim debate whether one who remains awake the entire night(11) is required to recite Birchot ha-Torah the next morning. Some authorities do not require it, since they hold that the previous day's blessings are still valid. In their view, unless a major interruption - such as a night's sleep occurs, yesterday's blessings remain in effect. Others hold that Birchot ha-Torah must be said each morning regardless of whether or not one slept, similar to all other Birchot ha-shachar which are said in the

morning, whether one slept or not. According to the Mishnah Berurah(12), this issue remains unresolved and the following options are recommended:

One should listen - with intent to be yotzei - as another person, who did sleep, recites the blessing. This should be followed by each person reciting yevorechecha and eilu devarim, so that the blessings are followed immediately by some Torah learning. While reciting the second blessing before Kerias Shema - Ahavah Rabbah - one should have the intention to be yotzei Birchot ha-Torah as well. In this case, he must learn some Torah immediately after Shemoneh Esrei. There are two other options available:

The poskim agree that if one slept (at least half an hour) during the day of erev Shavuot, he may recite Birchot ha-Torah on Shavuot morning even though he did not sleep at all during the night(13). While reciting Birchot ha-Torah on erev Shavuot, one may clearly stipulate that his blessings should be in effect only until the next morning. In this case, he may recite the blessings on Shavuot morning although he did not sleep(14). If one did not avail himself of any of these options and Birchot ha-Torah were not recited, one may recite them upon awakening from his sleep on Shavuot morning (after davening).

**ELOKAI NESHAMAH and HA MA'AVIR SHEINAH** - Here, too, there are differences of opinion among the poskim as to whether one who remains awake throughout the night should recite these blessings. The Mishnah Berurah(15) rules that it is best to hear these blessings from another person who slept. If no such person is available, many poskim rule that these blessings may be recited even by one who did not sleep(16).

**IN ACTUAL PRACTICE, WHAT SHOULD WE DO?** As stated earlier, all poskim agree that the other sixteen morning blessings may be recited by one who did not sleep at all during the night. Nevertheless, it has become customary in some shuls that one who slept recites all twenty morning blessings for the benefit of all those who did not sleep. Two details must be clarified concerning this practice: Sometimes it is difficult to clearly hear every word of the blessing being recited. [Missing one word can sometimes invalidate the blessing.] If that happens, it is important to remember that sixteen of the twenty blessings may be recited by each individual whether he slept or not, as outlined above.

The sixteen blessings which may be recited by each individual should not be heard from another person unless a minyan is present. This is since some poskim hold that the obligation of Birchot ha-shachar is discharged only by hearing them from another person in the presence of a minyan(17).

**FOOTNOTES:** 1 Rama O.C. 46:8. 2 Berachos 15a and 60b. 3 The source for the "spirit of impurity" is the Talmud (Shabbos 108b; Yoma 77b) and the Zohar, quoted by the Beis Yosef O.C. 4. 4 O.C. 4:3. 5 Mishnah Berurah 4:8. 6 Aruch ha-Shulchan 4:4 based on Rambam, Hilchos Berachos 6:2. 7 The rationale for this is: 1) Lo pelug, which means that once the Sages ordained that washing the hands is necessary because one is considered a "new person", they did not differentiate between an individual who slept and one who did not (Beis Yosef quoted by Mishnah Berurah 4:28); 2) The blessing was established to reflect chiddush ha-olam, which means that since the "world" as a whole is renewed each morning, it is incumbent upon the individual to sanctify himself and prepare to serve Hashem each morning; whether he, personally, was "renewed" is immaterial (Beir Halachah quoting the Rashba). 8 Mishnah Berurah 4:28. 9 Ruling of Aruch ha-Shulchan 4:12. 10 Mishnah Berurah 4:30 and Beir Halachah 494:1. This should be done immediately after alos amud ha-shachar in order to remove the spirit of impurity; O.C. 4:14. 11 Even one who falls asleep during his learning [while leaning on a shtender or a table, etc.] does not say Birchot ha-Torah upon awakening; Kaf ha-Chayim 47:27. 12 47:28. Many other poskim, though, rule that Birchot ha-Torah may be said even by one who did not sleep at all; see Birkei Yosef 46:12; Shulchan Aruch Harav 47:7; Aruch ha-Shulchan 47:23; Kaf ha-Chayim 47:26. 13 R' Akiva Eiger quoted by Mishnah Berurah 47:28. Harav C. Kanievsky, however, reports that the Chazon Ish did not agree with this ruling (Ishei Yisrael Hilchos Tefillah, pg. 719). 14 Keren L'David 59 and Luach Eretz Yisrael quoting the Aderes (quoted in Piskei Teshuvos O.C. 494:6). 15 46:24. This is also the ruling of Chayei Adam 8:9 and Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 7:5. 16 Shulchan Aruch Harav 46:7; Kaf ha-Chayim 46:49; Aruch ha-Shulchan 46:13; Misgeres ha-Shulchan 2:2. 17 Mishnah Berurah 6:14. In addition, see Kisvei Harav Henkin 2:7, who maintains that since many of the blessings are written in the first person, they must be recited by each individual; listening to them being recited by another person is not adequate.

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From: Yitz Etshalom[SMTP:rebyitz@torah.org] To: P'shuto Shel Mikra Subject:

Hag haShavuot A World of Kindness: An Analysis of Megillat Ruth (I)

I RUTH AND SHAVU'OT The custom of reading Megillat Ruth on Shavu'ot is a well-established one, first appearing (by allusion, at least) in the 8th century Massechet Soph'rim (14:3, 18) and attested to in numerous works of the Rishonim. Widespread as this custom may be, the connection between this short narrative about a Moavite woman who becomes the "Matron of Monarchy" and the festival of Shavu'ot is less than clear. Various solutions have been suggested, including some of the following: 1) The catalyst of the story is the barley (and, later, wheat) harvest and Shavu'ot is the harvest festival (Hag haKatzir). This explanation is first found in the Mahzor Vitri (reflecting the traditions of the school of Rashi). 2) Ruth is the archetype of a convert and Shavu'ot (=Mattan Torah) represents the "mass conversion" of Am Yisra'el (see BT Keritot 9a, MT Issurei Bi'ah 13:1-4). This explanation is also found in the Mahzor Vitri. 3) The earliest explanation provided is that found in the Midrashic collection Ruth Zuta (1:1): "What does [Megillat] Ruth have to do with Shavu'ot, the season of the giving of the Torah? To teach you that the Torah was given through afflictions and poverty." There are several other reasons suggested (including the tradition, found in the Talmud Yerushalmi Betza (61c) that King David (Ruth's great-grandson) died on Shavu'ot. The interested reader is directed to Da'at Mikra (Meltzer), pp.20-21 as well as Mikra Y'Yisra'el (Zakovitch) pp. 37-38. I would like to analyze the Megillah with an eye to understanding the connection between Ruth and Shavu'ot. If any new ideas or perspectives on this beautiful Sefer emerge from this analysis, the *zot s'chari*. Hopefully, we will gain a fresh understanding about the story woven through this Megillah and, thereby, increase our appreciation of the custom of reading Megillat Ruth on Shavu'ot. For better or for worse, any analysis of the Megillah will take us well beyond the space limitations of this forum; as such, this shiur will be a multi-issue essay. In order to maintain a sense of timeliness, however, we will endeavor to complete the analysis before the end of the harvest season (see Ruth 2:23). Before beginning, I owe a debt of gratitude. During my recent visit to Eretz Yisra'el, I had the great pleasure of auditing two shiurim on Megillat Ruth given by Rav Elhanan Samet of the Herzog Teacher's College in Alon Shvut. Much of the material here is inspired by those classes.

II INTRODUCTION (1:1-6) OVERVIEW The setting for the story is established in these six terse verses. We are introduced to a family which begins with a husband, wife and two sons and ends with the widowed wife and her two widowed daughters-in-law. The story begins with this family leaving their ancestral land due to a famine and, by verse 6, the remaining members are prepared to return to the land of Yehudah. Tragedy strikes anywhere between two and four times in this brief introductory section - but it ends with a sense of hope: Throughout this introduction, a number of allusions and associations with various events and persons found in Sefer B'resheet are readily identified. ANALYSIS 1.1: It came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a man of Beit-Lechem in Yehudah went to sojourn in the country of Moav, he, and his wife, and his two sons. The phrase *bi'Ymei Sh'fot haShof'tim* places the story squarely in the period of the Judges; however, a quick peek at the lineage listed at the end of the Megillah indicates otherwise. Since David's grandfather was born during the year following the return to Beit-Lechem, this places the entire story well after the last of the Judges listed in Sefer Shof'tim. (See, however, the discussion in Ruth Rabbah 1:1 and BT Bava Batra 91a). In any case, this superscription calls attention to the fact that the entire story takes place before the establishment of the monarchy (see the final verse in Sefer Shof'tim), which explains the "tribal" aspect of the entire story. There is, the reader will note, no concern about (or mention of) the rest of the nation; nor is there an explanation given for the famine (in our verse) nor for the bounty (in v. 6). This is particularly odd in light of the fact that there was no period in our history where G-d's Hashgachah was as manifest as the period of the Judges. When the B'nei Yisra'el were loyal, He sent a "Judge" to save them from oppression - and when they strayed from the path, they were immediately subjugated to any one of a number of foes. The introductory phrase, therefore, draws our attention to the time period while contrasting the Divine omnipresence of Sefer Shof'tim with the near-silence of Megillat Ruth. We will yet return to this point. The famine immediately evokes several stories in B'resheet (Avraham - 12:10, Yitzhak - 26:1, Ya'akov and his sons - 41:57), each of which was a catalyst in the forcing interaction between the Patriarchal family and a "significant" outsider. Note that none of the characters is given a name in this opening verse. We will return to this in the next verse. *Vayelech Ish miBeit...* reminds us of the beginning of the Moshheh story in Sh'mot (2:1) - a man of the house of Levi went and took a daughter of Levi. Again, the text is creating strong associations with the earliest eras (and heroes) of our people. The "sojourn" of this man (and his family), which, we soon learn, lasts much longer than intended, again reminds us of the Patriarchal narratives. Each of the Avot is described as a "sojourner" (B'resheet 23:4, 26:3, 47:4). The critical difference between this "sojourn" and those mentioned in B'resheet is location: Mitzrayim (B'resheet) as opposed to Moav. 1.2. And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Kilion, Ephrathites of Beit-Lechem in Yehudah. And they came to the country of Moav, and remained there. This verse seems to be an awkward repetition of the first verse. We are again told about a family which leaves Beit-Lechem for S'dei Moav - but, this time, we are given the names of the family members. There is a clear intent for us to pay attention to these names - else, why "double up" the verses? It would have been more economical to begin with verse 2 (and dispense with verse 1); by introducing the story and the first set of characters and, only then, telling us their names, it is clear that the names have a significance of their own. Elimelech is a powerful name, one associated with royalty. His name evokes an association with Avraham, who interacted with kings (B'resheet 12, 14, 20). This association is strengthened when we recall that Avraham was the first to leave Eretz Yisra'el on account of a famine - it is possible that the story here provides subtle rebuke to Avraham for his leaving the Land (see Ramban on B'resheet 12:10). (That Elimelech's leaving the land was considered sinful is hardly a new idea - his fate and that of his sons seem to confirm this idea, which Hazal explicitly state.) The very name Naomi means "pleasant"; the import of this meaning will become clear further on. In any case, her name also carries within it a significant word: *Ami* - (my people) - a word which will play a crucial role in her relationship with Ruth. Whereas the names of the parents are "positive"; their sons' carry names which no parent would think of granting their children. Mahlon is related to Mahalah

(disease) and Kilion to K'liyah (destruction). Considering their untimely deaths, in a foreign land no less, it is reasonable to posit that these were not their birth-names, rather names given them posthumously, symbolic of their tragic lives. [Keep in mind that Megillat Ruth was not written as a journal; it was composed after the key events in the story transpired. That being the case, it is not problematic to posit a posthumous "renaming" of the dead sons.] These tragic names (and many other points of reference in the story) evoke an association with yet another story in B'resheet - the Yehudah-Tamar interlude (Chapter 38) The story in B'resheet opens with Yehudah "leaving his brothers" and giving birth to two sons whose names are anything but positive (Er - meaning "barren" and Onan, meaning "mourning"). We must, again, posit that these names were given posthumously, as both sons died young (leaving the heroine, Tamar, as the prototypical Y'vamah - yet another connection with our story.) After repeating the identification of their homeland (Beit Lechem Yehudah), fortifying our awareness of their relationship with that area (so that the return carries an expectation of a homecoming of sorts - an expectation which is only tragically realized), we are told that they remained there. In other words, the temporary sojourn turned into a quasi-permanent state of residence. 1.3. And Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; and she was left with her two sons. Note the rapid shift of focus. In the first two verses, Naomi was Elimelech's wife - and, suddenly, he is her husband. Naomi has quickly been thrust to center stage - whereas Mahlon and Kilion have lost their identities as anything but "her sons". 1.4. And they took wives of the women of Moav; the name of one was Orpah, and the name of the other Ruth; and they dwelled there about ten years. Note that we do not learn (until the last chapter) which brother was married to which Moavite. The reason is rather straightforward: It isn't of any consequence. This is a common trait of Biblical narrative, omitting the information which has no bearing on the ultimate message of the story. The mention of dwelling there ten years reminds us of yet another passage in B'resheet (16:3) - it is only after ten years of childless cohabitation in the Land that Sarah arranges the "match" between Avraham and Hagar. We soon learn that both Ruth and Orpah were childless, and the association with one more B'resheet story is complete. 5. And both Mahlon and Kilion died; and the woman was bereft of her two sons and her husband. Note the similar phrasing between the end of this verse and the end of v. 3: *vatiSha'er* - and she was left - which serves to hammer home the impact of her repeated losses - first her husband, then her two sons. 6. Then she arose with her daughters-in-law, to return from the country of Moav; for she had heard in the country of Moav that Hashem had visited his people and given them bread. There are several points in this verse which are surprising. First of all, why do her Kalot agree to return with her - what of their own families? (In Naomi's dialogue with them we learn that their parental homes are still available to them) After all, they aren't really "related" to Naomi anymore - the husbands/sons that were their bond to Naomi are dead. Second, this verse seems to lead us all the way back to Beit Lechem Yehudah - no mention is given to any misgivings or concerns that any of these three women may have had regarding their return - yet the very next set of verses records Naomi's valiant (as we shall see) attempts to persuade them to stay in Moav. Why does our verse record their return in such a matter-of-fact fashion? Finally, we are left wondering why G-d has suddenly blessed His people. As mentioned above (v. 1), the period of the Shof'tim was a time when G-d's Presence and intervention in affairs of the people was most manifest. We would expect to hear that the people had demonstrated their readiness to recommit to G-d and that, as a result, He blessed the land. We would also expect some sort of explanation for the famine which set all of these events into motion - but the text is silent in that regard as well. SUMMARY The introductory verses, rapidly setting the stage for our story, utilize a number of allusions to the Patriarchal narratives of B'resheet. The text places a clear stress on the names of the family members, while placing G-d's role in the national fortunes in a less explicit setting than that which we would expect for this time period. At the end of the section, we get the sense that both Kalot abandon their families to join Naomi in Beit Lechem - an impression which is dashed by the dialogue in the next section. III NAOMI, ORPAH AND RUTH (1:7-19a) OVERVIEW In the process of returning, Naomi turns to her Kalot and tries to convince them to return to their ancestral homes and faiths. She begins with warm words of blessing (vv. 8-9); when rebuffed by their stubborn insistence on returning with her (10), she responds with a bitter soliloquy, turning her earlier blessing into a self-directed dirge (11-13). Orpah leaves, but Ruth clings to her (14). Naomi tries one last time to convince Ruth to go home, using Orpah's behavior as an example for her to follow (15). Ruth's final words here, representing her longest speech in the Megillah, are the powerful words of loyalty which are, perhaps, the most famous citation from the Megillah (16-17). When Naomi sees that her efforts bear no fruit, she ceases speaking to Ruth and the scene is set for their return to Beit Lechem Yehudah. ANALYSIS 1.7. So she went forth out of the place where she was, and her two daughters-in-law with her; and they went on the way to return to the land of Yehudah. Naomi is clearly at the center of the text-focus here; her Kalot are her escorts. Nonetheless, there is something disarming about the use of the verb *Shuv* (return) here; the text describes all three of these barren widows as "returning" to the land of Yehudah - yet only one of them (Naomi) ever lived there! This curious usage shows up several more times in the dialogue which follows, highlighting the extent to which the daughters-in-law identified with Naomi. Incidentally, the verb *Shuv* operates in this chapter as a *Milah Manchah* (key word), which guides the sense of the text. It shows up an extraordinary 12 times in this chapter, indicating that the underlying theme of the chapter is "return". We won't fully appreciate the sense of this message until much later in the story. By the way, a *Milah Manchah* usually appears 7 times within a given Parashah; the number 12 here has some significance. We will address it in our analysis of the second chapter, where the *Milah Manchah* also shows up 12 times. 1.8. And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, Go, return each of you to her mother's house; Hashem deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead, and with me. Note the ironic use of *Shuv* here - instead of returning to Yehudah, the word is used here in the context of the Kalot returning to their families in Moav. Why does Naomi mention return to your mother's house - as opposed to (the more likely) father's house? Although we would be tempted to posit that Orpah and Ruth were orphans (thus explaining their reticence to return home), with only mothers at home, the text in 2:11 doesn't allow for that possibility. Besides yet another textual allusion to the Patriarchal narratives (regarding Rivkah, the verse states; and the young girl ran in order to relate the events to her mother's house - B'resheet 24:28), Naomi seems to be emphasizing that she is not their mother - they have mothers of their own at home. This will soon be reversed, as the love and devotion of Orpah and Ruth for Naomi becomes more clearly expressed. Naomi's



mention of the dead, a clear reference to her sons, is a bit disarming here. Why doesn't she mention their names - or, at least, say my sons? It would seem that Naomi is speaking with great restraint here. After all, she is returning with no family, no children (or grandchildren). At the very least, she has these two devoted daughters-in-law to accompany her. >From Naomi's perspective, their returning home would be a devastating blow - yet, that is exactly what she wishes them to do. A bit of her special character begins to shine through, as we see her act as the brave parent, forcing the child whom she loves to leave home, leaving her with an empty nest but assuring the child's growth and success. Knowing that her Kalot would face great difficulties as outsiders in Yehudah, she tried to convince them to go home. We can easily imagine her choking back tears as she attempts to persuade; this is why she refers to her sons simply as "the dead". Any mention of her sons, by name or by relationship, would certainly test that wall of restraint that she must put up in order to convince them to leave her. We are also left a bit puzzled by the last phrase here - until this point, what Hessed have the Kalot done for Naomi? 1.9. Hashem grant you that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept. 1.10. And they said to her, No, we will return with you to your people. Naomi continues to wish them well; at this point, as mentioned above, her attempt is couched in positive terms, blessing them that each should find a new husband and should find comfort in a new home. Their reaction to Naomi's kiss cannot help but remind us of Ya'akov's first meeting with Rachel (B'resheet 29:11). Even though that kiss was not one associated with painful parting (although see Rashi's comments there), the juxtaposition of kissing and weeping continues to strengthen the association between our narrative and Sefer B'resheet. As pointed out earlier, the use of Shuv, which is the key word of this chapter, is ironic here. How can the young women "return" to a land to which they've never been? It seems that we are witnessing a deep expression of empathy and identification; even though this is a new land, since Naomi is returning, they, too, consider it a return. Nonetheless, harsh reality creeps into the next word - l'Ameikh - to your nation; there is a clear awareness that the nation residing in Yehudah is not theirs but Naomi's and that they will be strangers there. 1.11. And Naomi said, Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? 1.12. Turn back, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say, I have hope, even if I should have a husband tonight, and should bear sons; 1.13. Would you wait for them till they were grown? would you, for them, refrain from having husbands? no, my daughters; for it grieves me much for your sakes that the hand of Hashem is gone out against me. 1.14. And they lifted up their voice, and wept again; and Orpah kissed her mother-in-law; but Ruth held fast to her. It is unclear if we have one argument here or two. The uninterrupted flow of Naomi's words indicate one speech; yet the repeat of Shovna b'notai at the beginning of v. 12 (echoing the beginning of v. 11) may suggest a further attempt at persuasion. Although the entire section addresses one issue - the lack of any more male family members who would "redeem" the Kalot, the sense of v. 11 is dramatically different from that of 12-13 - and there is room to comment here. One of the common features of Biblical heroes is their refusal to rely on miracles in order to extricate them from troubles. Naomi does not suggest that she will become another Sarah, bearing a child at an advanced age. In vv. 12-13, her tone turns sardonic. Even if she would experience the absurd, the Kalot would still be in an unlivable situation - waiting (as Agunot - the word comes from the te'Ageinah in v.13) for her children to come of age. It seems, therefore, that there are two arguments here - to wit: I will have no more children. Even if I were to have children, that would not be a solution for you. This is, properly speaking, Naomi's second (and third) attempt at convincing the young widows to go home. Note, however, that her refusal to accept the role of mother (noted in v. 8) has shifted perceptibly: At the beginning of each of these arguments, she calls them my daughters. The end of her argument is phrased oddly: Ki mar li m'od mikem - the translation here is faithful to the intent. She is convinced that all of the tragedies that befell the family are on account of her sins - such that the losses incurred by these loyal "daughters" are her fault, as well. She is, understandably, reticent to accept any more responsibility for their welfare, especially considering her diminished circumstances back in Beit Lechem. 1.15. And she said, Behold, your sister-in-law is gone back to her people, and to her gods; go back you after your sister-in-law. The odd mention of returning to her...gods implies that neither woman had converted to the Israelite faith (it would be anachronistic to refer to "Judaism" here). Surely Naomi would not be willing to see her co-religionists revert to idolatry - much less push them in that direction. The phrase Shuv Aharei... usually means "to abandon"; here, Naomi uses it in the opposite manner - to follow. Subtly hidden in her words, perhaps, is buried the vision of abandonment - a future that Ruth, in any case, stubbornly rejects. Note how Ruth uses the same phrase in the opposite (usual) manner in her response. 1.16. And Ruth said, Do not entreat me to leave you, or to keep from following you; for wherever you go, I will go; and where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your G-d my G-d; 1.17. Where you die, will I die, and there will I be buried; the Lord do so to me, and more also, if even death parts me from you. There is so much about this beautiful speech that is worthy of comment; a starting point for the interested reader is BT Yevamot 47b, along with the classical commentaries here. One point of interest - the verb Lalin (rendered here "to lodge"), does not carry the same meaning as that of modern Hebrew. In Biblical Hebrew, it refers to "camping out", i.e. sleeping arrangements made while sojourning. See, for example, B'resheet 19:2. Ruth, accepting Naomi's fate as a traveler, commits to joining her on her travels "till death do us part." 1.18. When she saw that she was determined to go with her, she stopped speaking to her. The immediate sense of the end of this phrase is that Naomi ceased her entreaties. We will soon see that her silence at this point was much deeper and impactful than we presently assume. 1.19. So the two went until they came to Beit-Lechem... Although this is the middle of a verse, it is clear from the beginning of the second half of the verse that this phrase properly ends the "travel" segment of the story. This phrase brings the two of them, sans Orpah and in silence, back to the city of Beit Lechem. The second half of the verse sets the scene in the city itself, as Naomi interacts with the women of Beit Lechem and bemoans her fate...but that belongs to next week's shiur. IV IN THE MEANTIME... It would be unfair to pause at this point and not draw any conclusions about the text, leaving the Ruth-Shavuot relationship as unclear as it was at the beginning of this part of the shiur. We have noted that there are constant allusions and associations which serve to "graft" the story of Ruth into a "B'resheet mode". We get the sense that Naomi and Ruth are heroines who belong squarely in the book of B'resheet, as opposed to several hundred years later. One of the remarkable features which serves as an undercurrent of Sefer B'resheet is the notion of birth - and renewal. Avram and

Sarah are incapable of having children; but Avraham and Sarah are fertile. Ya'akov is one type of person, but his heroism (however we understand it) allows him to become Yisra'el. It is not only the granting of names (which will play a critical role in our understanding of the final chapter of Ruth) which signals this rebirth in B'resheet; the cycles of exile and homecoming, experienced twice each by Avraham and Ya'akov, represent the theme of spiritual renewal. Ruth, as the prototypical Giyoret (convert), is truly a daughter of B'resheet. Whatever spiritual metamorphosis she underwent in Moav that enabled her to act with such devotion surely places her squarely in a class with the great Patriarchs who built our nation. Shavu'ot, celebrated as the time of Mattan Torah, is a time for recommitment to the covenant of Sinai but also an opportunity to start fresh in our relationship with haKadosh Barukh Hu and with His precious Torah. There is much more to be said, but we will pick up in the middle of 1:19 next week. Mikra, Copyright (c) 1999 by Rabbi Yitzchak Etshalom and Project Genesis, Inc. The author is the Educational Coordinator of the Jewish Studies Institute of the Yeshiva of Los Angeles and is also the author of the Rambam class. learn@torah.org http://www.torah.org/ Project Genesis: Torah on the Information Superhighway 17 Warren Road, Suite 2B Baltimore, MD 21208 (410) 602-1350 FAX: 602-1351

Rabbi Yaakov Bernstein[SMTP:yaakovb@torah.org] Haaros - Shavuot 5759: Outline Vol. 3 # 23 6-7 Sivan 5759 -- MY 20-22, '99

Shavuot is the time of the Receiving of the Torah. "Anyone who learns Torah for its own sake, merits many things..." (Pirke Avos, Chapter 6) The Braisah lists many blessings which come about due to this level of learning. The Slonimer Rebbe asked, why do the brochos result solely from Torah Lishma -- learning Torah for its own sake? Surely every mitzva should be performed for intrinsic reasons, rather than for ulterior motives. The discussion takes us back to the topic of Tisha B'av, and the destruction of Eretz Yisrael and the Beis Hamikdash. The tragedy was said to have been a result of one factor -- "sh'lo birchu batorah batichilah" -- they didn't say the brocha before studying the Torah. (Last summer, we discussed whether this was meant literally, or figuratively.) The Bach, in his commentary to the Tur, Orach Chaim simon 47, questioned why such severe punishments were given for an apparently minor mistake. Torah Learning, the Bach concludes, is not a study, but its purpose is "lihisamos nafshoseinu b'atzmach, b'ruchniyos ubik'dusha" -- to solidify our souls with spirit and sanctity. If Torah Learning were performed properly, with an internal, intrinsic intention, then, though "d'veikus" -- attachment -- we would become a "merkavah l'sh'chinah" -- a vehicle for the Divine Presence. We would be a tool for Hashem's purposes. Therefore, a diminishing of the quality of Torah Learning, affects the highest spheres... The brochos are only on account of Torah studied for intrinsic purposes. Today, however, such levels are not often attained. As a result, we have fractured our unity, and are scattered into many splinters, arguing and bickering among ourselves. (See further: Bach, Orach Chaim, simon 47.) The Slonimer Rebbe continued. Meiras Einayim in Parshas Bechukosai writes that Hashem, who is beyond limit, contracted Himself into the Torah; this way, limited man could have the opportunity to reach out to Hashem. The Medrash states that Hashem looked into the Torah before He created the world. Why was this necessary, asked the Rebbe. Hashem, the all-powerful, could surely create the world without "looking into the Torah." The answer is that the Torah is the intermediary, the stepping-stone for man's elevation. He looked into the Torah first, in order to establish the connection with limited mankind, and then proceeded to create the world.

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From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@virtual.co.il] The Weekly Daf #275 Succah 48-54 Shavuot Outside of Israel / Parshas Naso in Israel Week of 4-10 Sivan 5759 / 19-25 May 1999

The Ladies Gallery Whoever did not see the "Simchas Beis Hashoeva," says the mishna, never saw true simcha in his life. In preparation for this great scene of music, singing and dancing which accompanied the drawing of water to be poured on the altar during the offering of the daily morning sacrifice on Succos, a "major adjustment" was made in the Beis Hamikdash. What was this "major adjustment"? Since there was an interest in enabling women to watch this great celebration, precautions had to be taken to prevent the mingling of men and women. After a couple of experiments in separating them on one level proved unsuccessful, it was decided to build a gallery from which the women could look down upon the proceedings without any danger of contact with the men below. This required building girders into the walls, and each Succos placing boards on them to form the balconies. But how could they do this, asks the gemara, when King David declares (Divrei Hayamim I 28:19) that all the exact details of the structure of the Beis Hamikdash were

recorded in writing on the basis of prophecies from Gad and Nassan, indicating that no adjustments are permitted? The answer, says the Sage Rav, is that the leaders making this adjustment based themselves on a passage in Zecharia (12:12) which stresses the urgency of separating men from women in public gatherings to prevent them from being corrupted. On the surface it seems that the gemara is simply pointing out that in a situation of such emergency the ban on making adjustments in the Beis Hamikdash could be relaxed. Maharsha, however, seemed to have been troubled by the idea of an explicit ban on adjustments being suspended in order to accommodate women as spectators. If such accommodation requires building galleries for the Simchas Beis Hamikdash service to be complete, then this would constitute an adjustment in the functional structure of the Beis Hamikdash, and would be forbidden. But Rashi stresses that the purpose of the adjustment was not to affect the service itself, but to achieve the separation between men and women. This idea of separation is strongly underlined by the Prophet Zecharia as a way of preventing the negative effect of mingling. Since the purpose of the galleries was morality rather than service, concludes Maharsha, it was not included in the ban on adjustments of which King David spoke. The blueprints prophetically handed down to David were perfect, requiring no adjustment. It was human nature that was so imperfect that the separations attempted without galleries proved insufficient, and a "major adjustment" had to be made in order to allow women to watch the simcha without their presence creating a spiritual problem. \* Succah 51a

The Mountain and the Hair A scene of weeping that will take place in the end of days is described by the Prophet Zecharia (12:12). One of the Sages interprets this as a reference to the slaughtering by Hashem of the Yetzer Hara (Evil Inclination) as both the righteous and the wicked look on. To the righteous this inciter to evil appears as a huge mountain, while to the wicked he seems like a thin hair. Both groups weep at the sight. The righteous weep as they recall the anguish they experienced in overcoming this force of evil and they wonder how they were able to conquer such a formidable mountain. The wicked weep as they wonder why they were unable to overcome such a thin hair. How can two people see the same object in such radically different ways? When the Yetzer Hara starts "making his sale" he paints a picture of the mammoth satisfaction his client will enjoy from the sin he is invited to commit, a virtual mountain of pleasure. The client who falls for the pitch of this evil persuader is always disappointed at the tremendous gap between expectation and realization. He realizes that the huge mountain he was promised was nothing more than a thin hair of pleasure. The righteous encountered and abandoned the Yetzer Hara during the stage of mountain-high expectation, so this is how they view him now as they tearfully recollect how difficult it was for them to resist such temptation. The wicked, however, followed the Yetzer Hara to the final stage of realization and saw his mountainous promise exposed as hairline illusion. They weep at the realization that they forfeited their eternal reward for nothing more than a thin hair of satisfaction in this world. \* Succah 52a

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From: Mordecai Kornfeld[SMTP:kornfeld@netvision.net.il] Subject: Insights to the Daf: Sukah 49-55 INSIGHTS INTO THE DAILY DAF brought to you by Kollel Iyun Hadaf of Yerushalayim daf@dafyomi.co.il, http://www.dafyomi.co.il

SUKA 36-56 (End of Maseches) have been dedicated by the wife and daughters of the late Dr. Simcha Bekelnitzky (Simcha Gedalya ben Shraga Feivish) of Queens N.Y. Well known in the community for his Chesed and Tzedakah, he will long be remembered. SUKAH 50 (1st day of Shavuot) dedicated by Mrs. Bekelnitzky on the occasion of the 34th Yahrzeit of her late husband's father, Shraga Feivish ben Nosson Yakov (and Sima Gitle) Bikelnitzky. The Dafyomi Advancement Forum needs your support. Send a contribution to D.A.F., 140-32 69 Avenue, Flushing NY 11367, USA

Sukah 46 HALACHAH: THE BLESSING OF "LEISHEV BA'SUKAH" OPINIONS: The Beraisa says that when a person "enters to sit in the Sukah," he recites the Berachah of "Leishev ba'Sukah." This implies that as soon as one goes into the Sukah to sit down, he makes the Berachah, even before sitting. At what point exactly is a person supposed to recite the Berachah? (a) The RAMBAM (Hilchos Sukah 6:12) and RAV HAI GA'ON cited by the ROSH (4:3) rule that when a person enters the Sukah, he should recite a Berachah even before sitting down. Rav Hai Ga'on adds that even if one walks in without intention to eat (for example, he goes in to his friend's Sukah to visit), he also recites the Berachah. The Rambam in fact does not mention that one must intend to eat in order to recite the Berachah. (b) The RA'AVAD (Hilchos Sukah 6:12) writes that one may make the Berachah on the Sukah after he sits down with intention to eat. The Berachah is really for the act of eating that will be done in the Sukah, but since the act of sitting is preparatory to the act of eating, one recites the Berachah when he sits down. The Rosh points out that this was also the practice of RABEINU MEIR, who would recite the Berachah after sitting down, before eating. (c) The ROSH writes that the universal practice is not to recite a Berachah for sitting in the Sukah except immediately before eating, after saying ha'Motzi. (This is in contrast to the Ra'avad, who says that one recites the Berachah when one sits down to eat, even though one will not be eating right away.) HALACHAH: THE SHULCHAN ARUCH (OC 639:8) rules like the Rosh, that the blessing is recited only at the time of eating. The MISHNAH BERURAH there (639:46) adds that it is best to be Machmir, and as soon as one walks into the Sukah one should take a Shi'ur (k'Beitzah) of Mezonos and recite a Berachah of "Leishev ba'Sukah" and "Borei Minei Mezonos" and eat. The Mishnah Berurah (639:48) also adds that if one has no intention to eat bread at all that day, he should make a Berachah as soon as he enters the Sukah, even though he is not eating. The only reason to push the Berachah off is that it is better to make a Berachah on the main use of the Sukah (eating) than on the secondary use (sitting and otherwise using the Sukah). If he does not intend to eat, though, he must recite the blessing upon entering the Sukah. He adds, citing the CHAYEI ADAM, that even if a person who \*did\* eat that day walked out of the Sukah, and later returned with intention to sit in, but not to eat in, the Sukah, he must recite a Berachah upon his return. (Even though his main use of the Sukah was eating, \*at this point\* his only use of the Sukah will be sitting and spending time in the Sukah -- since he will leave the Sukah again before returning

for the next meal. Therefore, when he re-enters the Sukah he recites the Berachah even though he is not eating). (It is recorded in MA'ASEH RAV (#18) that the practice of the VILNA GA'ON was to recite a Berachah every time he entered the Sukah, even when he did not eat there.)

HALACHAH: RECITING "SHEHECHEYANU" ON THE SECOND DAY OF YOM TOV IN CHUTZ LA'ARETZ OPINIONS: The Gemara says that aside from reciting the Berachah of Shehecheyanu for the arrival of the Yom Tov, one also recites Shehecheyanu upon performing the Mitzvos of the Yom Tov (such as Sukah and Lulav) for the first time. Outside of Eretz Yisrael, we observe a second day of Yom Tov, due to the original doubt about the exact date. (In the time when the Beis Din established the new month based on witnesses' sighting of the new moon, word of the new month would not reach the far-away locations. Even today, when the calendar system is used, the Rabanan decreed that the people in those places observe two days of Yom Tov as if they were in doubt.) The Berachah of Shehecheyanu is also recited on that second day of Yom Tov in Chutz la'Aretz, for the Rabanan enacted that all of the Berachos of the first day be recited on the second day as well. Therefore, in Chutz la'Aretz, we recite a Shehecheyanu as part of Kidush on the second night. What about the Shehecheyanu recited for the Mitzvos of Sukah and Lulav? When we pick up the Lulav on the second day of Yom Tov, do we recite another Shehecheyanu, just as we did the day before? Although the Beraisa states that one should recite Shehecheyanu upon completing the construction of the Sukah (before Yom Tov), the Gemara concludes that the practice of the Amora'im was not to make a Shehecheyanu at that time, but instead to include it in the Kidush recited at the onset of Yom Tov. Therefore, the Shehecheyanu that is recited for the Mitzvah of Sukah is not in question, since it is included in the Shehecheyanu that is recited during Kidush on the second evening of Yom Tov. But what about the Shehecheyanu for the Mitzvah of Lulav? Should a person who lives in Chutz la'Aretz recite Shehecheyanu again on the second day of Yom Tov when he picks up the Lulav? (a) The ROSH (4:2) cites the BA'AL HILCHOS GEDOLOSO who says that the Shehecheyanu recited during Kidush of the second night covers the Mitzvah of Lulav as well, even though that Mitzvah will not be performed until the following day. The Rosh mentions that the Rishonim reject this ruling, because the Mitzvah of Lulav does not apply at night, so how could a Shehecheyanu said at night include the Mitzvah of Lulav, when there is no Mitzvah of Lulav at night? (This is presumably the reason why the Behag agrees that the Shehecheyanu recited on the \*first\* night of Sukos does not cover the Mitzvah of Lulav that will be performed the next day. The Behag apparently understood that once the obligation of the Mitzvah of Lulav takes effect on the first day, then it continues uninterrupted for the next seven days. Even at night the obligation applies. Before the first day (such as the first evening, during Kidush), the obligation has not yet taken effect, since it only takes effect when he can actually do the Mitzvah in practice. It \*remains\* in effect, though, once it has already taken effect, even when he cannot do the Mitzvah in practice. (b) The Rishonim explain instead that there is another reason not to say Shehecheyanu on the second day on the Mitzvah of Lulav. The Beraisa states that one recites Shehecheyanu on the Lulav \*before\* Sukos, when he finishes preparing for himself the Lulav. Certainly, then, a Berachah of Shehecheyanu that is recited on the first day of Yom Tov covers the Lulav, since such a Berachah would cover the Lulav even if the first day is not really Yom Tov. However, RABEINU SHMUEL OF IVRA (cited by the Rosh) rejects this logic. There are only two times that one may recite Shehecheyanu on the Lulav: (a) when one finishes preparing the Lulav (before Sukos), or (b) when one performs the Mitzvah (on Sukos). The Shehecheyanu recited on the first day of Yom Tov, which is, out of doubt, being recited on the \*making\* of the Lulav, will not help for the second day of Yom Tov (which requires a Shehecheyanu to be recited on the \*performance\* of the Mitzvah). The Rosh counters that even if Rabeinu Shmuel's logic is correct, the Shehecheyanu recited on the first night is certainly just as good as the one recited when one prepares the Lulav. This Shehecheyanu, made on the first day of Yom Tov (which might not be Yom Tov), is clearly made for the performance of the Mitzvah. Even if the day is really not Yom Tov, since he must pick up the Lulav anyway because of the doubt, that is enough to make his Shehecheyanu relate to the Mitzvah. That is the Rosh's conclusion -- it is not necessary to make a second Shehecheyanu on the Lulav on the second day of Yom Tov in Chutz la'Aretz. (c) The RABEINU MANO'ACH (Hilchos Sukah 6:12), however, says that the opposite logic can be proposed. Even if it is true that one could recite Shehecheyanu before Yom Tov, that is only when one knows why he is reciting the Shehecheyanu; when he makes the Berachah because he has prepared the Mitzvah, the Berachah is valid. However, if he recites a Shehecheyanu because he thinks this is the first day, and he thinks that it is the correct time for the actual performance of the Mitzvah (and not just preparing the Mitzvah), while in reality it is a normal day and it is not time to perform the Mitzvah, the Berachah is worthless and is not related to the Mitzvah, because it is based on an error. (Rabeinu Mano'ach writes this with regard to the Berachah of Shehecheyanu recited on the Mitzvah of Sukah, but the same logic should apply to the Shehecheyanu recited on the Mitzvah of Lulav.) HALACHAH: The Halachah follows the Rosh, and no Shehecheyanu is recited on the Lulav on the second day of Yom Tov in Chutz la'Aretz (SHULCHAN ARUCH OC 662:2). Of course, if the first day of Sukos occurs on Shabbos, or one is unable to take the Lulav on the first day for some other reason, then one does recite Shehecheyanu on the second day. (If, however, one did take the Lulav on the first day and merely \*forgot\* to recite Shehecheyanu then, there is a doubt whether he must recite Shehecheyanu on the second day. See SHA'AR HA'TZION 662:4.)

46b GIVING THE LULAV TO A CHILD ON THE FIRST DAY OF YOM TOV QUESTION: Rabbi Zeira states that one should not give his Lulav to a child on the first day of Yom Tov, because a child can be Koneh an object from others, but he cannot be Makneh to others. If an adult gives his Lulav to a child, the adult cannot fulfill his Mitzvah with it after the child, because it belongs to the child and not to him. It is obvious that in order for a child to fulfill his obligated of Chinuch by performing the Mitzvah of Lulav, he must do the Mitzvah in the same manner that he will do it when he becomes an adult (see Insights to 42:1). For that reason, it is not sufficient for an adult to merely lend his Lulav to the Katan. On the other hand, he cannot be Makneh it to the Katan, because the Katan will not be able to be Makneh it back to him. Why does the Gemara not suggest that the adult simply give it to the child as a "Matanah l'Zman" (a "temporary gift," stipulating that he is fully Makneh the Lulav to the child for a limited period of time (five minutes)? When that time has passed, the Lulav reverts back to its original owner, and there is no need for the child to be Makneh it to him! Moreover, why can an adult not give the Lulav to a child the same way that one adult gives it to another on the first day of Yom Tov, as a "Matanah Al Menas

l'Hachzir" (41b)? The Halachah is that if the person does not return the Lulav, then he was never Koneh it to begin with, and thus in this case, when one gives it to a child on condition that he return it, since the child cannot be Makneh it back to the adult, it was never the child's to begin with! (In that manner, the adult is able to fulfill the obligation of Chinuch for the child by allowing the child to perform the Mitzvah as he will when he grows up, and the adult is also able to fulfill the Mitzvah himself.)

ANSWERS: (a) The ROSH (3:30) writes that we see from this Gemara that when someone acquires an object with a "Kinyan l'Zman," that object is not considered to be "Lachem," fully owned by him, which is necessary in order to fulfill the Mitzvah of Lulav. Therefore, it is of no use to give the Lulav to the child as a "Matanah l'Zman," since it is no different than simply lending it to him (which is also not considered "Lachem"). Regarding the question of why the adult does not give the Lulav to the child as a "Matanah Al Menas l'Hachzir," the RITVA here explains that doing so will have the opposite effect. Since it is known in advance that the child is unable to be Makneh the Lulav back to the original owner, one is making a stipulation which is impossible to fulfill. Consequently, the stipulation becomes voided and the action is fully binding ("Tenai Batel u'Ma'aseh Kayam"), and thus the child takes full possession of the Lulav and the adult cannot get it back from him. (b) The KETZOS HA'CHOSHEN (241:4) points out that a number of Rishonim disagree with the Rosh. They maintain that a "Kinyan l'Zman" \*is\* considered an absolute Kinyan and thus falls under the category of "Lachem." In fact, they maintain that a "Matanah Al Menas l'Hachzir" is itself actually a "Kinyan l'Zman" (TOSFOS Erchin 30a, DH vLo; Teshuvos ha'Rosh 35:2, quoting RABEINU AVIGDOR Kohen-Tzedek; this also appears to be the opinion of the RID, cited by the Rosh 3:30). Rather, the Ketzos ha'Choshen says that one may indeed give the Lulav to a child with a "Kinyan l'Zman" and then fulfill the Mitzvah himself afterwards when the child gives it back. The Gemara is just saying that one should not give it to a child in such a way that it will be a "Kinyan Gamur," a complete Matanah.

Sukah 51b HALACHAH: LIVING IN EGYPT OPINIONS: Rabbi Yehudah said that one who had not seen the great synagogue in Alexandria, Egypt, had never seen the glory of Israel. The Beraisa goes on to describe the magnificence of the structure and the huge number of Jews that worshipped there. Abaye concludes the Beraisa's description by telling us of the tragic end of the Alexandrian Jewish community. The entire community was wiped out by a Roman monarch (according to the Vilna Ga'on and the Yerushalmi, Trajan; according to Rav Yakov Emden, the Abarbanel in his introduction to Melachim, and perhaps Rashi here DH Stav (... "Alexandrus"), the Roman monarch Alexander Laturus; according to the Gemara in Gitin 57b, the emperor Hadrian -- it does not seem plausible that Alexander the Macedon killed them, as the text of our Gemara reads, since he lived much earlier, see ARUCH L'ANER). The Gemara explains that the people of Alexandria were punished because they transgressed the prohibition, "You shall not return on this path [to Egypt] anymore" (Devarim 17:16). The Mechilta (Shemos 14:13) expands on this Isur and says that in three different places the Torah warns us not to return to Egypt. The first verse is the one quoted above, "You shall not return..." (Devarim 17:16). The second verse is, "... for as you have seen Egypt today, you shall never see them again" (Shemos 14:13). The third verse appears in the admonition in Parshas Ki Savo, "Hashem will return you to Egypt in boats, on the path of which I said to you, 'You shall not see it ever again'" (Devarim 28:68). The RAMBAM (Hilchos Melachim 5:7 and Sefer ha'Mitzvos, Lo Ta'aseh 46) quotes the Mechilta and adds that the Isur to live in Egypt applies to an area of 400 by 400 Parsa'os in the north-eastern corner of the African continent, which includes the Sudan, Ethiopia and some of the Sahara Desert. It seems from the Gemara, the Mechilta and the ruling of the Rambam that it is forbidden for a Jew to return to Egypt. However, we know of many prominent Jewish communities in Egypt, up until recent times (see the book, "Tuv Mitzrayim," by Rabbi Yosef Nefussi). Many Gedolim, such as the Rambam himself and the Radvaz, one of the foremost commentators on Mishneh Torah, lived there as well. The KAFTOR VA'FERACH (ch. 5) writes that he met one of the Rambam's grandsons in Egypt who told him that his grandfather would sign his letters, "Moshe ben Maimon, who transgresses three prohibitions each day."

Why did these Gedolei Torah live in Egypt even after reading of the fate of the Alexandria Jewish community? (a) The SEMAG (Lo Ta'aseh 227) writes that the prohibition against living in Egypt applies only to living among the Egyptians who were there at the time that the Torah was given. The Torah did not want the Jews to learn from that nation's evil ways, as the Rambam (ibid.) and Sefer ha'Chinuch (Mitzvah #500) write. After Sancheiriv jumbled the nations of the world it is permitted to live in Egypt, because the people there are not the Egyptians of yore. This also seems to be the opinion of Rabeinu Bachye (Devarim 17:16). However, the Semag himself rejects this suggestion because of our Sugya, in which it is evident that the people of Alexandria, who settled there \*after\* Sancheiriv mixed up the nations, were still punished. The RITVA (Yoma 38a) modifies the Semag's explanation in order to answer this question. He says that the prohibition applies to living in the cities that \*were\* founded by the original Egyptians. (Alexandria, although developed and renamed by Alexander, was originally an ancient Egyptian city.) This is presumably because the customs of the cities follow those of the original inhabitants. Now that those cities are no longer settled and different cities are settled instead, it is not forbidden to live in Egypt in the new cities. (b) The SEFER YERE'IM (Siman 309) writes that the Torah forbids only going \*from Eretz Yisrael to Egypt\*, as is implied by the verse quoted by our Gemara. The logic behind this might be that returning to Egypt from Eretz Yisrael shows a lack of gratitude to Hashem. If one goes from Eretz Yisrael to Egypt after Hashem took us out from there, it is as if one is saying that he does not need nor appreciate what Hashem gave him. The RITVA and the KAFTOR VA'FERACH add that it is only forbidden to go to Egypt from Eretz Yisrael through the desert, following the path the Jews took out of Egypt. However, the BRIS MOSHE on the Semag points out that the verse in Devarim (ibid.) seems to contradict this, for it says that Hashem will send the Jews "by boats to Egypt, in the way that He said not to return there," which implies that it is forbidden to go from Eretz Yisrael to Egypt even by boat. The RADVAZ asks that even if the Isur is to go from Eretz Yisrael to Egypt by any route, that is supported only by the verse which our Gemara quotes. The other two verses, though, mention only that it is forbidden to go to Egypt, but make no mention of \*how\*, or from where, one gets there. (c) The RITVA (ibid.) concludes that the Isur only applies when the Jewish people are an independent nation, settled in their homeland, and they go to live in Egypt. When the Jews are in a state of Galus, all parts of the Diaspora are the same and one may live in Egypt just like he may live in any other country. The only Isur that applies then is not to leave Eretz Yisrael if he is living there, no matter where he leaves to. This might be Rashi's intention in our Sugya when he writes (DH Stav) that the people of Alexandria settled there

at the time of the Churban of the first Beis ha'Mikdash. That is, the problem was that they went directly from the Jewish kingdom in Eretz Yisrael to Egypt. Had they not reached Alexandria directly from Eretz Yisrael, it would have been Mutar for them to go to Egypt. The logic behind this is presumably that going to Egypt when Eretz Yisrael is occupied by Jews shows a lack of Emunah in Hashem. The Jews should live in Eretz Yisrael and trust in Hashem to protect them, rather than going to neighboring Egypt for protection. After they are sent into Galus, though, and they need to find a place to live, they may live wherever they want. (d) The RADVAZ (Hilchos Melachim 5:7) writes that the Isur is to \*go\* to Egypt, not to live there. Once a person is already in Egypt, having arrived there in a permitted fashion (such as for business, which the Yerushalmi (Sanhedrin 10:9) permits), then if he decides to live there, he transgresses no Isur d'Oraisa (but only an Isur d'Rabanan). Since it is difficult to travel and to find a livelihood once a person is settled, the Rabanan were lenient and did not require him to leave if he has already settled, until the time comes that he is able to leave easily. (e) However, the RAMBAM and the SEFER HA'CHINUCH seem to preclude any of these explanations. They seem to rule that the Isur applies today unconditionally, regardless of where a person is coming from or what path he takes to get there, and they write that \*living\* there is Asur and not merely going there. Why, then, did the Rambam live in Egypt? The RADVAZ and the KAFTOR VA'FERACH write that perhaps he had no choice, since he was the physician of the Sultan, and it was not possible for him to leave. What the Radvaz might mean by this is that it is permitted to go to Egypt for business or any other temporary purpose, as long as one intends to leave when he can. It is even permitted to settle there for an extended period, since he plans to leave. The Rambam always had plans to leave; to remind himself of this he adopted the practice of signing his letters as "sinner of three sins" so long as he did not have concrete plans for when he would leave. This is consistent with what the Radvaz states (in Hilchos Melachim, and in Teshuvos 4:1145) in a personal vein that he himself lived in Egypt for many years, where he found a Yeshivah and taught Torah until he eventually left and came to Eretz Yisrael. Such a thing, he says, is certainly permitted, since he did not settle there for the sake of living in Egypt, but in order to teach Torah to those who were already there, and he planned to leave when the opportunity arose.

52b HOW TO DEFEAT THE YETZER HA'RA AGADAH: Rabbi Yitzchak states that a person's Yetzer ha'Ra gets stronger and stronger every day, as it says, "[The inclination of the thoughts of his heart] is only evil all of the days" (Bereishis 6:5). Reish Lakish adds that in addition to gaining more power over the person each day, one's Yetzer ha'Ra attempts to kill the person, as it says, "The evil one (the Yetzer ha'Ra) looks towards the Tzadik and seeks to kill him" (Tehilim 37:32). Furthermore, the Gemara adds, if it were not for Hashem's help, a person would not be able to overcome the Yetzer ha'Ra, as it says, "Hashem will not forsake him (the Tzadik) in his hand, and will not let him be condemned" (Tehilim 37:33). The VILNA GA'ON (cited in TOLDOS ADAM, and in KOL ELIYAHU #207) asks what is the Gemara adding to the idea that is already expressed in this verse? The verse clearly states that Hashem helps a person overcome the Yetzer ha'Ra. What is the Gemara adding by saying that if it were not for Hashem's help, a person would not be able to succeed? Furthermore, what is the point in telling us that we cannot defeat the Yetzer ha'Ra without Hashem's help? What do we gain with this knowledge? The VILNA GA'ON explains that the Gemara is teaching that if a person does not use all of his might in attempting to defeat the Yetzer ha'Ra, then Hashem will not grant him His assistance. Only when the person has exerted all of his energy in his struggle against the Yetzer ha'Ra will Hashem then step in and help him. That is the point which we would not have known from a simple reading of the verse. Even though a person sees that his own efforts will not be enough to overcome the Yetzer ha'Ra, he will only receive Hashem's help after he first tries to defeat it himself with all his might.

DRAG THE YETZER HA'RA TO THE BEIS HA'MIDRASH AGADAH: The Gemara says that if one meets the Yetzer ha'Ra, he should drag him to the Beis ha'Midrash. If he (the Yetzer ha'Ra) is stone, says the Gemara, then he will melt; if he is iron, then he will crack. The VILNA GA'ON (Mishlei 2:16, 21:25, Iyov 2:5 and elsewhere) asks several questions on this statement. He infers from the answers some basic qualities of the Yetzer ha'Ra and the tactics which it uses, as well as how to protect oneself from those tactics. (a) First, he asks why does the Gemara say that one should drag the Yetzer ha'Ra to the Beis ha'Midrash? One should leave the Yetzer ha'Ra alone and \*run away\* from it to the Beis ha'Midrash! (b) Second, what does the Gemara mean when it says, "If he is stone... if he is iron?" Is the Yetzer ha'Ra like stone or is it like iron -- which one is he? (c) Also, why does it use two different descriptions for the Yetzer's demise, first saying that the Yetzer ha'Ra, if he is like stone, will "melt," and then saying that the Yetzer ha'Ra, if he is like iron, will "shatter?" (If a stone can melt, then certainly iron can!) ANSWERS: Based on these questions, the VILNA GA'ON explains as follows. (a) In Mishlei 7 (13-14), the Vilna Ga'on writes that the Yetzer ha'Ra does not try to conquer a person by seducing him to do something that is outright sinful; the victim would never listen to the Yetzer ha'Ra. Rather, the Yetzer ha'Ra tries to convince a person to do a Mitzvah she'Lo Lishmah. For example, it entices a person to eat the meat of a Korban (which is a Mitzvah) in order to enjoy the meat and not in order to do the Mitzvah. Once the Yetzer ha'Ra has succeeded in that small measure, it is able to entice the person to do more severe acts. The way to fight against this tactic, then, is as follows. When a person feels that the Yetzer ha'Ra is trying to persuade him to do a Mitzvah she'Lo Lishmah, he should go learn Torah. One is encouraged to learn Torah even she'Lo Lishmah, because the she'Lo Lishmah will lead to Lishmah, as the Gemara (Pesachim 50b) says. (Although the Gemara refers there to all Mitzvos as well, the she'Lo Lishmah of learning Torah is a spiritual pleasure and not a physical one, and therefore it is easier to be drawn to do the Mitzvah of learning Torah Lishmah.) That is what is meant by "dragging" the Yetzer ha'Ra himself into the Beis ha'Midrash -- using the Yetzer to learn Torah she'Lo Lishmah. (b) There are two categories of Yetzer ha'Ra. The first is the Yetzer ha'Ra that persuades a person to fall into the trap of arrogance, which culminates in anger and destruction ("Ka'as"). The other Yetzer ha'Ra is the lust for physical pleasures and the desire for honor and wealth ("Ta'avah"). (It seems that the Vilna Ga'on's source for this statement is the Gemara (Chulin 4a, Horiyos 11a) which describes two types of apostates -- one who rejects the Mitzvos out of arrogance, simply to anger Hashem -- l'Hach'is -- and one who rejects the Mitzvos due to his lusts -- l'Ta'avon.) The Yetzer ha'Ra of arrogance and anger has a male element. That is, it involves taking hold of a person's unbridled creativity and misguiding it. The Yetzer ha'Ra of Ta'avah, in contrast, has a female element, in that it is passive, quietly prodding a person to be \*drawn after\* temptations. (These two, in turn, correspond to "Lo Sirtzach" and "Lo Sin'af," or

Yishma'el and Esav.) The Yetzer ha'Ra of arrogance and anger is referred to as iron, which represents the sword or knife which cuts and causes damage. The Yetzer ha'Ra of Ta'avah is referred to as a stone, because it is firstly passive, and secondly hard as stone to conquer. Lusts are very difficult to control when one is completely overtaken by them. Furthermore, the Yetzer ha'Ra of Ta'avah makes a person's soul like a stone; it "corks up" one's soul (Metamtem ha'Lev) such that the person becomes unable to absorb Torah or wisdom (see TOSFOS, Kesuvos 104a, DH Lo). (c) Our Gemara is saying that if the Yetzer ha'Ra is a stone -- that is, it is the Yetzer ha'Ra of Ta'avah -- then in order to conquer it, one must learn the parts of Torah which are compared to water, as the Gemara here says, "All who thirst, go to the water" (Yeshayah 55:1). This refers to Agadah, or the Musar sections of the Torah which draw one's heart like water (Chagigah 14a). Since it takes a long time for a person to conquer that Yetzer ha'Ra, the Gemara refers to the process as "melting," which is a slow process. If one is battling the Yetzer ha'Ra of arrogance and anger, he should fight it with the parts of Torah that are compared to fire, as described by the verse which our Gemara cites, "Behold, My word is like fire, the word of Hashem, and like a hammer that shatters rock" (Yirmeyah 23:29). He should direct his creative energy to the fiery exchange of Talmudic discourse between Talmidei Chachamim in the Halachic aspects of Torah. (The Gemara in Ta'anis (4a) relates the creative energy that produces anger to the creative energy that is used in Talmudic discourse, saying "if a Talmid Chacham explodes in anger, it is the power of Torah that is burning within him.") The Yetzer ha'Ra of arrogance and anger does not convince a person that doing the sin is necessary and uncontrollable, as does the Yetzer ha'Ra of Ta'avah, and thus this Yetzer ha'Ra is easier to overcome. By refocusing one's creative energies on positive things (i.e. Torah learning), the Yetzer ha'Ra "shatters" immediately.

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Shiur HaRav Soloveichik ZT"L on Chag HaShavuos  
(Shiur date: 5/11/76. May be used for Parshas Emor ;-)

In Parshas Emor, the Torah uses the formula of *Vhikravtem Isheh L'Hashem* to indicate the requirement to bring a special Korban Mussaf on each of the festivals. The specifics of these Korbanos is provided in Parshas Pinchas. If we examine the various festivals we find that the Torah precedes and links the obligation to offer the Korban Mussaf, almost *Derech Agav* (as a side bar), with Issur Mlacha, the prohibition against work. The one exception is the festival of Shavuos, where there is no mention of the obligation *Lhakriv Isheh*, to offer the Korban Mussaf. Rather, the festival of Shavuos is mentioned in connection with the *Sefiras HaOmer* and the Torah then describes the special sacrifice that accompanied the *Shtay Halechem*, the first use of the new wheat in the temple itself. While the Torah mentions Issur Mlacha on Shavuos in Parshas Emor, it does not link it to or mention the Korban Mussaf, *Vhikravtem Isheh*, that was unique for the festival.

The Rav explained that *Kdushas Hayom*, sanctity of the day, of Shavuos is based on its close association with the festival of Pesach. It is the fiftieth day counted (with the *Sefiras HaOmer*) after the Korban Omer was brought on Pesach. The Torah does not mention the specific day and month of Shavuos because it is simply defined as 50 days after Pesach. It is called *Atzeres*, the conclusion of the previous festival, Pesach. However, there is another defining characteristic of Shavuos and that is the unique sacrifice of the *Shtay Halechem*. The Korban Omer and the *Shtay Halechem* have the common denominator that they permit the use of the new wheat. The Omer permits the use of the new wheat crop throughout the land, except in the *Mikdash* while the *Shtay Halechem* permits its use in the temple. *Sefiras HaOmer*, simply counting the days between Pesach and Shavuos, alone would not have been sufficient to permit the use of the new wheat in the temple. The *Shtay Halechem* are also required to complete the sanctioning of the use of the new wheat. The *Shtay Halechem* are necessary in order to be *Kovea*, to establish the *Kdushas Yom Tov* for Shavuos.

The Midrash *Shochar Tov* derives that there is a special *Gzeiras Hakasuv* that Shavuos applies in our days, *B'zman Hazeh*, just like it was applicable during the period of the temple. Why single out or even question the applicability of Shavuos nowadays? Why not question the applicability of *Passover* or *Succos*? The reason is that since the unique sanctity of the day is based on its association with Pesach and the offering of the *Shtay Halechem*, and since nowadays we can't offer the *Shtay Halechem*, the unique aspect of Shavuos would be unattainable. The *Sefiras HaOmer* alone would not have been enough to certify the applicability of Shavuos nowadays without this special *Gzeiras Hakasuv*.

In Parshas Pinchas the Torah introduces the *Mussaf* for Shavuos by describing it as *Yom Habikurim* (Shavuos) when we bring the new offering. Why does the Torah use such descriptive language for Shavuos in describing it as the day when the *Mincha Chadasha* was brought, a descriptive syntax that is not used when introducing the *Mussaf* for the other festivals? After all, in Parshas Pinchas we are interested specifically in the *Korban Mussaf* of Shavuos, so why even mention *Mincha Chadasha* when describing the *Mussaf* of Shavuos? Because without that *Mincha Chadasha* we would not have a festival of Shavuos. It is an integral factor, together with the counting of the fiftieth day, in establishing the *Kdushas Hayom* for Shavuos as the *Atzeres* of Pesach.

The Rambam says (*Hilchos Tmidim Umasaffim*) that the fiftieth day of the counting of the Omer is *Chag HaShavuos*, because on that day they brought the *Shtay Halechem* which completes and concludes the *Korban HaOmer* brought 50 days earlier. The Torah commands us to count 50 days and then bring the new offering in order that we recognize that the *Kovea* of *Kdushas Hayom* on Shavuos is the *Shtay Halechem*. The *Issur Mlacha* does not impose the *Kdushas Hayom*, it is only mentioned well after the description of the special sacrifice associated with the *Shtay Halechem*, *Ukrasem Betzem Hayom Hazeh Mikra Kodesh Yihye Lachem Kol Mleches Avoda Lo Taasu* (and according to the Ramban this applies even when there is no *Beis Hamikdash* and no offering of the *Shtay Halechem*). Unlike other festivals where the *Korban Mussaf* is linked to the *Issur Mlacha* and the *Issur Mlacha* defines the sanctity of the day, it is the *Shtay Halechem* that defines the sanctity of Shavuos. The obligation to bring the *Shtay Halechem* persists to this day even though we don't have the means to fulfill it. When the Torah mentions the sacrifices associated with the *Shtay Halechem*, it is pointing out the criterion that gives Shavuos its *Kdushas Hayom*, a criterion that is different from all other festivals. On all other *Yom Tovim* the *Mussaf* is a result of the *Issur Mlacha*. On Shavuos, the *Issur Mlacha* is a result of the *Kdushas Hayom* created by the *Shtay Halechem*.

The Torah does not mention *Isheh L'Hashem* by Shavuos in Parshas Emor in order that we not confuse the *Kdushas Hayom* of Shavuos with *Issur Mlacha*, which is the *Kovea* *Kdushas Hayom* for all other festivals. Rather, it is the *Shtay Halechem* that creates the *Kdushas Hayom*. Even though in Parshas Pinchas the Torah mentions the *Issur Mlacha* on Shavuos right before defining the *Korban Mussaf* for the day, the Torah goes out of its way, *Kvayachol*, to introduce the section by describing Shavuos as *Yom Habikurim*, the day when the *Mincha Chadasha* was brought, to underscore that the source for the *Kdushas Hayom* on Shavuos is the *Shtay Halechem* and not the *Issur Mlacha*. That is why in Parshas Pinchas, the Torah describes Shavuos in terms of the special *Shtay Halechem*, an introductory syntax that is not used to describe any of the other festivals.

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From: Yated USA[SMTP:yated-usa@ttec.com]  
Kortz Un Sharf- Short and Sweet Shavous Vertlach by Shaya Gottlieb

When Moshe Rabenu went up to Shomayim to accept the Torah, the malochim refused to part with it. Moshe then asked them, "why do you need the Torah? Are you humans, do you have parents, that the precept 'honor your father and mother' applies to you?" Why didn't the malochim want to part with the Torah? There was once an elderly Rav, leader of a large community, who desired to spend the rest of his life in relative peace and quiet, away from the distractions of a large city. He asked the leaders of his community for permission to accept a smaller 'rabanus' in one of the outlying hamlets, where he would enjoy some solitude. His congregants, though sad to see him go, agreed that their Rav should do what suited him best. The Rav applied for the position, and was accepted. On the day the representatives of the small village came to 'collect' their Rav, the baalei batim of the large town began to make a commotion. "Under no circumstances will we allow

our beloved Rav to depart!" they said. The Rav turned to them, surprised. "Why are you preventing me from leaving? Didn't you agree to my decision?" "We did, honored Rabbi," said the congregation. "We will support and honor your decision. However, we staged this protest for your benefit, to endear you to your new congregants, to make them aware that we are not letting you go out of our own free will. They will realize what a treasure they are getting!" Likewise, the malochim knew that the Torah was meant for Klal Yisroel. However, they wanted to endear the Torah to Klal Yisroel, to make them aware of the treasure they will be receiving. -The Maggid of Dubna

"All the presents that Klal Yisroel received were taken from them in Golus. The only treasure that remained? The Torah." -Toras Kohanim

"Torah is compared to oil. When a drop of water falls into a cup of oil, it pushes away one drop of oil. Likewise, one word of mockery which enters the heart pushes away one word of Torah. Conversely, a drop of Torah pushes away a drop of mockery." -Shir Hashirim Rabo

"One who sends his child to cheder to learn Torah is considered as if he was mekabel the Torah from Har Sinai." -Kidushin (30) Why is the Torah compared to wine, water and milk? To teach us, that just as these liquids keep fresh only when held in plain, inexpensive containers, so, too, the Torah only stays with the humble. -Taanis 7:1 Why do we eat milchig and fleishig meals on Shavuos? Just as on Pesach we commemorate the Korbon Pesach and Korbon Chagiga, so, too, on Shavuos we commemorate the Korbon Shte'i Halechem-the offering of the two breads, by eating two separate meals. Why do we read Megilas Rus on Shavuos? The Megilla, written by Shmuel Hanovi, enumerates the yichus of Dovid Hamelech, who was born and passed away on Shavuos. In addition, the name Rus has a numerical value of 606, the amount of mitzvos Klal Yisroel accepted at Har Sinai, (in addition to the seven mitzvos Bnei Noach they already possessed). Why do we decorate the Bais Medrash and our homes with branches and grass? On Shavuos we daven for fruit trees. In addition, the grass is a zecher to Matan Torah, when there was grass around Har Sinai. Why do we stay up all night to learn Torah? To be mechaper for Klal Yisroel, who oveslept on the morning of Kabolat HaTorah. -Taamei Haminhogim

### Tikkun Leil Shavuos: Origin and Customs by Pinchas Osher Rohr

The following article is drawn mostly from an excellent pamphlet on the origins of Tikkun Leil Shavuos by Rabbi Benyamin Hamburger, shlita, of Bnei Brak. This pamphlet is published under the auspices of Mechon Moresches Ashkenaz, the Foundation for the Study of German Jewish Customs and Traditions and is used here with the author's gracious permission. An Ancient and Holy Custom This Thursday night, the night of Shavuos, is one of the holiest nights of the year. Our actions on this night are said to have an enormous influence over the quantity and quality of Torah we will be privileged to acquire over the coming year. Nearly all able-bodied Jewish men follow the generations-old custom of staying awake all night and devoting themselves to Torah. Many have the custom of saying Tikkun Leil Shavuos, as has been reprinted many times over the centuries. In this article, we shall examine the sources for this custom and trace the various versions of the Tikkun which have existed. Sources for the Custom The custom of remaining awake throughout the night of Shavuos is recorded in the Zohar (Parashas Emor 98a), which relates that the early chassidim did not sleep on that holy night and spent the whole night engaged in Torah, "to bring ornaments for the bride (i.e. the Jewish people) so that the next day she would be suitably adorned and prepared before the King." Philon of Alexandria reports that even in the time of the Beis HaMikdash a group of scholars would spend the whole night in prayer, and Rabbi Moshe di Lion (5010-5065) reports that in his time also select individuals preserved this custom. Similarly, the Ramban's grandson R' Dovid, provides a lengthy, poetic, description of the importance of remaining awake on this night and reading Torah, Nevi'im, Kesuvim, Talmud, and Agados. R' Shimon Lavi (?-5340), author of the Pizmon Bar Yochai, relates that the custom in his time was to spend the night saying special Kabbalistic songs of praise to Hashem and His Torah. HaBris (Shelah) and has been a source of inspiration and motivation for Jews ever since. By the time of the Arizal (5294-5332) the custom of remaining awake all night on Shavuos was already expanding from its position as the province of a select minority and achieving the status of a rapidly growing widespread practice. The Arizal himself praised the custom profusely and promised that "anyone who does not sleep at all on this night, not even for a moment, and engages in Torah the whole night, is assured that he will complete the year and no harm will occur to him that year." Auerbach (father of R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zatzal) went one Shavuos to visit the Poupa Dayan and found the latter with an exceptional light shining from his face. In response to the visitor's inquiry, the Poupa Dayan said, "Really I wouldn't have said anything, but since you've noticed it, I'll tell you anyway. In my youth, when I learned in Pressburg, my Rebbe the Ksav Sofer passed on to us a tradition he had from his father the Chasam Sofer that anyone who learned the entire night of Shavuos without distraction will merit to see Eliyahu HaNavi. All my life I've striven to achieve this but never succeeded. But this night I sat down to learn and suddenly there came to me a man with a brilliant countenance and resolved for me a long-standing difficulty about a passage in the Zohar. I closed my eyes to reflect on his answer to see if it accorded with the matter at hand, which it did marvellously, and when I opened my eyes again to thank him, he had disappeared. I looked at the

clock and it was already time for davening, and I understood that I had finally merited to success." Non-Kabbalistic Explanations This custom has been explained on a more open level as well. The Magen Avraham (siman 494) writes that we stay up all night on Shavuos since the Jews slept the whole night before the Giving of the Torah and had to be awakened by Hashem (as related in Pirkei d'Rebbe Eliezer 41 and Shir HaShirim Rabba 1:56), we stay up all night in order to rectify our ancestors' act.

Rabbi Shimon Schwab expands on this explanation in his Sefer Mayan Beis HaShoeiva: Our ancestors thought that the Giving of the Torah would occur in the normal fashion of prophesy and so they went to sleep in order to receive prophetic vision in the form of a dream. They imagined that through the simcha of the mitzvah of eating and drinking and sleeping sweetly they would merit to receive the Shechina and prophetic dreams. Indeed, with the exception of Moshe, this was the classic pattern of prophetic vision. Therefore Moshe had to awaken them and inform them the Torah did not work in the same way as prophesy and in order to receive the Torah they would need to be awake and clear-minded, since it impossible to learn Torah otherwise. In this sense learning Torah has an advantage over prophesy, as Chazal said (Bava Basra 12a), "A Sage is preferable to a prophet." Thus we stay awake all night on Shavuos in order to rectify our ancestors' erroneous belief by receiving the Torah with clear minds and open eyes. This also explains why the order of learning on this night is known as a Tikkun. A "Graduation" Exercise

Another explanation given for learning throughout this night relates to the great importance placed by Chazal and other early sources on Torah study at night. Torah learned at night is clearer and more enduring than that learned during the day because people's minds are freed from the concerns and exertions of the day. However, this applies primarily to the longer nights of the year which begin with the fifteenth of Av and continue until Shavuos. After his nights become shorter and Chazal's injunction to learn Torah is relaxed. In this light, the Torah extravaganza of the night of Shavuos can be seen as a siyum of the nocturnal Torah season which has lasted since the previous Av and a beginning of the "summer vacation."

By the time of the Shelah HaKadosh (Rabbi Yeshayahu HaLevi Horowitz, 5320-5390), the latter was able to testify that the custom had taken hold throughout Eretz Yisrael, where "everyone together, from the great to the small, upheld and accepted this practice upon themselves and their descendants." In order to promote the custom in other lands, he wrote: "On that night of the festival of Shavuos, sleep should flee from anyone who wants to cleave to holiness and he should engage in Torah the entire night." The Custom Spreads These exhortations from Eretz Yisrael did not fall on deaf ears in the rest of the world. The Chida (Rabbi Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai, 5487-5566), who travelled extensively to Jewish settlements in all parts of the world, writes that "most of Israel was accustomed to learn on the holy night of Shavuos, according to the Zohar HaKodesh." Similarly the Ben Ish Chai (Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Bagdad, 5592-5669) writes: "One should take care not to speak of worldly matters the whole night, and one needs great watchfulness on this night since people gather in large groups and the way of the yetzer hara is to entice people into speaking of weekday matters." The Magen Avraham (Rabbi Avraham Gombiner, 5397-5443) also writes that in Poland most of the Torah scholars followed this custom. According to his explanation, discussed above, that Torah study on this night rectifies the sleep of the Jews on the night before the Giving of the Torah, the custom should apply to all Jews and not just those who devote their lives to Torah study. Indeed,

efforts were made during the spread of the custom of saying Tikkun Leil Shavuos to involve wider segments of society beyond the scholarly community. Thus Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein (?-5469), author of the Kitzur Shelah directed an appeal to residents of villages and small towns to stay awake all night and study whatever sefarim were available to them. Even if they could not appreciate everything contained in the Tikkun, if their intentions were for the sake of heaven and they did as much as they were capable of, Hashem would certainly give them credit. Nonetheless, Rabbi Yaakov Emden (5458-5536) in his Siddur Shaarei Shamaim saw fit to temper this call with a warning: "Those who remain awake must be careful not to engage in idle talk, and all the more so in frivolities, for then sleep would be more fitting for them and for the rest of the world." What to Learn

As mentioned above, the Ramban's grandson Rav Dovid prescribed reading Torah, Nevi'im, Kesuvim, Talmud, and Agados. Others, however, advised learning exclusively the Oral Torah on this night as a preparation for receiving the Written Torah the following day. While in earlier times there was no standard program as there is now, there was a widespread pattern of learning selections from all of branches of the Torah.

The first detailed syllabus was devised by Rabbi Shlomo Alkavetz, who advised learning the story of the Creation in Bereishis, followed by the accounts of the Giving of the Torah in Parashos Yisro and Mishpatim, followed by its repetition in Parashas VaEschanan including the Shema, followed by the Torah's ending in Parashas Zos HaBrocho. These selections from the Torah were followed by the haftoros of the two days of Shavuos, and Tehillim 19, 68, and 119, Shir HaShirim, Megillas Rus, and the concluding verses of Tanach at the end of Divrei HaYamim. This was followed by the study of two mesechtos of Mishnayos.

Rabbi Alkavetz' student and brother-in-law, Rabbi Moshe Kordovero (5282-5330), suggested a somewhat different order. Following nearly the same selections from the Torah (omitting the Shema and the conclusion of Zos HaBrocho), he recommended reading the haftoro of the first day of Shavuos (the Merkava of Yechiezkiel) as the exclusive selection from Nevi'im followed by Tehillim 68, Shir Hashirim and Rus as Kesuvim. Then he recommended Pirkei Avos as Mishnayos, and the listing of the 613 mitzvos by Rabbi Shlomo Ibn Gevirol (author of Adon Olam). Then he urged spending the remainder of the night learning Kaballa. The first version of the Tikkun Leil Shavuos used in our times was established by the Arizal. His innovation was to learn the first and last three verses of each Parasha of the Torah, in addition to selections from the Torah roughly the same as those listed above. He also included the first and last three verses of each of the Rav Elyezer Papo (5745-5982) author of the Sefer Pele Yotzev writes: "Reading the Torah on the night of Shavuos is a mitzvah, but the Tikkun Leil Shavuos did not include any of the books of the Torah." He advised spending the rest of the night learning Kaballa, each person according to his level of learning. Later versions of the Tikkun, such as one printed in Venice, included the first and last three verses of each sefer of Kesuvim as well as other parts of Torah.

The final version, still in use in our times, was established by the Shelah upon his arrival in Eretz Yisrael. He added a number of selections from the Torah, such as the story of the Exodus from Egypt in Parashos Bo and Beshalach, Birkas Kohanim from Parashas Naso, and the entirety of Parashas Zos HaBrocho. The remainder of Tanach was more or less as described above. From the Oral Torah, the Shelah included the first and last Mishna of each mesechta. This he followed with the first and last Mishnos of Sefer HaYetzira, a selection from the Zohar Parashas Emor, and then the 613 mitzvos according to the Rambam, the Smag, or one of the other listing of the mitzvos. Then, as morning approached,

he recommended reading Shir HaShirim. Interspersed among these selections were thirteen Kaddish d'Rabbanan's.

The Shelah's arrangement of Tikkun was first printed in Venice in 5408. Over the next hundred ninety years, until 5600, it was reprinted in various places approximately ninety times.

Seemingly the custom of saying Tikkun Leil Shavuos was widespread in Lithuania, and the Sefer Yesod v'Shores HaAvoda writes that a person should be extremely careful to to learn it on the night of Shavuos. It is also reported that the Chassam Sofer said the entire Tikkun every Shavuos. The Controversy over Learning Mishnayos

It is noteworthy that in the Tikkun Leil Shavuos described by Rav Chaim Vital (5303-5380), the talmid muvhak of the Arizal, there is no mention whatsoever of learning Mishnayos. R' Chaim Vital's talmidim report that for Kabbalistic reasons he was firmly opposed to learning Mishnayos on that night. Instead, he said, those who are capable of it should learn Kaballah and those who aren't should learn Midrashim.

Shavuos, and it lost my merit for it is forbidden to say and to learn Mishnayos, as you have said" (Zohar Chai 5b).

Nonetheless the text established by the Shelah included Mishnayos and most Ashkenazim, including Chassidic groups, do say them. Furthermore, many authorities throughout the generations have defended the custom. This is an area in which each person should ask his source of Torah guidance for instruction, though it might be suggested that those who have difficulty finishing the entire Tikkun are justified in omitting the Mishnayos sections.

Similarly the Kormarna Rebbe (5566-5634) said that there was no sense or reason (ta'am v'reiach) to