

## Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet

### SHAVUOS 5783

**Since Yom Tov begins on Friday, a rare occurrence, we must prepare an eruv tavshillin, whether we live in Eretz Yisrael or in Chutz La'Aretz.**

**Eruv Tavshillin**

**By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff**

Question #1: Where?

“Is it true that eruv tavshillin is more common in chutz la'aretz than in Eretz Yisroel?”

Question #2: What?

“In what way is the halacha of eruv tavshillin different on Shavuos and Shevi'i shel Pesach from other Yomim Tovim?”

Question #3: Why?

“What is the reason that many people use a hard-boiled egg for eruv tavshillin?”

Foreword

With Shavuos beginning on Thursday evening, the laws of eruv tavshillin are germane both to those living in Eretz Yisroel and to those living in chutz la'aretz. In order to reply accurately to the above inquiries, we must first examine several aspects of this mitzvah that Chazal implemented – particularly, the whys, hows, and whats of eruv tavshillin. Because of space considerations, this article will not be able to address all the issues of eruv tavshillin, but will answer the opening questions that were posed. However, there are other articles on the topic, as well as on the laws of Yom Tov, that may be read on RabbiKaganoff.com.

First, the basics: When Yom Tov falls on Friday, an eruv tavshillin must be made on erev Yom Tov to permit cooking and other preparations on Yom Tov for Shabbos. As it turns out, making an eruv tavshillin is much more common in chutz la'aretz than it is in Eretz Yisroel. Since, in our calendar devised by Hillel Hanasi, the beginning of Sukkos, Pesach and Shmini Atzeres never falls on Friday, the only time there is a need for an eruv tavshillin in Eretz Yisroel is when Shavuos or the seventh day of Pesach falls on Friday, or when Rosh Hashanah falls on Thursday. On the other hand, in chutz la'aretz, in addition to these instances, often the two days of Yom Tov fall on Thursday and Friday.

Introduction

When discussing the laws of Yom Tov, the Torah teaches kol melacha lo yei'aseh bahem, ach asher yei'acheil lechol nefesh hu levado yei'aseh lachem, “No work should be performed on these days; however, that which is eaten by everyone (kol nefesh), only that may be prepared for yourselves” (Shemos 12:16). We see from the posuk that, although most melachos are forbidden on Yom Tov, cooking and most other food preparations are permitted. However, cooking is permitted on Yom Tov only when it is

for consumption on that day. It is forbidden to cook on Yom Tov for the day after, and at times this is prohibited min haTorah. There is, however, one exception – when Yom Tov falls on Friday and an eruv tavshillin is made, it is permitted to cook on Yom Tov for Shabbos.

To quote the Mishnah (Beitzah 15b), “When Yom Tov falls on erev Shabbos, it is prohibited to begin cooking on Yom Tov for Shabbos. However, it is permitted to cook for Yom Tov, and, if there are leftovers, plan them to be for Shabbos. Furthermore (there is a way in which it is permitted to cook on Yom Tov for Shabbos), by preparing a cooked food from before Yom Tov which he leaves for Shabbos. According to Beis Shamai, this must be two cooked items, and, according to Beis Hillel, one cooked item suffices.” (As we are aware, we also set aside a baked item for the eruv tavshillin, but this is not essential.)

Prior to quoting the dispute between Beis Shamai and Beis Hillel, the Mishnah has expressed three distinct concepts:

No cooking on Yom Tov for Shabbos

1. It is prohibited to cook on Yom Tov for Shabbos (without making the eruv tavshillin).

Plan-overs

2. It is permitted to cook for Yom Tov, planning to have leftovers for Shabbos.

Eruv tavshillin

3. Making an eruv tavshillin permits cooking on Yom Tov for Shabbos.

Each of these concepts requires clarification:

1. No cooking on Yom Tov for Shabbos

It is prohibited to cook on Yom Tov for Shabbos.

Let me explain a question that is implicit here. If it is prohibited to cook on Yom Tov for Shabbos, why does an eruv tavshillin permit it? Or, in other terms, there are three types of eruv that Chazal instituted, eruv techumim, eruv chatzeiros and eruv tavshillin. All three of these mitzvos have the status of a takanas chachamim, which means that they were instituted by Chazal to permit something that is otherwise prohibited because of a rabbinic injunction. An eruv techumim permits walking on Shabbos and Yom Tov beyond the techum Shabbos, the distance outside the city or other “Shabbos residence;” an eruv chatzeiros permits carrying on Shabbos from one individual's jurisdiction to that of another. Both of these prohibitions permitted by their respective eruvim are rabbinic injunctions. An eruv, which is a rabbinic introduction, cannot permit something that is prohibited min haTorah, as the Gemara asks, “Can an eruv tavshillin permit a Torah prohibition” (Pesachim 45b)?

If cooking on Yom Tov for Shabbos is permitted min haTorah, and it is prohibited only because of a rabbinic injunction, we can understand how Chazal could create a rabbinic innovation called eruv tavshillin and thereby

permit this cooking. To paraphrase this expression of the Gemara, since Chazal created the prohibition, they can also reverse it (ibid.). However, if cooking on Yom Tov for Shabbos is prohibited min haTorah, how do Chazal have the authority to permit that which the Torah forbade?

Two differing approaches

How we answer this conundrum is dependent on a debate between two amora'im, Rabbah and Rav Chisda (Pesachim 46b), which has major ramifications specifically for this coming Yom Tov, when Shavuot falls on Friday.

Rav Chisda contends that, min haTorah, it is always permitted to cook on a Friday Yom Tov for Shabbos. This is called tzorchei Shabbos na'asin beYom Tov, literally, "Shabbos needs may be performed on Yom Tov." Since Shabbos and Yom Tov both have kedusha, and are both sometimes called "Shabbos" by the Torah, cooking on Yom Tov for Shabbos is permitted min haTorah, just as cooking on Yom Tov is permitted for the same day (Rashi ad loc.). The prohibition not to cook on Yom Tov for Shabbos is a rabbinic injunction; Chazal prohibited this in order to make sure that people do not cook on Yom Tov for a weekday, or on the first day of Yom Tov for the second, both of which might be prohibited min haTorah. Making an eruv tavshillin permits cooking on Yom Tov for Shabbos, since a person thereby realizes that, without an eruv tavshillin, he cannot cook on Yom Tov even for Shabbos -- therefore, he understands that he certainly cannot cook on Yom Tov for any other day.

The other position -- ho'il

Rabbah contends that it is often prohibited min haTorah to cook on Yom Tov for Shabbos. In other words, he maintains that tzorchei Shabbos einam na'asin beYom Tov -- notwithstanding that Yom Tov is sometimes called Shabbos, it is still prohibited min haTorah to cook on Yom Tov for any other day, including Shabbos!

If that is true, how can an eruv tavshillin, which is a rabbinic solution, permit that which is prohibited min haTorah?

The answer is a halachic concept called ho'il, which permits cooking on Yom Tov min haTorah whenever you might have a need for extra cooked food on Yom Tov itself, even when you are not expecting to need the extra food and it is unlikely that such a situation will arise. For example, after finishing the Yom Tov day seudah, min haTorah it is permitted to cook another meal, provided it will be ready to eat before the Yom Tov day is over. This is because unexpected guests may arrive at your door, and you now have a meal ready to serve them. The idea that perhaps something will happen is expressed as the word ho'il; this word is now used as a brief way of referring to a complicated legal concept.

Therefore, whenever it is possible that guests may yet arrive on Yom Tov, it is permitted to cook for them min haTorah. Although miderabbanan it is not permitted to rely

on ho'il to cook on Yom Tov for Shabbos, since this is only a rabbinic injunction, eruv tavshillin can permit the cooking.

However, this heter applies only as long as the meal will be ready to be eaten while it is still Yom Tov. There is no heter to begin cooking a meal on Yom Tov that will not be ready until Yom Tov is over. In other words, according to Rabbah, when ho'il does not apply, it is prohibited min haTorah to cook. Under these circumstances, an eruv tavshillin will not permit someone to cook on Yom Tov for Shabbos.

Thus, there is a halachic difference between Rabbah and Rav Chisda that affects us! According to Rabbah, it is not permitted to put a cholent on the fire on Friday that will not be ready to eat until sometime on Shabbos. Usually, it is perfectly fine to cook food on Friday that will be left on a properly covered fire when Shabbos starts and not ready to eat until the Friday night seudah. However, this Yom Tov it is not permitted to do this, according to Rabbah. Since this food will not be ready to eat on Yom Tov, the law of ho'il does not apply. Since the rule of ho'il does not apply, there is no heter to cook the cholent on Yom Tov for Shabbos, even if one makes an eruv tavshillin! Thus, the menu for Shabbos may have to depend on what one is planning to cook, or, more accurately, on whether it will be cooked in a way that it can be eaten on Yom Tov.

How do we rule?

The Mishnah Berurah, in Biur Halacha (527:1), notes that it is unclear whether we rule according to Rabbah or according to Rav Chisda. He concludes, therefore, that it is preferred to be machmir and have the food cooked for Shabbos in a way that ho'il applies, particularly when we are dealing with a potential question of a Torah law, such as when the first day of Yom Tov falls on Friday, as it does on Shavuot. This means that all food cooked for Shabbos should be edible before Shabbos arrives. The Biur Halacha rules that, under extenuating circumstances, it is permitted to rely on the rishonim who rule according to Rav Chisda's opinion, but it is preferable lechatchilah to have the food for Shabbos cooked in a way that it will be already edible on Friday.

When the the first day of Yom Tov falls on Thursday, and, therefore, Friday Yom Tov is miderabbanan, there is more latitude to be lenient.

At this point, we can answer the second of our opening questions: "In what way is the halacha of eruv tavshillin different on Shavuot and Shevi'i shel Pesach from other Yomim Tovim?"

In the calendar we currently use, the first day of Shavuot and Shevi'i shel Pesach never fall on Thursday, although they both often fall on Friday. When this happens, Friday is Yom Tov min haTorah, and it is important to plan the menu such that the meals cooked on Friday for Shabbos will be ready to eat when there is still time to eat them on Yom Tov.

## Plan-overs

At this point, we will examine the second point that we derived from the Mishnah, which stated, "It is permitted to cook for Yom Tov, and, if there are leftovers, plan them to be for Shabbos." In other words, even without having made an eruv tavshillin, there is a way to cook more than you need on Yom Tov in order to have plenty of leftovers, or, shall we call them, "plan-overs." One may cook amply for the Yom Tov meal, knowing that there will certainly be leftovers that can be served on Shabbos. As a matter of fact, if one follows the halacha correctly here, it is even permitted to cook on the first day of Yom Tov planning to have enough leftover to serve on the second day, or even on a weekday. This is provided that each dish is, or could be, served at a Yom Tov meal on the day that it was prepared.

This plan-over preparation is called *marbeh beshiurim*, literally, "increasing the quantities," which means that, while preparing food on Yom Tov, it is permitted to include a greater quantity while cooking, provided no additional melacha act is performed. For example, if you need to heat a small amount of water for a cup of tea, you may place a large pot of water on the fire, since only one act of heating water -- placing a pot on the fire -- is being performed.

However, it is prohibited if an additional melacha action is performed. For example, if the pot is already on the fire, you may not add extra water to it, since this involves a new melacha action.

## Adding more

Here are other examples. You are making a cholent or cooking soup -- you may add greater quantities of meat, beans or other ingredients than you will need for your Yom Tov meal into the pot before it is placed on the stove, because you place the entire pot onto the fire at one time, or turn up the fire only once, regardless as to how much is thereby being cooked. You may fill a pot with meat on the first day of Yom Tov, even though you need only one piece for the first day.

However, it is prohibited to prepare individual units of a food item, knowing that you are preparing more than can possibly be eaten on Yom Tov. For this reason, you may not fry more schnitzel or similar items than you will possibly need for a Yom Tov meal, since these involve separate melacha actions. Similarly, it is forbidden to bake more than what you will possibly need for the day (Beitzah 17a). Adding water or meat before putting the pot on the fire simply increases the quantity cooked, but does not increase the number of melacha acts, whereas shaping each loaf or roll is done separately, thus increasing the number of acts performed.

Why is this permitted?

Why is it permitted to cook extra on Yom Tov by use of *marbeh beshiurim*? We would think that cooking extra on Yom Tov is forbidden, just as in a situation of *pikuach*

*nefesh*, where it is forbidden to cook more than what is necessary for the needs of the ill person. Why, then, is it permitted to cook extra on Yom Tov, as long as no extra melacha actions are performed?

The Ran (Beitzah 9b in Rif pages, s.v. Umiha) explains that there is a qualitative difference between the performance of melacha actions on Shabbos (or Yom Tov) to save someone's life, and cooking on Yom Tov. Although saving lives is a huge mitzvah and supersedes Shabbos, the act performed is still an act of melacha. On the other hand, prohibited activities on Yom Tov are defined as melachos that are not food preparatory. Preparing food on Yom Tov involves no melacha activity whatsoever, and is as permitted on Yom Tov as it is to set the table on Shabbos. Since no melacha activity is performed, there is nothing wrong with adding more to cook while the Yom Tov meal is prepared, provided that no additional melacha action is done.

## Hard-boiled eruv?

At this point, let us examine the third of our opening questions: "Why do many people use a hard-boiled egg for eruv tavshillin?"

It is permitted to continue cooking on Yom Tov for Shabbos only as long as the eruv tavshillin, or at least a *kezayis* of the cooked part of the eruv tavshillin, still exists. In the days before refrigeration, someone who prepared meat or a different food on Wednesday or Thursday for eating on Shabbos was faced with a practical problem. Once you cook food, it begins to spoil very quickly, if it is not refrigerated. Therefore, notes the Aruch Hashulchan, it was not uncommon that the eruv tavshillin was no longer edible when people were cooking on Wednesday for Shabbos, and an inedible eruv tavshillin no longer permits you to cook on Yom Tov for Shabbos.

Using a hard-boiled egg for the eruv tavshillin resolved this problem, since an egg cooked before Yom Tov and kept without refrigeration will still be edible on Shabbos.

However, in today's world, when you can place the cooked part of your eruv tavshillin in the refrigerator and it will last until Shabbos, it is preferred to use as eruv tavshillin a cooked delicacy that you intend to serve at the Shabbos meal. For this reason, I for the eruv tavshillin the gefilte fish that will be served on Shabbos.

## Conclusion

The Torah refers to the Yomim Tovim as *mo'ed*. Just as the word *ohel mo'ed* refers to the tent in the desert which served as a meeting place between Hashem and the Jewish people, so, too, a *mo'ed* is a meeting time between Hashem and the Jewish people (Hirsch, Vayikra 23:3 and Horeb). Unlike Shabbos, when we refrain from all melacha activity, on Yom Tov the Torah permits melacha activity that enhances the celebration of the Yom Tov as a *mo'ed*. Permitting us to cook delicious, fresh meals allows an even greater celebration of this unique meeting time with Hashem.

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[CS – Adding 2 late breaking additions]

[from: Ira Zlotowitz <Iraz@klalgovoah.org>

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subject: Tidbits • Shavuos 5783

SHAVUOS

Yaaleh veyavo is said throughout Yom Tov in bircas hamazon. A man who omits yaaleh veyavo repeats bircas hamazon, a woman does not • There is a custom to eat dairy on Shavuos. Many have a dairy meal, while others suffice with a milchige Kiddush. Some explain that the source of the minhag is that immediately after Kabbalas HaTorah, Klal Yisroel opted to eat dairy as they had no kosher meat due to their new kashrus obligations requiring shechitah knives and kashered utensils. Another reason given is that halachah dictates that a loaf of bread from a dairy meal may not be used at a meat meal and vice versa. A dairy meal - and its required second loaf of bread - thus allows us to commemorate the Sh'tei Halechem, the two loaves of bread which were brought to the mizbe'ach in the Beis Hamikdash on Shavuos.

First Night of Yom Tov: Maariv may not begin until after nightfall (some wait as late as 72 minutes after shekiya), so as to ensure there are 49 complete days - "sheva shabason temimos" - seven complete weeks - in the Sefirah count • Shehecheyanu is recited both nights of Yom Tov • There is a minhag to learn Torah throughout the first night of Shavuos until morning. One reason suggested is that at Har Sinai Klal Yisrael had to be woken and were not properly ready at the time of Kabbalas HaTorah. To rectify this misdeed, we stay awake on the night of Kabbalas HaTorah immersed in learning. Many recite Tikkun Leil Shavuos.

First Day of Shavuos: After daybreak, one who has not slept should relieve himself, wash his hands and only then say al netillas yadayim, along with asher yatzar. One who has not slept at all since the prior evening may not recite: Elokai neshamah, bircas hatorah, and hamaavir sheina, but rather should be yotzei these berachos from someone who slept. The prevalent minhag is to be yotzei all of the birchos hashachar from someone else. When making the berachah on the tallis gadol, one should have in mind to include his tallis katan. Otherwise, one should be yotzei the berachah on his tallis katan through another person • Hallel is said after Shacharis. Akdamus is 'chanted' by the Baal Koreh before beginning leining. Many have the minhag to stand when the Aseres Hadibros are leined. Kah Keili is sung before mussaf. Mussaf includes bircas kohanim.

Second Night of Shavuos: Candle lighting for Shabbos must be done at the usual zman well before shekiya of the first day Yom Tov afternoon. Cooking preparations must cease before shekiya. All Shabbos restrictions regarding cooking and carrying (outside an eruv) are applicable on the second day of Yom Tov • The berachah on candle lighting is "L'hadlik ner shel Shabbos v'shel Yom Tov" • An abridged version of Kabbalas Shabbos is recited on

Friday night. Some have the custom to make "early Shabbos" (as recommended by the Mishnah Berurah סימן תקכ"ז ס"ק ג) • The additions for Shabbos are said in Shemoneh Esrei.

Second Day of Shavuos: Shacharis is followed by hallel • Megillas Rus is leined prior to kerias hatorah • The Yud Gimmel Middos before kerias hatorah are not said. The leining is divided into seven aliyos (instead of five). Yetziv Pisgam is read during the haftarah. • Y'kam Purkan is said, followed by Yizkor. Most shuls do not say Kah Keili before mussaf due to Yizkor • The special supplications during Bircas Kohanim are omitted • The complete havdalah for Motzaei Shabbos is recited.

TORAH READING

First Day: The leining (Shemos 19:1-20:23) is the event of Kabbalas HaTorah, the underlying focus of the holiday of Shavuos. Maftir (Bamidbar 28:26-31) is the korbanos of the Yom Tov. The haftarah is the Ma'asah Hamerkavah (Yechezkel 1:1-28, 3:12) which is considered to be a quintessential event of gilui Shechinah, a form of revelation of Hashem. Yet, those present at Har Sinai, which includes the neshamos of all of Klal Yisroel, experienced an even loftier revelation of Hashem's glory during the event of Matan Torah.

Second Day: The leining is from Devarim 14:22-16:17 (an extra section is added due to Shabbos), which ends with a discussion of the Yamim Tovim. Maftir (Bamidbar 28:26-31) is the korbanos of the Yom Tov. The haftarah is from Chavakuk (2:20-3:19) and also relates an event similar to the Maysah Hamerkavah (see above). It also contains the pasuk that the Gemara (Avodah Zara 2b) explains as referencing Hashem offering the Torah to the other nations and ultimately giving it to Klal Yisrael..

Megillas Rus is leined on the second day of Shavuos; the Abudraham gives two reasons for this. First, much of the episode of Rus occurs during the harvesting season, and Shavuos is called the Chag Hakatzir, the festival of harvesting. Second, at Kabbalas HaTorah our nation entered a bris, the covenant with Hashem. We thus relate the episode of Rus converting and entering into the bris, the covenant of Judaism.

Megillas Rus: Elimelech's family leaves Eretz Yisrael for Moav due to a famine • Rus and Orpah, Moabite princesses, marry Elimelech's two sons • Elimelech and his sons pass away, leaving his wife Na'ami, Rus and Orpah widowed • Na'ami beseeches Rus and Orpah to return to their families and she will return to Beis Lechem • Rus refuses, seeking to remain attached to Na'ami and the Jewish nation • Upon reaching Beis Lechem, Rus seeks out food for herself and her mother-in-law • The owner of the field, Boaz, provides her with food • Boaz inquires about her identity • Na'ami informs Rus of her family ties to Boaz • Na'ami advises Rus to ask Boaz to redeem Elimelech's property through marrying Rus, invoking the laws of yibum • Rus proposes this approach to Boaz one

night • Boaz advises Rus that another person has first rights to be the redeemer • The first redeemer (identified only as Ploni Almoni, “so and so”), declines to be her redeemer • Boaz marries Rus • She bears a child Oved, who has a child Yishai, who is the father of David Hamelech

#### FOR THE SHABBOS TABLE

The Magen Avraham offers an explanation as to what connects Megillas Rus to Shavuos. It is said that Kabbalas HaTorah can only be achieved through initial hardship. As Rashi explains (Shemos 19:5): Hashem told Klal Yisrael, “If you will accept the Torah, it will be sweet for you; however, know that all beginnings are difficult.” Although Rus was the daughter of a king, she chose to forgo all material and social comforts to join Klal Yisrael without even knowing if she would be able to build a family due to her foreign lineage. Despite, or perhaps in the merit of, her initial difficulties, she married Boaz, one of the Gedolei Hador, and ultimately became the matriarch of Malchus Beis Dovid.

Each morning, the berachah of La’asok B’Divrei Torah, to busy oneself in the words of the Torah, is recited, immediately followed by V’haarev Na, a plea to sweeten those same words. Every day, we renew our commitment to accepting the yoke of Torah, with faith that Hashem will fulfill His promise of making the Torah sweet. As we celebrate Shavuos and commemorate Matan Torah, we recognize that our efforts and resolve will affect sweetness in Torah learning and true satisfaction]

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[http://torahweb.org/torah/2023/moadim/rsob\\_shavuos.html](http://torahweb.org/torah/2023/moadim/rsob_shavuos.html)

#### **TorahWeb**

#### **Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky**

#### **Shabbos and Yom Tov - Hashem and His People**

During this upcoming week we will experience two different periods of kedushas zman in the form of Shabbos and Shavuos. Kedushas yom tov differs from kedushas Shabbos in several ways. There are activities such as aspects of food preparation that are permissible on yom tov even though they are prohibited on Shabbos. In the realm of positive mitzvos, the mitzvah of simcha - rejoicing is, according to most opinions, unique to yom tov and does not apply to Shabbos. Not only are there intricate halachic distinctions between the two, but the very source of the two sanctities is fundamentally different. Chazal highlighted this by instituting the culmination of the beracha of shemone esrei and kiddush different on yom tov than that which is recited on Shabbos. On Shabbos there is no mention of the Jewish people sanctifying Shabbos, rather Hashem is the Mekadesh Hashabbos - the One who makes Shabbos holy. On yom tov, however, we conclude this parallel beracha by acknowledging that Hashem declares the Jewish people to be holy and they, in turn, sanctify yom tov.

Several hundred years after the destruction of the second Beis Hamikdash a critical question arose that would impact upon the future observance of all the yomim tovim. Kiddush hachodesh - the sanctification of the new moon based on witnesses and the declaration of the beis din - ceased to exist. There was no longer a beis din qualified to perform this mitzvah and as such the question of how to observe Rosh Chodesh in its absence was of great concern; without Rosh Chodesh there could not be any yom tov. It was at this time that the set calendar that is in use until today was set up by Chazal under the leadership of Hillel the second. There is a dispute between the rishonim as to precisely how a set calendar can suffice in place of a monthly declaration by beis din. The Rambam's view is that the Jewish community living in Eretz Yisrael "declares" Rosh Chodesh by simply observing it as such. Our entire observance of yom tov today is only possible because the Jewish people, represented by those in Eretz Yisrael, sanctify Rosh Chodesh. No such procedure is necessary, however, for Shabbos. Declared holy by Hashem, Shabbos occurs with no input by the Jewish people. In fact, Shabbos predated the Jewish people as Hashem sanctified the Shabbos of creation well before Klal Yisrael existed. Rosh Chodesh and yom tov only came into existence upon the formation of Klal Yisrael as a nation when they were leaving Mitzrayim.

Matan Torah similarly has two dimensions to it. There is a part of Torah that emanates entirely from Hashem. The written Torah and the actual halachos that were given directly to Moshe require no human input, and they are similar to Shabbos in this respect. However, there is a portion of Torah that necessitates human involvement. Many halachos must be determined by using the rules of Torah interpretations given to Moshe at Har Sinai. When different opinions arise about the correct applications of these principles to new situations, we are required by the Torah to put the issue to a vote among the sages of the generation, and their decisions become an integral part of the Torah. Additionally, there are rabbinic enactments that are made that also become halacha, and this aspect of Torah is closer in nature to yom tov than to Shabbos. Hashem gave the Torah sages the ability to help determine the laws of the Torah, which is similar to the Jewish people's role in declaring the sanctity of yom tov.

Delegating the awesome responsibility to human beings to declare yom tov and decide Torah law is fraught with danger. One can begin to think that we have the authority to tamper with Hashem's word. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Shabbos is called "Rishon l'mikraei kodesh - the first of the holy days". One must be totally committed to the notion of Shabbos before approaching yom tov. We can only declare yom tov if we are completely subservient to the will of Hashem. It is a privilege to be asked by Hashem to join Him in the sanctification of time. As His humble servants we accept

this privilege by totally following His directives dictated to us by the halachos of kiddush hachodesh.

Perhaps an even greater challenge presents itself when being given the responsibility to delve into Hashem's Torah and apply its laws and protect it with rabbinic enactments. One can erroneously think that free reign is given to tamper with the Torah and adjust it to one's own desires. Only great Torah sages who are completely dedicated to the entire Torah as the eternal word of Hashem can undertake the tremendous responsibility of interpreting and applying its laws properly.

As we observe yom tov and Shabbos during this year's celebration of Zman Matan Toraseinu, let us strengthen our resolve to be recipients of Hashem's kedushas hazman and His Torah. We look forward to the time when kiddush hachodesh and the Sanhedrin will return, and when we will merit the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecy - "כי מציון תצא" [".תורה ודבר ה' מירושלים"].

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## Home Sabbath/ Holidays SHAVUOT

### Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

Fifty days pass quickly, especially if one counts them individually. It seems that it was just yesterday that we were preparing ourselves to sit down at the Pesach seder table and here it is Shavuot at the end of the week. Though the holiday has a number of other names associated with it – the Festival of Bikurim/First Fruits, the festival of the granting of the Torah – the proper name assigned to it is Shavuot – the Festival of Weeks.

The emphasis that the name gives us is that of the passage and counting of time. In its description of the festival itself, the Torah repeats, a number of times, this passage of weeks from the holiday of Pesach to the celebration of the holiday of Shavuot. It is apparent that this passage of time is deemed to be an important part of the significance of the holiday itself.

In the Talmud, as well as in the Bible itself, the holiday of Shavot is referred to as being atzeret - an adjunct and bookend, so to speak, to Pesach. Somehow it completes the process of redemption of the Jewish people from Egyptian bondage. It illustrates for us the purpose of that redemption and the true goal that freedom points us to in our personal and national lives.

It is as though the revelation at Sinai and the granting of the Torah is the strategic goal of the entire story of the Jewish people in Egypt while the actual Exodus from Egypt is the necessary tactic to allow this strategic goal to be attained. Only by connecting Shavuot to Pesach with this seven-week counting does this message become clear and cogent to us.

The connection of Shavuot to the bounty and blessings of agricultural produce is also emphasized in the Torah and is the backdrop to the drama of the book of Ruth, which by custom is read publicly in the synagogue on Shavuot. Humans cannot live by bread alone but they cannot live

without bread either. Therefore, we are reminded on Shavuot of the daily miracle of nature that provides food and sustenance for us all.

In our blessed current circumstances of plenty we often think that our food is from the supermarket and that we are somehow entitled to enjoy the quantities and varieties of food available to us. We always look for the hand of God, so to speak, in unusual and unforeseen circumstances. However, in the regular every day mundane activities that we are engaged in, we find it more difficult to sense the Divine Presence.

The agricultural nature of the holiday of Shavuot comes to remind us of the constant presence of God in our lives every time we sit down to eat the food produced by our earth. There was a time in the world when not only Jews said blessings of thanksgiving before and after their meals. The modern world has swept that antiquated custom aside today. However in Jewish life it remains a vital part of our daily activity and a necessary reminder as to the blessings that God has bestowed upon the agricultural toils of man. Freedom without food is a calamity. Shavuot reminds us of this obvious but often neglected truth.

Finally, Shavuot comes to reinforce our belief in the primacy of Torah study and observance in our life, both individually and as a nation. Rav Saadyah Gaon's famous statement that "Our nation is a nation only by virtue of our Torah" has been proven true by the millennia of Jewish history and its events. Those who forsook any connection to Torah, they and/or their descendants eventually fell away from the Jewish people.

It is the Torah and the revelation at Sinai that binds all of Israel together – Ashkenazi and Sephardi, Yemenite and Lithuanian, and in all shades in between, politically liberal and conservative and old and young. It is the Torah that crosses all lines and groupings within Israel.

This is the idea that the Torah itself expresses, that at Sinai we were all "of one heart and one being." Shavuot is the holiday of Jewish unity, of the acceptance of our individual differences within the framework of the goal of becoming a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. There was a seven-week process that led from the slavery of Egypt to the glory of Sinai. We are also in the midst of a process of rebuilding the Jewish people, strengthening the Jewish state, and revitalizing the actual Land of Israel. This process takes time and will not be accomplished in only seven weeks. But the example of the seven-week wait for Shavuot should stand us in good stead.

Shabbat shalom

Chag sameach

Berel Wein

**Please daven for him:**

**Harav Dov ben Esther**

Rabbi Wein is out of surgery. The doctors are pleased with the results, although it is early to see the benefits.

<https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/371859>

## **A Natural Blessing is More Preferable Than a Revealed Miracle**

### **Revivim -- Rav Eliezer Melamed**

A blessing that comes in a natural way is preferable than a revealed miracle which indicates an uncorrected situation, and arouses fear an additional calamity is approaching \* Thus we have found concerning four kings of Israel – David, Asa, Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah – the greater degree on which they relied on a miracle, as a result, calamity increased \* Although he was one of the greatest figures to pray and repent before God, King David was careful to ask God to give him the strength to prevail over his enemies by means of his own hands, and those of his warriors

There are some people who mistakenly think that miracles are preferable. In their opinion, the more we describe the Six Day War as a miracle beyond nature, the better. However, truth is the real blessing occurs when Torah and its mitzvot are observed, and then, blessing flows in a natural way. The mitzvah of Yishuv Ha'Aretz (settling the Land) and enlisting in the army are fulfilled, and we merit settling the Land and defeating our enemies. The mitzvot related to family are observed, and we merit having blessed families. And so forth in all matters.

However when a miracle is required, it is a sign that the situation is dire, and calamity could be lurking around the corner. The greater the miracle, the greater the fear of calamity should be. Because a miracle is like a loan on the grey market – the interest on which constantly rises, and if we fail to immediately correct our actions and repent, the calamity following the miracle, increases immeasurably.

#### **Four Kings**

Thus we learned in the Midrash:

“There were four kings, each of whom requested different things. They were David, Asa, Yehoshaphat, and Chizkiyahu. David said: ‘I have pursued my enemies and overtaken them: neither did I turn back until they were consumed.’ God answered him, and he killed his enemies. Asa stood up and said: ‘I lack the strength to kill them; instead, I will pursue them, and You do what is necessary.’ God said to him “I will do it,” and killed his enemies. Yehoshaphat stood up and said: ‘I do not have the strength either to kill them, or to chase them; instead, I will sing a song, and You do what is necessary.’ God said to him “I will do it”, and killed his enemies. Chizkiyahu stood up and said: ‘I do not have the strength either to kill them, chase them, or to sing; instead, I will sleep on my bed, and You do what is necessary.’ God said to him “I will do it”, as it is written: “And it came to pass that night that the angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of Ashur” (Eicha Rabba Petichta 30).

#### **King David was Victorious without Miracles**

David, King of Israel, did not ask for any miracle. After Shaul's defeat, he began to train the soldiers of Israel, so they could be victorious in war, as written: “And he said to

teach the sons of Judah the bow. Behold it is written in ‘Sefer Ha'yashar’ (the Book of the Just)” (2 Samuel 1:18). ‘Sefer Ha'yashar’ is the Torah, in which we learn that it is a mitzvah to serve in the army for the sake of the people, and the country. The book ‘Bamidbar’ is called ‘Chumash ha'Pikudim’ (the Book of Census) because in it, the soldiers who are required to conquer the Land, are counted. Therefore, the gravest sin in the ‘Chumash ha'Pikudim’ is the Sin of the Spies, in which they were afraid to fight for the Land, and asked that the Land be conquered before them, by a miracle. David was also the greatest worshiper, but in his prayers he did not ask for a miracle, rather, asked God to help him reveal all his powers naturally.

Thanks to this, David won all his wars, and laid the foundation for the kingdom of Judah and Israel for more than four hundred years.

Asa Needed a Minor Miracle, and His Calamity was Minor About sixty years after the death of King David, after the kingdom of Israel had already been divided from the kingdom of Judah, Asa became king of Judah. At first, he did what was right in the eyes of God, and when he began to grow stronger, Zerah the Cushite came from Egypt against him with a very large force. The situation was extremely dangerous. “Asa called to the LORD his God, and said, “O LORD, it is all the same to You to help the numerous and the powerless. Help us, O LORD our God, for we rely on You, and in Your name we have come against this great multitude... So the LORD routed the Cushites before Asa and Judah, and the Cushites fled. Asa and the army with him pursued them as far as Gerar. Many of the Cushites fell wounded beyond recovery, for they broke before the LORD and His camp. Very much spoil was taken” (2 Chronicles, 14: 10-13). This is what Asa said: “I do not have the power to kill them, but I will pursue them, and You kill them, and God answered him and killed his enemies.”

It was a miracle, but not a great one, since Asa himself pursued his enemies. After the great victory over Egypt, there was hope that Asa would grow stronger in his faith, and unite the Kingdom of Judah and Israel. However, when Aram and Israel came up against him, instead of strengthening against them and winning as the prophet Hanani said, fear befell him, and he took a large amount of silver and gold from the Temple, and bribed Aram with them. The bribe succeeded, and Aram began to attack the Kingdom of Israel and conquer territories from its northern border, and King Baasha of Israel was forced to withdraw from the border of Judah. At that time, Hanani the prophet came and rebuked Asa for not relying on God, for if he had strengthened his faith, he could have defeated them and united the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Instead of repenting, Asa became angry with the prophet, and imprisoned him in the stocks. Judah was weakened, its treasures dwindled, and the opportunity to unite all of Israel under the Kingdom of Judah was missed. From then

on Asa oppressed the people, suffered from an acute foot ailment, and two years later, died. Even in his illness, he did not pray to God, but rather, contented himself with turning to doctors (2 Chronicles 10-16; 1 Kings 15:9-24). Thus, the miracle he received did not benefit him, but made him proud and sin, and two years after the miracle, he died in agony.

#### Jehoshaphat

Jehoshaphat the son of Asa, followed in the ways of David; he encouraged the people to learn Torah and keep mitzvot; God was with him, and he had wealth, honor, a strong army, the surrounding nations feared him, and did not wage war against him. His heart was elevated in the ways of God, and he removed the shrines and sacred posts from Judah, and sent officers throughout all the cities of Judah to return the people to God, and to arouse the judges to judge righteously (2 Chronicles 17:19).

After about fifty years of rivalry and wars between the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, he was able to make peace with the house of Ahab, and his son Jehoram married Athaliah, daughter of Ahab and Isabel; Ahab and Jehoshaphat would go out to war together against Israel's enemies, and were victorious. About them, our Sages said: "Great is peace, for even if Israel worships idolatry but live in peace, the Holy One, as it were, says: Satan cannot touch them" (Sifrei Bamidbar 42).

However, Jehoshaphat was overly enticed by the house of Ahab and began to be punished for this, in that his army was greatly weakened. When the army of Moab invaded Judah, fear overtook him, and he encouraged the people to sing to God, and pray for a miracle. Their prayer and singing to God was wonderful, and God miraculously saved them. In the morning, they realized that during the night, their enemies had fought one another, and fled. About that war, Jehoshaphat said: "I have no power, neither to kill, nor to pursue; instead, I will sing a song, and You, kill my enemies. God answered him, and killed his enemies."

However, as mentioned, the recipient of a miracle should be wary of calamity, and if he does not immediately and most decisively correct the sin that caused him to require a miracle, disaster will follow. Before his death, Jehoshaphat bequeathed the kingship to his eldest son Jehoram, who was married to Athaliah, daughter of Ahab, and gave gifts to his other sons and appointed them governors of fortified cities. However, immediately after Jehoshaphat's death, Jehoram murdered all his brothers, sons of Jehoshaphat. Enemies attacked him from all sides, he lost possessions, most of his sons were killed by an Arab regiment, and within three years, he fell ill with a shameful disease, and died in disgrace (2 Chronicles 21). Following him, his younger son Ahaziah reigned for a year; he continued to sin, and even went to visit the house of Ahab. Just then, in accordance with the command of the prophet Elisha, Jehu rose up against the house of Ahab and destroyed them all,

including Ahaziah the king of Judah, and his relatives and advisers (2 Chronicles 22:2; 2 Kings 8:25-29). When Athaliah heard that her son had died, she reigned in his place in Judah, and ordered all Jehoshaphat's heirs to be murdered, so they would not threaten her kingdom. Thus, a few years after the enormous miracle of salvation, Jehoshaphat's entire house was destroyed. Only Jehoash, the younger son of Ahaziah, was saved, and from him, the line of the House of David continued (2 Kings 11:1-3; 2 Chronicles 22: 10-12).

#### Hezekiah

About one hundred and forty years after Jehoshaphat, King Hezekiah reigned in Judah. He greatly strengthened Judah from a religious point of view, and believed that, thanks to this, he would be able to succeed in rebelling against the Assyrian Empire. The prophets warned him of this, because although he succeeded in strengthening Judah in the mitzvot between man and God, in the mitzvot between man and his fellow man their situation was abysmal; the ministers and the rich corrupted their ways, and oppressed the poor. The Assyrians invaded Judah, and began to destroy its fortified cities. Hundreds of thousands of Jews were killed, or sold into slavery. Hezekiah then realized the strength of Assyria's army. To try to save Jerusalem, Hezekiah surrendered, and agreed to pay huge sums. For this purpose, he collected all the silver and gold in his treasures and that of the Temple, cut down the doors of the Temple, and the gold plating in the Temple. The Assyrians took the heavy tax, but continued their campaign of destruction in Judah, and conquered Jerusalem. The situation was desperate. Hezekiah cried out to God, and said: "I have no strength, neither to kill, nor to pursue, nor to sing a song; rather, I will sleep on my bed, and You take care of matters." God said to him: I will do it, as written: "That night an angel of the LORD went out and struck down one hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp, and the following morning they were all dead corpses." Sennacherib with his remaining soldiers were forced to return to his country (2 Kings 18-19).

There was no greater miracle of rescue than this. However, like interest on moneylending in the grey market, if Hezekiah did not immediately rectify all evils, great calamity was bound to occur. Despite his immense righteousness, instead of working on repairing the relationship between man and his fellow man, and in the process, gradually strengthen Judah – he received a delegation from Babylon, to forge a new alliance against Assyria. At that time, the prophet Isaiah prophesied about the kingdom of Judah falling into the hands of Babylon, and that the descendants of Hezekiah would be eunuchs in the court of the king of Babylon. Even his son, Manasseh, although he was witness to the great and awesome miracle, was more evil than all the kings of Judah, and in his days, the decree of destruction and exile was sealed on Judah.

The Value of Miracles



The great miracles that Israel experienced in Egypt and the desert, were meant to reveal the foundations of faith and Torah, and to guide Israel in their light; to a perfect life in the Land of Israel, but not to solve problems. Therefore, upon entering the Land of Israel, the revealed miracles were canceled. It is our obligation to follow the ways of the Torah, and continue drawing Divine blessing to the Land, in a natural way. Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

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## Essays Shavuot from Rabbi YY Jacobson

<https://theyeshiva.net/jewish/9000/>

shavuos-essay-children-please-make-some-noise

### Rabbi YY Jacobson

#### Children, Please Make Some Noise!

#### Did Our Parents Brainwash Us?

#### Why the Tears?

The local Hebrew School decided to observe Chanukah with a special ecumenical celebration, and invited everyone in the neighborhood, of whatever background, to participate in any way they thought appropriate, or to just come and observe, and have some home-baked cookies washed down with grape juice or heavy super-sweet wine.

There were speeches, dramatizations, and miscellaneous musical performances. At one point Mrs. Goldberg, in the third row, wiped away a tear as her little Miriam scratched out a hesitant rendition of "Havanu Sholom Aleichem" on a shiny new violin. Mrs. Goldberg noticed that a man seated next to her also had tears running down his face.

"Isn't it wonderful", she said to him, "to know that our heritage will be carried on by the next generation!"

"I suppose so," he said, "but I'm not Jewish."

"So why the tears?"

"I'm a musician..."

#### The Guarantors

There is a fascinating Midrash describing a peculiar conversation between G-d and the Jewish people before the greatest historical event—the giving of the Torah at Sinai, 3335 years ago (in the year 2448 since creation, 1313 BCE). [1]

מדרש רבה שיר השירים א, כד: אמר רבי מאיר, בשעה שעמדו ישראל לפני ה' סיני לקבל התורה, אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא: אלעיקי אני נותן לכם את התורה?! אלא, הביאו לי ערבים טובים שתשמרוה ואני נותנה לכם. אמרו לפניו: רבונו של עולם! אבותינו ערבים לנו. אמר להם: ן ערבים. למה הדבר דומה? לאחד שהלך ללוות מן המלך. אבותיכם צריכי אמר לו: הבא לי ערב ואני מלוה אותך. הלך והביא לו ערב אחד. אמר לו: ערבך צריך ערב. הלך והביא לו ערב שני. ואמר לו: ערבך צריך ערב! כיון שהביא לו ערב שלישי, אמר: תדע כי מפני זה, אני מלוה לך. כך בל התורה, אמר להם: אני נותן לכם תורת, בשעה שעמדו ישראל לק הביאו לי ערבים טובים, שתשמרוה ואתננה לכם. אמרו: אבותינו עורבים אותנו! אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא: אבותיכם יש לי עליהם... אמרו לפניו: רבונו של עולם! נביאינו ערבין לנו. אמר להם: יש לי עליהם. ר הקדוש ברוך הוא: הא וודאי ערבים אמרו: הרי בנינו עורבים אותנו! אמ טובים על ידיהם אתננה לכם. הדא הוא דכתיב: (תהילים ח) מפי עוללים ויונקים יסדת עוז... לפיכך, צריך אדם להכניס בנו לתורה ולהנכו בלימוד שיאריך ימים בעולם..

Rabbi Meir said: When the Jews stood before Sinai to receive the Torah, G-d said to them: "I swear, I will not give you the Torah unless you provide worthy guarantors who will assure that you will observe it."

The Jews responded, "Master of the world, our fathers will be our guarantors!"

"Your guarantors themselves require guarantors!" was G-d's reply.

"Master of the world," the Jews exclaimed, "our prophets will guarantee our observance of the Torah."

"They too need guarantors. Bring proper guarantors and only then will I give you the Torah."

As a last resort, the Jews declared, "our children will serve as our guarantors!"

"They truly are worthy guarantors," G-d replied. "Because of them I will give you the Torah."

#### This Is Not a Loan?

There is something enigmatic about this Midrash.

When you lend me money, you ask me to provide you with a guarantor, out of fear that I may default on the loan. But how about G-d? What exactly was He worried about? If the Jews accept Torah, it is because they want it. If they want it, they will keep it. And if not—how would a guarantor help? He will practice Judaism for them?

And why would G-d refuse our forefathers and our prophets and yet accept the children? Just as they can turn their backs on the Torah, so can our children?

At a public address on the second day of Shavuos 5712 (Shabbos, May 31, 1952), a little more than a year after he assumed leadership of the fledgling Chabad movement, the Lubavitcher Rebbe offered a homiletical and humorous interpretation to the above Midrash.[2] He introduced his answer by saying that in America everyone loves to give "derashos"—exciting and hermetical speeches. So, he will attempt to do the same. In the Rebbe's "sermon," he captured one of the deep sentiments of American and world Jewry at the time, in the early 50's, one that still is heard often in our circles, yet now with the hindsight of 20-20 we can, at last, appreciate its relevance.

#### The Three Options

The Jewish people loved Torah and thus accepted it. Torah is music to the Jewish ear, a symphony to the Jewish soul. The righteousness, the depth, the delight, the goodness, the purity, the innocence, and the brilliance of Torah wisdom speaks to the deepest recesses of the Jewish mind and heart. Yet G-d knew that life is filled with turbulence and pressure of all sorts—financial, social, and emotional. There is so much to do and so little time, so much going on, so much stress, anxiety, confusion. Faith and Religion may be cute and charming, but in the reality of life, it is easily pushed to the waysides, not due to evil intent, but because of pain, apathy or ignorance.

So G-d tells the people of Israel: I do not want the Torah to be abandoned. I am sharing with you My most intimate,

precious gift. Who will ensure its continuation in Jewish life?

So the Jewish people say: “Our forefathers—our elders—will be our guarantors.”

My Old Man

What the Jews meant, the Rebbe explained, is that our elders, our Jewish senior citizens, will keep the faith going. After all, they are retired with plenty of time on their hands; they do not have the burden of paying 25k for their child’s tuition. So together with playing golf and cards, why not a little Judaism too?

Besides, older people tend to be more nostalgic. As they prepare for their future, they tend to crave a connection to the past. Religion is good for them, said the young Jews to G-d. It gives them purpose, meaning, hope, community, social standing, and something to do. So, said the young busy Jewish entrepreneurs, our old men and women will hold on to the religion. They will guarantee it. They will come to shul, stick around for the sermon, stay for the kiddush, and maybe even pop in for a Torah class.

But G-d said no.

He didn’t like that option. Because, in G-d’s view, Judaism is not only for the old. It is also for the middle aged, for the body-abled busy, successful, ambitious, robust, driven people who think they own the world, or are coming close to it. Judaism is not only there to instill hope when one gets becomes and frail; it represent the deepest truths of life and love for people of all ages, in all situations, under all circumstances, even when you think you’re on top of the world and you need not G-d or faith.

It’s The Rabbis Job

So the Jewish people said to G-d: Okay, “the prophets—our neveim—will be our guarantors.” Our Rabbis, spiritual leaders, Torah scholars, they will hold on to the religion. (The term “neveim” comes from the Hebrew word which means preaching, “prediken” in German.[3] Thus, the Jews were saying, our preachers, rabbis and teachers, they will do the job.)

We, said the young successful Jews to G-d, will pay the Rabbi a nice salary; we will get him a house, a car, and health insurance. If he does a fine job preparing entertaining sermons, we may even give him a 15-year contract. And he will sit in his study all day and night and study our holy texts. Our dear Rabbi is a wonderful, pious Jew; he will guarantee the continuity of our religion.

Besides, the hard-working Jews argued to G-d, the Rabbi anyway got lots of time on his hands. While we must labor away, he gets to sit in his office and figure out some good jokes and anecdotes for his sermon. We will tell the Rabbi to prepare not only a good joke and some commentary on current events, but also a little bit of Torah, and all will be good.

But—to the dismay of us good rabbis—G-d did not “fall for this one” either. Somehow G-d sincerely believes that Torah was not made only for Rabbis. Judaism belongs to

every single Jew. I am not interested only in the Rabbis, says G-d. I want every Jew. Rabbis may teach Judaism, but they don’t own it.

Last Resort

The Jewish people were now desperate. They thought they would get away by guaranteeing the elderly among them; they were sure that the Rabbis will satisfy G-d. Now what? They were clever enough not to tell G-d to forget the whole deal. But they were not ready to guarantee themselves!

So our clever Jews came up with once last solution that would still work for them, not interfering too much with their daily lives:

"Our children will serve as our guarantors!"

Our little young innocent children—we will send them to a Jewish pre-school, to a Talmud-Torah, to a cheder, a yeshiva, maybe even a Jewish day school. When they are young, we are fine if they study a little bit of Torah. As long as one day they can grow up and move on, we don’t mind if our kinderlach will learn a little bit about Chanukah latkes, haman taschen, and a song about dipping the apple in the honey. We don’t even mind if they are given a taste of Chumash, and Jewish rituals—as long as they can grow out of it.

To their shock, G-d said: Yes! I’m in. You got a deal!

Why?

I will quote my Rebbe in his original Yiddish words:

אויף די ערבות האט דער אויבערשטער מסכים געווען, ווארום אז די קינדער וועלן קליינערהייט גיין אין תלמוד תורה אדער אין ישיבה, איז אויך אז זיי וועלן עלטער ווערן, וועלן זיי נישט וועלן ארויסגיין פון ישיבה ידן און און וועלן בלייבן לערנען. נאך מער, די קינדער וועלן אזויפיל רי אריינריידן אין די עלטערן, ביז זיי וועלן פועלן אויך אויף די עלטערן אז זיי וועלן אנהויבן לערנען תורה און מקיים זיין מצוות.

The Rebbe said something so beautiful and moving: When our children will get a taste for authentic Yiddishkeit, when they will absorb some of the love, depth, majesty and light of Torah—they will ultimately never leave it. They will remain hooked for life. What is more, they will pass on their love for Torah to their parents too.

Our Most Urgent Calling

As Jewish leaders and sociologists wonder about the secret for Jewish continuity, the Midrash quotes G-d’s simple remedy stated more than 3300 years ago: It is the children! G-d knows children best. This is why He knew that if the children will be involved and entrenched in Yiddishkeit, our people and its faith will endure forever.

Our entire future depends on our children. As a community, our greatest concern and passion must be to allow for every single Jewish child to receive a powerful, loving, passionate, authentic, and inspired Jewish Torah education. If your child loves Judaism, our eternity and our eternal link to Torah is guaranteed.

It is about time that we create a “Mega Fund” to guarantee an intensive Jewish education for every Jewish child. It is about time that teachers and pedagogues in Jewish schools be paid reasonable living wages. It is about time to shower

our educators and principals with utmost respect. If our children don't have quality teachers and receive a quality education, how can they be guarantors of a Jewish future? No other faith has attached a higher value to education and to teachers of Torah education. "For I love him," G-d says about Abraham in Genesis,[4] "because he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of G-d to do charity and justice."

The Talmud relates a story,[5] that Rabbi Judah the Prince sent Rabbi Chiya and Rabbi Assi and Rabbi Ami on a mission through the towns of Israel to establish teachers in every place. They came to a town where there were no teachers. They said to the inhabitants, "Bring us the defenders of the town," "Niturei Karta." They brought them the military guard who often terrorized the inhabitants. The rabbis said, "These are not the protectors of the town but its destroyers." "Who then are the protectors?" asked the inhabitants. They answered, "The teachers."

#### My Parents Brainwashed Me

The first annual Bronx Youth Poetry Slam was held in May 2013 at the Kingsbridge Library in the Bronx, NY. When a young Jewish boy, Ethan Metzger, stood to recite his poetry titled, "My Parents Brainwashed Me," no one expected the words that came out of his mouth. The video of his poem went viral within days. Ethan's poem captures why G-d wanted the youth as the guarantors for Torah:

One day I was in school, in class,  
Explaining my Judaism  
When this person has the audacity to exclaim,  
"You know you're only Jewish because your parents force you to be.  
I mean, it's all fake. You don't pray to God because you want to,  
You pray to God because your parents made you think you have to.  
You don't keep any of the laws of your own free will,  
Your parents just made you feel guilty if you didn't keep them."  
My classmates smirk.  
"Your parents brainwashed you your whole life,  
Made you think you were doing God's work,  
But they were just imposing restriction upon restriction;  
You don't have any real conviction of your own.  
You don't really know anything about anything."  
A silence swept over the class and  
I could sense all my friends look at me  
As to how angry I am...  
The more I thought, the more I realized  
That this student actually had a very valid argument.  
I thought to myself,  
"You're absolutely right. My parents did brainwash me.  
From the time I entered this world, my parents brainwashed me.

As early as I can remember, my parents were brainwashing me

To have respect for other people, for their belongings, for myself.

When I was little, they corrupted me into thinking that I need to treat everyone else how I would want to be treated,

No matter what. My parents programmed me to believe that I should stand up for someone if that person were being picked on And that I shouldn't be a bystander if I could stop bullying from taking place.

My parents brainwashed me?

Yeah. My father twisted my infant brain in such a horrific way

That he made me value my integrity, and

To make matters even worse,

He led by example.

And my mom? She incessantly told me as a child

Again and again and again to 'do the best you can; 'And that idea has become so ingrained in my mind.

That I don't define success as whether I get an 'A', but whether I gave it my all.

My parents perverted my way of thinking...

They contaminated my childhood with models and actions about

Love and Faith and Character, and

Yes, Religion, too.

And I'm sorry for you that your parents

Really didn't infect your DNA with any of these ideals."

But, I didn't say any of that.

Because my parents also polluted my conscience

Into believing that I shouldn't judge someone until I walked a mile in their shoes

Which makes me think that God must run marathons each day.

Quite frankly, I don't have the stamina for that. But here's what I did say, "You can call it brainwashing if you want.

That's fine.

I call it: Teaching.

Reb Michael Ber

I want to share with you the story of Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl (1903, Debrecen, Hungary – 1957, Mount Kisco, New York), an extraordinary rabbinic scholar and activist, who became renowned due to his secret negotiations with the architect of the Final Solution, Adolf Eichman (yimach shemo), trying to save Hungarian Jewry from extermination.[6]

Reb Michael Ber Weissmandl was born in Debretzin, Hungry, and moved in 1931 to the city of Nitra in Western Slovakia, to study under the great Rabbi of the city, Rabbi Shmuel Dovid Ungar, whose daughter, Bracha Rachel, he married in 1937.

Weissmandl was a scholar and an expert at deciphering ancient manuscripts. He was the first author to demonstrate the biblical codes. To carry out his research of these

manuscripts, he traveled to the Bodleian Library in Oxford, England, which gave him connections to the Western World to be used later during the hellish years of the war.

As the Nazis were well on the way to exterminate every Jew of Europe, Rabbi Weissmandl entered into secret negotiations with the SS in Slovakia. As a result of a handsome ransom, he managed to postpone the deportation of Slovakian Jewry to the death camps for almost two years. Seeing the effects of the bribery and knowing that as the Germans were suffering defeat they desperately needed money and merchandise, this Hungarian Orthodox Rabbi led secret negotiations with the SS to reduce the murder of Jews. This negotiation which was later named the “Europa Plan,” called for the payment of 2 million USD for 1,000,000 Jews. Reb Michael Ber worked day and night to get the money, but to no avail. Slovakian and Hungarian Jewry were deported and decimated.

In 1944, Weissmandl and his family were rounded up and put on a train headed for Auschwitz. He was separated from his family. Knowing full well the fate of the Jews who are taken to Auschwitz, Rabbi Weissmandl escaped from the sealed train by sawing open the lock of the carriage with an emery wire he had secreted in a loaf of bread. He jumped from the moving train, breaking his leg in the process, and hid in a secret bunker in suburban Bratislava. His wife and children perished in Auschwitz.

After the war, Weissmandl returned to his city of Nitra, where he once lived near his father-in-law who hid during the holocaust and died from starvation in his hiding place in 1945.

#### Please Make Noise

This was the first Jewish holiday after the war. Many surviving Jews who returned to Slovakia, to the city of Nitra, came to shul for the holiday services. It was a packed shul. Rabbi Michael Ber Weissmandl got up to speak, and this is what he said:

My father-in-law Rabbi Ungar would traditionally get up at the pulpit and say these words:

“My dear Jews! It is important to keep decorum in the synagogue. I am going to ask all the adults to maintain utmost respect in our shul. And I am going to ask all of the children to please sit quietly and behave appropriately. If you wish to make noise, you may not do so in the Sanctuary. Children, it is important to remain silent throughout the services...”

“This is what my father-in-law would say each year. But, today”—said Reb Michael Ber—“I am going to make a different very announcement.

With tears streaming down his face, and a choked-up voice, he declared: “If there are any children here in shul, please make noise! Please make a commotion. Kinderlach, if any of you are still here with us in the world, I beg you, through a ruckus!”

The shul was silent. No children survived. The shul had only adults who survived the camps, no children.

And Reb Michael Ber could not console himself. Arriving later in the United States, having lost his family and having been unable to save even Slovakian Jewry, he was so distraught that he would pound the walls and cry bitterly on what had befallen his people. Later he remarried and had five children, founded a Yeshiva on a farm in Upstate NY, and built an impressive Jewish community in NY, but died in 1957 at the age of 54 from a broken heart.

Let's Hear the Ruckus

80 years ago, there were few children left to make noise. Seven decades later, thank G-d, we have a shul filled with children.

ברוך שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה!

I want to ask our children to make noise, to make a ruckus. Let us hear your sounds of laughter, your giggles, and your running around playing with each other.

The Ponovizher Rav, Rabbi Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman (1886-1969), who himself lost his wife and children and community in the war, once remarked: “An orphan is a child without parents; an orphaned people is a nation without children.” Let us make sure today that we do not remain an orphaned people. Let our children generate excessive Jewish noise. Let the sounds of our children studying Torah, celebrating Yiddishkeit, singing, dancing, laughing, and enjoying—resonate in each of our homes and in all our communities.

As we prepare for Yizkor on Shavuot, let us remember all the children who perished, and let us promise them that the lively voices of Jewish children will never ever be silenced again. As we recite Yizkor for our loved ones, for our parents, grandparents, and all our family members who are no longer with us, let us vow to them that their sacrifices will have an eternal future, for our children will once again become the guarantors for G-d's Torah on this very Shavuot of 5783-2023. The voices of their innocent souls declaring Shma Yisroel and Torah Tzivah Lanu Moshe, will resonate forever.

With such guarantors, we will be in business for eternity.

#### Bring all the Kids

Now, at last, we can appreciate the Jewish tradition to bring all Jews to the shul on Shavuot to hear the Ten Commandments as they are read on this holiday.

When the Torah is read in the synagogue on Shavuot, we experience anew the Sinaitic transmission of the Torah by G-d. Just as the Sinai event was attended by every Jewish man, woman and child, if even one child was missing, G-d would not give the Torah to His people,[7] so too, every Jewish person should make every effort to be present in a synagogue this year on Friday, May 26, 2023, as the Ten Commandments are read from the Torah.

This is deeply meaningful. As I was growing up I recall how the Rebbe would suggest each year that we make an attempt to have every child, even infants, present at that moment—that shaped us and continues to shape us for eternity.

[1] Midrash Rabba, Song of Songs 1:4 [2] Sichas Shavuot 5712, Toras Menachem vol. 5. Part of the talk was published in Likutei Sichos vol. 2, p. 572-573 [3] See Rashi to Exodus 7:1 [4] 18:19 [5] Yerushalmi Chagigah 1:6 [6] I heard the following story from Rabbi Yerachmiel Milstein. I would be thankful for anyone who points out to me its original source. [7] Midrash Rabah Devarim 7:8. Cf. Mechilta Yisro 19:11

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## **Shabbat Shalom: Shavuot**

### **By Rabbi Shlomo Riskin**

Efrat, Israel – Our calendar moves from the spring festivals of Passover and Shavuot to the fall festivals of universal redemption and plenty, a journey in time that parallels a journey in space, from the barren desert to the land of milk and honey –Israel.

In the spring, Passover is linked by the counting of the Omer to its concluding Festival of Shavuot, seven weeks later; the Talmudic Sages even refer to Shavuot as Atzeret, or “Closing Holiday” (paralleling Shemini Atzeret, the Eighth Day which concludes the fall festival of Succot). And while Passover celebrates the promise of freedom, our journey from slave-labor and suffering to liberation, it is, for the time being, liberation in a hostile and homeless desert.

When does this journey come to an end? Shavuot, celebrated on the 50th day after the Seder of Passover, gives expression to the paradigm of completion, coming full circle, for it celebrates the bounty of the land, the first fruits brought by the Israelites who have not only reached their promised homeland, but have also established their Holy Temple in Jerusalem!

Remarkably, the holidays of this spring period are sandwiched between the public readings of two of our five Biblical Scrolls (Megillot), each of which features a heroic woman as its central personality: Purim is marked by the reading of the Scroll of Esther;

### **Shavuot by the reading of the Scroll of Ruth.**

And both Ruth and Esther, two of the greatest heroines of the Bible, have come to symbolize both the internal – and eternal – heart and essence of these festivals. But even more so, their stories, their ‘scrolls’ (these two megillot) reflect each other in remarkable ways, each one a prism into the nature of the other.

First of all, we need to keep in mind that just as Passover moves from the reality of a nation still smarting from slavery and only tasting the beginnings of freedom in the more confining, treacherous landscape of the desert to the far more satisfying Shavuot realization of home and hearth, state and sanctuary, (coming home after being away for so long in Egypt), we find that the Esther-scroll of Purim (pre-Passover) describes the opposite phenomenon, focusing upon Jews in vulnerable galut (exile). In terms of our experience of the festive calendar, Shavuot always culminates the trajectory that starts with Purim, inexorably

leading us toward the climactic moment when the Scroll of Ruth is read, ending with its majestic reach for messianic geulah (redemption), the final word recording the name of David, the future king and redeemer of Israel.

A study of the contrasts and comparisons between these two feminist-featuring Scrolls from galut to geulah should elucidate the march of our calenderical journey, which clearly points us in an eastward direction toward Zion.

First of all, the entire story of the Scroll of Esther takes place in Persia, opening with an exquisitely detailed description of the dining chambers of the Persian King in Shushan (Esther 1:6). The Scroll of Ruth, on the other hand, opens in Bethlehem, Israel – and although the rest of that chapter takes place in Moab, the succeeding three chapters all take place around the verdant hills of Bethlehem and Efrat.

It is important for us to realize that the ten years of Naomi’s life in Moab are described in that very first chapter, whereas it takes the next three chapters to detail the crucial events in Israel of only three months duration: from the beginning of the barley harvest to the end of the wheat harvest. These three months prepare the stage for Jewish eternity!

Secondly, according to the Midrash (B.T. Megillah 11a), the Scroll of Esther describes Jews who have the opportunity to return to Judea but opt to remain in the “diaspora;” Ahasverosh was King of Persia immediately following Cyrus, who conquered Babylon and permitted the exiled Jews to return to their homeland and rebuild their Temple. Esther may have even changed her name from the Hebrew “Hadassah” to the more Persian “Esther” (probably from the Persian word for star, and the Persian goddess Astarte).

In the Scroll of Ruth, however, the text makes fairly short shrift of the sons of Elimelekh, who leave Bethlehem (Lit. “House of Bread”) for the falsely glittering fields of Moab (lit. “from father” – a reminder of a Biblical act of incest between Lot and his daughter); their names, Makhlon (illness) and Kilyon (destruction) succinctly sum up their galut experience of assimilation and intermarriage.

The remaining three quarters of the book tell of Naomi’s return to her homeland, and of the triumph she eventually experiences there as the “ancestor” of the Messiah David. In short, the Scroll of Ruth is the record of Jews who leave their exiled status and return to Israel.

Thirdly, the Scroll of Esther tells the story of a Jewess in exile who is forced to forsake the home of her relative Mordecai (cousin, uncle, nephew, husband?) and live with a Gentile King in order to save her people; moreover, the salvation she achieves is only temporary, with the Talmud ruling that we don’t even recite Hallel on Purim since we still remained slaves of Ahasverosh even after Haman’s demise (B.T. Megillah 14). The Scroll of Ruth, on the other hand, tells the story of a Gentile Moabite who becomes a Jewess-by-choice, how she journeys to Israel to live with

her Jewish mother-in-law, and enters the royal family of Judah when she marries Boaz; moreover, she becomes the progenitrix of ultimate Jewish salvation through the eventual descendant of her great-grandson, David.

Finally, the manner in which we celebrate Purim is by drinking until “we can no longer distinguish between praising Mordecai and cursing Haman, perhaps because it was the arch anti-Semite Amalekite Haman who forcibly reminded the assimilating Jews of Persia that they were, after all, Jews; nevertheless, such raucous celebration is certainly not identified with the way in which our Sages generally asked us to celebrate. Shavuot, however, is celebrated by our bringing first fruits to the Temple singing praises to God and staying up all night studying Torah. It seems that true Jewish piety, Jewish future and eternal Jewish salvation can only come out of Zion! Apparently, even a celebration of galut survival must depend upon the temporary “high” of inebriating beverages, whereas a Festival of Jerusalem brings us to the supernal “heights” of our eternal Torah – for even Torah has its first fruits, through which we glimpse our redemption  
Chag Sameach and Shabbat Shalom

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### **Tikkun Leil Shavuot: A Tale of Two Women**

#### **A Study Sheet exploring Jewish national identity and the biblical heroes Rut and Tamar.**

##### **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**

This Study Sheet contains biblical sources (mekorot), discussion questions, and ideas from Rabbi Sacks zt”l based on a shiur he gave in 2016 to introduce his Shavuot Machzor. The original shiur is available to view here. You can also download this Study Sheet in PDF.

First, let us examine the similarities between key elements of Megillat Rut and Sefer Bereishit...

##### **SOURCE 1**

Rashi on Bereishit 1:1

The Torah, which is the law-book of Israel, should have begun with the verse, “This month shall be unto you the first of the months,” (Shemot 12:2) which is the first commandment given to Israel. What is the reason, then, that it begins with the account of the Creation? ... In case the peoples of the world say to Israel, “You are robbers, because you took by force the lands of the seven nations of Canaan”, so that Israel may reply to them, “All the earth belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He; He created it and gave it to whom He pleased. When He willed He gave it to them, and when He willed He took it from them and gave it to us” (Yalkut Shimoni on Torah 187).

##### **SOURCE 2**

Rut Rabbah 2:14

Rabbi Zeira says: “This book [of Rut] does not have anything in it concerned with impurity or purity nor what is forbidden and what is permitted. So why is it written? To teach us the greatness of the reward for acts of lovingkindness.”

##### **SOURCE 3**

Rut 2:11

Boaz said, “I have heard of all you have done for your mother-in-law ever since your husband died, of how you left your father, your mother, the land of your birth, and came to a people you knew not the day before.

##### **SOURCE 4**

Bereishit 12:1

The Lord said to Avram, “Go – from your land, your birthplace, and your father’s house – to the land that I will show you.

##### **POINTS TO PONDER**

What similarities can you find between Sefer Bereishit and Megillat Rut?

Why do Rashi and the Midrash question the reason each of these books were written?

What connection is there between Avraham’s journey and Rut’s journey?

Rabbi Sacks teaches:

icon from the thought of rabbi sacks purple speech bubble  
Now we can see what the two books have in common and what they are doing in the Tanach. Bereishit is the prelude to the birth of the Jewish nation, a book about a family. In the same way, the Book of Rut is the prelude from a tribal society which is not unified to the birth of Israel as a kingdom and a united political body.

Even though the rest of the Five Books of Moses is about the people of Israel as a nation – a political body, and the books of Samuel and Kings are about Israel as a kingdom – another kind of political body, they both have a prelude about family. This is to tell us of the primacy of the personal over the political. They teach that politics alone cannot sustain a society if that society’s foundations are not built upon acts of kindness, generosity, and moral strength the likes of which are best exemplified in stories about the human family. Ultimately, there cannot be a larger society if the individuals do not matter, or are ignored.

Now we move to the crux of our discussion: A Tale of Two Women.

##### **SOURCE 5**

Rut 4:12

[The elders said to Boaz:] May your house be as the house of Peretz, whom Tamar bore to Yehuda, growing from the seed that the Lord will give you from this young woman.

##### **POINTS TO PONDER**

Who was Peretz and why is this an appropriate blessing to give Rut and Boaz?

How are Yehuda and Tamar connected to Megillat Rut? 3.

What message is contained in this blessing?

##### **SOURCE 6**

Bereishit 38:1

Around that time, Yehuda left his brothers and camped near an Adulamite named Chira.

##### **SOURCE 7**

Rut 1:1-2

Once, in the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. One man set out from Beit Lechem of Yehuda and journeyed to live for a while in the land of Moav, and his wife and two sons came with him. This man's name was Elimelech, his wife's was Naomi, and his two sons' names were Machlon and Chilyon, all Efratites from Beit Lechem of Yehuda. They duly arrived in the fields of Moav, and there they stayed.

SOURCE 8

Bereishit 38:7-10

But Er, Yehuda's firstborn, was wicked in the Lord's sight, and the Lord took his life. Yehuda then said to Onan, "Go in to your brother's wife and fulfill your duty as her brother-in-law. Provide children for your brother." But Onan knew that the children would not be considered his. Whenever he came to his brother's wife, he let his seed go to waste on the ground so as not to have children in his brother's name. What he did was wicked in the Lord's sight, and so He took his life also.

SOURCE 9

Rut 1:5

After that, the two of them – Machlon and Chilyon – died as well, and the woman was left bereaved of both her children and her husband.

SOURCE 10

Bereishit 38:11

Then Yehuda said to his daughter-in-law Tamar, "Live as a widow in your father's house until my son Shela grows up" – for he thought he [Shela] too might die like his brothers. So Tamar went to live in her father's house.

SOURCE 11

Rut 1:11-13

Said Naomi, "Turn back, daughters; why would you come with me? Have I still sons in my womb who could be husbands to you? Turn back, my daughters – go; I am too old to be with a man. Even were I to say, 'There is hope for me still,' were I even this night to be married, even if I could bear sons again, are you to wait for them as they grow? Would you be chained to them, never to be with another man? No, daughters, for your presence is most bitter to me now, for the hand of the Lord has beaten me."

SOURCE 12

Bereishit 38:26

Yehuda recognised them and said, "She is more righteous than I. It was because I did not give her to Shela my son." He did not know her intimately again.

SOURCE 13

Rut 4:5

"On the day you buy that field from Naomi," said Boaz, "and from Rut the Moabite, you will have bought the wife of a dead man with it, to restore the dead man's name on his estate."

SOURCE 14

Bereishit 38:14

And she took off her widow's clothes and covered herself with a veil. Disguised, she sat at the entrance to Einayim on the road to Timna, for she had seen that Shela was now grown up and yet she had not been given to him as a wife.

SOURCE 15

Rut 3:8-9

At midnight the man started and turned over – there was a woman lying at his feet! "Who are you?" he said, and she answered, "I am your maidservant Rut – spread your mantle over your maidservant, for you are a redeemer."

POINT TO PONDER

What similarities can you find between Rut and Tamar?

Rabbi Sacks teaches:

icon from the thought of rabbi sacks purple speech bubble  
There are an overwhelming abundance of similarities between Tamar, and Rut. Let's examine a few:

- Both stories begin with the senior males (Judah and Elimelech) moving away from their larger family and into a moral or physical decline.

- In both stories, the movers and shakers are the women – Tamar and Rut.

- Both stories involve the death of two sons.

- In both cases, the woman is left as a childless widow, with no possibility of yibum, or Levirate marriage.

- In both cases, the story turns on a non-normative Levirate marriage. Instead of Tamar marrying her brother-in-law, she has a child with her father-in-law. In the case of Rut, she marries Boaz, which is also an unconventional Levirate marriage.

- In both stories, the women are determined to make sure that the name of their dead husband is perpetuated by having a child that will carry his lineage forward. The women, and not the two men who were obligated, were mindful of the

moral duty to perpetuate the names.

- In both stories, the women are required to act daringly in order to achieve their goals.

Ultimately, the most important similarities have to do with the women themselves. Our heroes, the ones whose acts are essential for the perpetuation of the Jewish people are the most marginalised of characters: Childless widowed women, women from foreign and adversarial nations, to whom people denied help. And yet, these two women, at the very margins of society, emerge as heroines and they allow the Jewish story to continue.

Finally, how do we define 'The Jewish Hero'?

SOURCE 16

Rut 4:18-22

This is the line of Peretz: Peretz was the father of Chetzron. Chetzron was the father of Ram; Ram was the father of Aminadav. Aminadav was the father of Nachshon; Nachshon was the father of Salma. Salma was the father of Boaz; Boaz was the father of Oved. Oved was the father of Yishai – and Yishai was the father of David.

SOURCE 17

I Shmuel 16:1-12

The Lord said to Shmuel... I am sending you to Yishai, the Bethlehemite, for I have seen a king for Me among his sons..."... When they arrived, he saw Eliav and thought, "Surely the Lord's anointed is before Him." But the Lord said to Shmuel, "Do not look upon his appearance or his tall bearing, for I have rejected him, not seeing as man does; for man sees what the eyes see, but the Lord sees into the heart." Then Yishai called to Avinadav and passed him before Shmuel, who said, "The Lord has not chosen this one either." And when Yishai had Shama pass, he said, "The Lord has not chosen this one either." Yishai had his seven sons pass before Shmuel, but Shmuel said to Yishai, "The Lord has not chosen any of these." Then Shmuel asked Yishai, "Are there no other boys?" "There is still the youngest," he said. "Right now, he is shepherding the flock." "Send out to fetch him," Shmuel said to Yishai, "for we will not move on until he comes here." He sent out and brought him; he was ruddy, with beautiful eyes, and handsome. And the Lord said, "Arise, anoint him – for he is the one."

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### **Shavuot: Connecting to Torah Study**

#### **Rav Kook Torah**

For Rav Kook, it was axiomatic that the Jewish soul and the Torah are a match made in heaven. In his book analyzing the essential nature and value of Torah study, *Orot HaTorah*, he categorically asserted that "The Torah is bound together with the spirit of Israel" (12:1). This is true not only for the Jewish people as a whole, but also for each individual:

"Just as Knesset Yisrael [the soul of the Jewish people] can only realize its full potential in the land of Israel, so, too, each individual Jew can only realize his spiritual potential through Torah study. The Torah is our spiritual 'Holy Land'; it corresponds to the special qualities of the Jewish soul. All other fields of knowledge, with regard to the spiritual potential of the Jewish soul, are like foreign lands." (12:7)

While this is nice in theory, in practice things are not so simple. Not everyone takes to Torah study like a fish to water. If Torah study is indeed so natural to the Jewish soul, why do Jewish educators need to work so hard?

Rav Kook was aware of this problem. There are a number of reasons why the words of Torah may not find a place in one's heart - some practical, some spiritual. In analyzing the reasons why a person may feel disconnected from Torah, Rav Kook noted several underlying causes.

#### **Appreciating Torah**

To properly appreciate the value of Torah study, we must recognize the essential nature of the Torah. The Torah is a revelation of *ratzon Hashem*, God's Will in the world. It is only due to the limitations of our physical state that we are unable to recognize the Torah's true greatness.

Similarly, we need to have a proper appreciation for our Divine soul and its natural sense of morality. People occasionally err and stumble; but overall, we should have faith in our innate moral sensibilities. Thus there exists an inner correlation between the Torah's ethical teachings and the soul's inner qualities. The extent that one enjoys studying Torah is a function of refinement of character; the greater one's moral sensitivity, the more readily one will identify with the Torah and its teachings.

This fundamental insight is essential in order to properly appreciate Torah study. When Torah is studied in holiness, one may sense the greatness of the Torah and how it emanates from the very source of holiness.

#### **Elevating the Details**

A basic appreciation for Torah, however, is not enough. Even if one recognizes the Divine nature of the Torah, one may feel a sense of impatience when faced with its myriad laws and complex details. One may be attracted to lofty matters, and feel restricted and frustrated when studying the detailed minutiae of Halachah.

The remedy for these feelings of restriction is not to avoid Halachic studies but rather "to elevate the value of each detail of practical studies to the richness of its spiritual source" (OT 9:8). A detail may acquire great significance when illuminated by a flash of insight or sudden inspiration. Success in "elevating the details" requires spiritual refinement and perseverance in the contemplative pursuit of the boundless heights of holiness.

In fact, each word of Torah contains infinite light, a reflection of the Torah's absolute morality. One who has learned to perceive this light will gain insight into the inner spiritual content of each detail.

#### **Find Your Portion in the Torah**

An additional aspect that needs to be addressed is that not all areas of Torah appeal to all people equally. In general we should occupy ourselves with those pursuits that interest us. This is especially true regarding Torah study, as the Sages taught, "One only learns that which one's heart desires" (*Avodah Zarah* 19a).

Some have strayed from and even abandoned the Jewish people because they failed to follow their personal inclinations when choosing what area of Torah to study. They may have been predisposed to philosophical inquiry, but lacking appreciation for their own innate interests, they dedicated themselves to conventional Halachic studies. Unsurprisingly, they felt an inner resistance to this course of study, since it was not compatible with their natural inclinations. Had they focused on learning more suitable topics, they would have realized that their inner opposition to Halachic studies was not due to some flaw in this important area of knowledge, but because their soul demanded a different field of Torah study.

Since they failed to understand the root cause of their inner conflict with Torah study, they attempted to suppress their natural tendencies. But as soon as an alternative path



became available, they rejected the Torah and the faith of Israel. Some of these individuals subsequently attempted to promote great ideals lacking practical foundations, and they misled the world with their false visions. Others are naturally drawn to the sciences and secular studies. These individuals should follow their natural

interests, while setting aside set time for Torah study. Then they will succeed in both areas. As the Sages counseled in Pirkei Avot 2:2, "It is good to combine the study of Torah with worldly endeavors."

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לע"נ

שרה משא בת ר' יעקב אליעזר ע"ה  
ביילא בת (אריה) לייב ע"ה  
אנא מלכה בת ישראל ע"ה