



EST. 1916

# שמע קולנו

**SHEMA KOLEINU: SHAVUOS 5783**

DIVREI TORAH FROM OUR REBBEIM, FACULTY, TALMIDIM, AND ALUMNI

# Introduction



Rabbi Michael Taubes

Rosh Yeshivah

YUHSB ('76)

## *Kabbalas HaTorah: The True Purpose of Yetzias Mitzrayim*

When Moshe Rabbeinu first encounters Hakadosh Baruch Hu at the burning bush and is charged with the mission of going to Paroh and taking Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt, he reacts by challenging the very idea. “Who am I that I should go to Paroh and that I should take Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt?” he declares. To which Hashem responds by assuring Moshe that He will be with him all the way, and then adding that He will provide a sign that He has in fact sent him on this mission, the sign being that when the people are eventually taken out of Egypt, they will come to serve Hashem on this very mountain, the mountain later known, of course, as Har Sinai (Shemos 3:10-12).

The last passuk here is quite difficult. How exactly does Hashem address the questions that Moshe had raised in wondering why he is being chosen for this task? And how will the people’s arrival at Har Sinai later on serve as a sign that will somehow show that Hashem indeed sent Moshe on this mission? Maran Haga’on Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik zt”l suggested that if we read the words of the Torah carefully, we will see that Hashem actually gave Moshe two different charges: one, to be His emissary to go and speak to Paroh, and the second, to be the manhig, the leader, of Klal Yisrael who takes the people out of Egypt (passuk 10). Moshe objects to both charges, saying, in effect, that he does not have the qualifications to go and negotiate with Paroh for the people’s release, and that he is also not the right person to lead the Jewish people (passuk 11). Hashem then replies to both objections (passuk 12).

First, He explains that He is not asking Moshe to act as an emissary, or an agent, in the usual sense. Ordinarily, when one appoints an agent to carry out a particular task on his behalf, one’s intent is to leave the entire endeavor, whatever it may be, in the hands of the agent and not to participate in the activity along with the agent. In this case, however, Hashem assures Moshe that He will in fact be joining him, that He will be an active participant as well in the mission of deliberating with Paroh. Moshe therefore has no need to be worried about any perceived lack of qualifications, for he will not be doing this job alone, as Hashem will be there with him. As for Moshe’s second concern, Hashem explains that Moshe needs to better understand the ultimate purpose of the mission, which will become completely clear when Bnei Yisrael are brought to Har Sinai to serve Hashem and to receive the Torah there.

In effect, Rav Soloveitchik noted, Hashem here was revealing to Moshe that the actual goal of Yetzias Mitzrayim was for Bnei Yisrael to come to Har Sinai and there to accept the Torah and that is why he particularly is being chosen as the leader. Had the objective of freeing the people from their slavery in Egypt been to bring about merely a change in their political or socio-economic status, there may well have been others who were better suited to lead this emancipation process. But since the true intent was to create a nation that would accept and live by the Torah, which they would need to be taught, Hashem determined that Moshe was in fact the best person for the position. Yetzias Mitzrayim, then, was just a step, a sign, to indicate what would transpire a little later. Moshe’s role as Moshe Rabbeinu – our teacher – indeed, our teacher par excellence, would be dramatically revealed at Har Sinai and it would then be understood by all that Hashem correctly designated him as the leader of Bnei Yisrael.

It is obvious from the above, then, that Yetzias Mitzrayim was nothing more than a prelude to Mattan Torah and Kabbalas HaTorah. The Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzvah 306) thus emphasizes, citing the aforementioned words from the Torah, that the entire reason why our ancestors were redeemed from Egypt was in order for them to accept the Torah on Har Sinai. As wondrous and miraculous as Yetzias Mitzrayim was, with all that we appropriately highlight and rejoice over at the Seder on Pesach, that event by itself was not independently significant because a Jewish nation, even a free Jewish nation, is incomplete and has no status without the Torah. Redeeming Bnei Yisrael from Egypt was thus not a goal in and of itself, it was rather a means to an end, the “end” being Kabbalas Hatorah, which we of course celebrate on Shavuos.

Despite the unfortunate reality that Shavuos is, ironically, one of the least well known, and probably the least widely observed, Jewish holiday in many circles today, as opposed to Pesach, which is one of the best known, and most widely observed (at least on some level) of our holidays, the fact is that Pesach and Shavuos are really part of a single continuum. Shavuos is actually the end of Pesach, which is why, as noted by the Ramban (Vayikra 23:36), among others, the holiday is referred to in Rabbinic sources as “Atzeres,” which means “conclusion” or “culmination,” with the intervening days of Sefiras Ha’omer serving as the bridge (similar to chol hamoed) between the two festivals.

In general, we are all properly excited with the much anticipated arrival of Pesach when we try to relive and re-experience the events of Yetzias Mitzrayim; we ought to be similarly excited about Shavuos and in a similar vein renew our own personal commitment to Kabbalas HaTorah, as that was the entire purpose of leaving Egypt and becoming a nation.

# Introduction



Rabbi Joshua Kahn  
Head of School

## Birchas HaTorah

*Shavuos, Zman Matan Toraseinu*, is the time in which we celebrate the gift of the Torah. The Torah connects us, binding us to each other, to our history and ancestors and to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. It is, as the poet Heinrich Heine refers to the Torah, our portable homeland. No matter where we have been exiled, the Torah has accompanied us and kept us connected. With the central role the Torah plays, it is not surprising that each morning, we start our day with *Birchas HaTorah*, expressing our love and commitment to the Torah. *Birchas HaTorah* are then immediately followed by our first *limmud HaTorah* of the day, which we accomplish through saying *Birkas Kohanim*, followed by *eilu devarim she'ein lehem shi'ur* and then *eilu devarim she'adam ochel peruseihem*. *Birchas HaTorah* could be followed up by any *pesukim*, why specifically are *Birkas Kohanim* the series of *pesukim* that we first learn? [1]

The Chafetz Chaim (Mishnah Berurah 47:19) provides two reasons why *Birkas Kohanim* were chosen as the *pesukim* to immediately follow *Birchas HaTorah*. Firstly, he uses a *halachah* from *Kerias HaTorah*. The minimum number of *pesukim* read for an *aliyah* is 3 *pesukim*. In order to make *Birchas HaTorah* feel like a daily experience of *Talmud Torah*, we picked a self-contained topic which is a set of 3 *pesukim*. The Chafetz Chaim then follows up with a second reason. He suggests that we want to connect *berachos*, namely *Birchas HaTorah* to *Birkas Kohanim* so that the series of 3 *pesukim* we read contains *berachos* in them.

Rabbi Norman Lamm quotes Rav Kook [2] who suggests a profound connection between *Birkas Kohanim* and *Birchas HaTorah* and provides another approach as to why these *pesukim* were specifically selected. If we analyze *Birkas Kohanim*, we find a fascinating duality in it. On the one hand, being a *kohen* is hereditary. A person is a *kohen* because his father was a *kohen*. Therefore, being a *kohen* is inborn and innate. There is a special *kedushas kehunah*, a profound holiness, with which each *kohen* is born. From the start of his life, he understands that he is holy and destined to serve in the *Beis Hamikdash*. This status is a gift bestowed upon him by *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. At the same time, when a *kohen* stands up to do *Birkas Kohanim*, we refer to this as *nesias kapayim*, or raising our hands, appropriately named because a *kohen* raises his hands under his *talit* to give the *berachos*. This gesture of raising our hands is deeply symbolic according to Rav Kook. It represents a sense of aspiring, reaching higher and for more. In this regard, the process of *Birkas Kohanim* also reflects this message of aspiration, growth, and a desire to achieve more. It is precisely this combination, on the one hand of appreciating our innate *kedushah* and greatness, while on the other hand expressing our desire to achieve more, that makes *Birkas Kohanim* the perfect follow up to *Birchas HaTorah*. Like a *kohen's* claim to *kehunah*, each person is born with an innate connection to *Talmud Torah* and a *chelek* of Torah that is his. At *Har Sinai*, as we prepared to receive the Torah on *Shavuos*, the Torah describes us as a *mamleches Kohanim*, reflecting this *kedushah* that is instilled into each member of *klal Yisrael*. Simultaneously, the *nesias kapaim* aspect of *Birkas Kohanim* also applies to *Talmud Torah*. The natural *kedushah* we possess is the foundation on which each person must reach out their hands and aspire for further growth in learning so that we can fully uncover our *chelek* of Torah.

It is our hope that our special MTA *Shavuos Shema Koleinu* will help in this constant pursuit of growth in the area of *Talmud Torah*. Thank you to our editors-in-chief Yosef Weiner ('23), and Yisrael-Dovid Rosenberg ('23), Eitan Rochwarger ('23) for forming, Moshe Lieberman ('24) and Yaakov Feldman ('24), the executive editors, Aaron Sisser ('23), Dovi Goldberg ('23), Elisha Price ('23), Eytan Sheinfeld ('23), Gavriel Barber ('23), and Natan Horowitz ('23), the editing team, and to Natan Gemal ('23) for managing distribution. And thank you to our Menahel, Rabbi Shimon Schenker, who oversaw this special edition of *Shema Koleinu*.

[1] According to many, Rav Amram Gaon established these *pesukim* right after we say *Birchas HaTorah*.

[2] Foundation of Faith p. 70-73

# TABLE OF CONTENTS



**From “Man” to “Mon”**  
Dovid Wartelsky  
Page: 4



**Blessing Diversity**  
Avi Weschler  
Page: 5



**It’s the Final CountUP!**  
Aaron Sisser  
Page: 6



**The Role of Tzedakah on Yom Tov**  
Josh Appel  
Page: 7



**Let the Torah Flow**  
Noam Sheffey  
Page: 9



**Feel the Light**  
Dov Hochman  
Page: 10



**The Sweetest Gift Imaginable**  
Yoni Tandhaseti  
Page: 11



**Yiddishkeit in Megillas Ruth**  
Isaac Cohen  
Page: 13



**Back to the Basics: What is Shavuot?**  
Elisha Price  
Page: 14



**Standing for Aseres Hadibros**  
Shua Pariser  
Page: 16



**Hashem’s Unconditional Gift**  
Noah Segelnick  
Page: 17



**Did all Jews in the World Know the Real Date of Shavuot?**  
Pinchas Cohen  
Page: 19



**“YOM HAKAHAL”**  
Rabbi Shimon Kerner  
Page: 20



**What is so Special about Shavuot?**  
Rabbi Schenker  
Page: 22



**The Crisis of Midrash Literalism**  
Yaakov Weiner  
Page: 23



**Reinvigorating a Nation**  
Rabbi Shlomo Anapolle  
Page: 25



**Our Years in Yeshiva - A Counting and Accounting**  
Rabbi Baruch Pesach Mendelson  
Page: 26



**Seven Weeks, 5 Names, One G-d**  
Nossan Oirich  
Page: 28



**Sefer Melachim’s Later Lesson of Har Sinai: Zealotry and Friendship**  
Yisroel-Dovid Rosenberg  
Page: 29



**Rejoicing in Talmud Torah**  
Zevi Burg  
Page: 31



**Live In The Present, Not The Past**  
Eitan Rochwarger  
Page: 33



**The Minhag to Stay Up All Night on Shavuot**  
Menachem Aharon Wallach  
Page: 35

## *Shema Koleinu Staff:*

**Editors in Chief:** Yosef Weiner ('23),

Yisrael-Dovid Rosenberg ('23)

**Executive Editors:** Moshe Lieberman ('24), Yaakov Feldman ('24)

**Format:** Eitan Rochwarger ('23)

**Editors:** Aaron Sisser ('23), Dovi Goldberg ('23) Elisha Price ('23), Eytan Sheinfeld ('23), Gavriel Barber ('23), and Natan Horowitz ('23)

**Distribution Manager:** Natan

## **Administration:**

**Rosh Yeshiva:** Rabbi Michael Taubes

**Head of School:** Rabbi Joshua Kahn

**Menahel:** Rabbi Shimon Schenker

**Associate Principal:** Rabbi Daniel Konigsberg

**Rabbinic Advisor:** Rabbi Baruch Pesach Mendelson



DOVID WARTELSKY

YUHSB ('20)

Dovid Wartelsky is an alumnus of MTA and is currently a talmid at YU in Rav Rosensweig's shiur.

## From “Man” to “Mon”

The second-to-last *mitzvah* in the *Torah* is that of *Hakhel*, the gathering of all of *Bnei Yisroel* at the *Beis Hamikdash* after *Sukkos* to hear the Davidic King of Yehudah read from *Sefer Devarim*. *Hakhel* is even compared to *Kabalas HaTorah* by some. However, this *mitzvah* is only done once every seven years, on the *Sukkos* following a *Shemittah* year. In the *Shemittah* year, farmers let their fields lay fallow. However, Hashem promised that He would provide enough food for the *Shemittah* year and the first year of the next cycle, since there was no harvest in the *Shemittah* year. Additionally, a farmer is only allowed to take two meals per day from the fruits Hashem produced in his field. What does leaving our fields untended have to do with *Hakhel*? It seems as if this is a very nice event that could easily be repeated on any given *Sukkos*. Why is it that this *mitzvah* can only be done on the *Sukkos* following a *Shmita*?

To answer this question, we must take a look at the unique food source of the Jews in the desert: the *mon*. The *mon* was a miraculous food that literally appeared at the doorstep of the Jews in the desert. The Jews were able to take the *mon* by themselves. This inevitably led to some people taking more than they were supposed to, and others taking less. However, the *possuk* (*Shemos* 16:18) says “*Vayimodu HaOmer.*” The *Omer*, which was the amount of *mon* every Jew was entitled to, measured itself, and every Jew got the exact amount. This was understandably a great test in *emunah* for the fledgling nation, as they had to rely on *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*’s providence for their food. Additionally, if any of the *mon* was left overnight, worms would eat it, and it would spoil (*Shemos* 16:20). This was another test in *emunah*, as the *Bnei Yisrael* had to rely on Hashem anew every day. Another layer of *emunah* was on *Shabbos*, where, contrary to the other days of the week, the food did not spoil overnight, and everyone ended up with two *Omer* portions, one for Friday and one for *Shabbos*. This constant reliance on Hashem’s *hashgachah* accompanied the Jews throughout their tenure in the desert.

However, after a while, the *Bnei Yisroel* must have gotten used to the *mon*. Since the *Bnei Yisroel* had some food with them when they left *Mitzrayim*, those first thirty days without *mon* would have overlapped with the period of *Sefiras HaOmer*. The *Bnei Yisroel* would have still been unsure as to where their next meal was coming from, which made for an even bigger test in *emunah*. However, after *Matan Torah*, the daily *mon* ration would’ve been cemented in their psyche.

It seems as if the circumstances of the *mon* can be easily compared to those of *Shemittah*: both display complete reliance on Hashem, followed by a *Torah*-receiving experience. By *Hakhel* being after the *Shemittah* year, we are commemorating the sequence of events of the *Bnei Yisroel* in the desert. This is supposed to strengthen our *emunah* and serve to reaffirm our vows in our holy marriage to Hashem. This *Shavuot*, after counting the days of *Sefiras HaOmer*, may we be able to fully appreciate *emunah baHashem*, and experience *Kabalas HaTorah* in a truly meaningful way.

# Blessing Diversity



AVI WESCHLER

YUHSB ('14)

Avi Weschler is an alumnus of MTA. He spent many years on the YU campus and served as an MTA dorm Resident Advisor and ultimately head RA during his time at YC and in RIETS.

The *Ohr HaChaim* [1] says the source of the *brachah* on seeing a mass gathering of Jews, *Chacham Harazim*, is based on the first true mass gathering — *matan torah*. Literally translated as the knower of secrets this *brachah* used to enjoy a more frequent usage as Jews performing the *mitzvah* of *Aliyah Laregel* were able to say it when they stood on the *Har Habayis* during the regalim. There is a machlokes between the Rambam and *Shulchan Aruch* that can reward us with an interesting insight. The Rambam [2] holds that one can only make this bracha in *Eretz Yisroel*, while the *Shulchan Aruch* [3] says that it can be said anywhere. This is an interesting approach for the Rambam to take considering the source is *Matan Torah* which occurred in the midbar! Additionally, why would a bracha that praises Hashem for knowing our secrets be limited to *Eretz Yisroel*? An answer to this question can be given by looking at the *Kesef Mishnah* on the Rambam. He says that the source for the Rambam is a *Gemara* in *Brachos* [4] in which Ben Zomah said the *brachah* when standing on the *Har Habayis* during a regel. The Rambam learned that as *davka* and therefore applied it as an essential component of the *brachah* while the *Shulchan Aruch* did not. While this distinction may sit well for the *Shulchan Aruch*, as the classic understanding of the *brachah* is that *Hashem* knows the inner workings of man's heart, even 600,000 different people (the amount of men at *matan torah* and therefore the minimum for what we consider a gathering), why would the Rambam chose to learn this as *davka*? The *Chasam Sofer* [5] provides an answer. He says that only when the Jewish people live in *Eretz Yisroel* with total control of it will they be required to run and upkeep the land, and in order to cultivate a flourishing society the Jewish people will need people to work in all professions learning and becoming involved in all manner of crafts and professions. Only then can we say that the Jewish people contain all the different knowledges of the world. It seems that according to the Rambam that the praise of the *brachah* is that *Hashem* knows all the different wisdoms that man can be involved in. In a sense this is a praise that *Hashem* created a diverse world in which so many different forms of craftsmanship exist. However, for the *Shulchan Aruch* the praise lies in the psychology of man and how *Hashem* is aware of the diversity that lies with the inner thoughts of all men, limited only by the imagination. Regardless, the *Ben Yehoyada* tells us why we would even be praising *Hashem* for diversity in the first place. He says that it is only because all men are different, whether in profession or though, that we can enjoy our interactions with others and grow from our interactions with them. If we all liked the same things or performed the same craft there would be a massive surplus in some areas, but a total deficit in others. What a limitation on the human experience! And so when we see a mass gathering we praise Hashem for creating that diversity and contemplate how we can reap the benefits of interacting and integrating with a diverse community.

[1] דברים לג:ב

[2] רמב"ם הלכות ברכות פרק י הלכה יא

[3] שולחן ערוך אורח חיים הלכות ברכת הפירות סימן רכד סעיף ה

[4] תלמוד בבלי מסכת ברכות דף נח עמוד א

[5] חתם סופר פרשת שופטים ד"ה מי האיש



**AARON SISSER**

**YUHSB ('23)**

Aaron Sisser is a Senior at MTA. He lives in Queens, New York, and is currently a talmid in Rabbi Tanchum Cohen's Beis Medrash Katan.

## It's the Final CountUP!

We are now in the last month of the school year. Students all over the world are getting ready for the relaxation that summer affords. Seniors specifically are looking forward to graduating. Some of them even have countdown timers installed on their cellphones, telling them that there are a certain number of days left until graduation. This situation is not unique to the school year, though. Many times throughout the year, we look forward to events by counting down the days, minutes, and seconds left. Birthdays and anniversaries are some important events that are commemorated every year. Furthermore, on the night of December 31, one million people gather in Times Square to countdown the seconds to the new year. In all of these cases, people are counting down to things that they are excited for.

However, as you may have noticed from the past several weeks, we have been doing just the opposite. Ever since the 2nd day of *Pesach*, we have been counting *up* towards the holiday of *Shavuos*. We count for seven weeks, each day adding one number to what we counted on the previous night, until we get to the 50th day which is *Shavuos*. Why is there this discrepancy between *Shavuos* and all other events that we look forward to throughout our lives?

The answer lies in what is actually happening during this counting. Normally, when we speak about all of those other fun events in our lives, the counting is just that; it is simply counting. However, on *Shavuos*, this counting is a *Mitzvah* → *Sefiras Ha'omer*. This leads to the question: Why are we only counting towards *Shavuos*? Why don't we also count towards *Pesach*, *Sukkos*, and all other Jewish holidays?

This question can be answered by asking one more question: Why do we count the *Omer* at all? Both *Pesach* and *Shavuos* commemorate the year of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, when Hashem miraculously took us out from slavery and gave us the *Torah*. However, when we left *Mitzrayim*, we learn that *Bnei Yisroel* were at the 49th level of *tumah*; almost at the lowest level of *tumah* possible. Hashem wanted to give us the *Torah*, but we had to be more pure in order for that to happen, so the days of *Sefirah* were established in order to improve the purity of the nation so we could receive the *Torah*.

The *Nesivos Shalom* brings down that if you do the math, *Bnei Yisroel* would have had to traverse 2 steps every day, to grow from the 49th level of *tumah* to the 49th level of *taharah*. How did they do this? Not by removing negative attributes and adding in positive ones, which would be a two-step process, rather by changing all of their negative attributes into positive ones in one step. This should be a lesson to us, that we should always try to grow in our holiness, especially by turning any bad traits into positive ones.

This explains why we count the *omer* at all, and what it means for us, and it also sheds some light on why we count up as opposed to down. In commemoration of that miraculous year, we have the *Mitzvah* to count the *Omer*. It is our job to learn from that counting and to take it upon ourselves to become more pure when we count the *Omer*. We must take it upon ourselves to always grow in holiness, and it is for this reason that we count upwards.

# The Role of Tzedakah on Yom Tov



JOSH APPEL

YUHSB ('17)

Josh Appel graduated from MTA in 2017, attended Yeshivat Hakotel, and is currently a *talmid* in Rabbi Michael Rosensweig's shiur in YU.

*This dvar Torah was written up by Josh from a shiur given by Rabbi Michael Rosensweig.*

The *pesukim* in *Parshas Emor* describe the *mo'adim* and many of the details of the respective holidays. Amongst the mix of holidays we find that for some reason the laws of *pe'ah* are mentioned. Additionally, as we know, *Parshas Kedoshim* begins with the lofty charge of "*kedoshim tehiyu*". Rashi says that this *parshah* contains *gufei Torah* and is read at *hakhel* in front of the entire nation. First the Torah mentions *kibbutz av va'em* followed by *Shabbos* and the laws of *pigul* before then turning to the laws of *pe'ah*, *shikechah* and *leket*. Why should *matanos aniyim* – *pe'ah* and *leket* – be amongst the cadre of laws which establish *kedushah* and why are they listed amongst the *mo'adim*?

In answering why *matanos aniyim* appears in *Emor*, Rashi quotes the *midrash* which says that anyone who gives *matanos aniyim* is treated as though he built a *mizbei'ach* and brought a *korban* on it. How is giving money to an *ani* at all comparable to bringing a *korban* to the *Beis Hamikdash*?

Maybe the idea is that just as bringing a *korban* is meant to bring a person closer to Hashem the same is true of *matanos aniyim*. After all, when a person uplifts and inspires an *ani* he is acting like *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. The *Gemara* in *Megillah* says that there is no difference ("*ein bein*") between *Adar Rishon* and *Adar Sheini* except for *mikra megillah*. The problem is that there is no author of any *beraisa* which seems to conform with this *mishnah*. The *Gemara* concludes that the *mishnah* follows the opinion of the *tana kama* who says that the difference between *Adar Rishon* and *Sheini* is *mikra megillah* and *matanos la'evyonim*. How does that fit with the *mishnah* which doesn't make mention of *matanos la'evyonim*? The *Gemara* answers, *ha beha talya*, *megillah* and *matanos aniyim* are dependent on one another. Moreover, the *mishnah* (*Megillah* 5a) says that on whichever day *megillah* is read *matanos la'evyonim* is given. Why should this connection between *matanos la'evyonim* and *mikra megillah* exist? The Rambam says that the purpose of *mikra megillah* is to bring to mind the notion of *Yeshu'as Hashem*. If so, we can then understand why there is an overlap between *mikra megillah* and *matanos la'evyonim*. Both *megillah* and *matanos la'evyonim* are meant to inspire us to recognize that salvation is imminent and near. When a person gives *tzedakah* they are essentially acting like *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* for He too lifts the *aniyim*. As the *Gemara* in *Sotah* says and the Rambam quotes in *Sefer Hamitzvos* (*Mitzvas Aseh* 8), "*mah Hu nikra chanun af atah heyeih chanun*". In fact, the *Gemara* in *Bava Basra* (10a) says that when a person gives *tzedakah* they rise to the level of greeting Hashem face to face so to speak. As another example of this, at the beginning of *Perek* 10 of *Hilchos Matanos Aniyim* the Rambam says that it is impossible to have proper *das* (religious thought) without *tzedakah*.

If this is the case it can serve as an explanation for Rashi. If a person gives *tzedakah* they are bringing themselves closer to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* – just as is the purpose of a *korban* – by acting like *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. In *Perek* 6 *Halachah* 18 of *Hilchos Yom Tov* the Rambam admonishes those who partake in their own private *Simchas Yom Tov* without inviting *aniyim* to join. This is because a central aspect of *Yom Tov*, which is a day of *amidah lifnei Hashem*, is *tzedakah la'aniyim*. In order to reach the highest level of *lifnei Hashem*, and therefore the greatest height of *Simchah*, a person must act as *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* does by giving *tzedakah*. This is why the Rambam emphasizes that *bechlal* – as in a core aspect – the *mitzvah* of *simchah* is helping the weak and downtrodden (*Sefer Hamitzvos M"A* 54). It is as if to say that if you truly want to be *lifnei Hashem*, then you must care for others.

In *Hilchos Chagigah* (2:14) the Rambam says that when giving the *chagigah* there is a need to invite the *leviyim* specifically to partake in the *chagigah* as well since they have no land nor *matanos basar*. Anyone who does not invite the *levi* to eat the *chagigah* on the *regalim* is *oveir belo ta'aseh*, "*hishamer lecha pen ta'azov es halevi*". The impression from the Rambam is that there is a *lo ta'aseh* violated by not providing for a *levi* during the *regalim*. In fact, in *Sefer Hamitzvos* (*Lo Ta'aseh* 229) the Rambam makes special mention of the *regalim* again in regard to this *lav*. However, the actual *passuk* (*Devarim* 12:19) makes no spe-

cific mention of the *regalim* at all! Why did the Rambam limit this broad violation of *azivas halevi* to the *regalim*?

As a way of answering this question, when it comes to *teshuvah* the Rambam (*Hilchos Teshuvah* 2:7) says that *Yom Hakippurim* is a *zman teshuva lakol* and it is *keitz mechilah uselichah*. However, as is clear from the *koteres* as well as the first *halachah* in *Hilchos Teshuvah* the Rambam believes that there is clearly a *mitzvah* of *teshuvah* all-year as well. Rabbeinu Yonah says that indeed there is *teshuvah* the entire year but on *Yom Hakippurim* there is a special *mitzvas aseh* of *teshuvah* be *Yom Hakippurim*. The Rambam, though, thinks that *Yom Hakippurim* is *keitz mechilah uselichah*, it is the culmination and ultimate expression of an idea which exists all year. After all, the Rambam puts this *Halachah* in *Hilchos Teshuvah* and *not Hilchos Shevisas Asor*. Rav Rosensweig said that according to the Rambam *Yom Hakippurim* is a day which heightens the general opportunity for *teshuvah*. In fact, the Chinuch, who says that there is a *mitzvah* to do *teshuvah* all year, says that failing to do *teshuvah* on *Yom Hakippurim* specifically is the *bitul aseh*.

If so maybe then we can say the same thing of *simchas Yom Tov* and *matanos aniyim*. There is a general *issur* of *azivas halevi* as seen from the *passuk's* broad formulation. However, missing the opportunity on *Yom Tov* given the nature of *tzedakah* on that day is the application of this general prohibition. Meaning, the *issur* exists all year but the failure to be *mesamei'ach* the *levi* on *Yom Tov* is when one truly violates the *issur* because *Yom Tov* is the opportunity to be *mesamei'ach aniyim*.

Simultaneously, there is an additional answer as to why *pe'ah* is mentioned in the *Parshas Hamo'adim* as well, one which connects to *Shavuos* specifically. There are many indications which show that *pe'ah* exemplifies something unique about *klal Yisrael*. Firstly, it is intriguing that the Torah begins with the word *uvekutz-rechem*, in the plural, but then says *ketzir artzechem*, in the singular (Rav Hirsch and Rav Rosensweig point this out as well). Secondly, the Rambam (*Matanos Aniyim* 1:14) says that the *passuk* of *uvekutzrechem* shows us that *pe'ah* is limited to *Eretz Yisrael*. The problem with this is that the *Gemara* in *Kiddushin* says that anything which is *teluyah ba'aretz* is not *noheges bechutz la'aretz*. Why then does the Rambam (quoting the *Yerushalmi*) require a special *gezeiras hakasuv* to show that *pe'ah* is not a *chutz la'aretz* obligation if *pe'ah* is a *mitzvah* *hateluyah ba'aretz* and thus already excluded? Third, even though normally a person can decide who they would like to give *tzedakah* to, the *Gemara* in *Chullin* (131:) says that there is no *tovas hana'ah* when it comes to *pe'ah* (i.e. the *ba'al habayis* cannot choose which *ani* his *pe'ah* goes to). Additionally, in contrast to *terumos uma'asros*, it is clear that *pe'ah* is not a *matir* for the field but actually a *chiyuv besof hasadeh* (Rambam *Matanos Aniyim* 2:12). Finally, the Chinuch says that *Mitzvas Pe'ah* is not in effect unless there is *bi'as kulchem*, the majority of *klal Yisrael* in *Eretz Yisrael*. The *Minchas Chinuch* (216:13) says that *bi'as kulchem* applies to *Shemita* and *Yovel* but *pe'ah* depends on *kedushas ha'aretz!* If the *kedushas ha'aretz* is still extant then that is all which is necessary for *pe'ah*. Where did the Chinuch learn that *pe'ah* was dependent on *bi'as kulchem*?

The idea is that *pe'ah* is much more than just social justice (Rav Rosensweig's words not mine). *Pe'ah* represents that while *klal Yisrael* believes in individual ownership there is an overlaying layer of collective ownership on every field as well. Even while expressing individual ownership there is a targeted *ba'alus haklal* which focuses on *aniyim*. This explains why the *pesukim* are formulated in both *lashon yachid* and *rabim*. For this reason too there is no *tovas hana'ah* either. *Pe'ah* isn't the private produce of the *ba'al hasadeh* which he can give to whomever he pleases; instead, it is simply the part of the field which he *relinquishes* to the *klal*. This is why the formulation of *pe'ah* and *leket* are always *belashon azivah*, a passive allowance for others to take the produce. This is also why *pe'ah* isn't a *matir* either. *Pe'ah* isn't something which has to be given from the field but is the way in which the field itself is oriented and constructed (partly individual, partly communal). This is why the Chinuch thought that without the majority of *klal Yisrael* in *Eretz Yisrael* there cannot be a *chiyuv pe'ah min haTorah*. This is why *pe'ah* has no *shi'ur min haTorah* – it isn't about giving support to *aniyim* only but about something much more.

With all of this in mind we can understand the appearance of *pe'ah* in *Parshas Hamo'adim* following the *kedushas hayom* of *Shavuos*. The transition from *Pesach* to *Shavuos* is the transition from individuals into a nation. When *Bnei Yisrael* left *Mitzrayim* they began the journey to *Matan Torah*, the location of their entering into the covenant together as one. This heightened level of *klal* is expressed in the multi-faceted *mitzvah* of *pe'ah* thus making the holiday of *Shavuos* the perfect location for this *mitzvah*.

It is maybe a combination of both of these ideas which serve as an explanation for why we read *Rus* on *Shavuos*. Of course, *Rus* is directly connected to the themes of *tzedakah*, specifically *matanos aniyim basadeh*. Secondly, many of the *dinim* of *geirus* come from *Rus* (*Yevamos* 47b) which relates to the second aspect we have mentioned here. Perhaps there is no better way to exemplify what *Shavuos* is than by the *Rus* uttered phrase, *ameich ami velokai'ich elokai*. The confluence of becoming closer to Hashem by helping others, by expressing our individual role while recognizing our part in something greater than ourselves – this is *Shavuos*, this is the birth of *klal Yisrael* and the acceptance of Torah.



NOAM SHEFFEY

YUHSB ('25)

Noam Sheffey is a Sophomore at MTA. He lives in Teaneck, New Jersey.

## Let the Torah Flow

One unique thing about *Shavuos* is the custom of eating dairy. This is a very unique custom that has been around for a very long time. Cheesecake I'm sure has now become a staple for you every single year on *Shavuos*. But why are we eating dairy on *Shavuos*? There are many different reasons given why we eat dairy on *Shavuos*. One reason is given in *Gemara Shabbos* (88a). It says that when *Bnei Yisroel* received the *Torah* at *Har Sinai* they were instructed not to eat meat products to prepare themselves for *Matan Torah*. This was because the animals needed to be *shechted* and prepared properly, and *Bnei Yisroel* didn't have enough time to do this. As a result *Bnei Yisroel* only ate dairy food leading up to *Matan Torah*. These events established this special custom of eating dairy on *Shavuos*. Furthermore, in *Shir Hashirim* (4:11) the *passuk* is referring to milk and honey as an analogy for *Torah*. Just like milk is very nourishing to us humans so is *Torah* is as well. At *Har Sinai*, we received the *Torah*, and the dairy was the prep we needed to be fed the *Torah* from *Hashem*. This shows why dairy is such an important custom, we should also nourish *ourselves with Hashem's Torah* to prepare ourselves *for Matan Torah*.

# Feel the Light



DOV HOCHMAN

YUHSB ('23)

Dov Hochman is a Senior at MTA. He lives in Brooklyn, New York, and is currently a talmid in Rabbi Tanchum Cohen's Beis Medrash Katan.

The Jewish people outside the Land of Israel needed to hold a second day for all of their *Yomim Tovim* because they did not know when the actual days fell out without a set calendar. The problem with this is that *Shavuos* (also known as the holiday of weeks) is 49 days or 7 weeks immediately after *Pesach*. They always knew exactly when *Shavuos* fell out, so why were they keeping two days outside Israel?

We start our “Jewish days” at night according to the *passuk* “And it was evening and it was morning.” (*Bereishis* 1:5) Some argue and say that that’s just a description and not instructions on how the calendar should work. In another place in sefer *Bereishis* it says “While the earth remains, seed time and harvest and cold and heat and day and night shall not cease” (*Bereishis* 8:22). Rav Pinchus Halevi Hurowitz who authored the *Panim Yafot* said that the *passuk* “From evening to evening shall you celebrate your *Shabbos*” (*Leviticus* 23:22) is what we base our calendars on now.

He believes however that before the giving of the *Torah* and the establishment of the calendar the Jewish people started their day in the morning. Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky (*Emet L'Yaakov, Parshat Bo, 280, 281*) proves this by stating that Avraham established *shacharis* because that was when the day started. If the Jewish day started at night then he would have established *maariv* instead. Rav Hurowitz suggests that since the calendar used to work differently they celebrated *Shavuos* with only one day which started and ended later than today, but now since it starts at night we extend it into the next day as a commemoration of the calendar combined with the fixed calendar we use now.

There is also a kabbalistic explanation of why we have two days of *Shavuos*. Every holiday connects us to a source of light. In *Eretz Yisroel* they only need one day to reach this light because it is the gate to *shamayim*, so they are inherently closer to the light of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. In *Chutz La'aretz* we need an extra day to reach the holy light of *Hashem*. This can explain why Israel does not keep two days even according to the opinion of Rav Hurowitz.

As we've been counting *sefiras haomer* we've been mourning over the loss of the *Beis Hamikdash* because we are not able to give the *korban omer* anymore. In fact, immediately after counting we say “May the Merciful One restore unto us the service of the *Beis Hamikdash* to its place, speedily in our days; *Amen, Selah*”, indicating that it's in this time of year that we truly experience it's loss. This *Shavuos* we need to go from the dark night into the day (or two) and truly feel the light.



# The Sweetest Gift Imaginable

YONI TANDHASETTI

YUHSB ('26)

Yoni Tandhasetti is a Freshman at MTA. He lives in New York and is currently a talmid in Rabbi Ezra Wiener's shiur.

The question has long been asked about what is the significance of the event at *Har Sinai*? We know our forefathers studied and taught *Torah* centuries before the “giving” of the *Torah* on *Shavuot*, and according to the *Talmud*, observed all the *mitzvos* as well. Yet the event at *Har Sinai* is considered to be one of the most important and decisive events in Jewish history, which contains many influential events. The key word in all of this is “giving”. Before the 6th of *Sivan*, we were aware of the wisdom of the *Torah*, but it didn't fully belong to us. We can compare the events of the giving of the *Torah* to a beautiful palace; we were given access to tour its rooms and appreciate the architecture, but at *Har Sinai* we were given the keys to the property.

Shlomo Hamelech links the events of *Har Sinai* to our wedding day, the day Hashem chose us from the other nations and wedded us. On the occasion of his marriage, he found no greater joy in giving over his most prized possession, his crown jewel.

The *Torah* describes the final week of preparation leading up to the events of *Har Sinai*. From the moment that Moshe brought the promise of redemption, B'nai Yisroel eagerly awaited the revelation at *Har Sinai*. Moshe had promised them more than freedom from the hard labor and slavery in Egypt; he had promised them ultimate freedom that being the freedom from boundness and material existence. He had promised them the experience of a divine reality which would be incorporated into their lives.

So from the day they left Egypt, they literally counted down the days, as we still do to this day in counting the *omer*. Therefore, the first day of *Sivan* is the most difficult day to understand. According to the *Talmud*, this was the day that Moshe did not say anything at all to the Jewish people because they were weary from the trip. But after six weeks of anticipation and preparation for the great day, was it possible that it came to a halt because the Jewish people were weary from the journey? On the very day of arriving at *Har Sinai* they didn't do anything at all in preparation for the *Torah*?

However, let's take a look at what happened after the events which explain this. When we think of a very powerful spiritual experience such as getting the *Torah*, we think of davening, meditating, or maybe a calm walk through nature. Yet this is not how the *Torah* describes the Jews' experience at the receiving of the *Torah* at *Har Sinai*. The *pasuk* says that the Jews experienced Hashem, then proceeded to eat and drink. It seems almost unbelievable that they witnessed Hashem, then how did they respond? By eating and drinking!

Some explain that not only was it permitted but it was the right thing to do, because rather than an interruption from the holiness, it was a celebration of it. Judaism teaches that our task is to bridge between physical and spiritual, to the point where the physical is beautified by enhancing the spiritual experience. Some Rabbanim build on this by saying that before *Har Sinai*, the physical and spiritual experience was divided, and only at the giving of the *Torah* enabled us to elevate the physical world and connect it to holiness. A similar concept to this

pops up regarding the purpose of *Shabbos*. Some argue that its purpose is to allow people to study *Torah* since working is prohibited, as others argue that its purpose is to allow people to enjoy food and drink as there is an obligation to honor *Shabbos* with delicacies. In truth, these two opinions don't contradict each other, rather address two situations: If we spend 6 days of the week completely engaged in material business, then *Shabbos* is the time to be involved in spirituality. If however, we create moments of closeness to Hashem during the week, then on *Shabbos* we may enjoy food and drink.

Similarly, when the Jewish people were preparing for the giving of the *Torah*. The day at which the Jews arrived at *Har Sinai* was far from an uneventful day. It was a day of intense preparation to bridge the gap between physical and spiritual to create a camp ready to receive the *Torah*. This was the weariness of the journey. It was not the physical journey that tired them, but rather the psychological and spiritual transition from six weeks of preparation to numbness.

Speaking of food, one of the most famous customs for *Shavuos* is eating dairy and especially cheesecake. One thing the *Torah* introduces regarding this, is our life goal to refine our natural instincts and purify our character to serve Hashem. The *Torah* relays a new path to achieve this goal; through engaging in simple acts of goodness and holiness, we can tame our lower desires and align ourselves with divineness.

This is why *Shavuos* is so special. Just like with dairy cheesecake, the *Torah* was given to transform our selfish appetites to appetites in serving Hashem. Hashem's love for us drove him to give us his most prized possession, enabling us to connect holiness to elevate the material world. Truly the sweetest gift imaginable!

# Yiddishkeit in Megillas Ruth



ISAAC COHEN

YUHSB ('23)

Isaac Cohen is a Senior at MTA. He lives in Teaneck, New Jersey, and is currently a *talmid* in Rabbi Tanchum Cohen's Beis Medrash Katan.

Although *Shavuos* is prominently known for *Matan Torah*, I find that it overshadows the reading of *Megillas Ruth*. Therefore, let us analyze this *sefer* and see just how meaningful it is in regards to the whole spectrum of *Matan Torah*.

In the beginning of *Megillat Ruth* we are introduced to a couple of characters:

היא ושני בניה...וישאו להם נשים מאביות...וימותו...מחלון וכליון ותשאר האשה משני ילדיה

“A man went from Bethlehem, he, his wife, and his two sons...the man's name was Elimelech and his two sons were named Machlon and Chilion...Elimelech died...and she was left with her two sons...They married Moabite women...Machlon and Chilion died, and the woman was bereft of her two children.” (1:1-5)

The *pasuk* is strange when addressing the names Machlon and Chilion as first “*banim*” but then the first time are called “*yeladeha*”. In order to answer this question we must first understand the fundamental difference between the words “*bannim*” and “*yeladeha*”. The term “*yeled*” denotes a biological offspring and someone immature. The word “*ben*” comes from the word “*boneh*” - a builder, i.e one who builds upon that which his father started (this comes from *Bereishis* 5:28, Rashi). To Elimelech and his wife, Machlon and Chilion were *banim* that would pass on their family traditions and have children themselves. However, Machlon and Chilion married non-Jewish women and their children would now be considered Moabites and not Jewish. By intermarrying, Machlon and Chilion failed to build on the home of their father. Therefore, they are merely referred to as *yeladim* and not *banim*.

Later in the first *perek* we see the story of Naomi and Rus begin to unfold.  
כי אל אשר תלכי אלך

“For wherever you go I will go.” (1:16)

According to *Shulchan Aruch* a prospective convert must be told the difficulties of converting to Judaism (*Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Dei'ah* 268:2). The *Midrash Rabbah* (2:22) writes that Naomi told Rus that it is not proper for Jewish women to go to the theater, to which she responded, “for wherever you go I will go”. The obvious question with this conversation is why did Naomi use this *halachah* as an example?

Within Judaism there are laws that we may enjoy and others that we may find unpleasant. For example, some may enjoy *davening* in *shul* on *Shabbos*, but hate that they can't drive to *shul*. In the case of Naomi, Naomi is teaching Rus an important lesson about *Yiddishkeit*: Torah and *mitzvos* should not be viewed as only a performance that allows one to pick and choose what *halachos* they want to keep, but a way of life that requires dedication under all circumstances and throughout all time.

It is through our dedication to Torah and *mitzvos* that we should one day merit the coming of *Mashiach*. *Chag Sameach!*



ELISHA PRICE

YUHSB ('23)

Elisha Price is a Senior at MTA. He lives in Bergenfield, New Jersey, and is currently a *talmid* in Rabbi Tanchum Cohen's Beis Medrash Katan.

## Back to the Basics: What is Shavuos?

Let's begin with a few questions about the basic mechanics of *Shavuos*:

1. *Shavuos* doesn't seem to follow the rules. Normally, a *chag* has seven days, it has a period of *chol hamo'ed*, and a *mitzvah* to eat meat as part of our obligation of *oneg yom tov*. But on *Shavuos*, none of those rules seem to apply [1].
2. *Shavuos* in the *pesukim* is really all about the harvest and the *karbanos* that accompany them as well as the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim* [2], so why do we celebrate it as the holiday of *Matan Torah*?
3. Why during *Shavuos* do we have *minhagim* that seemingly do not relate to the essence of the day? For example, the Rama (O.C. 494:3) quotes a *minhag* to decorate the *shul* with flowers and to eat dairy, even though neither of those practices relates to *Matan Torah*, nor to the harvest.

In order to begin to answer the first two questions, I'd like to explore the third one in greater detail. Because, while I said it convincingly, I think, I included a white lie in that question (I'm sorry). You see, it isn't true that the *minhagim* mentioned in the Rama have nothing to do with *Matan Torah*, but, while they truly have nothing to do with the Torah itself, they are relevant to the experience of *Matan Torah*. The Rama writes that the flowers are a commemoration of *Har Sinai* which was covered in flowers, and the *Mishnah Berurah* explains that the origin of the custom to eat dairy is to commemorate the first few days after *Matan Torah* when the Jews were unable to eat meat since they weren't yet proficient enough in the *halachos* relating to the preparation and consumption of food, and meat is much more difficult *halachically*. Thus, what we see here is not a direct celebration of the Torah, but rather of the experience of *Matan Torah* itself. [3] Once we understand that the celebration of *Shavuos* is less about the Torah we received at *Har Sinai*, and more about the experience of *Har Sinai* itself, we can return and answer our first question. Why doesn't *Shavuos* follow the rules? Because *Shavuos* is unique - it isn't celebrating the entire period of the *midbar* (like *Sukkos*) nor the entire period of *yeti'as metzrayim* (like *Pesach*); it is merely commemorating a one-day event. And so, instead of celebrating *Shavuos* throughout a week, the generic unit of time for the celebration of a time period, we can be more precise and celebrate the exact day of *Matan Torah* [4]. It follows that while *Shavuos* does require meat just like any other *chag*, but the particular *zikaron* of *Shavuos* would be better expressed through the addition of dairy. The Rama seems to express this himself: he doesn't just say "eat dairy," he suggests one eat a meal of dairy followed by a meal of meat [5].

What, however, is so special about the experience of *Matan Torah* that we have an entire *yom tov* celebrating it? Harav Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l [6] argues in a *sichah* [7] that *Matan Torah*, more than *Kabbalas HaTorah* is the climax of the relationship between *Am Yisrael* and *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. It is the first and only time in history that G-d revealed Himself to the entire nation, the creation of *Bris Moshe* and the *Luchos Habris*, truly a high moment in Jewish history. It is this relationship and covenant that we commemorate every *Shavuos*, not just the content of the Torah we received on that day.

We have yet to answer our second (and being that we went out of order, final) question. Why, if as we have said, the focus of the day is the experience of *Matan Torah* and the celebration of our relationship with *Hashem*, why is the focus in the *pesukim* all about the *bikkurim*, the *omer*, and the other *korbanos* related to *Shavuos*? Perhaps it is because, as Ramban writes, *korbanos* are an opportunity for reflection about our relationship with *Hashem*, because when we see that animal burning on the *mizbei'ach* we are supposed to think that we ought to be there in its stead. As such, the bringing of a *korban* is a profoundly spiritual experience wherein we gain new appreciation for the *bris* we have with *Hashem*. And the *bikkurim* are much the same idea: we are forced to take a step back from our harvest and acknowledge from whence they came. Therefore, since the harvest is at *Shavuos* time, it is appropriate to combine it with *Shavuos* itself. Thus, the focus on *korbanos* and *bikkurim* instead of *Matan Torah* itself makes sense because they all express the same message: a (renewed) appreciation for and of the *bris* we are blessed to have with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. [8]

[1] Not lasting seven days - see Rambam *Hilchos Temidim Umusafim* 8:1, *Aruch Hashulchan* O.C. 494:1, *Sefer Hachinuch* 404:1, and *Shulchan Aruch* OC 494:1-2. The lack of *chol hamo'ed* is implicit in their only being one day of *yom tov* to begin with. Lastly, for the lack of a *mitzvah* to eat meat, see the Rama on OC 494:3 as well as the *Magen Avraham*, *Ba'er Hetev*, *Kaf Hachaim*, *Chok Ya'akov*, and *Mishnah Berurah* there.

[2] See *Shemos* 23:16, 34:22, *Vayikra* 23:16, *Bamidbar* 28:26, and *Devarim* 16:10.

[3] Indeed, Ramban (addition #2 to the Rambam's *moneh hamitzvos*) lists remembering the experience of *Matan Torah* as a Torah-mandated *mitzvah*.

[4] This may be part of the reason we count towards *Shavuos* and none of the other *chagim* - intuitively, we should also count to *yeti'as mitzrayim* but we don't, perhaps because *Pesach* is the celebration of a period and *Shavuos* is the celebration of a singular day, something we can more easily count towards. As for *chol hamo'ed*, since there is only one day, no *chol hamo'ed* is necessary, which is intuitive.

[5] If you're interested in reading more on the subject of dairy on *Shavuos*, I wrote an article on that for *Shema Koleinu* a couple of years ago: [https://docs.google.com/document/d/ix\\_ALVvfc9ztXiWoJqBk\\_bg3s7YsgnwDyYHyXXIokxpo/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/ix_ALVvfc9ztXiWoJqBk_bg3s7YsgnwDyYHyXXIokxpo/edit)

[6] Also a Ramban in *Parshas Vayakheil*. See also Rav Mosheh Lichtenstein *shlit"a* here: <https://etzion.org.il/en/holidays/shavuot/shavuot-recreating-experience>

[7] Here: <https://www.etzion.org.il/en/holidays/shavuot/lest-you-forget-what-you-have-seen>

[8] For more details on the connection between the agricultural *mitzvos* and *Matan Torah*, see Rav Menachem Leibtag's article here: <https://etzion.org.il/en/holidays/shavuot/shavuot-and-matan-torah> and for more details on the experience of *Matan Torah* and how it relates to *Shavuos* in general, see Harav Yehuda Amital *zt"l*'s article here: <https://www.etzion.org.il/en/holidays/shavuot/shavuot-and-soulsearching>

# Standing for Aseres Hadibros



SHUA PARISER

YUHSB ('20)

Shua Pariser is an alumnus of MTA. He lives in Monsey, New York, is an alumnus of Yeshivat Yishrei Lev, and looks forward to attending YU this coming fall.

This Article is from Rav Elyahu Schlessinger's Sefer on *Moadim* called *Moadei Kodshecha*.

The *laining* that we will be hearing (or sleeping through) on the first day of *Shavuos* is the *Aseres Hadibros*. We also read the *Aseres Hadibros* in *Parshas Yisro* and in *Vaeschanan*. When the *Baal Kriah* gets up to the *Aseres Hadibros*, many people have a *minhag* to stand up. Rav Elyashiv *Zatzal* once told Rav Schlessinger that this was not a good *minhag* because every *Passuk* in the *Torah* is important, and therefore those who want to stand, should stand for all of *laining*.

Where does this come from, what is the source for this? There is a *Gemara* in *Berachos* (12a) that says that *Chazal* wanted to be *mesaken* that one should read the *Aseres Hadibros* every day, but they didn't because of *taromes haminim*. Rashi explains that this means that they were worried that the *Minim* would tell an *Am Ha'aretz*, "only these *pesukim* are true because we are reading them every day". There is a *Rambam* in the *teshuvos* that says that for this reason, one should not follow the *minhag* in some places to stand during the *laining* of the *Aseres Hadibros*, because this might cause someone to think that the *Aseres Hadibros* are more important than the rest of the *Torah*. Someone who says that even one *passuk* is not *min hashamayim* is a *kofer*, and we need to refrain from any possibilities of arriving at this state of *k'firah*. If someone claims that it's a *minhag* because so many people do it, his claim is worthless. If everyone is following a "*minhag*" that entails *kefirah*, some would define it as a "*minhag osiyos gehennom*" (the letters of *minhag* can be rearranged to spell *gehennom*).

What about the *yerushalmi* in *Bava Metzia* that says that a *minhag* is *Mevatel Halacha*? That's only by *Dinei Mamonos*. So much so that there were *Gedolei Yisrael* that saw that a *minhag* went against *Halacha* and were *Mevatel* it. One can only be *Mevatel* an incorrect *minhag* if he will not cause *Machlokes*.

However, we know that so many people stand for the *Aseres Hadibros*. If it leads to *Kefira* then why do people do it?

There is a *Pesikta Derav Kahana* that says that when you read this *Parsha* (the *Aseres Hadibros*) every year, it will be as if you are standing by *Har Sinai* and receiving the *Torah*. In the *Sefer Shalmei Tzibbur* by Rav Algazi he says that even though the *Rambam* says to not stand during the *laining* of the *Aseres Hadibros*, during the *Aseres Hadibros* on *Shavuos* we should stand, just like they were standing by *Har Sinai*. The *Shaar Ephraim* writes similarly, that when it comes to *Shavuos*, everyone should stand.

The *Sefer Devar Shmuel* writes that one should follow the *minhag* of standing during the *Aseres Hadibros*. The *gemara* in *Brachos* only applies when there's a *Chashash* of *Minus*, but here, on *Shavuos* morning, everyone knows that we are standing to accept the *Torah* and to be *Mekabel Pnei Hashchinah*. We see this idea by *Kiddush Levana*. We quote the *gemara* in *Sanhedrin* that we are being *Mekabel* the *Shechinah*, and *Abaye* says it has to be standing. Rashi there says that anytime we are being *Mekabel* the *Pnei Shechina*, we need to be standing. When we stand, it's not possible to have a *Min* trick anyone because we are so absorbed in the *Kabbalas Hatorah* and *Kabbalas Pnei Hashchina*.

It's also possible to be *Mechalek* that when you are reading the *Pesukim* as part of the annual cycle of the *Torah*, there's no *Chashash* of *Minus*. So standing for the end of a *Sefer*, *Az Yashir*, an *Aseres Hadibros* might be fine. Another question to contemplate is reading the *Aseres Hadibros* in *Ta'am Ha'elyon*, during *Yisro* and *Vaeschanan*.

We should all be *Zoche* to have a proper *Kabbalas Hatorah*, no *Chashash* of *Minus*, and *Kabbalas Pnei Hashechina* in the *Beis Hamikdash*, *Bimheira Biyamenu*.



## NOAH SEGELNICK

YUHSB ('24)

Noah Segelnick is Junior at MTA. He lives in Flushing, New York, and is a *talmid* in Rabbi Baruch Pesach Mendelson's shiur.

# Hashem's Unconditional Gift

There is a story of a woman who came to the Maggid of Kozhnitz complaining that her husband wanted to divorce her because he no longer finds her attractive. The Maggid responded by saying that maybe he truly no longer finds her attractive now that she has grown older. This caused the woman much distress. She told the Maggid that her husband chose her to be his wife, and when they stood under the *chuppah* he told her that he found her to be very beautiful. While living together, they experienced much prosperity but also lived through times of hardship. After all they had been through, how can her husband now tell her that she is no longer attractive just because she got a little older? After hearing the woman's tale, the Maggid told her to go see the great Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev and see what he had to say. After traveling to see Rav Levi Yitzchak, who was known for his ability to find the good in all things, the woman told him her story. "Let me ask you something," the Rebbe said. "Are you still in love with your husband?" "Yes, of course," replied the woman. "Then my dear, you have nothing to worry about," smiled the Rebbe. The woman was confused. "But how can that be?" The Rebbe explained, "The truth is, the beauty of love can never fade. If your love for your husband remains strong, then he will always find you beautiful. He may not always show it, but he will always feel it."

The story of the woman and Rav Levi Yitzchak's response is paradigmatic of *Bnei Yisrael's* relationship with Hashem. When *Bnei Yisrael* stood before *Har Sinai*, they were like a bride that Hashem chose over all the other nations of the world. What we can derive from Rav Levi Yitzchak's answer is that while it might seem that we are very far away from the holy Jews who stood before *Har Sinai* and accepted the Torah, we are still Hashem's chosen nation. Despite all of our sins, Hashem still loves *Bnei Yisrael* as a groom loves his bride. However, where does this idea come from? Where at *Maamad Har Sinai* did Hashem promise this unconditional love to us?

Right before the giving of the Torah, Hashem told Moshe that He was going to make *Bnei Yisrael* into a kingdom of priests and a special nation. After Hashem said this to Moshe, He told Moshe that these are the words that he should tell *Bnei Yisrael*. Rashi comments that Hashem meant that Moshe should specifically say these words without adding or removing anything. This statement of Hashem is very difficult to understand. There are hundreds of times in the Torah that Hashem tells Moshe to say something to *Bnei Yisrael*, but this is the only instance that Hashem told Moshe not to add or omit any of His words. Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk managed to resolve this difficulty by analyzing a ruling of the Rambam. According to the Rambam, if a person wants to give someone a gift on a certain condition, the giver must state the condition in both positive and negative terms. For instance, the giver must state that if the recipient performs X action, then the gift is his and if the recipient does not perform X action, then the gift is not his. On the other hand, if one does not use this precise double language, then the recipient automatically receives the gift whether the condition was or was not fulfilled. With this ruling of the Rambam in mind, one can under-

stand why Hashem told Moshe not to change His words. Hashem only wanted Moshe to tell *Bnei Yisrael* that they will be His special nation if they fulfill the *mitzvos* in the Torah; however, Hashem did not want Moshe to express the idea that *Bnei Yisrael* will lose their special status if they forsake the Torah because that is not the will of Hashem. Even if *Bnei Yisrael* do not fulfill the condition given to them by Hashem at *Har Sinai*, Hashem will still view them as His special nation.

Now that we know where it was that Hashem promised us his unconditional love, one question still remains. Why would Hashem do this? Why would Hashem promise that we will always be His special nation even if we forsake Him and His *mitzvos*? It must be that even if *Bnei Yisrael* externally turn away from Hashem, the internal core of *Bnei Yisrael* will always be holy and pure. Hashem knows that even if there are times when it seems that *Bnei Yisrael* are not being careful with His *mitzvos*, *Bnei Yisrael* can always look deep inside themselves and begin to once again return to Hashem.

During the holiday of *Shavuos*, when we commemorate Hashem giving us the Torah and officially making us his special nation, we should remember that as Jews, we all have an inner core that wants to serve Hashem in the best way possible. We all have the potential to live up to the greatness of our forefathers who were holy enough to stand by *Har Sinai* and actually receive the Torah. However, it is up to each one of us individually to choose if we want to tap into that potential. We all must try our hardest to reach deep within ourselves, retrieve that inner holy core, and become the holy nation that Hashem knows we are able to be.

# Did all Jews in the World Know the Real Date of Shavuos?



PINCHUS COHEN

YUHSB ('24)

Pinchus Cohen is a Junior at MTA. He lives in Brooklyn, New York, and is a *talmid* in Rabbi Mendelson's shiur.

Rabbi Zerachiah Halevi of Lunel (the Baal Hamaor, end of *Pesachim*) wonders why we, living in *Chutz Laaretz*, do not count *Sefiras HaOmer* twice each night (e.g. “today is 5 days of the *Omer*, today is 6 days of the *Omer*”), in the same way we observe two days of *Yom Tov*. His response is that if so, we would end up counting day 49 on the first night of Shavuos, and this would be disrespectful to Shavuos.

There is an interesting inference from the Rambam that would seem to indicate that he disagreed with the Baal Hamaor. In the days before the fixed calendar, the *Beis Din* in Jerusalem would declare *Rosh Chodesh* and then send out messengers to announce their decision. The Jews who received the message in time for *Yom Tov* would keep one day; those living further away kept two days. The *Gemara* says that there were certain locations in Babylonia where the messengers of the *Beis Din* were able to arrive before Pesach, but not before Succos (due to Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, they had less travel time available). Rabbi Yochanan decreed that these locations should keep two days of Pesach because of a *gezeirah* (*Rosh Hashanah* 21a).

The Rambam codifies this as *halacha* in *Hilchos Kiddush Hachodesh* 3:12, and then adds, “And they must even keep two days of Shavuos.” It sounds like Shavuos is more of a *chiddush* than Pesach. Why would that be? On Pesach, there were still many Jewish communities in the world – those beyond the limits of the messengers of *Nissan* – who were actually uncertain as to when Pesach fell. But on Shavuos, all Jews in the world knew the date of Shavuos, because Shavuos does not depend on the calendar date of the month of *Sivan*; rather, it depends on the counting of the *Omer*, which begins on the second day of Pesach. In 50 days, there is certainly enough time for the messengers to reach every Jewish community in the world. Thus the Rambam is implying that *Beis Din*'s messengers did not stop after Pesach. They continued traveling until the message spread to the entire Jewish world.

This shows that the Rambam disagreed with the premise of the Baal Hamaor. The Baal Hamaor seems to have assumed that the doubt as the correct date of Pesach carried through all the way to Shavuos, such that people in these communities (and all of us in *Chutz Laaretz* today) would be counting day 49 on Shavuos night. But the Rambam held that by Shavuos, everyone in the world would know the correct date of Pesach, so there would be no doubt about the *Omer* count.

What would the Rambam reply to the Baal Hamaor's question as to why we don't count twice each night? Possibly he would agree with Rabbi Avrohom Borenstein's contention (*Responsa Avnei Nezer, Yoreh Deah* 248:3) that counting, by its nature, has to be a certainty. One who counts 5 and 6 on the same night is not considered to be counting at all, even though one of the two is certainly correct.

This dispute would be relevant to a person who forgets which night of *Sefirah* it is, but is certain that it is one of two possibilities. According to the Baal Hamaor, this person should count both numbers. But according to the *Avnei Nezer*, counting both would not be considered counting at all.



## RABBI SHIMON KERNER

YUHSB ('77)

Rabbi Shimon Kerner is an alumnus of MTA and currently serves as a 10th grade maggid shiur.

# “YOM HAKAHAL”

The holiday of *Shavuos* has many names - *Shavuos*, *Chag Habikkurim*, *Chag Hakatzir*. 2 names that are less familiar are the Talmudic name of *Atzeres*; and a name for the day that we experienced the revelation of the *shechinah* some 3335 years ago that is mentioned 3 different times in *Sefer Devarim* (9:10, 10:4, and 18:16). All three places refer to the day as *Yom Hakahal*.

The truth is that although the Revelation at Sinai was done with pomp and ceremony, an amazing light and sound show, we know that *Chazal* say that when Hashem called Moshe up to carve out the second set of *luchos* He said “*ve'ish lo ya'aleh imach*” and Rashi comments that we see that there is no more desirable trait than *tzenius*. The first tablets were subject to the corrosive effect of an “evil eye” because they were given amid great pomp and circumstance. Actually, *Yom Kippur*, the day of the giving of the *second* set of *luchos*, is the day of *Kabbalas HaTorah*. So what is the big celebration of *Shavuos* all about?

We might suggest that the experience of Sinai was necessary to make an indelible impression on the collective *neshamah* of the “*Kahal*” so that we may pass it on to our children and grandchildren and no one will ever question the veracity of our religion. As Ramban (on *Devarim* 4:9) explains:

When we pass this matter down to our children, they will know that it is true without doubt, and it will be as if this event was seen/experienced by all generations. For we would not give false testimony to our children and we wouldn't hand down to them something that was empty/meaningless and without value. They will not at all doubt our testimony that we will testify to them, but they will believe with certainty that we all saw with our own eyes all that we told to them.

Indeed, just as we say that we are obligated to view ourselves on *Pesach* as having personally left Egypt, *Shavuos* is not simply *Zman Matan Toraseinu* in a historic sense, but in an experiential sense.

Rav Abraham J. Twerski z”l explains that in medicine there is a “recall phenomenon”. An infant is immunized with several injections, causing the body to build up a huge amount of antibodies to a particular virus. Over a period of time the antibodies disappear from the bloodstream and years later their presence is virtually undetectable. If years later he is given a booster injection, the body promptly produces massive amounts of antibodies like when he got the original injection. The body recalls the earlier experience and reproduces it.

So it is with the intense spirituality of *Matan Torah* at Sinai. We may have lost that lofty level of spirituality we had at Sinai. But each year we get a booster, which produces this “recall phenomenon”, and we re-experience the extraordinary declaration of the *na'aseh venishma* declared by our ancestors at *Matan Torah*. Rav Shlomo Wolbe z”l says that each year on *Shavuos* we should use our powers of imagery to see ourselves back at *Har Sinai*, seeing the mountain ablaze and trembling, hearing the thunderous sound of the *shofar*, seeing the lightning and being overwhelmed by the voice of the Almighty *bechvodo uve'atzmo* saying “I am the Lord your G-d”. Indeed it is the “*Yom Hakahal*” – the

day of our collective, communal “recall phenomenon” of the events of Sinai.

Perhaps now we can understand why *Chazal* dubbed *Shavuos* as *Atzeres*. Interestingly, the three *Yom Tov* days that are *atzeres* - *Shmini Atzeres*, the 7<sup>th</sup> day of *Pesach*, and *Shavuos* - have no specific *mitzvos* in common. These days are days of *lev* (heart) and *nefesh* (soul), intentionally not packed with *mitzvah* performance to allow for reflection of the awesome heights to which all the *mitzvos* are meant to direct us.

The day of *Matan Torah* was the event that according to *Chazal* “Heaven and earth kissed”. These events can hardly be described in words. This was the one time in history when lowly, finite creations communed with their Infinite creator.

The *Yalkut Shimoni* (*Bamidbar* 684) relates that at the time of *Kabbalas HaTorah*, the other nations complained that Hashem was showing favoritism to the Jewish people. Hashem replied that the Jews were uniquely qualified to receive the Torah because they alone possess a *sefer yochsin* (a book of pedigree). Why is this response satisfactory? Is nepotism better than favoritism? Perhaps it’s the idea that only this nation cherished the memory of their ancestors while the other nations discard and decry those memories. The Torah is a *morashah* – a heritage to be passed down to each generation. Hashem could only trust that the Torah would be preserved intact by the Jewish people because they alone have a loyalty and fidelity to the past.

The source of our *Yiddishkeit* is our collective experience as a *kahal*, as a *tzibbur* at Sinai. *Chazal* say *ein hatzibbur meis* (the *tzibbur* never dies). The collective, the *tzibbur* is eternal. *Atzeres* also means a gathering - whenever we gather with other Jews, we are connecting to our point of origin. This is a thought that is hopefully rejuvenating and refreshing to all those who contemplate it.

The beautiful holiday of *Shavuos* is a perfect time to remind ourselves of the awesome responsibility that our forebears carried out with such *mesiras nefesh*. Under all conditions, throughout our history, Jewish education was among the highest priorities, both in terms of setting personal examples and ensuring that we will continue being the “people of the book”. It is a true *Yom Hakahal*, as our “recall phenomenon” kicks in and we all collectively stand as one congregation from the time of Moshe *Rabbeinu* down through our own parents and grandparents. It is indeed a great *zechus* to be part of that *Kahal*. We can only hope and pray that *be’ezras Hashem* we will be as successful in passing the baton of our *mesorah* to our own children and *talmidim* for generations to come.

# What is so Special about *Shavuos*?



**RABBI SHIMON  
SCHENKER**

Rabbi Schenker is the  
*Menahel* of MTA.

When I was in college, I once took summer classes outside of YU. In that class, we had a quiz every single day, and if you missed one quiz, it was an automatic zero on the quiz - no exceptions. That summer, *Shavuos* fell out during the week, and I had to miss a quiz, so I went to the Dean to discuss it. She asked me why I had to miss the quiz, and I told her that it was *Shavuos*, when the Jews received the Torah. She went on to lecture me that she had heard of all of the Jewish holidays, and accused me of making this one up. I had to bring her a Jewish calendar to prove to her that *Shavuos* was in fact a holiday (this is before the internet was a thing, so I couldn't just look one up) which she then hung on her wall, and now *Shavuos* is officially in the Rutgers calendar.

The question posed by Rav Eliyahu Dessler, Rav Matisyahu Solomon, and others throughout the generations, is why is *Shavuos*, or at least the sixth of *Sivan*, the day we celebrate the receiving of the Torah? On that day, *Hashem* gave Moshe *Rabbeinu* the *Aseres Hadibros*, but immediately after that, Moshe went on to break those, and the *Aseres Hadibros* that are ours are the one's given to Moshe on *Yom Kippur* after he came down the second time. So, why is *Shavuos* not on *Yom Kippur*?

Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzato (Ramchal), in his *sefer Da'as Tevunos*, writes that there were two goals accomplished at *Har Sinai*: one, the giving of the Torah itself and its laws to perform them, and two, enabling *Klal Yisrael* to be fit to keep the *mitzvos* and enable our *mitzvos* to positively impact and sanctify the world. Ramchal explains that on *Shavuos*, we accomplished goal number two even though the *luchos* were broken. Standing at *Har Sinai* is what changed a group of slaves from people who were “*eino mitzueh ve'oseh*” (not commanded) to “*mitzueh ve'oseh*” (commanded). In essence, says Rav Solomon, *Shavuos* was the big *bar mitzvah* of *Klal Yisrael*. It was the singular moment where we became transformed from a bunch of slaves into *Knesses Yisrael*.

The Mabit in his commentary to the *Siddur* writes that this is what we say every time we make a *berachah* on a *mitzvah*, “*asher kidishanu bimitzvosav*” - who sanctified us with his *mitzvos*. When we do *mitzvos*, it is not only to fulfill goal number one of the Ramchal, but it is also to accomplish goal number two, to transform us and to be *mekadesh* us. Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky writes in *Emes LeYaakov* that when we make a *berachah* before we do an action as a *mitzvah*, it fundamentally changes the action and lifts up from an ordinary action to a lofty spiritual act. He writes that even though we always assume like the Rambam in *Hilchos Berachos* that all *berachos* on *mitzvos* are Rabbinic in nature, when we have that focus and that recognition that we are doing an action as way to serve *Hashem* and make ourselves holy, it changes everything we do.

Rav Herschel Schachter *shlit"a* writes in his *sefer Eretz Hatzvi* in the name of Rav Soloveitchik that we need to recognize that Torah is the word of *Hashem*. As we are simply flesh and blood, one might think “how is it possible for us to internalize the word and essence of *Hashem*?” The Rav explained that when the *malach* teaches us the entire Torah in the womb, the *Gemara (Niddah 3a)* describes that after he teaches us the whole Torah, he touches us on the top of the lip and we forget everything we learn. Asks the Rav, what was the point in teaching us the Torah if we are just going to forget it? The Rav explained that it is the same idea as goal number two of the Ramchal mentioned above; by learning *Torah* with the *malach*, we are sanctified and prepared to learn Torah on earth.

So, we see that while it is true that we might not have the physical *luchos* given to Moshe or the original Torah taught to us by the *malach*, it is alright. Every day we learn Torah and do *mitzvos*, we have the opportunity to be a *metzueh ve'oseh*, to do *mitzvos* because we were commanded to and transform ourselves into true *ovdei Hashem*.



# The Crisis of *Midrash* Literalism

YAAKOV  
WEINER  
YUHSB ('26)

Yaakov Weiner is a Freshman at MTA. He lives in Teaneck, New Jersey, and is currently a *talmid* in Rabbi Wiener's shiur.

A classmate once remarked to me that people used to be tens of feet tall before the time of Moses. I countered that Otzi the Iceman, a wet mummy who is presumed to have lived before No'ach, was average human size. He responded that nobody aged until the time of Jacob the Patriarch, and thus Otzi the Iceman was a baby. He explained that everything *Chazal* said was true, so it didn't matter what evidence was presented against anything they said. Now, an exposition regarding if and how *Chazal* could be wrong is for another article. However, one thing is clear: my classmate's beliefs are due to what I term *Midrash* Literalism.

According to the *Midrash*, Adam was three hundred feet tall [1], Abraham was as tall as seventy-four men [2], and Moses was fifteen feet tall [3]. Although not stated explicitly, a likely interpretation is that at the dawn of humanity, the average man stood 300 feet tall, and then continually shrunk until now, where the average height for a man is 5'9 feet. Not only can these descriptions of the biblical figure's height be easily interpreted non-historically, but according to many rabbinic luminaries they are supposed to be taken that way!

Rambam wrote that there are three camps of people when it comes to *Midrashim*. The first group interprets *Midrashim* literally because they haven't studied science; this is bad. The second group dismisses *Midrashim* as nonsense because they have studied science; this is even worse. The third group, however, interprets *Midrashim* and sees the messages they are trying to display; this is good. [4] In a similar vein, R. Yehuda Loewe, commonly known as the *Maharal*, writes that *Midrashim* are often metaphorical and therefore one can't raise a challenge from an *aggadic* passage as the author of the *Midrash* may have intended a hidden meaning. [5] (Parenthetically, R. Loewe develops the idea of *Midrashim* sometimes depicting the "essential reality." So, Moses was fifteen feet tall in an "essential reality", however, the physical reality couldn't bear a fifteen feet tall human. Thus, the physical reality made Moses taller than average [6]). Likewise, R. Yechezal Landau, best known for his responsa titled *Nodeh Biyehuda*, explains that *halacha* may not be derived from *aggada* as their main purpose is ethical teachings, hints, and parables. [7] Lastly, a school of thought prevalent amongst the *Geonim* maintains that *aggadata* is not necessarily authoritative. For example, Rav Hai Gaon writes that, unlike *halacha*, *aggadic* texts are not based on tradition. Rather, "each author expounded what he considered to be possible but not necessarily definitive". Likewise, Rav Shmuel Hanagid writes that "... what [*Chazal*] explained regarding scripture, each one according to his understanding and what he considered reasonable, we accept what is reasonable based on the text; the rest we don't rely upon." [8] Similarly, R. Samson Raphael Hirsch writes that *aggadata* comprises "ideas which have occurred to each one," arguing that, unlike *halacha*, *aggadata* does not have a *sinatic* tradition and is thus not binding. [9] Whichever of these three approaches one prefers, all agree that *Midrah* is not a historical fact.

Additionally, some literal interpretations of *Midrashim* not only contradict the Torah but also the basic tenets of the Jewish faith. A *Midrash* discusses

how God spends his day. [10] Obviously, God exists outside of time and thus doesn't "spend his day". Thus, one must interpret the *Midrash* metaphorically, just as it is true that the literal meaning of this *Midrash* is impossible and thus must be interpreted allegorically so too must we interpret other *midrashim* that don't fit our conception of reality allegorically.

Unfortunately, a frightening amount of Jews belong to Rambam's first camp. Too many people think that Esther's skin was green [11] and that Pharaoh's daughter stretched out her arm more than physically possible. [12] This is not a new problem, however. In fact, Rambam wrote, in the aforementioned "three camps" example, that the third camp is so small it might not even be considered a camp! The problem emerges when people don't know enough history and science, and when they are taught *Midrashim* not knowing the authors didn't intend them to be historical accounts.

*Midrash* Literalism is a problem for two reasons. First, by taking *Midrashim* literally, people miss out on a myriad of meanings and depths found inside of them. Although it's possible to say stories happened while still learning *lessons* from them, it's more likely that one would do so if he knew that the entire purpose of the *Midrash* is to provide a lesson and not a historical account. Secondly, when a child, who was taught these fantastical *Midrashim* on a simplistic level, grows up he may look at evidence that shows contrary to the literal interpretation, and turn away from Judaism. This problem needs to be solved. I suggest that we don't teach *Midrashim* to children until they are old enough to understand what it means for a story to be a metaphor. Indeed, this contention is supported by R. Eliyahu Dessler who writes that "*Aggada* contains the secrets of the *Torah*, and as long as the secret is not revealed to us, there is no use in studying it, since anyway we do not understand it correctly." [13] Therefore, according to R. Dessler, it would seem to be improper for children to be taught *midrashim* as they are not being taught nor comprehending the *midrashim*'s true meaning.

I also suggest that because so many kids already have these beliefs ingrained in them, we should have one or two classes per year in *shiur* dedicated to this. The *Rebbe* would explain that *Midrashim* is supposed to be taken metaphorically and clarify which common beliefs are rooted in simplistic understandings of *Midrashim*.

I hope we can live in a world where people see the depth and beauty of *Midrashim*, rather than thinking that Adam was three hundred feet tall.

[1] *Baba Batra* 75a

[2] *Seferim* 21:9

[3] *Shabbat* 92a

[4] Introduction to Tenth chapter of *Sanhedrin*

[5] *Be'er Hagolah* 6:15

[6] *Chiddushei Aggadot* vol. 3p. 33

[7] *Shut Nodeh Biyehuda Mahadura Tinyana Yoreh Deah* 161

[8] *Mavo L'talmud erech hagada*. Note that R. Netanel Weiderblank states that scholars attribute this piece as well to R. Hai Gaon

[9] Forward to Horeb. Regarding the question of the binding nature of *aggadata* see *Maharal Be'er Hagola* 6:15 who re-interprets the *Geonim's shita*. See, however, the following *Teshuvos Harambam*:

שו"ת הרמב"ם סימן תנח

ולענין יוצא תיבה כל אותן הדברים דברי הגדה ואין מקשין בהגדה וכי דברי קבלה הן או מילי דסברא אלא כל אחד ואחד מעיין [בפירושו] כפי מה שיראה לו בו ואין בזה לא דברי קבלה ולא אסור ולא מותר ולא דין מן הדינין ולפיכך אין מקשין [בהן] ושמא תאמר לי כמו שיאמרו רבים וכי דברים שבתלמוד אתה קורא הגדה כן כל אלו הדברים וכיוצא בהן הגדה הן בענינם בין שהיו כתובין בתלמוד בין שהיו כתובין בספרי הגדה

[10] *Avodah Zarah* 3b

[11] *Megillah* 13a

[12] *Sotah* 12b

[13] *Michtav Mei'elياهو* Vol. 4 353

# Reinvigorating a Nation

The period between *Pesach* and *Shavuos* is commonly referred to as *Sefiras Ha'omer*. We commemorate our leaving Egypt and transforming into a nation that received the Torah at *Har Sinai*. It is a time of tremendous *cheshbon nefesh*, self introspection, figuring out exactly who we are and how we can best grow as we count up in anticipation of receiving the Torah anew.

In modern times, we have added multiple important days and *chagim* throughout this period - specifically *Yom Ha'atzma'ut* and *Yom Yerushalayim*. Just like *Pesach* and *Shavuos* commemorate moments in our national history, *Yom Ha'atzma'ut* and *Yom Yerushalayim* do the same. Jewish Sovereignty was restored to the Land of Israel and we recaptured and liberated the Old City of *Yerushalayim*. This *Yom Ha'atzma'ut* we had the unique privilege of celebrating 75 years of the reborn state of Israel. We are living in a time that our ancestors could only dream of, yet the moment of *Shavuos* begs us to ask- how am I different? What has changed throughout these past 50 days?

In one of the most famous *nevu'os* in all of *Tanach*, Yechezkel is standing in front of a valley of dry bones. Hashem asks him THE question of our time:

"הֲתִחְיֶינָה הָעֲצָמוֹת הָאֵלֶּה" (יחזקאל לג:א)

"Can these bones become alive?"

Yechezkel responds to Hashem and says just two words:

"אתה ידעת"

"Only You Know"

The Navi Continues and tells us how Hashem gave life to the bones and the *mefarshim* at length talk about what this *nevu'ah* means. I would like to take this age old question that Hashem asks Yechezkel and put it into our context of *Shavuos*.

*Shavuos* seems to be at first glance a time of culmination - we have finished climbing the 50 rungs of *tumah* and finished counting the *Omer*. We have celebrated the rebirth of the State of Israel and the resettlement of the Old City and historic Jewish land. However, we may have the foundation and the physical aspects needed to build and write the next chapters in the Jewish Story, but it is dependent on our connection to Hashem. "*Atah yadata*" - He Knows our deepest thoughts, our desires, and our aspirations. He Knows what we are capable of and what we can do to grow and thrive, whether in Israel or abroad.

*Shavuos* is a time where we connect to Hashem not from the physical aspects of all the cheesecakes and snack breaks during our all night *Tikkun Leil Shavuos* learning, but rather through true understanding that receiving the Torah is THE beginning in the next chapter of our Jewish story.

We can agree and say that many of the pioneers of the state were not religious and wanted to leave the Torah behind when founding it 75 years ago. After the atrocities of the Holocaust, few could blame them. However the small number of religious Jews that were there 75 years ago has now grown exponentially. The biggest debates in today's State of Israel many times come down to the religious character of the Jewish State - whether that is army service, *Kashrus*, or *Shabbos*. However, *Shavuos* is also a chance at a new beginning - working together to come out of the division that may exist when going from slavery to freedom. We develop an understanding that the Torah is the way we can write the story of the next 75 years of the State of Israel. Our nation is looking for inspiration, for growth, and a new direction at this critical juncture of the year.

"*Atah yadata*", we should be confident in knowing that Hashem is steering the world, and He Knows what is best for us on an individual and national level. Just as we became a nation so many years ago on *Shavuos* may we be *zocheh* in such times to come together and be reinvigorated as a nation. Thanking Hashem for all the beautiful and amazing gifts He has given us and looking forward to the beginning of the next chapter in our own stories, but even more so the next chapter for our national story - one that is as old as time. We are a nation ready to be reinvigorated - just like those dry bones so many years before.

Wishing everyone a *Chag Sameach!*



SHLOMO  
ANAPOLLE

YUHSB ('13)

Shlomo Anapolle graduated from MTA in 2013. He now lives in Eretz Yisrael and is the Director of Jerusalem College of Technology Machon Lev/Machon Tal International Programs.

# Our Years in Yeshiva - A Counting and Accounting



**RABBI BARUCH PESACH MENDELSON**

Rabbi Baruch Pesach Mendelson is a 11th grade maggid shiur and coach of the chess team.

Many have the custom of reciting the “*sheis zechiros*” (lit. the six remembrances) every day after *Shacharis*. These can be found in most *siddurim*, and are *pesukim* which remind us of some of the basics of our belief. One of the items which we are supposed to remind ourselves about every day is “*yom asher amadeta lifnei Hashem Elokecha bechoreiv*,” the day we stood, as a people, before Hashem at *Har Sinai* and received the Torah. What is troubling about this statement is that despite *Chazal* telling us that we all stood and witnessed the giving of the Torah, it is impossible to remember that which we physically did not see. How can we recall that which is not actually in our memory? And furthermore, how do we make sure that memory remains engraved in our hearts “*kol yemei chayecha*,” all the days of our lives, and that we pass it on to our children, “*vehodatam levanecha velevenei vanecha*”?

Homiletically, one may suggest that the Torah is asking each of us to recall the days of our own **personal** *Kabbalas HaTorah*, namely, the *Kabbalas HaTorah* that we experienced in *Yeshiva*. The sum of all our years and experiences in *Yeshiva* constitutes our very own *Har Sinai*. As such, the memories of *Yeshiva* should guide us through life, and be passed on to our children. My Rebbi, *Harav Haga'on Rav Aharon Halevi Soloveichik zt"l* writes at length in his *Hashkafah* book about the various components of *Kabbalas HaTorah* at *Har Sinai*. These components directly correspond to a wholesome *Yeshiva* experience. The first component is the “Voice of Sinai,” the actual words of the Torah as they were given to *Klal Yisrael*. This parallels the *shiurim* and the myriad of *Halachic* and *Lomdish* information that one accumulates over years of “learning.” The second component is the “Fire of Sinai,” or the thunder and lightning that shook the mountain. This corresponds to the inspiring *Davening* and *Ruach provided by the Yeshiva*. It's not enough that we utilize our *Yeshiva* years to fulfill our intellectual quest for Hashem, we must also cultivate a healthy emotional component.

Tosfos in *Maseches Menachos* (66a) mentions a *machlokes* between Rabbeinu Tam and the Bahag about the ideal time to recite the *Sefiras Ha'omer*. Rabbeinu Tam rules that we must count as soon as possible in order to fulfill the *passuk* which states that the counting should have “*temimos*”, completeness. This would mean that one may only fulfill the *mitzvah* of counting at night, and if one were to miss a night, one would forfeit the *mitzvah*. We follow the Bahag's ruling that if one forgets to count at night, one may continue to do the *mitzvah* by counting in the daytime. The Bahag probably also accepts the basic concept of *temimos*, yet only requires it *lechatchilah*.

It is hard to understand why in order to count the days of the *Omer* in such a way as to fulfill *temimos*, one must count as early as possible, at the start of the day, but when it comes to the counting of the weeks one only counts upon completion of the week. Why this discrepancy between the counting of the weeks and the counting of the days? It becomes more perplexing in light of the fact that the *passuk* which mentions *temimos* is written in the context of the *sheva shabbasos temimos tehiyenah* (lit. there should be seven full weeks)?

I would like to suggest that there are two types of counting or, perhaps better stated, there's "counting" and there's "accounting." When counting individual **units**, it is natural for the person to pronounce his count while initiating an act, such as placing down the objects being counted, or pointing to them. When counting entire **groups**, we do not count until after the components are collected and organized into a cohesive whole.

It then is quite understandable that the manifestation of *temimos* differs according to the two categories. When counting the days of *Sefira*, the individual units, we count at the beginning of the day, so that this counting is on the entire day *betemimus*. However, when counting the weeks, we must count differently. One can't count "this week will be (or is) the first week of the *Omer*." The concept of the "week," made up of seven days, simply does not exist until the seventh and final day has begun and the week is entire. Therefore the way to achieve *temimos* with regards to weeks is to count at the week's end, to make an accounting.

Our *Yeshiva* experience also requires us to focus on this dichotomy. On the one hand we must count. We must make every day count, and we must start that counting at the beginning of each day. Each morning one must tell oneself that 'today will be a special day, (in *Shulchan Aruch*, it will be noted, the daily life of a Jew begins each morning despite the *Halachic* day beginning at night), today will be a day of personal *Kabbalas HaTorah* both intellectually and emotionally in the spirit of *vehayu hadevarim ha'eleh asher anochi metzavecha hayom al levavecha*, today will be a day of growth as a true *Ben Torah* where I will strive towards new spiritual heights and create memories to take with me even after I've physically left the *koslei beis hamedrash*.' On the other hand, at the end of each week one must make a spiritual reckoning, a rigorous accounting. 'How was my *davening* this week? How was my learning this week? How were my *middos* this week? Have I inculcated the values of the *Yeshiva* that surrounds me? Have I soaked in an adequate amount of knowledge and spirituality? Can I do more next week to improve myself and create those memories from which I will draw everlasting inspiration?'

These are the years of our personal *Kabbalas HaTorah*. May we all be *zocheh* to *Kabbalas HaTorah beshleimus*, and then always remember *yom asher amadeta lifnei Hashem Elokecha...kol yemei chayecha*.

# Seven Weeks, 5 Names, One

## G-d

NOSSON OIRICH

YUHSB ('23)

Nosson Oirich is a Senior at MTA. He lives in New York and is a *talmid* in Rabbi Daniel Konigsberg's shiur.

Every *Chag* on the Hebrew calendar has multiple names; but the next up takes the (cheese)cake. That holiday, of course, is *Shavuot*. Or should I say *Yom Habikurim*? Maybe *Chag Hakatzir* or perhaps *Atzeret*? No, no it's gotta be *Zeman Matan Torateinu*. Why all the confusion? What's the deal?

Let's begin with the most common of them all, *Shavuot*, literally meaning "weeks." This refers to the seven weeks from *Yitziat Mitzrayim* to *Matan Torah*. והג' וזהג' "שבעת תעשה לך בכורי קציר" חטים', "You shall make a Festival of Weeks for yourself with the first-fruits of the wheat harvest." (*Shemot* 34:22) Aside from the literal definition of "weeks", *Shavuot* can also be interpreted to mean promises, referring to the promises agreed to by *Bnei Yisroel* in their acceptance of the Torah. (טור ברקת על שו"ע או"ח)

Another name used is *Yom HaBikkurim*, translating to "Day of the First-Fruits", the culmination of seven weeks of daily grain offerings. "וביום הביכורים בהקריבכם מנחה חדשה לה' בשבעתכם מקרא קדש יהיה לכם" "It shall be a holy convocation (gathering) for you." (*Bamidbar* 28:26)

Next up is *Chag Hakatzir*, the "Festival of Harvest." The holiday marks the time of year for the most important harvest, wheat.

"והג' הקציר בכורי מעשיך אשר תזרע" בשדה. "And the Festival of Harvest of the first-fruits of your labors that you sow in the field." (*Shemot* 23:16) During the season it is important to manage the *pei'ah* and *shikchah*, the forgotten parts of the field.

*Atzeret*, a "holdover" is used as another name for this holiday. Just as we know that *Shemini Atzeret* is the cap-off to *Sukkot*, so too the *Atzeret* here is the cap-off to the weeks of counting the Omer from *Pesach* to...

*Zeman Matan Torateinu*, "Time of the giving of the Torah." This festival is most celebrated for the giving of Torah at *Har Sinai* and our subsequent acceptance of its Mitzvos.

So which do we call it? Why does it need so many names? What significance does each of these names hold?

*Shavuot* represents the weeks of anticipation of getting the Torah. The journey and growth. The culmination of that journey. The promises made to accept G-d's Mitzvos. *Yom HaBikkurim* represents the fruit offerings given and what we give back to G-d. *Chag Hakatzir* teaches us to man the field like it's the Beis Hamikdash (ויקרא כ"ג: כ"ב) and to remember every last grain and bundle just as we need to remember every last word of Torah. *Atzeret* is the epilogue after having accepted the Torah to continue the practice and learnings of it. *Zeman Matan Torateinu* is the "time of the giving of the Torah" but it's not just there and then. We are still in receipt of Torah in an endless pursuit of *Avodas Hashem*.

# Sefer Melachim's Later Lesson of Har Sinai: Zealotry and Friendship



YISRAEL-DOVID  
ROSENBERG

YUHSB ('23)

Yisrael-Doivid Rosenberg is a Senior at MTA. He lives in Queens, New York, and is currently a *talmid* in Rabbi Tanchum Cohen's Beis Medrash Katan.

Thronged of people surrounded the great hill. Tension was in the air. That entire morning, the prophets of the idol had been shouting and lacerating themselves to incite their god to bring fire down upon their altar to consume the offering upon it. The prophet of God, mocked them. And then came his turn. "Answer me, God! Answer me!" he cried. The fire of God fell upon the offering and consumed it - the wood, the stones of the altar, and the water that had been poured there to drench it all. "And all of the nation saw and they fell upon their faces and they said 'Hashem, He is God! Hashem, He is God!'"

This is, of course, the showdown between the treacherous *nevi'ei haba'al* and Eliyahu *Hanavi* on *Har Hacarmel* as recorded in *Sefer Melachim I* (*perek 18*). It is a moment of fiery zealotry on the part of Eliyahu. This grand spectacle inspires a powerful *emunah* (belief) in the hearts of the people so much so that, at Eliyahu's command, they execute the offending false prophets. A monumental occasion! Now, perhaps, will come the time of the repentance of the nation! These tribes of Yisrael, the northern kingdom, which have been entrenched in *avodah zarah* (idolatry) have finally declared such profound faith in God. It can't possibly go wrong. Or can it?

The subsequent *perek* starts with the wicked queen, Izevel, informing Eliyahu that he is to be put to death in one day's time. Eliyahu flees and wanders into the desert. Despondent, he prays for his own death. Why has he become so very dispirited? Why should he wish for death?

To answer fully, let us complete the context we began to describe earlier. Eliyahu set out a plan to bring the kingdom of Yisrael back to Hashem in *teshuvah*. This is his duty and his goal as a prophet of his stature. The nation withers along with the land in the three years of drought that he ordered. This does not inspire their repentance. When Hashem finally commands Eliyahu to go to Achav the King and end the drought, he arranges the fantastic showdown at *Har Hacarmel*. This seems to reach the people at last and God's fire ignites the fire of their souls in faith; concurrently, Eliyahu ends the drought. Dark clouds roll across the sky, rain begins to pour, and the *navi* runs before Achav all the way to *Yizre'el*. Such hope and wonder must fill Eliyahu at this time. But then the wretched Izevel drives Eliyahu away and nothing changes. There is no indication of a massive *teshuvah* movement from *Malchus Yisrael* at this time. The people apparently simmer down, and return to the idols of the previous day, and Eliyahu's great plans are entirely moot.

So now we can understand that Eliyahu wishes for death because all of his hard work and the culmination of years of difficulty have resulted in nothing.

At this point, an angel appears to Eliyahu and gives him food and water. The angel tells Eliyahu to eat well because his journey will be a long one. The *navi* eats and drinks and with only that one meal to sustain him, Eliyahu sets out to travel for forty days and forty nights to *Har Choreiv*, into a cave on the mountain [1].

*Har Choreiv* is another name for *Har Sinai*. The *gemara* in *Maseches Megillah* (19b) connects the extraordinary revelation that Moshe *Rabbeinu* witnessed (*Shemos 33:12-23*) on the mountain and that which Eliyahu *Hanavi*, as we will discuss, received on *Har Choreiv* (*Melachim I 19:9-14*) and identifies the cave in each story as the very same. The forty days and nights that Eliyahu traveled with no food or water also parallel Moshe's time on *Har Sinai* which was similarly without food or drink. Eliyahu is about to be privy to a vision comparable to those of Moshe *Rabbeinu* on *Har Sinai*! The *Tanach* has our attention.

After his arrival, Eliyahu hears Hashem call to him, "Why have you come here, Eliyahu?" Eliyahu responds "*kano kineisi*" - I have been exceedingly zealous on Your behalf, Hashem, but the people have abandoned Your covenant, destroyed Your alter, slaughtered Your prophets, and wish to kill me as well. Eliyahu is told to step out of the cave and stand on the mountain, at which point he experiences a strange and fantastic vision. God is passing and

there is a powerful wind that comes and shatters the mountains, but Hashem is not in that wind. The Earth rumbles and shudders but, again, Eliyahu is told that Hashem is not in the earthquake. Then a fire bursts forth, but God is not in that fire. Finally, a *kol demamah dakah*, a silent, thin voice, is heard. It is in that *kol demamah dakah* that Hashem is to be found. Curiously, Eliyahu responds with the exact same words as he used before. What is the meaning of all this?

Eliyahu, as we have seen and by his own admission, is a fiery zealot. He's someone who can not see *aveiros* (transgressions) committed and stand by. He has to act and he has to make it known how very wrong that behavior is. He brings drought to the land where the people of *Malchus Yisrael* worship foreign deities and when it comes time to end that drought by Hashem's command, he ends it with a bang! He arranges the showdown on *Har Hacarmel* where his message is clear: "*ad masai atem poschim al shetei hasi'ipim*" - for how long will you teeter back and forth between Hashem and the *avodah zarah*? It is an inherent contradiction and you cannot have it both ways, shouts Eliyahu. And the blaze on the mountain, clearly indicating Hashem's Lordship of the world, forces the nation as a whole to proclaim "*Hashem Hu Ha'elokim*". This is Eliyahu's style, fire and lighting, impressive punishments and miraculous proofs. How can anyone fail to have *emunah* and continue to sin? To Eliyahu, they all have to see the error of their ways right now by whatever force necessary.

When his methods do not work he is terribly discouraged, and it is at this point that Hashem has a message for him. Hashem is not to be found in the fire and lighting, in the shaking of the earth; it is in the silence, the calm and steady, of that *kol demamah dakah* that Hashem is to be found. Hashem's message is that Eliyahu can not hope to force the nation into *teshuvah*. They must be calmly, quietly, subtly, naturally brought closer. The flashes and bangs are not going to have the proper effect. If those loud noises are harsh and critical, they will most likely be discouraged or will otherwise find it distasteful and reject it out of hand. If they are impressive and dazzling, full of meaning and holy matters, it is true that they are inspiring, but inspiration does not last. It has to be harnessed, put into motion, used to change imbalanced behavior, and create good habits so that it will have a lasting effect even after the inspiration fades. In Eliyahu's case, his drought was harsh and had no impact, and Izevel cut off the possibility of harnessing the inspiration of *Har Hacarmel* right after it took place, so it went nowhere.

Eliyahu is the kind of person who feels he has to shout and scream at wrongdoing, but for all the yelling, no one wants to listen. Hashem tells him this at *Har Choreiv*, but Eliyahu does not understand what he is being told - so he repeats his prior words. "I have been exceedingly zealous..." But that zealotry has not and cannot accomplish that which must be done. If Eliyahu is not capable of leading the people back to Hashem, someone else must be appointed to take his stead. So Hashem gives Eliyahu a few final instructions including the initiation of Elisha as the new leading prophet for *Bnei Yisrael*.

But does Eliyahu's story end here? Curiously, he does not have a clear death. He ascends to Heaven in a fiery chariot as described in a poignant and remarkable scene in *Melachim II (perek 2)*. What became of Eliyahu? What is his mission now?

The *navi* Malachi identifies Eliyahu as the one who will herald the coming of *Mashiach* and the End of Days. The *mishnah* (*Eduyos* 8:7) discusses what Eliyahu's exact role will be. The *Chachamim* (Sages) state that he comes only to bring peace to the world. They cite the prophecy of Malachi where he states that Eliyahu will return "*lev avos al banim velev banim al avosam*" (Malachi 3:24). Eliyahu is to bring peace between fathers and sons. He is the one who will be the mediator, the kind leader who cares deeply for the people and is able to sooth all the interpersonal pain and heal the division and bring them all back to the ways of Hashem. Eliyahu eventually comes to understand the lesson of the calm and gentle approach that he could not comprehend on *Har Choreiv*, and, ultimately, he will teach this to us all. [2]

May we take inspiration from his excitement and zeal in the age of *Tanach* and learn from the lesson at the end of his tenure - that later lesson of *Har Sinai* - to know how to be calm and to reach out warmly to others. And may we merit to see the era of peace Eliyahu *Hanavi* will usher in with the coming of *Mashiach* speedily and in our days.

[1] See Malbim on *Melachim* ibid.:8 who notes the length of time absent of food and Ralbag ibid. who invokes *Har Choreiv* as the place of the giving of the Torah.

[2] This understanding of the character of Eliyahu is based on Rabbi Alex Israel's approach in his books *I Kings: Torn in Two* and *II Kings: In a Whirlwind* which are part of the *Maggid Studies in Tanakh* series. See especially the chapter entitled "Prophet in Distress" in the first volume (pages 259-272) and the section headed with "Elisha's Mission" in the second volume (pages 141-143) and footnote 18 there.



**ZEVI BURG**

**YUHSB ('23)**

Zevi Burg is a Senior at MTA. He lives in Bergenfield, New Jersey, and is currently a *talmid* in Rabbi Tanchum Cohen's Beis Medrash Katan.

# Rejoicing in Talmud Torah

The *sefer* Chaim Lichag raises a possible assumption that by *Shavuos* which is *Zman Matan Toraseinu* and a time of increased *simchah* for everyone: I as a working man who does some learning on the side but my main contribution to Torah is that I give money to various *yeshivas* and *mosdos*. Therefore I might then think that the *simchah* of *Matan Torah* isn't for me but it's for the learners and the Rabbis.

Moshe at the end of his life is gives *berachos* to each *sheivet* and one of these *brachos* (*Devarim* 33:18) was:

וְלִזְבוּלֹן אָמַר שְׂמַח וְזְבוּלֹן בְּצִאתָהּ וַיִּשְׁכַּר בְּאַהֲלָיֶיךָ

Rashi simply suggests that these two, Yisachar and Zevulun, are *shutfim*, partners, where Zevulun works while Yisachar is *shteiging* in the *beis medrash*. The obvious question, though, is that if Yisachar is the one learning and we know "*Talmud Torah keneged kulam*" (*Peah* 1:1) - it's equal to all *mitzvos* - and "the world stands on three things: *Torah, Avodah, and Gemilus Chasadim*" (*Avos* 1:2) then why would the one working be first in the *passuk* if *Talmud Torah*, I would think, is much more significant?

Rashi points out that the Torah of Yisachar is reliant on Zevulun therefore the *Torah* puts Zevulun first to show that without Zevulun, Yisachar can't survive.

The Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh on this *passuk* shares that people would think, why would Zevulun be happy when he is going out to go work as the *passuk* in *Koheles* says "*U'lisimchah mah zeh oseh*" (*Koheles* 2:2) meaning what kind of happiness is that?

The reason Zevulun should be happy when they leave is because they are going out for a reason and that is to support Yisachar and that itself is *simchah* enough. The Ohr Hachaim furthers this by saying that there's another layer of *simchah* and that is no one knows 100% when they're going out to do business whether they are going to be successful or not but rather one only knows upon their return. In Zevulun's case it's different because he is definitely going to succeed because he is going out to business in order to support Yisachar which means he is a *shaliach mitzvah* therefore he should already be *besimchah* upon leaving to go do business out of trust in Hashem. These two layers fit very nicely because you should be *besimchah* before because you know you're a *shaliach mitzvah* and you should be *besimchah* altogether because you're supporting Yisachar.

With these explanations brought by the Chaim Lichag on the *passuk* in *Devarim* we can debunk the working man's assumption from the beginning. Rashi's *pshat* that the *passuk* points out a partnership between a working man and someone who is constantly learning Torah and in fact the *passuk* puts the working man who's Zevulun first because he is the more critical part of the relationship. Also, the Ohr Hachaim's *pshat* that working so that you can support someone to learn Torah makes you into a *shaliach mitzvah* and that fact - since

he is supporting the people learning - is cause for great *simchah*.

Now we can see that the assumption was erred because we need the working man just as much and his portion of *simchah* when it comes to Torah is just as valid as the *Kollel yungerman* to his right.

To conclude, there is a story regarding Rav Aharon Kotler *zt"l* who was the founder of BMG in Lakewood and one time he was meeting with some *ba'alei habatim* to try to raise money. When he was giving his pitch to the people he was trying to get money from he said that if you support *Talmud Torah* you get just as much *sechar* in *olam habah* as the one learning the Torah itself. After Rav Aharon was done one of the *bachurim* approached him and asked "Is that really true that they get the same *sechar* as us and if so why is that fair?" Rav Aharon responded that it's true their *olam habah* might be the same as your *olam habbah* but their *olam hazeh* is not comparable to yours.

The message is clear that although if you're in a position to support *Talmud Torah* and do just that, it'll never replace it because it isn't just about the *sechar* and what benefits it brings for the future but also the benefits of the right now and how Torah itself can affect you in the present.

# Live In The Present, Not The Past



EITAN  
ROCHWARGER

YUHSB ('23)

Eitan Rochwarger is a Senior at MTA. He lives in Teaneck, New Jersey, and is currently a *talmid* in Rabbi Tanchum Cohen's Beis Medrash Katan. Eitan also serves as the production manager of Shema Koleinu.

Everyone at some point in their lives has been told by others that their work isn't good enough and that they could've done better. When this is said with love and compassion, it can lead to self improvement. But usually this is said as a cheap way to bring the critic's self view higher by lowering the people around them. Often when this is said there's no good that can come from it and only causes people to feel worse about themselves. Putting someone else down may make us feel better about ourselves. The *Midrash Rabbah* on *Rus* (*Rus Rabbah* #5), brings this very idea up in regards to *Rus* and two other instances from *Tanach* where it is believed that the one who saved the day could have done a bit more.

The *Midrash* first explains that if Reuven knew that he would have been written down in *Tanach* for saving Yosef's life [1] "he would have carried Yosef on his back". The *Midrash* wanted Reuven to see past the other brothers and that their perceptions of Yosef were wrong and unfounded. Yosef was pure and innocent and didn't deserve to die or be punished in any way. If only Reuven would have seen this more clearly, he would have argued on behalf of Yosef more strongly and carried him on his back home. The next instance discussed by the *Midrash* is when Hashem approached Moshe for him to be the next leader. Moshe is concerned that Aharon will feel embarrassed. Hashem responds back by telling him:

"הִנֵּה-הוּא יֵצֵא לִקְרַאתְךָ וְרָאֶךָ וְשִׂמְחָה בְּלִבּוֹ"

"And also, behold, he comes forth to meet you with rejoicing in his heart" (*Shemos* 4:14)

The *Midrash* comments here that if Aharon had known that this would be placed in the Torah: "he would have approached Moshe with timbrels and dances and not just "in his heart". Here it should be noted that if only Aharon was able to see the *ge'ulah* which occurred later he would have seen that Moshe was picked for his strong *anavah* (humility) and not greater wisdom over Aharon. Lastly, by *Megillas Rus* when Boaz sees Rus in the field the *possuk* says:

"וַיַּצְבֵּט-לָהּ קִלְי וַתֹּאכַל"

"He handed her roasted grain, and she ate..."

The *Midrash* remarks here too that if he had known that he would be written in *Tanach* as giving her "wheat", he would have fed her "fattened calves". He didn't know at this moment how high of a spiritual giant she was even at this stage of her life.

But why does the *Midrash* choose to specify these three cases? Were there not more times throughout *Tanach* where characters are rebuked for not doing a *mitzvah* wholeheartedly as well?

To answer these questions one needs to look at the major similarity between these three cases. In all three there is a person acting in a manner to go against his *yetzeir hara*, but the *Midrash* isn't satisfied with this effort and desires perfection from them. The *Midrash* is trying to reveal a deeper message from these three cases. This is for one to understand that every action he does should

be done wholeheartedly and in a way that he will not regret later. We should never leave something “half completed” as we too might be written down for it and regret not taking the extra time or thought to do the action wholeheartedly.

There is always the need for one to push themselves to do more than they feel they need to do or are capable of. After all, in Judaism we have the phrase: לפנים משורת הדין - *to go above the letter of the law*. This phrase is generally explained as one who does more than he needs/is asked to do. Yet, there's also the *issur d'orisa* of בל תוסיף which forbids one from doing more than the actual set *mitzvah* commanded from Hashem. Ultimately, one should at least try to be like the three characters displayed by the *Rus Rabbah* in the best way that suits them; and if the situation arises where we're asked to do something, we should do it wholeheartedly to ensure we won't regret the past later.

וישמע ראוּבֵן ויצלהוּ מִיָּדָם וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא נִקְנֶנּוּ גֹפֶשׁ [1]

*But when Reuven heard it, he tried to save him from them. He said, “Let us not take his life” (Bereishis 37:21)*



# The Minhag to Stay Up All Night

Menachem Aharon  
Wallach

YUHSB ('14)

Menachem Aharon Wallach has attended MTA and YU and, with the exception of one school year, has been on the campus since his Freshman year in 2009. He has one thing to share and that is: Let's Go Lions!

The original night of *Shavuos* the Jews sinned by going to sleep before receiving the Torah. The deeper reason for this act is explained in Jewish mysticism: the Jews wanted to reach such a level they could not achieve while being physically awake, therefore, they went to sleep with the intention to receive and explore a higher mystical realm.

The problem with that conduct is that the purpose of the Torah is to bring Godliness down into this physical world. By the Jews going to sleep in order to reach higher spiritual realms, they ignored working with their physical challenges and they missed the point of receiving the Torah.

Therefore to fix this mistake, we stay awake the whole night studying Torah to show Hashem we truly understand the purpose of the Torah: to bring Godliness into this world.

*Shavuos* is a *zman* where you connect with Torah. We have the idea of 30 days before the *Yom Tov*, but for *Shavuos* you have 49 days climbing from *Yetzias Mitzrayim* to *Matan Torah*. You have to work on yourself to bring yourself to the culmination of accepting the Torah. You have all this extra time.

And another short *devar Torah* in this theme:

There are 7 *Shemita* cycles until *Yovel*, a total of 49 years. This corresponds to the 7 weeks between *Pesach* and *Shavuos*, a total of 49 days. These 49 days correspond to the 49 levels of *tumah* that *Bnei Yisrael* had when they left Egypt. This is a time for growth and preparation to receive the Torah properly.

I hope everyone has an amazing, fun, spiritual and holy *Shavous!*



EST. 1916