

Shavuos 2016

1. Beis Aaron page 299: What does Shavuos and sefiras haomar have to do with Pesach? Furthermore, why on Pesach do we say zman cheirusainu (time of our freedom)? We are not completely free as the Braisa in Avos (perek 6) says someone who learns is called free (אין לך בן (חורין אלא מי שעוסק בתורה), so how do we say zman cheirusainu if we don't have the Torah yet? The answer is; we were physically free on Pesach. Even though, spiritually we weren't free yet. When the Jews left Egypt they were on the forty ninth level of tummah (impurity). Only at Har Sinai when we received the Torah, did we become completely free. This is what Sefira does; it links and demonstrates that the real completion of our freedom isn't until Shavuos. At the time of Shevuos we complete the physical freedom with a spiritual freedom.

2. **The Rama 494 says it's customary to eat dairy products the first day of Shavuos.** There are many reasons for this custom. The Otzros HaTorah pages 149-150 quotes Rav Pinchas Mikoretz who says the Torah doesn't dwell within someone who is arrogant (Taanis 7a). One of the prerequisites for a person to become a real talmid chacham is humility. That's what the dairy food symbolizes. Meat is very chashuv (important), 'arrogant' and expensive. Dairy food is typically less important, cheaper, and 'humbler'. Moshe received the Torah from Sinai. He received the lesson of humility from the mountain. Therefore, **we eat dairy specifically at the time when we received the Torah aka Shevuos because this food represents humility.** The Chok Yaakov quotes the Kol Bo that the Torah is compared to honey and milk. The pasuk in Shir Hashirim states (4, 11) "The sweetness of Torah drips from your lips, like honey and milk it lies under your tongue." Since the Torah is compared to milk, it is customary to eat dairy at the time when we received the Torah. The Elya Raba (494, 10) quotes the Tzeidah LaDerech that says infants nurse and drink milk. That's comparable to the Torah. The Torah is our sustenance just like a mother's milk is a baby's sustenance. (Rav Harfenes in Shu't Mikdash Yisroel (siman 70) offers twenty reasons why we eat dairy on Shavuos.)

3. Why is Safer and parshas Bamidbar always lained very close to Shavuos? Tosefos (Megilah (31b) dibor hamaschil kelalos) answers that this is done in order that the curses that are lained in parshas Bechukosai aren't uttered right before Shevuos. Shavuos is a very important time that we especially want beracha (and for sure no curses) because on Shavuos we get judged for the fruit of the trees as stated in the Mishna (beginning of Mesechas Rosh Hashana). Rav Moshe Feinstein (Drash Moshe chelek aleph page 110) says **we lained Bamidbar near the time of Shavuos for those who think learning isn't for them and those who think they are simple people who don't need to learn. The message of parshas Bamidbar is; learning Torah is for everyone. When the Jews were counted in parshas Bamidbar, the pasuk uses the language of si'eu, elevate. After the Jews were counted, everyone's level increased. Everyone felt more important because they were counted and merited to be counted even amongst the gedolim (great people). They reasoned that this big talmid chacham and I both count as one! Everyone gets counted equally because every simple Jew has the potential to become great.**

The same concept applies regarding being counted for a minyan. Both the Gadol hador (leader of the generation) and simple Jew are counted as one! Even a simple Jew can ascend and reach as great a level as the Gadol! (Also just the fact that he is Jewish makes him so

important.) The word צבור (congregation) is an acronym for צדיקים, בינונים ורשעים. (Righteous people, average people and wicked people.) The Gemara in Sanhedrin (64a) says there are three acts a person needs to die for rather than to transgress: to kill, commit adultery, or worship idols. Even if you are the Gadol Hador and are told to kill a simple Jew, the Gadol hador still needs to give his life up! The reason for this is that this simple Jew can rise to an even greater level than the Gadol hador! Who says your blood (aka the blood of the Gadol) is redder than his! (See Rivivos v'yovlos chelek aleph siman 10.)

4. Kuntros benyonai chag hashavuos page 153

The Magan Avraham (siman 494) quotes the Zohar who says **the custom is to stay awake the night of Shavuos.** The Magan Avraham writes **the reason for this is, because the Jews were sleeping and Hashem needed to wake them up to receive the Torah. To fix this we stay up all night.** The Magan Avraham and Mishna Berurah (siman 494) quote the Arizal (shar hakavanos, chag hashavuos page 89) who says we need to be careful not to sleep even one moment. Someone who doesn't sleep on this night and learns the whole night without conversing about mundane and wasteful matters is guaranteed his year will be complete and no harm will come to him. The life of a person is dependent on this matter. Similarly, the Yesod Vshoresh Haavoda (shar hatzon perek 10) writes we need to be careful to minimize our eating on this night in order that we will be able to learn. Immediately after the seuda (meal) run to the Beis Medrash not to be mevatel (waste) even a moment! The Chida (in sefer Avodas Hakodesh siman 22 os 7) writes that even during the seuda we should think about the learning. We see from the aforementioned information that **the life a person for the entire year is dependent upon this night.** The Sfas Emes as well says this night is the root of the entire year.

The simple explanation of all of the aforementioned information is that the positive impact of Shevuos night pertains to ruchniyos (spiritual) matters for the rest of the year. Similarly, the Rashash (Nahor Shalom page 32) says Pesach and Sefira are a root for the entire year.

Meaning, the way we act during this time will impact the way we will act the rest of the entire year. This is because the main 'light' of Shavuos is dependent upon a person's behavior during Pesach and Sefira. The way a person acts during Pesach and Sefira will determine the way he will act on Shevuos. Since Shavuos is the source for the entire year and since the way we act on Shevuos depends on the way we acted during Pesach and Sefira, therefore the entire year really depends on how we act during Pesach and Sefira.

We see from the Arizal a chiddush (insight) that Shavuos night also impacts the gashmiyos (physicality's) for the following year as well! What's the explanation of this? Seemingly our physical destiny is determined on Rosh Hashana, not Shevuos?

Shavuos is Yom Hadin (the day of judgment) al Hatorah (for Torah learning). This doesn't solely apply regarding how much a person will learn, but additionally on the 'vessels' for learning. Meaning, if a person is dead he won't be able to learn. If a person is physically injured, it will negatively impact his learning. A person's spiritual ability to properly and healthily learn is greatly intertwined with his physical status. Because of this, on this night a person is able to tap into the physical blessing as well. The Sefer Genizei Hamelech os 48 says even if it was decreed upon someone to die, but he nevertheless learns, the Torah will give him life. The Torah is called eitz hachaim (tree of life) and he will therefore live. The Nefesh Hachaim as well says learning can increase a person's life.

This concept of the holiday affecting the 'vessels' of Torah is derived from the Gemara. The Gemara in Sotah 12b says Moshe Rabbeinu was saved from the river during the time of Shavuos.

The Yaabetz explains that at the time of Shavuos Yocheved was pregnant with Moshe. Since Moshe was the pipe, vessel and intermediary through which the Torah was going to be given to Klal Yisroel, it makes sense he was conceived and saved on Shavuos. The Maharal (Nesivos Olam Perek 11) says the chachamim (Torah scholars) themselves are the Torah, as stated in the Gemara in Shavuos (22b) just like it was decreed that Hashem would give the Torah to Klal Yisroel, so too it was decreed He would give chachamim to Yisroel as well. A portion of the Jews receiving the Torah are the Jews receiving the chachamim. If this is so regarding the chachamim, kal v'chomer regarding Moshe Rabbeinu being given to the Jewish people was of great importance.

The Sefer Binyan Olam (Perek 16) quotes the Seder Hayom that says **even though a person spent the entire night learning, he shouldn't be mevatel the rest of the Yom Tov of Shavuos and not learn. The night learning shouldn't cause a decrease of learning during the rest of the Yom Tov. Rather, one should rest a little bit and get up and learn during the afternoon!** A person who calculates properly will notice he has plenty of extra time to learn. One may ask based on the Gemara in Pesachim (68b) that says everyone agrees on Shavuos you need time for yourself, yes one can accomplish both eating, sleeping, davening and learning. The Chida (in his sefer Simchas Haregel) writes that after you sleep and eat you will have a few hours to learn. If one merited purifying himself via learning at night, he will also be able to do so during the day! **The purpose of kabalas hatorah and learning all night is in order to recharge our batteries and enable ourselves to learn for another year until Shavuos. If there is bittul Torah motzei (after) Shavuos and onward, it's as if we are missing the point of the Chag. The point is to continue the positive flow and ripple effect of the chag (holiday).** Gedolei olam (great people) say that if a person learns during the night and day and doesn't speak devarim batailim (wasteful words) for the whole chag for sure he will have hatzlacha (success) with his learning for the whole year. The pasuk in Tehilim (119, 97) states "I loved your Torah and all day I talk about it!"/"מה אהבתי תורתך כל היום היא שיחתי." ALL DAY! כל (all) has the gematria (numerical value) of fifty which alludes to the fiftieth day. **He loved the Torah because of the fiftieth day of the omer, Shavuos, which he learned all day and night of Shavuos which gave him the strength and love for the Torah. The learning on Shevuos night gave him inspiration that fueled him to learn all year.** Through this we will be zocheh (merit) to learn, understand, and love the Torah the entire year. Properly understanding the Torah will subsequently lead to loving the Torah.

Thank you Yair Moshe Ausabel for typing this up.