



Divrei Torah



Chag HaShavuot

6 Sivan 5774 / June 4, 2014

Daf Yomi: Rosh Hashana 27; Nach Yomi: Isaiah 35

Weekly Dvar Torah

A project of the

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF YOUNG ISRAEL

*SPONSORED BY THE HENRY, BERTHA AND EDWARD ROTHMAN FOUNDATION
ROCHESTER, NY, CLEVELAND, OHIO, CIRCLEVILLE, OHIO*

The Unique Holiday of Shavuot

Rabbi Zvi Walkenfeld

Associate Member, Young Israel Council of Rabbis, Clifton, NJ

"Curiouser and Curiouser"

— Alice, *Alice in Wonderland*

Of the five holidays in the Torah, the holiday of Shavuot stands distinct in four rather prominent ways.

1. It is the only holiday that does not occur on a specific date. It occurs on the fiftieth day from the second day of Pesach, when the Omer sacrifice was brought. Nowadays, our calendar is fixed, but optimally each new month is supposed to be determined by eyewitness testimony as to the appearance of the new moon. Shavuot could then fall on the 5th, 6th or 7th of Sivan.
2. Shavuot does not have any holiday-specific ritual performance. Rosh Hashana has its shofar, Yom Kippur has its fast, Sukkot its sukkah and Pesach its matzah. In stark contrast, Shavuot, has nothing.
3. Unlike the other holidays, the main Torah portion is not about the holiday or its rituals. It contains the story of the Revelation at Sinai and the Decalogue, the Ten Commandments. (The reading on Rosh Hashana relates to the Binding of Isaac, Akedas Yitzchak which relates to the shofar. The Shofar on Rosh Hashana is taken from a ram to recall Abraham's devotion to the Almighty at the time of the Akeda, after which Abraham sacrificed a ram in lieu of his son.)
4. The Shavuot prayers do not describe the holiday. The prayers refer to it as *Z'man Matan Toratenu* – the time of the giving of our Torah. This association is not made in the Torah and is not precise. We do not know the exact date on which the Revelation took place. There is a Talmudic dispute as to whether it occurred on the 6th or 7th day of Sivan. Even if we were certain, as explained above, the holiday is not attached to either date.

Shavuot has no ritual observance and no independent date. The prayers and Torah reading connect it to Revelation at Sinai but the Torah itself makes no such connection. It simply does not have any identity of its own.

All this begs the question, "What is Shavuot really about?"

Suppose for a moment that you were a prophet; and that G-d Himself would converse with you. And, not just a god of wood or stone that you carved with your own hands, but THE G-d – the G-d who brought the world into being by his mere thought, the G-d who created light and dark, the G-d who created the universe and all it contains, the G-d who created life itself. That G-d. Could you imagine debating G-d? Could you imagine challenging G-d by telling Him that He is dishonest or untrustworthy? Could you imagine telling G-d that he made a mistake? Would you risk provoking G-d?

G-d tells Abraham that Sodom is an evil place and is going to be destroyed. Abraham responds, "Will you really wipe away the righteous with the wicked?" Abraham debates G-d on this issue until he is satisfied that there isn't a single righteous person in Sodom.

When Jacob leaves home to go to Laban's house in Padan Aram, G-d promises to protect Jacob on his trip until his safe return. G-d later instructs Jacob to return home and reiterates his promise of protection. On the trip home, Jacob is faced with a confrontation with his brother Esau and turns to G-d and says, "I am afraid that Esau will destroy me...and you promised me that you will do good by me." Why didn't Jacob trust G-d's promise?

Moses sees the burning bush and he speaks to G-d. G-d explains how the time has finally come to free the Israelites from their suffering and lead them to the Promised Land. G-d continues and tells Moses that he is the one that must go to Pharaoh and lead the people out of Egypt. Moses' responds: "Are you sure?"

G-d tells Moses that Pharaoh will resist sending the Jews out and he then sends Moses to Pharaoh to demand that the Jews be allowed out to worship G-d in the desert. Pharaoh responds by increasing their workload, whereupon Moses turns to G-d and essentially complains that G-d is causing more harm than good, "Why have You harmed this nation? Why have You sent me? Since I came to Pharaoh to speak in Your name, he has harmed this people, and You have not saved Your nation."

The Israelites clamor for meat. G-d acquiesces and tells Moses that He will provide enough meat for a month. Consider, after witnessing the plagues, after the splitting of the Yam Suf (Reed Sea), after experiencing the Revelation on Sinai, and after receiving the Manna – would you doubt G-d's words? Moses, the prophet on who's word all of these events occurred, responds with total amazement, "I am in the middle of a nation of six hundred thousand people on foot and You say, 'I will give them meat, and they will eat it for a full month'? If sheep and cattle were slaughtered for them, would it be enough for them? If all the fish of the sea were gathered for them, would it be enough for them?"

When Jonah receives a direct command from G-d, he runs away. Imagine that! G-d speaks to you and tells you to do something and you hop on a bus and head out of town – like a child who locks himself in his room because he doesn't want to do his homework.

What is even more amazing is G-d's response. G-d does not get angry or excoriate, but answers respectfully and clearly; G-d teaches but G-d does not get upset.

"The world is full of obvious things which nobody by any chance ever observes."
— Sherlock Holmes, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

As I previously noted, the Torah portion of the day is the Decalogue. Certainly this is the grand show, this is the main event, this is the part of the Torah that everybody comes to synagogue to hear. That being the case, the custom is that everyone stands for the reading of Decalogue.

In the Torah reading, prior to the Decalogue, there is a well-known item that does not receive much fanfare. A deal is struck between God and the Israelites. G-d makes a pact with the new Jewish nation in which we agree to keep and follow G-d's laws and, in turn, we become G-d's *Ahm Segula* (holy nation). Essentially G-d and the Jewish people have inked a deal wherein they have an exclusive relationship with one another; we do for G-d and G-d does for us. But this relationship is on human terms, not on G-dly terms and as such, G-d embraces dialogue with us as ourselves. Our relationship with the Almighty is a personal one, encompassing all of our attributes and our individual personalities. As human beings, we have emotions, fears and worries; we become excited, angry, and we show concern.

The Torah includes details of each prophecy in order for us to understand the healthy relationship that The Almighty wants.

God approached Abraham to inform him about the impending destruction of Sodom. G-d asks rhetorically, "Should I hide what I am doing from Abraham?" G-d has a close relationship with Abraham who will command his children to follow in G-d's ways to do justice and righteousness. Abraham's response reflected his honesty, it was his defining characteristic. Indeed, when Abraham left his father's house to go to Canaan, the Torah tells us that he brought along others with him – not just his family but the "souls that he made." Abraham was a maker of souls, not a destroyer.

Jacob's fear was a human emotion. When Jacob turned to G-d in his fear, it was reflective of the close relationship and bond that Jacob and G-d had with each other.

Moses was the most humble person of all humanity. He saw himself as one with the people, no better than anyone. He did not feel he was special. Moses was astounded that G-d would consider him a leader and so he naturally protested. After the sin of the Golden Calf, Moses, as part of the nation, could not tolerate the thought that G-d would destroy the Jews and build up a new nation from him. The very idea of elevating himself above anyone else repelled Moses, so he protested.

Jonah's relationship with God was likewise on human terms. His relationship was such that, at the end of the *Book of Jonah*, he and G-d converse and they discuss why Jonah tried to run and why G-d wouldn't let him.

Shavuot is a holiday dedicated to having an exclusive, individualized relationship with the Almighty. It is not associated with things, but with G-d Himself. With this understanding, our questions are answered:

1. Shavuot has no specific date because our relationship is not limited in time. It is tethered to Passover because the redemption was the pivotal event that forged the relationship between G-d and Israel.
2. It has no ritual because our relationship with G-d cannot be ritualized in the normal sense. When people have close relationships, they look forward to spending time together. The ritual on Shavuot is for man and G-d to spend time together.
3. The Torah reading on Shavuot reflects the essential nature of the holiday. It starts with the covenant between The Almighty and His chosen nation and then continues with the Decalogue. The covenant transformed the very nature of the relationship and formed a firm, legal bond between both parties. This is followed by the Decalogue which outlines the nature of that bond.

The first half of the Decalogue contains what are usually referred to as the commands between man and G-d. If you look carefully at those commands, you will see they involve our relationship. It talks about how we forged our relationship with G-d when He took us out from Egypt, how our relationship is to be exclusive with no other G-d. G-d tells us in human terms, that he is a jealous G-d. He does not call Himself a jealous G-d because He has a human trait. Rather, He uses a term that resonates with us which is similar to the jealousy that erupts from marital infidelity which threatens the very bond of the marriage. Similarly, worshiping other gods threatens the fabric of our relationship with The Almighty.

The second half of the Decalogue contains those commands between man and his fellow. But it doesn't contain just any commands. It contains those basic rules that an orderly society needs in order to maintain itself. G-d did not create people to leave them to the whims and wiles of chance. He is concerned with us and wants us to flourish, to grow, and to develop. G-d wants to have a relationship with us so that we, in turn, will be able to develop good relationships with other people.

4. The common assumption is that the holiday is called *Z'man Matan Toratenu* (The Season of the Giving of our Torah) because of the proximity of the holiday with Revelation. In fact, we are transposing the cause and effect. Revelation took place at that time so that it could coincide with the Holiday which is dedicated to our relationship with G-d.

The Holiday of Shavuot exists so that each of us can have a point in time dedicated to this very special relationship with the Almighty.

Chag Samayach

printer friendly:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/kd7ky9wlknrlcmq/The%20Unique%20Holiday%20of%20Shavuot.pdf>

From The Parables of the Maggid A Shavuot Message

Rabbi Moshe Greebel

Associate Member, Young Israel Council of Rabbis

One of the titles by which we refer to the Yom Tov of Shavuot is 'Z'man Matan Torasainu,' or the time of the giving of our Torah. Yet, when Moshe Rabbeinu first ascended Sinai to receive the Torah, he was given somewhat of an inhospitable welcome, as we see from the Gemarah of Shabbos 88b:

"Rabbi Y'hoshua Ben Levi also said, 'When Moshe ascended on high, the hierarchy Malachim (celestial emissaries) spoke before HaKadosh Baruch Hu, "Sovereign of the Universe! What business has one born of woman amongst us?" "He has come to receive the Torah," answered He to them. Said they to Him, "That secret treasure (the Torah), which has been hidden by You for nine hundred and seventy four generations before the world was created, You desire to give to flesh and blood? What is man, that You are mindful of him? And the son of man, that You consider him.....?" (T'hilim 8:5)

As per the Gemarah, HaKadosh Baruch Hu ordered Moshe to take firm hold of the Kisei HaKavod (throne of glory) for his protection against the fiery breath of the hierarchy Malachim, and answer their arguments against mankind being given the Torah, which he most successfully managed to do.

Now, whether Agadah (homiletics) is to be taken literally or figuratively, a somewhat inevitable question confronts us regarding this particular Gemarah. If the hierarchy Malachim were aware that HaKadosh Baruch Hu had already decided to present mankind with the Torah through Moshe, where did they get the 'insolence' to so vigorously protest the arrival of Moshe to receive the Torah? Should not the hierarchy Malachim of all HaKadosh Baruch Hu's servants, have served their Master with thorough loyalty, and not by casting aspersions?

Most fortunately for us, we are provided with quite an apt answer to our question by the Dubno Maggid (Rav Ya'akov Kranz 1740- 1804) of blessed memory, with the following very ingenious Mashal (parable).

A famous Rabbinic scholar had served in a large city for many years. As can be imagined, he was involved in a great many issues pertaining to the Jews of that city. Day and night, he was consulted to give renditions of the Halacha (Torah Law), to settle disputes between litigants, to oversee charity drives, and to intercede with the secular government on behalf of the Jews of the municipality. So faithfully did he toil at his post, that he never knew respite or relief from his labors.

The years all too quickly passed by, and the Rav grew old, too old to continue with these rigorous activities day in and day out. After careful deliberation with his wife and the rest of his family, it was decided that the Rav would seek employment in a smaller city. There, he could live out the remainder of his life in quietude, avoiding the stress and pressure he had experienced thus far. The Rav called for a town meeting.

"As you all know," declared the Rav to those assembled, "I have labored hard on your behalf for many years, years which have taken their toll on me. Now that I have grown old in your service, it is impossible for me to continue in this manner any longer. My strength has ebbed from me. I must seek a less demanding existence. With your permission, I will apply for a Rabbinic post in a smaller city, one in which I will not be too heavily taxed with communal affairs."

These words, as can be readily imagined, heavily saddened the audience. After several unsuccessful attempts at changing the Rav's resolve, the community had little choice but to reluctantly accept their leader's decision. After all, the Rav's health was at stake. This point was inarguable.

Several days later, the Rav dispatched a letter to a Jewish community in a smaller city, where at present, the post of Rabbi remained vacant. The communication read:

"I have given notice to my community that for the sake of my health, I wish to relocate to your city. If you will accept me as your Rav, preparations for my departure from here can begin immediately."

Needless to say, the community of this smaller city was overjoyed at these good tidings. So eminent a Rabbinic scholar wished to relocate to their city. A letter was dispatched by this community, which read:

"You do us undeserved honor by requesting to live among us as our Rabbi. Our entire community rejoices. We are prepared to send our most prominent representatives to your city to accompany you on your journey to our community. In addition, we have hired very costly carriages and wagons, complete with drivers and footmen to transport you, your family, and your belongings. We eagerly await your arrival."

Several days later, the carriages, wagons, and the representatives arrived in the city of the Rav. There however, in the town square, an angry rank and file, brandishing sticks and clubs, suddenly approached them.

"How dare you presume to take away our beloved Rav?" screamed the unruly mob. "We will never allow you to remove him from us!"

Hearing these threatening words, the representatives, drivers, and footmen ran in terror. The mob then began to thrash the carriages with their weapons.

Aghast, the Rav appeared in the town square.

"What is the meaning of this?" he angrily shouted. "Have you not given me your permission to relocate? Why are you acting in such a shameful manner?"

Hearing these words, the mob ceased their wild behavior, and stepped away from the carriages and wagons. Apprehensively, the representatives and drivers came out of hiding, and fearfully ordered the footmen to begin loading the Rav's belongings. When this was completed, the Rav and his family boarded their carriage, ready to depart from the city.

Nonetheless, before they were able to do so, the unruly mob assembled once more, approaching the carriages and wagons with their sticks and clubs.

"We are determined to bar your way!" they angrily shouted. "You will not take our revered Rav from us, not while we live!"

Standing up in the carriage, the Rav admonished the crowd, saying, "What are you doing? Did you not give me your leave to relocate to another city? By acting in so undisciplined a manner, you negate everything I have taught you! Desist from such behavior this instant!"

At this point, one member of the crowd declared, "Rabbi, will you give us a word in private before your departure?" Descending from the carriage, the Rav went with the mob to a location out of earshot of the public square.

"Rabbi," declared the mob leader, "we mean the representatives of this other city no harm by our behavior. We only act so, for your own good. Perhaps, the community of the city to which you relocate will mistakenly assume that you leave us because we wish it so. In such circumstances, they will treat you with less respect than you deserve. Our aim is to show these representatives that you leave us of your own accord. Only then will they treat you with the distinction that you merit." And, so concludes the Mashal of the Maggid.

The hierarchy Malachim did not protest and threaten with their words and fire in order to harm Moshe, the Maggid taught. Rather, they only wished to illustrate their reluctance to the giving of the Torah to flesh and blood, who they thought would only violate it. With this protest, the hierarchy Malachim displayed to Moshe that the B'nai Yisroel should not take the Torah HaK'dosha lightly and not deny it its deserved respect and honor.

The very essence of the celebration of 'Z'man Matan Torasainu,' is to come to the realization that only we, the people of Yisroel among all the other nations of the world, have been bestowed the greatest gift known to all humanity, the Torah. And, because we as a people, held fast to that Torah for so many thousands of years to the present day, we merit yet another Yom Tov of Shavuos to commemorate its giving. For, the Mitzvos of the Torah HaK'dosha are our very lives and the longevity of our days.

May we soon see the G'ulah Sh'laimah in its complete resplendency- and in our times. A good Yom Tov.

[printer friendly:](#)

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/6pn8ifrc8zdb28/From%20The%20Parables%20of%20the%20Maggid.pdf>

In addition to being a M'chaneich and semi retired synagogue Rav, Rabbi Greebel delivers a Gemarah Shiur via Skype. He can be contacted at weekllysidra@yahoo.com or at belmar.rabbi@yahoo.com

Meafar Kumi

Rabbi Ronen Shaharabany

Graduate, Young Israel Rabbinic Training Program

יש כ"ע, "שלום נתיבותיה וכל" (ז, ג משלי) דכתיב, **שלום הוא אורייתא**, "תורתך לאוהבי רב שלום" (קסה קיט תהלים) כתיב, אמר יוסי ירבי: (קעו דף, קרח פרשת) הקדוש בזהר איתא שלום הוא התורה מהות שעצם דהיינו, "שלום הוא אורייתא" מדוע, להבין?

להגיע היא הבריאה תכלית. ביותר עילאית חיובית מדרגה היא שלום. המחלוקת העדר דהיינו, השלילה דרך על רק אינו השלום ענין: לשונו זה, (קסה עמ קראוי חלק) שלום הנתיבות כתב "כולם את מחיה ואתה" כדכתיב, אותם המחיה יתברך וחוכ בלתי קיום זכות כל להם אין, ומדבר חי צומח דומם, הנבראים וכל. **יתברך כוחו זולת וכח מציאות שאין**, "מלבדו עוד אין" **ש להכרה** בטלים יהיו הנבראים וכל, "מלבדו עוד אין" ש יתגלה כאשר יהיה השלם התיקון ולכן. ה"הקב והוא, הבריאה בכל אחד כח שיש דהיינו, "אחד ה' אלקינו ה' ישראל שמע" שכתוב זה. (ו, ט נחמיה) **היא השלום למידת והניגוד**. **כולם את המחיה לה ובטלה מאוחדת הבריאה שכל, השלום דרגת זוהי**. יתברך כוחו זולת אחר וכח דבר שום אינוש, אחד ה' אלקינו 'שה ידעו וכולם, 'לה והניגוד ההיפך שהיא, העולם חורבן היא המחלוקת עצם, כך ומשום. השלום מידת של האחדות היפך, **נפרדת וישות נפרד כח הוא אחד שכל מכך בשורשה נובעת שהמחלוקת, המחלוקת** וש"ע, "מלבדו עוד אין" ו"אחד ה' אלקינו ה' ש הבריאה לתיקון

"מלבדו עוד אין" ש לישראל והראה הרקיעים כל את קרע ה"הקב סיני הר במעמד. "מלבדו עוד אין" ה גילוי סוד הוא סיני הר מעמד. "שלום הוא אורייתא" מדוע להבין ניתן, הקדושים דבריו פי על הגילוי גופא היא, השלום מידת והרי. כפשוטו מלבדו עוד אין - אלוקות שהכל להכרה להגיע, התורה כל תכלית זוהי. (שסז עמ, מועדים "אבנה משכן בבלבי" ועיין. לה, ד ואתחנן י"רש עי) "שלום הוא אורייתא" וממילא, "מלבדו עוד אין" ש

והיה, לזה זה כבוד נהגו שלא מפני אחד בפרק מתו וכולן, אנטסיפרס עד מגבת, עקיבא לרבי לו היו תלמידים זוגים אלף עשר שנים", (סב ותיבמ) בגמרא איתא: ביותר נפלא דבר להבין ניתן עתה "שעה אותה רהתו העמידו הם והם, שמוע בן אלעזר ורבי שמעון ורבי יוסי 'ור יהודה 'ור מאיר 'ר להם ושנאה, שבדרום רבותינו אצל עקיבא רבי שבא עד, שמם העולם

דברי עם נפלא באופן מסתרים דבריו. ש"ע, "עצמו בעיני ומציאות ליש נחשב אחד ושכל, עצמי ביטול חוסר מפאת הוא, לזה זה כבוד נהגו שלא הם" (: אמור פרשת) משמאל השם פירש הרי. ("מלבדו עוד אין" - 'לה ההתבטלות שהיא) "השלום מידת של האחדות היפך, דתנפר וישות נפרד כח הוא אחד שכל מכך בשורשה נובעת המחלוקת": שכתב, "לה הנ שלום הנתיבות "מלבדו עוד אין" בהשגת פגם היה - השלום מידת חוסר - לזה זה כבוד נהגו שלא התלמידים פגם

?מיתה חיוב או כרת איסור בזה אין הרי, לזה זה כבוד נהגו שלא בעבור מתו עקיבא רבי תלמידי מדוע, המפרשים קושיית לתרץ ניתן בזה

לדורות התורה ומסירת. הבאים לדורות התורה מוסרי להיות צריכים היו ותלמידיו, פה שבעל לתורה היסוד היה עקיבא שרבי, (ז עמ, ג חלק) אהרן רבי המשנת שכתב מה פי על לפרש אפשר ראויים היו לא ממילא, כראוי בתכלית תורתם שתהיה זכו לא, זה מקנין שהחסירו והם. תברים דיבוק הוא התורה קניני ח"מ שאחד, שפירש בדבריו ש"ע) עניניה בכל שלימה תורה להיות צריכה (התורה מוסרי להיות

הנובע, השלום במידת פגמו עקיבא רבי תלמידי והרי. "שלום הוא אורייתא" - השלום מידת - "מלבדו עוד אין" לה הגיעה היא ותכליתה התורה מהות שעצם ביארנו: כך לומר נכל דבריו ולפי עניניה בכל שלימה תורה להיות צריכה לדורות התורה מסירת כי, התורה מוסרי להיות זכו לא ולכן, ותכליתה התורה מהות מעצם שהחסירו נמצא. "מלבדו עוד אין" בהשגת מחסרון

עוד אין" ב להתעלות אמורים, זו בתקופה לכן. "מלבדו עוד אין" של גילוי היה תורה שמתן וביארנו. תורתנו מתן ליום נהההכ ימי אלו הרי. לעצרת פסח בין דווקא מתו התלמידים מדוע מובן עתה אז דווקא מתו, "מלבדו עוד אין" - האני ביטול מחוסר שנבע, לזה זה כבוד נהגו שלא התלמידים וממילא. השלום מידת - האני וביטול - "מלבדו

(עם) (מם ואו למד שין) במילוי "שלום" של הגימטריא שזה, 528 יש "עצרת" ל "פסח" ובין 1151 = במילוי (תאו ריש צדי עין) "עצרת". 623 = (חית סמך פה) במילוי "פסח": לכן לדורות התורה מוסרי ולהיות תורתנו מתן לחג להגיע יפראוי היו לא, כן עשו שלא והם. "מלבדו עוד אין" - השלום מידת את לקנות עלינו, תורה למתן ההכנה ימי, אז שדווקא לרמוז. (הכולל הבאים

אם. "שעה אותה תורה העמידו הם והם, שמוע בן אלעזר ורבי שמעון ורבי יוסי 'ור יהודה 'ור מאיר 'ר להם ושנאה, שבדרום רבותינו אצל עקיבא רבי בא" אומרת הגמרא, תלמידיו מיתה אחרי השלמות לתכלית הגיעו אכן, התורה מוסרי להיות שזכו החדשים התלמידים שחמשת מוכח, "מלבדו עוד אין" בהשגת חסרון מחמת התורה מוסרי להיות זכו לא הראשונים התלמידים "מלבדו עוד אין" בהשגת

מם, דלת ויו עין, נון יוד אלף) במילוי "מלבדו עוד אין" גימטריאב עולים - התלמידים חמשת שמות - "שמוע בן אלעזר" "יוחאי בר שמעון" "יוסי" "יהודה" "מאיר": לדברינו ביותר נפלא ורמז שמוותם ולכן. "מלבדו עוד אין" בהשגת השלמות לתכלית הגעתם מחמת הייתה, ולמוסרה תורה להעמיד זכו התלמידים שחמשת שהסיבה לרמוז. (1846) (הכולל עם) (וי דלת בית למד ופלא הפלא זה. בשלמותה נכתבת אות שכל באופן - שלמות מסמל "מילוי" כי, "מלבדו עוד אין" של מילוי דווקא עולים

החכם מאמר

כמוהו וגאוותן קפדן אין התפילה ולאחר, "תהיה לכל כעפר ונפשי" בכוונה אומר הוא

א"החיד

- !לטובה לבו משאלות כל 'ה ימלא. שבעו כל זה לעלון הגהתו על סימון בן חיים של האדיבה עזרתו את ומוקיר מעריך -

Need to locate a Young Israel Synagogue? Need the Zmanim in a partcular zip code?
See our website www.youngisrael.org