

LampLighter

5 Sivan
Shavuot
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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

Shavuot is the holiday on which we celebrate the giving of the Torah, when G-d Himself descended on Mount Sinai before the entire Jewish people. The world stood still as G-d's voice thundered the first of the Ten Commandments, "I am the L-rd your G-d, Who took you out of the land of Egypt".

Our Sages ask a pointed question: What was so special about the exodus from Egypt that G-d chose to mention it in the very first Commandment? Why not "I am the L-rd your G-d, Who created heaven and earth"? Is not the creation of the world more fundamental than an isolated historical incident involving only a few million people?

In addition, the exodus from Egypt - although a great miracle - involved only that generation. The existence of the physical world, however, is a phenomenon which each generation can point to as evidence of G-d's greatness. Why then did G-d give the exodus such prominence at the moment of His revelation to mankind?

Chasidic philosophy explains that in certain respects, the Jewish people's liberation from bondage in Egypt was an even greater event than the creation of the world. G-d created the world *ex nihilo* - substance out of nothingness - something which we, as created beings, cannot comprehend. Although the creation of the world was a wondrous event, for an all-powerful, eternal and infinite G-d, it was no particular feat.

Furthermore, the Torah states that the world was created by G-d's speech. "By the word of G-d the heavens were created, and by His breath all of their hosts." Speech is an external power, produced without exertion. The world was created in such a way as to express only the outermost fraction of G-d's true might.

The exodus from Egypt, however, was a miracle of a totally different order. In order for the Jews to leave Egypt, G-d had to supersede the laws of nature He had already created to run the world. G-d Himself, not an angel, led the Jews as they departed. Abrogating natural law to free the Children of Israel involved an even higher level of Divine intervention than creating the world in the first place! The exodus from Egypt was therefore given the top billing it deserved in the Ten Commandments.

Likewise, in our own lives, we sometimes find that it is harder to change ingrained and established habits than it is to begin a completely new undertaking. When G-d took our ancestors out of Egypt (Mitzrayim), He gave each and every Jew the strength to break through the boundaries and limitations (metzarim) which stand in his way. This innate power, bestowed upon the Jewish people when the Torah was revealed, gives us the ability to overcome any negative habits or character traits which prevent us from serving G-d with a full heart.

(Based on the teaching of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

In The Desert

By Yanki Tauber

In the desert there are no office buildings or factories. So if you lived in the desert, chances are you wouldn't have a job. There'd be no boss bossing you, and no underlings under you.

In the desert there are no towns or neighborhoods. No old money, no new money, no social climbers and no social climbed-overs.

In the desert there aren't even any department stores or groceries. You'd eat manna from heaven and wear the same pair of shoes for forty years.

That is why, say our sages, G-d gave us the Torah in the desert.

Had He given it to us on Wall Street, He would have had to decide whom to appoint to the board and who should retain a controlling interest. Had He given it to us in the Holy Land, He'd have had to decide if He wants it in religious Jerusalem, mystical Safed or hi-tech Tel Aviv. Or perhaps He'd have preferred a Marxist kibbutz or even a neo-Zionist settlement?

G-d wanted no shareholders in his Torah, no corporate structure, no social or political context. In fact, no context whatsoever. Just us and the Torah.

Wouldn't it have been great to stay in the desert?

But as soon as G-d was sure that we'd gotten the message—that we understood that the Torah is not the product of any particular age, environment or cultural milieu, and that it belongs, absolutely and unequivocally, to each and every one of us—he sent us to the cities and the towns of His world, to its farms and marketplaces, to its universities and office buildings. He told us that now that He's done His part, it's up to us to make His Torah relevant in all these places and in all these contexts.

Still, it's nice to come back to the desert once in a while. At least for a visit.



The Blessing of Writing a Torah - Alex Beim

by Tzvi Jacobs

About 250 years ago, a Jewish community in Russia was suffering from a devastating epidemic. The Baal Shem Tov advised the people to write a Sefer Torah (a handwritten scroll). They wrote the Torah and the plague stopped.

Salek and Chaya Beim of Morristown, New Jersey, commissioned a sofer, a Jewish scribe, to write a Sefer Torah in the merit that their two daughters, who suffered from a severe Lupus condition, should each have a complete recovery.

On September 11, 1992, six months after the sofer started this year-long project, the Beim's son, Danny, became the proud father of a six-pound, twelve-ounce baby boy.

As an obstetrician, Danny had seen many newborns, and his bright-faced, blonde-haired baby boy looked quite healthy. Danny's wife, Pam, needed a couple of days to rest up, but she looked forward to going home with her baby and taking an extended break from her work as a dentist.

Two days after the birth, a nurse went to get the Beim baby from the hospital nursery and noticed that he was barely breathing.

She rushed him into the intensive care unit. The doctors could not find the cause. After two days of testing, they believed that the faulty breathing stemmed from a congenital metabolic disorder which, in turn, was affecting the heart.

The doctors did an EEG on the baby. "Neurologically, it doesn't look good," the neurologist told Danny and his parents. He explained that the heart

apparently was not pumping enough oxygen-rich blood, resulting in a lack of oxygen to the baby's brain.

"The EEG indicated extensive brain damage. He will never walk, talk..." the neurologist said.

Later, the neonatologist advised Danny and Pam to forget about surgery and let nature take its course. "If we fix the heart, your baby may survive, but he will be institutionalized for the rest of his life," the doctor said.

That evening Danny's sister Betty called and asked to speak to Pam. Betty worked for El Al.

"I'm going to get you a bracha," Betty said. "What does that mean?" asked Pam.

"A bracha? A blessing. There's a rabbi who works in the El Al terminal at Kennedy Airport who knows a rabbi who can pray for your baby. His name is Rabbi Schneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe." Betty had recently met Rabbi Yekutiel 'Kuti' Rapp, the Lubavitch emissary in Kennedy Airport.

Rabbi Rapp called to report, "The Rebbe's answer is that the baby's brain will be okay; just fix his heart."

With this needed encouragement, the parents transferred their baby to Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital in Manhattan, famous for its advanced work in neonatology. The doctors there discovered that the trunks of the two main arteries leaving the baby's heart, the pulmonary and the aorta were fused together.

The "old" and the "new" blood were mixing together, resulting in a severe lack of oxygen reaching the brain. Many risky operations had to be performed to fix this rare defect, termed persistent truncus arteriosus, before the baby would be able to use his own heart.

In the meantime, Danny and Pam became co-sponsors in the writing of the Sefer Torah, in the merit that their son would live and be healthy.

So with the baby also in mind, the sofer continued inscribing letters in the Torah Scroll.

The baby had been in Columbia-Presbyterian for three weeks while the doctors evaluated his condition. "This is

the worst case I have seen in 22 years of practice," said the neonatologist. "You have a very sick baby. I am very sorry, but you will never be able to take him home."

"I guess I just want a miracle for my son," Pam cried.

Hanging onto the Rebbe's blessing, Danny and Pam decided to transfer their baby to the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. There, a team of doctors, headed by a Dr. Norwood, specialized in operating on babies with truncus.

The doctors at CHOP scheduled surgery on the baby's tiny heart. The delicate surgery involved dividing the arterial trunk, taking tissue from the baby's lung, and creating a wall between the divided trunks of the two arteries. This procedure had been developed only four years earlier and there were only 25 doctors in the world who were skilled at doing this type of heart surgery.

The Beim's baby was not strong-he weighed less than 10 pounds- so the surgery was doubly risky, but the Beim's gave the go ahead with it.

The sofer dipped his quill in the black bottle of ink, day after day, month after month. Then, on July 4, 1993, under an open tent on the lawn of Congregation Ahavas Yisroel in Morristown, New Jersey, the final 250 letters of the Torah Scroll were filled in by many friends of the Beim family.

Salek Beim filled in the last letter of the Torah, and exuberant singing erupted. The Torah was rolled up and covered with a velvet mantle, and everyone danced the Torah down Sussex Avenue to the Rabbinical College of America campus.

A robust, ten-month old boy, held in the arms of his smiling father, leaned over and gave the Torah a kiss. This healthy, bright boy was Avrohom Chaim "Alex" Beim.

"What can I say? You saw my baby today," said Danny, at the dinner following the Torah dedication ceremony. "I attribute Alex's miraculous recovery to the Rebbe's blessings and guidance. The Rebbe is proof that there is a G-d in this world.

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INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



Receiving Presents

28 Iyar, 5703 [1943]

Greetings and blessings,

...The holiday is called Shavuot, which means "weeks," recalling the verse: "And you shall count seven weeks for yourselves." The day of the holiday itself is not counted. Nevertheless, all the days leading up to the holiday must be counted; only then is the holiday celebrated.

This is one of the differences between Shavuot and the other pilgrimage holidays. The Torah associates Passover and Sukkos with a specific date. With regard to Shavuot, in contrast, the Torah merely states that it is to be celebrated on the fiftieth day after we begin counting (see Rosh HaShanah 6b).

What is the lesson we can derive from this?

Shavuot is the holiday commemorating G-d's giving us the Torah. Before the giving of the Torah, the Jewish people also studied the Torah. Our Sages (Yoma 28b) relate: "Abraham - the first Jew - was an elder, sitting in a yeshivah." This pattern continued in subsequent generations. At that time, however, the Jews were not commanded to study; they were acting on their own initiative, with their own powers. Since they were not commanded to study, they were able to proceed only as far as possible according to their own potential. Even those who had greater powers and were able to advance higher and higher, were nevertheless limited in their degree of progress. For every created being is limited.

When, however, G-d gave the Torah, He said (Shmos Rabbah, ch. 12): "The lower realms shall ascend to the higher realms, and the higher realms shall ascend to the lower realms. And I will begin." Through taking this initiative, He invested His own self in the Torah which He gave (Shmos Rabbah, ch. 33), and this granted the Jewish people the potential to ascend higher and higher without limitation.

Afterwards, from the giving of the Torah onward, this potential was granted to everyone, whether a small child or a man of developed intellect. For every Jew has a portion in the Torah.

For this reason, the event is called "The giving of the Torah," like the giving of a present. For one can only receive the Torah - and more specifically, the "light of the Torah" - as a present; it cannot be earned through one's own powers.

On this basis, we can appreciate why when Moses our teacher was on Mount Sinai, he would study the Torah and forget. He finally said: "I don't know anything," and then G-d gave him the Torah as a present (Shmos Rabbah, ch. 41). Now we know that throughout our ancestors' days in Egypt, the existence of a yeshivah did not cease; while they were in Egypt, there was a yeshivah with them, as indicated by the verse: "Go and collect..." Thus Moshe had studied Torah for several decades and never the less, the giving of the Torah represented a new plateau which he could not reach with his own power.

Although the Torah could not be earned, a present is not given to everyone. One must be worthy, as our Sages say: "If he had not generated pleasure for him, he would not have given him a present."

What did the Jews do to earn the gift of the Torah?

1. They possessed the merit of the observance of the Torah and its mitzvos by their ancestors. For it was in the merit of the Patriarchs that the Torah was given (Shmos Rabbah, ch. 28).

2. The Jews had also prepared themselves by leaving Egypt, "the nakedness of the land," and counting the days until they would receive the Torah, preparing themselves for this (the Midrash).

We must remember this at all times. We must remember that when we study the Torah, we are studying G-d's Torah. Therefore, a blessing must be recited before studying the Torah, declaring "Blessed are You G-d, who gives the Torah," using the present tense. For G-d is giving us the Torah as a present now, at this moment, just like He gave it at Mount Sinai.

Therefore we must approach the Torah with reverence, as our Sages commented (Berachos 22a): "Just as at Sinai, there was awe, fear, and trembling..., so too, at present, there must be awe, fear, and trembling..." A person's fear of sin must precede his wisdom, for then "his wisdom will be perpetuated" (Avos 3:9).

We must work hard and generate light so that a person will attain all the 49 Gates of Understanding that he can acquire with his own strength. Through this he will merit to "Count 50 days," i.e., be granted a revelation of the Divine potential which surpasses his understanding. When he studies the Torah, "G-d will be with him," "the halachah (Jewish Law) will follow his view at all times (Sanhedrin 93b). When he studies, he will appreciate the Torah's inner truth, and will be granted very sublime spiritual lights to advance his Divine service and knowledge of G-d.

I wish you success in all your efforts, and bless you to receive the Torah with joy and inner feeling: "Immediately to teshuvah, immediately to Redemption,"

A MITZVA A DAY

Positive Commandment 207: Loving a Convert

A person who has converted to Judaism is regarded highly by the Torah. The convert's tremendous strength and determination is appreciated and respected. He is called a "righteous convert" for taking upon himself the Jewish lifestyle. He merits special attention and the Torah gives us this specific commandment, instructing us to love him. This is learned out from the words (in the Torah) "Love the convert" (Deuteronomy 10:19).

A WORD from the Director

On Shavuot, we are reminded of the beautiful Midrash which teaches that the Jewish children of every generation are the reason why G-d gave us the gift of the Torah.

When G-d asked what assurance the Jewish people were offering that the Torah would be studied, loved and cherished, the Jewish people offered our Patriarchs as security. But this was not accepted. We then offered the Torah scholars as the guarantors. This, too, was not acceptable. It was only when we offered our children as guarantors that G-d approved our proposal and gave us the Torah.

On the anniversary of an event, the "spiritual energy" that was infused by G-d into that event is at its strongest. This is the reason why, for example, we should do our utmost to celebrate our birthdays properly each year. This is true, too, concerning every Jewish holiday. This means that on Shavuot - the celebration of the Giving of the Torah - the spiritual energy that was invested into that day over 3,000 years ago is at its strongest.

What is the special spiritual energy of Shavuot and how can we benefit from it? It was on Shavuot that our ancestors proclaimed, "We will do and then we will learn". Therefore, this is the best time to recommit to keeping mitzvos - even if we don't as yet understand or learned why to keep them.

Shavuot is also the time when the spiritual energy of our children, being the guarantors for the Torah, is at its strongest. This is the time to renew our commitment to providing our children with a proper Jewish upbringing and education as well as facilitating the proper Jewish education of all Jewish children, wherever they may be.

We can begin doing both of the above by going to the synagogue this Shavuot to hear the reading of the Ten Commandments and by bringing with us Jewish children of all ages - children in age, children at heart, or children in Jewish knowledge. Be there, and be a part of a 3,000-year-old unbroken chain of Jewish commitment and pride.

J.I. Gutnick

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Chasidic philosophy explains that Moshe was humbled when he saw the Divine service of the "generation of the heels of Moshiah." Moshe, who received the Torah from Sinai and spoke with G-d face to face, certainly had no problem attaining the loftiest level of Divine service. Nevertheless, when he saw a simple Jew who continued keeping Torah and mitzvos (commandments) despite being thrown about in the Diaspora, he was humbled. (*The Rebbe, Shavuot, 5746*)

It Happened Once...



Before the Giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai, G-d brought Moses up to Heaven in order to teach him the entire Torah. Moses, who walked about in Heaven as one walks on earth, was greeted by an angel who asked him, "What are you doing here, son of Amram? What business do you, a mortal who lives in the physical world, have coming to the holy Heavens?"

"I did not come of my own will," replied Moses confidently. "Our Master has ordered me here in order to receive the Torah and bring it back to the Jewish nation."

When the angels realized that Moses had come to take the Torah from the Heavens and bring it to the Jews, they raised a mighty cry. Would they now be parted forever more from their beloved Torah?

G-d therefore told Moses, "Go and speak with the angels. Convince them that they have no need for the Torah and that they have no reason to regret that it is being taken from them."

But Moses was frightened by the fiery angels. "I am surprised at you, Moses," chastised G-d. "When I first appeared to you from the burning bush, you had much to say. You were not afraid to ask and to argue without end. Why are suddenly frightened by angels who are merely My servants?"

Emboldened by G-d's words, and holding on to the Heavenly throne, Moses gathered his courage and began. "Whatever was written in the Torah was not intended for you," Moses told the angels gathered nearby. "What does the Torah say? 'I am G-d your G-d Who took you out of the land of Egypt.' Were you ever slaves in Egypt? Did G-d rescue you from there?" Moses asked the Heavenly servants.

"The Torah also says, 'You shall have no strange gods before Me.' Do you worship man made idols? Do you have an inclination to steal, to covet what belongs to others? Do you have parents that you must honour them? If not, what use do you have for the Torah? You cannot observe its positive commandments or its prohibitions."

Hearing these arguments, the angels had to concede that Moses was right.

Moses remained in Heaven for 40 days and 40 nights, learning the entire Written Torah and Oral Tradition. Moses knew when day or night had passed on earth by the activities of the angels. When he saw the angels preparing the manna which the Jews were to eat the following day, he knew that it was day. When the manna fell, he knew it was night time on Earth.

One day, Moses saw G-d sitting on His mighty, exalted throne, adding crowns to the letters of the Torah. He asked G-d to explain the reason for these decorations and was told, "In many years to come there will be born a great tzadik (righteous person) by the name of Akiva the son of Josef, who will reveal many hidden secrets of the Torah. He will know how to derive laws and Torah thoughts from every letterhead and crown which I am now adding to the letters."

Moses begged to be shown this tzadik. G-d showed him a building which housed many disciples sitting in rows upon rows. At their head sat a man who resembled a heavenly angel. Moses approached the men but could not understand what they were saying, and he was very grieved.

Then, suddenly, Moses heard one of the students ask the angelic-looking man how he knew all he had been teaching them. Rabbi Akiva replied, "Everything I am teaching and innovating before you in Torah is a direct

transmission of what Moses received upon Mount Sinai." Moses was comforted by these words but asked G-d, "If You intend to create such a great person, why do You not grant him the privilege of bringing the Torah down to the Jews?"

"I have especially chosen you to bring the Torah to My children," G-d told Moses. "But because you were so modest in thinking that Rabbi Akiva is more fitting than you to transmit the Torah to the Jews, I will increase your wisdom and knowledge." And at that moment, G-d opened the 50 gates of wisdom, allowing Moses to pass through 49 of them. Moses' wisdom was so great that no other person in the world could compare with him. And it is from Moses, of all our other great teachers, that we will learn Torah when Moshiach comes.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

Shavout

The name Shavuot comes from the word shvua - oath. On the day that the Torah was given, both G-d and the Jewish people made a mutual vow to each other. We swore to G-d that we would never exchange Him for another god and He swore to us that He will never exchange us for another nation. (*Or Hachaim Hakodesh*)

A Time to Eat and Rejoice

Passover and Sukkot, which commemorate physical events, may be celebrated in a purely spiritual manner, while Shavuot, which celebrates a spiritual event, must be celebrated in both a spiritual and physical manner. This is to teach us that at the time G-d gave us the Torah, the entire physical world was affected, and holiness permeated every corner of the world. (*Likutei Sichot*)

Love Your Fellow Jew

The Baal Shem Tov taught that we must love every Jew, the simplest person as well as the greatest Torah scholar. Jews are G-d's "tefilin," as it were, the Baal Shem Tov explained.

Scholarly Jews, those with great intellectual abilities, are the tefilin that are worn on the head. Simple Jews, those who perform G-d's mitzvot with joy and gladness, are the tefilin that are worn on the arm.

Just as when putting on tefilin the hand precedes the head, so too must we demonstrate love for the simple Jews first. (*Maayan Chai*)

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

CHAG SHAVOVS • 6-7 SIVAN • 28-30 MAY

THURSDAY NIGHT, 28 MAY, EVE OF SHAVUOS

ERUV TAVSHILIN

CANDLE LIGHTING:	4:53 PM
MINCHA:	5:05 PM
MAARIV:	5:55 PM

FRIDAY 29 MAY, 1ST DAY OF SHAVUOS

ALOS HASHACHAR:	6:00 AM
LAST TIME TO SAY SHEMA:	9:50 AM
SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
TEN COMMANDMENTS:	10:45 AM
CANDLE LIGHTING BEFORE:	4:53 PM
MINCHAH	5:00 PM
MAARIV	5:35 PM

SHABBOS, 30 MAY, 2ND DAY OF SHAVUOS

SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
YIZKOR APPROX:	11:00AM
MINCHA:	4:45 PM
YOM TOV END	5:53 PM

WEEKDAYS:

SHACHARIS:	9:15 AM
MINCHA:	2:00 PM
MAARIV:	5:55 PM
	7:00 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 28, 29 MAY 2009

YOM TOV BEGINS

28th 29th YOM TOV ENDS 30th

4:53	4:53	MELBOURNE	5:53
4:56	4:55	ADELAIDE	5:54
4:44	4:44	BRISBANE	5:39
4:41	4:41	GOLD COAST	5:40
6:10	6:10	DARWIN	7:01
5:04	5:03	PERTH	6:00
4:38	4:38	SYDNEY	5:35
4:35	4:35	LAUNCESTON	5:38
4:57	4:56	AUCKLAND	5:56
4:45	4:44	WELLINGTON	5:47

One should light before the given times. For the 29th one should light from a pre-existing flame only.

Dedicated to the beloved, revered leader of World Jewry

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

זצוקללה"נ נב"מ זי"ע

May he succeed in imploring the Almighty to redeem His people speedily in our days.