



Parshat HaShavuah

אָמּוֹר  
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ג' אייר תשע"ד

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# Ashreinu

חלקינו מה טוב

Candle Lighting

7:35

S"Z Kriat Shema

10:00

Sunset

7:54

Motzei

Shabbat

8:31



Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

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*Sponsored in memory of Lana (Leah) D. Goldberg*

## WHY IS THIS FESTIVAL DIFFERENT THAN ALL OTHERS? RABBI BENJY HOROWITZ

This second half of this week's parsha is all about the moadim, and includes the various aspects of each yom tov. One thing that stands out is that the holiday of Shavuot is strikingly different than all of the other holidays.

The Torah is very clear regarding the calendar dates of all of the other festivals. However we are never told on what specific calendar date Shavuot falls, only that it is on the 50th day after the Omer sacrifice is brought. In fact when the months were established by witnesses in the court, it was possible for Shavuot to fall out on the 5th, 6th, or 7th of Sivan. It is only now that the calendar is set that Shavuot always falls out on the 6th.

Another difference is that the while we are clearly told what to celebrate, on Pesach—leaving Egypt, on Sukkot—the protection Hashem gave us in the desert, we are not informed of what happened on Shavuot. It is only based on our Rabbinic tradition that the Ten Commandments were told to us on Shavuot. Why was this information not mentioned explicitly?

The Akeidah (a Torah commentator) explains that the acceptance of Torah does not depend on time. Rather, we need to accept the Torah every day. As the pasuk in Yehoshua (1:8) states, "the book of Torah shall not depart from your mouth, rather you should contemplate it day and night." The significance of the date on which the Torah was given pales in comparison to the significance of the Torah itself.

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## DELVING DEEP

### LANA ROSENTHAL ('17)

In this week's parsha, Parshat Emor, the Torah lists all of the holidays and the laws and rituals pertaining to them. When it comes to Shavuot, however, the Torah is somewhat ambiguous. Rather than providing an exact date, the pasuk says to celebrate Shavuot after counting seven weeks of the Omer. The pasuk says, "Even unto the morrow of the seventh Shabbat you shall count fifty days...and proclaim on the selfsame day, a holy convocation unto you: you shall do no servile work therein..." (23:16).

Why is the Torah vague when it comes to describing Shavuot? Why does it not provide us with specific rituals or even a certain date for the holiday, especially since the Torah provides a specific date for all the other holidays? Moreover the Torah mandates specific mitzvot to be performed on each holiday, like eating matzah on Pesach, fasting on Yom Kippur, and sitting in a succah on Succot. Yet the Torah does not include any specific rituals for Shavuot. Why not?

The Kli Yakar answers that this lack of detail embodies the very message of Shavuot. G-d gave us the Torah, not so we could read it once and be done with it, but so that each time we read it, we can look deeper into the laws and context to discover new things. The pasuk deliberately leaves both the date and practices of Shavuot ambiguous so that we must engage in Torah study to discover information about the special holiday.

If the parameters were already listed for us, we wouldn't spend time learning about Shavuot. The more time and effort we spend on something, the more involved and invested we are in the matter, and the more we grow to love it. And so this lack of detail surrounding Shavuot, the day we received the Torah, pushes us to be involved in Torah and teaches us that Torah requires hard work. When we put in that work, Shavuot becomes more meaningful to us. With Shavuot approaching next month, we should keep in mind the idea of delving deeper into our Torah studies—the ultimate purpose of Shavuot.

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## PRACTICE WHAT YOU PREACH

### ARIEL BUGAY ('15)

In Vayikra 24:17, the Torah states, "And a man, if he strikes mortally any human life, he shall be put to death." The next pasuk continues, "And a man who strikes mortally an animal life, shall make a restitution, a life for a life."

At first glance these two pesukim seem self-explanatory. However, pasuk 21 states: "One who strikes an animal shall make a restitution for it, and one who strikes a person down shall be put to death." After reading pesukim 17 and 18 followed by pasuk 21, one is compelled to ask: Why do the pesukim seem so repetitious?

Rashi explains that in pesukim 17 and 18, the word "strike" is talking about one who kills a man, woman, child, or animal. In pasuk 21, the word "strike" is talking about one who hits and injures an animal or hits and injures one's parent.

From this understanding of Rashi, we can learn that there is a purpose to reading more than what is on the surface. Hashem sets up the Torah in such a way where we are able to ask questions that inherently bother us and seek answers. Through this process, we are able to keep the Torah up-to-date and still-relevant. It is insufficient to learn in a classroom and then not translate those same values into practice. Instead, we must take what we learn from the Torah and try to constantly apply it to our lives.





## LET'S MAKE A KIDDUSH HASHEM

JOLIE DAVIES ('16)

This week's parsha, Parshat Emor, discusses two commands that are the essence of Jewish identity: "Do not desecrate My holy name. [And] I must be sanctified among the Jews. I am The Lord"(22:32). This is the commandment to make Hashem's name holy– a concept known as Kiddush Hashem– as well as to not destroy God's name—a concept known as Chilul Hashem.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks gives insight into the meaning of a name and its application to Kiddush and Chilul Hashem. He states, "a name is how we are known to others. God's name is therefore His standing in the world." It is known that we are Hashem's witnesses; thus, it is our duty to present God's name with respect, awe, and honor.

To further illustrate Rabbi Sacks' idea, God is not measurable by science, He cannot be observed. Instead, Hashem becomes known through Jews and our history. When we behave in an ill manner, it reflects poorly on God. So too the opposite: when we portray commitment to Judaism, we sanctify God's name.

In modern times, so many people, Gentiles and unaffiliated Jews alike, hold no connection to Judaism, especially Orthodox Judaism. So when an identifiable Jew acts unethically, it reflects badly on all Jews and even God Himself. Every day, every little task we do, we must ask ourselves, is this a Kiddush Hashem or a Chilul Hashem? The choice is always ours.

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## TOGETHER AS ONE

YAAKOV SIEV ('15)

Parshat Emor starts off with Hashem's orders to Moshe to relay certain halachot to the kohanim. However, later we see that Moshe not only transmitted these commandments to the kohanim, but "to all the Children of Israel" (21:24).

On other occasions where halachot were given to the kohanim, Moshe told only them—why was this time any different? Rashi explains that the entire nation was given this information in order to make the beit din, the court, responsible with regard to the kohanim. However, this seems puzzling. Why only now was the court held responsible for the kohanim's sins?

Furthermore, Rashi seems to contradict what the Torah itself says. The Torah says that the halachot were to be told to the entire nation, yet Rashi says they were only relevant to the beit din. According to Rashi, the transmission of information should have included only those who sat on the beit din, while the rest of Bnei Yisrael should have sat on the sidelines.

In a recent social experiment, family members of New York City residents were dressed up to look like homeless people on the street. When they walked down the street, these citizens of New York failed to recognize the people they loved most. Sometimes, humans fail to reach out to each other and instead, they turn a blind eye. We are all guilty, on some level, of not living up to *v'ahavta l'rayacha kamocho*—love your fellow like yourself.

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The halachot that were given to the kohanim up to this point were those that involved their different areas of service, whether it be the *avodah* in the Mishkan or other duties that kohanim carry out. However, the halachot that were now being given to the kohanim were those that reached beyond the walls of Hashem's home. These were halachot that entered the personal lives of the kohanim, and their observance, or lack of, could be seen by all. Everyone would know if they performed an illegal marriage. It then became the responsibility of not only the kohanim, but of all Bnei Yisrael, that these halachot be kept.

Rashi does not contradict the Torah in the slightest, but instead explains beautifully the message that Moshe Rabbeinu was trying to convey. Bnei Yisrael was to be like a *beit din*, responsible for the halachic observance of their brothers, the kohanim. It was for that purpose that they, too, were included in the transmission: they had to know the halachot in order to enforce their observance.

The idea that all Jews are responsible for one another is not some fluffy ideal that makes its way into *divrei Torah* and bouncy Jewish music. It is a very real concept that plays a role even in halacha. If one has already made *kiddush* on Shabbos, they are able to make *kiddush* again for someone else who needs to hear because one Jew is responsible for another. We are all connected. We are one body; when one part fails, the whole body suffers. It is up to each of us to make sure that we are successful, not just as individuals but as one unified nation.

*Rabbi Horowitz continued*

This might help us explain another difference between Shavuot and the other holidays. When we think of Pesach we think of the seder, matza, and maror, the reading of the Haggadah and the four cups of wine. On Succot we build a succah, shake the lulav, and beat the *Hoshanot*. Rosh Hashana has the shofar and Yom Kippur the fast. In contrast, Shavuot has no commandments that are specific to the day. We have customs to eat dairy and to stay up all night learning, but those are not written in the Torah or the gemara. Why is there no specific mitzvah set aside for Shavuot?

Perhaps we can take the Akeidah's answer one step further. Just like we don't limit the acceptance of Torah to a particular day, we also can't limit our celebration of the Torah to the performance of one or two mitzvot on only one day a year. To do so would be like a child giving his mother flowers on mother's day and doing nothing for her during the rest of the year. Our expression of gratitude for the greatest gift mankind has ever received is to celebrate it each day by continuously learning its lessons and adhering to its ideals in our every action.

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