

Cincinnati Torah מסע

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Bamidbar/Shavuos

EXPANDED
SHAVUOS
EDITION



RABBI
MOSHE TZVI
CRYSTAL

A YOM TOV THOUGHT

The Talmud in Shabbos describes the narrative of Moshe ascending Mt. Sinai to receive the Torah. The basic story line is that as soon as the angels are aware of Moshe's presence, they ask Hashem what this physical being is doing amongst them. After being informed by Hashem that Moshe has ascended to receive the Torah, the heavenly host is still not satisfied. "You are going to give the precious Torah that predated the world to mere flesh and blood?" Hashem instructs Moshe to respond to the challenge, and Moshe proves to the angels that the Torah must be made for physical beings because the nature of *mitzvos* is such that fulfillment of them only exists in the physical realm.

Rav Yonason Eibeshitz, in his work *Ye'aros D'vash*, asks some very pointed questions in attempting to gain a deeper understanding of this story. The first thing that Moshe tells the angels is that it is stated in the Torah that Hashem took you out of Egypt. "Were you taken out of Egypt?" asks Moshe. Let's pause, says Rav Eibeshitz. Did the angels not realize that they were not taken out of Egypt?! One may ask with the same incredulity regarding all the rest of the challenges of Moshe to the angels, continues Rav Eibeshitz. How could the angels not get it? Even the first question of what is this human doing here – how could it be that they did not know? The answer, says Rav Eibeshitz, is that the angels had a different problem entirely than what it would seem at first. They knew that the Torah was made for flesh and blood. They knew that the human service of Hashem is through the Torah. The angels wanted to fulfill their own part of service to Hashem, that of acting as messenger for Hashem. They assumed,

though, that as Hashem's messengers in this world that it was going to be their task to give over the Torah. When they saw Moshe in heaven to receive the Torah, they realized something else was going on. They therefore questioned what Moshe was doing there. When Hashem informed them that he was there to receive the Torah, their question was not yet answered. That Hashem himself need give the Torah would make sense, if what Hashem was giving lacked inherent significance and therefore needed Hashem's personal touch to give it importance. Torah is not that way. They wondered, wasn't the Torah such a precious gift that it did not need the king of all kings to give it himself to give it importance?! To this Moshe responded that you angels believe that it is your "job" to give the Torah because you understand the angel to be the "higher" being and the human to be lower and therefore you should be Hashem's agent to bring down the Torah to us. "Were you ever taken out of Egypt?" asked Moshe. What Moshe was really saying was that one of the reasons Hashem took us out of Egypt Himself is because the impurity of Egypt was so great that even an angel would have become sunk in the depravity of Egypt. Yet, the Jewish people underwent that crucible and survived, albeit with Hashem's timely help. We survived where even an angel dared not go. Moshe then continued with other *mitzvos* with the message that we, the human, have the capacity to fulfill these *mitzvos* even with an inborn evil inclination and the power to choose wrongly. If the angels would have that choice, they wouldn't be able to make the right decision. We therefore, Moshe told the angels, deserve the right to receive the Torah directly from Hashem himself. 🕊

LEARNING WITH THE KOLLEL (CHOSHEN MISHPAT)

WITH
RABBI MEIR MINSTER

Rashi, based on the Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 86a), explains that the prohibition to steal found in the ten commandments actually refers to kidnapping. The prohibition for stealing money is found in *Parshas Kedoshim* (*Vayikra* 19:11). The Gemara (*Baba Metziah* 62b) explains that even stealing to just cause pain or aggravation is included in this prohibition.

The *Ketzos* (*Choshen Mishpat* 348:1) brings from the *Shitah Mekubetzes* that some say this even includes taking something to tease someone with the intent to return it. The *Shitah* finds this difficult because this seems to be common behavior. He therefore favors an alternative understanding that it refers to taking something with the intent of not returning it. It is called taking to cause pain because the standard case of theft involves gain to the thief. Here the thief's motivation is not to gain, but just to cause pain. The *Ketzos*, however, brings support to the first interpretation from the words of the *Ramba"m* and the *Sifrei*, and he cautions us not to follow this common behavior.

The *Shulchan Aruch* there mentions a reason why this type of stealing is prohibited – so that one does not become accustomed to steal. Although this sounds like it is only a Rabbinic *gezirah* (decree), the *Levush* explains that the *Shulchan Aruch* is really giving

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a reason for the Torah's prohibition.

In contrast, the *Rama*"h in the laws of *Megilah* (*Orach Chaim* 696:8) brings a Purim custom of people grabbing things from each other in a joyful way. He explains that there is no prohibition here of stealing because it is an accepted custom. The *Mishna Berurah* says that one could therefore make a *bracha* on something that he grabbed on Purim. He adds, however, that the *Shela*"h comments that this is still not the way (teaching) of the pious and one should avoid this practice.

The *Chok Yaakov* (*Orach Chaim* 472:2) discusses the custom of the children stealing the *afikomen* and finds no problem with it as it is done under the eye of the head of the household and as a way to keep the children awake for the seder. 🕒

Something always bugged you about the upcoming parasha (or last week's)? Ask! Submit a question on the parasha by Monday at noon by emailing parasha@cincynkollel.org. Questions will be selected to address at the discretion of the Rabbi who is answering that week. Questions may be edited for brevity/clarity.

A YOM TOV THOUGHT

When the Torah relates what occurred when we arrived at Har Sinai the *passuk* says, "in the third month from leaving Egypt we arrived at the desert of Sinai." In the next *passuk* it states, "They journeyed from *Refidim* and came to the desert of Sinai." All the commentaries are bothered by a simple question the *passukim* are backwards. If the first told us that they arrived at Har Sinai then the next *passuk* should not be telling us the place where we journeyed from. Rather, it should first tell us where we journeyed from then where we arrived. The *Ohr Hachaim Hakadosh* says a mind-blowing answer – that this is the concept of *אהבה*, *מקלקלת את השורה*, that love blinds the person. This is as if to say that the Torah itself was blinded since the Torah had longed and waited from the beginning of creation for more than two thousand years for this day. The day of the giving the Torah to us, *Klal Yisrael*, is the purpose of the whole creation. When we finally reached that day, the Torah could not contain itself (even for a few words) and needed to scream out *באו מדבר סיני* – THEY ARE HERE – they arrived! Then, in the next *passuk*, the Torah relates to us the details of their journey up until that point.

need anything from us, as it says, "אם צדקת מה תתן לו" – "if you act righteously, what have you given Him?" Nonetheless, Hashem longed from the beginning of creation to give us the Torah. All He wants is to give to us. The greatest gift Hashem can give us is the Torah itself, the instructions for how we can have the best life both in this world and the next world. The Talmud in *Chagigah* says that there are three people who Hashem cries for every single day. One of them is someone who is able to learn and does not. Hashem actually cries for him every single day. The Chofetz Chaim explains that this is because Hashem knows with absolute clarity what is good for a person. He sees this person wasting such a great opportunity for himself, and for that reason Hashem cries for him. This is Hashem's ONLY desire; it is to give to us so that we should have the best. All Hashem wants is for us to have the best and therefore He gave us the Torah. 🕒



Let's stop and view this from another perspective.

At each point of the year when we celebrate a Yom Tov, it is not just a commemoration of the event that took place. Rather, at that point in heaven the event is reoccurring, and it is for that reason itself the day is so holy. This means that this year again Hashem cannot contain himself. He again has that same emotion, the feeling of excitement that we will be receiving the Torah, the purpose of all the creation. He has that same feeling that we have arrived because Hashem pines to give us the Torah.

Furthermore, Hashem doesn't

TEFILLATIDBITS

RABBI YAAKOV MARCHUK

In the following two *brachos* we thank Hashem who "unties the bound," giving us free movement of our limbs, and "straightens the bound," giving us the ability to stand straight and get out of bed. Rav Schwab extends this *bracha* to also include the function of our speech and hearing which are "tied up" while we sleep. The *Olos Tamid* takes it one step further to include when one is released from a responsibility, for example a project at work, or is given an extra vacation day with the ability to spend that time freely. 🕒

Shavuot SCHEDULE

Even Yom Tov
Shabbos, June 4

5:18PM
Latest time to begin the meal

8:15PM
Mincha
Followed by Seder Limud for adults and a shiur by Rabbi Minster

9:50PM
Maariv

Tikun Leil Shavuot
Chavrusa learning and classes/shiurim throughout the night

1-3AM
Boy's programming (5th-8th)

First Day
Sunday, June 5

5:30AM
Shachris
Hanetz 6:13AM

Second Day
Monday, June 6

7:15PM
Mincha
Followed by learning and Ne'ilas Hachag

9:52PM
Maariv

Shavuot Night Shiurim
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Shavuot Night Refreshments
Sponsored by Egal Ziv



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A SHINING EXAMPLE

RABBI EPHRAIM SKOLNIK

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach was not only one of the leading *poskim* of the last generation, but he was the late *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Yeshivas Kol Torah*. At one point there was a boy, Chaim Goldberg, in the *yeshiva* who, although quite intelligent, was very lazy and not taking his studies seriously. The administration of the *yeshiva* decided it was time to throw Chaim out of the *yeshiva*, as he was starting to be a detriment to the other boys. When they brought their decision to Rabbi Auerbach, he had one request. He asked them to give Chaim two more weeks in the *yeshiva*. Not sure how that would help, but not wanting to turn down the *Rosh Yeshiva*, they agreed. Right after the meeting, Rabbi Auerbach went over to one of the best boys in the *yeshiva* and said, "I need you to learn with Chaim for the next two weeks this one side of a page of Gemara and make sure he knows it really well. He will not be interested in learning with you, but I am leaving it up to you to figure out how to make it work. I will pay you well for your efforts and, most importantly, he must not find out that it is coming from me." immediately the boy set out on his mission and day after day he figured out a way to get Chaim to learn with him and slowly taught him that page of Gemara until he knew it with all its commentaries really well. Once a month Rabbi Auerbach would go to each class to test the boys on their learning and on the last day of the two weeks it was time to go into Chaim's class. As Rabbi Auerbach entered, the boys were all nervous that he

would call on them. Chaim sat in the back slumped in his seat knowing that tonight he would have to leave the *yeshiva* in shame with a bleak-looking future when suddenly Rabbi Auerbach called on him and asked him to read the page of Gemara that he had been learning for the past two weeks. To everyone's astonishment, Chaim started reading beautifully. Then Rabbi Auerbach asked him a question which he quickly answered and Rabbi Auerbach fired back another question which he again answered and they went back and forth for almost an hour, Chaim's pride and confidence growing. Finally, they finished and Rabbi Auerbach stood up and said, "Wow, such a gifted and special boy. What a shame that he decided to leave our *yeshiva*. He is one of our prize pupils and we benefit from him so much over here." Chaim was going to jump up and say that it wasn't his own choice to leave, but before he could say anything Rabbi Auerbach continued, "I understand you are going to study closer to home to be near your recently widowed mother. It is truly amazing that you are making such a sacrifice for your mother. You are a true hero!" By now tears were streaming down Chaim's face as Rabbi Auerbach went to shake his hand and wished him *hatzlacha*. That night as Chaim left the *yeshiva*, instead of sneaking out hoping no one would notice, he left with his head held high with Rabbi Auerbach's words echoing in his ears. He was no longer the uninterested boy with no self-esteem; he was now the pride of the *yeshiva* going on to bright future ahead. All because one great man saw the true beauty of every boy and went the extra mile to bring it out. 🙏

TEFILLA TIDBITS - RUS

Even in our time with the absence of the *Bais Hamikdash*, every Yom Tov has its unique mitzvos. Rosh Hashanah has the *shofar*, Pesach the matzah, and Sukkos the *sukkah* and four species. The Yom Tov of Shavuos is unique in the fact that there are no special mitzvos that we perform. However, we read the book of *Rus* on Shavuos. At face value *Rus* has nothing to do with Shavuos. The story begins with a prestigious Jewish family leaving Israel at a time they were needed most. Their two sons marry the local Moabite princesses and then eventually they die. One of the princesses returns home while the other one converts to Judaism and returns with her mother-in-law to the land of Israel where she marries Boaz, a relative of her in-laws. They have a child who is the grandfather of King David. The *meforshim* (commentaries) see a beautiful lesson in *Rus* which is deeply connected to accepting the Torah. The background and upbringing of *Rus* were not relevant to her becoming a part of the Davidic line and one of the prestigious women of Jewish history. So too when it comes to learning Torah. A perfect past is not a prerequisite for future greatness; the Torah is accessible to all people, no matter their background. In the words of the *sefer Mincha Katnah* (*Shmuel* I 10:11), "A person should not say since I have no merits of my forefathers how will I reach greatness, because there is no merit like one's own merit." Hashem promises that if we put in the work, we will achieve greatness. 🙏

ABARBANEL: FUGITIVE OF KING JOAO II OF PORTUGAL (PART IV)

RABBI NOSSON WIGGINS

Recap: Abarbanel and his family are safe in Spain and Abarbanel still hopes that one day he will be able to return home to Portugal. Sadly, though, his hopes are shattered when he is informed that his enemies have succeeded in inciting King Joao's wrath against him.

Abarbanel's enemies continued to produce evidence that he had betrayed the king in an attempt to get rid of the Jew once and for all. False evidence was produced that Abarbanel advised the rebellious dukes and even offered his financial assistance. On May 30, 1485, exactly two years after his escape from Portugal, King Joao II pronounced an official death sentence against Abarbanel. Upon hearing the news of the king's verdict, Abarbanel realized that his life in Portugal was over; he would never retrieve his seized property and assets and would never reestablish his home there.

Although Abarbanel was in exile and had lost all of his wealth, he finally had time to teach Torah, something he hadn't had time for while he was employed by the king. Despite his misfortunes, Abarbanel focused his energies on giving lectures on the *Sifrei Neviem* (Books of the Prophets). His lectures became quite popular and his students and admirers persuaded him to commit his lectures to writing. Abarbanel, while in Castile, produced in just over four months his commentary on *Yehoshua*, *Shoftim*, and *Shmuel*. These large volumes are comprised of about 400,000 words and display the terrific pace at which Abarbanel worked to produce such an immense work both in terms of quantity and quality. It is truly mind-blowing that Abarbanel was able to produce these works in such a short period of time despite the hardships he faced as a fugitive whose life was on the line.

Abarbanel's ability to teach and write was short-lived because just a short time later he would be summoned back to the royal court, this time in service of the most powerful monarchs in western Europe, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of the recently united kingdoms of Aragon and Castille.

To be continued... 🙏

Q: Many have the practice of sleeping Erev Shavuos in order to be well rested to learn all night. Can one do so when Shabbos falls out to be Erev Shavuos or is there a problem of הכנה?

A: Considering that taking a nap on Shabbos is considered עונג שבת, one can do so even if his primary intent is to stay awake after Shabbos. However, the Magen Avraham (OC 290:1) points out that one should not articulate that he is going to sleep in order to have energy after Shabbos (RMH & RSK).

Q: If the flower vase falls and spills, is there anything that can be done about it on Shabbos or Yom Tov?

A: Regardless of whether the flowers have already opened or are still closed, one cannot add water on Shabbos. There are several reasons brought for this in the Rishonim:

1) It appears as if one is watering plants and causing them to grow (רבינו חננאל).

2) It involves *tircha* (Rashi).

On Yom Tov, though, if not all the water emptied, it is permitted to add up to 50% of fresh water to flowers that have already opened (RSK based on the Aruch Hashulchan OC 654:2).

Q: We are all familiar with the waiting period between *fleishigs* and *milchigs*. Is there a process and what must be done before eating meat after dairy?

A: If one eats dairy (not hard cheese), one may eat meat immediately after, provided that the following steps are followed: First, one should either wash his hands or confirm that there is no dairy residue on his hands. Then, eat at least a small amount of pareve food and drink something. Alternatively, one can wait one half-hour (30 minutes) and then eat meat without going through the steps above. A ברכה אחרונה is not required between the eating of dairy and meat. This means one can eat cheese, perform the steps above, and then eat meat without reciting a בורא נפשות after the cheese. Only one ברכת שהכל (before the cheese) and בורא נפשות (after the meat) are necessary (RMH based on the MB 496:16).

Q: With what should one be משמח his children for Yom Tov?

A: The Shulchan Aruch (OC 529:2) says to get them popcorn and nuts. I am not sure today's children will have such שמחה by getting popcorn and nuts because they enjoy them throughout the year, while in former times they were special food for Yom Tov. You can get them something else which will make them happy (RMH).

Q: Can one take hot water from an urn on Yom Tov if new water will enter the urn and possibly won't be used before the end of Yom Tov?

A: Normally the possibility exists that someone else might take out water from the urn after you are done using it. You want the cold water to be heated up for the person who will take

after you. If you are certain that you are the very last person taking water, then you shouldn't use the urn due to הכנה (OC 503:1). It goes without saying that such an urn should not be used at all on Shabbos since it results in the heating up the fresh water which is an איסור בישול (RMH).

Q: Is it permitted for a woman to drink wine of Kiddush/Havdala when Yom Tov is motzei Shabbos?

A: The Magen Avraham (OC 296:4) quotes a Shla that writes that women should not drink from Havdala wine. The accepted reason behind this is that the עץ הדעת, according to one explanation, was a grape vine (Brochos 40a). Therefore, it would not be correct for women who caused the ערבוב between קודש and חול to then drink the wine of Havdala which heralds the separation between קודש and חול. Nonetheless, in this scenario where the Havdala wine is for Kiddush, it is fine for her to drink. Furthermore, there is no prohibition here, rather a מנהג for women to avoid drinking Havdala wine, unless no one else can make it for her (OC 296:8) (RMH).

Q: Should one read the ליל שבועות or spend time learning גמרא (Torah Sh'baal Peh) Shavuos night?

A: It seems like there were אחרונים גדולי throughout the generations who spent time reading and encouraging others to read the Tikkun (Pri Megadim, Yesod Shoresch Va'avoda, Chasam Sofer. See Kaf HaChaim that brings Kabalistic reasons based on the Arizal and Zohar to spend the night going through the Tikkun). While others felt that the עיקר learning on Shavuos night should be in תורה שבעל פה (the Shlosh Hakososh, Seder Hayom, Yeshuas Yaakov and Shulchan Aruch HaRav). Therefore, if it is your family מנהג, you definitely can choose to follow this custom. Even in Yeshivah where everybody else is learning Gemara, there is no concern of deviating from the מנהג המקום or מנהג (RSK). There was an interesting exchange and disagreement between the Vilna Gaon and the Dubno Maggid on this topic.

The story is told that the Dubno Maggid (Rabbi Yaakov Kranz 1740-1804) was once in Vilna for Shavuos and joined the great Vilna Gaon in his Beis Medresh to learn throughout the night. Following his custom, the Vilna Gaon was reciting Tikkun Leil Shavuos, which includes sections from all of Torah, Nevi'im, and Kesuvim, as well as from all of Torah Sh'baal Peh. The Dubno Maggid, however, did not follow this tradition, and instead studied from a single Gemara throughout the night. The Gaon noticed this, and asked the Maggid why he veered from the accepted custom of reciting Tikkun Leil Shavuos. The Dubno Maggid answered in the way for which he is famed, with a *meshal* (analogy). He relayed, "Once upon a time, a simple Jew named Reb Yankel was in dire need of a livelihood. As he searched through his local marketplace, he noticed a salesman who attracted a large

crowd clamoring to buy whatever it was that he was selling. With great interest, Reb Yankel approached the scene and discovered that the man was showing a book of carpet samples to the people surrounding him. The crowd was in a frenzy, handing him large amounts of money as they pointed to the samples that they liked. Reb Yankel had a flash of inspiration. If only he could get hold of one of those books, he could finally earn a respectable livelihood! He asked the salesman if he had an extra book of samples and the generous salesman graciously gave him a book. The next morning, Reb Yankel excitedly entered the marketplace, opened his book, and announced that he was in the carpet business. It did not take long before customers surrounded him to purchase from him. When someone chose a blue swatch of carpet and handed him money for the order, Reb Yankel took the money and began to peel the swatch out from the book to give to the buyer! "What is this, some sort of joke?" asked the stunned buyer. Reb Yankel naively responded, "But only yesterday a salesman sold the same carpets as these!" The buyer laughed and explained, "That salesman did not sell samples of carpets! Each swatch in his book was backed up by hundreds of yards of carpet in his warehouse! His samples represented real merchandise that he owns! You can't merely sell carpet swatches – you need actual carpet!" The Dubno Maggid told the Vilna Gaon, "This is the difference between you and me. When you read the 'samples' of the entirety of the Torah on Shavuos night from the Tikkun it has tremendous significance for you. This is because you possess the complete inventory of 'merchandise' to back it up! You are proficient in the entirety of the Torah, and your swatches are merely examples of the vastness of Torah you possess! I, unfortunately, lack such an encyclopedic knowledge of Torah; therefore, for me to read the Tikkun tonight would be like Reb Yankel selling his swatches. I simply don't have the goods in my 'warehouse' to back it up!"

Rabbi Shimshon Pincus, ZT"l, notes that the reasoning of the Dubno Maggid seems to be valid, logical, and convincing, and actually puts into question the time-honored custom observed by many, who do recite Tikkun, despite not being even close to the level of the Vilna Gaon! However, Rav Pincus insightfully and beautifully suggests that for those who do undertake to recite the Tikkun, it serves another very worthwhile purpose. By taking themselves on a 'tour' of the various different components of Torah, they make a heartfelt declaration to Hashem that this is what they so deeply desire to connect to and be in possession of. On זמן מתן תורתנו when we celebrate the receiving of the Torah, we daven for success in our learning and growth. Even for those of us who do not have the custom to recite the entire Tikkun, we should heed the message that our ambitions in Torah must be both broad and ambitious and, most important, our intentions should be backed up by action.