



## Shavuot: Acceptance, Action

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

The Arizal taught that every year on Shavuot, Hashem gives us the Torah anew just as He did at Har Sinai. The *Yesod V'shoresh haAvodah* writes that this happens during *kriat haTorah* and one should have in mind while the *chazzan* reads the Torah that it is our own personal *kabalat HaTorah*.

How do we tap into the energy and inspiration of Shavuot? Shavuot is a time of *aliyah l'regel*, when Hashem longs for his children to come back to Him. It's about a relationship of return when we can transform the day into one of joy and connection. After seven weeks of preparation, we are given the tremendous experience of *matan Torah*. The Torah is not just a book, but a manifestation of Hashem's wisdom. Every year on the 50th day, Hashem comes down to us and expresses His love wrapped in the Torah.

When the Torah speaks about the *korban pesach* it says, "*Vayelchu vayaasu*," They went and they did. Rashi explains that once the Jews accepted upon themselves to offer the sacrifice, it was as if they had done it already, even though they hadn't actually taken the lamb yet. When we willingly accept the Torah, Hashem counts it as if we had actually performed all of His commands. Then Shavuot becomes a day of forgiveness for all our sins, like a bride whose sins are atoned for on her wedding day.

What remained of the Shavuot experience after the breaking of the *luchot* was *kirvanu lifnei har Sinai*, the fact that Hashem had brought us to Har Sinai. We are meant to integrate our whole life with Torah. The only *mitzva* we have to do on Shavuot is to eat a festive meal. We celebrate the giving of the Torah with an elaborate *seudah* signifying the underlying principle of Judaism which is elevating the physical to spiritual. The Torah is not just a book but a way of life. We eat dairy on Shavuot because the Torah is compared to milk. It has to be a part of us, but we have to give it over to others so that it becomes a life giving force. *Pirkei Avot* begins, "*Moshe kibel Torah m'Sinai*," to teach us that *middot* are an important part of Torah. If we want to teach children *derech erez* and *middot*, we have to be a model for them.

Knowing Torah demands that it be an indivisible part of the person. When the Jewish people received the Torah for the first time they needed total physical purity in order to discard any other connections, leaving the body free to unite with the Torah. They were commanded to separate from their wives for three days, spurning any physical relationships, in order to concentrate entirely on uniting with Hashem and his Torah. When that was accomplished at *maamad Har Sinai* it became embedded in our genetic DNA for all

generations. The *shloshet yemei hagbala* (three days before Shavuot) are a time to open ourselves up to become one with Hashem. On Shavuot we're judged how much our lives is centered around Torah. We need to prepare ourselves and introspect and ask ourselves, "Where am I? Where should I be in terms of my goals, deportment, and mindset in Torah?"

Rav Meizlish notes that every year our souls are asked, "Do you want the Torah?" And every year it respond, "*Naaseh v'nishma*." (We will do and understand.) In order to move from the world of spirituality to the world of practicality, thought must be concretized in the world of action. *Rabbeinu Yonah* writes that if a person's wisdom exceeds his observance he'll eventually stop observing entirely because his knowledge is merely abstract. The *Kedushat Levi* notes on the verse in *Shir Hashirim*, "*Im ta'iru v'im t'eoreru*," that if a person is inspired to come closer to Hashem he should immediately make a vessel for it and concretize it into action. On Shavuot, it's not enough to feel the Almighty's love. Hashem desires the *naaseh*, the performance of the *mitzvot* with passion and fervor. Shavuot is an awakening of how much Hashem does for us. It's discerning the *hashgacha pratit* in our own personal lives and celebrating the reality of *ein od milvado*, that there's no one but Hashem.



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## Shavuot: Accepting The Torah #16

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

When we love other people we feel connected to them. We desire good for the other person because you view him as a part of your life. Hatred is detachment and alienation. If someone wronged you, you must empathize with them while pointing out the mistake in a sensitive way. Review the times in your own life when you slipped up and ask yourself how you would want others to correct you. Speak to the offender privately, focus on the present, discuss the action itself. Affirm that you value the person's intent to rectify what he has done. This equalizes the relationship.

When someone hurts you, think how you can help the person and what you can learn from him. When someone is belittled, he feels vulnerable and unable to cope. This feeling is heightened by the perpetrator who seems

intact, powerful, and frightening. The sweetness of revenge balances both sides so that the other person feels vulnerable too. Yet Hashem puts us in situations to uplift us. Taking revenge would makes both people feel small. Likewise, bearing a grudge continues the game of feeling belittled and wanting the other person to feel that way too. Instead, you can elevate yourself and the other person. A healthy response would be to give the other person what he needs. In this way your inner self can grows into a braver, bigger, person.

If you have to deal with critical people, remind yourself that it's all from Hashem. You can distance yourself emotionally and disregard what they say, but still care for them. Tell yourself that they have limitations and flaws, just don't let yourself be hurt. Ask yourself,

where's my *tikun* in this situation? You can say, "I'll be a person who benefits others." Or, "Now I know how someone feels when I criticize him." Or, "It's no coincidence that this person crossed my path, how can I help him and what can I learn from him?"

Respecting people includes making eye contact, not moving away while they're speaking, and seeing their message as relevant and important. Doing this will encourage a person to reveal more of his positive self to you. Another form of nurturing good will is sincerely davening for another person and feeling their pain. Train yourself to notice what people need. By becoming a giver, you become a greater more sensitive human being.

## Personal Kabbalat HaTorah

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The days between Pesach and Shavuot are days when we move from instinctive response to free choice, integration, and consciousness. This is hinted at in the *korban omer*, which was brought on Pesach and was made of barley, normally animal fodder, and the *shte'i halechem* offered on Shavuot which

consisted of wheat.

The human genome is made up of many parts. Every particle has its own vibration and notes. In the same way we each have our own personal *nigun* (melody) while sharing the common goal of finding our distinctive place in

the pattern of things. Likewise, Hashem gives the entire world existence, yet every minor thing is guided by Divine Providence. Hashem gave the Torah to all the Jewish people. If we appreciate the gift Hashem gave us, we will want to take it further and develop our own unique contribution to the Torah.