

Pulse OF Emunah

ANI
MAAMIN
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life

LESSONS

GIFTS OF GOODWILL

A gift can be an incredibly potent tool to create a *kiddush Hashem* or to help defuse tensions or hard feelings. The power of gifts to cultivate patience and understanding is illustrated by a powerful story told about a noted *maggid shiur* in Montreal who lived next door to a triplex occupied by three non-Jews, one of whom was known for his hostility toward the *chassidim* in the neighborhood. The *maggid shiur* made a practice of going out of his way to greet the man, and he even purchased large boxes of chocolates once a year for each of his three neighbors.

The *maggid shiur's* friendly overtures later turned out to have far-reaching effects. A prominent *rav* in Montreal was once seeking a male voice therapist, and one of Quebec's *askanim* searched far and wide for a suitable practitioner. The field was apparently dominated by women, though, for only one male voice therapist could be found, and he claimed to be too busy to take on additional patients. After a while, the therapist agreed to add the *rav* to his packed schedule.

This therapist turned out to be none other than the hostile neighbor whom the *maggid shiur* had gone out of his way to appease, and he made it clear that he had taken the *rav* as a patient out of appreciation for his gracious neighbor. 

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gem

OF THE WEEK

WHAT ARE WE CELEBRATING?

By Rabbi Moshe Pogrow

As we all know, Shavuot is also called *zman Matan Toraseinu*, and indeed, a look at Shemos reveals that Matan Torah occurred on the sixth or seventh day of Sivan—i.e., on or around the 50th day since counting had begun on 16th of Nissan.

We have a tradition that the day of Matan Torah was a Shabbos. According to the Seder Olam, *yetzias Mitzrayim* took place on a Friday. The Gemara (Shabbos 87b), however, says it was Thursday. So only according to the Seder Olam could Matan Torah have taken place on the 50th day—according to the Gemara, which for us is the decisive authority, Matan Torah was in fact on the 51st day. Thus, the 50th day of the Omer is not the anniversary of Matan Torah, but the day before.

Had the Torah intended us to celebrate the day of the month on which the Torah was given, it would have given us the exact date, as it did for Pesach. But this is not the Torah's intention; hence, *u'krasem b'etzem hayom hazeh*.

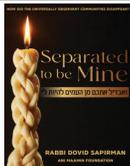
Do not establish the Yom Tov on the day of the month on which the Torah *continued on reverse side*

powerful
PRAYER 

SHEMA:
IN THE PARSHA

Saying Shema each morning and evening is a *mitzvah d'oraysa*. It contains three *parshiyos*, each excerpted from a different place in the Chumash: Shema, Vehaya, and Vayomer. Each one imparts a different message. Chazal refer to the first *parsha* as *kabbalas ol malchus shamayim*, accepting the yoke of heaven. A yoke is a symbol of obeying authority. When we say that first paragraph, we promise to accept Hashem's direction and do as He says. The second paragraph is called *kabbalas ol mitzvos*. When saying it, we think about how Hashem has given us instructions for life in the form of the 613 mitzvos. 

Adapted from Emunah in the Classroom



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FOUNDATIONS OF BELIEF

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

The Torah commands us never to forget what we experienced at Har Sinai, and to pass this knowledge on through the generations. The saintly Mashgiach, Rav Yechezkel Levenstein *zt"l*, gave a talk in Yeshivas Ponevezh that has been transcribed in his *sefer* Ohr Yechezkel. I had the privilege to be in Ponevezh and hear the Mashgiach speak numerous times; I can picture it as if it were yesterday. As a fitting introduction to Matan Torah, allow me to present a few excerpts of his talk.

“I was motivated to speak today on the topic and the manner of our obligation to clarify *emunah*. This is due to a particular occurrence that happened to me. One time, I asked one of the yeshiva students, ‘Do you know that there is a Creator of the world, One who controls everything?’ And he answered ‘Certainly,’ for is he not a believer? I continued, ‘Certainly you are a *maamin*, but what is the basis of your knowledge and understanding? What is the foundation that your belief is built upon?’ And for this he had no answer.

“As a result, I am compelled to ask: Is it possible for a man to live a long life of seventy or eighty years without knowing the source of his belief, all his knowledge relying only on the fact that he is ‘a *maamin*’? Yet he does not know the meaning of *emunah* at all; his words and sayings have no meaning. He does not recognize what hides behind his words and beliefs. What purpose is there for all the mitzvos he does throughout his life? Is the foundation of mitzvah observance not the knowledge and fulfillment of Hashem’s command?

“Only when I enlightened him and said to him that the foundation of *emunah* is built on Yetzias Mitzrayim and the Revelation at Har Sinai, as we say in the *tefillah* of Emes Veyatziv, did he nod his head and agree.

“When all belief is superficial and simple, like the answer of this student who did not know how to explain the source of his *emunah*, can this be called *emunah*? From this strength, can one fulfill the decrees of Hashem?”

We must live our lives by the holy words of the Mashgiach, with the knowledge that our *emunah* comes from the memory of standing at Har Sinai and shouting Naaseh V’nishma. 

was given; rather, without taking that into account, establish it *b’etzem hayom hazeh*, on the 50th day. The view accepted by the nation is that Shavuos falls on the day before Matan Torah, that Torah was not given on the 50th day, but on the 51st.

From this we learn a profound truth. The Yom Tov of Matan Torah does not celebrate the giving of the Torah. Rather, it celebrates our becoming worthy to receive it. The day before Matan Torah, the last day of preparation, that is the day represented by the 50th day. On that day, the people were ready for their great mission. We can see this in the name of the Yom Tov: Shavuos is not named after the mitzvos that apply to it, but after the counting that leads up to it.

Matan Torah, too, was not limited to one day at Har Sinai. The Torah was received over the course of forty years. The Aseres Hadibros heard at Har Sinai have no greater holiness than any of the other 613 commandments.

Hashem Himself explains the significance of the day at Har Sinai: it was only to prove that Hashem does speak to man, so that when we received the Torah through Moshe, it was with full confidence that he spoke the word of Hashem. Thus, the Aseres Hadibros received no special place in *tefillah*, so that one should not imagine that they are the entirety of the Torah. A similar consideration may be the Torah’s motive in not designating the day of their giving as a Yom Tov. 

*Based on the commentary of Rav Shmshon Raphael Hirsch *zt"l* on Chumash, with permission from the publisher.*



wonder WORLD

A RAINBOW PLACE



Why are animals different colors?

In Parshas Bamidbar, we learn that each *shevet* camped under its own unique flag with its own color and symbol, showing each family where they belonged. In nature, animals might also use color to stand out or to blend in. Famously, male peacocks flash bright feathers. Poison dart frogs show off their bold colors to warn predators “Don’t eat me!” Monarch butterflies have orange-and-black wings that other animals learn to avoid. Even ants, which all look alike to us, can recognize which colony another ant belongs to by its scent, and some species even show subtle color patterns. Colors and patterns in nature are not random. Hashem designed each animal to communicate a message, helping them find their place in the crowd. 

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