

Pulse OF Emunah

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life

LESSONS

DIVINE MESSAGES


By Rabbi David Ashear, Author of *Living Emunah (Artscroll)*"

There is a common misconception that some people have: When try to do the right thing and encounter challenges, it means *Hashem* is not listening.

Imagine a man who wakes up, alert and energetic, goes to *shul*, learns till *Shacharis*, then prays with real emotion. At the office, he has a smooth, productive workday. When he gets home, his wife encourages him to learn some more, so he goes back to *shul*, learns and understands everything, and comes home upbeat and gratified. Before he goes to sleep, he asks *Hashem* that the next day be just as good.

But one of his children is up all night, barely sleeps, and when his alarm goes off, he presses "snooze." He gets to *shul* late and quickly catches up. He tries to concentrate, but is too tired. He tries to learn after *Shacharis*, but can barely stay awake. When he gets to work, his coworkers are indulging in *lashon hara* and pressuring him to cheat. He feels uncomfortable, but does not yield.

When he gets home, his wife is overwhelmed and does not want him to go learn. Finally, when things settle down, he manages to catch the last 20 minutes of the class. As he gets into bed, he says to *Hashem*, "Why did You do this? I hardly did anything productive today!"

Hashem's response, so-to-speak, is, "Just the opposite—yesterday you did nothing. Today is when you truly accomplished—struggling to pray with concentration, struggling to understand the Torah, struggling to do the right thing at the office. Heroic! And then you managed to learn at night, even with everything else going on. This is truly amazing." 



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OF THE WEEK

WORTHY TO RECEIVE THE TORAH

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


The *minhag* of our *tefillahs* refers to *Yom Habichurim* - which is also referred to as *Chag HaShavuot* - as *zman matan Torah*. The Torah reveals that *matan Torah* was given on the sixth or seventh day of the third month. We have the *minhag* that the Torah was given on Shabbos.

According to the *Seder Olam*, the day of the exodus from *Mitzrayim* - the fifteenth of *Nisan* - was on a Friday. This means that *matan Torah* was 50 days after the 16th of *Nisan*. Therefore the 50th day of the *Omer* is not the anniversary of *matan Torah*, but the day before *matan Torah*.

Ideally, according to the Torah, the month is sanctified and determined by the observation of *Rosh Chodesh*. So, the 50th day since the *Omer* is not fixed to a particular day of the month, that is to say, *Shavuot* can fall out on the fifth, sixth, or the seventh of *Nisan*.

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PRAYER 

Every time we say the words *Baruch Atah*, we are reminded that we stand before *Hashem* at all times, that we are speaking directly to Him, and that He is listening to what we are saying. There are three main kinds of *brachos*. Some are a "thank you" to the Creator for the pleasure we take from the world, such as those on food and drink. These are called *birchas hanehenin*. A second category is called *birchas hamitzvos*, said before we do a *mitzvah* in gratitude to *Hashem* for making us special. The third type is a praise to *Hashem* for the wonderful things He does for us, often concluding with a request for various things we need 

Adapted from Biur Tefillah (Ani Maamin Foundation)

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BUMPER CROP

By Rabbi Dovid Sapirman, Dean, Ani Maamin Foundation

"The Sefer Hachinuch states that Pesach and Shavuos are linked together by the mitzvah of Sefiras Haomer. The end goal of Pesach, of the exodus from Egypt, was not merely our physical freedom from slavery; rather, its ultimate purpose was to bring us to Har Sinai, in order to receive the Torah.

Torah is the essence of the Jewish people. Therefore, we count the days from Pesach to show that even as we celebrate our physical freedom, we look expectantly toward a greater, more significant occasion: Kabbalas Hatorah.

Although this lofty thought is beautiful, there is one point that is unclear. We see the link between Pesach and Shavuos, but what is the connection to the sacrifice of the omer?

It is no coincidence that the Torah tells us to start counting from the second day of Pesach, the day that we bring the omer. Obviously, the rationale behind this mitzvah is not just a connection between two holidays but a connection to the korban omer itself. Indeed, because we no longer have the ability to bring the korban omer, Sefirah today is only a rabbinic mitzvah.

The omer was a mincha, a meal offering of barley—the first grain to ripen in the spring. We offered it as a korban before we ate or even harvested any of the new produce. The Sefer Hachinuch tells us that the korban is brought for the purpose of remembering that it is the Ribbono shel Olam who renews the agricultural cycle, and to say thank you to Him for having given us a new crop once again.

Now we can begin to understand. When we bring the omer, we realize that Hashem is the Creator, that the crops are His gift to us, and that we owe Him our gratitude. But when we contemplate that the world has a Creator, we are reminded of Hashem's ultimate purpose in creating it. In his commentary to the first verse in the Torah, Rashi tells us that Bereishis: the world was created for the things that are called "reishis," for the Jewish people and the Torah, in order that there be a nation that clings to Hashem through observance of His Torah.

When did we become that nation? On Pesach. "I will take you to Me for a people." When did we get the Torah? On Shavuos.

Through the omer, our reminder that the world has a Creator, we remember to connect Pesach to Shavuos, the two occasions that brought about the fulfillment of Hashem's ultimate plan." ♣

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If the intention of the Torah was to celebrate *matan* Torah on a specific day, it would have given us - with the same precision of remembering the dates of the exodus - the exact historical date.

On that day means: Do not establish the festival on the day of the month in which the Torah was given, instead, on the 50th day of the *Omer*, which is the day designated for bringing the *Bichurim* bread.

Here, in this instance, it's not the fixing of *Rosh Chodesh Sivan*, but the fixing of *Nisan and Sefires Haomer*. Thus, the day that is elevated to a festival, is not the day of the revelation, but the final day of the counting *leading up* to that great day.

The view that has been accepted by the nation is that *Shavuos* falls on *the day before* the Lawgiving, and the Torah was not given on the 50th, but on the 51st day.

We can learn from this a profound truth that *matan* Torah does not relate to the fact of giving the Torah. Rather, it celebrates *our making ourselves worthy* of receiving the Torah.

The day before the Lawgiving, *that* is the day represented by the 50th day of *Sefires Haomer* - when we were ready for the tremendous mission to be the receivers and bearers of Torah, to carry it throughout all future generations.

The festival of *Shavuos* is different than all other holidays, in that it is not named after the *mitzvos* that apply during the *chag*; rather it is called *Shavuos* - after the counting *which leads up to it*. ♣



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GRAIN FOR THOUGHT



How does wheat turn into bread?

In Parshas Emor, a wave offering was brought that was made of fine wheat flour, and then baked into bread - the first fruits given to Hashem. Sometimes we can take the food we eat for granted. Hashem gave wheat the proteins glutenin and gliadin. When liquid is added to wheat flour, and it is kneaded, these come together and form gluten - a network of stretchy fibers that hold the bread together and capture the bubbles caused by fermentation. Wheat does this better than any other grain because it contains more of the right proteins. Grains like rye have similar proteins, but they aren't as strong, so rye bread doesn't rise as well as wheat bread, and is more prone to crumbling. That doesn't mean you can't make good bread with other grains, but wheat does it easier and better.

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