



Dedicated in memory of Rachel Leah bat R' Chaim Tzvi

# תורת אמן WOMEN'S TORAH WEEKLY

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## Shavuot: Torah throughout our Lives

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur on Chassidut by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

By: Devora Kaye

The *Shem MiShmuel* discusses an intriguing explanation of the *Midrash* which states that the *Torah* was given in the desert with fire and water. These 3 elements, desert, fire and water, correspond to the three levels of the soul, *nefesh*, *ruach*, and *neshama*. *Nefesh* is the biological level of the soul, *ruach* is the spiritual, emotional experience, and *neshama* is the intellectual force. *Hashem* gave us the gift of *Torah* which speaks to every level of the soul. This is expressed through the *mitzvot*, which address all aspects of our being. *Mitzvot* that entail physical action, like eating *matzot* and putting on *tefillin*, involve the *nefesh*. The *ruach* connects through prayer, and the *neshama* finds meaning through the study of *Torah*.

These three levels of the soul are represented by the three phenomena that were part of the Sinai experience. The

desert is an area which is desolate, lonely, and detached from reality. This symbolizes the *neshama*, the human intellect, which is abstract and has no connection to the physical world. The *ruach* – the spirit and emotion – is represented by the fire of Sinai, the energy of *Torah* which infuses us with spiritual excitement and inspiration. Water, the fundamental building block of the physical world, represents the *nefesh*.

The *Shem MiShmuel* further discusses how our acceptance of the *Torah* went through three stages of development, which correspond to the three levels of the soul. Mt. Sinai symbolizes the *neshama*, the intellect. *Hashem* addressed each Jew individually through the first commandment of “*Anochi Hashem Elokecha*, I am *Hashem* your G-d” and an intellectual connection was formed. The forty year sojourn in the desert represents the *ruach* – a period of

*ahavat Hashem* (love for *Hashem*) and a desire for closeness and connection to Him. This was manifest in the *mishkan*. *Arvat Moav*, the final stop before the Jewish people entered the land of Israel, corresponds to *nefesh* – the physical side of human existence. Entrance into *Eretz Yisrael* meant the end of the miracle of the manna and the start of real life and its physical struggles.

*Torah* was given to every level of human experience. It is a *Torat chaim* – it addresses every aspect of life.

A Jew's mission is to incorporate the message of *Torah* into every aspect of his life and to tap into its unique and potent force. This *Shavuot*, let us work to integrate the *Torah* into every level of our soul and every fiber of our being. Let its unique power and spirit guide us through the challenges of life.

## The Ten Commandments

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur on Shavuot by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

By: Dena Weiss

The *mishna* in *Avot* writes that *Hashem* created the world with ten statements. *Hashem* moved from a state of unknowable infinity to a level of creativity and comprehension. The ten statements were the paths that *Hashem* created to allow us to know Him. *Adam*, *Noach*, *Shem*, *Ever*, and the *Avot*, all knew the mysteries of the ten statements. At Mt. Sinai, *Hashem* revealed something much deeper, greater, and intimate. We had to move from a level of knowing *Hashem* through observation to a level of knowing Him through revelation. Observation is finite and subjective. Therefore, *Hashem* made our senses fail at Mt. Sinai – we saw thunder and heard lightning, to teach us that any experience based on our senses is relative and limited. At the giving of the *Torah*, *Hashem* revealed

reality the way it truly is.

*Hashem* promised the *avot* that our hearts would be filled with faith. *Avraham* left *Charan* for the land of Israel on the basis of faith and his descendants inherited his deep faith. At Mt. Sinai, *Hashem* reopened the deep recesses of this faith within our hearts and we merited to hear His voice.

Before revealing the *Torah* to us, *Hashem* needed to be sure we would be credible listeners. Therefore, before He gave the *Torah*, the Jews said “*naaseh v'nishmah* – We will do and we will hear.” The reality of being heard takes place in action. They had to commit to let the understanding flow down into their lives.

When *Hashem* gave the first commandment He said, “*Anochi Hashem* – I am *Hashem*,”

the Source of all reality. But there's more. We have a dual relationship. I am also “*Elokecha* – the Master of the forces that interact with you, all the forces inside of you. The people you meet, the experiences you encounter, they are all orchestrated by Me.” *Hashem* created the forces and painted them into a picture. When one realizes that everything has an infinite Source, one stops being afraid of finite sources. This means living a life of awareness and mindfulness, which ultimately leads one on the path to self improvement and elevation.

When we fulfill the mandates of the *Torah*, we demonstrate our our faith in *Hashem* and our own reliability. In this way, we relate to *Hashem*, not as unknowable, but as a caring G-d who is involved in our daily lives.

## EXPANDING REALITY – SHAVUOT THOUGHTS

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

By: Channie Koplowitz Stein

We celebrate *Shavuot* as the time the *Torah* was given on the sixth of *Sivan*. Yet the *gemara* states that the day Moshe actually brought the *Torah* down to us was not the fiftieth day after leaving Egypt, Friday, but

on Shabbat, the fifty-first day, the seventh of *Sivan*. How could Moshe take upon himself the authority to wait an additional day, contrary to *Hashem's* explicit command? And how can we still celebrate *Shavuot* on

the sixth of *Sivan*?

In order to understand motivation and our own calendar, we must explore the significance of the numbers involved and continues on next page...

## אִמֵּךְ WOMEN'S TORAH WEEKLY

### EXPANDING REALITY – SHAVUOT THOUGHTS - Continued

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles  
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the timeline of that first *Shavuot*.

The command reads: "You shall count for yourselves from the morrow of the *Shabbat* (*yom tov*), from the day when you bring the *omer*... seven complete weeks. Until the morrow of the seventh week... fifty days." Notice the number seven, the number of days in a week. Seven times seven weeks is forty-nine days, There is an eighth day following these sevens, for a total of fifty.

Seven represents the world as it was created, the physical and mundane. But it also includes the *Shabbat*, the ability to raise the mundane to the spiritual. We were commanded to count seven full weeks, make them not just whole, but holy. Then add one more day, an eighth, to signify the supernatural, the immanence of God in the world, and His involvement in our lives. With this mindset we accepted the *Torah*, making it an integral part of our lives.

*Torah* has two major components. It naturally includes all the commandments. But a *Torah* life entails more than strict adherence to all the commandments. *Torah* must transform us so that every one of our actions and characteristics is ennobled. We become *ba'alei chesed* not only in strict obedience to a command, but in other opportunities presented to us to live accord-

ing to *Torah* morality. We study *Torah* not only to learn the proper way to do a *mitzvah*, but also because studying *Torah* creates a bond between ourselves and *Hashem*.

The *mitzvot* represent the forty-nine, the details of life on earth. Fifty, on the other hand, represents the spirituality of *Torah*, bringing the World of Truth and Eternity, into the mundane world. At *matan Torah*, we received both worlds, the detail-oriented world of the *mitzvot* and the totally enveloping world of *Torah*.

Moshe would not simply have added a day unless he saw a compelling reason to do so. Moshe reasoned that *Hashem* commanded us to receive the *Torah* after forty-nine full days, fifty if you count the first day of Passover as day one (similar to a *bris mila*, which is performed on the eighth day, when the baby is one week old). But, Moshe reasoned, we were not redeemed from Egypt until morning, until part of the day had already passed. Since the command was to receive the *Torah* on the fiftieth day, after forty-nine complete days had passed, Moshe felt *Bnei Yisrael* needed extra time to prepare to accept the *Torah*. They needed the time to work on themselves to become appropriate vessels for the holiness of the *Torah*. *Hashem* agreed with Moshe's

ment, and Moshe brought the *Torah* down on the seventh of *Sivan*.

Nevertheless, we still celebrate *Shavuot* on the sixth of *Sivan*. We are not contradicting our history. *Matan Torah* actually began on the sixth of *Sivan* with the internal work required to incorporate *Torah's* essence into our lives. While the generation that came out of Egypt was not free on the entire first day of the *omer*, we are. They began the work of preparation late and needed the extra time.

We may also want the extra time to prepare for the holiness of the day, but we have no excuse. We must start preparing ourselves to be vessels of holiness from the beginning of the count. If we are honest with ourselves in our struggle to maintain a spiritual life, *Hashem* will help us succeed. When we celebrate *Shavuot*, we must do more than remember and rejoice that *Hashem* gave us the *Torah*. We must reenact the preparation process, the struggle to make ourselves worthy of the *Torah*. Pick one area to work on personally. Then, think and feel like a Jew – in addition to acting like one. The struggle is difficult, and you may fail along the way. But if you are sincere and ask *Hashem* for His help, He will provide it.

### Rebbetzin's Perspective Part 8:

Excerpted from Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller's Question and Answer series on Naaleh.com

#### Question:

One of my favorite psalms in *Tehillim* is Chapter 29. However there is one verse that I have trouble connecting with. "Ki avi v'imy azavuni v'Hashem yaasfeini – For my father and mother have left me and Hashem has gathered me in." I have a good relationship with my parents, so it is difficult for me to understand this verse. Is there a deeper explanation behind it?

#### Answer:

In all normal situations, children outlive their parents. We need to develop a situation in which our primary relationship is with *Hashem* and not with our parents. An additional understanding comes from the verse, "Al ken yaazov ish es aviv ves imo

*vdavak b'ishto* – A person shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife." This means that even in our parents' lifetime we need to leave them to some extent. We need to fly away from them and form something new, something that is truly our own.

A third deeper explanation is that in the process of defining the way *Hashem* comes down into this world, *chochma* is called *abba* – father and *binah* is called *ima* – mother. *Chochma* is the father of all thought and creativity. It is the ability to ask what something is and what it is for. *Binah* means looking at things with depth, meaning, and detail. It involves asking where something is coming from and where it is going, in order to draw conclusions.

Therefore, a person needs to be able to move beyond his natural understanding and capacities. He must work towards doing what *Hashem* wants of him, whether or not he can understand or relate to it. An example of this is the *chukim*. You can conjecture what the esoteric meanings behind *shatnez* are. However, on your own you never would have invented this mitzva to create a spiritual connection with *Hashem*. Hence this verse teaches us that you need to learn to negate your own limited mindset – your *abba* and *ima* – and say to *Hashem*, "I am small, you are vast and indefinable. Teach me your ways and let me merit to subjugate my limited mind to your infinite knowledge."