

In times like these, when the nations are in conflict with one another, the Jewish people have the special assurance from the A-mighty that, "My children, have no fear, all that I have done, I have done solely for your sake,"<sup>1</sup> - in addition to the multitude of promises mentioned in the Torah to the effect that "Behold, He does not sleep nor slumber, the guardian of Israel"<sup>2</sup> and that "I am with him in distress,"<sup>3</sup> and "G-d will redeem Israel from all of its distress,"<sup>4</sup> (and only after that "He will redeem Israel from all of their sins"<sup>5</sup>) **etc. etc.**

It is a certainty that "He will not sleep nor slumber, the Guardian of Israel," wherever Jews may be situated - even in the Diaspora, and all the more so in the Holy Land, characterized by our Holy and true Torah as, "A land which G-d our G-d's eyes watch over from the beginning of the year to the end of the year."<sup>6</sup>

...And as was stated, the A-mighty notifies and proclaims to Jews wherever they are situated, particularly in the Holy Land, "My children, have no fear."

*(From the talks of Shabbos Parshas Vo'eira, 26 Teves, Mevorchim Shvat [Blessing of the month of Shvat], 5751)*

1. *Yalkut Shimoni, Yeshayahu, Remez 499.*
2. *Tehillim 121:4.*
3. *loc. cit. 91:14.*
4. *loc. cit. 25:22.*
5. *loc. cit. 130:8. [This is a reference to the fact that G-d will bring the Redemption even before we fully atone for our sins. Translator's note.]*
6. *Ekev 11:12.*

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# LIKKUTEI SICHOS

## AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the  
**Lubavitcher Rebbe**  
**Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson**

Reprinted for Shavuos, 5774  
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**THE BAAL SHEM TOV'S MISSION**

It has been explained<sup>43</sup> that every teaching from the Baal Shem Tov expresses the essence of his being. The Baal Shem Tov's mission was to reveal the teachings of *Chassidus* which underscore the importance of elevating the material world.<sup>44</sup> For this reason the Baal Shem Tov cherished the second day of Shavuos, for as mentioned, this elevation is the motif of the Divine service associated with that day.

(Adapted from *Sichos Chag HaShavuos*, 5720)



IN LOVING MEMORY OF  
Horav **Schneur Zalman Halevi** ע"ה  
ben Horav **Yitzchok Elchonon Halevi** הי"ד  
**Shagalov**  
Passed away on 21 Tamuz, 5766  
Reb **Dovid Asniel** ben Reb **Eliyahu** ע"ה  
**Ekman**  
Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5765  
Mrs. **Devora Rivka** bas Reb **Yosef Eliezer** ע"ה  
**Marenburg**  
Passed away on the second day  
of Rosh Chodesh Adar, 5766  
Reb **Yitzchok Moshe** (Ian)  
ben Reb **Dovid Asniel** ע"ה  
**Ekman (Santiago, Chile)**  
Passed away on the 24th day of Shevat, 5769  
ת. נ. צ. ג. ה.  
AND IN HONOR OF  
Mrs. **Esther Shaindel** bas **Fraidel Chedva** שתחיל  
**Shagalov**  
DEDICATED BY  
Rabbi & Mrs. **Yosef Y. and Gittel Rochel** שיחיי  
**Shagalov**

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43. See *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. IV, p. 1209.

44. See the interpretation of the verse (*Shmos* 23:5): "You must certainly help him" in *HaYom Yom*, p. 23.

Burial was also very significant for the Baal Shem. It is related<sup>41</sup> that the Baal Shem stated that he had the potential to ascend to heaven in a tempest as did Eliyahu, but desired to fulfill the Divine decree:<sup>42</sup> “You are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

The advantage of returning to dust over ascending to heaven in a tempest echoes the advantage of the second day of Shavuos. For instead of the upward thrust of ascending to heaven, the emphasis is on a return to the earth.

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the Alter Rebbe does not mention this, the ruling is not accepted by all authorities (see *Magen Avraham* 526:1).

40. I have not been able to determine whether the burial actually took place on the second day of the festival. There is a report that the Rebbe Rashab once said the day of the Baal Shem's burial is unknown.

An unedited listener's record of the *sichos* of the second day of Shavuos, 5699, [*Sefer HaSichos* 5699, p. 333], states that the question was asked and the Previous Rebbe replied that this matter was discussed in Lubavitch many years previously, but that there was no definite tradition regarding the matter. The Rebbe Rashab quoted the expression: “No man knows about his burial.” He finished by saying that logic would dictate that they waited until the festival was over.

This conclusion raises questions, for the law requires burial on the second day. Also, at the outset, the question was whether the burial took place on the first day or the second day, not whether or not it took place after the holiday.

Perhaps the intent was “they waited until after the first day of the holiday.” Alternatively, it can be explained that they waited until after the festival “so that relatives would come, or so that word could be spread to neighboring towns” (*Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De'ah* 357:1).

41. *Sichos Yud-Tes Kislev*, 5664 (*Toras Shalom*, p. 46). At that time, the emphasis was on the advantage of returning to dust. In the conclusion of the series of *mamaarim* entitled *BeSha'ah SheHikdimu*, 5672 [p. 1257] (in the portion that was not recited verbally), the emphasis was placed on the Baal Shem Tov's ability to ascend to heaven.

(With regard to the necessity of a tempest, see *Zohar*, Vol. II, p. 197a; see also *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. II, p. 515.)

It must be noted that this entire discussion appears to contradict statements at the conclusion of the text *Shivchei HaBesht*.

42. *Bereishis* 3:19.

# LIKKUTEI SICHOS

## AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

RELATING TO THE WEEKLY SECTIONS OF THE TORAH AND  
SPECIAL OCCASIONS IN THE JEWISH CALENDAR

by the  
**Lubavitcher Rebbe**  
**Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson**

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Volume IX: *Bamidbar*

•

In English rendition  
by  
**Rabbi Eliyahu Touger**

## SHAVUOS

## SLEEPING SOUNDLY

The *Midrash* states<sup>1</sup> that the Jews slept the entire night before the giving of the Torah, “because sleep on Shavuos is pleasant and the night is short.... Not even a flea bit them.”

When G-d came to give them the Torah, He found the Jews in deep slumber, and had to rouse them. This is alluded to in the verse:<sup>2</sup> “Why did I come when no one was there? I called, and there was no answer.”

To compensate for the nation’s slumber on the night before the giving of the Torah, it is customary to remain awake on the first night of Shavuos, studying the Torah.<sup>3</sup>

All the stories in the Torah serve as lessons for us in our Divine service. This is especially true with regard to any story which casts the Jews in an unfavorable light. The Torah is careful not to speak deprecatingly even about a non-kosher animal.<sup>4</sup> So if it tells a story which portrays the Jews unfavorably, we can assume that this is done only because a unique lesson can be derived from that story.

The lesson in this case is apparent: that we should compensate for our ancestors’ conduct by staying awake the entire night of Shavuos. To communicate this lesson, however, it would have been enough to summarize the story. The fact that our Sages added phrases such as: “Sleep on Shavuos is

1. *Shir HaShirim Rabbah* 1:12 (2).  
 2. *Yeshayahu* 50:2.  
 3. *Magen Avraham* 494:1.  
 4. *Bava Basra* 123a.

as a festival. This applies when the months are established according to a fixed calendar and the second day of Shavuos always falls on the seventh of Sivan. Moreover, even when the calendar was dependent on the sighting of the moon, in most years<sup>36</sup> Shavuos was celebrated on the sixth of Sivan, for an effort was made to see that the testimony of the witnesses confirmed the dates arrived at by calculations.<sup>37</sup>

## WHEN THE BAAL SHEM PASSED AWAY

The dearness with which the Baal Shem Tov held the second day of Shavuos found expression at the time of his passing. The Baal Shem passed away on the first day of Shavuos, 5520.<sup>38</sup> In such an instance, *halachah* prescribes<sup>39</sup> that the person be buried on the second day of the holiday.<sup>40</sup>

36. And the Torah follows the majority. For that reason in many of their statements, our Sages associate the holiday of Shavuos with the anniversary of the giving of the Torah. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Emor* in this series.  
 37. See *Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh* 2:4, which explains that, by their calculations, the Sages knew when and where it was possible for the moon to be sighted, and would ask pointed questions to verify that the witnesses had indeed sighted the moon at that time and place. See also the gloss of *Tosafos Yom Tov to Rosh HaShanah* 2:6.  
 38. This is reflected in the Alter Rebbe’s reference to the passing of the Baal Shem Tov: “On the fourth day, the luminaries were withdrawn.” We find the expression: “On the fourth day, the luminaries were suspended,” spelling the Hebrew word *nitlu*, meaning “suspended,” with a *tuf* (נטל). The Alter Rebbe restated that expression by substituting the letter *tes* for the letter *tuf* (נטל). “The fourth day” which he mentioned refers to Wednesday, the first day of Shavuos, 5520. The second day of Shavuos can never fall on a Wednesday. See also *Likkutei Dibburim*, Vol. I, pgs. 32 and 42.  
 39. In *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* 526:2, the Alter Rebbe states that it is forbidden to leave a corpse unburied, and so it should be buried on the first day of a festival by non-Jews. In this instance, however, the law does not apply, because on Shavuos morning, the Baal Shem Tov asked his disciples to take care of his burial themselves, and gave them instructions (*Shivchai HaBesht*). As the Alter Rebbe continues (*op. cit.*:18), in such a situation the burial should be postponed at least until the night, in order to fulfill the wishes of the departed.

Moreover, the directive to have non-Jews bury a corpse on the first day of a festival applies only when there are non-Jews available, and when there is sufficient time in the day for the burial to be completed. Furthermore, although

The inner reason for this law is that the second day of Shavuos and the seventh day of Sivan share the same spiritual thrust. Therefore, this day was always characterized by a unique spiritual significance because of the special qualities it possesses, as explained by the Maggid, and interpreted regarding the views of the Sages and Rabbi Yossi. This draws down greater power with regard to the observance of that day

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pora, when the day following Shavuos is the eighth of Sivan, one should be allowed to fast.

{For as stated above, with regard to Shavuos, there was never any doubt regarding the day on which the holiday was to be observed; the institution of the second day was only “so as not to differentiate between one festival and another.”

The custom of *Isru Chag*, honoring the day following the festival, was instituted (as law) only with regard to Shavuos, because of the custom of bringing the sacrifices. But with regard to *Isru Chag*, the concept of “so as not to differentiate between one festival and another,” does not apply, for the eighth of Sivan is not the anniversary of the day on which the sacrifices were brought. There is no doubt about this matter, and hence it should be permitted to fast on that day.)

Nevertheless, because our Sages instituted the observance of the second day of Shavuos, not because of a doubt, but by virtue of a definitive decree, that day is considered Shavuos, and the day following it corresponds to the day on which the sacrifices were offered (*Sichos Chag HaShavuos*, 5716).

This situation does not parallel the seven days of compensation which are counted from (and include) the first day of Shavuos but not the second day. (Therefore these seven days end on the 12th of Sivan,\* and not on the 13th.)

The rationale for the latter ruling is that the days of compensation do not begin after Shavuos, but rather on Shavuos itself.\*\* Therefore, since there is no doubt that the first day of Shavuos marks the beginning of the holiday (for the Rabbis’ ruling establishing the second day as Shavuos does not detract from the status of the first day), the seven days of compensation are also counted from that day.

*Isru Chag*, by contrast, is endowed with a unique status since it is the day following Shavuos, because of the prohibition against bringing individual sacrifices on that day. The second day of Shavuos is definitely endowed with the status of a festival in the Diaspora (although in the *Beis HaMikdash* itself it was not a festival and sacrifices were offered) according to Rabbinic Law. This applies with regard to the prohibition against work, and this prohibition includes the offering of sacrifices. As such, the day after Shavuos corresponds to the day on which the sacrifices were offered.

\* See *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 71. Note also, *Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. IV, p. 1312.

\*\* See the notes to *Likkutei Sichos*, *op. cit.*

pleasant and the night is short.... Not even a flea bit them,” indicates that these particulars contain lessons aside from the one which encourages us to remain awake on Shavuos night.

### IN ANXIOUS EXPECTATION

It is well known<sup>5</sup> that the promise that they would receive the Torah 50 days after their exodus from Egypt awakened a strong desire within the Jews. With great anticipation, they counted the days until the Torah would be given. This is the source for the *mitzvah* of counting the *omer*.

Now, if seven weeks beforehand the Jews could hardly wait to receive the Torah, we can assume that their desire increased as they approached the actual date. They knew G-d was going to give the Torah on the next day. How then was it possible for them to sleep?

Moreover, their counting for 49 days *prepared* them for G-d’s great gift. On each of these days they became more refined, and more worthy to receive the Torah. And on each of these 49 days, they drew down one of the 50 Gates of Understanding. Thus on the forty-ninth day, they had completed drawing down the 49 gates — the maximum possible through the Divine service of mortals for the fiftieth gate was to be opened by G-d at Mt. Sinai.

When one considers that the Jews had a burning desire for the Torah even while under the influence of Egypt’s 49 Gates of Impurity, we can understand how overwhelming this desire must have become by the time they had refined themselves in drawing down the 49 Gates of Understanding,<sup>6</sup> making themselves worthy of G-d’s priceless gift.

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5. See *Shibolei HaLeKet*, *HaArugah HaShemini*, *Seder Atzeres* 236; *Rabbeinu Nisim*, the conclusion of *Pesachim*.

6. Moreover, since the giving of the Torah came on the fifty-first day after the exodus (see the *sichah* to *Parshas Emor* in this series), it follows that the fiftieth Gate of Understanding had also been drawn down at that time.

With such a great desire, does it make sense that the people would go to sleep?!

We are forced to conclude that even while sleeping, they did not take their minds off the giving of the Torah. Indeed, they went to sleep *in preparation* for the event.

This is also indicated by the fact that the fleas did not bite them. If going to sleep was a deviation from the Torah, G-d would not have wrought a miracle to enable them to sleep so soundly. The fact that He did implies that this sleep was also part of the nation's preparation.

### REACHING UPWARD

To explain: The Alter Rebbe writes<sup>7</sup> that no matter how high a level of understanding a person achieves, or how deep an attachment to G-dliness, since each soul exists within a body, there is no way that a mortal can attain the kind of connection to G-d that the soul enjoyed in its incorporeal state. The human body simply cannot bear that degree of connection.

When a person sleeps, the soul disengages itself from the body to a certain degree and “ascends” to the spiritual realms,<sup>8</sup> leaving only a trace of vitality in the body.<sup>9</sup> Therefore the sleeper's soul can grasp a higher level of G-dliness than it can while it is awake and functioning within the body.

For this reason, those people who devote themselves arduously to the study of Torah during the day receive revelations regarding their study at night.<sup>10</sup> At times, matters

7. *Tanya*, ch. 37.

8. *Bereishis Rabbah* 14:9.

9. *Zohar*, Vol. I, p. 83a.

10. See the *maamar* entitled *BaLailah HaHu*, 5700, sec. 1; *HaYom Yom*, p. 8; *Sichas Simchas Beis HaShoevah*, 5721.

The *Radbaz* relates (*Migdal David*, the commentary to *Shir HaShirim*, commenting on (7:10): “the sleepers' lips murmur”) that he would speak of *halachic* matters while asleep.

### WHERE NO DOUBT EXISTS

As is true with regard to all concepts explained in *P'nimiyus HaTorah*, the relationship between the observance of the second day of the festivals and the seventh of Sivan is also reflected in *Nigleh*, the revealed dimension of Torah law.

There is a more severe aspect to the observance of the second day of Shavuos than there is to the observance of the second day of other festivals. The observance of the second day of other festivals was instituted because of a doubt. In places distant from Jerusalem, the day sanctified as *Rosh Chodesh* (on which depends the timing of the festivals) was not known with certainty, and therefore Jews observed every festival for two days.

This does not apply with regard to Shavuos, for the observance of Shavuos is not dependent on a particular day of the month, but rather on the conclusion of the counting of the *omer*.<sup>33</sup> This in turn depends on the declaration of Rosh Chodesh Nissan. By Shavuos, the day consecrated as Rosh Chodesh Nissan was known throughout the world. Thus the second day of Shavuos was not observed because of doubt, but “so as not to differentiate between one festival and another.”<sup>34</sup> For this reason, our Sages ordained that the second day of Shavuos be observed as a festival, despite the fact that there was never a doubt as to the day the holiday was to be celebrated.<sup>35</sup>

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second day of the holiday is made in connection with this festival because both the seventh of Sivan and the second day of a festival reflect the elevation of the worldly plane.

33. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Emor* in this series.

34. *Rambam*, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Kiddush HaChodesh* 3:12.

35. See the *Chasam Sofer*, *loc. cit.*

On this basis, we can explain why it is prohibited — not only as a matter of custom, but as a point of law — to fast on the day after Shavuos, even in the Diaspora (i.e., the eighth of Sivan).

We are forbidden to fast because it is the day on which the sacrifices for the pilgrimage festival were offered, as stated in note 21. Seemingly, in the Dias-

vuos, the seventh of Sivan. It reflects an elevation of the worldly plane.<sup>32</sup>

32. Based on the above, we can resolve a halachic difficulty. The *Magen Avraham* (494:1) writes that the Torah was given on the fifty-first day of the *omer* to allude to the observance of the second day of the festivals in the Diaspora.

The *Chok Yaakov* objects, stating that if so, the second day of the festival should be of primary importance, because it is the fifty-first day after the beginning of the counting of the *omer*.

This objection can be resolved as follows: With regard to the Divine revelation, it was appropriate for the Torah to be given on the fiftieth day of the *omer*, for it is on this day that the fiftieth Gate of Understanding was drawn down.

Even Rabbi Yossi would agree to this, for the sixth of Sivan was intended to be the day of the giving of the Torah (see *Tosafos, Avodah Zarah* 3a). The reason the Torah was given on the fifty-first day of the *omer* was because Moshe added one day on his own initiative, emphasizing the importance of man's efforts.

Thus the first day of the festival — a day when holiness is drawn down on its own accord — is celebrated on the fiftieth day of the *omer*. The second day of the festival — which emphasizes ascent — is the fifty-first day after the counting of the *omer* begins, for it shares such a motif.

[According to the Sages, the revelation from above, the giving of the Torah, took place on the fifty-first day after the counting of the *omer* began, (and not on the fiftieth day, on which we celebrate the first day of Shavuos). [At that time, the length of the months were determined according to the testimony of witnesses who sighted the moon, and in that year both Nissan and Iyar were months of 30 days.] Hence, the fifty-first day after the beginning of the counting of the *omer* fell on the sixth of Sivan. And on this day the Torah was given. [According to the fixed calendar we follow, this is impossible, and the sixth of Sivan is always the fiftieth day after the beginning of the counting of the *omer*.]]

In essence, the observance of the holiday is associated with the revelation of the fiftieth Gate of Understanding, which was on the sixth of Sivan (see the *Sichah to Parshas Emor* in this series). Thus the *Magen Avraham's* concept revolves around Rabbi Yossi's opinion (although he also asks questions with regard to the opinion of the Sages, as underscored by the *Machtzis HaShekel*), and in this context he explains that the fifty-first day is an allusion to the second day of the festival.

Based on the above, we can appreciate why the allusion to the second day of the festivals was stated with regard to the holiday of Shavuos, and not with regard to other holidays. As will be explained, the second day of Shavuos was instituted only "so as not to differentiate between one festival and another." Thus it is secondary to the other festivals in this regard [see the *Chasam Sofer (Orach Chayim, Responsum 145)* which states that in this context it requires greater reinforcement]. Nevertheless, the allusion to the observance of the

left unresolved during the previous day become clear by morning, based on the revelation experienced by the soul while the body was asleep.

This is why the Jews went to sleep before the giving of the Torah. They wanted their souls to become disengaged from the realm of corporeal experience and thus be able to grasp even higher spiritual levels. This, they thought, would better prepare them for the revelations to be experienced at the giving of the Torah.

This is implied by the *Midrash's* words: "Sleep on Shavuos is pleasant and the night is short." The more a person labors to refine himself while awake, when the soul is fully enclothed in a body, the higher the level of revelation experienced during sleep. After the counting of the 49 days, the "night" grew "short"; only a little of the world's darkness remained. For all the preparatory work had been completed, and the great revelation was imminent. At such a time, "sleep is pleasant," for very high levels can be reached.

Moreover, the spiritual peaks which the Jews reached by sleeping that night affected their environment to the extent that no other living beings disturbed their slumber.<sup>11</sup>

### THE PURPOSE OF THE GIVING OF THE TORAH

But G-d was not pleased with the sleep of the Jewish people before their receipt of the Torah, for this was not the proper manner in which to approach the event.

As mentioned on many occasions,<sup>12</sup> the giving of the Torah was a new development in comparison to the observance of the *mitzvos* by the Patriarchs. After the giving

11. This applied also before the giving of the Torah, reflecting the blessing (*Bereishis* 9:2): "And the fear and the dread of you will be upon all forms of life on the earth." See *Tanya*, ch. 24.

12. See the *sichos* from *Parshas Lech Lecha* and *Parshas Mishpatim* in this series, and the reference to *Shmos Rabbah* 12:3 cited there.

of the Torah, the *mitzvos* would have a permanent effect on the physical substances with which they were performed, imbuing them with holiness.

The peak of our Divine service is achieved, not by abandoning the body, but by *involving* it.<sup>13</sup> It is through such efforts that a connection is established with G-d's essence; this cannot be achieved by a non-corporeal soul. Indeed, the advantage of Divine service carried out within the body is so great that G-d and the Heavenly Court make themselves dependent on the rulings of a mortal court. G-d tells us: "You have triumphed over Me, My children,"<sup>14</sup> for "the Torah is not in the heavens."<sup>15</sup>

Since the purpose of the giving of the Torah was to accentuate the advantage of the Divine service performed while the soul is encloded within the body, the preparatory service must parallel that objective; not to sleep and rise above the body, but to work with it. (This applies even though, at that time, before the giving of the Torah, there was still a decree separating the material from the spiritual.<sup>16</sup>)

### NO MAN CAN REMAIN AN ISLAND

There are those who ask: "Why must I have anything to do with the darkness of the world? Why must I become involved with material things? I would rather cut myself off from all that and devote myself to studying Torah and perfecting my Divine service undisturbed by others."

Such people are saying that they have approached the level of Shavuos, when the "night" — the darkness of our

13. See *Tanya*, ch. 35ff.

14. *Bava Metzia* 59b.

15. *Devarim* 30:12.

16. A similar concept applies with regard to the Jews' statement of *Naaseh Vi-Nishma*, in which the promise "We will do" which refers to the observance of *mitzvos*, was given precedence over "We will listen" which refers to the study of the Torah (see *Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar*, p. 16c). This commitment was also made before the giving of the Torah.

tion). The fusion of both qualities indeed adds "a wondrous dimension."<sup>30</sup>

### A CONGRUENCE OF MOTIFS

Based on the above, we can appreciate the precision of the wording used by my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, that the Baal Shem Tov would cherish the second day of Shavuos. On the surface, the reason he cherished the day was not because it is the second day of Shavuos, but because it is the seventh of Sivan, which according to our Sages is the first day after the giving of the Torah, and according to Rabbi Yossi, the day of the giving.

The explanation is as follows: the second day of Shavuos possesses an advantage with regard to the first. The observance of the first day is mandated by Scriptural Law; as such, the day possesses an inherent sanctity. The observance of the second day, however, is mandated by Rabbinic law, i.e., the day in its own right is an ordinary weekday, but the Jewish people caused it to be endowed with holiness.<sup>31</sup> Thus the *second* day of a festival possesses a dimension of holiness similar to that described above with regard to the second day of Sha-

30. See *Likkutei Torah, Parshas Re'eh*, the *ma'amar* entitled *ViSamti Kodkeid* which focuses on the synthesis of these trusts.

31. In general, this dimension — that the day is endowed with holiness through the Divine service of the Jewish people — reflects the difference between *Shabbos* (in which the holiness is indigenous) and festivals, which are described as *mikroei kodesh*, literally a "calling forth of holiness." For the day in itself is not holy, but is rather sanctified by the Divine service of the Jewish people.

[This is implied by the wording of the blessing (*Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 250): "who sanctifies Israel and the festivals," interpreted by our Sages (*Beitzah* 16b) to mean "who sanctifies Israel, who sanctify the festivals," i.e., the Jews endow an ordinary day with holiness.]

In a more particular sense, however, since the observance of the first day of a festival is mandated by Scriptural law, the commandment endows us with the power to fulfill it. With regard to the second day, by contrast, since its observance is mandated merely by Rabbinic law, this concept does not apply.

To explain: Our Sages<sup>26</sup> state that Rabbi Yossi maintains that Moshe “added another day (of preparation for the giving of the Torah) on his own initiative, and the Holy One, blessed be He, consented.”

G-d told the Jews to refrain from marital relations for two days, the fourth and fifth of Sivan,<sup>27</sup> and so the giving of the Torah could have taken place on the sixth. Moshe, however, added another day on his own initiative, telling the Jews to separate for *three* days.<sup>28</sup> G-d accepted this, and thus it was not until the seventh of Sivan that the Torah was given.

Thus, according to Rabbi Yossi, the designation of the seventh of Sivan as the day of the giving of the Torah depended on the willingness of the Jewish people to add another day of preparation. Thus it reflects mortal efforts toward ascent.

For this reason, according to Rabbi Yossi, the day of the giving of the Torah itself is cherished, while according to the Sages it is the day *after* the giving which is cherished. And thus Rabbi Yossi considers the seventh day of Sivan — the second day of the holiday of Shavuos — a cherished day.<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, according to Rabbi Yossi, the dearness of the seventh of Sivan is even greater than it is according to the Sages. To refer to the Maggid’s statement, it possesses “a wondrous dimension.” According to the Sages, the uniqueness of the seventh of Sivan is characterized by a single positive thrust, ascent. According to Rabbi Yossi, by contrast, the second day of Shavuos possesses two positive qualities: revelation from above (for it is the day of the giving of the Torah), and ascent, (as reflected in the Jews’ initiative in adding a day of prepara-

world — is “short.” They want to reach the highest peaks (for “the sleep of Shavuos is sweet”) and not be disturbed by the “fleas” in their environment.

They must know that even before the Torah was given — indeed, on the very day it was given — such an approach was contrary to G-d’s intent. And indeed, we are still compensating for this error today, as we strive to make a dwelling for G-d in this lower world. Surely, this applies after the giving of the Torah, when our efforts must involve setting aside time to share with other Jews, even if they are on a lower level. And we must realize that we ourselves will also benefit from this sharing, as we are taught: “From my students, [I received] more than from all others.”<sup>17</sup>

This is the reason we do not sleep on Shavuos, the night before we receive the Torah. It is not merely to compensate for the shortcoming of our ancestors. It is because staying awake is part of the preparation for receiving the Torah.

The proper approach is to involve ourselves with the body, the animal soul, and one’s portion in the world. In this manner, one prepares oneself to receive the Torah with a joy that continues throughout the year.

(Adapted from *Sichos Chag HaShavuos*, 5722)

### A CHERISHED DAY

My revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, relates<sup>18</sup> that the Baal Shem Tov cherished the second day of Shavuos. Every year on the second day he would hold a special feast and linger with his chassidim.<sup>19</sup>

The Maggid of Mezeritch, the Baal Shem Tov’s successor, explained the reason for the Baal Shem Tov’s behavior. The

26. *Shabbos* 87a.

27. *Shmos* 19:10.

28. *Ibid.*:15.

29. Moreover, even according to Rabbi Yossi, Moshe ascended Mount Sinai on the seventh of Sivan (*Yoma*, *loc. cit.*).

17. *Taanis* 7a. See also *Temurah* 16a and the preface to *Tanya*.

18. *Sichos* of the Second day of Shavuos, 5704 [*Sefer HaSichos* 5704, p. 135].

19. Perhaps this is why my revered father-in-law, the Rebbe, designated that the portion of *Tanya* associated with that day should contain the words “And the Baal Shem Tov explains...”

second day of Shavuos was the first complete 24-hour day after the Jews received the Torah. The Maggid would add: “In particular, this is true according to the opinion of Rabbi Yossi,<sup>20</sup> who maintains that the Torah was given on the seventh of Sivan. This is a wondrous dimension.”<sup>21</sup>

On the surface, the two rationales given by the Maggid are contradictory. If the day is so dear because it was the first day after the giving of the Torah, then according to Rabbi Yossi, this dearness should characterize the *eighth* of Sivan? But if the dearness results from the fact that the Torah was given on that day (according to the Sages who maintain — as the Alter Rebbe rules in his *Shulchan Aruch*<sup>22</sup> — that the Torah was given on the sixth day), it is the *first* day of Shavuos which should be cherished?

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20. *Shabbos* 86a.

21. As are all matters of *P'nimiyus HaTorah*, the unique dearness of the second day of Shavuos is alluded to in *Nigleh*, the revealed dimension of Torah law.

To explain: There is a difference of opinion between the School of Hillel and the School of Shammai regarding whether it was permitted to offer the burnt offering brought for a pilgrimage festival on the day of the festival itself. Nevertheless, even the School of Hillel (who maintain that one may offer these sacrifices on the festival itself) would in practice follow the ruling of the School of Shammai, who forbade such offerings. Many others followed their practice. (See *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* 494:19. The sources for these statements were explained in *Sichos Chag HaShavuos*, 5723 [*Likkutei Sichos*, Vol. XXVIII, p. 24ff.]). Thus the day after Shavuos, (which is the second day of Shavuos in the Diaspora) was a day of slaughter, when the majority of the Jewish people brought their festive offerings.

This practice raises certain questions. Generally, the School of Hillel would not follow the rulings of the School of Shammai, even if the latter's view was the more lenient. (Indeed, regarding a like situation, it was said (*Berachos* 1:7): “You were worthy [of death] for violating the statement of the School of Hillel.”)

This would appear to apply with regard to the matter at hand, for postponing sacrifices involved a leniency, since the fundamental *mitzvah* of bringing burnt offerings for the pilgrimage festivals involves the first day of the festival (*Rashi*, *Chagigah* 7b. See also, *Rambam*, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos Chagigah* 1:1.)

Nevertheless, the School of Hillel offered these sacrifices (a thrust toward spiritual ascent) on the day after Shavuos and caused *that* day to be considered a festival, because of its unique dearness.

22. *Shulchan Aruch HaRav* 494:1.

## PHASE TWO

The cherished nature of the first 24 hours after the holiday of Shavuos can be explained as follows: As mentioned above, the giving of the Torah empowered every Jew to refine and elevate the world.<sup>23</sup>

In actuality, however, these efforts began *after* the giving of the Torah. The giving itself was a revelation from above — “And G-d descended on Mount Sinai,”<sup>24</sup> independent of man's efforts.

Man's labor of refinement, which was the fundamental *purpose* of the giving of the Torah, began after that event. This explains the dearness of the second day of Shavuos. On this day began man's endeavors to elevate the material.

This is reflected in the fact that the second phase of the dynamic — Moshe's ascent of Mount Sinai to receive the physical tablets of the Law (symbolic of the elevation of the material realm) — began on the seventh of Sivan.<sup>25</sup>

## MOSHE'S INITIATIVE

Based on the above, we can also appreciate why according to Rabbi Yossi, who maintains that the giving of the Torah took place on the seventh of Sivan, the seventh is a cherished day. Even according to his approach, the phase of ascent began on the seventh of Sivan.

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23. Here the emphasis is not on the elevation of the worldly realm in contrast to efforts to draw down G-dliness. Instead, the emphasis is on the transformation of the worldly realm to holiness. It is not significant whether this transformation comes through drawing holiness into the world (i.e., by means of deeds of kindness and the like) or by elevating the material (i.e., through sacrifices or the like).

24. *Shmos* 19:20. See *Shmos Rabbah* 12:3, which cites this verse as reflecting revelation from above.

25. *Yoma* 4b.