

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR FATHER
Reb **Avraham Leib** ben Reb **Yaakov** עי"ה **Gralnik**
On the occasion of his second yahrtzeit,
5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5777

IN LOVING MEMORY OF OUR DEAR GRANDFATHER
Reb **Efraim Fishel** ben Reb **Zev Wolf** עי"ה **Kissin**
Passed away on 5 Sivan - Erev Shavuot, 5750
ת. נ. צ. ב. ה.

*

AND IN HONOR OF OUR DEAR MOTHER
Mrs. **Yehudis** bas **Helen** שתח"ל **Gralnik**
May she be blessed with a *refuah shlaimah*
and go from strength to strength
in health, happiness, Torah and *mitzvot*.

*

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LIKKUTEI SICHOS

AN ANTHOLOGY OF TALKS

by the
Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson

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DEDICATED BY
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Shagalov

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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*

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In English rendition
by
Rabbi Eliyahu Touger

BAMIDBAR

THE COUNTDOWN

Every year, we read the portion of *Bamidbar* before the holiday of Shavuos.¹ The reason given is to interpose a *Shabbos* between the rebuke of *Parshas Bechukosai* and the commemoration of the giving of the Torah. Nevertheless, since all Torah matters are characterized by precise detail, it follows that there must be an intrinsic connection between *Bamidbar* and the coming holiday,² and that this reading contains a lesson that prepares us to receive the Torah.³

Parshas Bamidbar speaks primarily of a census of the Jewish people. Indeed, because of this reckoning, and the census described in *Parshas Pinchas*,⁴ the entire book is referred to as *Numbers*.⁵ Herein lies the connection to Shavuos. For as reflected in the *mitzvah* of counting the *omer*

1. *Tosafos*, entry *Kilallos ShebeToras Kohanim*, *Megillah* 31b.

2. For example, *Parshas Nitzavim* is always read before Rosh HaShanah to interpose between the rebuke of *Parshas Ki Savo* and the celebration of Rosh HaShanah (*Tosafos*, *op. cit.*). There is, nevertheless, an intrinsic connection to the two, as reflected in the interpretation (*Likkutei Torah*, the beginning of *Parshas Nitzavim*) that the opening verse of that Torah reading, "You are standing today," refers to Rosh HaShanah.

3. The fact that, at times, *Parshas Naso* is also read before Shavuos (and *Parshas Vayeilech* is at times read before Rosh HaShanah) does not present a difficulty. For there are times when additional preparation is necessary before Shavuos (and Rosh HaShanah). *Bamidbar* and *Nitzavim*, by contrast, contain preparatory lessons which are absolutely necessary for the commemoration of the holiday.

4. See *Rashi's* commentary, *Yoma* 68b.

5. *Yoma*, *loc. cit.*

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REDEMPTION

kings? the rabbis,"³³ and specifically the leader (king) of the generation). [The increase] has made it necessary to enlarge and expand "Beis Rabbeinu" further. The enlargement and expansion must be in a way that breaks through barriers, "Paratzta" (770 in Gematria), as if constructing a **new building**.³⁴

According to what was said previously concerning the pre-eminence of "Beis Rabbeinu Sh'b'Bavel" - that "the Temple traveled and settled there," and "this is the place of the actual Temple in the future," so that there the future Temple will be revealed and from there return to Yerushalayim - the great merit each and every Jew has in becoming a partner, physically and monetarily³⁵ (and all who increase are praiseworthy) in building "Beis Rabbeinu Sh'b'Bavel" is obvious. And this is like a preparation for the actual descent and revelation of the future Temple, imminently and immediately.

(Pamphlet concerning "Mikdash M'at Zeh Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel" - *Sefer HaSichos* 5752, p. 465)

33. See *Gittin* 62, end of first side. *Zohar*, vol. 3, 253b in *Raya Mehemna*.

34. Including the laying of the corner stone. [*On the eve of 18 Elul 5748 was arranged the laying of the cornerstone for (increasing and expanding) the synagogue and study hall of Lubavitch in Lubavitch. The Rebbe placed the cornerstone with his holy hands. Publisher's note.*]

35. Following the example of the Beis HaMikdash, that "everyone is obligated to build and support it themselves and with their money, etc." (*Rambam*, *Hilchos Beis HaBechirah*, chapter 1, halacha 12).

"all sevenths are beloved."²⁷ Through this [extension] is accomplished the completion of our actions and Divine service during the time of exile in all seven continents of the world. Immediately and imminently "the L-rd shall **continue to apply [yoseef]** His hand a second time, etc., and He shall **gather [Asaf]** the lost of Israel, etc." In this way, "**You have broken** (in Gematria, seven hundred and seventy²⁸) barriers for yourself," "The breaker is come up before them."

All this receives added emphasis in this last period:

The Divine service of spreading Torah and Judaism and the wellsprings outward from "Beis Rabbeinu" ("770") has continued and expanded with greater vigor and greater strength, even after (the last ten years of) his life in this world, for more than forty years (5710-5750). It has done so in a way that "G-d has given you a heart to know and eyes to see and ears to hear."²⁹ Thus we find that "Beis Rabbeinu" ("770") is a "fortress," "the mount that all mouths turn to,"³⁰ for more than a Yovel of years (5700-5750) - "Forever."³¹

[That Beis Rabbeinu is a "fortress"] receives further emphasis when we see with our own eyes the many Jewish people, and the increasing numbers of them, that come to "Beis Rabbeinu," with greater vigor and greater strength, - "in the multitude of people is the splendor of the king"³² (which includes also "Who are the

27. *Vayikra Rabba*, ch. 29:11. See the discourse *Basi L'Gani* of the year 5750 at the beginning. Also at length, the same-named discourse of 5751.

28. [The letters of the word "Paratzta" have the numerical value of 770: Peh=80; Reish=200; Tzadik=90; Tuv=400. Translator's note.]

29. *Tavo* 29:3.

30. *Brochos* 30a.

31. *Shmuel I* 1:22 and Rashi's commentary. *Yerushalmi Brochos*, chapter 4, halacha 1. See *Kiddushin* 15a. *Mechilta* and Rashi's commentary on *Mishpatim* 21:6.

32. *Mishlei* 14:28.

before that holiday,⁶ counting serves as a preparation for this holiday.

What is unique about counting? How does counting prepare us for the giving of the Torah?

NEVER TO BE NULLIFIED

The *Midrash*⁷ explains that G-d desired a census of the Jewish people because He treasures them. It continues with an analogy: "The Jews can be compared to a grainheap. Just as grain is counted when it is brought into the silo, so too the Holy One, blessed be He, wished that the Jews be counted at all times."

The wording of the *Midrash* is somewhat problematic. Grain is dear to a mortal; he counts his harvest so that he will know how much grain he has. This does not apply with regard to G-d; He always knows how many Jews there are. Why then does He require that they be counted?

The *Sheloh*⁸ as quoted in *Chassidus*⁹ states that the Jews are counted to endow them with the status of a *davar she-biminyan*, an entity which is counted.¹⁰ For our Sages comment:¹¹ "An entity which is counted can never be nullified."

To illustrate the concept with a *halachic* analogy: When one part of a forbidden substance is mixed with more than 60 parts of *kosher* food, the forbidden entity is considered *batul*,

6. See the *sichos* to *Parshas Shemini* and *Parshas Emor* in this series, where these concepts are explained.

7. *Bamidbar Rabbah* 1:4; see Rashi's commentary at the beginning of this Torah reading.

8. *Cheilek Torah Shebichsav*, p. 347a.

9. See the *maamar* entitled *Tzohar Taaseh LaTeivah*, 5673. See also the *sichah* to *Parshas Shmos* in this series where the concept is explained.

10. I.e., items which are sold in units, and not by weight or volume.

11. *Beitzah* 3b; *Shulchan Aruch*, *Yoreh De'ah* 110:1. If such items become mixed with other foods, they do not become *batul*, even though they are mixed with more than 60 times their volume.

nullified. Similarly, one could think that the Jewish people, “one lamb among 70 wolves,”¹² might become nullified. Nevertheless, by commanding that the Jewish people be counted, G-d endowed them with the importance inherent to “an entity that is counted,” and this prevents their existence from being nullified.

This rationale, however, is also insufficient. The reason “an entity which is counted can never be nullified” is because it possesses inherent significance. The fact that it is counted merely *reflects* the importance which exists; it does not *produce* it.

To refer to the analogue: The Jewish people are *in essence* important and worthy of being counted. Even if they were not counted, they would remain important. So why was it necessary for them to be actually numbered?

FUSING THE MATERIAL AND THE SPIRITUAL

Since *Parshas Bamidbar* serves as a preparation for the giving of the Torah, the above questions can be answered by considering the change brought about by the event at Mount Sinai.

The giving of the Torah created a connection between the material and the spiritual.¹³ Before Sinai, *mitzvos* did not affect the objects with which they were performed; they did not endow them with lasting holiness. The giving of the Torah effected a change, empowering the Jewish people to sanctify the material aspects of existence through the observance of *mitzvos*.

"770."²¹ This number in Gematria is "**Paratzta**," derived from "You shall spread out [U'Faratzta] west and east and north and south."²² This indicates that from this house light will go forth to all four corners of the world, in a manner of **breaking through barriers**, so that all four corners of the world will be elevated to the status of the land of Israel. (In the future the land of Israel will extend to all the lands.) This means in particular that all the synagogues and study halls throughout the world will be established in the land of Israel and connected to the Beis HaMikdash in the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach. For about him it says,²³ "**You have broken barriers for yourself**," which our Sages of blessed memory explain²⁴ as follows: "This is Moshiach, about whom it is said,²⁵ "**The breaker** is come up before them."²⁶

...In the completeness of the number seven (seven hundred and seventy) can also be found an allusion to the completeness of the Divine service of our Rebbe during his complete lifetime of **seven** decades, **seventy** years (5640-5710). His Divine service was concluded and completed in the lower hemisphere in the **seventh** decade (from the house whose number is seven hundred seventy). [This completeness] includes as well the extension of his Divine service in the years afterwards, through the **seventh** generation -

so in regard to an established dwelling). This is particularly true in our case, when the number becomes **the name of** the house, as discussed below.

21. Whether in Hebrew, Yiddish or English - "Seven Seventy."

22. *VaYeitze* 28:14.

23. *VaYeshev* 38:29.

24. *Aggados Bereishis*, end of chapter 63. See *Bereishis Rabba*, end of chapter 85 and Rashi's commentary on it.

25. *Micha* 2:13.

26. One should note that "Beis Moshiach" in gematria is "Paratzta" (770). Consider this carefully. [*Gematria is the numerical analysis of words. Translator's note.*]

12. *Esther Rabbah* 10:11; *Midrash Tanchuma, Parshas Toldos*, sec. 5. See also *Yoma* 69b.

13. See the exegesis of the verse (*Shir HaShirim* 1:3): "Your oils are fragrant," in *Shir HaShirim Rabba*. Note also the *sichah* to *Parshas Lech Lecha* in this series, where this concept is explained.

mentioned above).

It may be added, that this concept is also alluded to in the name¹⁵ of "Beis Rabbeinu" in our generation:

"Rabbeinu" [our Rebbe] - His two names alluded to the Redemption: His first name - Yosef - "And it shall come to pass that on that day, the L-rd shall **continue to apply [yoseef]** His hand a second time to acquire the rest of His people that will remain from Assyria and Egypt, etc. and from the islands of the sea, etc, and He shall **gather [Asaf]** the lost of Israel and the scattered ones of Judah He shall gather from the four corners of the earth."¹⁶ His second name - Yitzchak - refers to the laughter and rejoicing that will be complete in the future Redemption, and which will be completed through our righteous Moshiach. Thus it is written,¹⁷ "Then our mouths will be filled with laughter **[S'chok]**. It specifies "then," in the future,¹⁸ when they will say to Yitzchak (specifically), "Because you are our father."¹⁹

And **Beis** (Rabbeinu) [**The House** of our Rebbe] - its number is seven hundred seventy.²⁰ The name by which "Beis Rabbeinu" is called by all Jews has been universally accepted to be this number,

15. As is well-known, the name indicates the content and nature of the thing called with that name (*Tanya*, "*Shaar HaYichud v'HaEmunah*," end of chapter 1. See at length *Teshuvos u'Be'urim* (Kehos, 5734), section 1 and the cross references there).

16. *Yeshayahu* 11:11-12.

17. *Tehillim* 126:2.

18. Which is not the case during the time of exile, when "it is forbidden for an individual to be completely joyful [literally, fill his mouth with laughter] in this world, since it is written that "Then our mouths will be filled with laughter [we will be completely joyful]" (*Brochos* 31a).

19. *Yeshayahu* 63:16. Shabbos 89b.

20. One should note the customs of the leaders of the Jewish people, who learned allusions and lessons in Divine service from secular matters as well (for example, the number of wagons in the train, which is incidental, and all the more

The object of the Jews' Divine service after the giving of the Torah is to make the world holy, to transform it into a dwelling for G-d. For this reason, the importance of the Jewish people must be expressed in a way that can be appreciated by the material world. Even were the virtue of the Jewish people to be solely spiritual, this virtue could never be nullified within the worldly environment, for there is no way that any worldly circumstance can prevent a Jew from carrying out his Divine service. But in such an instance, the Jews' virtue would not influence their environment.

When the Jews were actually counted, their inherent virtue was expressed by an activity that could be appreciated within the material world. This enabled that virtue to have an effect within the world.

On this basis, we can understand the connection between *Parshas Bamidbar* and the giving of the Torah. Taking a census of the Jews expressed their importance in a material way. This empowered the people to continue in their Divine service within the material plane, and make this world a dwelling for G-d.

CONQUERING THE WORLD

The above explanation also helps us understand why the census involved only those above the age of 20.¹⁴ On the surface, every Jew should have been counted, for the act endowed each with the power of "an entity that is counted," preventing nullification among the gentiles. Why then was the census limited to those above 20?

This question can be resolved by focusing on the difference between the Divine service performed by a Jew before he reaches the age of 20 and that performed afterwards. Before 20, a Jew's primary efforts are centered on Torah study. Starting at age five, he must spend five years studying the

14. See *Bamidbar* 1:3.

Written Law, and then five years studying the *Mishnah*, and then five years studying the *Talmud*.¹⁵

Torah study is directed primarily inward; the intent is not to change the world, but to change oneself.¹⁶ Indeed, with regard to intellectual understanding in general, there is an advantage in solitude.

At the age of 20, by contrast, a person becomes outwardly oriented, his efforts center on “pursuit.”¹⁴ And at this age, a person becomes obligated for military service, i.e., he must go out to war to conquer the world. This is the spiritual parallel of the command:¹⁷ “Be fruitful and multiply; fill up the world and conquer it.” In this way, one makes the world a dwelling for G-d through the observance of *mitzvos*.¹⁸

For this reason, the census did not include those below 20 years of age, for their fundamental concern is personal spiritual development, not the changing of the world. The essential virtue which every Jew possesses is sufficient to carry out that objective. When, however, a Jew attains the age of 20 and is charged with conquering the world at large, this intrinsic virtue must be expressed in a manner that will be noticed by the world at large.

APPRECIATING THE ESSENTIAL ONENESS

As mentioned above, the Book of *Bamidbar* is also called *Numbers*. A name, particularly, a name in *Lashon HaKodesh*,

15. *Avos* 5:22; *Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Hilchos Talmud Torah* 3:1.

16. See *Eruvin* 54a, 55a. See also the *sichah* to *Parshas Chayei Sarah* in this series, which contrasts the attainments of a *zakein* (an individual who centers on Torah study) to a *bo bayomim* (one whose Divine service centers on *mitzvos*).

17. *Bereishis* 1:28. See *Shulchan Aruch HaRav, Hilchos Talmud Torah* 3:1, from which one can infer that from 20 on, one should father children.

18. In this context, it is important to note that the giving of the Torah — and thus the recollection of the census which prepares us for it — comes about through prefacing the promise “We will do” (observe the *mitzvos*) before “We will listen” (understand the Torah’s laws). See also *Likkutei Torah, Bamidbar* 16c.

and completed. Through the elevation of the lowest possible place all the other lands of the nations are also elevated.¹¹ This [objective] is achieved through "**Beis Rabbeinu**" [Our Rebbe's House] in the lower hemisphere, from which light goes out to all the world, to make the whole world (until the furthest corner of the world) into the land of Israel. This is the concept that "In the future the land of Israel will extend into all the lands,"¹² and "In the future, Yerushalayim will extend over all the land of Israel."¹² For then there will be established a connection between all the synagogues and study halls throughout the entire world and the Beis HaMikdash. [This will occur] in the true and complete Redemption through our righteous Moshiach, the leader of the generation, who is the Moshiach (the Redeemer of Israel) of the generation. Further, and this is also essential, he is the leader of the Torah of Chassidus,¹³ since through the spreading outward ("when your wellsprings spread forth," until there is nothing beyond, to all corners of the world) is achieved the coming of the king Moshiach.¹⁴

Therefore the greatness of "Beis Rabbeinu" can be understood. It is the essential "Temple in microcosm" of the final exile, "that the Temple traveled and settled there." Therefore, it is the actual place of the Temple of the future; not only that, but the future Temple will be revealed there, and from there return to Yerushalayim (as

cross-references.

11. "As in raising the walls of a house, it is necessary to raise the lower beam and then the upper beams will be raised automatically; this is not the case if one begins in the middle of the wall, one does not raise the lower beams" (*Torah Or Bereishis* 4, beginning of side a).

12. See *Sifrei Devarim* at the beginning. *Pesikta Rabbasi, Parshas Shabbos v'Rosh Chodesh. Yalkus Shimoni, Yeshayahu, remez* 503.

13. One should note that the Torah of Chassidus is the aspect of the Yechida in Torah (See the pamphlet concerning "On the essence of Chassidus), which is connected with the aspect of Yechida in Israel - the soul of our righteous Moshiach (*RaMaZ on Zohar* vol. 2, 40b and other sources).

14. *Igros Kodesh* of the *Baal Shem Tov - Kesser Shem Tov* at the beginning.

settling serves] as a preparation for the future Temple, which will be revealed there first, and from there return (with G-d and the Jewish people) to Yerushalayim.

...Perhaps it can be said that the statement in the Midrash,⁷ that "at the time when the king Moshiach comes, **he will stand on the roof of the Beis HaMikdash** [Temple] and announce to the Jewish people, saying, Humble ones, the time for your Redemption has arrived," refers to the roof of the Beis HaMikdash which is **the Temple in microcosm** outside the land,⁸ which takes the place of the Temple in Yerushalayim ("The Temple traveled and settled there"). [This may be said] because after the future Temple is revealed and descends to the earth below, there is no need to **announce** to the Jewish people that "the time for your Redemption has arrived."

...The above can be applied to "The House of our Rebbe in Bavel" **of our generation**, the house (the synagogue and study hall) of my sainted father-in-law, the leader of our generation:

...In this generation, the last generation of exile and the first generation of Redemption, "our actions and Divine service during the time of exile"⁹ to make the lands of the nations into the land of Israel even in **the lowest possible place**, that is, **the lower hemisphere** (where the Torah was not given¹⁰) has been concluded

settled in Bavel. Translator's note.]

7. *Yalkut Shimoni, Yeshayahu, remez 499.*

8. Accordingly, the expression "He stands on the roof of the Beis HaMikdash" becomes clarified; that "roofs... do not become sanctified" (Rambam, Hilchos Beis HaBechirah, chapter 6, halacha 7). Hence this alludes to the lands outside of Israel in comparison to the holiness of the land of Israel.

9. *Tanya*, beginning of chapter 37.

10. See *Igros Kodesh of the Rebbe RaYaTZ*, vol. 2, p. 492 ff. See there for

expresses the essence of the object named.¹⁹ Since the entire book is called *Numbers* because of the census described in the first reading, it follows that this census contains the fundamental element of the book.

Counting does more than communicate inherent importance; it generates a positive quality in and of itself. And because of this positive quality, *Parshas Bamidbar* prepares us for the holiday of Shavuot just as the counting of the *omer* prepares us for Shavuot. For with regard to the counting of the *omer*, the concept of revealing inherent virtue does not apply.

The positive aspect of counting is that all are equal; the great are not counted as more, nor are the small counted as less. Although there are various different levels among the Jewish people, in the census, each one is counted the same.

In this, there is a parallel to the counting of the *omer*. For although there are differences between the days — there are *Shabbasos*, festivals, days of *Chol HaMoed*, and *Rashei Chodashim*, when counting the *omer*, all days are counted the same.

Counting all Jews as one reflects the essence of the soul, a quality possessed by all Jews equally. With regard to our revealed, conscious powers, intellect and emotion, however, there are differences between one Jew and another. With regard to the essence of the soul, by contrast, all are the same.

There is a fundamental difference between the Divine service associated with the revealed powers and the Divine service associated with the essence of the soul. With regard to the revealed powers of intellect and emotion, each person's individual identity causes him to see himself as distinct from G-dliness. The person thus observes the Torah and its *mitzvos* because his understanding and feelings compel him to do so.

19. See *Bereishis Rabbah* 17:4; *Sheloh, Hakdamas Beis HaMikdash*; *Tanya, Shaar HaYichud VehaEmunah*, ch. 1.

But when he “awakens” and reveals the essence of his soul (“the one which affirms Your Oneness”²⁰), he realizes that the very core of his being is one with G-dliness, as it says:²¹ “Israel, the Torah, and the Holy One, blessed be He, are all one.”

The essence of the soul, common to all Jews, is expressed in the counting of the *omer*, in which all the days are considered equal. From the standpoint of intellect and emotion, there are differences between one day and another. The ordinary weekdays are not the same as *Rosh Chodesh*, *Shabbos*, or the festivals. On these special days, a person’s Divine service is charged with vitality. But when it comes to an ordinary weekday, when one must fulfill the charge²² “Know Him in all your ways,” a person may not feel any special vitality.

When, by contrast, a person awakens the essence of his soul, and the entire substance of his being becomes one with G-dliness, this affects his intellect and emotion as well, causing them to approach the weekdays with the same energy as *Shabbos* or the festivals. Regardless of what the person is doing, his efforts will be permeated by G-dliness.

On this basis, we can appreciate how the census of the Jewish people and the counting of the *omer* both serve as a preparation for the commemoration of the giving of the Torah. The Ten Commandments begin “I am G-d, your L-rd,”²³ i.e., G-dliness is not an incremental element of one’s existence, but is *E-lohecho*, which can be interpreted²⁴ as meaning “your strength,²⁵ and your vitality.” When a person comes to this awareness, he serves G-d, not only through the

20. Cf. *Siddur Tehillat HaShem*, p. 327; *Yechidah l’yachdecha* in the Hebrew original, referring to the soul as *yechidah*, which refers to the highest of its five levels.
 21. See *Zohar*, Vol. III, p. 73a.
 22. *Mishlei* 3:6; *Rambam*, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchos De’os* 3:3. See also the *sichah* to *Purim* and *Parshas Terumah* in this series, where this concept is explained.
 23. *Shmos* 20:2.
 24. See *Likkutei Torah*, *Shelach* 40c; *Balak* 73c.
 25. See *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chayim*, ch. 5.

BESURAS HAGEULO

The Announcement Of The Redemption

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It may be suggested that the Temple of the future (“it will be revealed and come from heaven already built and perfected”¹) will first be revealed in the place “That the Temple traveled and settled there”² in the time of exile (“The House of our Rebbe in Bavel”³); from there it will be transported to its place in Yerushalayim.

...Perhaps it can be said that this is alluded to in the Rambam’s choice of words (in *Hilchos Melech HaMoshiach*⁴) “And build the Temple **in its place**.” For apparently [there is a question]: what is the need to inform us here that the building of the Temple will be **in its place**? On the other hand, why isn’t the place specified: “And build the Temple in **Yerushalayim**?” [It must be] that “in its place” alludes as well to the place of the king Moshiach in the time of exile (**before** [the status of] “behold he is certainly Moshiach”). Therefore, while he is still **in exile** (for there he sits⁵ and waits and anxiously looks forward to redeeming the Jewish people, and the Divine Presence with them in exile) the king Moshiach builds a Temple (in microcosm). This is an illustration and example of the Temple in Yerushalayim (like “the synagogue of He slipped and settled,”⁶ “that the Temple traveled and settled there.”). [This

1. Rashi’s commentary and Tosfos on *Sukkah* 41, end of side a and in other sources.
 2. *Aruch*, entry *Shaf* (brought in the *Chiddushei Aggada MaHaRaSHA*, on *Megillah* 29a).
 3. *Megillah* 29a. [In Hebrew, “*Beis Rabbeinu Sh'B'Bavel*”. *Translator’s note*.]
 4. End of chapter 11.
 5. See *Sanhedrin* 98a: “*He is dwelling at the gate of Rome*.” [In the referenced passage, *Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi* asks *Eliyahu HaNavi* where *Moshiach* can be found. The quotation actually combines the end of the question (“*Where is Moshiach dwelling?*”) and the answer (“*At the gate of Rome*”). *Translator’s note*.]
 6. *Megillah* 29a. [The phrase is a reference to the Divine Presence going into exile with the Jewish people: *G-d’s Presence slipped away from Jerusalem and*

THE BAAL SHEM TOV'S MISSION

It has been explained⁴³ 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.⁴⁴ 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)



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.

study of Torah and the observance of its *mitzvos*, but in every aspect of his life.

TWO COURSES OF ACTION

The fact that the commemoration of the giving of the Torah requires both the recollection of the census and the counting of the *omer* indicates that each contributes an element which is lacking in the other; both are necessary to prepare us to receive the Torah.

The census focuses on counting the Jews, nothing else. The counting of the *omer*, as its name implies, involves counting other entities: the number of days which have passed since the *omer* offering was brought. This reflects a connection with our Divine service.

One may infer that the census of the Jewish people is associated with the essence of the soul, which is perfect at all times. With regard to this level, no Divine service is necessary. Because this potential is sometimes hidden, counting (all as equals) arouses and reveals it.

The counting of the *omer*, by contrast, refers to toil with our revealed powers (both of the G-dly soul and of the animal soul)²⁶ which we must refine and elevate. This involves a two-phase process: first comes a general influence created by bringing the *omer* offering, and then more particular efforts as reflected in the endeavor to refine a single emotional quality on each of the 49 days of the counting. (We have seven emotional qualities, each of which includes all the others, bringing us to a sum of 49. Thus each of the 49 days of the counting of the *omer* involves the refinement of a particular emotional quality.)

26. See the commentary of the *Tzemach Tzedek* to *Shir HaShirim* on the verse (1:4): "Draw me forth, we will run after You." "Draw me forth" uses a singular form, referring to the arousal of the G-dly soul on Pesach. "We will run after You," refers to the striving of both the G-dly soul and the animal soul during the counting of the *omer*.

Based on the above, we can also appreciate why the *mitzvah* of counting the *omer* is incumbent on every person as an individual, rather than on the nation as a collective.²⁷ Since the counting of the *omer* reflects an effort on the part of every person to refine his revealed powers, there are differences between the performance of one Jew and another. Thus it is possible that one Jew will have a different reckoning than another,²⁸ or will not count the *omer* at all.

With regard to the census of the Jewish people, by contrast, all Jews are counted equally, for this counting relates to the essence of the soul, which all possess equally.

REFRACTIONS OF LIGHT

The above does not contradict the statement that with regard to the counting of the *omer*, all the days — *Shabbos*, holidays, and weekdays — are the same, that because the counting is connected with the essence of the soul, one’s service on *Shabbos* and festivals is the same as one’s service during the week.

Our Divine service during the counting of the *omer* involves drawing down the soul’s essential light to our individual powers, elevating those powers to the essence. This is alluded to by the command:²⁹ “And you shall count from the day after the day of rest.” *Usefartem*, the Hebrew for “And you shall count” relates to the word *sapir*, referring to a shining sapphire,³⁰ in analogy, the light of the soul’s essence. The term “from the day after the day of rest” implies that this light should be transmitted outwards.³¹

27. *Menachos* 65b. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Emor* in this series, where this concept is explained.

28. I.e., when one crosses the International Dateline in the midst of the counting of the *omer* (*ibid.*).

29. *Vayikra* 23:16.

30. See *Likkutei Torah, Vayikra* 35b.

31. *Ibid.*:36b

Burial was also very significant for the Baal Shem. It is related⁴¹ 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:⁴² “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.

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.

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 years³⁶ 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.³⁷

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, 5520.³⁸ In such an instance, *halachah* prescribes³⁹ that the person be buried on the second day of the holiday.⁴⁰

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* (נִטְלוּ). 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 census of the Jewish people arouses the essence of the soul, and spurs it to express itself in the world. The intent of the counting of the *omer* is to refine our conscious powers and lift them to the level at which a person's conduct becomes a fitting expression of his soul's essence.

THE NEED FOR TWO PHASES OF PREPARATION

On this basis, we can appreciate why both the census and the counting of the *omer* are necessary before the commemoration of the giving of the Torah. As mentioned previously,³² the giving of the Torah brought about a fusion between the spiritual and the material. This fusion was twofold in nature: "the higher realms [the spiritual] descended to the lower realms [the material], and the lower realms [the material] ascended to the higher realms [the spiritual]."³³

A parallel exists within our souls: The essence of the soul — the higher realms — should be joined to our conscious powers — the lower realms. This enables our conscious powers to appreciate G-dliness as an integral part of their existence, just as the essence of the soul is "cleaving... to You, the one which affirms Your Oneness."²⁰

This concept is also reflected in the command: "I am G-d your L-rd." *Enochi* refers to G-d's essence, a level above our comprehension,³⁴ and which is joined to the essence of our souls. This level becomes *E-lohecha*, the power and life-energy internalized within the Jewish people.

Therefore, before the giving of the Torah, two phases are necessary:

32. See the *sichos* to *Parshas Yisro* and *Parshas Mishpatim* in this series, where this concept is discussed.

33. *Shmos Rabbah 12:3*.

34. This refers to a level of G-dliness above the name *Havayah*, one which "cannot be contained within a name, and which is not alluded to by a letter or even the point of a letter (*Likkutei Torah, Parshas Pinchas* the *maamar* entitled *Kodesh Yisrael*, ch. 3).

a) a stage of preparation that draws down and reveals the essence of the soul. This is accomplished through the census of the Jewish people.

b) a stage of preparation involving the cultivation of our conscious powers, until they can serve as receptors for that essence. This is accomplished through the counting of the *omer*.³⁵

(Adapted from *Sichos Shabbos Parshas Bamidbar*, 5722)



35. These two phases of preparation parallel the two dimensions of the holiday of Shavuos: a) that it is celebrated on the sixth of Sivan; b) that it is celebrated on the fiftieth day of the counting of the *omer*. See the *sichah* to *Parshas Emor* in this series, where this concept is discussed.

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

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.*

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*.³³ 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.”³⁴ 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.³⁵

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-

SHAVUOS

SLEEPING SOUNDLY

The *Midrash* states¹ 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:² “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.³

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.⁴ 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.

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 known⁵ 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,⁶ making themselves worthy of G-d’s priceless gift.

5. See *Shibolei HaLeKet, HaArugah HaSheminis, 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.

vuos, the seventh of Sivan. It reflects an elevation of the worldly plane.³²

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

tion). The fusion of both qualities indeed adds “a wondrous dimension.”³⁰

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.³¹ 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.

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 writes⁷ 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,⁸ leaving only a trace of vitality in the body.⁹ 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.¹⁰ 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.

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 Shavuot 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.¹¹

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,¹² 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.

To explain: Our Sages²⁶ 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,²⁷ 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.²⁸ 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 Shavuot — a cherished day.²⁹

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 Shavuot 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-

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.*).

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.²³

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,”²⁴ 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.²⁵

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.

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.

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.¹³ 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,”¹⁴ for “the Torah is not in the heavens.”¹⁵

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.¹⁶)

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.

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.”¹⁷

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, relates¹⁸ 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.¹⁹

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

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,²⁰ who maintains that the Torah was given on the seventh of Sivan. This is a wondrous dimension.”²¹

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*²² — that the Torah was given on the sixth day), it is the *first* day of Shavuos which should be cherished?

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.