

Shavuos 5783

It's a wedding! The Jewish nation is the bride, and Hashem is the groom! Incredible that we get to renew our vows every year with Hashem officially! The name of the holiday lends to the renewal of the vows. The simple translation of the holiday name is weeks, and rooted in that word is 7 (given that it is seven weeks after Pesach.) But the plural of a vow- Shavua, is Shavuos. Meaning the name itself lends to us renewing our vows with Hashem.

The renewed vows are the Torah, first given on Shavuos and the source code for all our purpose as Jews. The Rebbe in the Mamer, "Bisha'a Sheala Moshe Lemarom," analyzes the Gemara in Shabbos 88, which describes the encounter between Moshe and the Angels, who protested that the Torah is given in the physical world. The Rebbe highlights that the Torah, and our fulfillment of Mitzvos, is how we purify our "animal" soul. While this happened after the Torah was given, we also count sefira and annually prepare for renewal.

We first had to go down through Egypt to arrive on the other side with the ability to fully appreciate how to use the Torah as it is supposed to be used. From the covenant Hashem made with Avraham, we knew that Yaakov's sons would be down in Egypt and that they would leave "Br'chus Gadol" (abundant wealth). The metaphor of "going down to Egypt" remains with us as part of our service as servants of Hashem. Our Neshamos come "down into this world" and can either use Torah to purify its existence or Chas Vishalom the opposite. The Torah cannot be an unattainable purification tool; it must be practiced and harnessed through

doing Mitzvos and, as the Rebbe taught, spreading its light by making others do Mitzvos.

The Alter Rebbe in the Mamer "Usfartem Lochem" (Lekutei Torah) explains that the journey is physical to physical, that is, going from the physical place 'out of Egypt,' but it is through Torah that the Infinite light can be revealed, specifically through performing Mitzvos, (of which one of them is to learn Torah). The revelation at Har Sinai was so epic that we could see the sounds and hear the sights (that is normal; seeing something versus hearing something was wholly upturned.)

This year's dates of Shavuos are pretty interesting. Firstly, this year is Shnas Hakhel, which is the ingathering of the nation following the year of Shemitta, but allegorically represents the ingathering of the nation when Mashiach comes. Moreso, the renewal of our vows (i.e., the reading of the 10 Commandments) happens this year on Friday. On Friday, humans were created. We, humans, are the arbiters and vessels through which Mitzvos can take place. So, what is a better Kviyus than optimizing this year's holiday for our renewed vows with Hashem? Then we enter Shabbos, the day of the week when we recognize who the Master of the Universe is. We just came from counting Sheva Shabbasos Temimos (7 full weeks). To have a Shabbos Temima (complete), we needed to count and prepare. This year, once we accept the Torah on Friday, we can roll into a 'completed Shabbos' (in Chutz L'Aretz second day, but even in Israel, who have no choice but to rejoice on Shabbos), which reflects the ultimate goal of us being redeemed with Mashiach.

We are in Golus now, an external restriction on our ability to serve Hashem alternatively. The limitation can be overcome because part of the restriction is the guard we naturally put up. But we have help, the Torah, to help remove the restrictions and satiate our spiritual soul. How do we do this? It takes work, effort, and discipline to make Torah matter enough that we harness its full capabilities in our lives. Once we do so, the effect is boundless. We become a beacon of hope and shining light of authenticity which will influence others. Ultimately this spiral has a cascading effect on those around us, eventually leading to the coming of Mashiach.

I know what it feels like to have a personal redemption. I spent the past bunch of weeks away from my family as I awaited my visa to travel. It took much work and hoped to get to the finish line, but Hashem redeemed. My mother-in-law asked me at one point about my Mezuzos; it took me a moment to think about which Mezuzos would require checking. It turns out that the storage area I keep my office and a desk (part of a reshuffling of my stuff) didn't have Mezuzos and required me to install them. I prepared the double-sided tape and gathered some Mezuzos I had, but practically could only get to the office area on a Sunday.

I had spent the day out, and even though I was tired, I promised myself that I wouldn't let the weekend go without installing the Mezuzos. That Sunday evening, I went out to make the bracha, installed the Mezuzos, and I got my visa approval just over 12 hours later. I want to publicize this because it is clear to me that doing or missing doing a Mitzvah and then doing it, as in the case of the Mezuzos that needed to be installed,

has a profound and tangible effect on the person and the world around. When is Hashem most satisfied? When a person takes the time to learn (as we saw in Pirkei Avos and elsewhere in the Gemara), do Mitzvos. The Gemara in Gittin states that even a person who relies on Tzedaka for their livelihood must give Tzedaka because none of us are immune from performing Mitzvos.

What better time to reflect on the Mitzvos we need to do than when we renew our vows with Hashem on Shavuot? This renewal isn't just to eating cheesecake; it is a time to undertake what new Mitzvah we will perform with fervour and how we will renew our connection with Hashem; ultimately, because of this renewal, we will be redeemed speedily in our days.

Gut Yom Tov and Good Shabbos.