



Parshat HaShavuah

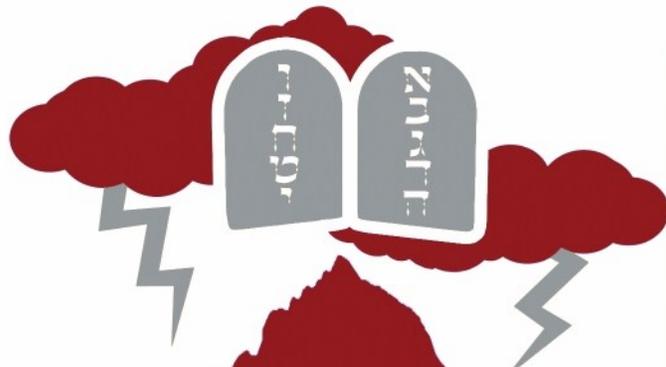
אמור

EMOR

APRIL 27, 2013

י"ז אייר תשע"ג

A PUBLICATION OF



# Ashreinu

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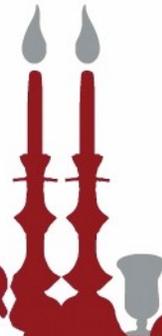
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Motzei

Shabbat

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Enriching and Enhancing Your Study of the Weekly Torah Portion

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## IN IT TO WIN IT RABBI BENJY HOROWITZ

Young men whose Bar Mitzvah parsha is Parshat Emor have an advantage over most others because the parsha contains a discussion of the holidays, which prepares the Bar Mitzvah boys to read the Torah on many occasions.

Prior to the Torah discussing each individual holiday, the parsha introduces the topic by discussing the obligation to observe Shabbat. Rashi questions how and why the laws of Shabbat are connected to the laws of the holidays. An examination of the two reveals that they are two completely different things! Shabbat arrives every seven days and Bnei Yisrael have no role in its arrival. The holidays, on the other hand, are dependent upon the Jewish people declaring Rosh Chodesh and setting up the calendar. In addition, the holidays include a requirement to travel to Jerusalem, while there is no such obligation on Shabbat.

Rashi explains that this juxtaposition of Shabbat and the holidays teaches us that one who observes the holidays is considered as if he observed Shabbat, and one who does not observe the holidays is considered as if he broke Shabbat. This begs the unanswered question: what is the connection between the two? Why should observing one have any impact on observing the other?

Rav Moshe Feinstein, in his *sefer Darash Moshe*, explains the deep idea hidden here. The observance of Shabbat shows that one recognizes that Hashem spent six "days" creating the world, and rested on the seventh. The holidays represent the fact that Hashem rules and directs the world even after the creation is finished. He frees His people on Pesach, protects them in the desert on Sukkot and shares His covenant with them on Shavuot.

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*Rabbi Horowitz continued*

To believe that G-d created the world but then left it to its own devices is a lack of complete faith. When one keeps the holidays, he is paying homage to Hashem that He not only created the world but also continues to supervise and direct it.

When we instill that meaning into our observance of the holidays, it reminds us that even until today, Hashem's involvement in our lives has not ended. The comfort we derive from these celebrations is that just like Hashem has been directly involved in the past, He continues to be involved today. One need only consider the modern holidays of Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim as proof.

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## THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

### DANIEL MIZRACHI ('14)

Vayikra 23:15 states that when counting the Omer we have to count seven complete weeks. Even without much advanced math we know that comes out to 49 days. However, the next pasuk says that we should count fifty days until the bringing of the *shte'i halechem* on Shavuot. So, is the count 49 or is it 50?

Rashi gives two interpretations: first, just separate the beginning of the verse from the end so that it reads, "until the morrow of the seventh week you shall count," and then, "on the fiftieth day you shall offer a new-meal offering."

However Rashi comments that he thinks that interpretation goes against the *pshat*, and so he offers another explanation: the words in the beginning of the verse are out of order! It should read: "until [and not including] the morrow of the seventh week which is the fiftieth day."

The HaEmek Davar answers in a different fashion, suggesting that the Torah's command of *tisparu*—count—does not mean that one should verbally count, but rather it is enough to just think the number in your head. Yet, the fact that the Torah repeats the command of counting the first 49 days/7 weeks must come to tell us to take the action of verbally counting each night. However, the fiftieth day, which is only mentioned once, is not counted verbally at all, but only in thought. This perspective allows us to view Shavuot as its own entity, that still serves as a culmination of sefirat ha'omer.

Simply, I think we shy away from counting the fiftieth day because we do not want to say that we are complete or finished. Rather, we should continue to strive to understand the Torah and internalize its profound messages.





## THE GREAT JOURNEY

### ZEVI LITWIN ('13)

In its account of the festivals of the Jewish year, this week's Torah portion contains the following statement:

You shall dwell in thatched huts for seven days. Everyone included in Israel must live in such thatched huts. This is so that future generations will know that I caused the Israelites to live in sukkot when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God (Vayikra 23:43).

What precisely this means was the subject of disagreement between two great teachers of the Mishnaic era, Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Akiva. According to the Talmud Bavli (Sukkah 11a), Rabbi Eliezer holds that the reference is to the clouds of glory that accompanied Bnei Yisrael on their journey through the desert. Rabbi Akiva maintains that the pasuk is to be understood literally (*sukkot mammash*). It means "huts" - no more, no less.

According to the view of Rabbi Akiva, that sukkot is to be understood literally, what miracle does the festival of Sukkot represent? Pesach celebrates the deliverance of Bnei Yisrael from Egypt with signs and wonders. Shavuot recalls the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, the only time in history when an entire people experienced an unmediated revelation of Hashem. On the "clouds of glory" interpretation, Sukkot fits this scheme. It recalls the miracles in the wilderness, the forty years during which they ate *mun* from heaven, drank water from a rock, and were led by a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. But on the view that the sukkah is not a symbol but a fact—a hut, a booth, nothing more—what miracle does it represent? There is nothing exceptional in living in a portable home if you are a nomadic group living in the Sinai desert. It is what Bedouin do to this day. Where then is the miracle?

A surprising and lovely answer is given by the prophet Yermiyahu:

Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: "I remember the devotion of your youth, how, as a bride, you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown (Yermiyahu 2:2).

Throughout Tanach, most of the references to the wilderness years focus on the graciousness of Hashem and the ingratitude of the people: their quarrels and complaints, their constant inconstancy. Jeremiah does the opposite. To be sure, there were bad things about those years, but against them stands the simple fact that the Bnei Yisrael had the faith and courage to embark on a journey through an unknown land, fraught with danger, and sustained only by their trust in Hashem.

Perhaps it took Rabbi Akiva, the great lover of Israel, to see that what was truly remarkable about the wilderness years was not that the Israelites were surrounded by the clouds of glory but that they were an entire nation without a home or houses; they were like nomads without a place of refuge. Exposed to the elements, at risk from any surprise attack, they none the less continued on their journey in the faith that Hashem would not desert them.

Adapted from Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathen Sacks



# SEPERATION BY PARTS

ILAN GRITZMAN ('16)

Time is a fundamental theme in Judaism. We take every opportunity to sanctify our days, weeks, and months, and our perspective on time is somewhat unique. For example, Christians follow the solar calendar and Muslims follow the lunar calendar, while we combine the two. We count the moon's monthly cycle and we reconcile that with the sun's seasonal cycle. Also, the secular day starts at midnight, however the Jewish day starts in the evening with the emergence of three stars. This is based on the pasuk: "וַיְהִי עֶרֶב וַיְהִי בֹקֶר יוֹם אֶחָד" –"and it was evening and morning, day one."

Not only do we have a unique approach to days and months, but even our concept of the New Year is distinct. Although many might consider Rosh Hashana to be the only celebration of the new year, the *משנה* in *ראש השנה* says that there are actually four new years! *ראש השנה* is the main new year, *טו בשבט* is the new year of the trees, *ניסן* is described by the *תורה* as the "first month" and is the new year for kings, and the new year of capturing animals is on *ראש חדש אלול*.

Parshat Emor discusses the fact that Shabbat is sanctified by Hashem, however the *חגים* are sanctified by the Jewish people. The *שלוש רגלים* commemorate times in our history, specifically the giving of the Torah, our exodus from Egypt, and the forty years we spent wandering in the desert. As Jews, we remember events in our history by sanctifying specific days, weeks, and months throughout our year.

Ensuring that each event is acknowledged within its own time frame can now be seen as a differentiating principle. As King Shlomo so accurately describes in *Kohelet*, there is a time for everything, "A time to be born and a time to die, a time to plant and a time to uproot..." Our sanctification of each *chag* establishes the importance of living in each moment—dedicating the proper respect to every life event. Through this we can learn to maximize each of our days and ensure that all we do is within the context of time.

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