

*a* **CALL** *to*  
**ACTION**

**SEFIRAH**  
**UNITY & LOVE**

**SHABBOS CHAZAK**

**SHAVUOS**  
**- PART ONE -**

**PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION**  
**FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE REBBE**  
**5748-5752**

**A PROJECT OF**  
**HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar**

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### *a CALL to ACTION*

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**NEW!**

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## Foreword

We are pleased to bring you this newly revised edition of **a CALL to ACTION**. Translated from its Hebrew counterpart, *HaMaaseh Hu Halkar*, this presentation is a collection of practical instruction from the Rebbe's Sichos pertaining to the climax of the period of *sefiras ha'omer*.

*HaMaaseh Hu Halkar* is a compilation of *hora'os* culled from the Rebbe's talks in the years 5748 to 5752 (1988-1992), from both edited and unedited sources (*muga* and *bilti muga*). Great effort has been extended to remain faithful to the Rebbe's calculated and instructive nuance. This English translation is rendered by Rabbi Yaakov Paley.

At this time, when Moshiach's arrival is imminent, the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, has emphasized the primacy of action. We are now beginning to experience the era when we will fully appreciate "the superiority of deed" above scholarship. May this take place completely and immediately!

Editorial Office of  
*HaMaaseh Hu Halkar*  
Erev Shabbos Mevarchim Sivan, 5768

# Sefiras HaOmer

Period of Counting the Omer

## WOMEN SHOULD PARTICIPATE

- Although women are technically exempt from the obligation to count the *omer* (since it is a time-bound commandment), nevertheless, “women in certain countries accepted the commandment upon themselves, rendering it obligatory”<sup>1</sup> – and *all* women can assist their sons and husbands, ensuring that they do not miss a day of counting.<sup>2</sup>

## COUNTDOWN TO *MATAN TORAH* APPLIES TO ALL

- Most importantly, women can and should assist in the essential theme of the counting: To awaking a yearning and longing for *Matan Torah* (the Giving of the Torah).<sup>2</sup>

## YEARN FOR GEULAH

- As we impatiently count the days leading up to Shavuot, we should impatiently express our desire for the Final Redemption – for we are also counting down the days, years and generations of our lengthy exile – and cry out, *ad masai*, “How much longer...?!”<sup>3</sup>

## TEACH YOUR FAMILY: TORAH IS OUR LIFE-FORCE

- In receiving the Torah at Sinai, G-d told Moshe to address the women *before* the men; this was due to their status as the bedrock of each Jewish household. Similarly, they should

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1. Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, Hil. Pesach 489:2.

2. Iyar 28 5751, address to the Lubavitch Women’s Organization (*Hisvaaduyos* pp. 244-245).

3. **Words with action**

We should increase our study of topics concerning the Final Redemption and the Holy Temple, for such learning helps bring these matters into reality all the sooner. (Iyar 24 5750, address to the Lubavitch Women’s Organization; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 229)

precede the men in the annual preparations for *Matan Torah* that takes place on Shavuot:

Women should strive to permeate their families with a longing for *Matan Torah* – filling them with the awareness that the Torah is “*our life and the length of our days*”!<sup>4</sup>

### WE HAVE THE ABILITY TO MAKE AMENDS

- During the *sefirah*, we are given extraordinary powers to mend our character traits and fix all that requires repair.<sup>5</sup>

### TIME TO MAKE UP

- [The period of the *sefirah* is treated as a state of semi-mourning for the thousands of students of Rabbi Akiva who perished during this time. Our Sages state that they were punished for failing to] “conduct themselves with respect one to the other” (*shelo nahagu kavod zeh lazeh*).

It is now that we are granted particular ability to correct any lack in our respect for fellow Jews.<sup>5</sup>

### RESOLVE DIVISIVE ISSUES

- We should express our *ahavas yisrael* by speaking with each

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4. Iyar 25 5750, address to the Lubavitch Women’s Organization (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 223).

5. **Full respect**

During the period of *sefiras ha’omer*, Jewish law places restrictions on matters associated with rejoicing ... This is due to our “mourning the twenty four thousand students of Rabbi Akiva who died during this period.”

The Talmud relates that the cause of their death was *mipnei shelo nahagu kavod zeh lazeh*, “because they did not conduct themselves with respect one to the other.”

Now, since this involves a law in *Toras Chesed* (“the Torah of Kindness”), and because the Torah applies eternally (“Torah” comes from *hora’ah*, “instruction”) – the death of Rabbi Akiva’s students must present us with a clear, positive directive:

We are not only are to observe the aspect of “mourning” during this period, but *primarily* concern ourselves with *mending* the failure to act with respect. To do this, we should *increase* our love for our fellow Jews, and act respectfully towards each other to the *fullest* extent. (Parshas Emor 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 112)

other peacefully and in a friendly manner, and by reaching unanimous decisions on matters that previously caused a divide.<sup>6</sup>

## INSTINCTIVE LOVE FOR FELLOW JEWS

- The precise words of our Sages, *nahagu...* “conduct themselves with respect,”<sup>7</sup> teaches us that *ahavas yisrael* should

6. Ibid., p. 120.

### **Diversity leads to fuller truth**

The possibility for human beings to act towards each other with disrespect stems from the fact that G-d created us dissimilar, or, as our Sages put it, *ein dei'oseithem shavos*, no two minds think alike ...

But *why* did G-d create us with such mental diversity? So that ... through presenting a wide-spectrum of views on any given topic, together we can formulate many innovative ideas; each person innovating according to the nature of his unique intellect. The end result is a far more *correct* understanding, conclusion and ultimate decision:

Firstly, different people with varied approaches discuss a topic between them, without any of them subduing or foregoing his personal opinion on the matter; doing so would run *contrary* to G-d's purpose in creating people with diverse natures.

They then evaluate the matter from many angles, and reach a final conclusion – a far truer conclusion than if but a single opinion would have been considered.

Obviously, in addition to the friendship that is eventually forged by reaching a unanimous and well-rounded conclusion, the actual discussions need to be carried out peacefully and with full respect for each participant.

This, then, is what is required of us during the *sefirah*: ... Even where a disharmonious situation already exists (as was the case with the students of Rabbi Akivah), we are to introduce peace between the parties. By doing so, we generate far *greater* peace than that which existed *prior* to the divide. This is similar to a document whose validity has been challenged and subsequently researched and proven in Court; it now carries far greater authenticity than a document that remains unchallenged – and therefore unproven. (Ibid., pp. 112-113)

### **The Torah's way**

And should there remain some issue about which the two sides can not discuss and reach an agreement – let them go to a third party, who will arbitrate between them. That “third party” should be the Rabbis in their location. After hearing the Rabbis' ruling, both sides should then conduct themselves according to the directive and decision of Halachah. *This* is the way things are done according to the Torah – as should be plainly obvious. (Ibid., p. 121)

7. **Regular behavior**

... After all, this wording is completely unusual for such a phrase. Seemingly, the Sages should have phrased it, “they did not *show* respect for each other,” or more simply, “they did not respect each other” – or something along those lines.

Nevertheless, they choose the term “conduct,” in order to teach us that acting

become our *minhag* – “custom”: It should be as routine and commonplace as a local custom; we should not require *effort* to act respectfully to each other...<sup>8</sup>

### PROACTIVE AHAVAS YISRAEL

- The term *nahagu* shares the root of the word *manhig* – “leader.” This indicates that each of us should “take the lead” in all matters pertaining to Jewish unity and brotherhood. And we should influence all those with whom we have contact – so that for them, as well, it will become instinctive to act with *ahavas yisrael*.<sup>9</sup>

### RECITING SHEHECHIYANU DURING SEFIRAH

- It is our custom to refrain from reciting the blessing of *shehechyanu* on a new fruit during the *sefirah*. The exception to this custom is on Shabbos and Lag B’omer.
- Nevertheless, those who already have the established custom to recite *shehechyanu* during the *sefirah* should *certainly* not stop doing so. Quite the opposite – may they continue making such blessings!<sup>10</sup>

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respectfully should become one’s *regular behavior* ... (Parshas Behar 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 158)

#### 8. Going beyond as part of duty

... Since this conduct will have become normal or even “natural” – or at the least, “second nature”...

In a way, a “custom” is superior to an obligation by law. It involves going *beyond* the call of duty (*lifnim mi’shuras hadin*), and is termed “pious conduct” (*midas chasidus*).

At the same time, a custom carries the weight of the dictum, *minhag yisrael torah hi*, “Jewish custom is part of Torah” – as Rambam states regarding “the Rabbinic decrees, enactments and customs (*gezeros, takanos* and *minhagim*)” that spread throughout Jewry.

The directive to us in all this, is that we should conduct ourselves with *ahavas yisrael*, in a manner of “pious conduct” that goes “beyond the call of duty”; this then becomes an actual part of the Torah and its laws. (Ibid.)

We should connect *both* of these interpretations of *nahagu*: Our *minhag* (custom) of acting with *ahavas yisrael* beyond the call of duty should become habitual. (Ibid., fn. 117)

#### 9. ...And they should become *manhigim*, “leaders,” to influence others in this regard. (Parshas Behar 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 159-159)

#### 10. New fruit

The Chief Rabbis: There are places where they have the custom to recite

## Addendum

# Jewish Unity

Shabbos Parshas Bechukosai 5746

Reprinted from Sichos In English, vol. 31

On Shabbos Bechukosai, the Lubavitcher Rebbe Shlita delivered a discourse which emphasized the importance of Jewish Unity and Ahavas Yisroel. He indicated that these two important principles should be brought into widespread practice on the Shabbos preceding Shavuos. This would be a fitting preparation for the receiving of the Torah, “as one man with one mind.”

He urged that gatherings of this nature should be organized all over the world and that multitudes of Jewish people should attend. Such gatherings will strengthen Jewish Unity and give expression to Ahavas Yisroel, love for our fellow Jews.

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Among the important themes of the Sefirah period, Ahavas Yisroel -- love of fellow Jews -- and Jewish unity, stand out most prominently.

1) The observance of the Sefirah period (between the holiday of Pesach and Shavuos) as a time of quasi-mourning, commemorates the tragic deaths of the disciples of Rabbi Akiva, nearly two millennia ago. The Talmud relates:

R. Akiva had 12,000 pairs of disciples,... and all of them died at the same time because they did not treat each other with respect. (Yevamos 62b)

They were remiss in their Ahavas Yisroel. We must therefore make special efforts during this period of the year, to increase Ahavas Yisroel in accordance with the dictum of Rabbi Akiva:

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*shehechyanu* over a new fruit during the *sefirah*, but not on a new garment. This matter is totally dependant on local custom.

The Rebbe: Our [Chabad] custom is... [See main text above for continuation]. (Minutes taken from the Chief Rabbis of Israel's visit to the Rebbe, Iyar 11 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 134)



You should love your neighbor as yourself; this is a fundamental principle of the Torah. (Rashi, Vayikra 19:18)

2) The days of Sefirah serve as a period of preparation for Shavuot and the giving of the Torah. Therefore, just as the first preparation for Torah was effected through unity, so too, we must prepare for the Torah through Jewish unity. On the verse “And there Israel encamped (singular) before the mountain” (Shemos 19:2), Rashi explains, “As one man with one mind (heart).”

The Midrash elaborates:

The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: Because the Jewish people despise discord and they love peace and are united in their camping, this is the propitious time for Me to give them My Torah. (cf. Vayikra Rabbah 9:9)

Clearly, our annual preparation for “receiving the Torah” must include an increase in Ahavas Yisroel and Jewish unity -- “as one man with one mind.”

3) During Sefirah we count 49 days equaling seven complete weeks, as Scripture states: “You shall then count seven complete weeks” (Vayikra 23:15). Chassidus offers us a symbolic interpretation that the Jewish people are represented by a seven-branched menorah, symbolic of the seven attributes (Sefiros) and seven levels of Divine service. By uniting the seven branches of the Jewish souls which interact with each other, we, symbolically, perfect the seven complete weeks.

The cooperation of every Jew is necessary for all Jews to attain perfection. Consequently, through Ahavas Yisroel and unity we complete the seven weeks and attain a state of “complete” unity of the Jewish people, the fitting preparation for receiving the Torah. As a result also, the seven weeks become unified as one.

On the Shabbos following Lag B'Omer and in the Torah portion of Bechukosai read on that Shabbos, we find expression of these points.

1) Since Lag B'Omer represents the cessation of the plague that killed R. Akiva's students, it follows that the period after Lag B'Omer saw a new emergence of respect and increased love among the students.

Lag B'Omer is also the Hilulo (day of passing and also -- celebration) day of Rabbi Shimon b. Yochai, R. Akiva's disciple, who

carried on and perfected R. Akiva's teachings and placed special emphasis on the mitzvah of loving fellow Jews. Rashbi (Rabbi Shimon b. Yochai) was forced to hide with his son in a cave, and suffer great privation for 13 years, to escape the threat of arrest by the Roman authorities. Having attained the loftiest peaks of Torah knowledge while in the cave, when he emerged, he immediately utilized the first opportunity to express his Ahavas Yisroel by improving conditions for his fellow Jews. He interested himself in a persistent problem affecting the Tiberias community and opened a road that had been closed to Kohanim because of suspected tumah (defilement) (cf. Shabbos 33b). He also proclaimed: "I am able to exempt the whole world from judgment..." (Sukkah 45b).

Rashbi's devotion to the Jewish people and his insights were much more profound. The Zohar relates:

It once happened that the world needed rain...so they came to R. Shimon...he recited the verse: "A song of ascents ...Behold, how good and how pleasant it is when brothers dwell together" (Tehillim 133:1). As a result the rain began to fall. (Zohar III, 59b)

Was not the Rashbi hinting that harmonious, brotherly love and Jewish unity serve as the harbinger of material blessings from G-d!

As the Ramban expounds on the verse:

"Then will I give you rains in their seasons" (Vayikra 26:4) -- He mentioned the matter of rains first because if they come in their proper season...it is a prime cause of physical health, and all produce will increase and be blessed by it, just as He said, "and the land shall yield her produce and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit..." This is the greatest of all blessings. (Ramban, Vayikra 26:4)

The Baal Shem Tov explains that the term rain "gishmeichem" has the same root as "gashmius" -- corporeality. Thus, all physical blessings are dependent on the unity and harmony of the Jewish people.

2) The period of Sefirah serves as a preparation for Mattan Torah in that the seven supernal and human attributes (kindness -- royalty) are interwoven and refined. Since on Lag B'Omer (the 33rd day) the attribute of "Beauty in Beauty" is attained -- the major portion of the Sefirah "body" has been built.\* And then Lag B'Omer is directly connected to the state of "as one man with one mind," of Mattan Torah.

3) The third aspect mentioned above comes into focus when we recall the Midrash:

R. Shimon B. Yochai said: "Whence can you prove that if Israel had been short even of one man the Divine Presence would not have revealed itself to them? For it is written: 'For on the third day the L-rd will come down in the sight of all the people upon Mount Sinai.'"

*(Devorim Rabbah 7:8)*

We see, that Rashbi held that Mattan Torah depended on the participation of every single Jew. Torah depends on absolute unity.

The Torah portion of this week also fits into the equation. As we know,

Ezra made a regulation for Israel that they should read the curses in Vayikra (Bechukosai) before Shavuos....

*(Megillah 31b)*

This accentuates the connection between the portion of Bechukosai and Mattan Torah on Shavuos. Therefore, with Lag B'Omer behind us and Shavuos quickly approaching, we must increase and intensify the aspects of Jewish unity and Ahavas Yisroel.

In our generation -- the time of "Heels of Moshiach" -- another theme emerges. The Rashbi has a special role in the future redemption, as we find in Zohar:

...with this work of yours, which is the book of splendor...(through which) they will leave their exile with mercy. (Zohar III, p. 124b)

In other words, it is the role of Rashbi to effect the redemption of each and every Jew, together with the liberation of the Shechinah. As the Rashbi taught:

To every place to where they were exiled the Shechinah went with them.... The Holy One, Blessed be He, will return with them from the places of exile. (Megillah 29a)

As the cause of the exile was the lack of Jewish harmony, it is obvious that we can nullify the basis of the diaspora by adding more Ahavas Yisroel, in the form of expressing our love even if there is no reason for the love! In that way the golus will also disappear. Especially as this expression of Ahavas Yisroel will also engender G-d's love for the Jewish people, for the Holy One, Blessed be He, is the

“friend” to the Jewish people, and we are precious in His estimation: “I have loved you,' says the L-rd” (Malachi 1:2).

When G-d reveals His love for the Jewish people, He then redeems them, without delay.

How can we actually and practically express and reveal our Ahavas Yisroel and Jewish unity? The answer is: when Jews gather in one place “as one man with one mind,” with the goal and purpose of encouraging and strengthening their harmony and -- especially increasing Jewish unity and Ahavas Yisroel; and when such a gathering is held in conjunction with a festive meal, including the toasting of “Le'Chayim” on wine, this increases Jewish Unity, as the Gemara says:

Great is the mouthful (of food or drink) in that it draws near those who are distant. (Sanhedrin 103b)

The Alter Rebbe explained the great value of a Chassidic farbrengen (gathering) by citing the following parable:

When a father sees the conduct of his children, with love, brotherly feelings, peace and friendliness, each one carrying out the wishes of the other and each one caring for the needs of the other just like his own needs, then the father is filled with delight, and he performs wonders and fulfills all their wishes.

*(Previous Rebbe -- Letters on Saying Tehillim)*

During the Sefirah period there are, of course, restrictions regarding public celebrations and a fitting time should be chosen, which will be acceptable according to all the different halachic opinions, so that everyone will be able to participate.

It would therefore be most fitting -- and acceptable to all opinions -- to celebrate such gatherings on this coming Shabbos, which is Shabbos Mevorchim Sivan, the “third month,” and the day of Erev Rosh Chodesh, when we will read the portion Bemidbar.

Let us elaborate on some of these points.

1) The “third month” alludes to the concept of peace, for the number “three” indicates that there can be two opposing forces and a third force which makes peace between them. As such, it is appropriate that Torah is also called the “threefold Torah” (Shabbos 88a) -- for the Torah was given “to bring peace in the world” (cf. Rambam, Laws of Chanukah, end).

It is therefore appropriate that on the Shabbos which bestows blessing on the coming “third” month, we should conduct an exercise which enhances Jewish unity.

2) Next Shabbos is Erev Rosh Chodesh (the day before the New Moon), therefore no Tachanun (penitential prayer) is said, or, in this case no Tzidkascha Tzedek, is said during Minchah on Shabbos. There is also an halachah which rules, that the evening services of the next day may be recited before sunset -- while it is still Shabbos -- and in that scenario the Ya'aleh V'yovo (“may there ascend”) prayer of Rosh Chodesh may be said on Shabbos.

Thus, next Shabbos can incorporate the following day of Rosh Chodesh -- which is Rosh Chodesh Sivan, the day on which the Jewish people reached the wilderness of Sinai and the Jews camped before the mountain “as one man with one mind.” The unity that preceded Mattan Torah.

3) The theme and context of the portion of Bemidbar is the census of the Jewish people. A count of people brings out the idea that each person is equal to every other; a simple person does not count for less than one individual, and the prominent person does not count for more than one. Each one counts as one. This emphasizes the unity and completeness of the Jewish people, and at the same time it shows us G-d's love for the Jewish people and how precious each and everyone is -- for that reason He counts them. This love of G-d for the Jews also leads to the love of one Jew for the other -- “for he loves that which his Beloved loves.”

This coming Shabbos, which blesses the month of Sivan and on which we read the portion of Bemidbar, is clearly the most appropriate time for Ahavas Yisroel gatherings to take place.

Therefore I propose the following soulful request:

This coming Shabbos, during the time of Minchah -- late afternoon -- Jewish people all over the world should gather in great numbers -- men, women and children: “with our youth and elders,...our sons and daughters,” in a manner of “brothers dwelling together.” There should be joyous gatherings of friends and festive meals (of course -- men & women separately).

At these gatherings words of Torah should be spoken on the topic

of Ahavas Yisroel and Jewish unity. The entire subject should be broadly covered.

Starting with Scripture: “Love your neighbor as yourself,” on which, “Rabbi Akiva said this is an important rule of Torah,” and which was also interpreted (by Hillel) as: “That is the whole Torah while the rest is commentary thereof....” Then, following through the practical halachic details, as described in Mishneh Torah of Maimonides, and finally the in-depth explanations on the profound quality of Ahavas Yisroel, as developed in Tanya -- and all the symbolic and exegetic interpretation presented by the great sages of Israel, whose Torah works have been widely accepted.

To all this we should add a special emphasis, that when we increase our love for fellow Jews and intensify Jewish Unity, the causes of the exile will be dissolved and automatically the effect -- the diaspora -- will disappear.

The subject matter for discussion should obviously be chosen with presence of mind and understanding of the audience so that it will be appreciated, comprehended and absorbed, to the point of influencing and enthusing the listeners. Hopefully, the enthusiasm will be contagious and they will go on and influence others, and strengthen and encourage others, to further the goals of Jewish Unity.

If, for some reason, these gatherings cannot take place on Shabbos then they should be scheduled for a subsequent fitting day, such as Sunday, Rosh Chodesh, etc. It is of primary importance that this call should be publicized and transmitted to the widest possible audience.

Those who will carry out this mission should involve themselves with energy, enthusiasm, vigor and excitement. They should keep in mind that this is “soulfully” essential for the Jewish people, and that we are dealing with an exceptional and unusual matter.

Practically speaking.

Preparation for these activities, and appropriate publicity should start as soon as possible and every moment of the day should be properly utilized. The approach must be in a pleasant and peaceful manner, day by day, leading up to the coming Shabbos and especially the time of “greatest delight” (late afternoon), when everyone will gather together. And although in every time zone on the globe the time of Minchah is different, nevertheless, in the spiritual realm they all

unite so that all Jews will be united simultaneously as truly one.

In approaching the preparation for these gatherings there will surely be those who will be concerned about the expenses. The first answer is that in each place they will certainly find the necessary funds, especially since everyone knows that in matters of holiness we must participate with our money, which indicates how important the matter is.

However, if there should be a place where the problem of finances will cause a diminution in the potential activities, then, after the program has been completed, they should inform the local Merkos offices and the list of the deficits should be transmitted here, and from here the necessary funds will be forwarded to cover the expenses -- with happiness and gladness of heart.

May it be G-d's will that our good resolution accepted now will forthwith generate the reward that is fitting for Ahavas Yisroel and Jewish Unity -- the suspension of the diaspora. And we will speedily merit the true and complete redemption through our righteous Moshiach.

This is especially pertinent now, for we stand close to the end of Shabbos -- the "meal of Dovid the King Moshiach"; and with Moshiach we will celebrate -- next Shabbos -- the true great assembly of all the Jewish people for, "a great assembly will return."

And all who "rest in the dust will arise," with Moshe and Aharon among them, and Rashbi and all the righteous sages and princes of our people -- and also the previous Rebbe. The main speaker at that ultimate gathering will be our righteous Moshiach, who will teach to all the people the new, esoteric Torah, in a manner of "seeing." And then the count of the Jewish people will be completed, through Moshiach the first redeemer and the last redeemer, truly in our time.

The editors of *HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar* seek dedicated individuals who would like to sponsor future editions of a **CALL to ACTION**.

Please contact Levi at 347-268-3299. Thank you.

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*Translated in the memory of Yitzchok Yosef ben Yaakov Mordechai.*

# Shabbos Chazak

## INTRODUCTION

*It is the Jewish custom that upon completing any of the five books of the Torah in our cycle of weekly readings, the entire congregation calls out: ‘Chazak, Chazak, v’Nischazek – Be strong! Be strong! And may we be strengthened!’<sup>1</sup>*

## EVERYONE’S CALL

- ‘Chazak, Chazak, v’Nischazek’ is called out by everyone present in the synagogue, including men, women, and children.<sup>2</sup>

## LOUD AND JOYFUL

- We call out with a loud, joyous, voice, which reflects on the strength and steadfastness of the Jewish people in all Torah matters.<sup>3</sup>

## THRICE STRENGTHENED

1. The sources given for this custom in Likutei Sichos, Vol.25 p.474, are: “*Avudraham*, Seder Hatza’os Sefer Torah; *Responsa of Maharam Mintz*, Chapter 85; *Aruch Hashulchan*, Orech Chayim, 39:15; *Keser Shem Tov* (Gagin) Vol.1, 38.”
2. “We call out – *everyone* present in Shul, both those in the men’s section and those in the women’s section and even including young children - ‘*Chazak, Chazak, v’Nischazek*’, using the word *chazak* three times.” (Parshas Vayechi 5752 – Sichos Kodesh p.505)

[In Jewish Law, something done three times constitutes a *chazakah* (lit. a strength) i.e. a legally valid continuity and power. In this case, the word *chazak* i.e. the strengthening, is *itself* given a *chazakah* (legal strength) by being repeated three times over – Ed.]

3. Parshas Matos-Masei 5751 – Hisvaduyos p.68.  
See there, footnote 4: “Note that the source for this custom is from the fact that “When Hashem told Yehoshuah upon the completion of the Torah, ‘*Chazak v’Ematz – Be strong and fortified!*’ [See footnote 1 above for sources]. The innovation in this custom is that although ‘strength’ is mentioned only twice in the verse, ‘Be strong and fortified’, Jewish custom has nevertheless added a third ‘strength’.

Now, in addition to an established Jewish custom being ‘a part of Torah itself’, it even bears an advantage of a kind, over the Written and Oral Torah (See Likutei Torah, Derushei Sukos, 80c and in many other location, for an explanation of this advantage). Moreover, this custom carries the advantage and complete state of ‘something done three times assumes a legal strength, a *chazakah*’ [See previous footnote].”

- This strength is itself further bolstered by our tripled expression of strength, ‘*Be strong! Be strong! And may we be strengthened!*’<sup>3</sup>

### IMPLEMENTING THE CALL

- During Shabbos Chazak, each and every Jewish person should strengthen themselves, their family, and all around them (the word ‘*nischazek* – may we be strengthened’ is plural), in all matters pertaining to Judaism, Torah, and Mitzvos.<sup>4</sup>

- 
4. [The name of every Parshah, in addition to its content, serves as a lesson and instructed that we should implement. This is included in the directive from the Alter Rebbe to ‘live with the Parshah of the week’ by implementing its lessons. Moreover, since our Parshah is also the conclusion of the entire book of Breishis - and ‘everything follows its conclusion’ (Brachos12a) - this Parshah’s name (Vayechi) must certainly contain a powerful lesson.

However, since we are already alive (and can therefore ‘live with the Parshah’) – the life of Jewry being *true* life since it stems from the Torah of Life (Avos d’Rabbi Nasan 34) – then what instruction can we take from the name Vayechi, which means ‘life’?! How do we ‘live’ with ‘living’?

The explanation, in brief, is that a person generally does not feel his life-force and certainly not its source i.e. the essence of his soul. He merely feels the individual powers that stem from this life-force e.g. sight, hearing, etc. Our general and essential life-force remains undetected by our senses. The instruction of Vayechi, then, is to take the expression of our soul’s essential life-force i.e. our essential faith in Hashem, and ‘live with it’ by expressing it within the particulars of our divine service and details of our daily affairs.

Insofar as Torah is concerned, instead of merely living with (and sensing the vivifying force we receive from) the individual Parshah of each week, ‘Vayechi’ instructs us to live with and sense the general vivifying force of Torah itself, ‘for it is our lives and the length of our days’. This awareness should then be likewise brought to bear in the particular of our daily ‘living’.

And since the life of the entire creation comes from the Torah, Vayechi teaches us to view the world in context of its true general life-force, so that we fully interact with the world based on the awareness that there is nothing besides Hashem. (Editor’s synopsis of Sichas Vayechi 5750 – Hisv. p137)]

“It is now Shabbos Parshas Vayechi, Shabbos Chazak, when we conclude the first book of Torah [i.e. Breishis, also known as] ‘Sefer Hayashar’ [i.e. the Book of the Upright – our forefathers Avraham, Yitchak and Yaakov. The name Breishis comes from the word *rosh* – a head or beginning, which indicates that this book is loftier than the other four books. See there, footnote 1]. Each and every Jewish person should therefore strengthen... [See main text above for continuation] ... in a manner whereby it becomes clearly discernable that he lives in the true sense of the word ‘living’ i.e. with the individual as well as general life-force of the Jewish people and the Torah, as it permeates every last detail of our day-to-day lives.

## GREAT KIDDUSH / FARBRENGEN

- We should connect this custom with the holding of a special *farbrenge*n in addition to the weekly *farbrenge*n (that are held in fulfillment of the custom ‘to gather congregations each Shabbos’). Indeed, many congregations have the custom to hold a *Kidushah Rabbah* – a ‘Great Kiddush’ on Shabbos Chazak.<sup>5</sup>

## RE-INSTALL THE CUSTOM

- We should re-establish and bolster this custom everywhere, so that all may add in reciting words of Torah - along with – and they may add in their rejoicing upon the completion of an entire book of Torah.<sup>6</sup>

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(Parshas Vayechi 5750 – Hisvaduyos p.137)

5. Ibid. See also there, p.142: “We should therefore hold an extra *farbrenge*n in honor of this Shabbos Chazak [upon completing the book of Breishis], as well on the Shabbos Chazak’s for completing the remaining four books of the Torah. Certainly, then, we should hold an extra *farbrenge*n on the Shabbos Chazak for completing the entire Chumash – although there is no need to encourage a celebration for that completion, since we already celebrate the completion of the entire Torah with the festival of Simchas Torah.

This practice should be further required in this Shul and study hall, since those present have not fulfilled their ‘obligation’ with the current *farbrenge*n. For that reason I found it necessary to promote and encourage this practice now. After all, I don’t want people to attribute the fact that that the Gabbaim haven’t arranged an additional *farbrenge*n, to the fact that this *farbrenge*n is being held! [Rather, they should go ahead and make another *farbrenge*n –Ed]

There is plenty of time to hold a second *farbrenge*n following this one, and even after all that we have discussed in this *farbrenge*n, there still remains plenty that could – and should – be discussed. Particularly, as there are Torah scholars present amongst the audience, and especially as there are students of Yeshivas Tomchei Temimim who are expected to fulfill everything in the most perfect manner [‘temimim’ means ‘perfect ones’ –Ed].

The most important thing is not merely the discussion, rather that the message should even transcend speech altogether, so that it will be openly and clearly discernable that this is our very life-force – [as alluded to in the name of the Parsha,] ‘Vayechi’ [lit. ‘he *lived*’]!”

See also Parshas Bamidbar 5750, footnote 137 – Hisvaduyos p.153: “It is for this reason that Kiddush on the day of Shabbos is called *kidushah rabbah*, the ‘Great Kiddush’, since it is held amongst a multitude of Jewish people [i.e. in Shul]” See there in the subnote: “This explanation is in addition to its basic euphemistic meaning, seeing that it is shorter than the Kiddush for Friday night (*Magid Mishnah* to the Rambam, Shabbos 29:10).”

6. “In a similar manner to the rejoicing over the completion of the entire Torah that is celebrated on Simchas Torah. The gathering of a large number of Jewish people

- This should include the acceptance of good resolutions to increase in Torah study and the embellished performance of Mitzvos.<sup>6</sup>

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for the sake of rejoicing over completing the Torah further emphasizes the indivisible unity of the general life-force of the Jewish people and the Torah. The final purpose, however, is for this life-force to be drawn down until it permeates our actual service, including its very finest details.” (Parshas Vayechi 5750 – Hisvaduyos p.137) [See previous two footnotes for further clarification]

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לכ"ק אדמו"ר מלך המשיח



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*a* **CALL** *to*  
**ACTION**

**SHAVUOS**  
**- PART ONE -**

**PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION**  
**FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE REBBE**  
**5748-5752**

**A PROJECT OF**  
**HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar**

## Foreword

We are pleased to bring you this newly revised edition of *a CALL to ACTION*. Translated from its Hebrew counterpart, *HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar*, this presentation is a collection of practical instruction from the Rebbe's Sichos pertaining to the festival of Shavuos – the Giving of the Torah.

*HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar* is a compilation of *hora'os* culled from the Rebbe's talks in the years 5748 to 5752 (1988-1992), from both edited and unedited sources (*muga* and *bilti muga*). Great effort has been extended to remain faithful to the Rebbe's calculated and instructive nuance. This English translation is rendered by Rabbi Yaakov Paley.

At this time, when Moshiach's arrival is imminent, the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, has emphasized the primacy of action. We are now beginning to experience the era when we will fully appreciate "the superiority of deed" above scholarship. May this take place completely and immediately!

Editorial Office of  
*HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar*  
*Shabbos Mevarchim Sivan*  
Year of Hakhel 5769

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# Shavuos

## PART ONE

### Preparing for Shavuos

#### INTRODUCTION

The following insight lends a fresh perspective on how to view and prepare for this festival:

Shavuos, when we receive the Torah afresh, gives us our life-force for the coming year. This is because the Torah is *chayeinu ve'orech yameinu*, “our life and the length of our days.”

This is not a mere *addition* to our life-force, but rather, complete renewal of our very existence – akin to childbirth. For the Giving of the Torah at Sinai is considered the *gi'ur* (conversion) of the Jewish people; as G-d stated regarding that event, “You shall become a nation this day.” And, “a convert is like a newborn.”

Why, then, is Shavuos not considered a “Rosh Hashanah” – after all, is it not the “Head of the Year” that elicits life-force for the entire year?! (And yet it is not even listed as one of the four “heads of the year” in the beginning of tractate Rosh Hashanah!)

Even before responding to this question, we must make one thing clear: Nothing can alter the plain fact that the Torah is “our life and the length of our days,” to the extent that its annual bestowal renews our existence like that of a newborn. And there is *nothing* that includes our entire life-force more than actual birth...

In light of this unequivocal truth, we could suggest that Shavuos is not considered a “Rosh Hashanah” because it is *far beyond* a “Head of the Year.” Being a “head” to the days of the years means being in the same league as the rest of the year – much as one’s head is part of his body (albeit the most exalted part).

Shavuos, on the other hand, is an independent day unto itself; a day whose exalted nature is on a completely superior league to the rest of the year – it is far too exalted to function as a “head”...!<sup>1</sup>

### SHAVUOS BLESSING

- We should encourage all Jews (men, women, and likewise the children) to bless each other before Shavuos. They should use this precise phrase:<sup>2</sup>

*Kabolas HaTorah BeSimchah u'BePenimiyus*, “May you receive the Torah with joy and inwardness.” This was the wording used by the Previous Rebbe – and he instructed others to use it as well.<sup>3</sup>

### ADVANCE ACCLIMATIZATION

#### 1. Why is Shavuos just one day?

Note the explanation given in *Torah Or*: “The reason why Shavuos is but a single day (unlike Pesach and Sukkos, which span *seven* days) is because we then receive the *Torah*: Torah stems from the realm of Supernal *Keser* [lit., ‘crown’], which is also the level of *Yechidah* [lit., ‘only one’; the highest tier of the soul/*sefiros* – a level that is united with G-d].

*Keser* stands beyond division into seven *midos* [the supernal attributes that are far ‘lower’ than *Keser*], which are called ‘the seven supernal *days*.’” (Second day of Shavuos 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 418.)

[To summarize: The spiritual source of the weekly cycle is the seven *sefiros* – and these levels are revealed on the seven days of Pesach and Sukkos. Shavuos, however, marks the revelation of Torah, whose source is the transcendent level of *Keser* – and like, *Keser*, the festival is but a single, supreme day.]

Note that even Rosh Hashanah is not one day – but *two* days. This is the case even within the Land of Israel. True, we consider the two days of Rosh Hashanah “as *one* long day” – nevertheless, we recite a separate *Kidush* at the beginning of each day [clearly defining it as a two-day festival]. Conversely, the festival of Shavuos is unique in being just *one* day. The reason for this is because Shavuos reflects a superior level that is indivisible. (Ibid., fn. 18)

#### 2. Bless and be blessed

... Through blessing a fellow Jew, you are blessed as well; as Hashem promises us, “I will bless those that bless you” ... And I [the Rebbe] will personally begin [implementing this directive], by blessing all the Jewish people – using the precise wording of the [Previous] Rebbe’s blessing ... (Parshas Bamidbar, Sivan 5 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 410)

... We will now conclude with the exact phrase that was heard from my father-in-law the Rebbe, Leader of our generation: *Kabalas HaTorah BeSimcha U'bePenimi'us* – To accept the Torah with joy and inwardness! (Parshas Bamidbar 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 227)

3. Address to Chabad’s Women and Girls Organization, Iyar 24 5750 (*Hisvaaduyos* p.229).

- We should work on achieving “joy and inwardness” in the days leading up to Shavuot – so that we will truly be in this state as we receive the Torah.<sup>4</sup>

### SHABBOS MEVARCHIM

- Our preparations, which span the entire period of the Sefirah, should be stepped up on Shabbos Mevarchim Sivan<sup>5</sup> – the day we elicit blessing and ability to receive the Torah.<sup>6</sup>

### CONSIDER THE MAGNITUDE OF TORAH

- We should prepare by (1) contemplating the Torah’s greatness and preciousness, awakening within ourselves a longing desire for *Matan Torah*.<sup>7</sup>

It is out this appreciation that we count the *sefirah* in the first place – we literally “count the days” out of a longing desire and craving for the Torah: How many days have passed since Pesach, the “time of our freedom” – and how much closer are we to Shavuot, the “time of Giving of the Torah”...?<sup>8</sup>

### REFINE EACH MIDAH

- (2) Throughout the *sefirah*, we work at refining each trait of our *nefesh habehamis* (animalistic side) – from *chesed*

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#### 4. Within reach

... Until it becomes the “nature” of each Jew, and especially the Jewish women – to the extent that their *entire lives* become filled with “joy and inwardness.” That will make it far easier to prepare for, and actually receive, the Torah in this state.

True, the Torah is “broader than the Earth” and reaches beyond all limitations. Nevertheless, it is within the power of each Jew to receive the *entire* Torah – and furthermore, to receive it all with joy and inwardness. (Address to Chabad’s Women and Girls Organization, Iyar 24 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 229)

#### 5. It starts now

... With a unique addition as we draw closer to the “days of preparation” for the Giving of the Torah – starting with *Rosh Chodesh*.

And now that *Shabbos Mevarchim* has already past – when we bless the upcoming Rosh Chodesh, and through that, the coming month – we *now* stand in the “days of preparation” for the Giving of the Torah. So all that we have discussed regarding the preparations now applies with full force. (Address to Chabad’s Women and Girls Organization, Iyar 28 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 336)

6. Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5748 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 344).

7. *Ibid.*, fn. 12. See the commentary of *Ran* at the end of *Pesachim*, and the explanation in *Likutei Sichos*, vol. 22, p. 114.

8. Address to Chabad’s Women and Girls Organization, Iyar 25 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 223.

*shebechesed* [the first of our traits] all the way until *malchus shebemalchus* [the last of them]. This way we will be refined, purified and fit to receive the Torah.<sup>9</sup>

### PUT THE TORAH IN A CLEAN VESSEL

- This refinement of our physical side and our *nefesh habehamis* (animalistic soul) is accomplished by avoiding (to the extreme) any undesirable matters. Only after we have removed all negativity, is the revelation of *Matan Torah* then drawn into spiritually clean and pure “receptacles,” and in a complete way.<sup>10</sup>

### PRIMARY FOCUS: TORAH STUDY

- Since every preparation should be similar to its objective, the primary focus of our preparations should be an increase in *Torah study*.<sup>11</sup>

### ALL PARTS OF TORAH

- We should include both the “revealed” and mystical teachings in our pre-Shavuot study program.<sup>12</sup>

### EMPHASIZE THE MYSTICAL

- On Shavuot, the study of Torah’s mystical teachings is particularly emphasized. These Kabbalistic teachings are referred to as *ma’aseh merkavah*, “the workings of the Celestial Chariot”<sup>13</sup> [a reference for the supernal *sefiros*, etc.],<sup>14</sup> and are

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9. Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5748 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 344).

10. *Ibid.*, p. 353.

11. Sivan 3 5748, fn. 12 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 380).

... In addition to the general preparation for the Giving of the Torah via *studying* Torah. (*Ibid.*)

... In addition to the preparations throughout *all* the days of the Sefirah. (Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 352)

12. Parshas Bamidbar 5750 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 215).

... Particularly as the inner dimension ... is *openly* revealed on Shavuot. (Sivan 3 5748, fn. 15; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 380)

13. [As in the vision of Yechezkel (Ezekiel) that we read as the *haftorah* on the first day of Shavuot. See Siddur Tehillas Hashem, p. 506.]

14. **Mystical revelation came first**

The regular approach to Torah study is to first study *nigleh*, the “revealed” teachings, and only then progress to its inner dimensions. However, when the

alluded to in the custom of eating dairy products on Shavuot.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, we should also (or more precisely, *primarily*) prepare for Shavuot by increasing our study of the Torah's *inner* teachings.<sup>16</sup>

#### ADD AND ENHANCE

- We should increase both the quantity and quality of our Torah studies.<sup>12</sup>

#### FOCUS ON THE DEED

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Torah was given at Sinai, the *reverse* approach was taken: First there was a revelation of the *innermost* dimension; as our Sages state (*Shemos Rabah* 3:2) regarding the verse "And G-d descended on Mount Sinai" – that at that moment, not only did all the Jews see the *Supernal Chariot* (*merkavah ha'elyonah*), but they even saw *G-d Himself* "riding" upon the Supernal Chariot! They witnessed Him descending, together with the Chariot, upon Mount Sinai! And this was all *before* "G-d spoke all these words saying" the Ten Commandments, which include the entire Torah. [Clearly, the inner teachings were transmitted visually before the "revealed" teachings were transmitted verbally.]

##### A nation of mystics

Not only that, but this view of the Chariot and its Rider occurred in a manner of complete comprehension and understanding: Not only did they *see* – for one may view the entirety of a thing along with all of its particulars and still not understand what exactly he is seeing – but, at the same time, they fully comprehended what they were seeing. As our Sages put it, "they heard that which was seen," and conversely, "they saw that which was heard" – meaning that they had "both advantages, of seeing and of hearing, as one." ["Hearing" (*shemi'ah*) also connotes "understanding."] (Ibid., p. 253)

#### 15. Why eat cheesecake?

The Alter Rebbe states (Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim, 494:16) that "one of the reasons behind this custom [to eat dairy products on Shavuot] is that milk alludes to Torah, which is likened to 'milk and honey.'"

This aspect of Torah finds particular expression in its *inner* teachings; as our Sages (Chagigah 13a) expound on the verse "Honey and milk are under your tongue" – "Matters [of the inner secrets of the Torah] that are sweeter than honey and milk should be kept under your tongue [and not exposed to all]." (Sivan 2, Parshas Bamidbar 5750; *Hisvaadyos* p. 252) [This is a reference to the mystical dimension of the Torah that had to be kept secret for much of history. The Arizal, however, proclaimed that we are now "duty-bound to reveal this wisdom" – and the Baal Shem Tov was informed that Moshiach's arrival depended upon their complete dissemination.]

#### 16. Body follows soul

Because the inner teachings constitute the "soul" of the Torah, they are given priority; the revealed teachings that form its "body" must *follow* the inner dimension, just as a body is *dependant* upon its soul. This is similar to the concept explained in Tanya, that Jews "view their souls as primary and their bodies as secondary." (Ibid., p. 253)



- We should study in a manner that leads him to action – adding in our observance of *mitzvos*, and in all kinds of good and sacred activities.<sup>17</sup>
- We should study the laws of Shavuot.<sup>18</sup>

#### TOPICS THAT AWAKEN LOVE OF TORAH

- We should especially study Torah texts that explain the magnitude of *Matan Torah*; this will strengthen our desire and longing to receive the Torah again this year.
- This includes the study of classical texts from the “revealed” parts of the Torah – such as the Sages’ discussion on *Matan Torah* in tractate *Shabbos*<sup>19</sup> – as well as the Chassidic discourses on this topic.<sup>20</sup>

#### STUDY WITH AWE THAT BREEDS TOIL

- Our actual study should be permeated with the awareness that “all of its principles, specifics and fine minutiae were given at Sinai.”

Bearing this in mind, our learning will resemble the original Giving of the Torah – concerning which our Sages state: Just as it was accompanied by awe and fear ... back then [at Sinai], so too here [in our present-day study]...!

Moreover, this knowledge will inspire us to *toil* in our study of Torah – until [like the engraved tablets received at Sinai,] the Torah’s teachings are “carved” into our soul.<sup>21</sup>

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17. ... We should begin these positive resolutions in actual practice, even on this very day of Shabbos. (Parshas Bamidbar 5750: *Hisvaadyos* p. 215).

18. Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5748 (*Hisvaadyos* p. 352). See Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, beg. of ch. 429.

19. Beginning on page 86a.

20. Parshas Behar-Bechukosai (*ibid.*, p. 352).

21. **Sanctifying the world**

... And it is then drawn into our divine service of refining and purifying the surrounding world – via observing the *mitzvos* in actuality.

That service includes carrying out our mundane affairs in a manner of “doing everything for the sake of Heaven,” and even “knowing Hashem within all your paths” (which includes the Ba’al Shem Tov’s directive to derive a lesson in our divine service from everything we see or hear in this world). (*Ibid.*)

### SHABBOS SHIURIM

- Every Shabbos elicits blessings for coming week. For that reason, it would be an excellent idea to hold gatherings in synagogues and study halls on both the Shabbos before Rosh Chodesh Sivan,<sup>22</sup> as well as the Shabbos before Shavuos.
- These gatherings are for the purpose of studying Torah. Our Sages taught that such gatherings should be made *every* Shabbos of the year; certainly, then, we should make this practice a *priority* before the festival of Shavuos.<sup>23</sup>

### GATHER A MINYAN

- Ideally, we should gather a quorum of at least ten Jews to study Torah – for “G-d’s Presence rests among every group of ten who sit and occupy themselves with Torah,”<sup>24</sup> and “the King is glorified by the presence of many subjects.”<sup>25</sup>

### FOCUS ON THE PRACTICAL

- Inspire the participants in these gatherings to begin their spiritual preparations for Shavuos; they should work on personal refinement as well as striving to have a positive influence on others.

It can be explained how these resolutions could be put into practice *immediately*: The participants could encourage *more* people to come and study Torah at these gathering – and especially, to bring people to hear the Torah being read publicly

22. Parshas Behar-Bechukosai, Mevarchim Chodesh Sivan, Iyar 27 5751 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 241).

23. **Shabbos study sessions**

Yalkut Shimoni, beg. of Parshas Vayakhel (see also Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, Laws of Shabbos 204:4): G-d said to Moshe ... “Hold large gatherings [on Shabbos to teach the people Torah] so that the generations that come after you will learn from you and gather people together every Shabbos [to study Torah].” (Parshas Bamidbar 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 253)

May the practice of going [to other communities] to make large gatherings in their synagogues and study-halls, in the manner of “run to do a Mitzvah,” immediately result in our “going” and “running” to greet our righteous Moshiach! (Ibid., p. 254)

[Note that on Parshas No’ach 5750, the Rebbe launched a campaign to hold such gatherings every Shabbos, in compliance with the abovementioned directive.]

24. Pirkei Avos 3:6

25. Mishlei 14:28. Parshas Bamidbar 5750 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 253).

during the afternoon service of Shabbos.<sup>26</sup>

### **BITUL AND KABALAS OL**

- A further prerequisite to our receiving the Torah is that of *bitul*, self-nullification or selflessness, and *kabalas ol*, unequivocal commitment.

Thus we find that the Jewish people eagerly accepted the yoke of Heaven at Sinai, by prefacing their declaration of *nishmah*, “We will *hear* [and comprehend Your commandments]!” with *na’aseh*, “We will *perform* [them unquestioningly]!”

Similarly, in our own annual preparation for receiving the Torah: We should utilize the days leading up to Shavuot to ingrain within our characters the qualities of *bitul* and *kabalas ol*.<sup>27</sup>

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26. ... As per the teaching of the Previous Rebbe that “Whenever two Jews meet, it should bring about the benefit of a third Jew.” (Ibid.)

27. **Why a wilderness?**

The prerequisite of *bitul* and *kabalas ol* – receiving the Torah by prefacing *nishmah* (“We will hear!”) with *na’aseh* (“We will do!”) – is reflected in this week’s Torah portion, the portion always read before Shavuot – Parshas *Bamidbar* [*midbar* means “a wilderness”]:

One of the reason for specifically giving the Torah in a wilderness – “upon which everyone tramples” – is to stress how *bitul* is necessary in order to merit receiving the Torah.

**Supernal wilderness**

On a deeper level, the self-nullification of preceding *na’aseh* to *nishmah* does not merely involve our subservience to the *Will* of G-d [as expressed in Torah and Mitzvos]. Rather, it indicates *bitul* to the *Possessor* of that Will – for, naturally, G-d Himself *transcends* His Will (the Torah and Mitzvos).

This, then, is the concept of the “wilderness” seen in a positive, advantageous light: Within each person, the “wilderness” alludes to his innermost essence that transcends the many parts and faculties of which he is comprised. This “wilderness” is considered “uninhabitable” because it *transcends* all human faculties [even the most sublime spiritual tier – one’s desire and will].

Now, G-d’s “desire and will” is His Torah and Mitzvos. So the “wilderness,” in this case, is G-d’s *Essence* – totally “uninhabitable” due to its *transcendence*.

In conclusion:] The “wilderness” actually represents, not the Torah (G-d’s Will), but the *source* of the Torah; as it is stated, the Torah was given to us “as a gift from the *Wilderness*.” (Parshas Bamidbar, Shabbos Mevarchim and Erev Rosh Chodesh Sivan 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 221)

# The unique role of Jewish women

## WOMEN FIRST

Each year, just prior to Shavuot, the Rebbe personally addressed the annual convention of Chabad's Women and Girls Organization (*Neshei U'benos Chabad*). He explained the significance behind the convention's timing:

At Sinai, the Jews' preparations to receive the Torah specifically began with the women. [G-d had instructed Moshe to prepare the Jewish people by first addressing the women – and only afterwards, the men.

This is not mere historical detail. Rather,] since this fact is recorded in the Torah,<sup>28</sup> it serves as an eternal directive to follow suit [in our own Shavuot preparations], each and every year.<sup>29</sup> That is why the convention that addresses Jewish

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### 28. Women lead the preparation

The superiority of Jewish women is emphasized in connection with the Giving of the Torah:

The Torah itself relates, that when G-d instructed Moshe to prepare the Jews to receive the Torah, He told him, "So shall you say to the House of Yaakov, and relate to the Sons of Israel." The seemingly repetitive description of the Jews as the "House of Yaakov" and "Sons of Israel" is explained by the Sages: The first phrase ("House of Yaakov") refers to the Jewish *women*; to them Moshe was commanded to "say" (*amirah*), i.e., speak "in a soft tongue." Only *after that* was Moshe to address the Jewish men ("Sons of Israel") ...

[To clarify:] The Torah itself was *presented* to all Jews – men, women and children – at the same time ... nevertheless, when it came to the *preparation* for the Torah, Moshe was told to address the women before the men.

#### Positive influence

Why was this necessary? One explanation is that this magnified the effect of Moshe's message [to prepare for *Matan Torah*] on the *men*: For as we clearly see for ourselves, it is human nature for the conduct of the entire household to depend upon the *woman*. She is the "mainstay" and foundation of the home, and she influences the entire household – sons and daughters, and her husband as well...

This she does by using the unique skill and talent with which women are endowed – the art of influencing others in a gentle, persuasive manner, with feeling and warmth, ensuring that her words are accepted and absorbed within the inner hearts of those around her, having a long lasting effect.

... Therefore, we should prepare afresh each year, taking the same approach used for the Giving of the Torah at Sinai ... with an emphasis on the superiority of the Jewish woman, each one of whom is the "mainstay" of her home; through her, the entire household is prepared and made fit to receive the Torah. (Ibid.)

29. Address to Chabad's Women and Girls Organization, Iyar 28 5748 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 367).

women and girls is held just prior to Shavuos...<sup>30</sup>

### READY THE FAMILY

- The women are the ones who should launch each year's preparations to receive the Torah from Hashem anew.<sup>31</sup> It is they who are most successful at influencing every member of their family, and they should exercise this ability before Shavuos: A number of days *before* the festival, the entire household should already be filled with Torah-related themes.<sup>32</sup>

### SET THE TONE

- The Jewish woman, being the “mainstay” of each Jewish home, is entrusted with a special mission:

They should determine, in the days leading up to Shavuos, the manner in which their household will accept the Torah afresh – amid new-found joy and new-found enthusiasm.<sup>32</sup>

### INTENSIFY ACTIVITIES

- We should intensify our spiritual preparations with each passing day, just as we do with the festival's physical preparations.
- We should begin a number of days in advance. Then, as we draw ever closer to Shavuos, we should increase our activities, amplify our enthusiasm, quicken our pace and magnify our joy – more and more!<sup>32</sup>

30. Address to Chabad's Women and Girls Organization, Iyar 26 5751 (*Hisvaadyos* p. 243).

31. **An eternal command**

When G-d commanded Moshe – the one who received the Torah and gave it over to the Jewish people for all times – to give the Torah to the Jews (and with such a powerful “giving” that even after over 3300 years have passed, the Jews still receive the Torah annually with enthusiasm and renewed vigor!), G-d told him (and *recorded* this instruction in the Torah) ... to first address the *women*, and only afterwards, the men. In other words, our Receiving of the Torah is first and foremost relevant to the Jewish women – and they will undoubtedly accept it with the greatest *shurem*, enthusiasm, heartfelt feelings and so on – which are all attributes more present in women than men.

Further, since each of them is the “mainstay” of her home, the very atmosphere of the home depends upon them. This is obviously the case with regards to the preparation to receive the Torah afresh... (Address to Chabad's Women and Girls Organization, Iyar 28 5748; *Hisvaadyos* p. 366.)

32. *Ibid.*, p. 367.

### EREV SHAVUOS GATHERING

- [On Shabbos, Erev Shavuos 5748, the Rebbe stated:] It is worthwhile and fitting that, before Shavuos commences, the women to should gather<sup>33</sup> in preparation for the Giving of the Torah.<sup>34,35</sup>

### EXPLAIN IT TO THE CHILDREN

- Children should be made to understand the great significance of receiving the Torah. They should know that this is something for which we must prepare appropriately. For although G-d chooses to give us His Torah out of His own generosity [and not due to our own merits], nonetheless, He desires that the Jewish people do their *own part* and *ready themselves* to accept the Torah.<sup>36</sup>

## Gather all youth to hear the Ten Commandments

### GUARANTORS MUST BE PRESENT

Our Sages explain the great significance of being present in the synagogue while the Ten Commandments are read from the Torah:

G-d told the Jews, “My children, read this portion each year,

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33. Parshas Bamidbar, 5th Sivan 5748 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 410)

34. After the Minchah service, an announcement was made concerning a women’s gathering during Shabbos, and the Rebbe stated: May it be Hashem’s Will, that the gathering will enjoy truly outstanding success – and as we discussed earlier, it should influence the men as well. (Ibid., p. 411)

See the Introduction to *HaYom Yom*, under the Rebbe’s accomplishments of the year “5748” – “He promoted that women should hold a gathering in preparation for the Giving of the Torah on Shavuos.”

35. ... Preferably, they should do so [today,] while it is still Shabbos, before we enter [Shavuos,] the “time of the Giving of our Torah.” (Ibid.)

36. Parshas Bamidbar 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 252.

#### **Including children**

Just as this is relevant to men and women, so it is applicable to children. If they receive an appropriate Jewish education, then they should also experience this renewal each year; so that upon entering the “days of preparation” for the Giving of the Torah, they should experience new vitality, pleasure and freshness, which will influence their entire year. (Address to Chabad’s Women and Girls Organization, Iyar 28 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 366)

and I will consider it as if you are again standing at Mount Sinai and receiving the Torah!”<sup>37</sup>

The Midrash<sup>38</sup> also explains the important role of the youth in the Giving of the Torah: It was specifically the young children who G-d accepted as the Jewish people’s “guarantors” that His Torah will be kept – and it was only on that basis that He agreed to give His Torah to the Jews.

Before each Shavuos (starting in 5740 [1980]), the Rebbe made a point of repeating the above message and pushed for the gathering of all Jews – and *especially* the children – to hear a reading of the Ten Commandments. This was a primary focus of his Shavuos addresses.

Nevertheless, as the Rebbe once pointed out, this drive is merely *an addition* to all the other equally necessary preparations for Shavuos.<sup>39</sup>

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37. **Not enough**

This teaching appears in *Pesikta DeRav Kahaneh*, on the verse *bachodesh hashlishi* (quoted in *Rokei’ach* 296).

It is similarly stated in *Midrash Tanchumah* (Vayigash 2a), “The Jews said, ‘Our children will be our guarantors.’ And G-d *immediately accepted them* [as guarantors], and gave the Torah to the Jewish people.”

This tells us that even the Jewish people’s intense preparation from Rosh Chodesh Sivan until the sixth of Sivan was not “enough” for G-d; He still demanded “guarantors” who would ensure that the Jews preserve and observe the Torah in future generations as well. Even when the Jews presented *many other* guarantors, G-d still refused to accept any of them.

It was *only* when they declared, “Our *children* will be our guarantors!” that – through and in the merit of the Jewish children – G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish people. (Parshas Bamidbar, Shabbos Mevarchim and Erev Rosh Chodesh Sivan 5746; *Hisvaadyos* p. 408)

38. **From the mouth of minors**

The Midrash states (*Shir HaShirim Rabah* 1:4(1)), “When that the Jews stood ready to receive the Torah, He said to them ... ‘Bring Me good guarantors that you will keep [the Torah] and [then] I will give it to you!’ They replied, ‘Our forefathers will be our guarantors! ... Our prophets will be our guarantors! ...’ (But G-d declined to accept these as guarantors.)

They then declared, ‘Here! Our *children* will be our guarantors!’ G-d answered, “*Now, those are certainly good guarantors! Through them will I give [the Torah] to you.*” And so it is expressed in the verse, ‘From the mouth of minors and nursing infants You established Strength’ – for ‘strength,’ in this case, refers to the Torah, regarding which it is stated, ‘G-d will give *Strength* unto His people.”

39. **Overlooking fundamental activities...**

Now is the appropriate time to raise an issue that stands to be corrected:

### INCLUDING INFANTS

- We should promote the message in each and every location,<sup>40</sup> that every effort should be expended in order to bring all local Jewish children – girls,<sup>41</sup> boys and even tiny infants<sup>42</sup> – to the synagogue on Shavuot, to hear (at least) the reading of the Ten Commandments.<sup>43</sup>

### THEIR SOUL UNDERSTANDS

- While many children may be too young to understand the Torah reading, they nevertheless enjoy the spiritual revelation of reading the Ten Commandments in the synagogue – their *mazal* (soul) sees and comprehends.<sup>44</sup>

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We often discuss how a specific matter should be taken to heart in preparation for a given Yom Tov (or other important date), and we encourage everyone to put effort into that *specific* area. Nevertheless, it is patently obvious that this comes *in addition* to all the other things that need to be done in preparation for Yom Tov. It is just that since these other requirements are so very obviously necessary, that they do not require any mention.

However, it sometimes happens, due to the intense enthusiasm in promoting that specific – *additional* – activity, that the *primary* preparations are all but forgotten about! As a result of this “oversight,” it sometimes happens, that when informing the public of what they have to do for Shavuot, *only* the proposal to bring every Jewish child to the synagogue to hear the Ten Commandments, or to increase in giving Tzedakah before Shavuot, gets publicized – but nothing further!

There is therefore a need to emphasize that the said activities are *additions* to our primary preparations. Clearly, we should publicize the fundamental Shavuot preparations – which are explained in numerous places, in the works of *mussar* and the like (even before we get to Chassidus), and are even included in the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* ... translated into all languages ... explained and elaborated upon in a vast number of Torah sources. It is only due to the darkness of exile that we have to stress that the activities should not remain within the “Torah sources” – but rather, should be implemented in the real world. (Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* pp. 355-356)

40. Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5751 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 241).

41. Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5750 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 216).

42. Even babies “straight out of their cribs” – for they are our guarantors that enable our receiving the Torah. (Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5751; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 241)

43. Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 353.

#### **Sinai repeated**

The Torah is given afresh each year in a *similar manner* to the first time it was given. This is revealed primarily by reading the Ten Commandments from the Torah itself ... therefore, we should listen to this portion being read, with awe and fear – as if we were now standing before Mount Sinai. (*Ma’amar* entitled *Anochi Hashem Elokechah* 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 254)

44. See *Megilah* 3a.



- In addition, their parents are rewarded for bringing them to hear the Ten Commandments [whether or not the children understand].

This is akin to the obligation of *hakhel*,<sup>45</sup> and the *aliyah* (pilgrimage) to the *beis hamikdash* that took place during each of the three annual festivals. In fact, these sacred pilgrimages serve as “the basis for bringing young children to the synagogue”<sup>46</sup> nowadays.<sup>47</sup>

### CREATE SHIFTS TO ATTEND TORAH READINGS

- It may prove difficult to bring the entire family to the synagogue at once in order to hear the Ten Commandments; there is often a need for at least one member to remain at home.

In such a case, some of the family should attend a different synagogue with an earlier or later schedule for reading the Torah – or even the same synagogue, if it offers an additional reading at a later hour. In many communities, it is indeed customary to host more than one prayer service on Shavuot.<sup>47</sup>

## Rosh Chodesh Sivan

### DAY OF DECISION

The Torah relates, “On the third month after the Jews left Egypt, *on this day*, they arrived at the Sinai Desert.”<sup>48</sup> The Talmud<sup>49</sup> explains that “this day” refer to the first of the month – Rosh Chodesh Sivan. The passage then continues “And Israel camped there,” using the singular (*vayichan*) instead of the plural (*vayachanu*) – an indication of the absolute unity that then prevailed; the Jews camped “as one man with one heart.”

This unity caused G-d’s decision to go ahead and give the Jewish people His Torah; as the Midrash relates:<sup>50</sup> G-d

45. See *Chagigah* 3a.

46. Tosefos, end of *Chagigah* 3a.

47. Parshas Bamidbar 5750 (*Hisvaadyos* p. 252).

48. Yisro 19:1.

49. *Shabbos* 86b – quoted in Rashi on the verse.

50. *Vayikra Rabah* 89:9.

declared, “Since the Jews hate divisiveness and love peace, and have formed one, united camp – it is now time to give them My Torah!”

[Chassidus explains the seven weeks of counting the Omer as a process of rectifying a person’s seven character attributes. The Jews reached Sinai on Rosh Chodesh Sivan – the third day of the last week of the Omer. They had already rectified the three primary branches of the last week’s attribute (i.e., *chesed*, *gevurah* and *tiferes* of *malchus*). Hence, their spiritual refinement was now considered complete.]

It is clear from the Midrash that G-d was ready to give the Torah immediately – on Rosh Chodesh Sivan. However, to enable the Jews to become ultimate “receptacles” to receive the Torah, an *additional* preparation was required on their part [in addition to their unity]. These were the detailed preparations carried out between the first and sixth of Sivan, as described in Parshas Yisro – and clearly laid out in the Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch [see Addendum].<sup>51</sup>

### CONSIDER SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DAY

- We should contemplate the above message, explaining the significance of Rosh Chodesh Sivan.<sup>52</sup> The major preparation for the Giving of the Torah begins each year on Rosh Chodesh

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51. Parshas Bamidbar, Shabbos Mevarchim and Erev Rosh Chodesh Sivan 5746 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 406).

52. **Three insights into Rosh Chodesh**

... The significance of Rosh Chodesh is clearly stated in the Torah, “On this day [of Rosh Chodesh] they came to the Sinai desert ... and Israel camped there.” The main preparation for the Giving of the Torah (as the Torah continues to detail ...) then began.

The Oral Torah explains an even greater significance: On Rosh Chodesh, G-d saw them “camped there” (in the singular, indicating complete unity), and declared “Now is the time to give them the Torah!”

... Chassidus presents its deeper significance (*Torah Or, bachodesh hashlishi*): We ready ourselves for the Torah by counting the Omer; “seven weeks shall you count for yourselves” [rectifying another of the seven attributes or character traits each week]. On Rosh Chodesh, the Jews entered the *third* day of the *seventh* week [i.e., they had rectified the main components of the final attribute – *chesed*, *gevurah* and *tiferes* of *malchus*]. They could now be considered as having already counted [and rectified] that entire last week – and were therefore ready and fit to receive the Torah. (Rosh Chodesh Sivan, night and Motzei Sivan 3 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 279)

Sivan.<sup>53</sup>

This awareness will add much to the *quality* of our preparations.<sup>54</sup>

### STUDY THE SHAVUOS MA'AMOR

- It is worthwhile and fitting to study the Chassidic discourse entitled *bachodesh hashlishi* (“In the third month...”).<sup>55</sup> We should begin studying with *eagerness*, on the actual day of Rosh Chodesh – and then steadily advance in its study over the course of the next few days.<sup>51</sup>

### EXPLAIN MA'AMOR TO ALL

- We should publicize the directive to study this discourse in every location, and it should be implemented in actuality. We should make it clear that studying the discourse is relevant to each man, woman and child. It is something we can teach and explain to every Jew, each on their own level.<sup>56</sup>

### COMPLETE THE FINAL STEPS TO MATAN TORAH

- In his *Shulchan Aruch*, the Alter Rebbe states: Immediately after Rosh Chodesh [Sivan], Moshe began to busy the people with preparations for receiving the Torah.<sup>57</sup>

The *Alter Rebbe* then continues and explains at length the

#### 53. No small matter

... Rosh Chodesh is the third day in the seventh week to the counting of the Omer, close to the completion of the service of counting along with all of its details – including the result, “...May abundant bounty be bestowed upon all the worlds...” The Jewish people, for their part, now constitute a “fitting, pure and holy receptacle” within which to receive the Torah. [This elaborate preparation is necessary, because the Torah] is G-d’s Wisdom and Will that has been drawn down and revealed within all of Torah’s details – down to the ink used to inscribe its words on parchment. (Ibid.)

54. Ibid., p. 380.

55. *Torah Or*, Parshas Yisro, beg. of p. 66c.

#### 56. Even to minors

... Just as the general concept of the Giving of the Torah is relevant to each Jew, even children – at least as far as our obligation to educate them in Torah is concerned. In truth, it was specifically due to the children – who were under the age of obligation to observe the Torah and Mitzvos at the time – serving as our guarantors, that the Torah was given to the entire nation ... The same applies to our study of the discourse *bachodesh hashlishi*. (Ibid.)

57. Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, Orach Chaim 494:20.

various stages of preparation that took place on the final days leading up the Giving of the Torah.

Superficially, this account appears to be historical in nature; however, its inclusion in a Code of Law indicates that it has a legal implication: It is an instruction for each of us to follow the same path of preparation for the annual Giving of the Torah, mirroring each stage in which Moshe guided the Jews back then.<sup>58</sup>

### **MORE EACH YEAR**

- Our Sages taught that there should always be growth in the realm of holiness and spirituality.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, each year's efforts in preparations for Shavuot should *surpass* that of the previous year.<sup>58</sup>

### **FROM ROSH CHODESH, WE SHOULD ADD FURTHER IN:**

- 1) *Ahavas yisrael* and *achdus yisrael*, love and unity amongst Jews<sup>60</sup> - reflecting the way in which the Jewish people camped at Mount Sinai on Rosh Chodesh Sivan – “like one man with one heart.”<sup>61</sup>

- 2) The concept of prefacing *na'aseh* (“We will do!”) to *nishmah* (“We will hear!”).<sup>62</sup> This event, which took place on the fifth of Sivan, represents the *bitul*, self-nullification, and the unconditional acceptance of G-d's commandments.<sup>60</sup>

- 3) Torah – the very thing for which we are preparing ourselves!

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58. *Ma'amar* entitled *Anochi Hashem Elokecha 5749; Hisvaaduyos* pp. 253-254, with fn. 36.

[This is based on the principle concerning any event commemorated in the Jewish calendar, that the spiritual revelations that occurred at the original event are re-awakened and shine forth into the world – depending on our proper observance of the occasion.]

However, there remains a need to clarify (based on the above) why the Alter Rebbe failed to include the important detail that the Jews preceded *na'aseh* (“We will do!”) to *nishmah* (“We will hear!”) in his description... (Ibid.)

59. See *Shabbos* 21a; *Yoma* 12b; *Megillah* 9b; *Menachos* 39a.

60. Parshas Bamidbar 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 226.

61. Rashi to Shemos 19:2.

62. See Shemos 24:7.

We should most definitely increase our study of Torah.<sup>63</sup>

### PROVIDE *YOM TOV* NEEDS

- Before each festival, we are obligated to provide the needy with their festival requirements. However, this obligation assumes additional prominence before the festival of Shavuot:

Our Sages state, “All agree that on Shavuot we are required to enjoy the festival *physically* as well [as spiritual service],” and “we gladden ourselves on the festival with a feast.”

Moreover, providing the needy with their requirements enhances their ability to receive the Torah; as our Sages state, “The Torah was only given to those who ate the manna” and were therefore freed from the concerns of making a livelihood.<sup>64</sup>

### TORAH, *AVODAH*, *TZEDAKAH*

- To ready ourselves for the Giving of the Torah, we should add in each of the “three pillars upon which the world stands:<sup>65</sup> Torah study, prayer and acts of kindness.” The last of these

63. *Ma'amar* entitled *Anochi Hashem Elokecha 5749; Hisvaaduyos* pp. 253-254.

64. **Bring an offering according to your means**

... This is also true for the *donor*, for one is expected to bring offerings when visiting the *Beis HaMikdash* during each festival, “in accordance with his wealth.” (Rosh Chodesh Sivan, Night and Motzei Sivan 3 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* pp. 390-391) One’s ability to bring an abundance of sacrifices is a result of his having received an abundance of material blessing. This is specifically relevant to a *Yom Tov*, when we are obligated to bring an abundance of sacrifices ... as it is stated, “It is a commandment to bring according to one’s wealth” ... Now, from all festivals, this obligation is extra prominent regarding Shavuot – the subject of the above verse. (*Ibid.*, pp. 382-383)

65. **Justifying the universe**

... Just as the existence of the universe was firmly established by the original Giving of the Torah. As our Sages state on the verse, “the Earth was fearful and calmed,” that [from the beginning of Creation] until the sixth of Sivan “the Earth was fearful”; but on the sixth of Sivan, when the Jews accepted the Torah, it was finally “calmed.” [The purpose of all existence is only for the sake of the Jews and the Torah they observe. So the existence of all Creation remained in doubt and unjustified until the Jews actually accepted the Torah.] Similarly, each Shavuot brings an *addition* in G-d’s giving, and in our receiving, the Torah. So, too, greater validity is given to the universe’s existence each year ... Therefore, to ready ourselves for the Giving of the Torah, we should add in each of the “three pillars upon which the world stands: Torah, prayer and acts of kindness.” (*Ma'amar* entitled *Anochi Hashem Elokecha 5749; Hisvaaduyos* p. 255)

categories especially includes giving Tzedakah.<sup>66</sup>

### KEEP GIVING

- In order to receive the Torah in an even superior state of completeness, we should make a determined resolution to increase in Tzedakah; again and again – and a third time too!<sup>67</sup>

### EREV SHAVUOS TZEDAKAH

- We should give extra Tzedakah on the day before Shavuos.<sup>68</sup> By raising our normal Tzedakah contributions to a completely new level (creating a *pesichah chadashah*, “new opening”) on this day, we will open new spiritual channels of blessing from G-d.

These new channels will allow His bountiful blessings in all matters to flow more generously – from His “full, open, holy and generous hand.”<sup>69</sup>

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66. Not only is Tzedakah one of the pillars of the world, but it also includes the entire Torah (as explained in *Torah Or, Ma'amar bachodesh hashlishi*). (Ibid.)

67. Tzedakah is associated with the Giving of the Torah; as the Alter Rebbe explains, ... “Tzedakah includes the entire Torah, which is itself referred to by the name ‘Tzedakah.’” (Rosh Chodesh Sivan 5749; *Hisvaadyos* p. 241) See also night of Sivan 4, *ibid.*, p. 249.

68. *Ma'amar* entitled *Anochi Hashem Elokecha 5749* (*Hisvaadyos* p. 255).

#### Three crowns at Sinai

Note the statement in *Ma'amar* entitled *Tze'edah u'R'edah 5677* (p. 225) and 5712 – that in addition to the two “crowns” given to the Jews at Sinai, one for declaring *na'aseh* (“We will do!”) and the other for declaring *nishmah* (“We will hear!”), there was also a *third* crown for *preceding na'aseh to nishmah*.

#### King and princes

There it is explained that these are the same three crowns referred to in *Vayikra Rabah* (Parshas Kedoshim 24:8) – two of which (i.e., the crown of *na'aseh* and the crown of *nishmah*) the King (G-d) placed on the heads of his sons (the Jewish people). He placed the third crown (the crown of “preceding *na'aseh to nishmah*”) on His own “head.”

#### Three pillars

As is known (for example, see *Sefer Hama'amarim 5679*, p. 387 and 395), these three crowns are also the three fundamental pillars of Torah study, prayer and acts of kindness. Clearly, then, these three activities are especially relevant to the fifth of Sivan – the day on which the Jews preceded *na'aseh to nishmah*, thereby eliciting these crowns. (Ibid., fn. 46)

69. **Unlimited**

After all, the Giving of the Torah began with the declaration, *anochi Hashem Elokecha asher hotzeiticha Mei'eretz Mitzraim*, “I am Hashem your G-d, Who took you out from the land of Egypt (*mitzraim*).” This declaration removed us from all limitations (*mitzarim*), causing us to become united with *Anochi*, “I am” (i.e., G-d’s Essence) – the *Giver* of the Torah... (Ibid., pp. 255-256)

**RESOLVE TO ACT UNCONDITIONALLY**

- On the day before Shavuos, we should contemplate the need to accept G-d's commands unconditionally – even before we fully understand them.<sup>70</sup>
- This contemplation should lead to practical results: However we serve G-d, we should always begin with practical implementation (action), and only then work to gain a complete intellectual understanding of the matter.<sup>71</sup>

**Tikun Leil Shavuos****ULTIMATE REPAIR**

Our Sages tell us that the entire Jewish nation overslept on the morning of Shavuos – the very morning that G-d was to give them the Torah! Since then, until this day, we seek to rectify this incident by staying awake all night on the first night of Shavuos, reciting a digest of holy writings. These collected verses and teachings are referred to colloquially as the *tikun*,

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70. See Shemos 24:7.

71. **A most auspicious time**

Although the fifth of Sivan is Erev Yom Tov, and we are preoccupied with festival preparations, however, there is ... not (such) a dominance of the forces of evil as on a regular day. It is therefore a *most auspicious time* to accomplish everything necessary to advance in Torah study, prayer, etc. (Ibid., p. 254)

This was the case on the fifth of Sivan, even *before* the Torah was given. A similar occurrence takes place annually [but on a far greater level, since we now have the Torah]. (Parshas Bamidbar, Shabbos Mevarchim and Erev Rosh Chodesh Sivan 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 221)

**Significance of Erev Shavuos**

People do not pay close attention to the fact that the Jewish people's act of preceding *na'aseh* to *nishmah* occurred on a *separate day unto itself* – not on the sixth of Sivan when the Torah was given), but rather, on the fifth. This act comprises a *separate* aspect of divine service in its own right.

Further, the Jews *slept* on the eve of the sixth, for as the Midrash relates, the Jews *slept* on the night before the Giving of the Torah. That sleeping constituted a legal *interruption* (*hefsek*) between the day of their declaration and the day they received the Torah.

True, their sleeping was in fact an extremely exalted mode of service, whereby their souls ascended on High to “draw life and study Torah in the Heavenly realms.” Nevertheless, *any* form of sleep is a *hefsek* – as is seen in the laws of service in the *Beis HaMikdash*, where sleeping overnight constitutes a formal interruption and loss of focus, which requires the Kohen to re-immense... (Ibid., p. 228)

“rectification.” Indeed, the *tikun* is a spiritual remedy that fixes *everything* that needs to be repaired.<sup>72</sup>

### ALL SHOULD RECITE ENTIRE *TIKUN*

- We should encourage *all* Jews to read the *entire tikun* – including those who feel that they could “better” spend their time in a more in-depth study of Torah...<sup>73</sup> For the *true* preparation for receiving the Torah is to recite the *entire tikun leil shavuos* from beginning to end.<sup>74</sup> If a person was not particular to do so in past years, he should resolve to say the entire *Tikun* from now on.<sup>75</sup>

72. Roshei Devarim to the second day of Shavuos 5751.

73. **Counting Mitzvos late at night**

... [I wish] to *negate* the opinion of those who claim, “Why should we ‘squander’ our time by reciting the *tikun*?!” They maintain that they could spend the same time on the *in-depth study of hemshech ayin-beis* [a series of complex Chassidic discourses] or something similar from the Torah’s inner teachings – instead of simply *reciting* the *tikun* and *counting* the 316 Mitzvos...

Note the precise description of “counting” the Mitzvos: Generally speaking, by the time one reaches the list of Mitzvos (at the conclusion of the *tikun*), the night is almost over; he is already thinking about going to immerse in the Mikvah, and prepare himself for his morning prayers – including hearing the reading of the Ten Commandments... By then he is exhausted and cannot contemplate the content of each Mitzvah – certainly not their *spiritual* content ... All he can do is simply “*count*” the Mitzvos... (Parshas Bamidbar 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 409)

74. **The rectifier**

Its importance is emphasized in the name by which it is called according to Jewish custom (which, by definition, constitutes a part of Torah), *tikun leil shavuos*. (Ibid.)

Since the Halachic authorities call it “the *tikun*,” its theme is evidently to rectify *everything* that needs correction. (Roshei Devarim to second day of Shavuos 5751)

The *tikun leil shavuos* rectifies and completes all matters in an everlasting manner ... and does so amid *ta’anug* (pleasure). (Roshei Devarim to the second *farbrengen* of Parshas Naso, Sivan 12 5751)

75. **He read it twice...**

The *Tikun* contains excerpts of the Written Torah and sections of the Oral Torah ... concluding with the count of the Mitzvos ...

It is not demanded that everyone read the *entire tikun* twice – on *both* nights of Shavuos ... We have indeed heard of such a practice, such as the conduct of Reb Hillel Paritcher. For Reb Hillel was extremely scrupulous and exceedingly zealous in observing the Mitzvos, and he therefore saw a need to read the *tikun* on the *second* night of Shavuos as well as the first. Now, Reb Hillel undoubtedly had his reasons for doing so, despite the fact that we have not heard of this custom being practiced by any of the Rebbes of Chabad. The one exception was the Rebbe Rashab, who was once forced to visit a health spa and felt lacking in some



**CORRECTIONS:**

• At the end of the *tikun*, there are Kabbalistic excerpts from *sefer yetzirah* and *zohar* pertaining to the Giving of the Torah and Shavuos. In many prints of the *tikun*, these excerpts contain a number of mistakes. Those using these editions should note these corrections:<sup>76</sup>

1) The end of the excerpt from *sefer yetzirah* reads:

”נאמנת בפנים . . אחד בפה ואחד בלב” .

This is incorrect, in my opinion: Not only does it strangely fail to conclude on a positive note, but it also fails to make sense! Rather, it should read according to the many books of *sefer yetzirah* that are printed as a separate volume:

” . . נאמנת ג' רעות ללשון דיבור רע והמלשין והמדבר אחד בפה ואחד בלב ג' טובות ללשון שתיקה ושמירת הלשון ודיבור אמת”

2) In many version of the *tikun* (including the Slavita edition), there is a quote from Rashbi, beginning, ”אנן בחביבותא תליא מילתא דכתיב כו” . This quote concludes with two passages. However, in the original source in *zohar*, a *third* passage appears. The *tikun* should therefore be amended to read:

”אנן בחביבותא תליא מילתא דכתיב ואהבת את ה' אלקיך וכתיב מאהב ה' אתכם וכתיב אהבתי אתכם אמר ה'...”

**BRING A CORRECTION SHEET WITH YOUR TIKUN**

• We should publicize these amendments and print a correction sheet with the accurate excerpts.<sup>77</sup> Since we are permitted to carry on Shavuos, we can bring to the *tikun* to the synagogue together with a copy of the correction sheet.<sup>78</sup>

exalted matters in the course of his rigorous journey. That year, he also spent the second night of Shavuos engaged in the exalted practice of saying the *tikun*.

However, regarding the *first* night of Shavuos – I personally witnessed, as did many others, how the Leader of the Generation would read the *entire tikun*. No-one examined to see whether or not he said every word, but apparently he did read the *entire tikun* from beginning to end... (Roshei Devarim to Parshas Bamidbar, Sivan 5 5751)

76. Parshas Bamidbar 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 409. See *Likutei Sichos*, vol. 28, p. 315.

77. Now is the time to give a *yasher ko'ach* (thank you) for publicizing these amendments by printing a correction sheet ... as well as for publicizing the directive to provide festive provisions for those who need it, and to bring children to the synagogue on Shavuos. (Parshas Bamidbar 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 409)

78. **Soul-food**

... Particularly as this is a matter of *ochel nefesh*, providing food – literally, “food for the soul,” which we are permitted to prepare on Yom Tov (unlike Shabbos). The *tikun* is *spiritual substance for the soul*. (Ibid.)

### THE WAY TO READ THE *TIKUN*

- Chassidus<sup>79</sup> explains that at the Giving of the Torah, each Jew was given the ability [to study Torah on a level] that “the Torah law that leaves their mouths is the very word of G-d that was told to Moshe at Sinai.”

Further, our Sages state that “whoever reads and studies Torah, causes G-d to read and studies in conjunction with themselves.”<sup>80</sup> When a Jew is engaged in Torah, he should “not consider the words he utters to be his own, but rather, the literal word of G-d!”<sup>81</sup>

When we read or study Torah with all this in mind, “awe and fear will fall upon him as if he had received the Torah today at Sinai” – causing us to study “with the same awe, fear, trembling and perspiration, as we experienced at Sinai.”<sup>82</sup>

### REMIND EVERYONE

- It is now just a few hours away from “the time of the Giving of the Torah.” We should once again remind everyone to prepare – mainly, by studying Torah in the proper manner, “with the same awe, fear, trembling and perspiration, as we experienced at Sinai” as if we had just received it this very day.
- And *that* is how we should recite the *tikun leil shavuot*!<sup>81</sup>

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79. **Repeating G-d’s words**

Chassidic discourses (see *Torah Or*, Yisroh 67b ff. – *Ma’amar* entitled *bachodesh hashlishi* 5749) explain the fact that the Torah was given in a desert (*midbar*): The word *midbar* shares the root of *dibur*, “speech” – with an additional letter *mem* (*mem*). So *midbar* is exchangeable with *midaber*, meaning speech that comes forth automatically, of its own accord.

For [when one studies Torah,] his speech “does not come forth as if it is his own speech, but rather, as ‘my tongue will answer after *Your* speech’”: The Torah is “*Your* speech” and “my tongue” simply “answers,” like one who repeats words dictated by someone else [in this case, G-d Himself]. The power for this was given to us at the Giving of the Torah.

80. See also *Tanah D’vei Eliyahu Rabah*, beg. of ch. 18; *Yalkut Shimoni Eichah* 247:1034.

81. Parshas Bamidbar, Sivan 5 5748 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 403).

82. For example, *Berachos* 22a.

### THIS APPROACH IS FOR JEWS OF EVERY LEVEL

- Approaching Torah study (or recital) in the manner described above applies to each Jew, elderly and young alike, regardless of their present level of Torah knowledge. Indeed, it applies equally even to one who has absolutely no idea what he is reading.<sup>83</sup>

### LAST MINUTE REMINDER

- There are a few hours left until we recite the *tikun*. We should use this time to influence and arouse everyone we can reach to recite the *tikun* as if the words being read are right now being transmitted to us at Mount Sinai – along with full awe and trepidation on our part...<sup>84</sup>

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#### 83. **When ignorance is a virtue**

... On the contrary! In certain regards there is an *advantage* to one who does not know what he is reading: For when a Jew understands the translation of the words, and certainly if he has a deeper comprehension of the subject, then when he reads the *tikun*, he recites the passages of the Ten Commandments with *far greater enthusiasm and passion* than the rest of the passages from that section (Parshas Yisro) – and *certainly* with more enthusiasm than the passages from other sections. However, a Jew who has absolutely no idea what he is reading – why, he recites the *entire tikun* with the *very same* immense enthusiasm and fervor!

All the more so when you tell him that at the *very moment* that he recites these passages from the *tikun*, G-d “*sits [besides Him] and reads them in conjunction with him*” – his passion will *certainly* grow immensely.

Further, regarding words of Torah read by an uneducated person: Not only does G-d “sit and read in conjunction with him” as he recites passages from the *Written Torah* (for which one fulfills the obligation of Torah study even *without* knowing their meaning). Rather, this occurs even when reciting words of *Mishnah* and the like from the *Oral Torah*! [An educated person must *understand* the teachings of the *Oral Torah* to be considered “studying”; an uneducated person, though, can merely recite them.]

We find an example of this on a daily basis: Every person, even one who does not know what he is reading, recites the morning blessing over the Torah – and proceeds to read verses from the *Written Torah* (the priestly blessing), followed by a *Mishnah* from the *Oral Torah*.

An even better illustration is found in the words of the Shaloh (end of 13a ff. – see the note there), concerning the importance of reading the “*names* recorded in the *Written and Oral Torah*.” The same is true of the names of the *tana'im* and *amara'im* (see *Vezos Liyehudah* – part two of *Or Haganuz* – by Maharil HaKohen from Anipoli, beg. of ch.22) ... Merely reading the *names* is considered having studied! (Parshas Bamidbar, Sivan 5 5748; *Hisvaadyos* pp. 403-404)

#### 84. **Spiritual hunger**

We strive to provide [a needy person with] all his festival requirements (food,

### FOCUS ON REALIZATION AND FEELING

- We should explain the concept of this awe, in a way that it will be understood:

“Awe and fear, trembling and perspiration” is *not* attained by external body movements, swaying to and fro and the like... Rather, it requires a *feeling* within one’s *heart* that is a product of understanding intellectually how *at this very moment, G-d Himself is present – and is reading [the tikun] together with you!*<sup>85</sup>

### GRAB THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY

- Regarding influencing others: We need to work quickly, because if we do not effect the individual at the very first opportunity, who knows whether we will meet that person again before the reciting of the *tikun*? And even if we *do* get together before then, who says he or she will then have the time to listen...<sup>86</sup>

## Tahaluchah

### SPREADING JOY

The practice of *tahaluchah* was instituted by the Previous Rebbe: The Chassidim would leave their own neighborhoods towards the conclusion of the major festivals – and walk to other congregations and communities to promote festive joy there.

The Rebbe held this practice in high esteem and strongly encouraged its implementation on each of the three major festivals – Pesach, Shavuos and Sukkos.

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drink and the like) in generous measure – particularly as “all the Sages agree that on Shavuos we require *lachem*, “for yourselves,” i.e., *physical* pleasure by “rejoicing on the festival with a feast.” Similarly, we should strive to provide his *spiritual* needs. Of immediate concern, this means ensuring that he prepares to receive the Torah appropriately. Therefore, we should use this time to influence and arouse everyone we can reach to recite the *tikun* as if the words being read are right now being transmitted to us at Mount Sinai – along with full awe and trepidation on our part. (Ibid.)

85. Ibid., p. 405.

86. Ibid.

## GATHER JEWS AND REJOICE

- It has been our Yom Tov custom of many years to visit other Jews in the synagogues and study-halls of different communities, in order to augment the joy of the festival by uniting many Jews of varying communities.

## DISSEMINATE TORAH

- This is especially so by saying and distributing<sup>87</sup> words of Torah, from both the “revealed” and inner teachings – since “the statues of G-d are upright; they gladden the heart.”<sup>88</sup>

## FAMILY, GUESTS – AND *TAHALUCHAH*

- Although, we are expected to rejoice with our families on Yom Tov, as well as with our guests (whom we cannot simply leave while we go elsewhere<sup>89</sup>) – nevertheless, we can undoubtedly arrange to participate in the *Tahaluchah* in such a manner that will not detract from our families and guests’ Yom Tov joy...<sup>90</sup>

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### 87. Do your footwork

The divine service that applies to one’s *feet* is relevant on Shavuos as well. For example, dancing with one’s feet to rejoice in the festival, or walking to other synagogues to bring joy to other Jews – which includes repeating and distributing Torah ideas regarding Shavuos, arousing people to study Torah, give their children a Torah-true education and the like. (Second day of Shavuos 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 288)

Disregarding the obligation of “physical pleasure on Yom Tov,” there were a number of people who wore out their feet in order to go and bring joy to other Jews on the last night of Pesach... They specifically went to other synagogues and study-halls, and through causing the men to rejoice in the men’s section, they also had an affect on those in the women’s section – including the children there. Moreover, they connected the rejoicing with words of Torah – either verbally or by distributing printed material – regarding which it is stated, “they gladden the heart.” (Roshei Devarim to Acharon Shel Pesach 5751)

88. Aharon Shel Pesach, fn. 1 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 79).

89. ... That would run contrary to the *mitzvah* of welcoming guests, which is “greater than greeting the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence).”

90. Second day of Shavuos 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 288.

## ADDENDUM

Below is a letter sent by the Rebbe to Jews worldwide, dated Rosh Chodesh Sivan 5749 (*Hisvaaduyos*, pp. 235-236):

To the sons and daughters of Israel everywhere, may Hashem bless them,

*Shalom u'vrachah!*

The Torah relates that “in the third month after the Children of Israel left Egypt, on this day” – the day of Rosh Chodesh Sivan – “they came to the Sinai Desert; and Israel camped there.” The word “camped” is written in the singular (lit., “he camped”), which as our Sages explain indicates that the Jewish people were “like one man with one heart.” They camped “facing the mountain” – in order to receive the Torah.

On the second day of Sivan the Jews were told, “And you shall be unto Me” – which includes both a command and a promise – “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

On the third day, they were given the command to confine their movements – “guard yourselves lest you ascend the mountain...”

On the fourth day, they were given the command of abstinence from materiality and physicality – “today and tomorrow [the fifth of Sivan as well],” and were commanded “to prepare yourselves” during these [two] days for the actual day when they would receive the Torah.

On the sixth of Sivan the Torah was actually given.

These days are “recalled [appropriately] and [thereby re-] accomplished” each year like new – and new in actual fact; [culminating in the] “receiving the Torah with joy and with inwardness.”



מוקדש

לכ"ק אדמו"ר מלך המשיח



לזכות

הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' יוסף משה בן חי' ברכה שי'  
לרפואה שלימה וקרובה

ולזכות

הרה"ח הרה"ת ר' משה חיים בן פיגה שי'  
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