

The
CHASSIDUS
PERSPECTIVE
with Reb Yoel Kahn

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ONE DAY LATER

Shavuos is unique in that the Torah does not pinpoint the date when it should be celebrated. Instead, the Torah tells us to celebrate Shavuos on the fiftieth day of the Omer. Today, when we have a fixed calendar, Nissan is always 30 days and Iyar is always 29 days, so Shavuos will always occur on the 6th of Sivan. However, in the era when Rosh Chodesh was established based on the testimony of witnesses who saw the new moon, Shavuos would occur either on 5 Sivan (if both Nissan and Iyar were 30 days), on 6 Sivan, or on 7 Sivan (if both months were 29 days).

Now, the Jews left Mitzrayim on a Thursday and received the Torah on Shabbos (seven weeks and two days later). This is unlike nowadays, when Shavuos is always seven weeks and *one* day after the first day of Pesach. The reason is because that year, both Nissan and Iyar were 30 days, resulting in the Torah being given on the *fifty-first* day of the Omer, and not on the fiftieth! Why do we say “Zman Matan Toraseinu” on Shavuos, if the Torah was not given on the fiftieth day of the Omer?

The Alter Rebbe explains that this is not a problem, because Matan Torah is not associated with a specific date since the Omer. Since the Torah was given on 6 Sivan, we say “Zman Matan Toraseinu” on that date. However, this is only true according to the Chachomim; according to Rabbi Yossi the Torah was given on 7 Sivan. According to this opinion, whatever we decide to follow—be it the amount of days since the Omer or the days of the month—the day the Torah was given is one day *after* the day we say “Zman Matan Toraseinu”!

The Magen Avraham explains that the reason Hashem gave us the Torah one day later was to hint to the second day of Yom Tov, celebrated by Jews in the Diaspora. But this requires further explanation: If so, the second day of Shavuos should be the main Yom Tov, because *it* is the day the Torah was actually given!

TRUE ELEVATION

The Midrash tells us that before Matan Torah, there was a Divine decree that did not allow what is Above to descend below and what is below to ascend Above. Matan Torah achieved two distinct accomplishments: what is Above can now descend

below, and what is below can now ascend Above.

In what way is ascending Above different from receiving what has descended from on High? If mortal creations merit to experience a Divine revelation, isn't that itself the greatest elevation possible? The Midrash clearly says differently: Despite having experienced the Divine revelation of Matan Torah, it was necessary for there to be a second step, in which the elevation of those below comes from within.

This can be explained by means of an analogy. When the sun shines, although the world is illuminated, it has not actually changed. The earth is essentially a dark place by day just as it is at night. Its present illuminated state is not due to a concrete change that has been effected within it, rather it is because of an outside influence—the sun's rays.

Even something received internally will not necessarily change the recipient. Let's take the example of a teacher imparting an intellectual idea to a student. Even if the student understands the idea well and can repeat it perfectly—the idea has become part of him—it's possible that when presented with a new topic he will be unable to grasp it on his own, nor will he be able to come up with an original innovation. This shows that although

the student has learned many ideas, his thought process has remained the same and has not risen to the teacher's level.

Even if the student is able to explain new concepts independently, it's possible that it is based on ideas he heard from the teacher. The ultimate sign that the mentor has succeeded in elevating the student is when the latter's subsequent innovations are his original thoughts.

HASHEM'S INNER THOUGHTS

One of the areas where this idea is expressed is in Torah Sheba'al Peh. Torah Sheba'al Peh is comprised of various parts. One part is the *mesorah*, the explanations Hashem transmitted to Moshe orally together with Torah Shebichsav. For example, together with the written words *pri eitz hadar*, Hashem explained to Moshe that this refers to the esrog. Throughout history this was

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never a matter of debate, because it was told to Moshe explicitly.

A second part are the new laws derived by means of the thirteen principles with which the Torah is expounded upon. Using the methods of *kal vachomer*, *gezeirah shavah*, and so on, Chazal deduced new laws from those written clearly in Torah. Since these laws are centered on the Sages' understanding, they can be the subject of dispute (although both opinions are *divrei Elokim chaim*). However, these laws are not entirely original, as they are based on the thirteen principles given from Above (similar to the student's explanation based on an idea he heard from his mentor).

But then there is a third part—the *takanos* of Chazal (e.g., *netilas yadayim* and reading the *megilah*). These *takanos* were not transmitted explicitly, and they are not based on the thirteen principles either; they originate entirely from Chazal themselves. When Hashem gave us the Torah, he gave us the power to ascend Above until we adopt Hashem's thought process, so to speak, and can institute new *takanos*.

This is why the Gemara refers to Chazal as "*sofrim*." A *sefer* is a book, in our case—the Torah, and the *sofer* is the one who wrote the book—Hashem. There are certain ideas Hashem transcribed in the Torah, and there are other ideas that are not written clearly but can be deduced from what is transcribed in the book. But then there are the ideas that were not expressed even via implications and allusions. Chazal toiled to grasp even those deep ideas that remained within the *sofer* and never made their way to the *sefer*.

SIX AND SEVEN

Let's return to the opinion of Rabbi Yossi, who states that the Torah was given on 7 Sivan.

Why was the Torah given one day later? Originally, Hashem instructed the Jews to prepare for two days. However, Moshe added a third day on his own initiative. Hashem subsequently consented to this addition, as evidenced by the fact that he revealed Himself on Har Sinai on 7 Sivan.

At the end of the six days of Creation, the Torah says, "And it was night, and it was day—the sixth day." The Gemara explains that

Hashem made a condition with Creation: "If the Jews will accept the Torah on 'the sixth day' of Sivan, good; but if not, I will revert you to nothingness."

Tosefos asks: How can this be reconciled with the opinion of Rabbi Yossi, that the Torah was given on 7 Sivan? Tosefos answers that originally the Torah was to have been given on 6 Sivan, and it was delayed since Moshe added a day of preparation.

The statement that 6 Sivan was suitable for Matan Torah is not conceptual. On Hashem's part, 6 Sivan was the day of Matan Torah. It was the day He planned for this event, and on a spiritual plane, it actually occurred (even according to Rabbi Yossi). 6 Sivan thus marks the day when we receive what is given to us from Above.

Moshe's independent addition of a third day represents our ability to elevate ourselves until we can add and innovate on our own. 7 Sivan thus marks the beginning of our *avodah* to ascend Above and add to what we were given.

WHY THE DELAY?

These two facets of Matan Torah replay themselves each year, on 6 and 7 Sivan respectively: 6 Sivan is when we experience Matan Torah as it comes from Above, and 7 Sivan celebrates Matan Torah as it is initiated from below.

6 Sivan, the first day of Yom Tov, is *me'deoraysa*, while 7 Sivan, the second day, is *midrabanan*. Hashem is the One who invests the first day of Yom Tov with *kedushah*. The holiness of the second day, however, comes from *us*: Chazal instituted that a second day should be celebrated. This demonstrates our ability to take a mundane, *golus'dike* day and transform it into something holy.

This is the meaning of the Magen Avraham's answer that the reason Hashem gave us the Torah on 7 Sivan was to hint to the second day of Yom Tov. The Torah was given one day later because Moshe added a day, showing how we have the power to add in *kedushah* on our own. This is a hint to the second day of Yom Tov which we are the ones who made holy.

For further study, see Likutei Sichos Vol. 4, pp. 1027ff, and fn. 24



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