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**EVEN SHESYA**
SHAVUOS READER

CHAPTER 1

Erev Shavuos: Where the Finite goes Infinite

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The forty-ninth day of the *Omer*, Erev Shavuos, is actually more of an **impasse** than a landmark, as will be discussed. The last day of the *Omer* must be special. It may not be Shavuos itself, but by counting the forty-ninth day we've completed the whole *mitzvah* of *Sfiras HaOmer*. What is the day all about?

Review?!?

The Chassidic work *Siach Sarfei Kodesh* tells us that the forty-eight traits necessary for acquiring Torah, laid out in the *Braisa* in the 'sixth chapter' of *Avos*, each correspond to a day of *Sefira*. Each of the first forty-eight days of *Sefiras HaOmer* parallel one of the forty-eight attributes, and **the forty-ninth day serves as a review for them all.**

The *Siach Sarfei Kodesh's* proposed allusion to *Sefiras HaOmer* in the *Mishnah* seems a bit weak, seeing how the number is off by one. An answer to this lack in symmetry was presented, but it is ostensibly less than satisfying – seemingly almost contrived. This is certainly not the case. When we understand why **the last day of the Omer really is the perfect day to review all of the other traits attained on the preceding days** then we will see that the forty-eight attributes **and their review** perfectly parallel the forty-nine days of counting.

Na'aseh V'nishma

It was on this last day of the *Omer* that the nation uttered the moving words of **Na'aseh V'nishma**, the commitment to uphold the Torah unconditionally and subsequently to fully understand its infinite wisdom, a climactic moment for the Jewish people. It is interesting to note that there is much discussion in the *Aggadic* literature surrounding Shavuos explaining the idea behind **Na'aseh V'nishma**. Why is this, seeing as our people's great proclamation was pronounced on Erev Shavuos, and not Shavuos itself? Furthermore, why did this phrase gain so much significance

and fame? Only days before the people had already affirmed: *kol asher diber Hashem Naaseh*, all that Hashem speaks we will **do!** What makes "Na'aseh V'nishma" more than that previous unconditional commitment?

Quantum Leap

Why is it that even though the Torah says to count fifty days of the *Omer*, we only count forty-nine? As we explained in the "**Sefira Reader**", it is because the fiftieth day is not just one more day. It's the day we reach the Torah – and the Torah is infinite, beyond time and space. As we count *Sefira* we pass over individual milestones, we gain individual attributes. But on the fiftieth day we break through to the infinite – something which cannot be counted and compartmentalized. We are left with a problem. As much progress we may have made with our counting, how do we make the jump from quantifiable finitude to the infinite of the Torah? How is this leap accomplished?

As discussed in the "**Sefira Reader**", the final week of *Sefiras HaOmer* is *Malchus*, accepting the yoke of Hashem's Majesty. This trait is compared to a desert, with open space completely ready to receive. A person who has perfected the trait of *Malchus* has no egocentricity blocking his capacity to accept new ideas and directives.

The forty-ninth of the *Omer* parallels the trait of *Malchus she'b'Malchus* – *Malchus* squared. It is the zenith of *Malchus*, pure unadulterated acceptance. **This is the energy of the day, and what prompted another additional and unique commitment of Na'aseh V'nishma.** How does this energy break through the barrier of infinite? Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin gives us a clue in his book *Nefesh HaChaim*.

Keser Malchus

In *Shaar Alef*, the *Nefesh HaChaim* describes the order of reality according to the Zohar and the Kabbalists. All of the universes and spiritual levels of existence from the highest to the lowest are linked together like a chain. This enables us to climb ever higher as we learn Torah and do the *mitzvos*. Each level – or link in the chain – is itself comprised of ten individual levels: the **Sefiros**. The top level is called **Keser**-crown. It is the will and drive to bring a

not disobey, it did not have the power of *Malchus she'be'Malchus*.

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Shavuos is directly associated with *Na'aseh V'nishma* because its power to come to earth for the Jewish people comes straight from the day before, and therefore is considered the "fiftieth day" because without the forty-ninth day, Shavuos could not be manifest on earth as a day to give the infinite Torah to the Jewish people .

Deepening the Commitment

The *Sach Safrei Kodesh's* understanding of the relationship between the forty-eight ways of acquiring Torah and the forty-nine days of the *Omer* is now crystal clear. The forty-eight days we've passed through and built upon until the last day of counting are all finite units. On the final forty-ninth day we are at an impasse – how do we break through to the infinitude of Torah? **The only way to go forward is by deepening our commitment** – we review the lessons of each day. When we have gone as far as we can and there is no more for us to attain, by deepening our commitment with *Malchus* we will find the new strength and power of the will of *Keser*. This is our divine service on Erev Shavuos.



desired goal from planning, to action, to final reality. *Malchus* is the last step. It is the point upon which all of the energies focus from *Keser* on down. **It's the point where the goal is accomplished.** Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin explains that the energy of *Malchus* becomes the *Keser* for the universe below. We actually express this concept every Friday night when we sing it in *Lechah Dodi*: "*Sof ma'aseh b'machshava techilah*". The final action is in the first thought." This is also the idea behind "*Keser Malchus*." *Keser* is always the *Malchus* of the universe above. The *Nefesh HaChaim* tells us that this idea isn't just metaphysics. It is a practical resource, a tool that we can use, **power we can tap into.** A person may feel stuck. He feels as if he has done as much as he can and he's struggling to break through to become a more refined person. He needs to find new strength, because he feels that he's reached an impasse in his Divine service. What should he do? **Reaccepting Hashem's Will produces a new drive for him, a new stronger will to continue higher.** By accepting the yoke of Heaven on himself once again he's **stepping into Malchus, and that leads him to a new Keser.** Just as *Malchus* on high can build the *Keser* - the Will and determination for a whole new world, so too a man's *Malchus* below can accomplish the same thing. He may have reached an impasse, but by accepting Hashem's kingship on himself once again he can find new reservoirs of strength beyond anything he ever imagined.

The Quantum Leap

This is what happens for all of us upon the completion of *Sefiras HaOmer*. We've been building unit upon unit in order to reach the infinite Torah. The problem is that **no matter how big the quantity, the gap to infinite is still infinite.** When we've reached the final day we've maxed out our units. How will we make the quantum leap? The answer is *Na'aseh V'nishma*. We need to find new strength to make an infinite jump forward. *Na'aseh V'nishma* is on Erev Shavuos, because it's the ultimate mode of acceptance: acceptance for the sake of acceptance – *Malchus she'be'Malchus*. It gives us the ability to make the infinite jump. We proclaimed *Na'aseh V'nishma* because we needed fresh energy from the power of accepting for acceptance's sake. Our earlier declaration of "*Naaseh*" was just to indicate that we would

CHAPTER 2

Sensory Crossover

Seeing Sound Hearing Sights

“And the whole nation saw the sounds”(20:14) Rashi brings the Chazal that this is to be read literally **they saw sound and they heard sight!** There was an amazing sensory crossover at the time that Hashem said the ‘Aseres HaDibros’ and what is normally perceived by seeing was heard and what is normally perceived by hearing was seen. What is the purpose of this sensory crossover? What is the message to us?

Torah Shebichtav & Torah Shebaal Peh

As is well-known, the mazal of the month of Sivan is “Teomim”-twins (Gemini) because in this month we got the Torah that is “twins”. There is the written Torah and the oral Torah. Why did Hashem split the Torah into two? Why couldn't it be all written or all oral? This question is related to the question above because the written Torah is learned by **reading which is seeing** and the oral Torah is learned by **listening which is hearing**. To answer our questions, we need to understand the meaning seeing and the meaning of hearing. What is the difference between the information that we get from seeing as opposed to the information that we get from hearing?

Seeing

“Seeing is believing”. When we want testimony, which is the highest form of proof, we want to know what the witnesses **saw**, not rumors they heard. Even when testifying to a person's statement, they must see his face and watch as those words come out of his mouth... hearsay is not testimony. Seeing is the most objective sense that we have for measuring fact. Once something is observed visually whether by the naked eye, or with the aid of a microscope or a telescope, it is an incontrovertible fact that needs to be dealt with.

Seeing vs Hearing

However, as objective as seeing is, it only sees the surface. **Seeing doesn't perceive explanations** as to why things happen, whether the motives behind an action that was done by choice, or the law of nature behind a natural occurrence. **“Why” is invisible and is what the mind attempts to figure out.** Often times we are wrong as to “why”, and that's what we mean by “appearances can be deceiving”. **There are some things that cannot be perceived by sight at all because they are pure ideas like the “right” versus the “wrong”, morality, and ethics.** These are all ideas that we were either **taught** or **figured out**. How are they taught? The ideas are put into words and communicated verbally and received with the sense of hearing. This is the difference between **demonstration** and **explanation**. **Demonstration displays the raw facts. The explanation will always be verbal commentary accompanying the display.** In other words: **Sight perceives “what” - Hearing perceives “why”.** However, the weakness of an idea that can never be visually demonstrated is that it may just be a theory, but not reality. Anything that can't be visually verified can be denied (rightfully or wrongly). Some form of visual demonstration is necessary to establish incontrovertible fact.

The Blind

With this we can understand the tremendous wisdom of the halacha that the **“Suma”-blind man** is considered a fully mentally competent individual and is responsible for all his actions. We rule like the opinion that generally speaking he is obligated and all the Mitzvos except for the particular ones that blind men are distinctly exempt from. However, Chazal have said the blind man is considered like dead in his own lifetime (Nedarim 64B), why? The answer to this is rooted in another fundamental question: The first thing Hashem created was light. Why? There was nothing to see yet and no one to see anything! **My Rebbe Maran HaGaon HaRav Moshe Shapira ZT”L** explained that **light sets the tone of the entirety of existence. What is “existence”? “Existence” is what Hashem wants to show us!** Life is to be experienced and witnessed, not something you hear about. Hence, the first thing created was **“light” the ability to show and demonstrate.** The blind man is mentally competent because since he is able to hear we can teach him wrong from right. Sadly, for him all of life is just **“a thing he hears about”,** he doesn't actually observe it. **The**

essence of experiencing existence is to see it! Not being able to do that makes it as if he is dead in his own lifetime.

The Deaf

A person who was deaf his whole life and never heard may be able to observe life but the explanations for "why and how" life works and, more importantly, pure ideas that cannot be seen like the right versus the wrong are sealed off to him! This is why Chazal gave the "Cheresh"- person who was deaf from birth - the halachik status of someone mentally incompetent just like a minor or an imbecile. A person cannot be held responsible for his actions if he cannot be taught right from wrong. [important note! We are speaking in the days of Chazal, before there were tremendous breakthroughs in the education of the deaf that we have B"H merited in the last few generations. As far as the halachik status of a person who was/is deaf his whole life in this day and age, ask your local Orthodox rabbi!]

Torah Shebichtav

With this we could understand the tremendous Divine wisdom in the fact that we have a "Twin Torah", the written Torah which is seen, and the oral Torah that is spoken and absorbed with hearing. Their different ways of absorption are perfectly parallel to their difference in function. What gets into the written Torah are prophecies. The prophet sees and just like he saw it so also it has to be put in writing for others to see. With this we could understand why the written Torah will not address certain issues that are only addressed in the oral Torah. As the Maharal explains in his first introduction to his Gevuros Hashem: The Written Torah will only address what is seen, and this is the secret why the Written Torah doesn't talk about Olam Haba as being the final and absolute reward of mitzvos. As the Gemara says (Brachos 34b) all the prophets only saw as far as Moshiaich but Olam Haba no eye has seen it except for you Hashem". Olam Haba is "out of line of sight". It's something that we were taught about, not something that can be seen, not even in prophetic vision. On the opposite extreme the written Torah gives the impression as if the reward for Mitzvos is bounty in this world with rainfall, abundant crops, and peace. This is because the Written Torah talks about what you will see, and you will indeed see that when you keep your Mitzvos

you get all these things, even though they are not the real reward for the Mitzvos, only fringe benefits.

Torah Shebaal Peh

The oral Torah provides the in-depth explanation for the mitzvos, and also discusses those ideas that can never be visually apprehended, like that Olam Haba being the real reward for mitzvos. Furthermore, in polar opposite to the Written Torah that stresses reward for Mitzvos that you'll see that you'll get up front, the Oral Torah will discuss a very elevated philosophical idea that's hard for anyone to accept until they reach the very high level of refinement of mind and character: to serve Hashem "L'shma"- because it's the truth - without wanting any reward whatsoever. This is the reason that when Tzadok and Baisus heard this idea which they couldn't accept from Antignus Ish Socho, they rebelled against the Oral Torah where this idea is to be found, but they were able to hold on to the written Torah (even though there's evidence that they did not believe in it either - see Menachos(65A)) where this idea isn't spelled out because it's an elevated concept, and not a visible entity.

Perfect Unity

The necessity for this "twinness" in Torah is because of our human limitations. These experiences are compartmentalized, our eyes only see, and our ears only hear. For the seeing - factual aspect of Torah we have the written Torah and for the explanations and deep ideas and the we have the oral Torah - but we must remember it's all ONE TORAH and it 'divides' into written and oral only because our learning senses of seeing and hearing are divided into eyes and ears. At this great event of receiving the Torah directly from Hashem we were raised above the limits of our senses. The particular significance of this sensory crossover was to show it's all one Torah. The written Torah which is "seen" was "heard" meaning: it is not lacking the deep ideas that in human experience can only be conveyed by speaking and hearing. The Oral Torah that is "heard" was "seen" Meaning: these ideas aren't theory! They are real and solid fact! At this great event we were granted the great experience of perceiving the perfect unity of the Torah.

CHAPTER 3

Giving or Receiving?

“Half and Half” or “Either Or”?

The *Gemora* in *Pesachim* 68b describes an argument between Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Eliezer regarding how to resolve two seemingly contradictory Torah verses that discuss the holidays. One verse says “*Atzeres L’Hashem Elokecha* – A gathering for Hashem your God,” while the other reads “*Atzeres lechem* – a gathering for you.” Which is it? Is our cessation of normal activity during a *yomtov* dedicated to Hashem or to us?

Rabbi Eliezer explains that the Torah is conveying that a person may choose to involve himself exclusively in spiritual activities, or he may optionally spend time on the holiday indulging in meat and wine – *simchas yomtov* – in keeping with the joy of a festival. So the *yomtov* can be dedicated either to Hashem, or optionally to ourselves if we wish.

Rabbi Yehoshua argues, maintaining that the verses are actually *obligating* a person to set aside half of the day celebrating the *yomtov* with food and drink, *in addition* to a half day of spiritual activities. In his opinion *yomtov* is intended for both purposes, so again, there is no contradiction in verse.

The halachic ruling is according to Rabbi Yehoshua’s opinion. In keeping with this understanding, the Rambam writes that on *yomtov* one should pray and study until midday, and the rest of the day is celebrated joyously until night fall. Nevertheless, the Gemara states that even **Rebbi Eliezer would agree that enjoying *yomtov* is obligatory on Shavuos because it “was the day the Torah was given.”**

This would seem counterintuitive. Because Shavuos is the day the Torah was given we should be obligated to rejoice with meat and wine?!? It would seem more in keeping with the theme of the day to minimize our physical pleasures, and focus exclusively on Torah study!

Torah or Nothing

The classical answer to this question is as follows: Rashi in *Bereishis* commenting on the words “*Yom Ha’shishi* – the sixth day” paraphrases the Gemara (Shabbos 88A) that points out that the *heh* in *Ha’shishi* seems grammatically superfluous – it isn’t there in the words referencing the other five days of creation. Chazal answer that the definite article here (the – *heh*) is indicating how the verse is referring to a particular sixth day – the sixth day of Sivan, when the Torah was given. The day the Torah was given is being referenced here because Hashem made a stipulation with the creation: **If the Jewish people accept the Torah then the world can continue to exist, but if not, it must return to *tohu v’vohu* – utter desolation.** There is ample reason for everyone to rejoice, even those who do not have access to Torah learning. The whole of reality would disappear if not for the *B’nei Yisrael* accepting the Torah on Shavuos, **so there is reason to celebrate and indulge with eating and drinking to commemorate our rescue from oblivion.**

Getting or Giving?

Let us build on this classic answer to understand more deeply how Shavuos is a cosmic holiday that is meaningful even for those who do not have access to Torah. We’ll begin with another question concerning the nature of Shavuos. In *davening* and *Kiddush* we refer to Shavuos as “*zman matan Toraseinu* – the time of the giving of our Torah.” Why don’t we say “*kabalas Toraseinu* – receiving our Torah?” Isn’t the main thing that we actually have it now, not that it was given?

Giving vs Receiving

Now let us return to our original difficulty with Rav Eliezer’s position. The Gemara says that since Shavuos “was the day the Torah was given,” even he must agree that enjoying the *yomtov* with meat and wine is obligatory – despite that celebrating on other *Yomim Tovim* in this way was merely a permitted option. As stated above, it would seem that the opposite should be the case. The day the Torah was given should be a day totally dedicated to Torah study! In fact, the *Mishnah* in *Avos* describes forty-eight attributes required for acquiring Torah wisdom. **These attributes include minimizing physical needs and pleasures like eating,**

drinking and sleeping. The *mitzvah* of *simchas yomtov* – enjoying the holiday, is all about adding to and enhancing physical pleasures. This doesn't seem in line with "receiving the Torah". It is true that enjoying the *yomtov* with **physical pleasures is not in line with receiving the Torah.** However, **Shavuos is actually about the giving of the Torah.**

Infinite Giving despite Finite Capacity to Receive
There is an inherent difference between receiving and giving. **Receiving is always limited to what the receiver can maintain, or what his mind can encompass.** A person can deliver a Talmudic discourse to a four year old, but the child won't be receiving anything. Since the Torah is the Will and Wisdom of Hashem, like Hashem Himself, the Torah is infinite. **This means it is impossible to receive the whole Torah.** Even Moshe Rabeinu was not actively conscious of everything contained within the Torah! Still, Hashem, the giver of the Torah, is **omnipotent**, and **He in His infinite ability is able to convey the whole of His transmission even if the receiver is lacking.** If we could only be given what we were capable of receiving we would not have the whole infinite of the Torah. Still, the whole Torah was given. **This is the tremendous joy of Shavuos.** Because of the mystical dynamics of the transmission of the Torah, all the people, for the moment, had prophecy like that of Moshe. They saw Hashem "face to face" so they could realize the truth and clarity of prophecy that Moshe Rabeinu had. They were **supernaturally catapulted** to this level in order to perceive what Moshe was capable of seeing so they could know for certain that the was of divine origin. But this level wasn't a level that they actually had the ability to naturally attain, and therefore it did not stay with them – not only that – **it killed them** and they had to be resurrected (Shabbos 88B) and they begged to have that level removed. **Shavuos is truly the day of the Giving of the Torah.**

Shavuos – the Beginning of the perpetual Giving
Even though our understanding of Torah is limited, the Torah is *lo b'shamayim* – not in heaven. The law is determined by the Jewish Sanhedrin or the Jewish people on the whole. They have been entrusted with the essence of Torah by Hashem, and they are

even empowered to argue with Hashem Himself when it comes to deciding Halachah (see Bava Metzia 59B). The essence of the Torah is given to us, and the law is determined according to how the majority of the Rabbis understand it. Hashem is His infinite ability transferred the very essence of the infinite Torah to us despite our finite capacity. This is only possible because Hashem forces it to be with us – only He could accomplish this, as we do not actually have the vessels to contain the infinitude of the Torah. **Hashem is in a state of constantly giving the Torah to us,** so that it will remain with us. But there is more to this.....

The Newness of Torah

Koheles says: "there is nothing new under the Sun" Chazal explain that "Under the Sun there is nothing 'new' but over the Sun there is 'new' and what is that? that is Torah!". What does it mean that the Torah is 'new'? It was given already, and Hashem 'wrote it' even prior to creation 'black fire on White fire'. What do we mean by 'new'?

What do we mean by 'New'?

"New" does not have to mean that something was just created. "New" means that the experience is fresh, and 'never gets old'. Hashem 'wrote' the whole Torah even before creation, but the **Torah never gets old because it is the will and the wisdom of an infinite power.** Just like Hashem never gets old so also his Torah never gets old. There's always something 'new' for the finite mind to learn from an infinite Torah.

Matan Torah never stopped

In the 'Birchos HaTorah' we sign off "blessed are you Hashem The Giver (present tense) of the Torah". The Maharal explains that the Torah never stopped being given! 'Matan Torah' is perpetual! Since the Torah is Heavenly and infinite it doesn't really belong in this finite world. It tends to 'recoil' back to its natural place in the highest heavens above where the angels are. Hashem is constantly forcing it to be in this finite earthly plane. This explains why without constant review a person forgets his Torah learning. Torah is Heavenly and it is a miracle a mere mortal to have a

grasp on it. **The miracle of retention of the spiritual Torah in the physical mind is in the Merit of constantly reviewing.** That is for the individual. For the Jewish people as a collective Hashem is still forcing Torah to stay on earth.

Infinity

Another angle on this idea is that the Torah is infinite it cannot be 'given' within finite time. Ever since the time of 'Matan Torah' Hashem is constantly in process of revealing the infinite Torah to the world. That's why every generation can see something 'new' in the Torah that wasn't seen by earlier generations. This is **not** because it's a different Torah! It is the same Torah as given at Mt. Sinai, but **Torah is so big and hence constantly in process of 'being given' so it is always 'new'**. Every new day is a new vantage point to be added to what was seen yesterday.

Today

This idea of "every day it should be new to you as if today Torah was given" is not self-deception! It is actually to be in touch with the reality of Torah! **'Matan Torah' initiated a process that is still happening and will never end.** Every new day is to be a new experience of Torah! That's what it means that "every day is as if **today** Torah was given". We are supposed to seek the aspect of Torah that you could see **today**, that you could not have seen yesterday, **because it is being given today!**

Today is to yesterday like experience is to memories

Why does the Torah look the same today as it did yesterday? **The problem is that we are looking at today's Torah with yesterday's eyes!** The difference between 'today' and 'yesterday' is not time, **it is the difference between experiencing and remembering.** Are we currently mid-experience or are we recalling an experience? Once the experience is over, it's just a memory. What is a memory? A finalized defined record of the experience. The memories won't 'grow' or 'change'. They are static and finalized. However, while you are still in the midst of experiencing that is called **'Today'** i.e. in the present. **The experience does not get defined until after it's over when you make it a memory.** But until that point you

are still formulating your impressions of the experience, because you are still living it. **That's what's being alluded to by "on this day" as opposed to "on that day". Are you experiencing Torah in the present or are you remembering Torah?**

Sights and sounds vs meaning

The 'black on white' of the pages is the same 'black on white' as yesterday, and the 'sound bytes' of explanation may sound the same today as they did yesterday. The 'newness' is in the ever unfolding infinite meaning that it takes forever and ever to 'give over', not in the external sights and sounds! Sadly, upon seeing the familiar 'black on white' and hearing the familiar 'sound bytes' we are prompted to recall how we previously understood those sights and sounds. We need to see beyond the familiar 'black and white' and hear beyond the familiar 'sound bytes' to have a **current experience of Torah** and thus experience **"newness"** as opposed to recollections of our previous understandings. (How do we do that? See "Sefira Reader" – entries on Bamidbar)

He Looked in the Torah...

"Istakel b'oraysa u'bara alma – He looked into the Torah and created the world" (Zohar Shemos 161A). We know that Torah contains the entire program for all of reality. This is true even for things that we would call "evil" – the plan for their existence is outlined in the Torah. This is certainly true for things that may not be inherently evil, but they try and tempt us, distracting us from our main goal. When we look at things that tempt us to divert our focus from Torah, **we are only seeing their physicality – this is what distracts us.** When we look at meat and wine, or cheesecake, we do not see the letters of the Torah that are their life force. This is why in order to expand our ability to receive the Torah it is necessary to avoid all distractions and temptations. We must even avoid overindulgence in kosher meat and kosher wine in order to acquire Torah. For this reason minimizing eating and physical pleasures are listed amongst the forty-eight behaviors necessary to acquire Torah. Avoiding physicality expands our capacity to receive the spirituality of Torah by eliminating distractions.

Omer vs Shavuot

During the Omer we are building our capacity to receive Torah and the days of the Omer are parallel to the attributes for us to **acquire**

studying the whole day is not necessary. Our focus is on Hashem the Giver, because Shavuos truly is “the Giving of our Torah.”

CHAPTER 4 Internalizing

Where do we go from here?

After the uplifting days of Shavuos, which commemorate the greatest event in history of unmitigated Divine revelation, one has to wonder where do we go from here? How can there be any moving forward or growth after having the greatest experience possible? Ironically, upon the place where this supreme revelation occurred, there is no trace of that Holiness there. If we would know where Har Sinai really is, there would be no prohibition to ascend the mountain and tread there despite the fact that there was never ever an experience of Divine revelation parallel to what transpired there anywhere else. By contrast, the Temple mount where although the Divine presence was revealed there but nothing comparable to the unmitigated revelation at Sinai, we are prohibited from going there in our impure state, even at the time when the Beis Hamikdash is not standing there. How do we understand this?

Naso & Post - Shavuos

In most years we read Parshas Naso immediately following Shavuos. As we explained, as it is an ancient custom to read Parshas Bamidbar before Shavuos, by the same token, it is of equal antiquity to read Naso directly following Shavuos. What is the connection between Parshas Naso and post-Shavuos?

Why here?

Parshas Naso has a strange combination of topics, it opens up with resuming and finalizing the count of the Levitim and towards the end of the Parsha, it flashes back to events that happened a month before with “**Chanukas HaMishkan**” - the inauguration of

Torah which includes withdrawal from the physical. Shavuos is different. **On Shavuos we are not focusing on our ability to receive. We are reliving how Hashem, with His infinite power, forced the infinite Torah to reside with us.** We are focusing on how Hashem **gave** us the Torah. On Shavuos He revealed the essence of Torah to us. The Jewish people were able to see the words of the Torah in everything, and everything around them was perceived as being a part of the essence of Torah. Hashem was giving the Torah with His infinite power so that even our limited vessels could receive it.

The Joy of Shavuos

Now we can see a deeper connection to the role of partaking in meat, wine and physical pleasures on Shavuos. When we see Hashem revealing the Torah we realize how the whole creation is dependent on it, and would not exist without it. Rav Eliezer is saying that Shavuos is different because **it was the day the Torah was given**, and there is a renewal of access to the revelation that everything has its root in Torah. This is why on Shavuos *simchas yomtov* is a *mitzvah* – even according to Rebbi Eliezer who normally maintains that *simchas yomtov* is merely permitted. **Since the essence of Torah shines forth – even in physical pleasures – it is most appropriate for us to indulge in *simchas yomtov*.**

Indulging on Shavuos reminds us of our focus for the day – Hashem as the **Giver** of the Torah. The rest of the year, especially during the *Omer*, we focus on our capability of receiving the Torah, on perfecting ourselves and increasing our capacity to contain the holy Torah. **On Shavuos we connect to Hashem's unceasing act of constantly giving the Torah.**

On Shavuos we set aside half of the day to indulge because we don't have to worry about eliminating the distractions of the world. We indulge to recognize how on Shavuos we have access to the reality that the world's existence and life force is rooted in the Torah – Hashem gives us the capacity to perceive what we normally can not.

When Hashem uses His infinite power to give His infinite Torah even to His finite people, they can see how everything is Torah –

the Mishkan. Why was the story of the inauguration of the Mishkan put in Naso? Why was it not put either at the end of sefer Shemos or Parshas Tzav & Shemini which talk about the Mishkan being erected and the Kehuna being passed to Aharon. Why was it delayed and saved for this Parsha that we read following Shavuot?

Sandwiched between the count of the Leviim and the “**Chanukas HaMishkan**” are the banishment of the impure from wherever they are restricted to be, laws of gifts that are awarded to the Kohen, Sota, Nazir and Birkas Kohanim. What is the connection between these topics and what do they have to do with the count of the Leviim and the “**Chanukas HaMishkan**”?

“Eirusin” & “Nisuin”

The Pasuk says (Devarim 33:4): “Torah was commanded to us through Moshe as a “**Morasha**” – inheritance unto the congregation of Yaakov”. Chazal tell us “don’t read it “**Morasha**” – inheritance but read it as “**Me’orasa**” – **married**”, as the giving of the Torah married us to Hashem. There is a very important observation to make. As we know, “**Me’orasa**” is from the word “**Eirusin**”, which is when the groom legally acquires the bride, which indeed makes her prohibited unto all other men in the world. However, there’s another step to marriage called “**Nisuin**”, which is the bride going into the Chuppah and entering the domain of the groom. There are many differences in law between only being an ‘**Arusa**’ who had “**Eirusin**” alone and being a ‘**Nesua**’ who had “**Nisuin**” also. An ‘**arusa**’ may be prohibited to all men in the world and carries the death penalty of “**Sekila**”-stoning if she is unfaithful but on the other hand, she is not yet permitted to her groom and does not have the status of being called “**she’eiro hakarov eilav**”-his wife who is close to him, for her Kohen husband to be allowed to defile himself by attending her funeral, as well as other halachik differences that all center around one central idea: **although she is prohibited to the rest of the world, she has not yet become united and close with her husband until she undergoes ‘Nisuin’ when “he takes her into his domain”, which is performed by the bride entering the chuppah.** How do we find “**Eirusin**” and “**Nisuin**” in our relationship to Hashem and the Torah?

Where’s the Admission?

The Gemara says (Shabbos 88B-89A) that the plea that the angels put in for the Torah to remain in Heaven and only accessible to them is alluded to in the Pasuk in Tehillim (8:2) “Hashem, our Lord, how mighty is your Name throughout the earth that you should **place your Glory** on the heavens” . After Moshe bested them in the debate their concession is alluded to in a very similar sounding Pasuk in the same chapter (8:10) “Hashem, our Lord, how mighty is your name **throughout the earth**”. How is this Pasuk a concession? It is a repeat of the first half of their plea to leave the Torah in heavens, albeit the request to “put the Glory upon the heavens” is not mentioned, as the Gemara points out, but **for it to be a full admission, they should have said “put your Glory upon earth”**. How can we be certain that they are conceding to Moshe if they are just saying the same praise that they had said as a preamble to leaving the Torah in heaven?

Sinai vs The Mishkan

The Rishonim comment on the fact that the prohibitions of non-Kohanim and the impure to go into the Mishkan and subsequently the Beis Hamikdash are parallel to the restrictions that there were to ascend Har Sinai at the time that the Torah was being given. The Midrash tells us in Parshas Terumah that Hashem says that once the Torah was given, we acquired Hashem’s Divine presence together with it and that is why following the giving of the Torah, Hashem commands to make the Mishkan. The Divine presence that comes with the Torah needs a home. The idea is that **the great revelation at Sinai did not find a home at Sinai.** It appeared there and forever transformed us into being Hashem’s chosen nation that serves him **which separates us finally and absolutely from the nations of the world.** That Revelation did not get “bottled up” and internalized at Sinai. **It was internalized and brought into our midst with the Mishkan.** In this week’s Parsha, the Pasuk introducing the section of the “**Chanukas HaMishkan**” (7:1) says: “And it was on the day “**kalos**”-completed Moshe to erect the Mishkan...” Rashi brings the Chazal that says that it isn’t written in the Torah scroll as “**kalos**”-completed but rather as “**kallas**”-bride, **that this was like the Jewish people entering the Chuppah.** We’re being taught a great lesson here. The giving of the Torah at Sinai transformed us in a manner that we are separate from all the nations of the world

like a 'Arusa' - a woman who has only undergone "Eirusin", is separated from all the other men in the world. However, the internalization of that Holiness, the closeness and intimacy with the Divine presence, is the function of the Mishkan, which is like the chuppah, which brings about the stage of "Nisuin" and that is internalization, closeness, and unification, with the Divine presence in our midst.

Har Sinai vs Har HaMoriah

With this we can understand why after the great revelation at Sinai ceased, we were permitted to go up the mountain because as great as that supreme revelation was, Sinai was not a vessel to capture and internalize it. Although that revelation changed us and separated us from the nations of the world as a people that belong to Hashem alone, there wasn't the vessels to contain that revelation. We were like an 'Arusa' to Hashem and his Torah but not a 'Nesua'. The function of the Mishkan of 'Veshachanti Besocham' is where there are vessels and a space to contain that revelation. And that's why that space is treated with similar restrictions to Har Sinai at the time that the Torah was being given. The Mishkan and its vessels are inherently receptors for the Divine light. However, the ground that it stands on a temporary basis is only holy when the Mishkan stands there. When the Mishkan leaves, that ground no longer has holiness attached to it. However, the Temple mount that was consecrated to be the permanent home of the Beis HaMikdash retains that holiness. Ever since the Beis HaMikdash was first built there and never loses that holiness even at the time when the Beis HaMikdash is not standing because it was designated to be the place of the "Beis Olamim"-the Eternal Temple.

Divine Revelation & Angelic Admission

Hashem, His Torah, and Divine Presence, are everywhere and all is sustained by Him. When we talk about "the Divine Presence being somewhere" that is not to the exclusion of everywhere else but rather we mean to say that that place is not just sustained by the Divine presence as everything is, but rather that place has a special quality to internalize the Divine Presence that sustains it and that's why "the Divine presence is revealed there" (See more on this important fundamental idea in the Ramchal's Daas Tevunos siman 160; pages 175-177 in the

Friedlander edition). The Divine Presence and the Torah are called "Hashem's Name". What the angels were saying in their initial claim was "Hashem, "your Name" i.e. your Divine Presence and the power of your Torah permeates all as it sustains all, even the Earth, but reveal Your Glory in heaven" and what they meant by "give your Torah to us" is that the Torah should only be internalized and revealed in the heavens. When Moshe proved to them that the greatest glory would be for the Torah to come down to earth to vanquish evil and to elevate the physical, they may have repeated the words of first half of their claim but this time they mean it differently and they mean to say in a most literal sense, "Hashem our Lord, How mighty is your Name on Earth" that Earth itself will be the vessel that internalizes and hence reveals the light of Torah that in essence is everywhere.

Two Armies

The Zohar (Bamidbar; Vilna edition section 3 page 117B) says that Hashem is now coming to count the "soldiers of the Torah" and the "soldiers of the Mishkan". That is the secret behind why the Levitim are counted separately from the Jewish people. The whole Jewish people are the "soldiers of the Torah", as the Torah separated all of us from all the nations of the world. However, as a result of the sin of the golden calf, all Jews share being separated from all other nations but not all Jews share the same level of internalization of the Divine light. Shevet Levi in general and the Kohanim in particular, who were the first to rise up after the sin of the golden calf, merited to be consecrated to be the ones to do the Divine service in the Mishkan and the Beis HaMikdash where the light is internalized. They are "soldiers of the Mishkan". Although the word "Naso" literally means to "take count", however it can allude to "Nisuin"-the level of internalization and unification and that's why the Parsha that we read after the giving of the Torah which was the "Eirusin" starts off with finishing the count of the "soldiers of the Mishkan", which is the Chuppah.

"Chinuch"

This is the secret that the "Chanukas HaNesuin" was delayed and put in Parshas Naso, even though the Torah had touched upon these dates and events in the books of Shemos and Vayikra. What is "chinuch"? It means to inaugurate. It also means to educate. What is the common denominator? Rav Klionimus

Kalman of Piacezna in his monumental introduction to his seminal work, the “**Chovos HaTalmidim**” references Rashi in Parshas Lech Lecha, on the Pasuk (9:14) “Avraham alerted ‘**chanichav**’ – those he educated...” Rashi there explains the verb ‘**chinuch**’ as follows: “it is the beginning of a person or a vessel to **enter** its trade **that it is destined for** and similarly, **chanoch** l’naar, **chanukas** Hamizbeach and **chanukas** HaBayis.” The Piacezna Rebbe explains that “**chinuch**” is not just to impart information like ‘limmud’. It is to connect a vessel or a person with his destiny. In other words, **to internalize the light and the mission**. Just like inauguration puts the Divine energy within the building or the vessels. So also “**chinuch**” is **to teach the Torah in a way that the student absorbs and internalizes it** and that is why as the famous Pasuk says (Mishlei 22:6): “**Chanoch**” – **educate** the lad according to his ‘path’...” continues “....**even when he grows old, he will not stray from it**” because if he was “**chanoch**” - **in his way, he absorbed it and made it a part of himself and that’s why he will never stray from the Torah**. We read this after we mark the giving of the Torah because this is how we move forward and progress from Sinai. **We are engaged in the generation spanning effort to internalize the infinite light of the Torah**.

Forever Since....

As we said in last chapter, we make Birkas Hatorah in present tense, ‘Blessed are you, Hashem, “**Nosen**” – the giver (present tense) of the Torah’. From Hashem’s perspective, Hashem transferred title of the Torah to us at Sinai all those years ago. As a function of that, He revealed to Moshe everything even what any student is destined to ask of his Rebbe. However, as Torah is infinite, our internalizing of it is a generation spanning project and from our perspective, **it’s like Torah is perpetually being given and that’s why it can be truly seen as “new every day”** because we are perpetually internalizing it every new day and every new generation internalizes another aspect of the infinite light that had not yet been internalized yet within the Jewish nation.

Kohen Nazir & Sotah

With this we can understand how the other topics sandwiched between the count of the Leviim and the Chanukas HaMishkan are

inter-connected and belong in this week’s Parsha. Firstly, the Divine Presence became internalized and revealed in our midst and that’s why the impure one had to be relocated. As we mentioned, the Divine presence and the Torah are called “**Hashem’s Name**”. “**Hashem’s Name**” rests upon the Kohanim and that’s why the Torah awarded them with certain privileges which are called in this week’s Parsha, that which belongs to Hashem and yet it’s awarded to the Kohanim (5:8, Rashi there) because of Hashem’s Name dwells upon them. The blessings that the Kohanim put on us is summed up as ‘And they will place **My Name** upon the Jewish people and I will bless them’ (6:27). The Kohanim have Hashem’s name upon them and they place Hashem’s name upon us. In the effort to verify the innocence of the Sotah, in order to permit her to be with her husband, **which is in effect to restore their “Nisuin”**, we dig up earth from the earth of the **Mishkan** and we erase the **Divine Name** in the waters which means that saving the **Jewish marriage is worth the Divine Name** and this shows that the **Divine Name** dwells amongst the Jewish people and particularly in the happy home as Chazal say, ‘**if they merit, the Shechina dwells between them**’ (Sotah 17A). With this we can also have a positive association as to why the Nazir is mentioned in this parsha. The Nazir can draw upon himself and internalize holiness to the point that he is like a Kohen that must not come in contact with the dead and his hair truly becomes holy. All these topics are functions of the internalization of the light of Torah which is what we must do moving forward from Matan Torah.

