

σνξχ YOM TOV SELECTIONS
SHOVUOS - ZVI AKIVA FLEISHER

WHY IS SHOVUOS ON THE SIXTH OF SIVON?

The Mo'gein Avrohom on Shulchon Oruch O.Ch. #494 asks why Shovuos takes place on the sixth and not the seventh of Sivon. There is a disagreement in the gemara Shabbos 87a-b about which date the Torah was given, which hinges upon a technical ruling in the laws of purity and impurity. The final halachic ruling, which sides with the more stringent opinion as stated in Y.D. 196:11, would require an extra day of preparation for receiving the Torah. This would force us to say that the Torah was given on the seventh day of Sivon and not on the sixth.

ZMAN MATAN TOROSEINU

The Mo'gein Avrohom raises a second question. The gemara Shabbos 87b says that everyone agrees that the bnei Yisroel left Egypt on a Thursday, and everyone agrees (86b) that the Torah was given on a Shabbos. This also proves that the Torah was given on the 51st day after the second day of Pesach. How then do we say "zman matan Toroseinu" on the sixth of Sivon, which is only the 50th day after the second day of Pesach?

The K'hilas Yitzchok answers in the name of Rabbi Chaim haKohein Rappaport in his responsa Mayim Chaim #15, with the Tosfos on the gemara Rosh Hashonoh 27a d.h. "k'man matzlinon." The gemara there says that the text of our Rosh Hashonoh prayers "zeh ha'yom tchilas maa'secho" is according to the opinion of Rabbi Eliezer who says that the world was created in the month of Tishrei. Tosfos asks that in reality we side with Rabbi Yehoshua who posits that the world was created in the month of Nison. Rabbeinu Tam finally answers that although we side with Rabbi Yehoshua, we can still attribute the creation to the month of Tishrei, since Hashem entertained the idea of creating the world during the month of Tishrei, although the actual creation took place in Nison. We see from here that the plan of Hashem is considered as if it had physically taken place. I understand this in the following light: A person can plan a project but many things can stand in the way of its coming to fruition; he might change his mind, obstacles might stand in the way, etc. Not so with

Hashem. The actual creation is secondary, as all that He wishes to do is assured. There is no stopping Hashem. "Lo ish u'ven odom v'yisnechom " (Bmidbar 23:19). In reference to Hashem, the decision to do something is primary. The decision of Hashem is as good as done.

Similarly, Hashem was ready to give the Torah one day earlier, but Moshe added a day and Hashem agreed to wait (as per gemara Shabbos 88a and Y'vomos 62a). We therefore attribute the giving of the Torah to the day that Hashem was ready to deliver it, the sixth of Sivon.

Actually, the Baalei Tosfos in the Hadar Z'keinim ask the Mo'gein Avrohom's question in parshas Emor (23:16) and answer that since the Torah was given only one day later, it is appropriate to say "zman matan Toroseinu," meaning in the proximity of the time of the giving of the Torah.

WHY IS THERE A SECOND DAY OF SHOVUOS IN THE DIASPORA?

The Rambam in hilchos kiddush hachodesh 5:5 says that although today we don't have the doubt that existed at the time of the court's announcing the new moon necessitating having an extra day of Yom Tov in the Diaspora, nonetheless, we still continue with the custom of having two days, to maintain the customs of our forefathers.

The Chasam Sofer in his responsa ~~Tisru~~ O.Ch. #145 asks why we keep two days of Shovuos in the Diaspora. Even during the time when the court decided when the new month would begin through the system of sighting of the new moon and testimony of witnesses, there was never a doubt as to which day was Shovuos. The Torah gives us no date for the holiday of Shovuos, only stating that it takes place fifty days after the day of the Omer offering. By the time the month of Sivon came, everyone already knew when the month of Nison had begun, and knew exactly when Shovuos would take place. The Chasam Sofer says that the extra day of Shovuos for the Diaspora was instituted to align it with the other holidays, and not because of any doubt. He concludes that since there is no basis for this extra day because of any doubt, it is stricter than a second or eighth day of Pesach, Sukos, or Shmini Atzeres (Simchas Torah). He therefore ruled that on the second day of Shovuos it is not permitted to have a divorce written and sent from an ailing childless husband who was close to death, to his

wife, to avoid her requiring "chalitzoh," even though the surviving brother lived far away, and there was a realistic fear of her never being allowed to marry. Actually, the Rambam in hilchos kiddush hachodesh 3:12 clearly states this point, that we have two days of Shovuos to align it with the other Yomim Tovim that are two days because of a doubt

RABBINIC INTERPRETATION
INHERENT TO BASIC
UNDERSTANDING OF THE TORAH

The gemara Shabbos 88a and Y'vomos 62a says that although the words of Hashem seemed to indicate that the Torah would be given two days later, Moshe added on a day through his own calculation. Hashem agreed with him as we find that the Holy Spirit descended upon Har Sinai and Hashem spoke to the bnei Yisroel one day later. Why indeed was Hashem so cryptic, and why didn't He clearly say that there should be a THREE DAY preparation period? The Tiferes Shlomo, the holy Admor of Radomsk, answers that Hashem wanted to teach the bnei Yisroel that all matters of the Torah require the interpretation of our Rabbis. This lesson is strikingly poignant when the actual date of the giving of the Torah hinged upon Moshe's understanding, as the literal words of Hashem seemed to indicate otherwise.

To bring this point to our conscious level, here is a loose translation of Medrash Tanchuma parshas Noach perek 3, on Breishis 6:9. "Eileh toldos Noach Noach" – May the Name of the King over kings who are themselves kings over kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, Who has chosen in Yisroel from among the seventy nations, as the verse says, "Ki cheilek Hashem amo Yaakov chevel nachaloso" (Dvorim 32:9), and has given us the written Torah text, whose intention is in allusions, hidden, and mysterious, and they (our sages) have clarified them in the oral Torah and exposed them to Yisroel. Not only this, but the written Torah is but generalities, and the oral Torah is specific and detailed. The oral Torah is vast and the written Torah is small. Regarding the oral Torah it is written, "Arukoh mei'eretz midoh urchovoh mini yom" (Iyov 11:9). It is also written, "V'lo simotzei b'eretz hachaim" (Iyov 28:13). What does "It (the Torah) will not be found in the land of the living" mean? Are we to deduce that it will be found in the land of the deceased? Rather, it means that the

oral Torah will not be found by one who seeks the world's pleasures, lust, and honour, and fame in this world, but only in he who kills himself over it, as the verse says, "Zose haTorah odom ki yomus b'ohel" (Bmidbar 19:14). And this is the way of Torah, eat bread and salt, and measured water shall you drink, and sleep upon the ground, and a life of deprivation shall you live, and then you will properly toil in Torah (Pirkei Ovos 6:4). The Holy One, blessed be He, only concluded a covenant (the giving of the Torah) with Yisroel because of the oral Torah, as the verse says, "Ki al PI hadvorim ho'eileh korati itcho bris" (Shmos 34:27). (As far fetched as it seems that the meaning of the repetitiveness of "Lo s'vasheil gdi bacha'leiv imo" means not to cook, eat or benefit from meat cooked in milk, it is specifically so that the bnei Yisroel rely on the interpretations of our sages that the covenant of the Torah is binding.) Our sages of blessed memory have said that the Holy One, blessed be He, did not write in the Torah, "L'MAAN hadvorim ho'eileh," and not, "BAAVUR hadvorim ho'eileh," and not, "BIGLAL hadvorim ho'eileh," only, "Al PI hadvorim," and this is the verbal Torah (transmitted by mouth), which is difficult to learn and involves great pain, as it is compared to darkness, as the verse states, "Ho'om haholchim bachoshech ro'u ohr godol" (Yeshayohu 9:1). These are the masters of the Talmud, who perceived a great illumination, as the Holy One, blessed be He, enlightens their eyes in (clarifying) the prohibited and the permitted, the impure and the pure. And in the future world (it is said of them), "V'ohavov k'tzeis hashemesh gibvuroso" (Shoftim 5:31). And Yisroel did not accept the Torah until He held the mountain over them as a keg, as the verse says, "Va'yisatzvu b'sachtis hohor" (Shmos 1:17). And Rabbi Dimi bar Chama said, "The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Yisroel, 'If you accept the Torah it is good, and if not, there will be your grave.'" If you will ask, "At the moment that Hashem asked them if they would accept the Torah they all responded with, 'Naa'seh v'nishmo' (Shmos 24:7)," (the answer is) that there is not in her (the written Torah) (deep) understanding and pain (to grasp its meaning), and it is limited. But rather, what did He say to them (will you accept the Torah), on the oral Torah, which has in it minutia details of the mitzvos, both the easier and the harder ones. It (comprehending it) is severe as death and harsh as the abyss is its zealotness, because the one

who studies it is only one who loves the Holy One, blessed be He, with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his capacity, as the verse says, "V'ohavto eis Hashem Elokecho b'chol l'ovcho uvchol nafsh'cho uvchol m'o'decho" (Dvorim 6:5). How do you derive that this love means only the Talmud? See what is written right afterwards, "V'hoyu hadvorim ho'eileh asher onochi m'tzavcho al l'ov'vecho" (verse 7). This must mean the Talmud, which is upon one's heart (it requires analytical understanding that sits well in one's heart). Therefore say, that "V'shinantom l'ov'necho" (ibid.) refers to the Talmud, which requires sharp discernment. This teaches you that the first chapter of the Shma reading does not clarify the reward (for fulfilling its dictates) as does the second chapter, "V'hoyoh im shomo'a tish'mu (Dvorim 11:13), V'nosati m'tar atrz'chem" (verse 14), which is the reward for those who involve themselves in mitzvos (another version says the written Torah), but do not busy themselves with the Talmud. This comes to teach you that whoever loves wealth and pleasures cannot properly learn the written Torah, because it involves pain and sleep deprivation, and one wears himself out and degrades himself (physically) for it. Therefore its reward is set aside for the world-to-come, as the verse says, "Ho'om haholchim bachoshech ro'u ohr godol" (Yeshayohu 9:1) The great light refers to the light that was created on the first day of creation, which the Holy One, blessed be He, hid for those who toil in the oral Torah by day and by night, in whose merit the world stands, as the verse says, "Ko omar Hashem im lo vrisi yomom voloyloh chukos shomayim vo'oretz lo somti" (Yirmiyohu 33:25). What is the covenant that applies both day and night? It is the Talmud. As well, the verse says, "Ko omar Hashem im to'feiru es brisi hayom v'es brisi haloyloh gam brisi sufar es Dovid avdi (verse 19). The verse also says, "Ki im b'toras Hashem cheftzo uvsoroso yeh'geh yomom voloyloh" (T'hilim 1:2). And also, the Holy One, blessed be He, concluded a covenant with Yisroel that the oral Torah will not be forgotten from their mouths and the mouths of their children, even until the end of all generations, as the verse says, "Vaani zose brisi osom omar Hashem ruchi asher o'lecho udvorai asher samti b'ficho lo yomushu (Yeshayohu 59:21). The verse does not say "mimcho" (only from YOU it will not be

removed), but rather, "mipicho umipi zaracho umipi zera zaracho" (ibid.). Commentators ask why this information is placed here in parshas Noach. Perhaps it is because at the time of the giving of the Torah had the bnei Yisroel ch"v not accepted the Torah, Hashem would have destroyed the world, as explained in the gemara A.Z. It is therefore befitting to discuss this in parshas Noach, where the world was likewise almost totally annihilated.

REASONS FOR SHOVIOS BEING CALLED "ATZERRES":

The earliest source for Shovuos being called "Atzerres" is to be found in the Targum Onkelos on Bmidbar 28:26 on the word "B'shovuoseichem" the Targum says "b'atzro'seichon." As well the mishnah calls Shovuos "atzerres" in R.H. 16a.

We must first begin with the simple translation of "atzerres." The Ibn Ezra in parshas Emor 23:36 says that this word either means RESTRAINT or ASSEMBLY.

As well, it should be pointed out that the Torah never gives Shovuos the appellation "atzerres." Shovuos is mentioned in the Torah five times, perhaps to allude to the giving of the five books of the Torah on that day. In Shmos 23:16 it is called "chag hakotzir," in Shmos 34:22 and Dvorim 16:10 "chag Shovuos," in Bmidbar 28:26 "yom habikurim," and most interestingly in Vayikro 23 Shovuos is discussed from verse 16 through verse 21, yet no name is mentioned here and no calendar date is given for the holiday anywhere in the Torah. (It is written in the name of the GR"A that the letters of Shovuos, Shin-Beis-Ayin-Tof when spelled defectively, are an acronym for the names of Shovuos. Shin = Shovuos, Beis = Bikurim, Ayin = Atzerres, Tof = (Matan) Torah. Actually the Torah also calls Shovuos "chag haKotzir in Shmos 23:16.)

Although the Torah does not give Shovuos the appellation "Atzerres," our Rabbis have given it that name, for example in the mishnah R.H. 16a that on "Atzerres" we are judged for produce of the trees. Why is Shovuos not called "Atzerres" anywhere in the Torah and given that name by the Rabbis of the mishnah?

1) The Torah calls the day after Sukos "Atzerres" (Vayikro 23:36). As well the seventh day of Pesach is also called "Atzerres" in Dvorim 16:8. Each Yom Tov has a positive action that is connected with the Yom Tov, i.e.

blowing shofar on Rosh Hashonoh, eating matzoh, Korban Pesach, and moror on Pesach, etc. Even Shovuos has a positive mitzvoh of bringing the two loaves of bread as an offering to the Beis Hamikdosh to permit bringing further flour offerings from the new crop. However, the eighth day of Sukos and the seventh day of Pesach have no inherent positive mitzvos, only the command to restrain from work. Hence having only restraint causes these particular days to be called "Atzerres."

After the destruction of the Beis Hamikdosh even Shovuos was left with no positive mitzvoh, only restraint. Therefore the Rabbis who lived after the destruction of the Beis Hamikdosh gave Shovuos the name "Atzerres." (Kedushas Levi)

2) Of the "three festivals," Pesach, Shovuos, and Sukos, only Shovuos has no cholo shel mo'eid. The other two have days on which work may be done. Shovuos is without a cholo shel mo'eid, and is completely restrained from work. (Kedushas Levi)

3) Shovuos corresponds to Shmini Atzerres in numerous ways. We consider Shovuos the end of Pesach, just as Shmini Atzerres ends Sukos. We are to consider the intermediate days of Sefiroh as the cholo shel mo'eid between Pesach and Shovuos. Indeed the M.R. says that Shmini Atzerres would have been fifty days after Sukos, just as Shovuos is fifty days after Pesach. It is only because the weather at that time would make travelling to and from Yerushalayim treacherous that Hashem moved it earlier to the end of Sukos, thus saving everyone a most difficult trip. Because of these similarities Shovuos is called "Atzerres." (Ramban on Vayikra 23:36)

4) In Dvorim 9:10 the day of the receiving of the Torah is called "Yom hakohol," - the day of the ASSEMBLY. Not only did the bnei Yisroel assemble as a group but also united as "one person with one heart." (See Rashi on "Va'yichan" Shmos 19:2.) (Sfas Emes)

5) By accepting the Torah, the bnei Yisroel accepted upon themselves Hashem's mastery. "Atzerres" means lordship, as we find in Shmuel 1:9:17, "Zeh YAATZOR b'ami." (Sfas Emes)

6) "Atzerres" means "retained within," as we find in Yirmiyohu 20:9, "OTZUR b'atzmosai." The fire and zeal of accepting the Torah is still retained in the bones of the bnei Yisroel. (Rabbi Boruch of Mezhbizh)

7) "Atzerres" is an acronym for the Aramaic expression "Oloh Tzir Reish Turo," meaning that the agent (Moshe)

ascended to the top of the mountain. Although "Turo" is spelled with a Tes and the last letter of "Atzerres" is a Tof, these two letters are interchangeable since they are phonetically the same. (Imrei Noam)

8) "Atzerres" means "maintained," as we find in Dvorim 32:36, "OTZUR v'ozuv." Rashi explains that the leader maintains the people as a group and keeps them from running away in all directions when the enemy pursues. Likewise, with the acceptance of the Torah, we are given guidance and strength and are thus kept from being overpowered by our enemy, the evil inclination.

9) Rashi on Shmos 19:12 says that we derive from the word "leimore" in the verse "V'higbalto es ho'om soviv LEIMORE hishomru lochem alose bohor" - And you shall cordon off the nation around, SAYING "Guard yourselves from ascending the mount," that the physical border that was created, miraculously spoke, clearly warning the people to go no further, lest they touch or come onto the mount and be liable for the death penalty, "Kol hanogei'a bohor mose yumos." There is no doubt that there was such a powerful yearning to come close to Hashem at the time of receiving the Torah that there was a true fear that in a surge of spiritual emotion the masses might have stepped over the demarcation line and a day of monumental happiness could have turned into a day of great mourning. Hashem in His infinite kindness wrought a miracle, having the boundary continuously announce, "Do not go beyond this point!" This miraculous safeguard for restraining the people is remembered in the word "Atzerres."

Perhaps with this we can answer the question raised by the Kedushas Levi mentioned above in #1. We know the insight of the Kedushas Levi on Pesach that Hashem named the holiday Pesach "chag hamatzos" to praise the bnei Yisroel for leaving Egypt with full trust in Hashem, taking along only matzos as provisions. Nowhere does the Torah call the Yom Tov "chag haPesach." On the other hand, we praise Hashem for having mercy upon us and skipping over our homes during the plague of the smiting of the first born, hence we call it "chag haPesach." He takes this concept from the gemara Brochos 6a that says that the script in Hashem's tefillin praise the bnei Yisroel, while the script in the bnei Yisroel's tefillin praise Hashem. Maybe we can extend this to Shovuos. Hashem calls the Yom Tov Shovuos,

Bikurim, Kotzir, all in praise of the bnei Yisroel who have counted seven weeks in preparation, who bring the first fruits to the Beis Hamikdosh, who leave their fields at the busy time of harvest to come to Yerushalayim. We, on the other hand, praise Hashem, calling the Yom Tov "Atzerres," in appreciation of Hashem's placing a miraculous audible RESTRAINT against our entering Har Sinai, lest we deserve the death penalty for treading upon forbidden terra sancta.

10) The Torah calls the day after Sukos "Atzerres" in Vayikra 23:36. Rashi comments that although seventy sacrifices were brought throughout Sukos for the benefit of the seventy nations, Hashem requested that we REMAIN with Him in the Yom Tov mode for one more day and only bring one sacrifice, to correspond to our nation. Thus the restraint is waiting one more day. Hashem seemingly told Moshe that the Torah would be given on the sixth of Sivan. Moshe added one more day on his own cognizance (gemara Shabbos 87a). Although forty-nine days of preparation were made to lead up to this momentous day, we can say that once the eve of this day arrived Moshe felt that the bnei Yisroel were still not sufficiently prepared. He therefore asked for a one-day reprieve and Hashem agreed. This is the nature of the righteous. Even though they make all possible efforts they feel that they have not done enough. Thus the sixth day of Sivan, the day which was in actuality the eve of the giving of the Torah, was a day of restraint, pushing off the receiving of the Torah that Hashem was ready to give on that day. (Droshos Rabbeinu Yoseif Nechemioh Kornitzer page 265)

11) It is most unusual for this Yom Tov to be called Shovuos based on the counting of weeks before the Yom Tov. All others are named by virtue of what happened ON the Yom Tov, not before. We must therefore conclude that the days of counting since the omer are concluded and Hashem wants to extend matters, like the term used by the end of Sukos, to remain another day in privacy with Hashem. This is Shminin Atzerres. Similarly here, we are invited to remain after the counting of weeks and this will be the Yom Tov called Atzerres. (Kedushas Levi)

12) It says in Shir Hashirim (2:7) "Mah to'iru umah t'or'ru es hoahavoh ad she'techpotz." Ramban explains "ad shetechpotz" as until you put your love into a physical (cheifetz) expression, otherwise it will just wane and die out.

Don't just leave it in the realm of emotion.

Applying this concept to Shovuos, in preparation for the receiving of the Torah, just having great spiritual energy could very well dry up. Hashem therefore gave the bnei Yisroel the mitzvoh of "hagboloh," to restrain themselves from going upon Har Sinai. Thus they had a mitzvoh, an actualization of serving Hashem by fulfilling a unique command connected to receiving the Torah. This "Atzerres, restraint, was their "ad she'techpotz." (Kedushas Levi)

Please note that the variations on the translation of "atzerres" offered above, lordship, retained within, and maintained, are all closely related to the concept of restraint, and as well, the two translations given by the Ibn Ezra that were mentioned above, "assembly" and "restraint" are also one in concept. It is only through restraint that there is assembly.

REASONS FOR READING MEGILAS RUS ON SHOVIOS:

The Ram"o in O.Ch. #490:9 says that we have the custom to read Rus on Shovuos.

1) The Yalkut Shimoni Rus #601 says that Rabbi Z'eiro says, "This megilah does not contain laws of purity and impurity, nor laws of what is permitted and what is prohibited. It only contains the lesson of the reward for those who do acts of kindness." Since the main thrust of the Torah is to teach us to refine our characters and be kind, as is stated in Mishlei 31:26, "V'soras CHESSED al l'shonoh," we therefore read it on Shovuos. (Rokei'ach and Medrash Lekach Tov)

2) Torah is given to one who is willing to endure suffering and impoverishment. We find that Rus accepted the Torah upon herself in spite of enduring suffering and impoverishment. (Yalkut Shimoni on Rus #596)

3) With accepting the Torah the bnei Yisroel converted to Judaism. Likewise Rus accepted the Torah and converted to Judaism. (Machazor Vitri #312)

4) Shovuos is called "chag haKOTZIR" - the holiday of harvesting. Likewise, the main part of the story of Rus took place at the time of harvesting, "Bis'chilas K'TZIR s'orim" (Rus 1:22). (Avudrohom and Machazor Vitri)

5) Similarly, the story of Rus took place at the time of harvesting of grain, and it is at the time of harvesting of wheat, on

Shovuos, that the offering of two loaves of bread made of wheat of the new crop are brought. (L'vush on O.Ch. #494:2)

6) Rus converted to Judaism around the time of Shovuos, just as the bnei Yisroel became Jewish on Shovuos through accepting the Torah. (Darkei Moshe)

7) In parshas Emor immediately after the listing of the sacrifices of Shovuos, the Torah says that one should leave certain items in the field for the poor person and the convert, "Le'oni v'la'geir taazove osom." (Vayikro 23:22). Rus was both a poor person and a convert, and Boaz left the prescribed items in his field for her, "V'gam shole tosholu loh" (Rus 2:16). (Rokei'ach s. 296)

8) The Yerushalmi Chagigoh 2:3 says that King Dovid died on Shovuos. The gemara R.H. 11a and Sotah 13b says that Hashem completes the allotted years of a righteous person. We may therefore assume that King Dovid was also born on Shovuos as the gemara Kidushin 35a says, that Hashem completes the years of a righteous person, allowing him to live full years, from the date of birth until death, on the same calendar date. Since the main reason for reading Rus is to point out the lineage of King Dovid, we read it on the day of his birth. (Shaa'rei Tshuvoh #494:7)

9) Just as Hashem kept His promise to Moshe, "B'hotziach es ho'om miMitzrayim taavdun es ho'Elokim al hohor ha'zeh" (Shmos 3:12), by giving us the Torah on Shovuos, so also He will fulfill the prophecy of "V'yotzo choter mi'geza Yishoy v'neitzer mishoroshov yifreh" (Yesha'yohu 11:1). This prophecy will be fulfilled through King Dovid's descendant, Melech Hamoshiach. We therefore read the story of the lineage of King Dovid. (Rabbeinu Dovid Ibn Yichia)

10) Before the bnei Yisroel accepted the Torah they had seven mitzvos. By accepting the Torah they took on 606 more mitzvos. The name Rus has the numeric value of 606, the number of new mitzvos she accepted upon herself when she converted. (Birkei Yoseif on O.Ch. 494:11 and Ba'ch)

11) On the day of the receiving of the Torah we want to read from the Torah, Nviim, and Ksuvim. We read from the Torah in parshas Yisro and we read from Nviim for the Haftorah. We also read Rus from Ksuvim because it is the first book in Ksuvim, as per the gemara B.B. 14b. (Ziv Haminhogim)

12) The Yerushalmi Pei'oh 2:4 says that not only was the Torah taught to Moshe when he ascended into the

heavens, but all concepts that any future Torah student would think of was taught to him. He in turn taught all this to Yehoshua, and Yehoshua transmitted it further. Thus all Rabbinical interpretations were also taught to Moshe. In the book of Rus the interpretation "Moavi" (Dvorim 23:4), "v'lo MoavIS" (Y'vomos 68) was pivotal for the acceptance of the lineage of King Dovid into "k'hal Yisroel." This interpretation is accepted in spite of the simpler interpretation that a MoavIS is also included in the restriction. We therefore read Rus to teach us that along with the written Torah, the oral Torah was given to Moshe. (Chesed Limshicho)

13) Similarly, because of the argument about Rus's being allowed to be married to a ben Yisroel the disagreement about "Moavi" (Dvorim 23:4), "v'lo MoavIS" came to a head, and a conclusion was reached. Acceptance of the ruling of the Rabbis is a sort of "kabolos haTorah," an acceptance of "Torah she'b'al peh." (Sfas Emes)

14) The whole book of Rus is a story that is completely a human down on earth happening. By reading this book we show that just as this book became a part of Tanach, similarly the bnei Yisroel are a partner with Hashem in the Torah, and are empowered to interpret it. (Sfas Emes)

15) Similarly, just as the Holy Admor of Radomsk says that the Torah was given a day later than indicated by the simple meaning of the words Hashem said to Moshe, and yet Moshe was correct in his understanding, albeit that it was almost contrary to the words of the Torah, likewise we read the book of Rus where the interpretation of Boaz that "Moavi" (Dvorim 23:4), "v'lo MoavIS" was accepted, although it also is seemingly contrary to the simple meaning of the words of the Torah.

16) The Ohr Hachaim Hakodosh on "Vi'h'yi'sem Li seguloh" (Shmos 19:5) says that the bnei Yisroel are required to extract the "holy sparks" of sanctity from all the nations of the world. When this is completed Moshiach will come. He says that if they merit it, the bnei Yisroel can do this through Torah study, and if not, they are spread out to all far-flung corners of the world to extract the "holy sparks." We read about the lineage of King Dovid, the progenitor of the family of Moshiach on the day of the giving of the Torah to indicate that we hope that we will accomplish as mentioned in the Holy Ohr Hachaim through the Torah and thus bring an end to our exile. (Sfas Emes 5653)

17) Perhaps it can be said that the offering of the two breads on Shovuos (Vayikra 23:17) represents the written Torah and the oral Torah. The Torah is equated to bread in the verse "L'chu lachamu b'lachmi" (Mishlei 9:5). We therefore read the book of Rus whose main outcome is the lineage of King Dovid, which was only accepted by virtue of the oral interpretation of the Torah on the day that the two breads are offered.

18) Possibly it can be said that since the acceptance of the Torah required the complete unity of the bnei Yisroel as pointed out from the words "Va'YICHAN shom Yisroel neged hohor" (Shmos 19:2), which is explained as "k'ish echod b'leiv echod" (Rashi), we read from the book of Rus which includes what happened to Elimelech when he left the bnei Yisroel at their time of need and settled in the land of Moav, to show how devastating it is to break away from the unity of the bnei Yisroel.

19) In parshas Emor we have a listing of the Yomim Tovim, and the theme is to introduce the technical the laws unique to each Yom Tov. There is a major departure from this right after the laws of Shovuos. The Torah tells us to leave over the produce of the corner of our field for the poor when harvesting (Vayikra 23:22). Although this is placed in the proper calendar sequence, as most harvesting is done between Shovuos and Rosh Hashonoh, it is nevertheless, seemingly a non sequitur, deviating from the laws of the Yomim Tovim. What we can derive from this is that the act of kindness of caring for the poor among us is strongly connected to Shovuos. We therefore read Megilas Rus, which is suffused with acts of kindness. (Pardes Yoseif)

20) Rus came from the despised nation Moav, whose males, even after converting, were not permitted to marry a woman who had the status of "k'hal Hashem." Nevertheless, she broke away and elevated herself to the point that she became the wife of the leading judge of the bnei Yisroel, and eventually King Dovid and his dynasty were her descendants. The word Moav has the numerical value of 49. This is a lesson for us during the 49 days of the omer counting, a preparation for Shovuos, that we too can greatly improve ourselves in preparation for the receiving of the Torah. We therefore read Megilas Rus on Shovuos, the culmination of our omer counting preparation for Shovuos. (Nirreh li)

REASONS FOR EATING DAIRY PRODUCTS ON SHOVIOS:

1) By eating a dairy meal and then a meat meal, we must have another bread to accompany the meat meal. This is in commemoration of the two breads of the new crop of wheat, which were brought to the Sanctuary on Shovuos. (Ram"o in O.Ch. 494:3)

2) Since the bnei Yisroel were restricted from eating non-kosher foods at Har Sinai on Shovuos, they could not heat food in their cooking vessels, as the flavour of the non-kosher items would be absorbed into that which was prepared. They had no choice but to eat cold dairy products. (The Rebbe Reb Heshel and the Mishneh Brurah O.Ch. 494:12)

3) The Torah is compared to milk and honey in Shir Hashirim 4:11, "Dvash v'CHOLOV tachas l'shoneich." (Kol Bo)

4) The seven week preparation period from the beginning of the Omer until Shovuos is like the seven day period in which a woman prepares herself for purification from her "nidoh" status. The gemara B'choros 6b says that the menstrual blood which remains deteriorates and turns to milk. Shovuos is the state of returning to purity from the detrimental effects of Egypt. We likewise symbolically consume dairy products to show we have reached a stage of purity. (Mo'gein Avrohom O.Ch. 494:6 quoting the Zohar parshas Emor page 27b)

5) Regarding Shovuos the Torah says, "Chadoshoh LaShem B'shovuoseichem" (Bmidbar 28:26), whose first letters spell CHOLOV. (Nachal K'dumim and Matteh Moshe)

6) CHOLOV has the numerical value of 40, and the Torah was given over in its entirety to Moshe during a period of 40 days and nights. (N'zirus Shimshon)

7) After three days of abstaining from marital relations the bnei Yisroel were permitted to return to their wives on Shovuos. Dairy products are helpful in increasing a man's ability to reproduce (gemara Yoma 18a). (N'zirus Shimshon)

8) Immediately after mentioning Shovuos as the holiday on which one brings the first-ripened offerings to the Beis Hamikdosh, it mentions the law of not cooking meat with milk, "Reishis bikurei admos'cho tovi beis Hashem Elokecho, lo s'va'sheil g'di bacha'leiv imo" (Shmos 23:19). (Ziv Haminhogim)

9) Milk can only be stored in simple earthenware vessels. If stored in silver or golden vessels, it spoils very quickly. Likewise, the Torah resides with one who is not haughty, but rather, is

modest (Yalkut Shimoni on Megilas Rus remez #597). See a strikingly similar point in gemara N'dorim 50b. (Ziv Haminhogim)

10) We know that Moshe was placed among the bulrushes when he was three months old. He was found by Bisyoh the daughter of Paroh who attempted to have him nurse from an Egyptian wet-nurse, but Moshe refused. Since his holy mouth would eventually communicate directly with Hashem, he would only nurse from a bas Yisroel. This occurred on the 6th of Sivan, three months after his birth. We likewise consume kosher dairy products on that date. (Sefer Matamim)

11) Upon accepting the Torah, the bnei Yisroel had the status of a newborn person. Newborn babies feed exclusively on milk. (Sefer Matamim)

12) Milk is symbolic of humbleness. On the day of the receiving of the Torah we eat humble food to indicate that we receive the Torah while acting humbly. (It was common to sit on the ground while hearing a Torah lecture during the era of the mishneh and gemara.) (Rabbi Pinchos of Koritz)

13) Until Matan Torah milk from a live animal was prohibited. A ben Noach has seven mitzvos including "eiver min hachai." Milk from a "chai" was likewise prohibited. Only after the Torah was given were we taught by a verse that milk is permitted as per the gemara B'choros 6b. (found in Birkas Chaim)

I was bothered for many years by the verse in Breishis 18:8 that says that Avrohom served butter and milk to his guests. We see from here that a ben Noach was permitted to consume dairy products even before the Torah was given. A possible answer is that he served them dairy products that were taken from a dead animal.

14) Milk embodies the characteristic of "chesed" (possibly because although taken from an animal, it does not require slaughtering of the animal), and the Torah is called "chesed" in Mishlei 31:26, "v'soras chesed al l'shonoh." In T'hilim 92:3 regarding the Torah it says "L'hagid Baboker Chasdechoh." The first letters of these three words spell CHOLOV. (Bnei Yisos'chor)

15) The Medrash Shochar Tov on T'hilim 8:3 on the words "Mipi ol'lim v'yonkim yosadto oze" says that the angels requested that Hashem not give the Torah to mere mortals, but rather leave it in the heavenly realms for the angels. Hashem responded that the angels had already transgressed the Torah when they came to Avrohom and ate a combination of meat and milk

(Breishis 18:8). To show that we deserve the Torah, we eat both dairy products and meat products, and are careful not to mix the two. (Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropolia. This is mentioned in the Bo'eir Heiteiv O.Ch. #494 s.k. 7.)

16) In T'hilim 68:16 and 17 Har Sinai is called "har GAVNUNIM." Literally this means a mountain which protrudes as the bulge of a hunch-back, as we find in Vayikro 21:20, "O gi'bein." However, "har GAVNUNIM" can also be translated "mountain of CHEESE," as in the word G'VINOH. Just as cheese was a liquid that curdled and solidified, so too Har Sinai petrified upon having the Holy Torah given upon it. (Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropolia) Possibly this theme can be expanded. The gemara Avodoh Zoroh 3a on the words in Breishis 1:31 "Yom H'Ashishi" explains why there is a definitive Hei as a prefix to the word "shishi." It refers to the sixth of Sivon, the date on which the bnei Yisroel would accept the Torah 2448 years later. The whole creation of the world was in jeopardy, as Hashem would turn it back into nothingness if the bnei Yisroel would not accept the Torah. The world's existence hinged upon the acceptance of the Torah. We find that the "m'leches Shabbos" of "boneh," - building, is only a Torah transgression when the item which was built has permanence. The Rambam in hilchos Shabbos 10:13 says that if one curdles milk on Shabbos, turning it into cheese, he has desecrated the Shabbos with an act which is under the heading of "boneh." How appropriate to call Har Sinai "har GAVNUNIM," mountain of cheese. The existence of the world was in jeopardy until the bnei Yisroel accepted the Torah, and only then was the world afforded permanency. This juncture in history was the true "binyan" of the world. This is symbolized by the making of cheese, the hardening of a shapeless flowing object into an object of solidity and permanence.

17) The 365 negative precepts correspond to the days of the solar year. The 66th mitzvoh is to not eat meat and milk that were cooked together. Counting Rosh Chodesh Nison as the first day of the first month (Shmos 12:2), the 66th day is Shovuos. Therefore we eat both dairy and meat products, but are careful not to mix them. (Otzar Haminhogim)

18) There is a law in Y.D. #91 regarding the mixing of meat and milk that requires the absorption of the flavour of one into the other if they are afterwards separated to render the

mixture not kosher. This absorption only takes place if there is sufficient heat or sharpness of flavour to make this happen. The ruling is that if a hot item falls into a cold item we say that there was no absorption and if a cold item fell into a hot item we say that there was absorption. This rule is known as "tato'oh govar" - the bottom item overpowers the upper item. As mentioned earlier from the Medrash Shochar Tov on T'hilim 8:3, the angels requested of Hashem to leave the Torah in the heavenly realms. Hashem forced a debate between the angels, celestial creatures, and Moshe, a mortal being from the lower spheres, earth. Since Moshe won the debate, the lower overpowering the upper, we eat meat at some Shovuos meals and also dairy at some Shovuos meals, to allude to the ruling regarding meat and milk of "tato'oh govar," that the lower overpowers the upper. (Rabbi Mendel of Riminov)

19) As mentioned earlier in #16, the gemara says that the continued existence of the world hinged upon the bnei Yisroel accepting the Torah on the sixth of Sivon. The M.R. Breishis 12:15 says that at the time of the creation of the world Hashem set into motion a system of judging the actions of mankind sternly, "midas hadin," as indicated by the words of the first verse of the Torah, "Breishis boro ELOKIM," ELOKIM connoting strict judgement. He realized that it could not exist in this manner and added lenient judgement, and even had it precede strict judgement, as indicated by the verse "b'yom alose HASHEM ELOKIM eretz v'shomoyim" (Breishis 2:4), the name HASHEM connoting mercy, and it is mentioned earlier than the name ELOKIM. As mentioned earlier in #14, milk symbolizes mercy. It is understood that meat symbolizes strictness, as one only has meat to eat when a creature is slaughtered. Since the day of the receiving of the Torah is the true completion of the creation of the world in a form of permanence, we emulate the creation of the world. Night precedes day in creation, and in the beginning we find only ELOKIM mentioned by creation. Correspondingly, on the night of Shovuos we have a meal that includes meat. By day, where the verse says "B'YOM alose HASHEM ELOKIM," we have both milk and meat, symbols of both mercy and strictness, but also with milk preceding meat, in the same order as HASHEM and ELOKIM appear.

20) Possibly another reason might be that the Torah says, "V'chol Chacham Leiv Bochem yovo'u v'yaasu eis kol asher tzivoh Hashem" (Shmos 35:10). This might allude to the keeping of all of the Torah, "eis kol asher tzivoh Hashem," which was given at Har Sinai. The first letters of the words "Chacham Leiv Bochem" spell CHOLOV.

21) The Medrash Shochar Tov on T'hilim 68:16 says that at the time of the giving of the Torah the Temple Mount moved from its location in Yerusholayim and came to Har Sinai to be present at the giving of the Torah. This alludes to the requirement of serving Hashem in the Beis Hamikdash, which was needed to bring the full presence of the "sh'chinoh" into klal Yisroel, besides the acceptance of the Torah. "V'osu li mikdash v'shochanti b'sochom" (Shmos 25:8). As well, the Sinaic revelation was transferred to the Mikdash as indicated by the Ibn Ezra on Shmos 19:13. King Shlomo actualized the building of the Beis Hamikdash, and regarding this the verse says, "Choshak Livnos B'Yerusholayim" (M'lochim 1:9:19 and Divrei Hayomim 2:8:6). The first letters of these three words spell CHOLOV.

22) The Chasam Sofer in his Droschos page #288 writes that milk has different components within it. There is the fatty cream that rises to the top. From it comes the richest and choicest of dairy products, butter. The less fatty component is used for making cheese and other curd-based products. The last level is a watery run-off, called "mei cholov," which is useless (at least in the days of the Chasam Sofer). These three components correspond to the different levels of the bnei Yisroel. Because Hashem holds all the bnei Yisroel so dearly and does not want the lowest level of the people to be negated, He looks upon the bnei Yisroel as a whole. Similarly, we drink milk without the components separated to symbolize this concept.

23) The Yeshuos Yaakov in his commentary on Sh.O. O.Ch. 494:2 says that Hashem gave us His Torah with its mitzvos to be able to successfully do battle with our evil inclination. This is clearly shown in the gemara Shabbos 88b. The angels claimed that the Torah should remain in the celestial spheres, "T'noh hodcho al hashomoyim" (T'hilim 8:2). Hashem responded that the Torah is an antidote to the evil inclination, as He asked them if they have a "yetzer hora." In essence this means that Hashem created us with negative traits and it is our responsibility to change

these traits into positive ones. The gemara Nidoh 9a says that a woman's blood deteriorates and turns into milk, as per the verse "Mi yi'tein tohor mito'mei," – who can extract pure from defiled. This is symbolic of bad changing to good. M.R. Breishis 54:1 says that the intention of the verse, "Birtzos Hashem darkei ish gam oivov yashlim ito" (Mishlei 16:7) – when Hashem is pleased with the paths a person has chosen, even his enemies make peace with him – refers to the person who overpowers his evil inclinations. This is extracting the good from the bad. Therefore on the day of the giving of the Torah we consume dairy products, to symbolize that our acceptance of the Torah carries with it in the main that we use the Torah to do battle with our evil inclinations and that we should come out as victors.

23) Our Shovuos meals that have meat in their main course are a commemoration of the extra sacrifices brought on the Holiday. On Shovuos there is an extra requirement of "lochem," that we celebrate with something that targets our physical appreciation. We therefore eat dairy foods, which cannot by any stretch of the imagination be construed as being a sacrifice, to celebrate the "lochem." (Eishel Avrohom)

24) Yom Tov meals are always fleishig. On Shovuos we not only celebrate the Holiday, but also the completion of counting the omer. By eating dairy foods we differentiate between the two. (Medrash Menachem)

25) We have fasts that precede our Holidays. The fast of Esther precedes Purim, Yom Kippur precedes Sukos, the fast of the firstborn precedes Pesach. This weakness helps us feel the Holiday fare strength more keenly. Dairy foods do not give us as much strength as do meat dishes. There is also a message that when we study Torah, we should not jump into areas that are beyond us. Begin with the basics and work your way into the more complex. (Imrei Pinchos)

This deserves clarification, as the night meal is a meat meal, and it is only by day that we first have the dairy meal.

26) Constant Torah study weakens a person (gemara Sanhedrin 26b). A dairy meal invigorates and restores one's strength that was expended for Torah study (seemingly the reverse of the previous offering). Sefer Matamim

27) We should have such excitement as if the Torah was just given to us today (see Dvorim 11:13). Dairy foods spoil very quickly. Their freshness is

paramount. This is symbolic of the proper outlook towards the Torah, especially on the anniversary of when it was given. (Chasam Sofer)

27) Just as a baby who nurses delights in its mother's milk every time, so too, one who studies Torah will always discover new insights and greater depth when he studies or reviews. (Ol'Los Efrayim)

28) The Torah is compared to both milk and honey (Shir Hasheirim 4:11). The Rambam writes that honey has the effect of warming a person and milk cools him off. The Torah has the power to warm up a person who has grown cool and lackadaisical about his Torah observance and mitzvoh fulfillment. The Torah also cools off the warmth of improper passions and pursuit of sin. We therefore eat dairy and sweet foods. (Lechem Osher)

29) We are considered newborn upon accepting the Torah. Just as a newborn receives ALL its nourishment needs solely from its mother's milk, so too, our souls can receive all their spiritual nourishment from the Torah. We likewise nourish our bodies with dairy and our souls with diligent Torah study on Shovuos. (Imrei Noam)

30) The Holy Zohar on parshas Va'y'chi writes that milk alludes specifically to the Written Torah. With our "naa'seh v'nishma" said in acceptance of the Torah we arouse this merit. (Erech Shai)

This is especially well understood in the light of the words of the Medrash Tanchuma #3 on parshas Noach, that the bnei Yisroel only accepted the Written Torah willingly on Shovuos. It was only on Purim that they willingly accepted the Oral Torah.

31) We must revitalize our spirits with a renewed acceptance of the Torah daily, but all the more so on Shovuos itself. This new spirit is called "Lev CHodosh B'kir'b'chem" (Yechezkel 36:26). These words' first letters spell "ChoLoV." (Imrei Yehudoh)

32) Even though milk is best served fresh, even if it sours and curdles, it can be used to make cheese or similar products. Man is at his best when he is fresh and unsullied from sins. Nevertheless, through the power of the Torah he can repent and return to the proper use and be of great value. (Imrei Yehudoh)

33) Just as the angels who visited Avrohom (Breishis 18:8) consumed meat and dairy, we rise to the level of angels on Shovuos, so we likewise consume both dairy and meat meals. (Noam Elimelech)

34) In the merit of the dairy food Avrohom served his angelic guests the bnei Yisroel in the desert had manna. The manna alleviated any need for consuming their time in pursuit of income to pay for food. This freed up their time for total immersion in Torah study. On Shovuos we also consume dairy foods to recall the merit of Avrohom's act, which allowed for unencumbered Torah study. We likewise pray for ease in receiving our sustenance so that we can readily pursue Torah study and mitzvos. (N'zirus Shimshon)

REASONS FOR PLACING TREES, FLOWERS, AND GRASS IN SHULS ON SHOVIOS:

The earliest source for this custom is the Targum Sheini on Megilas Esther 3:8 on the words "V'do'seihem shonose." The Targum enumerates many religious customs the bnei Yisroel had. Among them is listed that for Shovuos the bnei Yisroel would place apples and flowers on the roofs of their houses of worship.

1) To remind us of what the mishnah R.H. 16a says; that on Shovuos the world is judged for the produce of its fruit trees. (Mo'gein Avrohom on O.Ch. # 494:5)

2) The verse says "Gam hatzone v'habokor al yiru el mul hohor hahu" (Shmos 34:3). We derive from this restriction that there was grazing land at the foot of Har Sinai. To remind us of the scene at the time of receiving the Torah we place greenery. (L'vush O.Ch. #494 and Gaon Yaave"tz)

3) The M.R. Shir Hashirim 2:6 on the words "K'shoshanoh kein hachochim kein ra'yosi kein habonos" (Shir Hashirim 2:2) relates a parable. A king had a magnificent garden. However, his gardeners eventually neglected it and it became overgrown with weeds and thistles. They crowded out the beautiful foliage that had previously grown. The king became so angry that he said that he would have the whole garden uprooted. He then spotted one solitary rose, perfect in all aspects. He then retracted his previous statement to destroy the complete garden, in the merit of its producing this one rose. Similarly, says the M.R. when Hashem created the world and people sinned, He was ready to destroy the world. However, because of His one "rose," the bnei Yisroel who would eventually say "Naa'seh v'nishma" (Shmos 24:7), He spared the world. We therefore place flowers in our shuls. (Bnei Yisos'chor)

4) When Hashem's voice emanated at the time of the giving of the Torah, the cedar trees were shattered, as stated in T'hilim 29:5, "Kol Hashem shoveir arozim." We therefore place trees in our shuls to remind us of this. (Zichron Osher)

5) The Torah which was given on this day is called "Eitz chaim hee lamachazikim boh" -the tree of life (Mishlei 3:18). (M'la'meid L'ho'il)

6) The Torah is compared to a tree, "Eitz chaim hee lamachazikim boh" (Mishlei 3:18). Just as a tree brings forth new fruit each year, so also each year a person receives a new portion of Torah that is specifically his, "V'sein chelkeinu b'Soro'secho." (Sfas Emes)

7) Alternatively, just as a tree is more successful in bringing forth a bountiful amount of fruit in relation to the agricultural preparations made, weeding, pruning, fertilizing, etc. so also a person's success in his pursuit of Torah and mitzvos depends on his preparation and removing his negative traits. (Sfas Emes)

8) To remind us of the miracle of Moshe's remaining hidden when placed into the Nile on the sixth of Sivon, three months after his birth, when his mother could no longer hide that she had given birth to a child. Moshe's basket was hidden from public sight by the camouflage of bulrushes, as is written "Vato'sem basuf" (Shmos 2:3). (Milin Chadtin)

9) The gemara Shabbos 88b says that with the emanation of each of the Ten Commandments the world was filled with a most luscious fragrance. We therefore spread out fragrant flowers and grasses. (Medrash Talpios)

10) The gemara Eiruvim 22a relates that Rabbi Ada bar Masno was on his way to the beis ha'medrosh to learn. His wife asked him how he could pursue Torah study at a time when she had nothing to feed the family. He responded that there was still greenery available in the swamps from which some sustenance could be derived. We spread greenery to remind us of this story, to teach us that Torah should be pursued even when one has very trying financial and physical hardships. (Gri"z haLevi Soloveitchik)

11) Rashi on the words "V'chol siach haso'deh terrem yi'h'yeh vo'oretz" (Breishis 2:5) says that although the trees and vegetation had been created on the third day, they were not visible on the face of the earth. There was a physical existence of all plant life that was still below the surface of the earth, but it waited for rain to promote its

growth, "ki lo himtir." The rain had not yet come because man was not yet created, "v'odom ayin," and Hashem wanted man to exist so there would be a creature that would give thanks for the rain. When Hashem created man on the sixth day, it then rained and plant life made its premier appearance on the face of this planet.

As mentioned earlier from the gemara Avodoh Zoroh 3a, regarding the day of creation of man the Torah says "Yom H'Hashishi" - THE sixth day (Breishis 1:31), the only ordinal number of a day preceded with a definite Hei. This indicates that although man was created on the sixth day, his continued existence and that of the whole world was tenuous, dependent upon the bnei Yisroel's acceptance of the Torah on the sixth day of Sivon 2448 years later. The appearance of all vegetation on the face of the earth waited for the creation of man. On the day of the receiving of the Torah we spread out all sorts of greenery to show that we have given the existence of man, and for that matter, of the whole world, permanence.

12) Shovuos has the appellations Atzeres, Shovuos, and Bikurim. The first letters of these words form the word "EiSeV," grass. We therefore spread grass and other greenery in our shuls to remind us of these names for the Holiday. (Rabbi Chaim Zeitchik in his likutim al Shovuos)

LEARNING TORAH ON THE NIGHT OF SHOVIOS UNTIL THE MORNING

The earliest source for this is the Holy Zohar on Breishis page 8a and on Vayikro page 98a.

The Shalo"h in section Ma'seches Shovuos writes that it is a very great virtue to learn through the night of Shovuos with a minyan of people in attendance. He relates a story regarding the importance of doing this with a minyan and adds that if one has the strength he should attempt to also learn through the second night of Shovuos as well.

The Mo'gein Avrohom on O.Ch. #494 writes that the M.R. Shir Hashirim 1:51 relates that Hashem came to the bnei Yisroel the night before the giving of the Torah and found them asleep. He proceeded to wake them up with voices. The Mo'gein Avrohom writes that to make up for sleeping so close to the giving of the Torah we learn through the night of Shovuos.

The Kedushas Levi defends the bnei Yisroel's sleeping, saying that they did this to be alert at the momentous

occasion of the giving of the Torah. Alternatively he says that since Hashem first offered the Torah to each of the nations as recorded in M.R. Eichoh 3:1 on the words in Dvorim 33:2 "V'zorach miSei'ir lomo," the bnei Yisroel were sure that the nations would accept the Torah and it would take much time to go from nation to nation and negotiate with them, thus there would be much time until the bnei Yisroel would be offered the Torah. They therefore went to sleep. The Sfas Emes says that we learn through the night of Shovuos to take advantage of the great spirit of purity that is sent down from heaven on the night of Shovuos, as is written in the Holy Zohar on Vayikro page 98b. With the acceptance of Hashem's words of Torah in purity we fulfill "Imros Hashem amoros t'horos" (T'hilim 12:7).

A Yeshiva student once approached MVHRHG"R Yaakov Kamenecki zt"l and told him that although he stayed up through the night of Shovuos and learned until the morning, he felt he actually lost quantity and quality in his Torah learning. Towards the end of the night his mind was far from alert and he was so tired that he slept a few extra hours over the next few days until he was back to himself. He therefore raised the question if it was worthwhile to stay up until the morning of Shovuos. MVHRHG"R Yaakov Kamenecki zt"l responded that he should still do so in the future. He explained that the intention of staying up all night is not to cram in extra learning. It is obvious that most people would lose out some Torah learning similar to the experience of this Yeshiva student. The intention of staying up all night and learning is to demonstrate an unbridled love for Torah study on the day of the giving of the Torah. The merit of this act is a "seguloh" for Hashem's blessing of opportunity to learn Torah and do mitzvos with a minimum of external disturbances.

PREPARATION FOR KABOLAS HATORAH

As mentioned earlier, the mishnah R.H. 16a says that the world is judged for the produce of its fruit trees on "Atzeres." A person is compared to a tree, "Ki ho'odom eitz haso'deh" (Dvorim 20:19). According to the level of a person's commitment to the Torah on Shovuos, he is judged for heavenly facilitation that enables him to produce Torah and mitzvos to his maximum. (Rabbi Avrohom of Slonim)

PREPARATION AS A VITAL REQUIREMENT

The Medrash Rabboh Yisro 29:1 on the words in T'hilim 29:4, "Kol Hashem bakoach," says that this refers to the voice of Hashem emanating from Har Sinai at the time of the giving of the Torah. The M.R. says that had the verse said "kolos," - voices, rather than the singular form, this would indicate that all the statements heard were on an equal plane. However, since the singular form "kol" is used, it indicates that each person heard a voice that was uniquely befitting for him, expressed by the M.R. as "L'fi kocho shel kol echod v'echod." Alternatively the M.R. derives this from the choice of wording of "bakoach" rather than "bakocho."

There is a clear message for us from this M.R. Obviously each person heard that which he was able to grasp and comprehend. This depended totally upon the preparation done by each individual during the days from the exodus from Egypt until the giving of the Torah. Likewise, we must prepare for our own annual receiving of the Torah on Shovuos by making ourselves a vessel befitting to receive and store the Torah. The Haksav V'hakaboloh at the end of parshas Mishpotim on the words "aish ocheles" (Shmos 24:17) derives the same theme.

KABOLAS HATORAH AND ATONEMENT

The Talmud Yerushalmi Rosh Hashonoh 4:8 and the M.R. on Shir Hashirim 4:4 say, "Rabbi M'sharshioh says in the name of Rabbi Idi, 'Why is the word CHATOS not mentioned by the sacrifices of Shovuos, although it is mentioned by the sacrifices of every other holiday? This teaches us that Hashem says that one who fully accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah is considered as if he had never sinned in his lifetime.'"

Rabbi Dovid Luria, the Bichover Rov, in his commentary on the above M.R. cites the Rokei'ach #295 that this does not only apply to those who accepted the Torah at Har Sinai, but also in all generations when Shovuos comes and one truly accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah, Hashem forgives all his sins.

"CHATOS" AND "L'CHAPPER"

There is a difficulty in understanding the statement of the Yerushalmi, as there is the mention of CHATOS by the sacrifices of Shovuos in parshas Emor

23:19, "Va'asi'sem s'ir izim echod L'CHATOS."

Rabbeinu Chaim Paltiel answers this by saying that although the word CHATOS is found in parshas Emor, the word L'CHAPPER is not found with it. Other holidays have both words mentioned.

I have difficulty understanding this because the gemara only says that the word CHATOS is not stated, and Rabbeinu Chaim Paltiel says that the combination of CHATOS and L'CHAPPER is the intention of the gemara. Also, we find CHATOS without L'CHAPPER by both Sukos and Shmini Atzeres in parshas Pinchos. An explanation would be very appreciated.

MUSSOF AND "SHTAI HA'LECHEM"

A possible answer to the word CHATOS appearing in parshas Emor might be that the statement of the gemara is limited to the "mussofim" of the holidays that come specifically as holiday additions, and not other sacrifices which come for other purposes. The CHATOS mentioned in parshas Emor is an accompaniment to the two breads that are brought as a Chodosh offering to permit bringing grain from the new crop as a Korban Minchah. This is not to be included in the statement of the gemara.

"CHATOS" UNIQUE TO "SHTAI HA'LECHEM"

The Meshech Chochmoh in parshas Pinchos (28:15) says that there is a special reason that the word CHATOS is appropriate in relation to the accompaniment to the "shtai ha'lechem." We have the unusual expression of "l'chatos laShem" by the mussof sacrifice of Rosh Chodesh. The gemara Chulin 60b says that there is an allusion to an atonement for Hashem through the Rosh Chodesh offering because when the moon renews itself, it is a reminder that Hashem diminished the size of the moon. It was once equal in size to the sun.

The Meshech Chochmoh explains that the atonement is not for the diminishing. That was justified, as explained in the above-mentioned gemara. It is needed because had the sun and moon remained equal in size, then those who might have had a propensity to take on the sun as a deity would have been discouraged by seeing that the sun had an equal, the moon. Now that the sun is larger, there is more latitude for making this mistake and Hashem is partly responsible, thus necessitating an atonement, kavyochol.

Similarly at the time of bringing of the new crop of wheat which is the main staple of life for humans, there is also a fear of people over-attributing powers to the sun which brought about the growth and maturing of wheat and all other vegetables and fruits. Therefore it is again in place to mention the word CHATOS. However, we see from this insight of the Meshech Chochmoh that it is only in relation to the "shtei ha'lechem" and not to the Holiday.

READING OF THE SECTION OF KABOLAS HATORAH IN PARSHAS YISRO:

Ch. 19, v. 2: "Va'yichan shom Yisroel" - Rashi comments, "k'ish echod b'leiv echod." Rashi on the word "no'sei'a" (14:10) says that the Egyptians were "b'leiv echod k'ish echod." The Avnei Neizer says that the change of the word order in these two statements of Rashi is significant. Here it means that the bnei Yisroel are always united as if they are ONE person, but now they are also united in their "leiv," their desire. In 14:10 the Egyptians all have a similar desire, but are not united as one person, except in their pursuit of the bnei Yisroel. See Sedrah Selections on B'shalach 5759 (14:7 #3).

Ch. 19, v. 3: "U'Moshe oloh" - And Moshe ascended - When Moshe ascended Har Sinai he asked Hashem, "Why are You giving the Torah through me alone, just one person?" Hashem responded that Moshe was capable of transmitting all 613 mitzvos all on his own, as is indicated by the appellation "Moshe Rabbeinu," whose numerical value is 613. Moshe then asked, "If one person is capable on his own to transmit the Torah, why is it required to have a quorum of 10 people to perform a 'dovor shebikdushoh,' an act of special sanctity, for example to say Kadish, Kedushoh, or Borchu?" Hashem responded that Moshe had the spiritual power of 10 people, as indicated by his name Moshe. When it is spelled out "b'milluy," Mem is Mem-Mem, Shin is Shin-Yud-Nun, Hei is Hei-Hei, we have a total of 450, equal to 10 times "odom." (Medrash Plioh)

Ch. 19, v. 3: "U'Moshe oloh" - And Moshe ascended - When Moshe ascended to the heavens he saw Hashem attaching crowns (tagin) to certain letters of the Torah. He understood that the crowns contained cryptic allusions and meanings beyond just the written word. He therefore

asked Hashem, "Who is capable of extracting the secrets embodied in these crowns? Why not write their content in full?" Hashem responded that there would be people like Rabbi Akiva and others of his stature who would comprehend all the secrets of the crowns. As to why they would not be written out in full, Hashem answered that it is to avoid writing a much lengthier Torah, and by having the concepts embodied in simple crowns much money would be saved by one who would undertake to write a Torah or have it written by a sofer. (Sefer Hatagin)

Ch. 19, v. 3: "U'Moshe oloh el Elokim" – And Moshe ascended to Hashem – Note this extreme contrast: In our verse we find Moshe ascending to Hashem, a feat that was never duplicated by anyone in the world who afterwards would descend back to this world. On the other hand, all the survivors of the desert crossed over the Jordan River and entered Eretz Yisroel except for Moshe, "Lo saavor es haYardein ha'zeh" (Dvorim 3:27, 31:2). This was the intention of King Shlomo when he wrote "Ki lo lakalim hamorotz" (Koheles 9:11), even those who are light of foot (are capable of entering into the Heavenly Domain of Hashem) are not able to run (enter Eretz Yisroel). (M.R. on Koheles 9:11)

Ch. 19, v. 4: "Vo'esso es'chem al kanfei n'shorim" - The Yalkut Shimoni #234 says that the prosecuting angels complained to Hashem that just as the Egyptians are idol worshippers, so are the bnei Yisroel. Hashem then elevated the bnei Yisroel to such a height that was beyond the reach of the prosecuting angels, similar to being lifted on the wings of eagles. How does this answer the claims against the bnei Yisroel? This is the intention of the Mechilta brought by Rashi, "It is better that the arrow (their complaint) enter into Me, rather than into my children." (Chidushei HaRI"m)

Ch. 19, v. 6: "Eileh hadvorim" - Rashi says, "Exactly these words, no more and no less." Why is this stressed by the giving of the Torah over any other prophecy that Moshe was told?

1) Since Moshe realized that the whole purpose of creation was dependent upon accepting the Torah, and that this would also be the greatest treasure that is imaginable for a nation to receive, there was a fear that Moshe might ENHANCE the words of Hashem to

entice the bnei Yisroel to accept the Torah. (Emes L'Yaakov)

2) Moshe was about to become the transmitter of the Torah. It was absolutely necessary to warn him that he would be deserving of this position only if he would not alter the word of Hashem by even one iota. (Emes L'Yaakov)

Ch. 19, v. 9: "V'gam b'cho yaaminu l'olom" - The Rambam in hilchos Yesodei haTorah (8:1,2,3) explains how the prophecy of Moshe can never be refuted, as stated in this verse. The Rambam expounds and expands on this idea in his famous "I'geres Teimon." How is it then, that throughout the generations, there were bnei Yisroel who did not believe in Moshe's prophecy? The Holy Admor of Satmar writes that the non-believers are the "eirev rav" or their descendants. The K'hilas Yaakov answers that one can become a non-believer by studying heresy.

Ch. 19, v. 11: "L'einei KOL ho'om" - Rashi quotes a Mechilta that says that from here we derive that at Mount Sinai, prior to the giving of the Torah, everyone was healed. Possibly, this is why many hospitals have been named Sinai or Mount Sinai.

Ch. 19, v. 12: "V'higbalto es ho'om soviv" - The Torah says, "V'taharu v'kidshu" (Vayikra 16:19), indicating that one first should purify himself as a preparation to sanctify himself. If so, why does our verse first say, "V'higbalto es ho'om soviv" before commanding the bnei Yisroel to separate themselves from their wives for three days before receiving the Torah (verse 15), sanctity before purity? (Although the words "V'hoyu n'chonim la'yom hashlishi" alludes to the three-day separation, as explained by Rashi, it is not spelled out until verse 15.)

The Avnei Nezer answers, based on the M.R. in parshas V'zose Habrochoh that Hashem offered the nations of the world the Torah and they did not accept, complaining that the sampling of mitzvos was contrary to their essence. If so, they have a seemingly legitimate claim that had Hashem given the bnei Yisroel a sampling of a mitzvoh that was also contrary to their essence, they would have likewise declined the offer. This is why the first command in preparation for the receiving of the Torah was to have Har Sinai cordoned off as terra sancta. The bnei Yisroel had such a yearning for holiness that the

restriction of coming any closer was an utmost test of their allegiance to Hashem and His commands.

His son, the Shem miShmuel offers another answer, which is in the same line of thinking. Complying with a command to separate oneself from such an earthy act as to be with one's wife was very easy for the bnei Yisroel at this point in time. Their extreme desire for spirituality put pursuits of earthly and especially earthy matters on the back burner. This paled in contrast with the challenge of restraining oneself and coming closer and even to scale Har Sinai at the time of Hashem's great revelation, hence this command is mentioned earlier. (Shem miShmuel on Shovuos 5683)

On a simple level, the question raised by the Avnei Nezer might be answered by differentiating between purity that is required of a person before he creates a spirit of sanctity, hence, "v'taharu v'kidshu." However, here the sanctity of Har Sinai came about by Hashem's sanctifying it.

Ch. 19, v. 12: "V'higbalto es ho'om soviv" – Logically, one should first purify himself as a preparation to sanctifying himself. If so, why does our verse first say "V'higbalto es ho'om soviv," before commanding that the bnei Yisroel separate themselves from their wives for three days before receiving the Torah (verse 15), sanctity before purity? (Although the words "V'hoyu n'chonim la'yom hashlishi" alludes to the three-day separation, as explained by Rashi, it is not spelled out until verse 15.)

The Avnei Nezer answers, based on the M.R. in parshas V'zose Habrochoh that Hashem offered the nations of the world the Torah and they did not accept, complaining that the sampling of mitzvos was contrary to their essence. If so, they have a seemingly legitimate claim that had Hashem given the bnei Yisroel a sampling of a mitzvoh that was also contrary to their essence, they would have likewise declined the offer. This is why the first command in preparation for the receiving of the Torah was to have Har Sinai cordoned off as terra sancta. The bnei Yisroel had such a yearning for holiness that the restriction of coming any closer was an utmost test of their allegiance to Hashem and His commands.

His son, the Shem miShmuel offers another answer, which is in the same line of thinking. Complying with a command to separate oneself from such an earthy act as to be with one's wife was very easy for the bnei Yisroel at

this point in time. Their extreme desire for spirituality put pursuits of earthly and earthly matters on the back burner. This paled in contrast with the challenge of restraining oneself and coming closer and even to scale Har Sinai at the time of Hashem's great revelation, hence this command is mentioned earlier. (Shem miShmuel on Shovuos 5683)

On a simple level, the question raised by the Avnei Nezer might be answered by differentiating between purity that is required of a person before he creates a spirit of sanctity, hence, "v'taharu v'kidshu." However, here the sanctity of Har Sinai came about by Hashem's sanctifying it.

Ch. 19, v. 12, 13: "Hishomru u'ngo'ah b'kotzeihu, Lo siga bo yad" - What are the two prohibitions? The Ibn Ezra, the Rosh, and the Baalei Tosfos answer that the Torah first warns against ascending the mountain or even touching it, under the penalty of death. If a person has transgressed and the court wants to immediately carry out the punishment, it is warned, "Lo siga BO yad," Do not come into contact with him, the transgressor (not the mountain), since you would also be entering the restricted area. "Ki," rather, "sokol y'sokeil", - stone him from a distance.

Ch. 19, v. 13: "Bimshoch ha'yoveil" – This can either be interpreted as "when the sound of the yoveil is DRAWN OUT," connoting that it is the completion of blowing, as is common when playing musical instruments to draw out the final sounds, indicating that the musical rendition is coming to an end, or "when WITHDRAWING FROM blowing the yoveil," again indicating that the blowing is stopping.

When was this yoveil sounded and by whom?

1) It was a shofar sound emanating from heaven on the day of the giving of the Torah (Ibn Ezra and others)

2) On the following Yom Kippur, blown by Moshe (Rabbi Saadioh Gaon, strongly disputed by Rabbeinu Chananeil)

3) On Rosh Chodesh Nisan, when the Mishkon was assembled and not nightly disassembled (Rashi Beitzoh 5b, Rashi Taanis 21b))

4) On the twentieth of Iyar (Rashi Taanis 21b)

Ch. 19, v. 13: "HEIMOH yaalu vohor" - Who are the antecedents of the pronoun "heimoh?" The Ibn Ezra says in the name of Rabbi Shmuel ben

Chofni that this was permission for Aharon and the seventy Elders ONLY, to ascend the mountain. The rest of the bnei Yisroel were restricted from ascending because of a residual sanctity that remained on the mountain until the building of the Tabernacle, when the sanctity transferred itself from the mountain to the Mishkon.

The Mahari"l Diskin says that it seems to be the opinion of Rabbi Saadioh Gaon that not only was permission granted for all of the bnei Yisroel to ascend, but possibly it was even a COMMAND, to indicate that the sanctity had ceased. However, the Mechilta clearly states that this was only permission and not a command.

Ch. 19, v. 17: "Va'yisatzvu b'sachtis hohor" – And they stood themselves below the mountain – The gemara Shabbos 88a says that the bnei Yisroel literally stood below the mountain as it was suspended above them like a barrel above their heads. The Yonas Eilem chapter #8 says that since they remained alive only by virtue of a miracle, as a mountain suspended above them should have come down upon them by the laws of gravity, they were considered as if they had died. This accomplished that the negative effect of the sin of Odom's eating from the Eitz Hadaas left them, "poska zuhamoson."

Ch. 19, v. 17: "B'sachtis ho'hor" - The gemara Shabbos 88a says that these words teach us that Hashem lifted Mount Sinai above the bnei Yisroel and told them that if they accept the Torah, all is good and fine. If not, they would be buried under this mountain. This amounts to coercing the bnei Yisroel to accept the Torah. There is a well-known question. If the bnei Yisroel willingly accepted the Torah, as it says (24:7) "na'a'seh v'nishmoh," why was coercion necessary? There are many answers to this. Tosfos' and Medrash Tanchuma's answers follow.

The gemara goes on to say that since they were coerced, if one were to ch"v transgress the precepts of the Torah, he could excuse himself by saying that it was accepted through coercion. The gemara adds that in the days of Achashveirosh the bnei Yisroel willingly accepted the Torah, as is written, "kimu v'ki'bl(u) ha'Yehudim" (Megilas Esther 9:27).

Tosfos d.h. "kofoh" asks why there was a need for coercion, as we see that the bnei Yisroel willingly accepted the Torah, as is indicated by the words

"kole asher di'ber Hashem naa'seh v'nishmo" (Shmos 24:7). Tosfos answers that coercion was necessary since there was the fear of the bnei Yisroel's rescinding their acceptance when they would see the awe inspiring fire present at the time of the giving of the Torah.

The Medrash Tanchuma on parshas Noach says that coercion was necessary for acceptance of the Oral Torah, and "naa'seh v'nishmo" was a willing acceptance of the Written Torah only. This automatically answers Tosfos' question, as the willing acceptance in the days of Achashveirosh was only necessary for the Oral Torah.

The Rashb"o writes that the excuse of being coerced into accepting the Torah only helped until the bnei Yisroel entered the Holy Land. However, upon entering, this excuse fell to the wayside, as the merit to live in Eretz Yisroel was predicated upon the bnei Yisroel's complying with the Torah's precepts, as is stated, "Va'yi'tein lo'hem artzose goyim, Baavur yish'm'ru chukov v'Sorosov yintzoru" (T'hilim 105:44,45).

Ch. 19, v. 19: "Moshe y'da'beir v'ho'Elokim yaanenu v'kole" - When a prayer for the healing of a person is said on Shabbos, "mi she'beirach l'choleh," the words "Shabbos hi milizoke" are inserted into the prayer. The previous Bobover Rebbe zt"l said that this is alluded to in our verse. Moshe is spelled Mem- Shin-Hei. These are the first letters of "SHabbos Hi Milizoke." When praying on Shabbos in this manner, "v'ho'Elokim yaanenu," Hashem will respond to the supplicant, "v'KOL," with Kuf- Vov-Lamed, "U'ruoh Krovoh Lovo." (Heard from Rabbi Shmeel Rosengarten z"l, a talmid of the previous Bobover Rebbe zt"l)

Ch. 20, v. 1: "Va'y'da'beir Elokim" - In this verse, which is a prelude to the Ten Commandments, there are seven words, which have a total of twenty-eight letters in them. These are the same amounts as in the first verse of the Torah and as the words of "Y'hei Shmei Rabbah" The Medrash (I have only found part of this in Yalkut Reuvaini at the beginning of Breishis) says that this teaches us that one who says "Y'hei Shmei Rabbah" with all his strength becomes a partner with Hashem in the creation of the world and in the giving of the Torah. However, upon counting the letters of the words "Y'hei Shmei Rabbah" you will find twenty-nine letters. There are a number

of resolutions to this disparity in the Beis Yosef on the Tur O.Ch. #58, d.h. "V'chosav hoRav Dovid Avudrohom."

Ch. 20, v. 1: "Leimore" - This word indicates that the bnei Yisroel should respond to the Ten Commandments. The Mechilta ch. 4, 20:1, says in the name of Rabbi Yishmoel, that the bnei Yisroel responded to every positive commandment with "Hein," YES, and to each negative commandment with "lav," NO. "Zochor" is a positive commandment and "Shomor" is a negative commandment. They were said concurrently, "Shomor v'zochor b'dibur echod (Friday evening prayer of "L'cho dodi"). How did the bnei Yisroel respond upon hearing this commandment? Look into the zemer recited at a bris, "Yom l'yaboshoh" for an answer.

Ch. 20, v. 2: "Onochi" - The Rambam at the beginning of his Yad Hachazokoh, hilchos Yesodei haTorah 1:1, says that this mitzvoh requires that one should KNOW, "she'yeida," that there is Hashem. In his Sefer Hamitzvos he says that the mitzvoh is to BELIEVE, "b'he'emnosoh Elokus." Which is it? I heard in the name of Rabbi Chaim Brisker that as far as one's study can bring him to understand Hashem, he fulfills the mitzvoh with understanding. Beyond that point the mitzvoh is to believe.

Ch. 20, v. 2: "Onochi" - Why not the word "Ani?"

1) The gemara Shabbos 88b uses the four letters of "Onochi" as an acronym for a few different four word phrases.

2) The Yalkut Shimoni #286 says that since the bnei Yisroel had just been in Egypt for a few generations they were very fluent in the Egyptian language. The word for "I - Ani" in Egyptian is "Onoch."

3) The Malbim says that "Ani" simply means "I." If one says "ani KOSEIV," it means that I am writing, but not erasing. The stress is on the action and not on the pronoun. If one says "ONOCHI koseiv," the stress is on "I" am writing, but someone else is not writing. Therefore, the Torah says "ONOCHI," I am Hashem, to the exclusion of others.

Ch. 20, v. 2,3: "Onochi Hashem Elo'kecho, Lo yi'h'yeh l'cho elohim acheirim" - When the bnei Yisroel sinned with the golden calf Moshe spoke in their defense. The M.R. Shmos 47:9 says that Moshe said that since our two verses which command that the

bnei Yisroel believe only in Hashem and not in false gods is expressed in the singular form, "Elo'keCHO" and "Lo yi'h'yeh L'CHO," perhaps the command was only given to Moshe and not to them. In his essays on Shovuos, Rabbi Yoseif Nechemioh Kornitzer asks in the name of his ancestor, the Chasam Sofer, "How is it possible for Moshe to use such a defense? Did he not tell the bnei Yisroel that in the merit of accepting the Torah after their deliverance from Egypt, they would be allowed to leave Egypt. Were they not told to prepare numerous days for the giving of the Torah? It is therefore impossible to say that all their preparation was only for being relegated spectator status!" He answers in the name of the Chasam Sofer that indeed we find that Moshe made no attempt to provide a defense for those who actually sinned by worshipping the golden calf. To the contrary, he preceded to assemble a small army of those who would kill the guilty people, and those who were not warned by witnesses were punished by Heavenly intervention and were killed by a plague. Finally, those who were not known to have sinned were tested by being given a brew of golden calf dust to drink, which brought about the death of those who were guilty (see Rashi on Shmos 32:20 d.h. "va'yashk"). We do not find that Moshe prayed or did anything else to stop this from happening. Moshe's defense, he posits, was to avoid having the bnei Yisroel being held responsible as "areivim," guarantors that others would not sin. Indeed, we find that the Torah was given only on the condition that the bnei Yisroel take responsibility one for another, as mentioned in the M.R. Shmos 27:9. He quotes a Medrash Tanchuma that the singular form used in the first two Commandments teaches that each person would take responsibility for the acts of his fellow ben Yisroel. However, Moshe claimed that only he was responsible for "arvus," "li tziviso v'lo lo'hem," understanding that the singular terms were directly only to him. This is why he said "m'cheini noh misif'r'cho" (Shmos 32:32). (I have found a Medrash Tanchuma in parshas Nitzovim ch. #2 that says that the leader has a unique "arvus" responsibility for the acts of all of the bnei Yisroel.) To this Hashem responded that even Moshe was not held responsible, as "arvus" would only begin later as mentioned in Rashi on parshas Nitzovim (29:28). Thus Hashem tells Moshe, "leich n'chei es ho'om el asher di'barti loch." Lead the

nation to the place that I have told you, i.e. Eretz Yisroel, because only there would "arvus" come into effect.

Possibly another explanation of this most enigmatic medrash can be given based on the words of the N'tzi"v. I feel it is appropriate to mention that the words of the N'tzi"v are most crucial to understand why the Torah oft-times tells us a ruling in a very direct forward manner, "pshuto shel mikro," and sometimes it is necessary to derive an understanding of the intention of the verse through one of the thirteen exegetical rules through which the Torah is explained, known as the "Breisa of Rabbi Yishmoel" at the beginning of the medrash on Vayikra. In Vayikra 21:5 the verse deals with three prohibitions for Kohanim. The first is against ripping out hair as a form of mourning. The N'tzi"v points out that the way it is expressed in this verse, "b'roshom," which when wearing a head covering is a hidden place, is stricter than the expression in Dvorim 14:1, the prohibition for all bnei Yisroel, "bein ei'neichem," indicating a restriction only in a prominent location. Similarly, regarding the prohibition against cutting one's beard with a razor which is mentioned next in the verse, it says "lo y'ga'leichu," even a minimal shaving, while by bnei Yisroel it says "v'lo sash'chis" (Vayikra 19:28), not to destroy by shaving, again a stricter expression by Kohanim. As well, regarding the prohibition against scraping one's flesh as an act of mourning, the final prohibition in the verse, he also points out in Vayikra 19:28 that it is expressed more stringently by Kohanim, not mentioning "lo'nefesh," as it does by bnei Yisroel. He says that by way of "droshoh," exegetical rules, all that applies to a Kohein applies to the rest of bnei Yisroel as well, so their halochos are exactly the same. On Vayikra 19:27 d.h. "lo sakifu" he says that although the halochos are the same for all, by virtue of the fact that the Torah OPENLY expresses stricter terms by Kohanim, they are liable to greater punishments that are meted out by the Heavenly court. His words: "D'b'mokome hamforosh baTorah ho'onesh b'dei shomayim chomur mi'ma shenilmad b'kaboloh bigzeiroh shovoh u'chdomeh." He refers us to the words of Tosfos on the gemara Yoma 44a d.h. "mai lav," who ask why the Rabbis instituted a restriction as a safeguard against transgressing a Torah prohibition in one situation, and did not do so in another case that seems to have the same

concern. Tosfos answers that the Rabbis were more concerned when the Torah prohibition is clearly spelled out in the Torah, as in the former case, than by the latter case, although also a Torah prohibition, because that prohibition is derived and not clearly stated. According to the words of the N'tzi"v, the seemingly enigmatic words of the Tosfos are readily understood.

Given this most basic understanding of the difference between that which is derived and that which is explicitly spelled out by the Torah, perhaps we can say that Moshe's defense was that although it is well understood that the first two Commandments were directed to all the bnei Yisroel, nevertheless, they were not expressed as such, with the simple words seeming to be aimed at Moshe. If so, the bnei Yisroel do not deserve to be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

Ch. 20, v. 3: "Lo yi'h'yeh l'cho elohim acheirim AL PONOY" - The Rambam in his list of negative mitzvos lists as the first, second, fifth, and six mitzvos "Lo yi'h'yeh, Lo saa'seh l'cho fessel, Lo sishtacha'veh, and V'lo so'ovdeim." The Ramban says that all of these are to be considered one mitzvoh. He proves this from the gemara Makos 23b-24a that derives from the words "Torah tzivoh lonu Moshe" (Dvorim 33:4) that Moshe taught the bnei Yisroel 611 mitzvos, the numeric value of the word TORAH, while the TWO mitzvos "Onochi" and "Lo yi'h'yeh," the bnei Yisroel heard directly from Hashem. If we count the negative commands that are found in the verse that begins with "Lo yi'h'yeh" as separate mitzvos, we have a total of five mitzvos that we heard directly from Hashem. This leaves us with only 608 mitzvos that we heard from Moshe, totally contrary to the words of the gemara. The Ramban, in asking his question, assumes that along with "lo yi'h'yeh" we must include the complete verse with the cantellations of "taam ho'elyone" as being heard directly from Hashem or this complete parsha until the next paragraph space. Indeed, the Megilas Esther, a commentator on the Sefer Hamitzvos l'hoRambam, answers the Ramban's difficulty by saying that only the first words of the verse "Lo yi'h'yeh" were heard directly from Hashem, leaving us with only two mitzvos, "Onochi" and "Lo yi'h'yeh."

However, the Meshech Chochmoh gives a most interesting answer based on the words of the Rambam himself, in Moreh N'vuchim 2:33. The Rambam writes that hearing "Onochi" and "Lo

yi'h'yeh" does not mean that the bnei Yisroel actually heard the words of these two mitzvos articulated. Rather, they heard a most awesome celestial sound.

(Perhaps this is indicated in Dvorim 4:12, "Kole dvorim a'tem shomim," - You hear a voice of words, but not the words themselves. Another allusion to this might be in Dvorim 4:35, "Atoh horeiso lodaas," - You were SHOWN to know, but did not hear it, since the verse does not say "Atoh SHOMATO lodaas," "ki Hashem hu ho'Elokim," this is "Onochi," "ein ode milvado," this is "Lo yi'h'yeh.")

The sound emanating from heaven left the bnei Yisroel with the clear knowledge that "Onochi" and "Lo yi'h'yeh," - I am your G-d and there shall be no other besides me. This is what is meant by the gemara Makos. Since they did not grasp the other three mitzvos from this sound, only two were heard (understood), and Moshe taught them 611 mitzvos including the three following "Lo yi'h'yeh." Moshe, on the other hand, was able to discern the actual words conveyed with the sound and heard the articulated five mitzvos in the verse of "Onochi."

The Rambam at the beginning of hilchos avodoh zoroh, 1:1, says that idol worship evolved through people saying that celestial bodies are the ministers of Hashem, which do His bidding and help make Hashem's world inhabitable. People felt that by giving honour to Hashem's agents, they were honouring Hashem. This spiraled further downwards to the point that people deified the agents themselves. Since giving honour to a king's appointees indeed gives honour to the king, what was wrong with the first stage?

The Mahari"l Diskin answers that it is proper to honour the king's ministers, but only when the king is not present. We find that Urioh gave honour to a general in King Dovid's army in front of the king and Dovid considered this to be a rebellious act. Hashem is the Omnipresent, "Mlo chol ho'oretz kvodo." Therefore it is wrong to show honour to any of Hashem's agents. This is the intention of the words "al ponyoy."

Ch. 20, v. 5: "Lo sishtacha'veh lo'hem" - The Sefer Hako'neh page 33a writes that if an angel appears in front of a person in the form of a human being, he is allowed to bow down to him, but if he appears in the form of an angel then it is prohibited.

Ch. 20, v. 8: "ZOCHOR" - In the Ten Commandments in parshas Yisro, the word "ZOCHOR" is used, and in parshas Vo'es'chanan the word "SHOMOR" is used. Which one of these two words was etched into the tablets?

1) The Ibn Ezra (Yisro) brings the opinion of one of his colleagues, that both appeared.

2) The Ibn Ezra brings another opinion, that since the letters were etched all the way through the stone, there was text appearing on both sides. Through a miracle, one side showed "zochor" and one side showed "shomor".

3) The Ibn Ezra himself disagrees with all the opinions he quotes, and says that only "zochor" was written. The Ramban (Yisro) also says that only "zochor" was written on both sets of tablets.

4) There is an opinion that the first tablets had "zochor" and the second had "shomor."

5) Another opinion is that the first had "shomor" and the second had "zochor."

It is possible to connect some of the above opinions with a Yerushalmi Sh'kolim 6:1. Rabbi Chaninoh ben Gamliel says that each set of tablets had ten commandments, five on each side. The Rabonon disagree and say each set of tablets had twenty commandments, a full set of ten on each side. Possibly, according to the Rabonon, since the full text appeared twice on each set of luchos, one tablet may have had "zochor" and the other "shomor."

MVRHRH" G Rav Yaakov Kamenecki brought a proof that "shomor" appeared on the luchos, from the words in the amidoh of Shabbos Shacharis, "V'chosuv bohem SHMIRAS Shabbos."

Ch. 20, v. 8,11: "Zochor es yom haShabbos Ki sheishes yomim - Remember the Shabbos day Because in six days Hashem made the heavens and the earth and He rested on the seventh day." The Torah commands us to keep the Shabbos in these Ten Commandments with very different reasoning from that found in the second time in Dvorim 5:12,15, "Shomor es yom haShabbos V'zocharto ki eved ho'yiso va'yotziachoh Hashem - "Guard the Shabbos day... And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Hashem, your G-d, has taken you out from there."

"Zochor - remember" differentiates Shabbos from the six weekdays. "Shomor - guard" expresses our holy covenant, forged by our leaving Egypt

and accepting the Torah at Har Sinai. Why are two different explanations used for these two commandments?

"Remember the Shabbos," commands us to remember one specific day each week. Its explanation must focus on why that particular day is unique. Therefore, the Torah explains, "Because in six days Hashem has created the heavens and the earth and Hashem rested on the seventh day." Remembering Shabbos differentiates it from the other days.

"Guard the Shabbos" commands us to not do creative work on Shabbos. Refraining from creative work does not differentiate Shabbos from other workdays, as one can refrain from creative work on any other day of the week as well. Rather, "Guard the Shabbos" expresses a more intimate connection with Hashem, Who created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. The explanation leads to another question. If all human beings were created by Hashem, why don't they all share the mitzvah of Shabbos? To this the Torah says, "You were a slave in the land of Egypt, and Hashem has taken YOU out" The bnei Yisroel have a special connection to Hashem, which was forged upon their leaving Egypt and having accepted their unique spiritual mission at Har Sinai through their "kabalas haTorah." Thus, only they are commanded to keep this special, intimate, and divine connection. (Mahara"l of Prague in Tiferes Yisroel, chapter #44)

Ch. 20, v. 13: "Lo signove" – The cantillation for the word "lo" is a "tipcha," creating a division between it and the next word. The Holy Zohar (page 93b) says that this indicates that one may read the word "tignove" on its own, that there is a circumstance when one may steal. He explains that this refers to "g'neivas daas," fooling someone (see Sforno ad loc.). A student may tell his teacher that he has not understood what was just taught to cause the teacher to repeat and expand upon what he taught, so that the student may benefit from the expanded explanation.

Ch. 20, v. 13: "Lo saa'neh v'rei'acho EID sheker" – The Ibn Ezra writes that he was bothered for many years with the word EID, which means witness. Shouldn't the verse have said EIDUS, testimony? He answers that the words "EID sheker" are a noun of direct address and its adjective. You, the person who contemplates testifying

falsely, the "EID sheker," "lo saa'neh," do not testify.

The Meshech Chochmoh answers the Ibn Ezra's question by saying that this verse also serves as a warning against being an "eid zomeim," a person who testifies about something that he could never have witnessed (Dvrim 19:18). As explained in the gemara Makos 5a, this pair of witnesses might have even testified to a true happening, as other witnesses might properly confirm that it took place. However, since they themselves were not eye witness to the fact, they are liars and are even liable to be killed, in fulfillment of "vaasi'sem lo kaasher zomam laasose l'ochiv" (Dvrim 19:19).

Had our verse said "EIDUS sheker," it would only be a prohibition to testify to something that is factually false, but not to something that really took place, just that these testifiers never personally witnessed it. With the use of the word EID, the Torah tells us to not be a witness who lies, even if the statement is accurate and the lie is only that he was not a true eye witness.

Chag Shovuos so'mei'ach, v'ein simchah k'simchas haTorah.

υ,αυσεχ κτραη υγκ πρυ, ι,βα λυρχ

BORUCH SHENOSAN TORAH L'AMO YISROEL BIKDUSHOSO!

A GUTTEN YOM TOV!