The Little-Known Reason Why the Six-Day War Started on June 5

On the morning of Friday, June 2, 1967, the Ministerial Committee for Security Matters convened in the War Room in Tel Aviv as usual... **PAGE 30**
Throughout Jewish history, two mountains stand out more than any others – Mount Sinai and Mount Moriah. They are so different. One is nestled in the heart of a barren wilderness and the other – the Temple Mount – is at the epicenter of one of the world’s greatest cities – Jerusalem. One is in an arid desert far from human society and the other is at the core of a country and civilization. One is where G-d’s word was revealed and the other is where it is lived. Sinai is where G-d’s holiness appeared intensely and temporarily and the other is the locus of the permanent resting place of G-d’s Presence. Sinai is about the Torah, Moriah the Temple. Both are indispensable to the history of the Jewish people and are inextricably linked to the Jewish journey. Sinai is where our spiritual destiny was chartered and Mount Moriah-Jerusalem is its ultimate destination.

Let’s also consider the number two in a historical context. I find it quite remarkable that in the modern era, the day of the reunification of Jerusalem – Yom Yerushalayim, the day when the Old City, the Kotel and the Temple Mount returned to Jewish sovereign control for the first time in 2,000 years – occurs exactly one week before the Giving of the Torah, the Festival of Shavuot. Yom Yerushalayim and Chag Matan Torah – two milestones in such close proximity. One of destiny, the other of destination. Both are integral parts of the same journey.

The Torah was given on two tablets not one. Each tablet represents two distinct categories of Jewish life. One represents the commandments between Man and G-d, our heavenly relationship, and the other between Man and Man, our interactions with our fellow human beings. The Torah consists of two distinct parts – the Written Law and the Oral Law. They could not be more different. One we are commanded to write down and the other we are forbidden to write down. One focuses on the broad sweep of Jewish life – our spiritual history and perspective, while the other focuses on the narrow and particular – actionable items and behavioral requirements. One is about the macro and the other...
micro – halacha, the details of Jewish laws and customs.

**A TALE OF TWO CITIES**

Of course, the two cites of Jerusalem are one city and the two Torahs are one. So what is the essence of this duality? What is the deeper meaning of the concept of ‘two’?

Rav Yehuda Loewe, the Maharal of Prague, explains that two is unique in that it is the first number which converts the unitary into a multiple, a single into a plural. One is uniform; two is the birth of difference. The reality of two creates complexity. The moment diversity is born it has potential to transform the meaning of unity. To convert the blandness of uniformity into the remarkable ability to transform the richness of unity. To convert the tears of separateness into wholeness.

The great challenge of the number two is whether the potential for difference will create division or unity. Will two beget three, four and so on, endless expressions of diversity of experiences that have nothing in common?

Or alternatively, can they all be weaved together to become one again? Herein lies the incredible power of plurality. It has the potential to transform the meaning of oneness. When one exists alone, it represents total uniformity devoid of any complexity.

The moment diversity is born it has the remarkable ability to transform the blandness of uniformity into the richness of unity. To convert sameness into wholeness.

Will the complexity of contrast at the heart of life itself create irreconcilable contradictions or different yet complementary experiences? Will there be conflict or completeness?

Thesis and antithesis can remain polar opposites or they can merge to create a beautiful synthesis. Can two become one again or will they remain locked in eternal divisiveness?

Jerusalem is the lodestar of spiritual life and therefore presents us with this challenge more than anywhere else. Will the multifaceted city be divided against itself or will it become one glorious and unified whole?

Will the heavenly and earthly cities be locked in an endless conflict of irreconcilable truths or will they become one eternal city of peace and completeness?

**OUR TASK**

Our Sages, basing themselves on a cryptic verse in Psalms (122:3), charge us to take up this challenge of making the Holy City one complete whole:

יְרוּשָׁלַיִם כְּעִיר שֶׁחֻבְּרָהּ לָהּ יַחְדָּיו
“Jerusalem is like a city that was joined together within itself.” Our Sages interpret this as, “The city which joins Jerusalem on High – the heavenly city – with the Jerusalem below, the earthly city, must be a city which transforms all of the Jewish people into friends (חֲבֵרִים).”

The Torah is one Torah, a complementary whole aimed at simultaneously synthesizing our relationship with G-d and with our fellow human beings. One without the other is incomplete. We ought to have an equal commitment to both the Written and the Oral Torah – to Biblical and Talmudic study, to understanding both the broad context and meaning of Jewish life as well as the detailed implementation of halacha and Jewish Law. One without the other creates divisiveness and tension.

If we focus only on our relationship with G-d and not with our fellow Jews and other people (or vice versa), we miss the mark. If we only study Tanach and not Talmud and Jewish Law, (or vice versa), we do not grasp the fullness of Jewish life. Inevitably, diversity becomes partial and divisive instead of harmonious. We should strive to bring all disparate aspects together, creating a תּוֹרָה תְּמִימָה, one whole and wholesome Torah.

**THE LESSON OF THE SIX-DAY WAR**

During the miraculous Six-Day War, and through an extraordinary turn of events, a divided city would finally be reunited.

I believe that to ensure that the city remains geopolitically united, it must first and foremost be internally united. The spiritual fault lines and fissures which create contrast and conflict ought to be forged together to complement each other and cultivate completeness.

Both the Torah and Jerusalem combine the earthly and the heavenly, the particular and the universal, the national and the religious, the ethnic and the ethical, and the values of truth and peace. Indeed, the wholeness of the Torah is inherently linked to the unity and holiness of Jerusalem.

May we merit the ultimate expression of spiritual wholeness, the rebuilding of the Temple, soon and speedily in our days.

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1 The prohibition to commit the Oral Torah to writing appears in Gittin (60b). Based on the Talmud (Temurah 14b), the Rambam explains the extenuating harsh, historical circumstances which left the Sages no choice but to begin committing it to writing lest it be forgotten (Introduction to Mishneh Torah).

2 Tiferet Yisrael 34.

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YEARNING FOR MEANING

G-d created every one of the world’s seven billion people with a yearning to feel meaningful and impactful. Although people know that they are merely one of billions, they want to feel that their lives matter, that they mean more than just ‘the average Joe.’

THE DAY THE TORAH WAS GIVEN

Chag Shavuot offers direction to this existential yearning. Shavuot is the only chag other than Sukkot regarding which the Torah specifies the mitzvah of simcha (happiness). Chazal understood the mitzvah as requiring physical celebration. In fact, Rabbi Elazar asserts that even those who see other yamim tovim (holidays) as spiritually focused agree that Shavuot requires physical celebration. Interestingly, the Talmud links this requirement to the fact that Shavuot is the day the Torah was given.

This linkage seems strange. Shouldn’t Shavuot’s commemoration of Matan Torah mandate a spiritually focused celebration? Rashi explains the ‘day’ and accepted the Torah as it was given, but as the days, he had studied Torah. Matan Torah is worth celebrating, but ultimately, it is only our individual investment in Talmud Torah that develops us personally.

IF NOT FOR THAT DAY

A bit later in the Talmud, we are told that Rav Yosef had a preferred culinary simcha selection and a unique formulation of its significance. On Shavuot, Rav Yosef ate a ‘triple-meat’ sandwich and explained his custom by exclaiming that “without the impact of this day, there would be many Yosefs (Joes) in the marketplace.”

Rav Yosef highlighted the importance of Torah learning and knowledge in developing a meaningful and distinguished identity. There are many ways people seek to distinguish themselves. There are the Joe DiMaggios and Joe Namaths of sports and the Joe Bidens and Joe Liebermans of politics. Their respective accomplishments may be undoubtedly impressive and celebrated by society, but Rav Yosef’s statement asserts that on a deeper level, the only way we truly develop and distinguish ourselves is through building our character upon a foundation of Torah learning.

This appreciation lies at the heart of Chag Shavuot. To celebrate Shavuot properly, we need to reflect upon how central Torah learning and values are to Jewish identity. Celebration without this reflection is superficial and only physical in nature.

THE DAYS I LEARNED AND ELEVATED

Rashi’s explanation of Rav Yosef’s words further personalizes his statement. Rashi explains the ‘day’ Rav Yosef refers to, not as the day the Torah was given, but as the days he had studied Torah. Matan Torah is worth celebrating, but ultimately, it is only our individual investment in Talmud Torah that develops us personally.

Rashi also employs a unique adjective to describe the impact of Torah learning on Rav Yosef – יוחנן ממתי, “And I was elevated.”

Rashi seems to be paraphrasing the Mishna in Avot that explains that Torah learning elevates one above all creatures and actions.

Throughout the year we involve ourselves in many (often important) activities. The multitude of disciplines may distract us from the primary importance of Torah learning. Chag Shavuot is a time to reflect upon the unique significance of Torah learning and how it elevates us. Hopefully, our reflection and celebration will inspire us to devote more time to learning and, in the process, make ourselves matter more than the average Joe.

1 Devarim 16:11.
2 Pesachim 68b.
3 DH DeBainan.
4 Abie Rotenberg’s song “Joe DiMaggio’s Card” contrasts collecting baseball cards, which are valued by many but ultimately worthless, with collecting Gedolom Cards that celebrate meaningful accomplishment.
5 Implied by his usage of the word אולנאל, “had it not been for.”
6 DH Li.
7 6:1.
8 We also find this verb in Amudah, with which we begin the central part of the Yom Tov Amidah: ערביבין אלים אולם, “And raised us above all the languages.” See also the words of Rabbi Yochanan (Berachot 17a): אני כתב ישר על בורך, “Happy is one who has grown in Torah.”

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SHAVUOT:
A JEWISH THANKSGIVING

O
n Pesach, as we fulfilled the Mishnaic dictum of וְדוֹרֵשׁ מֵאֲרַמִּי אֹבֵד אָבִי, “And expounds from ‘My father was a wandering Aramean,’” we recited the declaration of Bikkurim accompanying the presentation of our first fruits (of the seven species of Eretz Yisrael) to the Beit HaMikdash, as it appears in Devarim 26:5-10:

“You shall then recite as follows before the L-rd your G-d: ‘My father was a fugitive Aramean. He went down to Egypt with meager numbers and sojourned there; but there he became a great and very populous nation. The Egyptians dealt harshly with us and oppressed us; they imposed heavy labor upon us. We cried to the L-rd, the G-d of our fathers, and the L-rd heard our plea and saw our plight, our misery, and our oppression. The L-rd freed us from Egypt by a mighty hand, by an outstretched arm and awesome power, and by signs and portents. He brought us to this place and settled in the Land as a fulfillment of G-d’s promises for a permanent abode.

Chazal (Sifrei, Devarim 301) explain that “the Aramean” refers to Lavan the Aramean who sought to uproot the existence of my father, Ya’akov.

This is the homiletical reading we incorporate in the Midrashic portion of the Haggadah on Seder night as we focus on the perpetual threat of Jewish survival.

However, in the context of the complete proclamation as written in the Torah, various commentators identify the Aramean otherwise.

The Rashbam (Devarim 26:5) maintains that “a wandering Aramean was my father” refers to “Our father Avraham originated from Aram. He wandered in a state of exile from Aram, as it states: ‘Go forth from your land’”. Ibn Ezra (ibid.) suggests in a grammatical context that “the Aramean is Ya’akov, and the verses meaning is this: when Ya’akov was in Aram, he was an "oved," i.e. poor, penniless... and the point here is that I did not inherit the land from my father (Ya’akov) for he was poverty-stricken when he came to Aram. He was even a stranger in Egypt…”

These opinions reflect a close reading of the psvat (simple meaning) of the verses as they relate to the theme of the declaration – the appreciation of a national identity through the Land of Israel.

We thereby recount the days when our father (Avraham/Ya’akov) was a wandering Aramean, in contrast to his progeny, who have merited settling in the Land as a fulfillment of G-d’s promises for a permanent abode.

This is one of the primary themes of Shavuot – “Chag HaBikkurim” (Bamidbar 28:26). It is a time when we bring the first fruits/wheat crop of our harvest as an expression of “Thanksgiving” for the Land of Israel. This is underscored through the minchat shtei halechem sacrifice whereupon two loaves of wheat (chametz) are offered, representing the transition of Sefirat HaOmer – the counting from the Omer (barley) offering to the wheat – mincha chadasha; prayers and anxiety followed by appreciation for the successful harvest (Seftorno, Vayikra 23:10).

The Ramban (Vayikra 23:17) notes that the loaves of Shavuot are brought from chametz as a Todah offering, expressing our thanksgiving for our staples of existence – the Torah and the wheat of the Land. When we thank G-d for the bounty of the present harvest, our future harvests are also blessed (Rashi, Yirmiyahu 5:24).

The famous Chassidic master, Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter of Ger (known as the Sfat Emet), explains that the two loaves offered on Shavuot symbolize the duality we perceive in creation: one signified Divine blessings, the other the product of man’s toil. On Shavuot, they were both waved in gratitude towards heaven as an acknowledgment that both come from G-d (Bamidbar, Shavuot 5631, 5637).

Unfortunately, today we do not have the privilege of bringing our Bikkurim to the Mikdash and reciting the declaration of thanksgiving. Nor do we bring the mincha chadasha as an expression of gratitude to G-d for the wheat of the Land. However, we are not exempt from thanking G-d at this time for our national homeland. Chag HaBikkurim is our Jewish “Thanksgiving” – after recounting our days of wandering and oppression on Pesach, we complete the proclamation of Bikkurim on Shavuot with gratitude to G-d for our homecoming!

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The ESSENCE of TORAH

According to various Tannaitic opinions, there are certain mitzvot that have never presented themselves and never will. These are the ben sorer uMoreh (the rebellious son), the ir haNidachat (the idolatrous city), and the bayit haMenuga (the leprous house).

As the Gemara explains, there are so many specific conditions for these mitzvot to apply that it is virtually impossible for them to become a practical reality. The reason that these mitzvot are included in the Torah is so that we should expand them and receive a reward. This reason is difficult to grasp. Isn’t there enough Torah study for which to receive reward, even without these three mitzvot?

Indeed, the Torah includes many positive and negative mitzvot. However, those mitzvot are not really the essence of the Torah. The essence is to present Elokat (G-dliness), a description of the Creator. For this reason, when Rav Soloveitchik discovered something new in Torah, he described it as if he felt that G-d revealed Himself to him; as if he perceived a glimpse of Elokat at that time. The Rav felt that this should lead the student of Torah to be overcome by a profound sense of humility, never arrogance.

The overwhelming majority of the laws of the Torah were given on a level that Man can understand and practically experience. In this way, Man is able to have a connection with Elokat. Of course, we must be careful to fulfill all the mitzvot of the Torah and be careful not to violate any of its prohibitions, but the ultimate purpose of all of the mitzvot is to serve as a description of Elokat.

Hence, there were apparently certain aspects of Elokat – corresponding to the three mitzvot mentioned above – that could not be simplified to the level of practical reality. They had to remain in their original state. That is why they never occurred in reality and never will. Still, they had to be included in the body of the Torah because all of the 613 mitzvot are necessary for the full description of the image of G-d. It is obvious that if the purpose of the Torah were merely to present all of the rules in G-d’s lawbook, there would be no reason to include laws that have absolutely no practical relevance. The fact that there is even one mitzvah that never happened and never will happen sheds light on the balance of the entire corpus of the mitzvot. This is what the Gemara is teaching us by דרש וקבל שכר.

We must learn the lessons of these three laws and extend that lesson to the rest of the Torah – that the essence of Torah is to teach us the ‘personality and characteristics’ of G-d Himself.

The Tanya elaborates on an important principle – every Jew has an innate hidden love, אהבה מוסתרת, for G-d. Rav Soloveitchik felt that the source of this love is the act of the malach (angel), who teaches the fetus the entirety of the Torah while in its mother’s womb. The moment before birth, the malach taps it on its mouth to make the baby forget all this learning. We should not view the malach’s teachings as an act of futility, because the purpose of the learning must be to form an impression on the Jew’s heart. It is to implant the “hidden love” for G-d that will stay with the child throughout his or her entire life, and specifically through Torah learning. One can come to love G-d only after being exposed to His essence, and this is accomplished through the medium of His Torah.

Rav Soloveitchik explained further that this principle forms the basis of the Rambam’s assertion that Bnei Yisrael are guaranteed to do teshuva at the end of time. How can there be such a promise if we have a principle of faith that guarantees Man free will? The answer must be that at our very core, we – the Jewish people – do not want to sin. Any sin committed runs contrary to our true nature. Therefore, the natural course of events is such that the Jew, even though he has the full ability to exercise his free will, will eventually return to his root nature. This inner nature reflects the אהבה מוסתרת gleansed from the Torah study experienced even before birth, and we are bidden to subsequently intensify this love for G-d through Torah learning throughout our lives.

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LUXURY CRUISES | EXOTIC TOURS | ITALIAN ALPS | AFRICAN SAFARI | SUKKOT HOTELS | ISRAEL TOURISM
A few years ago, I went to Cyprus for a meeting of religious leaders – rabbis, priests and qadis from Israel. The purpose of the trip was to talk about topics we have in common, in order to reduce the existing tensions and increase calm and mutual respect in Israel.

I was asked to give a lecture about Jerusalem. I decided not to get into trouble. I do not like provocations, shouting arguments or quarrelling with people. So I decided to only talk about Jerusalem of the past, and not relate to the present or the future at all.

I began the lecture with a presentation and explanation of Mount Moriah, the site of the Akeida (Binding of Isaac), and the explanation of where the Temple was. And suddenly... shouts! Riots! Screams! The qadis were going wild. I didn’t understand what the fuss was all about. I had barely begun...

One of the qadis stood up and said: “The Temple was not on the Temple Mount!”

I told him: “It is a simple fact that the Temple was on the Temple Mount – a clear historical fact, an archaeological fact, and there are also ancient Muslim sources that cite this very clearly.”

But he stood firm, declaring: “The Temple was not on the Temple Mount!”

I asked him, “Why do you care where the Temple was? Why are you so angry?”

And he answered: “Because if the Temple was on the Temple Mount, then you were there before us, and so we must evacuate the place and give it to you!”

“Jerusalem at the forefront of our minds.” How does one make that happen? The Mishna (Rosh Hashanah 85a) says that a “remembrance of the Mikdash” is required, and therefore Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai mandated that the Four Species be taken throughout the entire week of Sukkot and in every place (not only in the Temple).

The Talmud asks why we need to remember the Mikdash and bases this remembrance on the verse from Jeremiah (30:17):

כִּי אַעֲלֶה אֲרֻכָה לָךְ וּמִמַּכּוֹתַיִךְ אֶרְפָּאֵךְ נְאֻם ה ה ֶלֹ ר כִּי נִדָּחָה קָרְאוּ לָךְ צִיּוֹן הִיא דֹּרֵשׁ אֵין לָהּ.

For I will restore health to you, And I will heal you of your wounds, says the L-rd; because they have called you an outcast: ‘She is Zion, there is none that cares for her.’”

Why does a verse need to teach us that we need a memorial of the Temple? Isn’t that obvious? It turns out that it is not enough that the verse allows us to create a remembrance of the Mikdash, but rather it must define what constitutes a remembrance. The simple understanding is that we mentally remember the Temple; we internally remember what it was and the rich and vibrant spiritual reality it represented.

But when it comes to memory there is a great concern. People usually remember things that were and can no longer be. Obviously the most prominent is a memorial day for the dead. (Of course, we expect the resurrection of the dead, but in the simple, immediate sense it is about the memory of a past that is no longer.)

The verse makes it clear that remembering Jerusalem is not a reminder of the past, but rather that it must be face to face with the future. We remember in order to demand and to assert, to keep in mind that Jerusalem is always ours and that it will, G-d willing, be returned to us. This is not just a memory of the past, but a longing and a demand that “the Temple will soon be built.”

Jerusalem needs to be at the forefront of our minds. If things are clear to us, then G-d willing and with many prayers, we will soon merit the building of Jerusalem.

וְלִירוּשָׁלַיִם עִירְךָ בְּרַחֲמִים תָּשׁוּב, וְתִשְׁכּוֹן בְּתוׁכָהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ, וּבְנֵה אוֹתָהּ בְּקָרוֹב בְּיָמֵינוּ בִּנְיַן עוֹלָם.

“To Jerusalem, Your city, may You return with mercy and dwell in the midst of it, as You have spoken, and build it soon and in our days.”

What Bothered the Qadis in Cyprus?
Jerusalem is the eternal city. The holy city. The capital of the State of Israel. It is the city that generations have longed to rebuild and the city towards which Jews pray wherever they are in the world.

There is no doubt that Jerusalem is a city of great significance in Jewish culture. Surprisingly however, it is not mentioned at all in the Torah. And even in the days of Joshua, it is not clear whether it was conquered, and was certainly not a city of importance.

The city of Jerusalem only begins to be significant during the reign of King David.

In Samuel II (Chapter 5), David conquers Jerusalem in a complex heroic conquest and turns it into the capital of his kingdom. Immediately after this, he brings the Ark of G-d to Jerusalem and begins preparations for the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem, which will only be built by his son Solomon.

From that moment, Jerusalem became the central city of the Davidic kingdom, and of all the people of Israel, to this day. To the extent that we barely remember it was only chosen in David’s time.

Why?

The Torah says several times that the worship of G-d should be concentrated in one place only, הקמם אשר יברר י י, “The place that G-d will choose,” but surprisingly this “place” is not revealed. Seemingly, the Torah waits until David arrives at “the place” and discovers it for himself. Only then does Jerusalem become “the place that G-d will choose.” From here we understand that the choice of Jerusalem is intrinsically connected to the kingdom of the House of David.

The kingdom of David is a kingdom which unites all of Israel for the first time. A kingdom in which the king leads the people in a practical way while being connected to G-d with all his soul. Thus, he expresses his mission of implementing the kingdom of G-d in the earthly world. Only when the people of Israel are united, connected to G-d, and headed by a leader and spiritual figure alike, is it possible to choose one central place in which the Shechina rests within the people of Israel.

With the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem, in the days of Solomon, Jerusalem becomes the spiritual center of the people of Israel, through which the Jewish people pray to G-d for all their needs, as Solomon describes in his prayer at the dedication of the Mikdash:

“In any prayer or supplication offered by any person among all Your people Israel – each of whom knows his own affliction – when he spreads his palms toward this House, oh, hear in Your heavenly abode…” (Kings I 8:38-39).

However, Solomon says more than that. The Beit HaMikdash will be a spiritual center for the entire world:

“Or if a foreigner who is not of Your people Israel comes from a distant land for the sake of Your name – for they shall hear about Your great name and Your mighty hand and Your outstretched arm – when he comes to pray toward this House… grant all that the foreigner asks You for. Thus all the peoples of the earth will know Your name and revere You, as does Your people Israel; and they will recognize that Your name is attached to this House that I have built” (Kings I 8:41-43).

Jerusalem is chosen and becomes a spiritual center for the entire world when the people of Israel have genuine leadership.

Why is this? Because the Jewish people are supposed to serve as an example to humanity as a whole; of the ability to live in this world naturally, with a profound connection to G-d. Accordingly, the king of Israel is not a king “like all other nations,” but rather a king who represents the kingdom of G-d in this world, which connects heaven and earth.

Only when the people of Israel are led in such a way can Jerusalem, the central city of the kingdom of Israel, become a spiritual center for the entire world, as Isaiah foresaw: “And the many peoples shall go and say: ‘Come, Let us go up to the Mount of the L-rd, to the House of the G-d of Jacob; that He may instruct us in His ways, and that we may walk in His paths.’ For instruction shall come forth from Zion, The word of the L-rd from Jerusalem” (Isaiah 2:3).
The Talmud (Zevachim 116a) tells us that at the time of מַעֲמַד הַר סִינַי (the Revelation at Mount Sinai), all the nations of the world were in shock, not knowing what cosmic event was occurring. They ran to the evil Bilaam, the smartest person they knew, and asked him:

What is going on? Is G-d bringing another flood?

He answered that no, another flood is not on the horizon. “So what is it?” Bilaam answers that G-d is giving the Torah, His most prized possession, to the Jews, ה' עֹז לְעַמּוֹ יִתֵּן, to which they answer ה' יְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ בַשָּׁלוֹם. G-d should bless His nation with peace.

At the time of מַעֲמַד הַר סִינַי, the nations of the world witnessed מַעֲמַד הַר סִינַי, שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶגֶּד הָהָר – כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד בְּלֵב אֶחָד, “Israel encamped there in front of the mountain – as one person and with one mind.” What did they think? They only understood type #1 of unity. Hence they feared another flood. Bilaam tells them that this is a totally different type of אַחְדוּת, one based on Torah, common goals, shared visions, and mutual aspirations of connecting to the Creator on the deepest of levels. They internalize what they have just witnessed and exclaim ה' יְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ בַשָּׁלוֹם.

How fitting it is that Rav Shapira authored this idea. Arguably, as the founder of the Daf Yomi, the daily Gemara learning program, he has done more than anyone over the past 100 years to unify Jews from all walks of life through the medium of Torah study.

As we ready ourselves for our own personal קַבָּלַת הַתּוֹרָה (receiving of the Torah), let us allow the Torah to bind us to each other, to connect our hearts with Jews from all over the world, and to connect to the Divine. Wherever a Jew may find him or herself, the gift of לִמּוּד תּוֹרָה can transport them into a communal world of spiritual bliss – the ultimate mechanism to connect to the Creator of the World.

Rav Shapira answers by first asking a different question. The prophet Isaiah (11:6) tells us that in Messianic times, all the animals will get along with each other. וְגָר זְאֵב עִם כֶּבֶשׂ וְנָמֵר עִם גְּדִי יִרְבָּץ, “The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard lie down with the kid.” What an amazing description of an idyllic reality. But sure it happened once before? On Noah’s ark, in which all the animals lived together for an entire year. What then is so astounding about Isaiah’s prophecy?

Rav Meir Shapira answers that there are really two types of אַחְדוּת (unity). The first is what we might call אַחְדוּת מִתּוֹךְ אֵין בְּרֵירָה – we get along because we want to survive. There is a common enemy from which we both need protection. That’s what happened at the time of the flood. The animals didn’t really love each other but the species needed to continue, so they lived together. The אַחְדוּת of Isaiah is one based on a shared vision and common aspirations to connect to the Messianic reality of overflowing דַּעַת ה’, palpable even to the animals. That is something yet to occur in the animal kingdom.

At the time of מַעֲמַד הַר סִינַי, the nations of the world witnessed מַעֲמַד הַר סִינַי, שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶגֶּד הָהָר – כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד בְּלֵב אֶחָד, “Israel encamped there in front of the mountain – as one person and with one mind.” What did they think? They only understood type #1 of unity. Hence they feared another flood. Bilaam tells them that this is a totally different type of אַחְדוּת, one based on Torah, common goals, shared visions, and mutual aspirations of connecting to the Creator on the deepest of levels. They internalize what they have just witnessed and exclaim ה' יְבָרֵךְ אֶת עַמּוֹ בַשָּׁלוֹם.

How fitting it is that Rav Shapira authored this idea. Arguably, as the founder of the Daf Yomi, the daily Gemara learning program, he has done more than anyone over the past 100 years to unify Jews from all walks of life through the medium of Torah study.

The Talmud (Baba Kama 82a) records the story which occurred at Marah (Exodus 15), when the Jews thirsted for water, and G-d produced sweet water from the bitter surroundings. Chazal offer a deeper interpretation. The Jews really thirsted for Torah (אֲשֶׁר לָא מַיִם אֶלָּא תּוֹרָה, “there is no water except for Torah”) and it was at that moment that the law was enacted that no Jew should ever go three days without hearing a Torah reading. A beautiful passage, but with one obvious problem. What were they thirsty for? This happened a few weeks before מַעֲמַד הַר סִינַי, so how could they be thirsty? There was no obligation to learn anything yet! Rav Soloveitchik answers that a Jew’s connection to Torah does not flow purely from the obligation to learn, but from an inborn, magnetic connection to the Torah, the Divine word. Hence even before we formally received the Torah, we subconsciously yearned for its power and purpose.

As we ready ourselves for our own personal קַבָּלַת הַתּוֹרָה (receiving of the Torah), let us allow the Torah to bind us to each other, to connect our hearts with Jews from all over the world, and to connect to the Divine. Wherever a Jew may find him or herself, the gift of לִמּוּד תּוֹרָה can transport them into a communal world of spiritual bliss – the ultimate mechanism to connect to the Creator of the World.

Rabbi Shalom Rosner is a Rebbe at Yeshivat Kerem B’Yavneh and Rabbi of the Nofei HaShemesh community.
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In a survey of almost 1,500 Orthodox Jewish couples in the United States, researchers found that close to 40 percent of couples in our community report conflict over in-laws to be a significant source of marital conflict. Early in a marriage, the default setting is to assume that the new family will be governed by a similar set of rules and expectations that characterized their family of origin. Yet families are inherently different. Research in family psychology finds that the two main organizing influences of families are rule structure — ranging from rigid to chaotic — and emotional closeness — ranging from enmeshed to disengaged. If one comes from a family that is compulsive about time and emotionally distant, it can come as a shock to be exposed to in-laws who might be perceived as intrusive and chaotic.

The key is not to see the inevitably different family culture as better or worse but rather as a variation on the theme of normal. Once one pathologizes this difference as a “defect,” one’s spouse is likely to respond by seeing this issue as one of divided loyalties where they have to choose between spouse and parents. This can lead to defensiveness, and escalation of conflict is likely to follow.

Hierarchical Challenges

The rule structure of a family can range from rigid to chaotic. In-laws with a chaotic style might pose difficulty for a son-in-law or daughter-in-law regarding issues such as:

- **Time Management:** This might be manifested by in-laws being chronically late in arriving for Shabbat, showing up to watch the children, etc.

- **Disciplinary Style:** A lax approach to watching or disciplining grandchildren can lead to discomfort on the part of a parent who is used to a more structured style of raising children.

- **Formality:** In-laws might stand on ceremony if a son-in-law or daughter-in-law isn't careful about calling, remembering birthdays, etc. They also might be less understanding regarding lack of promptness and more likely to get upset at a perception of overly lax parenting style when spending time at their children's home. In turn, their discipline might be viewed as too controlling, overprotective or rigid when watching grandchildren.

Another major potential source of conflict is in the area of emotional connectedness. If a family is overly close, often referred to by family therapists as “enmeshed,” the potential difficulties might coalesce around potential sources of conflict such as unexpected visits, prolonged visits, or a set of expectations of closeness from a son-in-law or daughter-in-law with a “psychological allergy” to closeness that the child might perceive as smothering.

The other extreme of emotional closeness is lack of connection. In such families, in-laws might feel that visiting their children a few times a year and an occasional call is more than sufficient. This can easily be viewed as uncaring to a son-in-law or daughter-in-law who comes from a family with a warmer emotional temperature.

**Recommendation**

Take an active role in educating your spouse about your family of origin's rules. It is easy to forget that in dealing with our parents, we have the benefit of decades of learning to accommodate to their emotional needs, demands and unique idiosyncrasies. Often our accommodation to their personalities is so much a part of us that we don’t even realize how we have molded our behavior to minimize conflict and maximize effective communication. Bring a high level of empathy to your spouse, who doesn’t have the benefit of this experience and is often expected to “instantly” master this complex and often inscrutable code of conduct.

This means that the crucial ingredient in managing the often-inevitable challenges of getting used to an alien family style is open communication between spouses. Spouses should explore a plan for dealing with frustration in part by managing their expectations and not pathologizing a situation where “different” doesn't mean crazy or insensitive.

Perhaps the most important point is that validation isn’t the same as agreement. When one calmly listens and validates spouses who are upset with in-laws, the son or daughter doesn’t have to feel a need to defend their parent. This isn’t a lack of loyalty to parents. It is simply supporting a spouse while helping them understand an alien culture.

(Some of the ideas in this article are based on the work of Dr. Rona Novick.)

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Ruth’s generosity reverses the downward spiral of the narrative and launches its arduous movement toward resolution. However, Ruth, a marginalized Moabite, cannot act independently. Everything that she offers Naomi (food, children) is given to her by the well-established Judean, Boaz, who is also portrayed as a paragon of generosity. If the first critical shift in the book is initiated by Ruth, its final pivot is completed by Boaz. It may be most accurate to conclude that the success of the narrative rests upon the coming together of this couple. Ruth and Boaz’s marriage represents the conjoining of two similar personalities, whose traits are ideal for producing both the personal solution for Naomi and the national solution for the self-centered, miserly, and slothful society of the period of the Judges.

To convey the similarity between Boaz and Ruth and simultaneously highlight the important traits they share, the Book of Ruth presents several linguistic parallels between these characters.

The most significant similarity between them is their common trait of kindness. The verb *natan*, to give, is employed in the book to depict Ruth giving food to Naomi (2:18) and to portray Boaz giving food to Ruth (3:17). Each of these exemplary characters supplies food to someone needy, thereby solving the essential problem of the book. And yet, the book does not portray commonplace kindness; rather, it focuses on a particularly selfless type of kindness. Specifically, both of these characters are generous without any thought of personal benefit that can accrue from their generosity. This type of kindness, which is often associated with acts of kindness done for the deceased, is termed *chesed shel emet*. There is, of course, no expectation of recompense when one buries a dead person or treats a corpse with respect. It is striking, therefore, that both Ruth and Boaz are explicitly praised for the kindness that they perform for the deceased. Naomi blesses Ruth (and Orpah) that she will receive due recompense for her behavior: “G-d shall do kindness with you as you did with the dead ones and with me” (1:8). Naomi later blesses Boaz in a similar fashion: “Blessed is he to G-d, for he has not withheld his kindness from the living or the dead” (2:20).

In keeping with this trait, both of these characters are portrayed not just as acting on someone else’s behalf, but as doing so in a manner that undermines their own interests. Ruth’s original decision to remain with Naomi rather than return to a fulfilling future in Moab attests to her selflessness. Boaz’s willingness to buy Elimelech’s land and marry Ruth in order to establish the name of the deceased requires a fair measure of selflessness, as may be seen from the redeemer’s panic. Both Ruth and Boaz are willing to sacrifice their personal dignity to help another: Ruth when she offers to go to the fields to glean food (2:2) and Boaz when he himself serves Ruth food in the field (2:14). The self-sacrificing quality they share and their willingness to suspend their own personal interests in favor of the needs of the other are critical to the success of their union. Their marriage is designed to create a dynastic line of kingship from which will emerge a leader, who, like his illustrious ancestors, will be willing to put the needs of the other before his own.

A similar point emerges from the textual description of Ruth’s hardworking behavior. Ruth’s industriousness, indicated by her willingness to work in the fields from morning (2:7) until evening (2:17), corresponds to Boaz’s industrious nature. Despite being a wealthy landowner, Boaz personally visits his fields during the harvest (2:4), winnows his own barley (3:2), and sleeps in his fields to guard his crops. Their common drive to work hard is critical for producing an unselfish king. A leader who is willing to serve his people can be a benevolent and charitable king. It is no wonder then, that the Davidic dynasty begins with a woman and a man who labor in the fields. The marriage of these industrious individuals produces a child whose name is Oved, “the worker,” born to serve the people (4:17).

The mirroring of Ruth and Boaz thus depicts the harmonious alliance of two similar personalities, who are kind, generous, selfless and hardworking. The parallels between these personalities hint at the successful fruit of their union, the Davidic dynasty, which is founded upon their common traits.

(This article is excerpted with permission from ‘Ruth: From Alienation to Monarchy,’ Maggid, 2015.)

Dr Yael Ziegler teaches Tanach at leading institutions in Israel
Dr. Yael Ziegler

צְאֶינָה וּרְאֶינָה בְּנוֹת צִיּוֹן בַּמֶּלֶךְ שְׁלֹמֹה בָּעֲטָרָה
שֶׁעִטְּרָה לּוֹ אִמּוֹ בְּיוֹם חֲתֻנָּתוֹ וּבְיוֹם שִׂמְחַת לִבּוֹ.

“O maidens of Zion go forth and gaze upon King Solomon wearing the crown that his mother gave him on his wedding day and on his day of bliss.”
(Song of Songs 3:11)

What sort of crown was it that Solomon is depicted as wearing on his wedding day? Let us consider the rabbinic rendering of this verse. The Rabbis depict the crown not merely as a symbol of his kingly station but as the pinnacle of his achievement. Moreover, Solomon in the Midrash ceases to be Solomon and is transformed into the Jewish people: “Oh maidens of Zion go forth”: my children found in Zion. “Wearing the crown... on his wedding day”: at Sinai, “and on his day of bliss”: in Jerusalem.

The ultimate wedding day for Am Yisrael is of course Shavuot. At Sinai, G-d is portrayed as a groom who sets out to meet his bride. In point of fact, in Pirkei D’Rabbi Eliezer, G-d is described as going first to the women, certain that they will prevail upon their husbands. Collectively, the women and men declared נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע “, We will do and we will listen.”

The Gemara (Shabbat 88a) portrays the crowning of the bride at Sinai:

דָּרַשׁ רַבִּי סִימְלָאֵי: בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁהִקְדִּימוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל נַעֲשֶׂה לְנִשְׁמָע, בָּאוּ שִׁשִּׁים רִבּוֹא שֶׁל מַלְאֲכֵי הַשָּׁרֵת, לְכָל אֶחָד וְאֶחָד מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל קָשְׁרוּ לוֹ שְׁנֵי כְּתָרִים, אֶחָד כְּנֶגֶד נַעֲשֶׂה וְאֶחָד כְּנֶגֶד נִשְׁמָע.

“When the Jewish people declared ‘We will do and we will listen,’ 600,000 angels descended and crowned them with two crowns, one for נַעֲשֶׂה and one for נִשְׁמָע.”

“And the day of his bliss” – in Jerusalem. On a simple level, the Rabbis were asserting that the ultimate jewel in Solomon’s crown was the Temple he constructed in Jerusalem. But consider if you will the following Mishna (Sotah 9:14):

בַּפֻלְמוּס שֶׁל אַסְפַּסְיָנוּס גָּזְרוּ עַטְרוֹת חֲתָנִים, וְעַל הָאִירוּס. בְּפֻלְמוּס שֶׁל טִיטוּס גָּזְרוּ עַל עַטְרוֹת כַּלוֹת.

“During the war with Vespasian, when joy diminished, the custom of crowns for grooms was discontinued, and during the time of Titus (Roman general and governor of Judea in 117 BCE) the custom of brides wearing tiaras was abolished.”

The Gemara (Sotah 49a) asks: what was the nature of the bridal crowns? The answer “a city of gold,” a crown in the shape of Jerusalem of Gold. And so, “the day of his wedding” is at Sinai and “the day his heart is jubilant” is in Jerusalem.

The custom of wearing a veil is as old as the Bible, but the wearing of a wedding crown or tiara by both brides and grooms in Jerusalem has been around since the rabbinic period. The significance of this custom under the chuppah is clear, as is the profound meaning for us, as we transition from Yom Yerushalayim to Shavuot, Zman Matan Torateinu (the time of receiving our Torah).

But there is one more crown, described by Chazal as the “crowning glory” in the following Midrash: Rabbi Pinchas in the name of Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Yirmiya in the name of Rabbi Chiya bar Abba said, at the time that Israel prays, you don’t find all of them praying together, but rather each and every gathering prays by itself... but when all the gatherings finish their prayers, the angel in charge of prayers takes all the prayers prayed by all the different gatherings and makes them into crowns, which he puts on the head of the Holy One, Blessed be He, as it says, “unto You (adecha) does all flesh come” and adecha means crown, as it says (Isaiah 49:18) “I will clothe yourself with them all like jewelry (ke-adi) and adorn yourself like a bride,” and as it says (Isaiah 49:3) “Israel in whom I take glory,” that the Holy One, Blessed be He who adorns Himself with the prayers of Israel, as it says (Ezekiel 16:12) “A crown of glory on your head.”

This year as we walk to the Kotel after a night of Torah study, let us hope that all of our prayers make their way to the heavenly throne and are placed at the forefront of G-d’s consciousness. May the angel in charge of prayers place crowns upon the head of מֶלֶךְ מַלְכֵי הַמְּלָכִים, which the King of the Universe will don with pride.

Dr. Bryna Jocheved Levy

Dr. Bryna Jocheved Levy is the Rector of the Bellows Eshkolot Graduate Program in Biblical Studies at Matan
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Israel is constantly in a state of growth -- a growing economy and a growing population. The latter is fueled by a constant influx of new immigrants and a relatively high birth rate. The growth in population must be met by ongoing housing starts to deal with the rising demand. In this context, Tsfia International Ltd., in conjunction with Rothstein Construction, are developing Carmay-Hanadiv, a housing complex in the Kiryat Malachi area. Tsfia and Rothstein are established companies with a wealth of experience in Israel’s real estate industry. They have planned and built many neighborhoods, public institutions, shopping and employment centers throughout the country.

Shalom Wassersteil, chairman of Tsfia, is very proud of Carmay-Hanadiv, which he says is well adapted to absorb American olim. He states, "I feel blessed because by building a new residential project in the Holy Land, I feel that I am fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah, namely the rebirth of our nation in its historic homeland. We are building a complex of over 3,000 new homes in Israel, which we believe will play an important role in the 'ingathering of the exiles' by building a residential project that will act as a magnet for potential Olim."

One of the reasons for Carmay-Hanadiv's attraction is that it is a warm, unified community inhabited by high quality families who help new Olim make their absorption into society as smooth as possible. These families have made it their goal to welcome new families and work to make their absorption easier through a variety of activities and a wide range of classes in Torah and other subjects.

This new community not only has the framework to absorb new Olim, but it also offers potential residents well-constructed apartments in very attractive surroundings. Wassersteil explains, "Carmay-Hanadiv is located on a 525-dunam, 130-acre privately owned plot of land between Be’er Tuvia and Kiryat Malachi. Hanadiv means 'the benefactor.' The early entrepreneurs gave it this name as a tribute to Baron de Rothschild, who bought large tracts of land to facilitate the reestablishment of Israel. As early as 1887, Baron de Rothschild purchased the fertile tract of land on which Carmay-Hanadiv is being built and now, over 130 years later, the baron's dream is being realized with the construction of the Carmay-Hanadiv complex."

That dream, a green neighborhood in the heart of the country, has a lot going for it. It has apartment buildings of uncompromising standards, surrounded by wooded terrain, modern infrastructure and a system of roads that provide easy access to commerce, employment and educational centers in the vicinity. In addition, the new Kiryat Malachi train station connects Carmay-Hanadiv to the country's railway system. Carmay-Hanadiv is a 15-minute drive from Ashdod and Ashkelon, 10 minutes drive from Yad Binyamin, 30 minutes from Tel Aviv and 40 from Jerusalem.

Wassersteil adds, "While Carmay-Hanadiv's location is ideal geographically, what makes it perfect is the combination of four parameters that provide an infrastructure that facilitates aliyah absorption in the best possible way. They are: housing, community, education and employment."
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The festival of Shavuot is a mystery wrapped in an enigma. Here is how Shavuot is described and defined in Parashat Emor:

"From the day after the Sabbath, the day you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, count off seven full weeks. Count off 50 days up to the day after the seventh Sabbath, and then present an offering of new grain to the L-rd… On that same day, you are to proclaim a sacred assembly and do no regular work. This is to be a lasting ordinance for the generations to come, wherever you live" (Leviticus 23:15-21).

These are the difficulties: First, Shavuot, “the feast of weeks,” is given no calendrical date: all the other festivals are. Pesach, for example, is “on the 15th day” of the “first month.” Shavuot has no such date. It is calculated on the basis of counting “seven full weeks” from a particular starting time, not by noting a date in the year.

Secondly, while the New Moon was determined on the basis of eyewitness testimony, Shavuot could have no fixed date. In the Jewish calendar a month can be long (30 days) or short (29). If Nisan and Iyar were both long months, Shavuot would fall on 5 Sivan. If both were short, it would fall on 7 Sivan. And if one were long and the other short, it would fall on 6 Sivan. Unlike other festivals, Shavuot is (or was) moveable.

Thirdly, the point at which the counting of days and weeks begins is signaled in a profoundly ambiguous phrase: “From the day after the Sabbath.” But which Sabbath? And what is the reference to a Sabbath doing here at all? The previous passage talked about Pesach, not the Sabbath. This led to one of the great controversies in Second Temple Judaism. The Pharisees, who believed in the Oral Law as well as the Written one, understood “the Sabbath” to mean the first day of Pesach (15 Nisan). The Sadducees, who believed only in the Written Law, took the text literally. The day after the Sabbath is Sunday. Thus the count always begins on a Sunday, and Shavuot, 50 days later, also always falls on a Sunday.

The fourth mystery though, is the deepest: what is Shavuot about? What does it commemorate? About Pesach and Sukkot we have no doubt. Pesach is a commemoration of the Exodus. Sukkot is a reminder of the 40 years in the wilderness. This is not a marginal phenomenon, but of the essence. Other religions of the ancient world celebrated seasons. They recognized cyclical time. Only Israel observed historical time – time as a journey, a story, an evolving narrative. The historical dimension of the Jewish festivals was unique. So all the more is it strange that Shavuot is not biblically linked to a historical event.

Jewish tradition identified Shavuot as “the time of the giving of the Torah,” the anniversary of the Divine revelation at Sinai when the Israelites heard the voice of G-d and made a covenant with Him. But that connection is not made in the Torah itself. To be sure, the Torah says that “In the third month after the Israelites had gone forth from the land of Egypt, on that very day, they entered the wilderness of Sinai” (Exodus 19: 1), and Shavuot is the only festival in the third month. So the connection is implicit, but it is not explicit. For this, as for the festival’s date, we need the oral tradition.

What then was the view of the Sadducees? It is unlikely that they linked Shavuot with the giving of the Torah. For that event had a date, and for the Sadducees, Shavuot did not have a date. They kept it on a Sunday – they observed it on a specific day of the week, not on a specific date in the year. How did the Sadducees view Shavuot?

There is a fascinating episode recorded in rabbinic literature (Menachot 65a) in which a Sadducee explains to Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai why, according to them, Shavuot is always on a Sunday: “Moses our teacher was a great lover of Israel. Knowing that Shavuot lasted only one day, he therefore fixed it on the day after the Sabbath so that Israel might enjoy...
themselves for two successive days.” Shavuot gave the Israelites a long weekend!

From this starting point, we can begin to speculate what Shavuot might have meant for the Sadducees. The late Louis Finkelstein argued that they were landowners and farmers. In general, they were wealthier than the Pharisees, and more closely attached to the State and its institutions, the Temple and the political elite. They were as near as Judaism came to a governing class.

For farmers, the agricultural significance of Shavuot would have been clear and primary. It was “the festival of the harvest, of the first fruits of your work, of what you sow in the field” (Exodus 23:16). It came at the end of a seven-week process that began with the bringing of the Omer – the first of the barley crop. This was the busy time of gathering in the grain. Farmers would have a specific reason to give thanks to G-d who “brings forth bread from the ground.” They would also, by the end of harvesting, be exhausted. Hence the Sadducee’s remark about needing a long weekend.

We can now see the outline of a possible Sadducean argument. Pesach represents the beginning of the Israelites’ journey to freedom. Sukkot recalls the 40 years of wandering in the desert. But where in the Jewish year do we recall and celebrate the end of the journey: the entry into the Promised Land? When did it take place? The Book of Joshua (5:10-12) states:

“On the evening of the 14th day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover. The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate of the produce of Canaan.”

It is this text that Maimonides takes as proof that “the day after the Sabbath” in fact means – as the text states here – “the day after the Passover.” Seen through Sadducean eyes however, this text might have held a quite different significance. The Omer recalls the day the Israelites first ate the produce of the Promised Land. It was the end of the wilderness years – the day they stopped eating manna and started eating bread from the Land to which they had been traveling for 40 years.

The reason Shavuot is given only agricultural, not historical, content in the Torah is that agriculture was history in this case. The 50-day count from the first time they ate food grown in Israel to the end of the grain harvest represents the end of the journey of which Pesach was the beginning and Sukkot the middle. Shavuot is a festival of the Land and its produce because it commemorates the entry into the Land in the days of Joshua. So the Sadducees may have argued. It was Israel’s first Yom HaAtzmaut. It was the festival of entry into the Promised Land.

It is, perhaps, not surprising that after the destruction of the Second Temple, the Sadducees rapidly disappeared. How do you celebrate a festival of the Land when you have lost the Land? How do you predicate your religious identity on the State and its institutions when you have lost those institutions? Only a movement (the Pharisees) and a festival (Shavuot) based on the giving of the Torah, could survive. For the Torah was not completely dependent on the Land. It had been given “in the wilderness.” It applied anywhere and everywhere.

To be sure, the Pharisees, no less than the Sadducees, loved the Land. They knew the Torah in its entirety could only be kept there. They longed for it, prayed for it, lived there whenever they could. But even in exile, they still had the Torah and the promise it contained that Jews would return one day, and recover their sovereignty, and rebuild what they had lost.

The argument about Shavuot turned out to be fateful for Jewish history. Those who celebrated it as “the time of the giving of the Torah” ensured Jewish survival through nearly 20 centuries of exile and dispersion. And we, who live in the era of the return, can rejoice in a double celebration: of the Torah and of the Land.

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is Emeritus Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth @RabbiSacks · www.RabbiSacks.org
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AN EXCERPT FROM

The Laws of Torah Study

הלכות תלמוד תורה

The Amount of Torah Study Necessary to Fulfill the Mitzva

How much time must one spend studying Torah each day in order to fulfill the mitzva? Must one dedicate all of one’s available time to the task or is it sufficient to set aside a certain amount of time daily, and if so, how much? There appear to be two conflicting passages in the Gemara with regard to this question. One is found in the Gemara Berachot:

Masechet Berachot 35b

The Sages taught: What is the meaning of that which the verse states: “And you shall gather your grain”? Because it is stated: “This Torah shall not depart from your mouths, and you shall contemplate in it day and night” (Yehoshua 1:8), I might have thought that these matters are to be understood as they are written; one is to literally spend his days immersed exclusively in Torah study. Therefore, the verse states: “And you shall gather your grain, your wine and your oil,” follow in their regard, the way of the world; set aside time not only for Torah, but also for work. This is the statement of Rabbi Yishmael.

Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai says: Is it possible that a person plows in the plowing season and sows in the sowing season and harvests in the harvest season and threshes in the threshing season and winnows in the windy season, and is constantly busy; what will become of Torah? Rather, one must dedicate himself exclusively to Torah at the expense of other endeavors; as when Israel performs G-d’s will, their work is performed by others, as it is stated: “And strangers will stand and feed your flocks, and foreigners will be your plowmen and your corvées – the Jews perform the mitzva, and the gentiles perform the work for them.”

Discover more at www.tzurbaolami.com
vinedressers” (Yeshayahu 61:5). When Israel does not perform G-d’s will, their work is performed by them themselves, as it is stated: “And you shall gather your grain.” Moreover, if Israel fails to perform G-d’s will, others’ work will be performed by them, as it is stated: “You shall serve your enemy whom G-d shall send against you” (Devarim 28:48).

Summing up this dispute, Abaye said: Although there is room for both opinions, many have acted in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yishmael, and combined working for a living and learning Torah, and although they engaged in activities other than the study of Torah, were successful in their Torah study. Many have acted in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai and were not successful in their Torah study. They were ultimately forced to abandon their Torah study altogether.

According to this Gemara, Rabbi Yishmael holds that one should work in order to earn a livelihood, and should not study Torah full time. By contrast, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai seems to hold that one must study Torah full time at the expense of earning a living by working the land, since otherwise there will be no remaining time for Torah study. He claims though that if the people collectively follow the Torah, they will merit that others assist them in earning a livelihood. Abaye then seems to adopt the position of Rabbi Yishmael when he notes that many people were not successful in supporting themselves through the method of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai.

However, the following Gemara in Menachot appears to present these same Tanna'im as having reached the opposite conclusions.

Rabbi Yochanan says in the name of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai: Even if a person recited only the recitation of Shema in the morning and in the evening, he has fulfilled the mitzva of: “This Torah scroll shall not depart from your mouth.” And it is prohibited to state this matter in the presence of ignoramuses [amei ha’aretz], as they are likely to get the impression that there is no need to study Torah beyond this. And Rava says: On the contrary, it is a mitzva to state this matter in the presence of ignoramuses, as they will realize that if merely reciting the Shema leads to such a great reward, all the more so how great is the reward of those who study Torah all day and night.

Ben Dama, son of Rabbi Yishmael’s sister, asked Rabbi Yishmael: In the case of one such as I, who has learned the entire Torah, what is the halacha with regard to studying Greek wisdom? Rabbi Yishmael recited this verse about him: “This Torah scroll shall not depart from your mouth, and you shall contemplate in it day and night.” Go and search for an hour that is neither part of the day nor part of the night, and learn Greek wisdom in it.
According to this Gemara, Rabbi Yishmael seemingly holds that one must study Torah at every available free moment, and is permitted to study other subjects (such as Greek wisdom) only at a “time that is not day or night.” On the other hand, Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai says that one has fulfilled the mitzva of studying Torah daily (vehigita bo yomam valaila) simply by reciting Keriat Shema, the opposite of his ruling in Berachot.

We can illustrate this contradiction through the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Berachot</th>
<th>Menachot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rabbi Yishmael</td>
<td>Work normally</td>
<td>Study Torah full time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai</td>
<td>Study Torah full time when following the Divine will</td>
<td>Fulfill the obligation through Shema twice daily</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We find similar contradictory approaches in the Mishna concerning this question as well. The following mishnayot in Pirkei Avot seem to support the approach of earning a livelihood, as is apparent from the commentary of the Gra to the second mishna, who references the opinion of Rabbi Yishmael in Berachot.

**Pirkei Avot 2:2**

Rabban Gamliel the son of Rabbi Yehuda HaNasi would say: Beautiful is the study of Torah with the way of the world, for the toil of them both causes sin to be forgotten. Ultimately, all Torah study that is not accompanied with work is destined to cease and to cause sin...

**Pirkei Avot 3:17**

...If there is no flour, there is no Torah; if there is no Torah, there is no flour...

**Commentary of the Gra, ibid.**

If there is no flour, there is no Torah – As it says in the sixth chapter of Berachot, ‘and you will gather your grain, etc.

On the other hand, another Mishna in the following chapter of Pirkei Avot seems to side with the approach that one must engage entirely in Torah study, as evident from the commentary of the Gra, who links it with the opinion of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in Berachot.

**Pirkei Avot 3:5**

Rabbi Nechunia the son of Hakana would say: One who accepts upon himself the yoke of Torah is exempted from the yoke of government duties and the yoke of worldly cares; but one who casts off the yoke of Torah is saddled with the yoke of government duties and the yoke of worldly cares.

**Commentary of the Gra, ibid.**

The yoke of worldly cares – As it says in the sixth chapter of Berachot: When Israel performs G-d’s will… And anyone who casts off – as it says: When Israel does not perform G-d’s will, etc.

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1. The question of studying secular studies according to halacha is an interesting and complex one that is beyond the purview of this shiur. It should be noted though that many commentaries and addressed it, including the Rema (Y.D. 246:4). For more discussion of this topic and a survey of the many sources, see Petakim Uteshuvot (Y.D. 246, #21), Yehudah Levi, "Torah Study,” pp.238-293, and Jacob J. Schacter (ed.), "Judaism’s Encounter with Other Cultures: Rejection or Integration," Jason Aronson, 1997.
How can we resolve all of these contradictions? Rav Yaakov Yisrael Kaniesvsky, known as the Steipler Gaon, suggests the following principle in his Kehilot Yaakov that can help to answer the question: The minimal amount necessary to fulfill the obligation of daily talmud Torah is reciting Shema twice a day. However, one is obligated to study as much as one is capable every day, with no maximum amount given.

Kehilot Yaakov, Masechet Shabbat, Siman 11

It seems that the parameter [of the mitzva] is the following: For all obligatory mitzvot, the obligation remains upon him even when he is unable to fulfill the mitzva due to unavoidable circumstances, and there is no complaint against him for not fulfilling it, as the Gaon Rav Elchanan Bunim Wasserman, may Hashem avenge his blood proves... but with regard to the mitzva of tzedaka (charity), one who is poor and does not have any [money] to give... is not considered to be in the category of ones (extenuating circumstances), but exempt, as the primary measurement of tzedaka is according to his capability, and if he doesn’t have, there is no obligation to give. The same is true for performing physical acts of kindness: What he is incapable of doing is not considered ones; it is just the limit of the measurement of the mitzva, which he should do according to his capability. Since the Torah did not provide a time limit and set measure, the measure is according to his capability.

The same applies to the mitzva of talmud Torah: Since the Torah did not give a measure, the obligation is therefore according to his capability, and concerning the time that he is unable to learn, it is not considered nullifying a mitzva due to ones; rather, this is the limit of his obligation, which is to the extent that he is capable. The only set and clear obligation is one chapter in the morning and one chapter at night, as it is written, “and you shall engage in it day and night,” and when he is unable to study this chapter, it is considered nullifying a mitzva...

Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 156:1

One should go to his business dealings [after studying Torah], as any Torah that is not accompanied by work will ultimately be abolished and cause sin, as poverty will cause him to transgress the word of his Creator. Nonetheless, one should not establish his work as primary, but rather as secondary, and his Torah should be permanent, and then this one and that one will be sustained in his hand.

Based on the Kehilot Yaakov, we can suggest that the resolution to the contradiction between the two mishnayot and two passages in the Gemara is as follows: According to Rabbi Yishmael, one is obligated to study Torah any time that he is capable of doing so (as he states in Menachot). However, any time that he must devote to earning a livelihood is not included, and the mitzva does not apply at that time (based on his statement in Berachot). By contrast, according to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, the ideal level is to study Torah all the time (as he indicates in Berachot), but the minimal obligation is reciting Shema in the morning and at night (as per Menachot).

What is the practical halacha concerning this dispute? How much is one in fact obligated to learn daily? The Shulchan Aruch rules the following concerning the issue:

2. The Kehilot Yaakov continues to explain that the principle that talmud Torah is overridden when one is obligated in other mitzvot is based on the same idea. Although the general rule is that osak b’mitzva patur min hamitzva, one who is engaged in one mitzva is exempt from another mitzva, talmud Torah is different, since the obligation itself does not apply when one is engaged in other important activities.
The Shulchan Aruch, it seems that one should ideally combine Torah study together with earning a livelihood, but that Torah study should always remain the primary focus. The Magen Avraham explains how one establishes one’s work as secondary and links this with the opinion of Rabbi Yishmael as presented in the passage in Berachot:

His work as primary – This means that he should work only for the amount that is sufficient to earn a living. And we say in the Gemara: Many have acted in accordance with Rabbi Yishmael and were successful...

However, the Machatzit HaShekel notes that the Maharsha explains that the reason Abaye said that many were successful when following Rabbi Yishmael and many were unsuccessful when following Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai is because only those who are completely righteous can merit to have their work done by others. Since such individuals are relatively few in number, everyone else must follow the approach of Rabbi Yishmael in Berachot.

Many have acted in accordance with Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai and were not successful,” since most of them are not completely righteous like Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, as we have learned: Beautiful is the study of Torah with the way of the world, etc., and: Ultimately, all Torah study that is not accompanied with work, etc. But in the future, as it says, “and your people are all righteous” (Yeshayahu 60:21), [the promise of] “and foreigners will stand up and shepherd your sheep, etc.” will be fulfilled for us.

Full Time Torah Study

Although the Maharsha cautions against assuming that one is sufficiently righteous to receive the promise of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in Berachot, the Rambam famously declares that anyone who wishes to dedicate his life exclusively to Torah study may do so and follow in the footsteps of the tribe of Levi, whose primary purpose was to study and teach Torah to the rest of the Jewish people.
12. Why did the Levites not receive a portion in the inheritance of Eretz Yisrael and in the spoils of war like their brethren? Because they were set aside to serve G-d and minister unto Him and to instruct people at large in His just paths and righteous judgments, as it is stated (Devarim 33:10): “They will teach Your judgments to Yaakov and Your Torah to Israel.” Therefore, they were set apart from the ways of the world. They do not wage war like the remainder of the Jewish people, nor do they receive an inheritance, nor do they acquire for themselves through their physical power. Instead, they are G-d’s legion, as it is stated (Devarim 33:11): “G-d has blessed His legion,” and He provides for them, as it is stated (Bamidbar 18:20): “I am your portion and your inheritance.”

13. Not only the tribe of Levi, but any one of the inhabitants of the world whose spirit generously motivates him, and he understands with his wisdom to set himself aside and stand before G-d to serve Him and minister to Him and to know G-d, and he proceeds justly as G-d made him, means of support may do so. This is the basis for the practice of all those who study in kollel.

The Bi’ur Halacha agrees with the Rambam that certain individuals who desire to dedicate their life to Torah may do so, though he says that this is especially pertinent if others have already expressed willingness to support them.

According to the Rambam and Bi’ur Halacha, it seems that although the Shulchan Aruch and many other sources favor the approach of earning a livelihood combined with Torah study for most, anyone who feels he is prepared to devote his life to Torah study and can find a means of support may do so. This is the basis for the practice of all those who study in kollel full-time for many years.

Despite the declaration of the Rambam, Rav Kook writes in Ayin Aya, his commentary on the Aggadic portions of Masechtot Berachot and Shabbat, that based on the statement of Abaye in the Gemara Berachot (that many were unsuccessful in engaging in Torah alone and supporting themselves), it seems that only a minute number of individuals can truly reach the level of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai where they study Torah and their needs are provided for them by others. Rav Kook explains that the Torah was not given to angels but to humans. Therefore, the rules of the Torah follow the majority of the population and dictate that most individuals should earn a livelihood normally.

As is well known, the tribe of Yissachar studied and taught Torah, while the tribe of Zevulun, who were merchants, provided their sustenance for them, and also received a portion of their reward for Torah study. This subject will be discussed in more detail in the next shiur, as well as additional considerations concerning studying in kollel in contemporary times. [Addition of the English editors]
Jerusalem is “the place where G-d chose to dwell.” For the first time, we encounter this choice at עֲקֵדַת יִצְחָק, the Binding of Isaac, when G-d directs Avraham toward “one of the mountains” in the “land of Moriah.”

Later on, in the book of Chronicles, we will learn that this is Mount Moriah, which we know today, upon which the Temple was built (Chronicles II 3:1).

We see that in the days of the Judges, Jerusalem was a Jebusite city, a foreign city, and it was only during King David’s time that Jerusalem became part of the Kingdom of Israel. It would appear that King David did not choose Jerusalem as a place of worship because of the deep connection to the Akeida or because it is the “place chosen by G-d.” So why did David choose Jerusalem specifically as the city of his kingdom?

I would like to paraphrase an article by Rabbi Yaakov Medan, Rosh Yeshivat Har Etzion, “Why was Jerusalem Chosen?” The article points to the possibility that the answer to this question occurred at the peak moment of the encounter between Joseph and his brothers in Egypt, in which Yehuda tells Yosef that he is willing to replace Binyamin in captivity, provided that no harm comes to his youngest brother. Yehuda gives his life to protect Binyamin at all costs. This is the brotherhood and mutual guarantee between the chosen son of the ‘hated’ Leah and the remaining son of ‘beloved’ Rachel. This is a magical moment. A reversal of the story of jealousy and competition between the brothers and a profound and honest response to the sin of selling Yosef.

King David was able to reign in Hebron just as Shaul ruled in Giva, in the territory of Binyamin, just as all the judges ruled from their hometowns. However, David decided to leave Hebron and reign in Jerusalem, the city “which was not divided into tribes” (Bava Kama 82b). The simple reason Jerusalem was not divided into tribes is that it took about 400 years from when Israel entered the Land in the time of Joshua until David conquered Jerusalem from the Jebusites. However, the main reason is that Jerusalem sits on the border of Yehuda and Binyamin. Both tribes shared Jerusalem and therefore neither of them wanted to take it from the other.

King David decides to conquer the city and connect these two rival tribes in order to build the kingdom of Israel precisely out of the connection between the tribes of Rachel and Leah.

Hence Jerusalem was chosen twice, and both times because of מְסִירוּת נֶפֶשׁ, “selfless devotion.”

Thanks to Avraham’s devotion in the binding of Yitzchak, G-d chose that location as the place of His Shechina, and thanks to Yehuda’s devotion to his brother Binyamin, David chose Jerusalem, shared by the tribes of Yehuda and Binyamin, as his royal city.

At the celebrations marking the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem, two years ago, Rabbi Aryeh Stern, Chief Rabbi of Jerusalem, said: “We commonly use the poetic phrase of ‘Temple of the King of a Royal City’ – מִקְדַּשׁ מֶלֶךְ עִיר מְלוּכָה – to describe Jerusalem. In other words, a combination of holiness and royalty. It is clear to us that there is no point in monarchy without holiness, and that holiness does not have a place without the kingdom.”

The word שלם, “perfect” or “complete,” lies in the name יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, and this can only be achieved by the realization of both holiness and kingship. When this ideal combination exists in practice, Jerusalem radiates to all peoples throughout the world.

From here in Jerusalem, one can see how everything is exalted and holy. Similar to those who stand on the mountain and see all that is below. Thus, the prophet Isaiah stood in the Temple and said, “The fullness of the whole earth is Your glory,” meaning that it is precisely from this sacred place that one can see how G-d radiates His light over the entire earth.

In honor of Jerusalem, I pray that we will understand how to combine holiness and regality, the devotion of the soul and the unity and love of every Jew wherever they are, and in that way may we merit complete redemption speedily in our days.

Gael Grunewald is Head of the Rural Growth and Development Division of the WZO, former Director of World Bnei Akiva and one of World Mizrachi’s representatives in the National Institutions.
When Eliyahu Koren made aliyah, he was passionate about a number of things, primarily art, the Hebrew letter and Jerusalem. He left Germany in 1933, changed his last name to Koren and set sail for Eretz Yisrael.

For Mr. Koren, Jerusalem was the manifestation of beauty and tradition. It was a city that represented vitality, rebirth and promise for the Jewish people as a whole. He began working at the Jewish National Fund (KKL), designing graphic elements that became iconic to the State, including the first official stamp of Israel and Jerusalem's official coat of arms, still in use today.

Mr. Koren eventually launched his own company, Koren Publishers Jerusalem, as he prepared to reveal his flagship project to the world: The Koren Tanakh (the English translation is known as The Jerusalem Bible). Published in 1962, The Koren Tanakh became the first Hebrew Bible to be produced entirely by Jews in 500 years and the first Tanakh published in the new State of Israel. Prior to that time, most versions of the Hebrew Bible had been produced by Christian publishers and were rife with printing errors. Determined to rectify these mistakes, Koren worked on the Tanakh for two decades, consulting with experts on medieval manuscripts, Hebrew grammarians, copyeditors, and opticians so he could to develop the most accurate, legible design. He aspired to revitalize the Hebrew letter with a new, precise font that would reflect the sacredness and majesty of the Torah while restoring ‘ownership’ of the Hebrew Bible to the Jewish people.

For Eliyahu Koren, it was time the words of the prophet Isaiah came to life: "כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תוֹרָה וּדְבַר ה מִירוּשָׁלָ ִם" , "For out of Zion shall the Torah go forth and the word of G-d from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3). He designed a gold logo for the spine of his Tanakh which would shine the crown of Jerusalem.

The world would know that Jerusalem was at the heart of the company.

Mr. Koren’s remarkable design of the Hebrew letter and vowelization won the attention of leading dignitaries. The Koren Tanakh became the official Tanakh on which the President of Israel took his oath, while the Israeli Rabbinate named it as the authoritative Tanakh for the most accurate Haftarah readings. To this very day, troops in the IDF receive a personal copy of the Koren Tanakh at their induction ceremonies. With this juxtaposition of physical and spiritual, The Koren Tanakh became a symbol of Zionism and the revival of the Jewish people in their national homeland.

Today, Koren Publishers Jerusalem continues to bring the Hebrew letter to life. Still headquartered in Jerusalem, the company most recently modernized the Rashi script, based on sketches originally designed by Mr. Koren. Rashi’s original text was restored, rectifying printing errors seen in most other Humashim. Like the other Koren fonts, the text is crisp, contemporary and legible. It can be seen in The Steinsaltz Humash and in upcoming projects.

Now, more than 50 years later, students of all ages continue to use The Koren Tanakh and especially love the new colorful editions. On bookshelves around the world, the gold Koren logo shines, reminding us that, like Eliyahu Koren, our center and passion as a people will always be Jerusalem.
This is the story of a little-known and brilliant deception operation that succeeded in determining the fate of the battle on the Egyptian front even before a single shell was fired.

The Egyptian army’s deployment in northern Sinai between May 16 and May 23, 1967 had completely surprised IDF intelligence. They had assumed the Egyptians would deploy in southern Sinai, hence Israeli efforts were going to be focused on the south.

If the IDF had blindly acted upon this initial assumption, the consequences could have been disastrous. Fortunately though, they realized the problem ahead of time.

Thus, the decision was made to carry out deceptive operations to entice the Egyptian command to deploy all of its forces in the south, far from the bulk of the IDF soldiers. It was a sophisticated operation, which included the use of a scam division, Division 49, under the command of Colonel Shlomo Amber. To confuse the Egyptians, they fashioned cardboard tanks and set up empty camps in the southern region.

Meanwhile, Arik Sharon’s unit was moving large forces in the south during the day and bringing them back north under dim lights at night. Double agents were conveying false intelligence to the enemy, giving them the impression that Israel’s main attack would indeed be launched in the south.

According to historian Aryeh Yitzchaki, after two or three days the Egyptians swallowed the bait, hook, line and sinker: “They switched their deployment completely, and moved their three elite divisions and all their combat tank reserves into the southern zone.”

Miraculously, this left the Egyptians open to attack and put the balance of numbers in favor of the IDF forces. For example, there were now only 82 Egyptian tanks against 380 Israeli tanks. With G-d’s help – and despite the initial intelligence failure – this was turning out to be the most brilliant deception operation the IDF had ever carried out.

Meanwhile, the atmosphere in Israel was tense. In trepidation of an Egyptian onslaught and attacks on other fronts, makeshift cemeteries were being dug in public parks all over the country.

The people expected their government to act fast.

Nevertheless, the undercover military operations had to be kept very secret, of course. If any hint of what was happening on the ground had leaked into the media or on army radio, the Egyptians could have discovered the plans and tragically transformed the outcome of the war... and the entire future of the 19-year-old State of Israel...

At the same time, on the morning of Friday, June 2, 1967, the Ministerial Committee for Security Matters convened in the War Room in Tel Aviv.

The meeting was highly charged and developed into an emotional confrontation between the moderate political leadership that championed restraint and the military command urging for a preemptive strike.

No decision was made about launching an attack, and Prime Minister Levi Eshkol rejected Chief of Staff Rabin’s demand to convene the government immediately. The government would meet as usual, two days later, on Sunday, June 4.

Despite this decision, the Prime Minister had a short meeting later that day with Rabin, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, Foreign Minister Abba Eban, Minister Yigal Allon, and Ya’akov Herzog, Director-General of the Prime Minister’s Office. Knowing what was happening in Sinai, and understanding that the increasing confusion among the Egyptians would peak on Monday, June 5, Rabin proposed that the attack should not begin before then.

Two formal reasons would be given to the public for the delay: firstly the need to wait for the return of Mossad Chief Meir Amit from the US on Saturday night (because we must know “what the Americans think and if we have their support”), and secondly, the IDF still needs to complete “last-minute preparations.”

We now know what these “last-minute preparations” were. Rabin’s recommendation was accepted.

The deceptive maneuvers continued undetected, Amit returned with a detailed report, the Cabinet met on Sunday morning and the following resolution was passed by a decisive 16-2 majority: “The government decides to take military action that will lead to the release of Israel from the increasingly tight military noose around its neck.”

The rest, as we know, is history. And thank G-d for that.
This has been the official emblem of the city of Jerusalem since 1950. The lion represents the “lion of Judah,” the symbol of the Tribe of Judah and later of the Kingdom of Judah, the capital of which was Jerusalem.

The background represents the walls of Jerusalem and the Western Wall, and the olive branches represent the quest for peace. The inscription above the crest is the Hebrew word for Jerusalem.

According to the Midrash, Jerusalem has 70 different names! How many can you name?

Here are a few to get you started: Ariel, Gila, Yerushalayim, Zion, Moriah, Nachalah, City of G-d, Shalem, City of David, Eden, City of Justice, Har HaMor, Armon...

Did You Know?

There is a custom to eat dairy on Shavuot. Pharaoh’s daughter drew Moshe out of the water on the 6th of Sivan, and he was willing to be nursed only by a Hebrew woman. Therefore we recall Moshe’s merit on Shavuot by eating milk foods. Furthermore, the numerical values of the letters of the Hebrew word chalav (milk) add up to 40, corresponding to the 40 days Moshe spent on Mount Sinai.

Family Discussion: Why do we read Megillat Ruth on Shavuot?

There are a few possible reasons:

1. King David (Ruth’s great-grandson) was born and died on Shavuot.
2. The story of Ruth takes place during the wheat harvest which is also the time of Shavuot.
3. The story of Ruth is the story of kindness and our Torah is a Torah of kindness.
4. Ruth was a convert who accepted the Torah and we all accept the Torah on Shavuot.
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