Did Klal Yisrael embrace Torah or was it foisted upon us? Are we G-d's people because of our enthusiastic embrace of that mission, *
ַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמָע*, or because G-d held the mountain threateningly over our heads, *
כָּפָה עָלָיו הַר כְּגִיגִית*?

Apparently, there is a dual nature to our relationship with G-d and Torah, that includes both choice and destiny. Our *בְּחִירָה*, our free choice, defines the extent to which we embrace Torah in our lives, allowing mitzvah, Halacha, and Torah ideals to guide our decisions and actions. Our destiny, on the other hand, does not require our consent and is defined by *הַשְׁגָּחָה*, by G-d's choices guiding us towards our rightful place in the world and its history. Thus, from the outset we needed to embrace the commandments of the Torah voluntarily, as this was representative of the lifetime of choices we would exercise relative to their observance. Destiny however was foisted upon us. The Jews have an inescapable and critical role in the world.

This duality between commandment and destiny is found within the Torah itself, which – as Rashi notes in his opening comment on the Torah – documents both G-d's word and His deed. It includes the *mitzvot*, beginning with *הָוָה נָתַתָה לְךָ הַמִּצְוָה* while also recording the Divinely guided path of history, *כֹּחַ מַעֲשָׂיו הִגִּיד לְעַמּוֹ* that culminates in the ultimate gift of *Eretz Yisrael*.

And similarly, there are two aspects to the celebration of Shavuot. In our *tefilot* we describe the day as *
פָּנֵי מָכָה חֲרֵמוֹת*, the time when the Torah was given to us, while the Torahef{2} refers to it as *
יִתְנְמוּרָא*, the festival when we begin to offer the first fruits, celebrating the gift of *Eretz Yisrael*, the place of our destiny.

This duality within Shavuot is specifically manifest in the process we begin the day after we celebrate leaving Egypt, the *mitzvah of Sefirat HaOmer*. The Exodus had been framed by G-d and by Moshe in terms of two end goals, one of destiny and the other of *mitzvah*. On the one hand, we were leaving Egypt to *Eretz Yisrael*, to the Land promised to our forebears, the Land flowing with milk and honey.

Thus, the counting of the Omer, which represents the eager anticipation of reaching the goal of our liberation from Egypt, has two dimensions. Explicitly, we count from the offering of the barley on Pesach to the offering of the wheat loaves, the *
שְׁתֵּי הַלֶּחֶם*, of Shavuot. These offerings symbolize our bond to the Promised Land and begin the season of offering *Bikkurim*. Implicitly, however, we are counting towards Sinai. As the Midrash records, when we left Egypt, we immediately asked Moshe when we would have the promised opportunity to serve G-d on His mountain. When Moshe responded that it would be after 50 days, every member of the Jewish people started counting on their own towards that day.

It is that yearning, that striving towards G-d, towards both the destiny He has charted for us and the word He would share with us, that we perpetuate through our own counting of the Omer.

It is no surprise therefore that when we crossed the Red Sea and sang the song of redemption, *
שִׁירַת הַיָּם*, we sang specifically of our anticipated arrival at *Har HaBayit*. 

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*Sources and footnotes available in the full text version.*

**The ORTHODOX UNION**

Founded in 1898, the **Orthodox Union (OU)** serves as the voice of American Orthodox Jewry, with over 400 congregations in its synagogue network. As the umbrella organization for American Orthodox Jewry, the OU is at the forefront of advocacy work on both state and federal levels, outreach to Jewish teens and young professionals through NCSY, Israel Free Spirit Birthright, Yachad and OU Press, among many other divisions and programs.
If Har Sinai represents G-d’s word and Eretz Yisrael represents our destiny, there is one place that represents the blend of the two, and that is Yerushalayim and its Har HaBayit. קִי מִצְיָון תֵּצֵא תוֹרָה וּדְבַר ה’ מִירוּשָׁלָיִם, the word of G-d comes forth from Yerushalayim. This is the place that was always meant to serve as the center and source of Torah learning⁸ and halachic rulings,⁹ as well as the city that is מִקְדָּשׁ מֶלֶךְ עִיר מְלוּכָה, the center and capital of the land of our destiny.

It is this blend of Torah and destiny that we bear in mind on Yom Yerushalayim, as we commemorate the visible Divine hand of destiny that 54 years ago granted us the renewed gift of Yerushalayim. We recall the joyful and torrential flow of Jews returning to the Kotel on Shavuot 1967, and we celebrate and embrace the renewed and revitalized connection to our Torah and the approaching fulfilment of our destiny.

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1. Shabbat 88a.
7. Ran at conclusion of Pesachim; Sefer HaChinuch no. 306.

Rabbi Moshe Hauer is Executive Vice President of the Orthodox Union.