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הרה"ח ר' נתן יהושע זעליג בן רעכל צילה נפטר ט"ז  
סיון תשמ"ט

ולעילוי נשמת  
מרים ינטה חי' בת הרה"ח ר' אברהם שמואל אלתר  
נפטרה ר"ח סיון תנש"א  
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה

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# *a* **CALL** *to* **ACTION**

**SHAVUOS**

**- PART ONE -**

PRACTICAL INSTRUCTION  
FROM THE TEACHINGS OF THE REBBE  
5748-5752

A PROJECT OF  
**HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar**

## ADDENDUM

Below is a letter sent by the Rebbe to Jews worldwide, dated Rosh Chodesh Sivan 5749 (*Hisvaaduyos*, pp. 235-236):

To the sons and daughters of Israel everywhere, may Hashem bless them,

*Shalom u'vrachah!*

The Torah relates that “in the third month after the Children of Israel left Egypt, on this day” – the day of Rosh Chodesh Sivan – “they came to the Sinai Desert; and Israel camped there.” The word “camped” is written in the singular (lit., “he camped”), which as our Sages explain indicates that the Jewish people were “like one man with one heart.” They camped “facing the mountain” – in order to receive the Torah.

On the second day of Sivan the Jews were told, “And you shall be unto Me” – which includes both a command and a promise – “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.”

On the third day, they were given the command to confine their movements – “guard yourselves lest you ascend the mountain...”

On the fourth day, they were given the command of abstinence from materiality and physicality – “today and tomorrow [the fifth of Sivan as well],” and were commanded “to prepare yourselves” during these [two] days for the actual day when they would receive the Torah.

On the sixth of Sivan the Torah was actually given.

These days are “recalled [appropriately] and [thereby re-] accomplished” each year like new – and new in actual fact; [culminating in the] “receiving the Torah with joy and with inwardness.”



**a CALL to ACTION**

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## GATHER JEWS AND REJOICE

- It has been our Yom Tov custom of many years to visit other Jews in the synagogues and study-halls of different communities, in order to augment the joy of the festival by uniting many Jews of varying communities.

## DISSEMINATE TORAH

- This is especially so by saying and distributing<sup>87</sup> words of Torah, from both the “revealed” and inner teachings – since “the statues of G-d are upright; they gladden the heart.”<sup>88</sup>

## FAMILY, GUESTS – AND *TAHALUCHAH*

- Although, we are expected to rejoice with our families on Yom Tov, as well as with our guests (whom we cannot simply leave while we go elsewhere<sup>89</sup>) – nevertheless, we can undoubtedly arrange to participate in the *Tahaluchah* in such a manner that will not detract from our families and guests’ Yom Tov joy...<sup>90</sup>

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### 87. Do your footwork

The divine service that applies to one’s *feet* is relevant on Shavuot as well. For example, dancing with one’s feet to rejoice in the festival, or walking to other synagogues to bring joy to other Jews – which includes repeating and distributing Torah ideas regarding Shavuot, arousing people to study Torah, give their children a Torah-true education and the like. (Second day of Shavuot 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 288)

Disregarding the obligation of “physical pleasure on Yom Tov,” there were a number of people who wore out their feet in order to go and bring joy to other Jews on the last night of Pesach... They specifically went to other synagogues and study-halls, and through causing the men to rejoice in the men’s section, they also had an affect on those in the women’s section – including the children there. Moreover, they connected the rejoicing with words of Torah – either verbally or by distributing printed material – regarding which it is stated, “they gladden the heart.” (Roshei Devarim to Acharon Shel Pesach 5751)

88. Aharon Shel Pesach, fn. 1 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 79).

89. ... That would run contrary to the *mitzvah* of welcoming guests, which is “greater than greeting the *Shechinah* (Divine Presence).”

90. Second day of Shavuot 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 288.

## Foreword

We are pleased to bring you this newly revised edition of *a CALL to ACTION*. Translated from its Hebrew counterpart, *HaMaaseh Hu Halkar*, this presentation is a collection of practical instruction from the Rebbe’s Sichos pertaining to the festival of Shavuot – the Giving of the Torah.

*HaMaaseh Hu Halkar* is a compilation of *hora’os* culled from the Rebbe’s talks in the years 5748 to 5752 (1988-1992), from both edited and unedited sources (*muga* and *bilti muga*). Great effort has been extended to remain faithful to the Rebbe’s calculated and instructive nuance. This English translation is rendered by Rabbi Yaakov Paley.

At this time, when Moshiach’s arrival is imminent, the Rebbe, Melech HaMoshiach, has emphasized the primacy of action. We are now beginning to experience the era when we will fully appreciate “the superiority of deed” above scholarship. May this take place completely and immediately!

Editorial Office of  
*HaMaaseh Hu Halkar*  
Rosh Chodesh Sivan, 5768

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### FOCUS ON REALIZATION AND FEELING

- We should explain the concept of this awe, in a way that it will be understood:

“Awe and fear, trembling and perspiration” is *not* attained by external body movements, swaying to and fro and the like... Rather, it requires a *feeling* within one’s *heart* that is a product of understanding intellectually how *at this very moment, G-d Himself is present – and is reading [the tikun] together with you!*<sup>85</sup>

### GRAB THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY

- Regarding influencing others: We need to work quickly, because if we do not effect the individual at the very first opportunity, who knows whether we will meet that person again before the reciting of the *tikun*? And even if we *do* get together before then, who says he or she will then have the time to listen...<sup>86</sup>

## Tahaluchah

### SPREADING JOY

The practice of *tahaluchah* was instituted by the Previous Rebbe: The Chassidim would leave their own neighborhoods towards the conclusion of the major festivals – and walk to other congregations and communities to promote festive joy there.

The Rebbe held this practice in high esteem and strongly encouraged its implementation on each of the three major festivals – Pesach, Shavuos and Sukkos.

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drink and the like) in generous measure – particularly as “all the Sages agree that on Shavuos we require *lachem*, “for yourselves,” i.e., *physical* pleasure by “rejoicing on the festival with a feast.” Similarly, we should strive to provide his *spiritual* needs. Of immediate concern, this means ensuring that he prepares to receive the Torah appropriately. Therefore, we should use this time to influence and arouse everyone we can reach to recite the *tikun* as if the words being read are right now being transmitted to us at Mount Sinai – along with full awe and trepidation on our part. (Ibid.)

85. Ibid., p. 405.

86. Ibid.

## THIS APPROACH IS FOR JEWS OF EVERY LEVEL

• Approaching Torah study (or recital) in the manner described above applies to each Jew, elderly and young alike, regardless of their present level of Torah knowledge. Indeed, it applies equally even to one who has absolutely no idea what he is reading.<sup>83</sup>

## LAST MINUTE REMINDER

• There are a few hours left until we recite the *tikun*. We should use this time to influence and arouse everyone we can reach to recite the *tikun* as if the words being read are right now being transmitted to us at Mount Sinai – along with full awe and trepidation on our part...<sup>84</sup>

## 83. When ignorance is a virtue

... On the contrary! In certain regards there is an *advantage* to one who does not know what he is reading: For when a Jew understands the translation of the words, and certainly if he has a deeper comprehension of the subject, then when he reads the *tikun*, he recites the passages of the Ten Commandments with *far greater enthusiasm and passion* than the rest of the passages from that section (Parshas Yisro) – and *certainly* with more enthusiasm than the passages from other sections. However, a Jew who has absolutely no idea what he is reading – why, he recites the *entire tikun* with the *very same* immense enthusiasm and fervor!

All the more so when you tell him that at the *very moment* that he recites these passages from the *tikun*, G-d “sits [besides Him] and reads them in conjunction with him” – his passion will *certainly* grow immensely.

Further, regarding words of Torah read by an uneducated person: Not only does G-d “sit and read in conjunction with him” as he recites passages from the *Written Torah* (for which one fulfills the obligation of Torah study even *without* knowing their meaning). Rather, this occurs even when reciting words of *Mishnah* and the like from the *Oral Torah*! [An educated person must *understand* the teachings of the *Oral Torah* to be considered “studying”; an uneducated person, though, can merely recite them.]

We find an example of this on a daily basis: Every person, even one who does not know what he is reading, recites the morning blessing over the Torah – and proceeds to read verses from the *Written Torah* (the priestly blessing), followed by a *Mishnah* from the *Oral Torah*.

An even better illustration is found in the words of the Shaloh (end of 13a ff. – see the note there), concerning the importance of reading the “*names* recorded in the *Written and Oral Torah*.” The same is true of the names of the *tana'im* and *amara'im* (see *Vezos Liyehudah* – part two of *Or Haganuz* – by Maharil HaKohen from Anipoli, beg. of ch.22) ... Merely reading the *names* is considered having studied! (Parshas Bamidbar, Sivan 5 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* pp. 403-404)

## 84. Spiritual hunger

We strive to provide [a needy person with] all his festival requirements (food,

## Shavuos

## PART ONE

## Preparing for Shavuos

## INTRODUCTION

The following insight lends a fresh perspective on how to view and prepare for this festival:

Shavuos, when we receive the Torah afresh, gives us our life-force for the coming year. This is because the Torah is *chayeinu ve'orech yameinu*, “our life and the length of our days.”

This is not a mere *addition* to our life-force, but rather, complete renewal of our very existence – akin to childbirth. For the Giving is the Torah at Sinai is considered the *gi'ur* (conversion) of the Jewish people; as G-d stated regarding that event, “You shall become a nation this day.” And, “a convert is like a newborn.”

Why, then, is Shavuos not considered a “Rosh Hashanah” – after all, is it not the “Head of the Year” that elicits life-force for the entire year?! (And yet it is not even listed as one of the four “heads of the year” in the beginning of tractate Rosh Hashanah!)

Even before responding to this question, we must make one thing clear: Nothing can alter the plain fact that the Torah is “our life and the length of our days,” to the extent that its annual bestowal renews our existence like that of a newborn. And there is *nothing* that includes our entire life-force more than actual birth...

In light of this unequivocal truth, we could suggest that Shavuos is not considered a “Rosh Hashanah” because it is *far beyond* a “Head of the Year.” Being a “head” to the days of the years means being in the same league as the rest of the year – much as one’s head is part of his body (albeit the most exalted part).

Shavuot, on the other hand, is an independent day unto itself; a day whose exalted nature is on a completely superior league to the rest of the year – it is far too exalted to function as a “head”...!<sup>1</sup>

### SHAVUOT BLESSING

- We should encourage all Jews (men, women, and likewise the children) to bless each other before Shavuot. They should use this precise phrase:<sup>2</sup>

*Kabalas HaTorah BeSimchah u'BePenimiyus*, “May you receive the Torah with joy and inwardness.” This was the wording used by the Previous Rebbe – and he instructed others to use it as well.<sup>3</sup>

### ADVANCE ACCLIMATIZATION

#### 1. Why is Shavuot just one day?

Note the explanation given in *Torah Or*: “The reason why Shavuot is but a single day (unlike Pesach and Sukkot, which span *seven* days) is because we then receive the *Torah*: Torah stems from the realm of Supernal *Keser* [lit., ‘crown’], which is also the level of *Yechidah* [lit., ‘only one’; the highest tier of the soul/*sefiros* – a level that is united with G-d].

*Keser* stands beyond division into seven *midos* [the supernal attributes that are far ‘lower’ than *Keser*], which are called ‘the seven supernal days.’” (Second day of Shavuot 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 418.)

[To summarize: The spiritual source of the weekly cycle is the seven *sefiros* – and these levels are revealed on the seven days of Pesach and Sukkot. Shavuot, however, marks the revelation of Torah, whose source is the transcendent level of *Keser* – and like, *Keser*, the festival is but a single, supreme day.]

Note that even Rosh Hashanah is not one day – but *two* days. This is the case even within the Land of Israel. True, we consider the two days of Rosh Hashanah “as *one* long day” – nevertheless, we recite a separate *Kidush* at the beginning of each day [clearly defining it as a two-day festival]. Conversely, the festival of Shavuot is unique in being just *one* day. The reason for this is because Shavuot reflects a superior level that is indivisible. (Ibid., fn. 18)

#### 2. Bless and be blessed

... Through blessing a fellow Jew, you are blessed as well; as Hashem promises us, “I will bless those that bless you” ... And I [the Rebbe] will personally begin [implementing this directive], by blessing all the Jewish people – using the precise wording of the [Previous] Rebbe’s blessing ... (Parshas Bamidbar, Sivan 5 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 410)

... We will now conclude with the exact phrase that was heard from my father-in-law the Rebbe, Leader of our generation: *Kabalas HaTorah BeSimchah U'BePenimi'us* – To accept the Torah with joy and inwardness! (Parshas Bamidbar 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 227)

#### 3. Address to Chabad’s Women and Girls Organization, Iyar 24 5750 (*Hisvaaduyos* p.229).

### THE WAY TO READ THE *TIKUN*

- Chassidus<sup>79</sup> explains that at the Giving of the Torah, each Jew was given the ability [to study Torah on a level] that “the Torah law that leaves their mouths is the very word of G-d that was told to Moshe at Sinai.”

Further, our Sages state that “whoever reads and studies Torah, causes G-d to read and studies in conjunction with themselves.”<sup>80</sup> When a Jew is engaged in Torah, he should “not consider the words he utters to be his own, but rather, the literal word of G-d!”<sup>81</sup>

When we read or study Torah with all this in mind, “awe and fear will fall upon him as if he had received the Torah today at Sinai” – causing us to study “with the same awe, fear, trembling and perspiration, as we experienced at Sinai.”<sup>82</sup>

### REMIND EVERYONE

- It is now just a few hours away from “the time of the Giving of the Torah.” We should once again remind everyone to prepare – mainly, by studying Torah in the proper manner, “with the same awe, fear, trembling and perspiration, as we experienced at Sinai” as if we had just received it this very day.
- And *that* is how we should recite the *tikun leil shavuot*!<sup>81</sup>

#### 79. Repeating G-d’s words

Chassidic discourses (see *Torah Or*, Yisro 67b ff. – *Ma’amar* entitled *bachodesh hashlishi* 5749) explain the fact that the Torah was given in a desert (*midbar*): The word *midbar* shares the root of *dibur*, “speech” – with an additional letter *mem* (*mem*). So *midbar* is exchangeable with *midaber*, meaning speech that comes forth automatically, of its own accord.

For [when one studies Torah,] his speech “does not come forth as if it is his own speech, but rather, as ‘my tongue will answer after *Your* speech’”: The Torah is “*Your* speech” and “my tongue” simply “answers,” like one who repeats words dictated by someone else [in this case, G-d Himself]. The power for this was given to us at the Giving of the Torah.

80. See also *Tanach D’vei Eliyahu Rabah*, beg. of ch. 18; *Yalkut Shimoni Eichah* 247:1034.

81. Parshas Bamidbar, Sivan 5 5748 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 403).

82. For example, *Berachos* 22a.

**CORRECTIONS:**

- At the end of the *tikun*, there are Kabbalistic excerpts from *sefer yetzirah* and *zohar* pertaining to the Giving of the Torah and Shavuos. In many prints of the *tikun*, these excerpts contain a number of mistakes. Those using these editions should note these corrections:<sup>76</sup>

1) The end of the excerpt from *sefer yetzirah* reads:

”נאמנת בפנים . . אחד בפה ואחד בלב”.

This is incorrect, in my opinion: Not only does it strangely fail to conclude on a positive note, but it also fails to make sense! Rather, it should read according to the many books of *sefer yetzirah* that are printed as a separate volume:

”... נאמנת ג' רעות ללשון דיבור רע והמלשין והמדבר אחד בפה ואחד בלב ג' טובות ללשון שתיקה ושמירת הלשון ודיבור אמת”

2) In many version of the *tikun* (including the Slavita edition), there is a quote from Rashbi, beginning, ”אנן בחביבותא תליא מילתא דכתיב כו””. This quote concludes with two passages. However, in the original source in *zohar*, a *third* passage appears. The *tikun* should therefore be amended to read:

”אנן בחביבותא תליא מילתא דכתיב ואהבת את ה' אלקיך וכתיב מאהב ה' אתכם וכתיב אהבתי אתכם אמר ה'...”

**BRING A CORRECTION SHEET WITH YOUR TIKUN**

- We should publicize these amendments and print a correction sheet with the accurate excerpts.<sup>77</sup> Since we are permitted to carry on Shavuos, we can bring to the *tikun* to the synagogue together with a copy of the correction sheet.<sup>78</sup>

exalted matters in the course of his rigorous journey. That year, he also spent the second night of Shavuos engaged in the exalted practice of saying the *tikun*.

However, regarding the *first* night of Shavuos – I personally witnessed, as did many others, how the Leader of the Generation would read the *entire tikun*. No-one examined to see whether or not he said every word, but apparently he did read the *entire tikun* from beginning to end... (Roshei Devarim to Parshas Bamidbar, Sivan 5 5751)

76. Parshas Bamidbar 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 409. See *Likutei Sichos*, vol. 28, p. 315.

77. Now is the time to give a *yasher ko'ach* (thank you) for publicizing these amendments by printing a correction sheet ... as well as for publicizing the directive to provide festive provisions for those who need it, and to bring children to the synagogue on Shavuos. (Parshas Bamidbar 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 409)

78. **Soul-food**

... Particularly as this is a matter of *ochel nefesh*, providing food – literally, “food for the soul,” which we are permitted to prepare on Yom Tov (unlike Shabbos). The *tikun* is *spiritual substance for the soul*. (Ibid.)

- We should work on achieving “joy and inwardness” in the days leading up to Shavuos – so that we will truly be in this state as we receive the Torah.<sup>4</sup>

**SHABBOS MEVARCHIM**

- Our preparations, which span the entire period of the Sefirah, should be stepped up on Shabbos Mevarchim Sivan<sup>5</sup> – the day we elicit blessing and ability to receive the Torah.<sup>6</sup>

**CONSIDER THE MAGNITUDE OF TORAH**

- We should prepare by (1) contemplating the Torah’s greatness and preciousness, awakening within ourselves a longing desire for *Matan Torah*.<sup>7</sup>

It is out this appreciation that we count the *sefirah* in the first place – we literally “count the days” out of a longing desire and craving for the Torah: How many days have passed since Pesach, the “time of our freedom” – and how much closer are we to Shavuos, the “time of Giving of the Torah”...?<sup>8</sup>

**REFINE EACH MIDAH**

- (2) Throughout the *sefirah*, we work at refining each trait of our *nefesh habehamis* (animalistic side) – from *chesed*

**4. Within reach**

... Until it becomes the “nature” of each Jew, and especially the Jewish women – to the extent that their *entire lives* become filled with “joy and inwardness.” That will make it far easier to prepare for, and actually receive, the Torah in this state.

True, the Torah is “broader than the Earth” and reaches beyond all limitations. Nevertheless, it is within the power of each Jew to receive the *entire* Torah – and furthermore, to receive it all with joy and inwardness. (Address to Chabad’s Women and Girls Organization, Iyar 24 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 229)

**5. It starts now**

... With a unique addition as we draw closer to the “days of preparation” for the Giving of the Torah – starting with *Rosh Chodesh*.

And now that *Shabbos Mevarchim* has already past – when we bless the upcoming Rosh Chodesh, and through that, the coming month – we *now* stand in the “days of preparation” for the Giving of the Torah. So all that we have discussed regarding the preparations now applies with full force. (Address to Chabad’s Women and Girls Organization, Iyar 28 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 336)

6. Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5748 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 344).

7. Ibid., fn. 12. See the commentary of *Ran* at the end of *Pesachim*, and the explanation in *Likutei Sichos*, vol. 22, p. 114.

8. Address to Chabad’s Women and Girls Organization, Iyar 25 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 223.

*shebechesed* [the first of our traits] all the way until *malchus shebemalchus* [the last of them]. This way we will be refined, purified and fit to receive the Torah.<sup>9</sup>

### PUT THE TORAH IN A CLEAN VESSEL

- This refinement of our physical side and our *nefesh habehamis* (animalistic soul) is accomplished by avoiding (to the extreme) any undesirable matters. Only after we have removed all negativity, is the revelation of *Matan Torah* then drawn into spiritually clean and pure “receptacles,” and in a complete way.<sup>10</sup>

### PRIMARY FOCUS: TORAH STUDY

- Since every preparation should be similar to its objective, the primary focus of our preparations should be an increase in *Torah study*.<sup>11</sup>

### ALL PARTS OF TORAH

- We should include both the “revealed” and mystical teachings in our pre-Shavuot study program.<sup>12</sup>

### EMPHASIZE THE MYSTICAL

- On Shavuot, the study of Torah’s mystical teachings is particularly emphasized. These Kabbalistic teachings are referred to as *ma’aseh merkavah*, “the workings of the Celestial Chariot”<sup>13</sup> [a reference for the supernal *sefiros*, etc.],<sup>14</sup> and are

<sup>9</sup> Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5748 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 344).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 353.

<sup>11</sup> Sivan 3 5748, fn. 12 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 380).  
... In addition to the general preparation for the Giving of the Torah via *studying* Torah. (Ibid.)

... In addition to the preparations throughout *all* the days of the Sefirah. (Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 352)

<sup>12</sup> Parshas Bamidbar 5750 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 215).  
... Particularly as the inner dimension ... is *openly* revealed on Shavuot. (Sivan 3 5748, fn. 15; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 380)

<sup>13</sup> [As in the vision of Yechezkel (Ezekiel) that we read as the *haftorah* on the first day of Shavuot. See Siddur Tehillas Hashem, p. 506.]

<sup>14</sup> **Mystical revelation came first**

The regular approach to Torah study is to first study *nigleh*, the “revealed” teachings, and only then progress to its inner dimensions. However, when the

“rectification.” Indeed, the *tikun* is a spiritual remedy that fixes *everything* that needs to be repaired.<sup>72</sup>

### ALL SHOULD RECITE ENTIRE *TIKUN*

- We should encourage *all* Jews to read the *entire tikun* – including those who feel that they could “better” spend their time in a more in-depth study of Torah...<sup>73</sup> For the *true* preparation for receiving the Torah is to recite the entire *tikun leil shavuot* from beginning to end.<sup>74</sup> If a person was not particular to do so in past years, he should resolve to say the entire *Tikun* from now on.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Roshei Devarim to the second day of Shavuot 5751.

<sup>73</sup> **Counting Mitzvos late at night**

... [I wish] to *negate* the opinion of those who claim, “Why should we ‘squander’ our time by reciting the *tikun*?!” They maintain that they could spend the same time on the *in-depth study* of *hemshech ayin-beis* [a series of complex Chassidic discourses] or something similar from the Torah’s inner teachings – instead of simply *reciting* the *tikun* and *counting* the 316 Mitzvos...

Note the precise description of “counting” the Mitzvos: Generally speaking, by the time one reaches the list of Mitzvos (at the conclusion of the *tikun*), the night is almost over; he is already thinking about going to immerse in the Mikvah, and prepare himself for his morning prayers – including hearing the reading of the Ten Commandments... By then he is exhausted and cannot contemplate the content of each Mitzvah – certainly not their *spiritual* content ... All he can do is simply “*count*” the Mitzvos... (Parshas Bamidbar 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 409)

<sup>74</sup> **The rectifier**

Its importance is emphasized in the name by which it is called according to Jewish custom (which, by definition, constitutes a part of Torah), *tikun leil shavuot*. (Ibid.)

Since the Halachic authorities call it “the *tikun*,” its theme is evidently to rectify *everything* that needs correction. (Roshei Devarim to second day of Shavuot 5751)

The *tikun leil shavuot* rectifies and completes all matters in an everlasting manner ... and does so amid *ta’anug* (pleasure). (Roshei Devarim to the second *farbrengen* of Parshas Naso, Sivan 12 5751)

<sup>75</sup> **He read it twice...**

The *Tikun* contains excerpts of the Written Torah and sections of the Oral Torah ... concluding with the count of the Mitzvos ...

It is not demanded that everyone read the entire *tikun* twice – on *both* nights of Shavuot ... We have indeed heard of such a practice, such as the conduct of Reb Hillel Paritcher. For Reb Hillel was extremely scrupulous and exceedingly zealous in observing the Mitzvos, and he therefore saw a need to read the *tikun* on the *second* night of Shavuot as well as the first. Now, Reb Hillel undoubtedly had his reasons for doing so, despite the fact that we have not heard of this custom being practiced by any of the Rebbes of Chabad. The one exception was the Rebbe Rashab, who was once forced to visit a health spa and felt lacking in some



## RESOLVE TO ACT UNCONDITIONALLY

- On the day before Shavuos, we should contemplate the need to accept G-d's commands unconditionally – even before we fully understand them.<sup>70</sup>
- This contemplation should lead to practical results: However we serve G-d, we should always begin with practical implementation (action), and only then work to gain a complete intellectual understanding of the matter.<sup>71</sup>

## Tikun Leil Shavuos

## ULTIMATE REPAIR

Our Sages tell us that the entire Jewish nation overslept on the morning of Shavuos – the very morning that G-d was to give them the Torah! Since then, until this day, we seek to rectify this incident by staying awake all night on the first night of Shavuos, reciting a digest of holy writings. These collected verses and teachings are referred to colloquially as the *tikun*,

70. See Shemos 24:7.

71. **A most auspicious time**

Although the fifth of Sivan is Erev Yom Tov, and we are preoccupied with festival preparations, however, there is ... not (such) a dominance of the forces of evil as on a regular day. It is therefore a *most auspicious time* to accomplish everything necessary to advance in Torah study, prayer, etc. (Ibid., p. 254)

This was the case on the fifth of Sivan, even *before* the Torah was given. A similar occurrence takes place annually [but on a far greater level, since we now have the Torah]. (Parshas Bamidbar, Shabbos Mevarchim and Erev Rosh Chodesh Sivan 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 221)

**Significance of Erev Shavuos**

People do not pay close attention to the fact that the Jewish people's act of preceding *na'aseh* to *nishmah* occurred on a *separate day unto itself* – not on the sixth of Sivan when the Torah was given), but rather, on the fifth. This act comprises a *separate* aspect of divine service in its own right.

Further, the Jews *slept* on the eve of the sixth, for as the Midrash relates, the Jews *slept* on the night before the Giving of the Torah. That sleeping constituted a legal *interruption* (*hefsek*) between the day of their declaration and the day they received the Torah.

True, their sleeping was in fact an extremely exalted mode of service, whereby their souls ascended on High to “draw life and study Torah in the Heavenly realms.” Nevertheless, *any* form of sleep is a *hefsek* – as is seen in the laws of service in the *Beis HaMikdash*, where sleeping overnight constitutes a formal interruption and loss of focus, which requires the Kohen to re-immense... (Ibid., p. 228)

alluded to in the custom of eating dairy products on Shavuos.<sup>15</sup>

Similarly, we should also (or more precisely, *primarily*) prepare for Shavuos by increasing our study of the Torah's *inner* teachings.<sup>16</sup>

## ADD AND ENHANCE

- We should increase both the quantity and quality of our Torah studies.<sup>12</sup>

## FOCUS ON THE DEED

Torah was given at Sinai, the *reverse* approach was taken: First there was a revelation of the *innermost* dimension; as our Sages state (*Shemos Rabah* 3:2) regarding the verse “And G-d descended on Mount Sinai” – that at that moment, not only did all the Jews see the *Supernal Chariot* (*merkavah ha'elyonah*), but they even saw *G-d Himself* “riding” upon the Supernal Chariot! They witnessed Him descending, together with the Chariot, upon Mount Sinai! And this was all *before* “G-d spoke all these words saying” the Ten Commandments, which include the entire Torah. [Clearly, the inner teachings were transmitted visually before the “revealed” teachings were transmitted verbally.]

**A nation of mystics**

Not only that, but this view of the Chariot and its Rider occurred in a manner of complete comprehension and understanding: Not only did they *see* – for one may view the entirety of a thing along with all of its particulars and still not understand what exactly he is seeing – but, at the same time, they fully comprehended what they were seeing. As our Sages put it, “they heard that which was seen,” and conversely, “they saw that which was heard” – meaning that they had “both advantages, of seeing and of hearing, as one.” [“Hearing” (*shemi'ah*) also connotes “understanding.”] (Ibid., p. 253)

15. **Why eat cheesecake?**

The Alter Rebbe states (Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim, 494:16) that “one of the reasons behind this custom [to eat dairy products on Shavuos] is that milk alludes to Torah, which is likened to ‘milk and honey.’”

This aspect of Torah finds particular expression in its *inner* teachings; as our Sages (Chagigah 13a) expound on the verse “Honey and milk are under your tongue” – “Matters [of the inner secrets of the Torah] that are sweeter than honey and milk should be kept under your tongue [and not exposed to all].” (Sivan 2, Parshas Bamidbar 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 252) [This is a reference to the mystical dimension of the Torah that had to be kept secret for much of history. The Arizal, however, proclaimed that we are now “duty-bound to reveal this wisdom” – and the Baal Shem Tov was informed that Moshiach's arrival depended upon their complete dissemination.]

16. **Body follows soul**

Because the inner teachings constitute the “soul” of the Torah, they are given priority; the revealed teachings that form its “body” must *follow* the inner dimension, just as a body is *dependant* upon its soul. This is similar to the concept explained in Tanya, that Jews “view their souls as primary and their bodies as secondary.” (Ibid., p. 253)

• We should study in a manner that leads him to action – adding in our observance of *mitzvos*, and in all kinds of good and sacred activities.<sup>17</sup>

• We should study the laws of Shavuos.<sup>18</sup>

#### TOPICS THAT AWAKEN LOVE OF TORAH

• We should especially study Torah texts that explain the magnitude of *Matan Torah*; this will strengthen our desire and longing to receive the Torah again this year.

• This includes the study of classical texts from the “revealed” parts of the Torah – such as the Sages’ discussion on *Matan Torah* in tractate *Shabbos*<sup>19</sup> – as well as the Chassidic discourses on this topic.<sup>20</sup>

#### STUDY WITH AWE THAT BREEDS TOIL

• Our actual study should be permeated with the awareness that “all of its principles, specifics and fine minutiae were given at Sinai.”

Bearing this in mind, our learning will resemble the original Giving of the Torah – concerning which our Sages state: Just as it was accompanied by awe and fear ... back then [at Sinai], so too here [in our present-day study]...!

Moreover, this knowledge will inspire us to *toil* in our study of Torah – until [like the engraved tablets received at Sinai,] the Torah’s teachings are “carved” into our soul.<sup>21</sup>

17. ... We should begin these positive resolutions in actual practice, even on this very day of Shabbos. (Parshas Bamidbar 5750: *Hisvaaduyos* p. 215).

18. Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5748 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 352). See Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, beg. of ch. 429.

19. Beginning on page 86a.

20. Parshas Behar-Bechukosai (ibid., p. 352).

21. **Sanctifying the world**

... And it is then drawn into our divine service of refining and purifying the surrounding world – via observing the *mitzvos* in actuality.

That service includes carrying out our mundane affairs in a manner of “doing everything for the sake of Heaven,” and even “knowing Hashem within all your paths” (which includes the Ba’al Shem Tov’s directive to derive a lesson in our divine service from everything we see or hear in this world). (Ibid.)

categories especially includes giving Tzedakah.<sup>66</sup>

#### KEEP GIVING

• In order to receive the Torah in an even superior state of completeness, we should make a determined resolution to increase in Tzedakah; again and again – and a third time too!<sup>67</sup>

#### EREV SHAVUOS TZEDAKAH

• We should give extra Tzedakah on the day before Shavuos.<sup>68</sup>

By raising our normal Tzedakah contributions to a completely new level (creating a *pesichah chadashah*, “new opening”) on this day, we will open new spiritual channels of blessing from G-d.

These new channels will allow His bountiful blessings in all matters to flow more generously – from His “full, open, holy and generous hand.”<sup>69</sup>

66. Not only is Tzedakah one of the pillars of the world, but it also includes the entire Torah (as explained in *Torah Or, Ma’amar bachodesh hashlishi*). (Ibid.)

67. Tzedakah is associated with the Giving of the Torah; as the Alter Rebbe explains, ... “Tzedakah includes the entire Torah, which is itself referred to by the name ‘Tzedakah.’” (Rosh Chodesh Sivan 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 241) See also night of Sivan 4, ibid., p. 249.

68. *Ma’amar* entitled *Anochi Hashem Elokecha 5749* (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 255).

##### Three crowns at Sinai

Note the statement in *Ma’amar* entitled *Tze’enah u’R’enah 5677* (p. 225) and 5712 – that in addition to the two “crowns” given to the Jews at Sinai, one for declaring *na’aseh* (“We will do!”) and the other for declaring *nishmah* (“We will hear!”), there was also a *third* crown for *preceding na’aseh to nishmah*.

##### King and princes

There it is explained that these are the same three crowns referred to in *Vayikra Rabah* (Parshas Kedoshim 24:8) – two of which (i.e., the crown of *na’aseh* and the crown of *nishmah*) the King (G-d) placed on the heads of his sons (the Jewish people). He placed the third crown (the crown of “preceding *na’aseh* to *nishmah*”) on His own “head.”

##### Three pillars

As is known (for example, see *Sefer Hama’amarim 5679*, p. 387 and 395), these three crowns are also the three fundamental pillars of Torah study, prayer and acts of kindness. Clearly, then, these three activities are especially relevant to the fifth of Sivan – the day on which the Jews preceded *na’aseh* to *nishmah*, thereby eliciting these crowns. (Ibid., fn. 46)

69. **Unlimited**

After all, the Giving of the Torah began with the declaration, *anochi Hashem Elokecha asher hotzeiticha Mei’eretz Mitzraim*, “I am Hashem your G-d, Who took you out from the land of Egypt (*mitzraim*).” This declaration removed us from all limitations (*mitzarim*), causing us to become united with *Anochi*, “I am” (i.e., G-d’s Essence) – the *Giver* of the Torah... (Ibid., pp. 255-256)

We should most definitely increase our study of Torah.<sup>63</sup>

#### PROVIDE *YOM TOV* NEEDS

- Before each festival, we are obligated to provide the needy with their festival requirements. However, this obligation assumes additional prominence before the festival of Shavuos:

Our Sages state, “All agree that on Shavuos we are required to enjoy the festival *physically* as well [as spiritual service],” and “we gladden ourselves on the festival with a feast.”

Moreover, providing the needy with their requirements enhances their ability to receive the Torah; as our Sages state, “The Torah was only given to those who ate the manna” and were therefore freed from the concerns of making a livelihood.<sup>64</sup>

#### TORAH, *AVODAH*, *TZEDAKAH*

- To ready ourselves for the Giving of the Torah, we should add in each of the “three pillars upon which the world stands:<sup>65</sup> Torah study, prayer and acts of kindness.” The last of these

63. *Ma'amar* entitled *Anochi Hashem Elokecha* 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* pp. 253-254.

64. **Bring an offering according to your means**

... This is also true for the *donor*, for one is expected to bring offerings when visiting the *Beis HaMikdash* during each festival, “in accordance with his wealth.” (Rosh Chodesh Sivan, Night and Motzei Sivan 3 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* pp. 390-391) One’s ability to bring an abundance of sacrifices is a result of his having received an abundance of material blessing. This is specifically relevant to a *Yom Tov*, when we are obligated to bring an abundance of sacrifices ... as it is stated, “It is a commandment to bring according to one’s wealth” ... Now, from all festivals, this obligation is extra prominent regarding Shavuos – the subject of the above verse. (Ibid., pp. 382-383)

65. **Justifying the universe**

... Just as the existence of the universe was firmly established by the original Giving of the Torah. As our Sages state on the verse, “the Earth was fearful and calmed,” that [from the beginning of Creation] until the sixth of Sivan “the Earth was fearful”; but on the sixth of Sivan, when the Jews accepted the Torah, it was finally “calmed.” [The purpose of all existence is only for the sake of the Jews and the Torah they observe. So the existence of all Creation remained in doubt and unjustified until the Jews actually accepted the Torah.] Similarly, each Shavuos brings an *addition* in G-d’s giving, and in our receiving, the Torah. So, too, greater validity is given to the universe’s existence each year ... Therefore, to ready ourselves for the Giving of the Torah, we should add in each of the “three pillars upon which the world stands: Torah, prayer and acts of kindness.” (*Ma'amar* entitled *Anochi Hashem Elokecha* 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 255)

#### SHABBOS SHIURIM

- Every Shabbos elicits blessings for coming week. For that reason, it would be an excellent idea to hold gatherings in synagogues and study halls on both the Shabbos before Rosh Chodesh Sivan,<sup>22</sup> as well as the Shabbos before Shavuos.

- These gatherings are for the purpose of studying Torah. Our Sages taught that such gatherings should be made *every* Shabbos of the year; certainly, then, we should make this practice a *priority* before the festival of Shavuos.<sup>23</sup>

#### GATHER A MINYAN

- Ideally, we should gather a quorum of at least ten Jews to study Torah – for “G-d’s Presence rests among every group of ten who sit and occupy themselves with Torah,”<sup>24</sup> and “the King is glorified by the presence of many subjects.”<sup>25</sup>

#### FOCUS ON THE PRACTICAL

- Inspire the participants in these gatherings to begin their spiritual preparations for Shavuos; they should work on personal refinement as well as striving to have a positive influence on others.

It can be explained how these resolutions could be put into practice *immediately*: The participants could encourage *more* people to come and study Torah at these gathering – and especially, to bring people to hear the Torah being read publicly

22. Parshas Behar-Bechukosai, Mevarchim Chodesh Sivan, Iyar 27 5751 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 241).

23. **Shabbos study sessions**

Yalkut Shimoni, beg. of Parshas Vayakhel (see also Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch, Laws of Shabbos 204:4): G-d said to Moshe ... “Hold large gatherings [on Shabbos to teach the people Torah] so that the generations that come after you will learn from you and gather people together every Shabbos [to study Torah].” (Parshas Bamidbar 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 253)

May the practice of going [to other communities] to make large gatherings in their synagogues and study-halls, in the manner of “run to do a Mitzvah,” immediately result in our “going” and “running” to greet our righteous Moshiach! (Ibid., p. 254)

[Note that on Parshas No’ach 5750, the Rebbe launched a campaign to hold such gatherings every Shabbos, in compliance with the abovementioned directive.]

24. Pirkei Avos 3:6

25. Mishlei 14:28. Parshas Bamidbar 5750 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 253).

during the afternoon service of Shabbos.<sup>26</sup>

#### **BITUL AND KABALAS OL**

- A further prerequisite to our receiving the Torah is that of *bitul*, self-nullification or selflessness, and *kabalas ol*, unequivocal commitment.

Thus we find that the Jewish people eagerly accepted the yoke of Heaven at Sinai, by prefacing their declaration of *nishmah*, “We will *hear* [and comprehend Your commandments]!” with *na’aseh*, “We will *perform* [them unquestioningly]!”

Similarly, in our own annual preparation for receiving the Torah: We should utilize the days leading up to Shavuot to ingrain within our characters the qualities of *bitul* and *kabalas ol*.<sup>27</sup>

26. ... As per the teaching of the Previous Rebbe that “Whenever two Jews meet, it should bring about the benefit of a third Jew.” (Ibid.)

#### **27. Why a wilderness?**

The prerequisite of *bitul* and *kabalas ol* – receiving the Torah by prefacing *nishmah* (“We will hear!”) with *na’aseh* (“We will do!”) – is reflected in this week’s Torah portion, the portion always read before Shavuot – Parshas *Bamidbar* [*midbar* means “a wilderness”]:

One of the reason for specifically giving the Torah in a wilderness – “upon which everyone tramples” – is to stress how *bitul* is necessary in order to merit receiving the Torah.

#### **Supernal wilderness**

On a deeper level, the self-nullification of preceding *na’aseh* to *nishmah* does not merely involve our subservience to the Will of G-d [as expressed in Torah and Mitzvos]. Rather, it indicates *bitul* to the Possessor of that Will – for, naturally, G-d Himself *transcends* His Will (the Torah and Mitzvos).

This, then, is the concept of the “wilderness” seen in a positive, advantageous light: Within each person, the “wilderness” alludes to his innermost essence that transcends the many parts and faculties of which he is comprised. This “wilderness” is considered “uninhabitable” because it *transcends* all human faculties [even the most sublime spiritual tier – one’s desire and will].

Now, G-d’s “desire and will” is His Torah and Mitzvos. So the “wilderness,” in this case, is G-d’s *Essence* – totally “uninhabitable” due to its *transcendence*.

In conclusion:] The “wilderness” actually represents, not the Torah (G-d’s Will), but the *source* of the Torah; as it is stated, the Torah was given to us “as a gift from the *Wilderness*.” (Parshas *Bamidbar*, Shabbos *Mevarchim* and *Erev Rosh Chodesh Sivan* 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 221)

various stages of preparation that took place on the final days leading up the Giving of the Torah.

Superficially, this account appears to be historical in nature; however, its inclusion in a Code of Law indicates that it has a legal implication: It is an instruction for each of us to follow the same path of preparation for the annual Giving of the Torah, mirroring each stage in which Moshe guided the Jews back then.<sup>58</sup>

#### **MORE EACH YEAR**

- Our Sages taught that there should always be growth in the realm of holiness and spirituality.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, each year’s efforts in preparations for Shavuot should *surpass* that of the previous year.<sup>58</sup>

#### **FROM ROSH CHODESH, WE SHOULD ADD FURTHER IN:**

1) *Ahavas yisrael* and *achdus yisrael*, love and unity amongst Jews<sup>60</sup> - reflecting the way in which the Jewish people camped at Mount Sinai on Rosh Chodesh Sivan – “like one man with one heart.”<sup>61</sup>

2) The concept of prefacing *na’aseh* (“We will do!”) to *nishmah* (“We will hear!”).<sup>62</sup> This event, which took place on the fifth of Sivan, represents the *bitul*, self-nullification, and the unconditional acceptance of G-d’s commandments.<sup>60</sup>

3) Torah – the very thing for which we are preparing ourselves!

58. *Ma’amar* entitled *Anochi Hashem Elokecha* 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* pp. 253-254, with fn. 36.

[This is based on the principle concerning any event commemorated in the Jewish calendar, that the spiritual revelations that occurred at the original event are re-awakened and shine forth into the world – depending on our proper observance of the occasion.]

However, there remains a need to clarify (based on the above) why the Alter Rebbe failed to include the important detail that the Jews preceded *na’aseh* (“We will do!”) to *nishmah* (“We will hear!”) in his description... (Ibid.)

59. See *Shabbos* 21a; *Yoma* 12b; *Megillah* 9b; *Menachos* 39a.

60. Parshas *Bamidbar* 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 226.

61. Rashi to Shemos 19:2.

62. See Shemos 24:7.

Sivan.<sup>53</sup>

This awareness will add much to the *quality* of our preparations.<sup>54</sup>

#### STUDY THE SHAVUOS MA'AMOR

- It is worthwhile and fitting to study the Chassidic discourse entitled *bachodesh hashlishi* ("In the third month...").<sup>55</sup> We should begin studying with *eagerness*, on the actual day of Rosh Chodesh – and then steadily advance in its study over the course of the next few days.<sup>51</sup>

#### EXPLAIN MA'AMOR TO ALL

- We should publicize the directive to study this discourse in every location, and it should be implemented in actuality. We should make it clear that studying the discourse is relevant to each man, woman and child. It is something we can teach and explain to every Jew, each on their own level.<sup>56</sup>

#### COMPLETE THE FINAL STEPS TO MATAN TORAH

- In his *Shulchan Aruch*, the Alter Rebbe states: Immediately after Rosh Chodesh [Sivan], Moshe began to busy the people with preparations for receiving the Torah.<sup>57</sup>

The *Alter Rebbe* then continues and explains at length the

#### 53. No small matter

... Rosh Chodesh is the third day in the seventh week to the counting of the Omer, close to the completion of the service of counting along with all of its details – including the result, "...May abundant bounty be bestowed upon all the worlds..." The Jewish people, for their part, now constitute a "fitting, pure and holy receptacle" within which to receive the Torah. [This elaborate preparation is necessary, because the Torah] is G-d's Wisdom and Will that has been drawn down and revealed within all of Torah's details – down to the ink used to inscribe its words on parchment. (Ibid.)

54. Ibid., p. 380.

55. *Torah Or*, Parshas Yisro, beg. of p. 66c.

#### 56. Even to minors

... Just as the general concept of the Giving of the Torah is relevant to each Jew, even children – at least as far as our obligation to educate them in Torah is concerned. In truth, it was specifically due to the children – who were under the age of obligation to observe the Torah and Mitzvos at the time – serving as our guarantors, that the Torah was given to the entire nation ... The same applies to our study of the discourse *bachodesh hashlishi*. (Ibid.)

57. Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*, Orach Chaim 494:20.

## The unique role of Jewish women

### WOMEN FIRST

Each year, just prior to Shavuos, the Rebbe personally addressed the annual convention of Chabad's Women and Girls Organization (*Neshei U'benos Chabad*). He explained the significance behind the convention's timing:

At Sinai, the Jews' preparations to receive the Torah specifically began with the women. [G-d had instructed Moshe to prepare the Jewish people by first addressing the women – and only afterwards, the men.]

This is not mere historical detail. Rather,] since this fact is recorded in the Torah,<sup>28</sup> it serves as an eternal directive to follow suit [in our own Shavuos preparations], each and every year.<sup>29</sup> That is why the convention that addresses Jewish

#### 28. Women lead the preparation

The superiority of Jewish women is emphasized in connection with the Giving of the Torah:

The Torah itself relates, that when G-d instructed Moshe to prepare the Jews to receive the Torah, He told him, "So shall you say to the House of Yaakov, and relate to the Sons of Israel." The seemingly repetitive description of the Jews as the "House of Yaakov" and "Sons of Israel" is explained by the Sages: The first phrase ("House of Yaakov") refers to the Jewish *women*; to them Moshe was commanded to "say" (*amirah*), i.e., speak "in a soft tongue." Only *after that* was Moshe to address the Jewish men ("Sons of Israel") ...

[To clarify:] The Torah itself was *presented* to all Jews – men, women and children – at the same time ... nevertheless, when it came to the *preparation* for the Torah, Moshe was told to address the women before the men.

#### Positive influence

Why was this necessary? One explanation is that this magnified the effect of Moshe's message [to prepare for *Matan Torah*] on the *men*: For as we clearly see for ourselves, it is human nature for the conduct of the entire household to depend upon the *woman*. She is the "mainstay" and foundation of the home, and she influences the entire household – sons and daughters, and her husband as well...

This she does by using the unique skill and talent with which women are endowed – the art of influencing others in a gentle, persuasive manner, with feeling and warmth, ensuring that her words are accepted and absorbed within the inner hearts of those around her, having a long lasting effect.

... Therefore, we should prepare afresh each year, taking the same approach used for the Giving of the Torah at Sinai ... with an emphasis on the superiority of the Jewish woman, each one of whom is the "mainstay" of her home; through her, the entire household is prepared and made fit to receive the Torah. (Ibid.)

29. Address to Chabad's Women and Girls Organization, Iyar 28 5748 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 367).

women and girls is held just prior to Shavuos...<sup>30</sup>

### READY THE FAMILY

- The women are the ones who should launch each year's preparations to receive the Torah from Hashem anew.<sup>31</sup> It is they who are most successful at influencing every member of their family, and they should exercise this ability before Shavuos: A number of days *before* the festival, the entire household should already be filled with Torah-related themes.<sup>32</sup>

### SET THE TONE

- The Jewish woman, being the “mainstay” of each Jewish home, is entrusted with a special mission:

They should determine, in the days leading up to Shavuos, the manner in which their household will accept the Torah afresh – amid new-found joy and new-found enthusiasm.<sup>32</sup>

### INTENSIFY ACTIVITIES

- We should intensify our spiritual preparations with each passing day, just as we do with the festival's physical preparations.
- We should begin a number of days in advance. Then, as we draw ever closer to Shavuos, we should increase our activities, amplify our enthusiasm, quicken our pace and magnify our joy – more and more!<sup>32</sup>

30. Address to Chabad's Women and Girls Organization, Iyar 26 5751 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 243).

31. **An eternal command**

When G-d commanded Moshe – the one who received the Torah and gave it over to the Jewish people for all times – to give the Torah to the Jews (and with such a powerful “giving” that even after over 3300 years have passed, the Jews still receive the Torah annually with enthusiasm and renewed vigor!), G-d told him (and *recorded* this instruction in the Torah) ... to first address the *women*, and only afterwards, the men. In other words, our Receiving of the Torah is first and foremost relevant to the Jewish women – and they will undoubtedly accept it with the greatest *sh'turem*, enthusiasm, heartfelt feelings and so on – which are all attributes more present in women than men.

Further, since each of them is the “mainstay” of her home, the very atmosphere of the home depends upon them. This is obviously the case with regards to the preparation to receive the Torah afresh... (Address to Chabad's Women and Girls Organization, Iyar 28 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 366.)

32. *Ibid.*, p. 367.

declared, “Since the Jews hate divisiveness and love peace, and have formed one, united camp – it is now time to give them My Torah!”

[Chassidus explains the seven weeks of counting the Omer as a process of rectifying a person's seven character attributes. The Jews reached Sinai on Rosh Chodesh Sivan – the third day of the last week of the Omer. They had already rectified the three primary branches of the last week's attribute (i.e., *chesed*, *gevurah* and *tiferes* of *malchus*). Hence, their spiritual refinement was now considered complete.]

It is clear from the Midrash that G-d was ready to give the Torah immediately – on Rosh Chodesh Sivan. However, to enable the Jews to become ultimate “receptacles” to receive the Torah, an *additional* preparation was required on their part [in addition to their unity]. These were the detailed preparations carried out between the first and sixth of Sivan, as described in Parshas Yisro – and clearly laid out in the Alter Rebbe's Shulchan Aruch [see Addendum].<sup>51</sup>

### CONSIDER SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DAY

- We should contemplate the above message, explaining the significance of Rosh Chodesh Sivan.<sup>52</sup> The major preparation for the Giving of the Torah begins each year on Rosh Chodesh

51. Parshas Bamidbar, Shabbos Mevarchim and Erev Rosh Chodesh Sivan 5746 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 406).

52. **Three insights into Rosh Chodesh**

... The significance of Rosh Chodesh is clearly stated in the Torah, “On this day [of Rosh Chodesh] they came to the Sinai desert ... and Israel camped there.” The main preparation for the Giving of the Torah (as the Torah continues to detail ...) then began.

The Oral Torah explains an even greater significance: On Rosh Chodesh, G-d saw them “camped there” (in the singular, indicating complete unity), and declared “Now is the time to give them the Torah!”

... Chassidus presents its deeper significance (*Torah Or, bachodesh hashlishi*): We ready ourselves for the Torah by counting the Omer; “seven weeks shall you count for yourselves” [rectifying another of the seven attributes or character traits each week]. On Rosh Chodesh, the Jews entered the *third* day of the *seventh* week [i.e., they had rectified the main components of the final attribute – *chesed*, *gevurah* and *tiferes* of *malchus*]. They could now be considered as having already counted [and rectified] that entire last week – and were therefore ready and fit to receive the Torah. (Rosh Chodesh Sivan, night and Motzei Sivan 3 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 279)

- In addition, their parents are rewarded for bringing them to hear the Ten Commandments [whether or not the children understand].

This is akin to the obligation of *hakhel*,<sup>45</sup> and the *aliyah* (pilgrimage) to the *beis hamikdash* that took place during each of the three annual festivals. In fact, these sacred pilgrimages serve as “the basis for bringing young children to the synagogue”<sup>46</sup> nowadays.<sup>47</sup>

#### CREATE SHIFTS TO ATTEND TORAH READINGS

- It may prove difficult to bring the entire family to the synagogue at once in order to hear the Ten Commandments; there is often a need for at least one member to remain at home.

In such a case, some of the family should attend a different synagogue with an earlier or later schedule for reading the Torah – or even the same synagogue, if it offers an additional reading at a later hour. In many communities, it is indeed customary to host more than one prayer service on Shavuos.<sup>47</sup>

## Rosh Chodesh Sivan

#### DAY OF DECISION

The Torah relates, “On the third month after the Jews left Egypt, *on this day*, they arrived at the Sinai Desert.”<sup>48</sup> The Talmud<sup>49</sup> explains that “this day” refer to the first of the month – Rosh Chodesh Sivan. The passage then continues “And Israel camped there,” using the singular (*vayichan*) instead of the plural (*vayachanu*) – an indication of the absolute unity that then prevailed; the Jews camped “as one man with one heart.”

This unity caused G-d’s decision to go ahead and give the Jewish people His Torah; as the Midrash relates:<sup>50</sup> G-d

45. See *Chagigah* 3a.

46. Tosefos, end of *Chagigah* 3a.

47. Parshas Bamidbar 5750 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 252).

48. Yisro 19:1.

49. *Shabbos* 86b – quoted in Rashi on the verse.

50. *Vayikra Rabah* 89:9.

#### EREV SHAVUOS GATHERING

- [On Shabbos, Erev Shavuos 5748, the Rebbe stated:] It is worthwhile and fitting that, before Shavuos commences, the women to should gather<sup>33</sup> in preparation for the Giving of the Torah.<sup>34,35</sup>

#### EXPLAIN IT TO THE CHILDREN

- Children should be made to understand the great significance of receiving the Torah. They should know that this is something for which we must prepare appropriately. For although G-d chooses to give us His Torah out of His own generosity [and not due to our own merits], nonetheless, He desires that the Jewish people do their *own part* and *ready themselves* to accept the Torah.<sup>36</sup>

## Gather all youth to hear the Ten Commandments

#### GUARANTORS MUST BE PRESENT

Our Sages explain the great significance of being present in the synagogue while the Ten Commandments are read from the Torah:

G-d told the Jews, “My children, read this portion each year,

33. Parshas Bamidbar, 5th Sivan 5748 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 410)

34. After the Minchah service, an announcement was made concerning a women’s gathering during Shabbos, and the Rebbe stated: May it be Hashem’s Will, that the gathering will enjoy truly outstanding success – and as we discussed earlier, it should influence the men as well. (Ibid., p. 411)

See the Introduction to *HaYom Yom*, under the Rebbe’s accomplishments of the year “5748” – “He promoted that women should hold a gathering in preparation for the Giving of the Torah on Shavuos.”

35. ... Preferably, they should do so [today,] while it is still Shabbos, before we enter [Shavuos,] the “time of the Giving of our Torah.” (Ibid.)

36. Parshas Bamidbar 5750; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 252.

#### Including children

Just as this is relevant to men and women, so it is applicable to children. If they receive an appropriate Jewish education, then they should also experience this renewal each year; so that upon entering the “days of preparation” for the Giving of the Torah, they should experience new vitality, pleasure and freshness, which will influence their entire year. (Address to Chabad’s Women and Girls Organization, Iyar 28 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 366)

and I will consider it as if you are again standing at Mount Sinai and receiving the Torah!”<sup>37</sup>

The Midrash<sup>38</sup> also explains the important role of the youth in the Giving of the Torah: It was specifically the young children who G-d accepted as the Jewish people’s “guarantors” that His Torah will be kept – and it was only on that basis that He agreed to give His Torah to the Jews.

Before each Shavuos (starting in 5740 [1980]), the Rebbe made a point of repeating the above message and pushed for the gathering of all Jews – and *especially* the children – to hear a reading of the Ten Commandments. This was a primary focus of his Shavuos addresses.

Nevertheless, as the Rebbe once pointed out, this drive is merely *an addition* to all the other equally necessary preparations for Shavuos.<sup>39</sup>

37. **Not enough**

This teaching appears in *Pesikta DeRav Kahaneh*, on the verse *bachodesh hashlishi* (quoted in *Rokei’ach* 296).

It is similarly stated in *Midrash Tanchumah* (Vayigash 2a), “The Jews said, ‘Our children will be our guarantors.’ And G-d *immediately accepted them* [as guarantors], and gave the Torah to the Jewish people.”

This tells us that even the Jewish people’s intense preparation from Rosh Chodesh Sivan until the sixth of Sivan was not “enough” for G-d; He still demanded “guarantors” who would ensure that the Jews preserve and observe the Torah in future generations as well. Even when the Jews presented *many other* guarantors, G-d still refused to accept any of them.

It was *only* when they declared, “Our *children* will be our guarantors!” that – through and in the merit of the Jewish children – G-d gave the Torah to the Jewish people. (Parshas Bamidbar, Shabbos Mevarchim and Erev Rosh Chodesh Sivan 5746; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 408)

38. **From the mouth of minors**

The Midrash states (*Shir HaShirim Rabah* 1:4(1)), “When that the Jews stood ready to receive the Torah, He said to them ... ‘Bring Me good guarantors that you will keep [the Torah] and [then] I will give it to you!’ They replied, ‘Our forefathers will be our guarantors! ... Our prophets will be our guarantors! ...’ (But G-d declined to accept these as guarantors.)

They then declared, ‘Here! Our *children* will be our guarantors!’ G-d answered, “*Now, those are certainly good guarantors! Through them will I give [the Torah] to you.*” And so it is expressed in the verse, ‘From the mouth of minors and nursing infants You established Strength’ – for ‘strength,’ in this case, refers to the Torah, regarding which it is stated, ‘G-d will give *Strength* unto His people.’”

39. **Overlooking fundamental activities...**

Now is the appropriate time to raise an issue that stands to be corrected:

## INCLUDING INFANTS

• We should promote the message in each and every location,<sup>40</sup> that every effort should be expended in order to bring all local Jewish children – girls,<sup>41</sup> boys and even tiny infants<sup>42</sup> – to the synagogue on Shavuos, to hear (at least) the reading of the Ten Commandments.<sup>43</sup>

## THEIR SOUL UNDERSTANDS

• While many children may be too young to understand the Torah reading, they nevertheless enjoy the spiritual revelation of reading the Ten Commandments in the synagogue – their *mazal* (soul) sees and comprehends.<sup>44</sup>

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We often discuss how a specific matter should be taken to heart in preparation for a given Yom Tov (or other important date), and we encourage everyone to put effort into that *specific* area. Nevertheless, it is patently obvious that this comes *in addition* to all the other things that need to be done in preparation for Yom Tov. It is just that since these other requirements are so very obviously necessary, that they do not require any mention.

However, it sometimes happens, due to the intense enthusiasm in promoting that specific – *additional* – activity, that the *primary* preparations are all but forgotten about! As a result of this “oversight,” it sometimes happens, that when informing the public of what they have to do for Shavuos, *only* the proposal to bring every Jewish child to the synagogue to hear the Ten Commandments, or to increase in giving Tzedakah before Shavuos, gets publicized – but nothing further!

There is therefore a need to emphasize that the said activities are *additions* to our primary preparations. Clearly, we should publicize the fundamental Shavuos preparations – which are explained in numerous places, in the works of *mussar* and the like (even before we get to Chassidus), and are even included in the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* ... translated into all languages ... explained and elaborated upon in a vast number of Torah sources. It is only due to the darkness of exile that we have to stress that the activities should not remain within the “Torah sources” – but rather, should be implemented in the real world. (Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* pp. 355-356)

40. Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5751 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 241).

41. Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5750 (*Hisvaaduyos* p. 216).

42. Even babies “straight out of their cribs” – for they are our guarantors that enable our receiving the Torah. (Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5751; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 241)

43. Parshas Behar-Bechukosai 5748; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 353.

### Sinai repeated

The Torah is given afresh each year in a *similar manner* to the first time it was given. This is revealed primarily by reading the Ten Commandments from the Torah itself ... therefore, we should listen to this portion being read, with awe and fear – as if we were now standing before Mount Sinai. (*Ma’amar* entitled *Anochi Hashem Elokechah* 5749; *Hisvaaduyos* p. 254)

44. See *Megilah* 3a.