



O.A.H. SHAVUOT NEWSLETTER

OD AVINU HAI YOUTH MINYAN - 2020

THIS ISSUE

*Short divrei Torah
written by the boys
of the Od Avinu Hai
youth minyan*

OUR RECENT ACTIVITIES

Being the only weekly Sephardi youth minyan in Hendon, Od Avinu Hai fill the calendar with events at the end of every school term, which has helped create deeper bonds between the boys in different fun atmospheres. These events are used as incentives to encourage the boys to attend the weekly minyanim on time and consistently. In the last few years, OAH have carried out 2 youth takeovers - where the main service of the shul was led entirely by the youth boys. Some of the activities in recent years include football zorbing in the park, Lag Ba'omer BBQ's, paintballing, go karting and even driving a supercar, all of which are subsidised as an incentive for the avid minyan goers.

We have our own chill room which the boys (colourfully!) decorated themselves. They earn the rights to play FIFA there after participating in the midweek learning where fundamental topics are covered. These sessions are accompanied with dinner and infuse a great sense of achdut in the group.

Due to the current COVID-19 pandemic, these sessions have been taking place over Zoom.



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OUR YOUTH ARE THE FUTURE

DAYAN DAVID



Od Avinu Hai is an answer to the question put out by Yaacov Avinu, "Od Yosef Hai?" - Is my son Yosef still alive after all these years in Mitzraim - the land of tumah and temptation? The response of his son was "Od Avinu Hai" - My father is still alive. As the Talmud says in Ta'anit (5b) *Yaacov Avinu lo met* - Yaacov our father has not died, *ma zarah bachaim of hu bachaim* - as long as his children are alive, he is also alive.

If we are spiritually alive so are our ancestors, we must take into our lives the spirit and traditions of our forefathers and make sure they are alive in us. That is the meaning of the response "Yes, Od Avinu Hai, our father is alive within us" hence Od Yosef Hai - Yosef is alive even in the land where the challenge of low morality is so rife.

The aspiration of Od Avinu Hai as the Navi Malachi concludes: *Vehashev lev avot al banim velev banim al avotam* - Our fathers and sons come together to be on the same page. We are an organisation to bring together *avot ubanim* in happiness, to the service of *Hashem Avinu Shebashamayim*. Yes, we make our Torah and Traditions attractive to draw our youth to be proud and happy, fulfilling Torah and mitzvot, preserving and keeping our traditions with *simchat hachaim*, joy of living, as we have inherited from our ancestors.

Od Avinu Hai has merited from its very beginning dedicated leaders who cared for our youth and given so much of themselves, the community has benefitted much

from them. Now we are zocheh to have a true and caring leader, Jordan Moses, a product of the yeshivot, who has imbibed so much Torah and knowledge and now uses this and his G-d-given talents to lead Od Avinu Hai Leshem Shamayim.

We appreciate his wonderful work and pray G-d bless him and his family with good health and parnasah. Amen!



PLANTING THE SEEDS

JORDAN MOSES



I have been asked many times why I run the Od Avinu Hai youth minyan, what do I gain out of it, and what I am trying to achieve. The answer is simple.

In 2008 when I was 12 years old, I started to attend the OAH youth minyan. Some of my fondest memories from my early teenage years are the many Thursday nights we used to play football in the shul, order food and just hang out. It gave me a feeling that this was where I belong. OYH is my shul, and I love being here. I remember the selichot lessons we used to have so that we could run the show for the explanatory service on Yom Kippur and of course having a blast on the streets of Hendon and Golders Green whilst out Purim shpeiling.

Now obviously playing football should not be the reasons that we teach our children to want to come to shul for, but years on I now understand what I learned from those experiences that can be used to help the future of our community. This is simply the importance of feeling like you belong. It is tremendous. It can make or break our children's future. By giving these boys their own minyan, by teaching them how to read, lein and daven and by giving them a reason to want to come to shul this will ensure that they grow up with the same warm memories of OYH that I have.

But it was more than just football that made me enjoy coming to shul! The activities and programs that were organised always seemed to be tailored to exactly what we wanted and the learning and praying aspect was always given over in a fun way too. I have no doubt that behind all of the youth leaders that we have had over the years, there is one thing that has kept the message and goal consistent throughout the years - our Rabbi's.

If I tell you the words Od Yosef Hai, there is one thing that everyone reading this will think of. Dayan David and Rabbi Yossi. The Rabbis of our community have continuously helped to guide our children in the right ways. They are always available if one needs to seek guidance or advice and this has been the case as far back as I can remember. They encourage our questions, our learning, our growth, and they do so with the biggest smile on their faces. I have personally been like a shadow to them since becoming barmitzvah



Drive a Supercar, September 2018

and can honestly say that I would not be the same person I am today if they had not been in my life. They are true role models and we are privileged to have them as leaders of our community. I have gained more than just Torah knowledge from being so close to them. I have been fortunate enough to observe the derech eretz which comes with the great Torah knowledge that they have.

All I can try to do is what we all ultimately try to do - emulate their ways and pass them forward to the next generation. I appreciate first hand the importance of having a role model in shul who shows importance and interest to your questions and makes you want to come back not just next week but tomorrow.

So why do I run the youth minyan?

There is nothing better that I can do to show my appreciation for what I have gained from the shul than to give back in the same way. So that is my goal - the same goal as our Rabbis - to instill a passion for Hashem into the children of our community. This can only be done by showing them my own deep love for Hashem.

But there is one more thing that is equally important to the success of our children and that is the support of their parents. Baruch Hashem I was brought into this world by incredible, supportive parents who have showed me what it means to love Hashem and always seek the truth. If we can do the same for our children then anywhere they turn they will see splendor of Hashem and the youth minyan will merely be a stepping stone for them to achieve much greater heights.

I have genuinely enjoyed being involved once again with the youth minyan since coming back from yeshiva in 2016. I have already definitely seen some of the fruits of the seeds that we started to plant back then and hope that the boys continue to make me, the community, the Rabbis and themselves proud. I can now attest to the Gemara in Ta'anit (7a) which quotes Rabbi Chanina who said "I have learned much from my teachers, more from my colleagues, and the most from my students". Some of the questions that I have been asked by the creative minds of these boys, has enlightened my vision to different ways of interpreting both the Torah and the world and has sharpened my brain in areas which have not been exercised like this before.

We usually run an all-night learning program for the boys on Shavuot but due to the current circumstances with everyone stuck at home, I asked each one of them to contribute something small relating to Shavuot so that we can all have some reading material to be able to learn from home this year.



Youth chill room

I would like to thank Od Yosef Hai for giving me a place where I can serve Hashem and still feel at home, where I can continue to grow as much as possible and where I can truly say that I belong.

I would also like to thank the sponsors of this newsletter who have allowed us to be able to send it to the community. For more information of sponsorship opportunities please contact me.

Jordan Moses, OAH Youth Director

THE BUILD UP TO SHAVUOT

JOSH ISAAC-SAUL



We count the Omer from Pesach to Shavuot, day by day, looking forward to receiving the Torah. Usually, when a person is counting towards something, they count downwards towards their end goal. So why do we count up to Shavuot during the Omer instead of counting down? Isn't it a countdown from Pesach to Shavuot?

We count the Omer from Pesach to Shavuot, day by day, looking forward to receiving the Torah. Usually, when a person is counting towards something, they count downwards towards their end goal. So why do we count up to Shavuot during the Omer instead of counting down? Isn't it a countdown from Pesach to Shavuot?

A countdown is when all you have standing between you and your goal is a certain amount of days. As more time passes, you get closer to achieving your goal or end date. You are simply counting down the days to indicate how much time is left.

However, the Omer is not a countdown. When the Jews left Mitzrayim, they were surrounded by the immortality of the land.

Imagine a wealthy prince, travelling alone, and falling into a deep pit from which he cannot get out. He survives, but becomes dirty in the meantime and loses that sense of royalty. Eventually, he is found and rescued by a mighty king who wants him to marry his daughter. The prince however is filthy, and first must wash, shave, change his clothes etc. before he can marry the princess.

So too, Hashem rescued the Jewish nation from the pit of Egyptian bondage and offered us an eternal bond with the Torah. But we had become so dirty from the Egyptian way of life that we were in no condition to receive the Torah just then. The 49 days until Shavuot were given as a time to cleanse ourselves and prepare for this time. We counted up because each day we grew a level higher, each day we took one step closer to becoming G-d's chosen nation.



Each year we count up again, because the Omer is a time of spiritual refinement, and bettering ourselves. We are not counting down the days that pass. Rather, we are counting up, climbing one step higher each day and making every day count.

THE WEDDING OF THE YEAR!

EITAN ISRAELI



Shavuot is one of the three main Jewish chagim where the Jewish people would travel up to the Beit Hamikdash and offer korbanot and celebrate with their families. The other two festivals are Succot and Pesach. Pesach celebrates the freedom of the Jewish people from Egypt whilst Succot celebrates the times we then spent protected in the desert by Hashem. However, what does Shavuot really represent? It's understood that Shavuot celebrates the receiving of the Torah but isn't that celebrated on Simchat Torah? So what is Shavuot really, and why do we count up from Pesach to this day?

To answer this, I will need to bring to mind how a marriage processes works in the Jewish community. When a man and woman decide to get married, the husband will mekadesh his wife at the engagement ceremony which starts off the marriage. After this the couple will usually wait, in order to plan the wedding and their future together. After these weeks of waiting are up, the couple will be married and a ketubah will be written as proof of their kosher union. Once the wedding is over, they will partake in the 7 days of shevah brachot where family and friends will bless the couple so that they live happily together. This marriage process is exactly what is happening during Shavuot.

At Pesach Hashem remembers how He took us out of Egypt and reminds himself that he will always be with the Jewish nation - His nation - no matter what. This is the engagement. We then count 49 days of the Omer which leads to Shavuot. This is the wait before the marriage that a couple will go through. Shavuot is the wedding day itself where Hashem will crown us as His chosen nation and hand us over the Torah which is represented by the ketubah that a man will hand over to his wife. Finally, we have the 7 days after Shavuot where we say no tachnun. This

is obviously represented by the shevah brachot after the wedding day. We can clearly see that Shavuot is not just another holiday but it is the day where Hashem crowns us as His chosen people. It is the day when the ketubah is handed over and we receive the greatest ketubah of all time - the Torah.

May we all merit to see Hashem in all His glory in the coming days of Mashiach. Amen!



Swimming, January 2019

TIKKUN VS LEARNING GEMARA

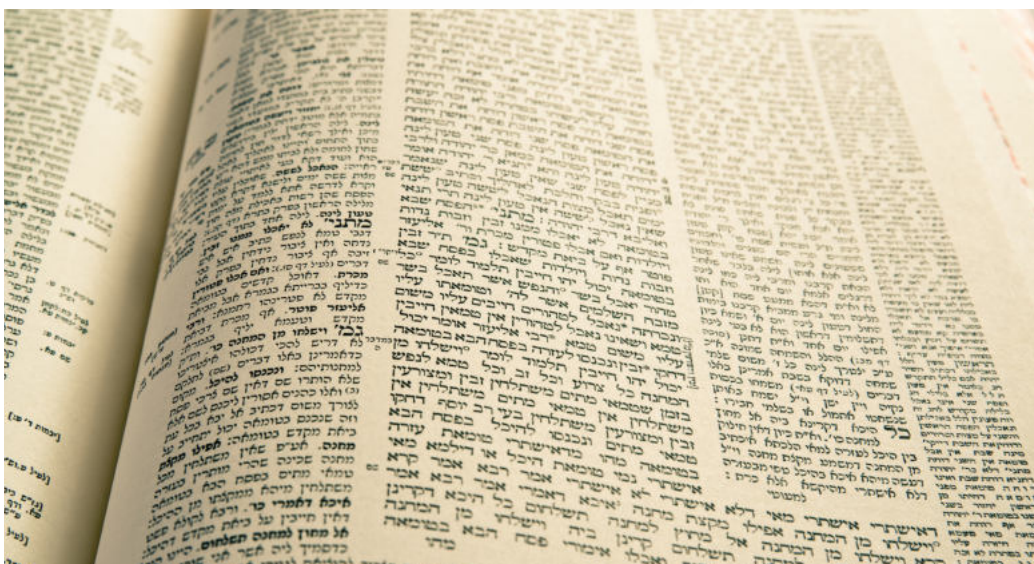
There is a custom to spend all of Shavuot night to learn from the holy Tikkun Leil Shavuot. It is made up from portions of the Torah, the Neviim, Ketuvim and the Zohar. Parts from the Mishnah, followed by a listing of the 613 commandments, are also included. Therefore, the order of study in which we follow on the first night of Shavuot is a sampling of written and oral tradition.

One Shavuot night, the Vilna Gaon and the Dubno Maggid were up late in the night learning, but whilst the Vilna Gaon was learning from the Tikkun, the Dubno Maggid was learning from the Gemara as if it was not a special night. The Vilna Gaon saw this and he asked The Dubno Maggid why he did not learn from the Tikkun, as that would have been the proper way. So The Maggid of Dubno answered by giving the following mashal:

There was once a travelling business man in textiles who was very successful in acquiring large orders from his customers. When visiting them, he carried only a small book of samples, and wherever he showed them to customers there was immediate demands for the materials.

This man had a neighbour who was very poor. The poor man looked at his neighbour and always said to himself "If my neighbour can make such a good living from showing pieces of scraps of materials, then why can't I?"

So the next day, he and his wife set to work and started to collect pieces of materials and put them into a book. When they were done, the man started to go around looking for customers and whenever he found any, instead of showing interest in making a purchase, they would just say no or sometimes even laugh at him.



Greatly discouraged, he went back to his neighbour and asked angrily "What is the secret to your success?" So the latter replied "my friend, the book in which I carry represents samples of masses of material actually available to buy in the factories

and warehouses which I represent.

All that my customers need to do is to leaf through my book and choose the patterns that they like, and then buy them from the stores. But what use are your samples in which your wife pasted together? You have no stock in trade which you could make available to the customers. Your homemade sample is only a collection of scraps resenting nothing.”

Said the Dubno Maggid, “This mashal should answer your question. My master, you have access to a vast stock of knowledge of all the holy books of our people, and the brief selections from each which you read in your Tikkun have meaning to you as exquisite samples of the spiritual treasures they represent. One selection of Mishnayot in the Tikkun will instantly recall to you all the laws and commentaries connected to that subject.”

“But as for me” said the Dubno Maggid modestly, “I am just a simple Maggid and have little learning or knowledge. Therefore, the samples contained in the Tikkun don’t mean as much to me as they do to you. I would get little benefit from these selections, as the merchant did for his scraps. Hence I must go back to the original source and study the Gemara itself even on the eve of Shavuot.”



Midweek learning, October '19

TORAH ON OUR TONGUE

SAMUEL AARON



Why do we stay up all night on Shavuot learning the Torah sheba'al peh - the oral Torah?

The simple (pshat) reason is that the Bnei Yisrael slept on the night prior to the giving of the Torah and Moshe had to wake them up to prepare them for receiving the Torah, as it is written (Shemot 19,17) Moshe led the people out the camp towards Hashem. Therefore, to correct their fault we stay awake the whole night of Shavuot learning Torah.

The Bnei Yisrael accepted the Torah and said (Shemot 24,7) Na'aseh Venishma - all that Hashem has spoken we will faithfully do. It is brought down in the Gemara (Shabbat 88a) that this is referring to the acceptance of the written Torah, but they were forced to receive the oral Torah by Hashem suspending Har Sinai over them and said, 'if you accept the Torah, fine, if not then here will be your grave'. Nonetheless, Rabba continues that they reaffirmed their acceptance of the oral Torah in the days of Achashverosh, as it is written (Ester 9:27), 'The Jews observed it and accepted it upon themselves' - they observed that which they had already accepted.

Because of this midrash, there has become an accepted custom to stay up throughout the night of Shavuot learning the oral Torah, to make up for the fact that Hashem had to force us to accept it. The Ben Ish Hai (Year 1, Pikudai 7) also



says that the best time to learn the oral Torah is at night (even during the week). Therefore, in order to accept the oral Torah in a better manner, on the day where we receive the Torah, we stay up all night learning since night time is dedicated to learning the oral Torah.

According to the deeper meaning (remez) the Shalosh Regalim (3 festivals) correspond to our forefathers. Pesach corresponds to Avraham Avinu, because this was the time when the three angels came to visit him. Succot corresponds to Yaakov Avinu as it says (Bereishit 33,17) he (Yaakov) built succot for his sheep. Shavuot corresponds to Yitzchak Avinu who was meant to be a korban at the akeida but instead a ram was sacrificed, and on Shavuot at the giving of the Torah we heard the sound of the shofar of that ram (Shemot 19,19) (Rashi Shemot 19,13). Yitzchaks' particular characteristic was gevurah - strength, so we learn the whole night in order to sweeten, so to speak his gevurah.

There is also a connection to the oral Torah on Shavuot from Megilat Ruth, which we read on Shavuot. Ruth was a Moabite, who seemingly the Torah forbids to marry into the Jewish people. However, the Sages (Yevamot 69a) interpreted the verse, "Lo yavo Amoni uMo'avi bikehal Hashem" - "An Amonite or Moabite may not marry into the community of G-d" (Devarim 23:4) - to refer only to the Moabite men but not to the women. Consequently, due to the Rabbinic interpretation of Torah (which is effectively what the oral Torah is), it was possible for Ruth to marry Boaz and become the ancestor of King David and Mashiach. Therefore, Megilat Ruth is read on Shavuot to emphasize the immense benefit the Jewish people derive from the oral Torah, which Hashem forced us to accept at the time of the giving of the Torah.



Chanukah dinner, 2019

RUTH - IT'S NEVER TOO LATE

ALEX HAROUNOF

The Book of Ruth is read on the second day of Shavuot. It is about a Moabite woman who, after her husband dies, follows her Israelite mother-in-law, Naomi, into the Jewish people with the famous words “wherever you go, I will go, wherever you lodge, I will lodge, your people will be my people, and your God will be my God.” She asserts the right of the poor to gather leftovers of the barley harvest, breaks the normal rules of behaviour to confront her relative Boaz. She is then redeemed by him for marriage, and becomes the ancestor of King David.

There are many explanations given for the reading of Ruth on Shavuot:

The most popular reason is that Ruth’s coming to Israel took place at around the time of Shavuot, and her acceptance into Judaism can be drawn as a parallel to the acceptance of the Jewish people to the Torah.

A second explanation relates to genealogy. Since the Book of Ruth ends with the generations of David HaMelech, who is related to Ruth, it has been suggested that it is read on Shavuot because this is when David HaMelech was born and passed away.

Another reason for the reading of Ruth on Shavuot is that its story takes place at harvest time, and Shavuot also occurs at the time of the spring harvest.

A further reason is that on Shavuot we received the Torah, which contains 613 commandments. The entire world had already been given 7 of these commandments to observe, so we actually received 606 additional commandments at Har Sinai. When Ruth converted to Judaism, she accepted upon herself 606 new commandments as the Jewish people did at Sinai. To emphasize the fact that we all received 606 new commandments on Shavuot, we read the story of Ruth, whose name (רות) has the numerical value of 606.



We can also learn something from Ruth. There are people who say “if I would have been religious growing up then I would have conducted myself that way throughout my life. Now, however, it is too late to change my rooted lifestyle and start afresh.” But Ruth was 40 years old when she embraced Torah and Judaism. She started on the elementary level and rose to become one of the most exemplified women in Jewish history. If she was able to do it at 40 years old, then surely it’s never too late!

FINALLY A DAIRY FEAST!

NATI RAYMOND



Many people have the custom to eat dairy foods on Shavuot, but why?

There are many sources to this custom. Perhaps the most famous reason for eating dairy products is the reason given by the Mishna Berurah (494:12), who suggests that at the time of the receiving of the Torah, the Jewish people became obligated to commit to all the mitzvot in the Torah. As such in order to eat meat, they would have had to follow the complex procedures involved in producing kosher meat. Because this required time in order to properly prepare the meat, the only food items available immediately after Matan Torah were dairy products. The tradition of eating dairy products on Shavuot serves to commemorate the Matan Torah experience when the Jewish people were only able to eat dairy products.

Another reason is that the Torah is compared to milk, as the pasuk says (Shir HaShirim 4:11), "Like honey and milk [the Torah] lies under your tongue". Likewise, the Eretz Yisrael is referred to as "a land flowing with milk and honey" (Devarim 31:20). Essentially, milk serves as sustenance, the source of life, and honey represents sweetness. Just like milk has the ability to fully sustain the body of a human being (i.e. a nursing baby), so too the Torah provides all the 'spiritual nourishment' necessary for the human soul. And further, on Shavuot we make dairy-based sweet treats like cheesecake and blintzes to show that the Torah is sweet.

A third reason, is the gematria (numerical value) of the Hebrew word for milk, chalav, is 40. We eat dairy foods on Shavuot to commemorate the 40 days that Moshe spent on Har Sinai receiving the entire Torah.



Paintballing, July 2017

The numerical value of chalav, 40, has further significance in that there were 40 generations from Moshe Rabbeinu - who recorded the Written Torah - until the generation of Ravina and Rav Ashi who wrote the final version of the Oral Torah, the Gemara/Talmud.

Our custom is to have dairy foods on Shavuot, but to have meat for the actual meals, since the mitzva of a meal on yom tov is with meat and wine!

SHEMA - TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE

RAPHAEL AARON



On Shavuot, it is a widespread custom to stay up all night learning Torah in anticipation of receiving the Torah from Hashem on this special day. Staying up all night on Shavuot is really fun right, but have you ever asked yourself why we do this?

There are many answers to this question, however the one I would like to discuss is the midrash that says the Bnei Yisrael overslept on one of the most important days of their life. A day they had been counting up towards, the day that Hashem was coming to give us the holy Torah at Har Sinai, and we turned up late for the big occasion, ruining a once-in-history opportunity. Instead of waiting for Hashem to 'arrive' at Har Sinai, as would have been proper, the Bnei Yisrael made Hashem wait for them. To rectify for this terrible mistake, we stay up all night learning so that we will be awake and ready to receive the Torah at dawn!

We can carry this lesson further with us throughout the year on a daily basis. It is very important to wake up on time and say the Shema in its designated time. This is a mitzvah de'oraytah - from the Torah. The latest time one can recite the Shema is by the end of the third halachic hour of the day (a halachic hour is where you divide the amount of daylight in one day by 12 - in the winter a halachic hour will therefore be shorter than in the summer). This is a time where 'people of luxury' would wake up, and is therefore the cut off of saying Shema from the Torah. However, if one missed this time, he should still recite the Shema later.

One should be very careful to make sure they recite Kriat Shema every morning in its correct time. The Gemara in Chagigah says regarding one who fails to say



Shema in its proper time that it is a "transgression that cannot be corrected." This is a very harsh description and is only found in Chazal regarding three things;

one who sins with an illicit woman resulting in the birth of a Mamzer, one who separates himself from Torah, and one who fails to recite Shema on time.

The Gemara in Shabbat (119b) says that the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed because they failed to recite Shema in its proper time.

Midweek Learning, November 2017

And further, the Zohar says that Blessings from Above are withheld from one who fails to recite Shema in its proper time, and they are considered to be excommunicated by Heaven for that day, and their Tefilot on that day will not be listened to.

One needs to have the correct Kavana - intentions - when they are saying the Shema, in order to fulfill their requirement correctly. Besides having in mind that one is about to fulfill a positive Mitzvah from the Torah of saying Shema, one also needs to understand what they are saying in the first pasuk, as well as having Kabbalat Ol Malchut Shamayim (acceptance of yoke of heaven) and Yichud Hashem (knowing that Hashem is one).

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| "Shema Yisrael" | - The Jewish people should listen, understand and accept the following, |
| "Hashem Elokeinu" | - Hashem was, is and will be one, and The Master of the universe, |
| "Hashem Echad" | - Hashem was, is and will be one, in the seven heavens and earth, and in all four corners of the earth (North, South, East and West). |

One should extend saying letter daled of the word Echad, but not too long so that it doesn't sound like a normal pronunciation of the word Echad.

It is forbidden to walk around while saying the first pasuk of Shema and Baruch Shem Kavod. Some are strict not to walk while saying the first pasuk until after Al Levavecha. It is forbidden to do any activity such as work and even signalling with one's eyes or fingers, or mouthing with one's lips while saying the first paragraph of Shema.



DO WE WASH WITH A BRACHA??

JORDAN MOSES



There is a common question that arises every Shavuot morning before shachrit, after being up all night, which is “since I have been up all night, do I need to make a bracha when I wash netilat yadayim?”

Why do we wash?

The Orchot Chaim says the reason why we need to wash netilat yadayim in the morning is to remove the ruach ra’ah - “impure spirit”, which the Ben Ish Hai explains is what a person gets when they sleep because they’re considered a sixtieth dead. But this alone does not require a bracha on washing the hands, because Tosafot (Shabbat) says that anything which the Rabbi’s instituted out of danger does not need a bracha.

Why do we make a bracha?

There is an argument between the Rosh and the Rashba why we need to make a bracha on washing our hands in the morning:

- The Rosh says it is because during our sleep, it is assumed that we have touched a dirty area of our body, and we cannot pray without being clean so we have to wash our hands, and our Rabbi’s instituted a bracha for this. So based on this reason, the Biur Halacha says that if one slept whilst wearing gloves, they should still wash their hands in the morning because of the “impure spirit”, but without a bracha because there is no need.

- The Rashba holds that once it becomes dark at night a person becomes a bria chadasha - “new creation” in the morning, and they should praise Hashem for this, just like we praise Him in all of the other birkat hashachar - morning blessings. The Biur Halacha adds that if one woke up at 3am and washed their hands (because of the “impure spirit”) and then went back to sleep, then they would still make a bracha of netilat yadayim when they wake up again in the morning because that is when they become a “new creation”.



What happens if one only sleeps a bit?

The Beit Yosef and the Pri Megadim say that if one slept for a bit of the night, everyone agrees that they should wash netilat yadayim with a bracha. The Mishna Brura adds that this only a shenat keva - “permanent sleep” (in one’s bed), but if it was a shenat aray - temporary sleep (ie on the couch) then the Rosh would not say a bracha because it is not called sleeping. (Rav Pinchos Sheinberg says that whether the sleep is considered permanent or temporary depends on the persons’ intentions when they go to sleep, and not the place of sleep. The Gemara in Succah says a temporary sleep is the time it takes to walk up to 100 amot - approx. 60 meters.)

In all of these cases, one should always wash their hands because it's a safek - doubt, but never make a bracha, because when in doubt we are lenient, except for in the morning because then there is no doubt.

What if one was awake all night?

Maran says (in Siman 4:13) that it is a doubt if one needs to wash their hands in the morning to remove the "impure spirit" if one was awake all night. The Pri Megadim's solution to this, is to ask someone next to you (who did sleep) to have you in mind when they say their bracha. The doubt is;

- If one is awake all night, then they don't become a "new creation" (Rashba).
- But according to the Rosh, because it depends on touching a dirty area of your body, so one should only wash with a bracha if they did so!

The Beit Yosef adds that according to the Rosh, if one was awake all night then they should still wash their hands in the morning because of the "impure spirit", but should not say a bracha. (However, the Zohar implies that one only gets this "impure spirit" if they actually sleep. Nevertheless, it is a doubt, so there is nothing to lose by washing without a bracha.)

The Ramah says that if one was awake all night, they should wash their hands without a bracha, and the Kaf Hachaim says the same.

The Mishna Brura says that if one was awake all night, they should go to the bathroom in the morning, wash their hands, and can then make a bracha according to everyone, which would be a perfect solution for the morning of Shavuot. However, the Mamar Mordechai says that it doesn't work to touch a dirty area of one's body on purpose (ie go to the bathroom) in order to be able to make a bracha.

So what is the conclusion?

The Kaf Hachaim paskens that shev ve'al ta'aseh adif - being passive is better, and safek brachot lehakel - when in a doubt, we are lenient and do not say a bracha, so therefore one should not make a bracha, even if they did go to the bathroom and they did touch a dirty area of their body.



But the best thing to do, is to find someone who did sleep at night, and does need to was netilat yadayim with a bracha (according to everyone!), and ask them to have you in mind with their bracha.

(I saw somewhere that if one is making the bracha of netilat yadayim to wash on bread, this can also work to ask them to have you in mind with their bracha, although I'm not sure who would be eating bread so early in the morning!)

TO EAT OR NOT TO EAT

RAPHAEL MOSES



At the beginning of Parshat Yitro (Shemot 18:12) the Torah describes how after Yitro decided to convert to Judaism, and he brought various korbanot. These were the korban olah and korban shelamim. A korban olah is completely burnt on the mizbeach, and a korban shelamim is only part burnt on the mizbeach, and the rest is given to the kohen and eaten by the owner. Why did he specifically bring both these types of korbanot?

Perhaps the answer is that this double korban symbolized Yitro's change from non-Jew to a Jew. The halacha is that a non-Jew cannot bring a korban shelamim, only a korban olah. Some explain that this is because according to the non-Jewish world's perspective, kedusha requires a total separation from physicality. They say that to live a life of holiness, a person must deny himself from all physical pleasure. For a non-Jew, the korban olah is the only way to serve Hashem because a non-Jew feels that a spiritual life requires total sacrifice.

However, the Torah has a different perspective. While there certainly is room for a korban olah which is completely burnt on the mizbe'ach, there is also a place for a korban shelamim, in which part of the korban is burnt on the mizbeach, part is given to the kohen, and part is also eaten by the owner. The korban shelamim shows that the Torah believes that man can partake of the physical world, he can enjoy physical pleasures like eating and drinking, and still be serving Hashem. Kedusha does not require a person to abstain from the physical world. It requires that he elevate and sanctify the physical world. By bringing both an olah and a shelamim, Yitro demonstrated that he understood this message.

This explains the Gemara (Pesachim 68b) which explains how to fulfil the mitzva of simchat yom tov - rejoicing on yom tov. It says that on Pesach and Succot, a

person can choose between total involvement in spiritual activities (kulo l'Hashem) or in physical activities (kulo lachem), or in splitting the day chatzi l'Hashem v'chatzi lachem - engaging in both spiritual endeavours like praying and learning Torah, as well as physical activities like eating and drinking. But on Shavuot, everyone agrees that some physical enjoyment is necessary.



At first glance, the opposite approach seems more logical. After all, Shavuot is the day that the Jewish people received the Torah, a day on which we celebrate the value of spirituality in our lives, so why must there be some portion of lachem (physical enjoyment) on that day at all? If anything, everyone should agree that on Shavuot one can choose the option of kulo l'Hashem (total spirituality) to fulfil the mitzva of rejoicing on Yom tov!

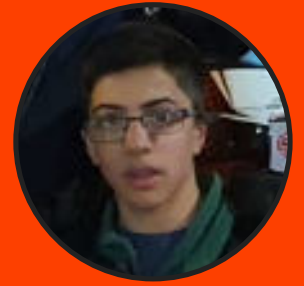
The answer is that precisely because Shavuot is the day of kabbalat haTorah (receiving the Torah), we have to eat and drink to celebrate the Yom tov because Shavuot is a day that we declare our commitment not only to learning Torah, but to living a Torah lifestyle as well. And there is no better way to demonstrate the Torah's perspective on life than by elevating ourselves through eating and drinking.

When we eat and drink l'shem shamayim (for the sake of Hashem), in a refined way, when we dedicate some of our resources to tzedaka and mitzvot, we demonstrate that we have internalised the message of the korban shelamim. We do not have to abstain from physical pleasures in order to reach the ultimate level of serving Hashem. All we have to do is live for a higher purpose.



THE SHALOSH REGALIM

YARON ISRAELI



Pesach - celebrates the Exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt, as well as the beginning of the new planting season after the winter rains in Israel, since it falls in the early spring.

Shavuot - biblically, this is solely an agricultural celebration. Falling exactly seven weeks after Pesach which places it at the time of the late spring harvest. Shavuot as a celebration of the giving of the Torah and is a post-biblical development.

Succot - celebrates the wandering of the Israelites in the desert for 40 years, when they had to rely only upon God for food and protection. This also celebrates the last harvest festival before the onset of the winter rains in the land of Israel. It falls five days after Yom Kippur, usually in mid-autumn. At the conclusion of Succot, the holidays of Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah are celebrated.

Question: Why are the three Chagim; Pesach, Shavuot and Succot called 'The Shalosh Regalim'?

Answer: Jewish families were supposed to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate three feasts during the year. Because of this requirement to travel to Jerusalem, these three festivals became known as the Shalosh Regalim.

Question: What do all the three Chagim have in common?

Answer: They all have an extra day to keep if you are outside of Israel.

Question: Why do they all have an extra day outside of Israel?

Answer: Because they needed to get to Jerusalem and they were unsure about the date in those days which is why they added an extra day out of doubt. Nowadays, this is still kept since we do not uproot something that the Rabbis instituted.



Hoshanah Rabbah, 2017

COOKING FOR SHABBAT

SHAWN MIRANDA



Normally, on Jewish holidays, we are allowed to cook and pursue other preparations for that day, but it is not permissible to start preparations for the next day, which starts after nightfall. For example, regularly, on a Tuesday night holiday, we can cook for Tuesday night and the following day. But any preparations for Wednesday night and Thursday can only commence after nightfall on Wednesday night.

What is an eiruv tavshilin?

The Eiruv Tavshilin is a meal that consists of a Challah or a Matzah and a food that has been cooked such as meat, egg or fish.

When do make one?

This rule is followed on any day of the week but for the exception of where a Friday holiday runs continually into a Shabbat, where all cooking is banned. In this case cooking is allowed on the Friday before Shabbat starts due to an Eiruv Tavshilin.

How do we make one?

We take the food items (which are preferably wrapped in foil or cling film so that they can be kept apart from the rest of the food at home) and hold them in the right hand and say the bracha (al mitzvat eiruv).



Hummus Bar, June 2019

Following the blessing, a declaration must be made describing the purpose of the eiruv foods. This declaration is traditionally said in Aramaic, but it must be said in a language that one understands. So, if one does not understand the Aramaic words, he should say the following translation: "By means of these eiruv foods, we will be permitted to bake, cook, keep foods warm, light candles, carry, and do all that we need on Yom Tov for Shabbat." The eruv is then put away separately until Shabbat day when it is eaten.

TEFILLIN - THE GIFT OF TIME

AVI WAKEFIELD



Every morning when we put on tefillin, we say the Kaddish Li. At the end of this, it says regarding the tefillin (Shemot 13:9), that “it shall be for you as a sign on your arm, and as a reminder between your eyes, so that Hashem’s Torah shall be in your mouth, because Hashem brought you out of Egypt with a mighty hand.”

But why would putting on tefillin every morning, remind us that Hashem took us out of Egypt? What is the connection between the two? Furthermore, why would putting on tefillin cause there to be Torah learning in our mouth?

We learnt about this in one of our midweek learning sessions, and we concluded that a common denominator between putting on tefillin and leaving Egypt is time. When the Jewish people were slaves in Egypt, they were not owners of their own time. They were slaves to Pharaoh. A slave by nature does not have any time to himself. He does whatever his master tells him to do at whatever hour of the day he is told. When Hashem took us out of Egypt, we were given the gift of being in control over our own time - we were no longer slaves to Pharaoh, but rather ‘servants’ to Hashem.

And that is exactly what we show when we put on tefillin every morning. We are spending our ‘own’ time, which Hashem has given us, and using it to serve Him with and fulfill His mitzvot. And by doing so, we are proving to Him that it was worth it to take us out of Egypt, and give us the blessing of free time.

Once we realise this, then we can understand why wearing tefillin will cause us to learn more Torah in our day. Because now that we know that Hashem has blessed us with being in control of our own time, we should use it appropriately. There is no better way to spend our time than by learning Hashem’s holy Torah.



This is especially appropriate for these current times. Now more than ever we have so much extra time on our hands that we never had before being so busy with ‘life’. We can try and make the most of this, by firstly making sure we don’t rush our tefillin in the morning, but more importantly, by setting aside some time in our day, no matter how long or short, to learn something small and show Hashem that it was worth it to bring us out of Egypt.

DAVENING IN THE MOONLIGHT

SHANE MIRANDA



What is Birkat HaLevana?

Upon seeing the moon at the beginning of the month we say a blessing called Birkat HaLevana. The Gemara says that saying Birkat HaLavana is like greeting the Shechina. Halacha says that by seeing the full moon we recognise Hashem's strength.

When and Where Do We Recite it?

The Sanctification of the Moon is done at night, when the moon is waxing (growing to the stage of a full moon) and is bright enough that we can benefit from its light. According to Sephardim, we may say the Bracha seven days after the Molad (new moon) and according to Ashkenazim, they may say it 3 days after. A person should not recite the blessing on a night when clouds are completely covering the moon. If someone begins the blessing and it suddenly becomes cloudy, they should still complete the service. We go outside to sanctify the moon. Nothing should come between us and the heavens, even if the moon can be clearly seen from the shelter of a porch or the balcony. One should look his best on this occasion, and it is preferable to sanctify the moon in a large group. Therefore, the very best time is immediately after Shabbat, outside of the synagogue, when we are all together and dressed in our best clothing.

What is the Significance and Meaning Behind it?

The sages of the Talmud write that the renewal of the moon each month reminds us of the wonders of G-d's creations, as if the Divine Presence in our world which is often hidden, is coming out to meet us. The Ben Ish Hai says one should recite Birkat HaLevana with joy and careful enunciation, for it is a way of greeting the Shechinah. In the siddur Kol Eliyahu of Rabbi Mordechai Eliyahu zt'l, it is noted by that men who are single and would like to get married should be taught that when saying Birkat HaLevana with intent and together with a congregation they will be drawing down to themselves a special Divine favor to fulfill their yearning.



Zorbing, Lag Ba'Omer 2017

Because the moon has the most obvious cycle to humans out of all the other planets and stars, we take time to thank Hashem for the wonders that we are able to see from the Moon. So, once a month, Jews open their prayerbooks to speak of the moon.

THE GIFT OF TOMORROW

ELISHA MOSES



We say every morning after Birkat HaTorah, the pasukim from Birkat Kohanim, which are mentioned in Parshat Naso (Bamidbar 6:24-27), next week's parsha. These are 3 very special blessings. Every blessing begins with Hashem: "Hashem should bless you and guard you". "Hashem should make His face shine upon you". "Hashem should turn His face unto you and place peace on you."

But why does the Torah add the last phrase of "And let them place My Name upon Bnei Yisrael and I shall bless them"? We already know that Hashem is the One who is giving us the blessings?

Harav Simcha Hakohen Sheps z.l., in his sefer Simchas Hatorah, explains that this last phrase is an added blessing. Even after one receives a blessing from Hashem, he must internalise the fact that the blessing comes only from Hashem. Nothing that we receive has any source other than from Hashem.

This in itself is a profound perception. Because while many people know theoretically that Hashem is the true source of all blessing, how many people really internalise this idea? We turn to Hashem only when we are about to lose something. Then we beg him not to take it away. But when we have it, we forget that it is only through Hashem's blessing that we are recipients of His good will. Even after we have received Hashem's blessings, we are required to recognise, realise and remember that they are from Hashem.

This is especially true for a special gift that we receive from Hashem regularly, that we often take for granted. The gift of tomorrow. We make plans and arrange schedules always taking tomorrow as a given. Does anybody ever perceive tomorrow as Hashem's greatest gift? How often do people put things away for a special occasion only to find that the special occasion doesn't actually happen? All too often we tend to go through life as if we are guaranteed to wake up tomorrow. Life should not be taken for granted, and we should thank Hashem for letting us be in this world every day. Maybe in these current times we can appreciate this message and internalise it. Every day, every minute, every breath is a gift from Hashem. Do not take it for granted!



Go Karting, February 2020