

Vort on Shavuot

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This dvar Torah is on the importance of not wasting time.

One thing wrong with addictions to technology or shmuts is

that it takes away so much time from our lives. This vort is

just meant to give chizuk be"H to use our time more carefully for it is

the only thing money can never buy back - it truly is a gift from Hashem!

Shavuot has no special misvot, is dateless in the Torah, and has no special name.

It lacks the recognizable characteristics of a festival or special date which are present

in all other holidays. But why? Isn't Shavout one of the most important holidays in our history?

It is the time that we became Hashem's people and received the Torah - the purpose of creation.

So why doesn't the Torah have any special characteristics that distinguish it from all other

festivals just like the other festivals which each have their own uniqueness? (Ex: Pesach we have matza, sukkot we have the lulav and sukka, on Hannukka we have the menorah, Purim we have megila, etc.)

To further understand the question we have to understand a fundamental yesod

of Avodat Hashem. Life is full of potential. Wasted time equals wasted potential.

In this world, the ikar is the effort while the result is the tafel, as pirkei avot (4:17) says

"??? ??? ??? ?????? ?????? ?????? ?????? ??? ??? ??? ?????? ???" and (5:23) "???? ????? ?????".

What do we start doing unique from the second night of Pesach?

We begin counting seven weeks. What is so special about Sefirat Haomer?

It is the time that Am Yisrael prepared themselves to receive the Torah.

During this time they went from the 49th level of tumah to the 49th level of kedusha.

This period of preparation is a period full of potential - a time when we put in our hishtadlut to become worthy of receiving the kedusha that is entailed with the holiday of Shavout and the receiving of the Torah. However, although the Torah says to count seven weeks it does not say the date that will be the 50th day. Why? Hashem is hinting to us to never stop maximizing our potential and to make proper use of our time. If Hashem were to tell us that Shavuot is on the 6th (or 7th) of Sivan then we would think that the potential ends on this date. But it doesn't! Every minute is a potential for growth. This is why bitul Torah and bitul zman is such a big sin (one of the only sins that Hashem is reluctant to forgive) because it is in essence wasting the gift of potential that Hashem bestows on every human.

As pirkei avot (3:4) says, "????????????? ?????? ????????????, ?????? ??? ??????????? ??????????" - one who turns his heart to

idleness, this one is liable for his life.

It was only after seven weeks that we became worthy of receiving the Torah - after maximizing our potential. People that waste time are returning to the state we were in Egypt when Pharoah limited our potential by not providing us with straw. The Pharoah of today's generation is technology and most people today are slaves to social media, movies, etc. The word for straw is ??? which is related to the word ???? - insight. The Torah is called ???? as the pasuk in mishlei says "?? ??? ??????? ??? ????? ?? ??????" The Pharoah of today's generation is depriving us of Torah by bombarding us with distractions and enticements and very quickly our potential for a holy life and growth is wasted.

The addictiveness of technology and the wasted time that results from it is

robbing today's generation of the Torah. How? As stated before, wasted time equals wasted potential. Time is a necessary component in doing preparation (hishtadlut) - a necessity in receiving the Torah, as Pirkei Avot says (2:12) "???? ???? ????? ???? ?????? ????? ??".

Prepare yourself to learn Torah for it is not inherited to you. Every person has to toil to acquire Torah and this can only be done through constant preparation. Not for only seven weeks but throughout your entire lifetime. For this reason Shavuot is called "weeks" and not the day we got the Torah - because the preparation will be over the weeks of your life and is the ikar in your avoda. The uniqueness of Shavuot is that we have a period of preparation right before it to remind us of the importance of using our time properly. (Of course technology can be used for learning and can be used for avodat Hashem as well, which is an ingenious invention of the Satan to test the generations before Moshiach.) The special "mitzvah" we do on Shavuot is we stay up learning the Torah making sure we don't waste a minute. We are telling Hashem that we recognize that we have wasted much time through our lives but from now on we want to get serious. We will stay up learning Torah and we will be more meticulous in the future with how we spend our time and maximize our potential.

"Rav Haim Palachi (Izmir, Turkey, 1788-1869) composed a work entitled Mo'ed Le'chol Hai, in which he discusses the unique qualities of every Hebrew month and the significant days in each month. In his discussion of the month of Sivan – the month in which we received the Torah, as we celebrate on Shavuot – he writes that this month is especially suited for developing

the qualities of humility, unity among the Jewish people, and clear comprehension of Torah. He then adds that the sins of Bittul Torah (wasting time that could be used for Torah study),

gossip, slander, frivolity and other forms of inappropriate speech are particularly grievous during the month of Sivan. Although these offenses are certainly considered sinful regardless of when they are committed, violators are liable to especially harsh retribution, Heaven forbid, if they commit these sins during the month of Sivan. As this is the month in which we receive the Torah, and we are to devote ourselves – and especially our faculty of speech – to studying the Torah, these violations committed during Sivan have a particularly harmful spiritual effect in the heavens." (Daily Halacha by Rabbi Eli Mansour) Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to take the lesson of Shavuot to heart and be especially careful in the month of Sivan and in the future with how we spend our time making sure to minimize our bitul Torah.

The Torah is compared to water. Water is tasteless, colorless, and odorless.

Water also lacks the characteristics that are present in other physical substances.

Water is a necessity for living things to grow and survive. So is the Torah.

Shavout is a time that we got the Torah, but now what? If you have water but you do not drink it or water other living things with it then of what use is it? So too, we have the Torah and we need to use it on ourselves and teach it to others.

If we don't follow its laws, study it, and use it to change then of what good was it becoming Hashem's chosen nation and receiving the Torah? For this reason, Shavuot does not have the unique characteristics of other festivals because receiving the Torah wasn't the goal nor the end. The goal is to study the Torah and follow its laws to properly serve Hashem, our Loving Father.

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