

Shavuot

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Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

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Under the auspices of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Son of the tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Ahron Pinto, zt"l, and grandson of the holy tzaddik and miracle-worker Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy"á



MASKIL LEDAVID

Weekly talk on the Parshah given by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

EDUCATION: THE FOUNDATION OF HUMILITY

The Midrash asks, "From where does Sinai come?" (Shocher Tov 68). It comes from Mount Moriah, having been kneaded like challah from dough, from the place where Isaac was to have been sacrificed. Thus G-d said, "Since Isaac should have been sacrificed there, it will be good for his children to receive the Torah there."

We may ask at least three questions on this passage:

1. If Mount Moriah is so important, why was the Torah not given on it (without having a portion taken from it and placed on Mount Sinai)?

2. What exactly does "having been kneaded" mean? Why did our Sages add, "Like challah from dough"?

3. What is the connection between the sacrifice of Isaac and the giving of the Torah? Did these two events have to occur in the same place?

The Torah commands: "Who is the man who has built a new house and has not inaugurated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the war and another man will inaugurate it" (Devarim 20:5). What exactly does "lest he die" signify? Everyone who goes out to war is exposed to danger. What is the meaning of, "Who has built a new house and has not inaugurated it"? It means that even the construction of a house implies the performance of several mitzvot that are inseparable from one another, from the mitzvot connected to the house itself (such as the mezuzot [Devarim 6:9] and the fence on the roof [ibid. 22:8]) to the mitzvot that one performs within its walls (such as the laws of kashrut, family purity, being fruitful and multiplying). The precepts carried out within the home, and the Shechinah found therein, constitute the very foundation of Torah. With regards to this, the Talmud teaches that if a man and his wife are worthy, the Shechinah dwells among them; if not, they are devoured by fire (Sotah 17a). A man performs mitzvot and good deeds in every corner of the house. He impregnates it with holiness, and it is difficult to commit a sin there. The beams and walls of the house will witness against him if he commits a sin within it (Taanith 11a). In the same way that one educates one's children, one educates and impregnates one's home in the service of G-d.

If, as the Talmud relates (Yoma 47a; see also Vayikra Rabba 20:11), Kimchit had seven sons who all served as Kohen Gadol, it was because the beams of her house never saw the braids of her hair. She was careful to hide them even when she was alone in the house, doing so in order to impregnate it with holiness. Because of her modesty, she merited giving birth to seven Kohanim Gedolim.

Therefore if a person has built a house without having performed the mitzvot intended for it, he does not have the right to go to war. He will be judged for not having inaugurated it with mitzvot and good deeds. Moreover, Yonatan ben Uzziel translated the verse in question into Aramaic as follows: "If someone has built a new house, and has not affixed a mezuzah to it...." This is because the mezuzah and other mitzvot constitute the foundation of the Jewish home and generate humility in man, a guarantee that the Divine commandments will be carried out.

On Mount Moriah, our Patriarch Isaac was taught to fear Hashem and serve Him with the greatest of devotion (Berachot 62b; Taanith 16a; Zohar III:53b). Our Sages teach that when the Jewish people finds itself in distress, the "ashes" of Isaac rise toward the Holy One, blessed be He, and his merit saves them. Yet where, in fact, do these "ashes" come from? Isaac was never sacrificed! The answer is that his modesty and humility allowed him to reach the level of dust and ashes that wind scatters to the four corners of the earth. It is similar to the challah that we take from the dough: It is really bread, but when we burn it, it is literally transformed into ashes.

The Talmud teaches (Taanith 16a; see also Bereshith Rabba 55:7) that from Mount Moriah, an educational message was relayed to the Jewish people – one of modesty, submission, and the fear of Heaven. Just as Mount Moriah was uprooted, the Torah does not stay in one place; one finds it everywhere. We too must perform mitzvot everywhere, with the greatest of humility – that is the essential thing. As we have seen, the Torah was given on Mount Sinai because it was the smallest of mountains, and it is part of Mount Moriah.

Desiring to impregnate the Torah and mitzvot within themselves in order to defeat the evil inclination, the Children of Israel settled in the desert, where the forces of evil fiercely raged, close to Sinai. They wanted to attain high levels of spirituality on this mountain, which Meromem Y-H (Moriah=Meromem Y-H), Hashem uplifts. Note the similarity in the numerical values of Y-H (Hashem) and ga'avah (pride), both equal to 15. By the study of Torah, we array ourselves in Hashem's majesty alone.

This Torah portion carries the name Yitro because he, fleeing all honors, ventured into the desert to impregnate himself with the service of Hashem and to fight the evil inclination.

This is also what the Children of Israel did. In fleeing into the desert from honors, they were then "pursued" by Mount Moriah, which elevated them and allowed them to reach sublime spiritual levels.

Commenting on the verse which states, "So shall you say [ko tomar] to the House of Jacob and relate [vetaged] to the Children of Israel" (Shemot 19:3), the Talmud explains (Shabbat 87a) that Hashem uses gentle language with the House of Jacob (that is, with the women), and rough language with the Children of Israel (that is, with the men). Why two different ways of speaking? Furthermore, why does the verse mention the women before the men, which is contrary to the norm?

The answer is that men learn the virtue of humility from women. If on Mount Sinai it was the Torah that reminded man to conduct himself with complete humility, who would remind him to do so in his home, if not his wife? The Midrash teaches that all while being strong, a woman is born with a discreet, modest disposition (Bereshith Rabba 18:2). Hence in order to learn humility (which is the very foundation of the entire Torah), a woman needs ko tomar ("so shall you say") and "I am Hashem your G-d."



THE GIVING OF THE TORAH

Preparing for the Festival of the Giving of the Torah

As we know, the names of the festivals are generally determined by the events that transpired on their dates. That being the case, why is the festival of Shavuot called the day of “the giving of the Torah”? We also need to understand why, in our prayers, we refer to Shavuot as the day of the giving of the Torah, not as the day when we received the Torah. The festival of the giving of the Torah, which occurred on Sivan 6, is dependent on the seven weeks that preceded it. This emerges from the words of the Tanna: “The Torah is acquired by 48 qualities” (Pirkei Avot 6:6). The expression, “The Torah is acquired” teaches us that it is not enough to know the Torah; we must also acquire it. As is the case with acquisitions in this world, if we fail to pay for the object that we want to buy, the transaction will not take place and the object will continue to be viewed as the property of the seller. The same applies when we want to receive the Creator’s Torah: If a person neglects even a single element by which the Torah is acquired, it remains the property of the Holy One, blessed be He, and a person cannot take possession of it.

To what can this be compared? It is like a wealthy man who placed one of his young servants in charge of the homes he possessed. Over the course of time, the young man learned everything there was to know about all the wealthy man’s properties and their particulars. However even though he knew more than the owner himself, it was still the owner who retained exclusive possession of his property. With regards to the owner, this young man – regardless of what he knew – had no ownership rights over any of his homes, not even the smallest part of one. The same applies to the Torah, as King David said: “His desire is in the Torah of Hashem, and in his Torah he meditates day and night” (Tehillim 1:2). At first it is called “the Torah of Hashem,” but once a person has studied it, it is called “his Torah” (Kiddushin 32b). When does this happen? When he has acquired the Torah by appropriate means.

The Children of Israel had breached the 49th gate of impurity while in Egypt (Zohar Yitro 39). However as soon as they left Egypt, they began to work regularly and diligently to leave the gates of impurity and enter the gates of holiness. To accomplish this, they acquired the 48 qualities mentioned above, one quality each day. On the 49th day, which was the day before Shavuot, they reviewed everything. It was after having gone through this extraordinary preparation that they proceeded to receive the Torah.

Consequently, this is why the festival is called Shavuot, for during those weeks (shavuot), the Children of Israel acquired everything they needed in order to receive the Torah. This also answers our second question, which is why the festival is called the day of “the giving of the Torah,” rather than the day of “the receiving of the Torah.” It is because the Holy One, blessed be He, gives the Torah (and Heavenly assistance with it) to every Jew, but not every Jew “receives” the Torah in the same way. Each person receives the Torah according to his own abilities that he developed for this goal, according to the effort

he invested during the seven weeks leading up to its giving. It is precisely in accordance with his efforts that he may receive the Torah. The book *Kol Yehudah* by Rabbi Tsadka Zatzal states that Shavuot is called “the festival of bikkurim [first fruits]” in the Torah because all other festivals are solely limited to the days when the celebrated event took place, which is not case for the giving of the Torah. It did not take place solely on that day, for Hashem gives the Torah anew each day, as the Sages have explained: “They [the mitzvot] should be new to you, as if you heard them on this very day.” It is our duty to prepare ourselves to receive the Torah.

The gaon Rabbi Isser Zalman Meltzer Zatzal wrote something amazing in regards to this: In the same way that the world is judged on four occasions (on Passover for the grain harvest, etc. [see *Rosh Hashanah* 16a]), on Shavuot Hashem judges man for every moment that he was given during the year. Did he use each moment to study Torah, or did he unfortunately squander them away? It is only after verifying how a person spent his time that Heaven decides his spiritual condition for the year to come, as well as the amount of Heavenly assistance that he will be given to study Torah.

The Earth Feared and Subsided

“From heaven You made judgment heard; the earth feared and subsided” (Tehillim 76:9)

Chazal teach (Shemot Rabbah 29:9) that when Hakadosh Baruch Hu wished to give His commandments to Bnei Yisrael, the entire Creation was silent. The birds did not chirp, babies did not cry, and the animals did not call out.

Why was it necessary to have utter silence at Matan Torah? Couldn’t Hashem just as well have given His Torah while the world continued in its natural order?

Moreover, if complete stillness was mandatory, why do we find that there was tremendous noise at Matan Torah, as the pasuk states (Shemot 19:19), “The sound of the shofar grew continually much stronger; Moshe would speak and G-d would respond...”? Also, we read (ibid. vs. 16), “On the third day... there was thunder and lightning and a heavy cloud on the mountain, and the sound of the shofar was very powerful...” On the one hand, total silence was necessary. Yet, at the same time, the Torah was given amidst roaring thunder.

Hashem wanted to impress upon Am Yisrael the magnitude of the responsibility resting on their shoulders. If they would not accept the Torah, or, alternatively, slacken in their Avodat Hashem, the entire world would be in danger of returning to nothingness.

Silence signifies the Yetzer Hara, whose job it is to silence a person in his service of Hashem. He endeavors to confuse man in his task in this world. He accomplishes this by bringing daily suffering and problems upon a person. In this manner, he tries to quiet man’s service of Hashem, if even only for a brief period of time.

Then, when a person remains without Torah study, only under the influence of the Yetzer Hara (Sukkah 52b), who has cooled him off in his Avodat Hashem, the world is in great danger of collapsing. For the entire Creation is only upheld in the merit of Torah, as Yirmeyahu Hanavi says (33:25), “If not

for My covenant [being studied] day and night, I would not have instituted the laws of the Heavens and the earth.”

The pasuk says (Bereishit 1:31), “בקר יום הששי ויהי ערב ויהי – And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.” Chazal ask (Avodah Zarah 3a; Shabbat 88a), “What is the reason for the extra letter ה' in the word הששי (the sixth)? It signifies a specific “sixth day.” This is the sixth of Sivan, the day of Matan Torah. Hashem made a condition with the Creation and stated, “If Yisrael accept the Torah, you will endure. But if not, I will return you to nothingness.”

For that reason, Hashem silenced the entire world for a few moments, indicating the tremendous damage which would result from the silencing of the voice of Torah. He also wanted the nations of the world to observe this.

He hinted to them, as well, that the main purpose of accepting the Torah is to accept it in one’s heart. That is where the Yetzer Hara resides (Berachot 61a). He lies in ambush in man’s heart, trying to bring about his downfall. The Gemara states (Sukkah 52b), “A man’s inclination overcomes him daily, desiring his death.” This is based on the pasuk (Tehillim 37:32), “The wicked one watches for the righteous and seeks to kill him.”

It is known that the heart holds man’s secrets, for the heart is hidden from outsiders. The Gemara states (Pesachim 54b) that a man has no idea as to what is going on in his friend’s heart. In the heart, complete silence reigns.

Therefore, silence reigned at Matan Torah. Man’s main goal in life is to perfect his middot and combat the Yetzer Hara, the paradigm silent killer, who always steals into his heart. The pasuk describes this as (Melachim I, 19:11-12), “Hashem is not in the earthquake... [but in] a thin, still sound.”

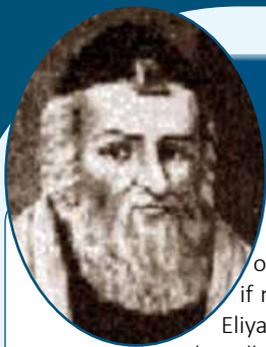
We can explain that the shofar sounds at Matan Torah allude to the hardships that beset a person. The Yetzer Hara takes advantage of man’s suffering and uses it to test him, by shaking his emunah in the Creator, to see if he will “cool off” his level of Avodat Hashem.

The solution to this is found in the Torah. The pasuk states (Shemot 19:19), “The sound of the shofar grew continually much stronger; Moshe would speak and G-d would respond to him with a voice.” Although there is much suffering, referred to as the “sound of the shofar,” a person must realize that this is all part of the order of things. What is incumbent upon him is “Moshe would speak.” Meaning, he must continue his Avodat Hashem. He must accept the Torah upon himself, not allowing the world to fall into danger, chas v’shalom.

Chazal tell us (Berachot 5a) that if a person experiences suffering and examines his deeds but finds no fault in them, he should ascribe his suffering to bitul Torah. This will bring an end to his troubles. And if not, he should know that his hardships are afflictions of love, as the pasuk states (Mishlei 3:12), “Hashem admonishes the one He loves.” Bitul Torah is the main area of combat with the Yetzer Hara. Our mission is to vanquish him.

The gematria of the words ארץ יראת ושקטה (the earth feared, and subsided) is the same as that of כבד בנשאת (for you bear a heavy burden). The juxtaposition of both noise and silence at the time of Matan Torah points to the tremendous responsibility placed on our shoulders, as mentioned before. If Bnei Yisrael accept this responsibility, they will merit length of days, and the world will endure.

RABBEINU ELIJAHU OF VILNA – THE VILNA GAON



Our Sages have said, “If the Rav is like an angel of G-d, then seek Torah from his mouth. And if not, then do not seek Torah from him.” Rabbi Eliyahu, the Vilna Gaon, was one of those rare figures that all people, from the smallest to the greatest – all those who had the merit of seeing his majestic face and all who heard him speak – considered him like an angel of G-d. It was in this way that he appeared to his contemporaries, and for us he has remained like this up to our days.

Rabbeinu Eliyahu had many things bequeathed to him by birth. He possessed all the abilities and characteristics that belonged to the Tannaim and Amoraim. He became famous for all generations by the name of “the Gaon,” and when we simply say “the Gaon” everyone understands that the reference is to Rabbeinu Eliyahu of Vilna.

The Gra (as he was also known) was born on the first day of Passover 5480 (1720). The people of Vilna recounted that the young Eliyahu was a very beautiful child, a pure soul in a pure body. He was gifted with extraordinary intelligence that had no equal for the centuries that preceded or followed him. From his earliest childhood, at the age of three, he astounded the great men of Vilna by his power of recollection, his absolute mastery of Tanach, and the speed of his comprehension.

One day he was asked, “Where in the Chumash is there a verse that contains eight words that all end with the letter mem?” And the little Eliyahu, who wasn’t even four years old at the time, instantly answered, “It’s the verse in Parsha Vayishlach: ‘Two hundred she-goats and twenty he-goats, two hundred ewes and twenty rams’ [Genesis 32:15].”

Around the age of seven, he gave a discourse at the great synagogue in Vilna that marveled all his listeners.

The Gra studied with a Rav until the age of seven, for after that time nobody was found who could teach him Torah. He then studied alone with great diligence until becoming an expert in all fields of Torah, revealed as well as hidden.

Still very young, his parents married him off to a young girl from the town of Keidan in Lithuania. After getting married, he remained in Keidan, enclosed in his room where he studied Torah day and night in holiness and purity. Even by day he studied by candlelight, his shutters being closed so that the noise from the street wouldn’t bother him. The Gra always said, “The adjective lamdan [scholar] that we apply to a Talmid Chacham is formed in the same way as the word gazlan [thief]. In the same way that we do not call someone a thief because he has the opportunity and knows how to steal (applying it instead only to someone whose occupation is stealing), so too is it impossible to call someone a scholar because he can study. We only apply it to someone whose permanent occupation is study.”

He spoke little, even at home with his family. One day his sister (who he had not seen for years) came to pay a visit. When she entered his room, he greeted her and asked about her family. He then said, “My sister, we will see each other in the World to Come. There is no time here in this world. I have to study Torah.”

While he was still young, he took it upon himself to go into exile, and went roaming about for years in the towns of Poland and Germany. Even though disguised as a poor man, he couldn’t manage to hide his spiritual loftiness and piety from people. Everyone recognized his grandeur, and he became known the world over as a Gaon and Tzaddik.

On returning from his exile he settled in Vilna, where he once again began to diligently study Torah day and night. He didn’t want to become a Rav or Rosh Yeshiva, but instead remained in the shadow of his tent, enveloped in his Tallit and wearing his Tefillin, with words of Torah constantly in his mouth.

The extent of his diligence was indescribable. His son gives us the following account: “For 50 years, my father did not sleep more than half an hour at a time, and not more than two hours during an entire day. So as not to fall asleep during the long winter nights, he studied in a house that was not heated, with his feet immersed in cold water. He never went two yards without Torah and Tefillin, and he never had a useless conversation in his entire life. Before his death, while crying abundantly, he confessed to having sinned in losing four minutes of Torah study.”

His Torah knowledge was phenomenal. He reviewed his entire studies every 30 days, and the whole Torah was permanently engraved on his heart. He knew how many times the name of each Tanna and each Amora appeared in every tractate, and all his books were covered over with notes. His commentaries were published under the title Hagoat HaGra [Notes of the Gra]. He also wrote books on grammar, astronomy and geometry, and he was knowledgeable in medicine and other sciences. Some thinkers who met him were stunned to see someone who was living in the tent of Torah, yet surpassing them nevertheless in all subjects and secular sciences of their specialty.

His genius demonstrated itself not only in study, but also by his good deeds and sterling character. His student Rabbi Israel of Shklov recounts the following story:

It happened one day that the synagogue official who brought the Gaon funds (which the community allotted him every month) took this money for himself. The Gaon didn’t want to cause problems for this man, for he was poor, and so he didn’t reveal anything to anyone. Feeling that no one was aware of what he had done, the man continued to act in the same way. The Gaon didn’t complain about him, and for two years he never told anyone that he himself and his family were suffering from hunger. In no way was it acceptable to the Gaon that he should humiliate a Jew. It was only when this synagogue official fell ill and confessed to his sin on his deathbed that the matter became known.

Because of his Torah and uprightness, everyone simply called him “the pious one”. When the Gaon heard this, he was opposed to it and said, “I am not worthy of this name. I only wish to merit saying that I properly adhere to the Shulchan Aruch.”

The Gaon greatly longed to go to Eretz Israel and establish his Beth Midrash there. Later on in life, he left Vilna and set off for the Holy Land. He traveled as far as Koenigsberg, Germany, where he wrote his famous letter (“the letter of the Gra”) to his mother, wife, and family. In that letter his pure soul is reflected in all its beauty. However, he did not merit entering Eretz Israel. There are several legends and popular stories as to why he returned, but no one knows the real reason. Yet if the Gaon was not able to see the land that he yearned for, his desire was fulfilled after his death. During the six years that followed, many of his thousands of disciples went to Eretz Israel and founded the community of Perushim in Sefat and Jerusalem.

In 5557 (1796), the Gaon fell ill and felt that his days were numbered. On the eve of the last Yom Kippur before his death, he called all his descendants and, crying abundantly (contrary to his normal practice), he blessed them. On the third day of Chol HaMoed Sukkot (Tishri 19, 5558), he asked to be given an etrog and lulav. He then got up, recited the blessing on the lulav, and didn’t let go of it until his death. A few moments before passing away, he took his Tzitzit in his hand and said, “How it is difficult to leave this world of action, where by a mitzvah as simple as this, which costs but a few pennies, one can merit seeing the face of the Shechinah!”



REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

The Traditions of Shavuot

There exist numerous and varied customs regarding the holiday of Shavuot, ones that we will cite and expand upon below.

Decorating the Synagogue and the Home

On Shavuot people usually decorate the synagogue and their homes with greenery and flowers, and they also place trees in synagogue (Rema 494). The Mishnah Berurah (494 al. 10) states that we do this in order to remember that we are judged with regards to the fruit harvest. The Vilna Gaon annulled this custom because it is similar to the customs of non-Jews. However many poskim have written that there is no reason to take this into account, for our custom has a reason behind it and has spread to Jewish communities everywhere (Da'at Torah 494). We must simply be careful not to pluck branches from fruit-bearing trees, for some believe that doing so constitutes a transgression of the verse, "You shall not destroy its trees" (Devarim 20:19). The Ya'avetz described the reason for this custom in the following way: It is done in memory of the giving of the Torah, which took place on a verdant mountain. This is why we use many trees and all kinds of fragrant flowers to rejoice in this great day. The Milin Chadetin states that Moshe was born on Adar 7, and the Torah states: "She hid him for three months" (Shemot 2:2) – until Sivan 6 – at which point "she placed it among the reeds" (v.3), meaning the reeds and greenery that we display in memory of the miracles that were performed for Moshe. The Bnei Issachar states that the customs of the Jewish people must be considered as Torah, and they prepare roses and other greenery on Shavuot in accordance with the following words of the Midrash: "The matter may be compared to the case of a king who had an orchard planted with one row of fig-trees, one of vines, one of pomegranates, and one of apples. He entrusted it to a tenant and went away. Some time later, the king came and looked at the orchard to ascertain what it had yielded. He found it full of thorns and briars, so he brought woodcutters to raze it. He looked closely at the thorns and noticed among them a single, rose-colored flower.

He smelled it and his spirits were calmed. The king said, 'The whole orchard shall be saved because of this flower.' In a similar manner, the whole world was created only for the sake of the Torah" (Vayikra Rabba 28:3).

Studying Torah on the Night of Shavuot

Yesod VeShoresh HaAvodah states: In the Arvit prayer of Shavuot, we recite the Ahavat Olam blessing with great joy because it is on this day that Hashem chose our forefathers and sanctified them by a Torah of truth and righteous laws. Let us therefore rejoice in our G-d, in His Torah and mitzvot, and may we be careful not to eat excessively on that night, that we may recite the Tikkun. Immediately after reciting Birkat Hamazon, we should quickly make our way to the Beit HaMidrash, without losing a single moment in mundane conversation. The Ya'avetz states that those who stay awake on that night should not involve themselves in useless pursuits. There is no place for joking around or having lighthearted conversations on that night, for in such a case it would be better for them – and everyone else – to have slept. The Pele Yoetz states that the Tikkun on the night of Shavuot effects a great repair for the damage caused by a person looking at forbidden things, as well as by what a person damages by a few nights of working and anger, for he was awake to disturb his Creator by his laughing, lightheartedness, and other detrimental things.

Milk Products

The Rema states (494:3) that in certain places people customarily eat milk products on the first day of Shavuot. The reason behind this is for people to take two kinds of food, much like on the night of Passover when we mention both the Passover and Chagigah offerings. Similarly, on Shavuot we eat milk products first and then meat. (See Mishnah Berurah *ibid.*, which explains the remarks of the Rema.)

The Mishnah Berurah gives a second reason for this custom by citing the words of a great Torah figure, who said that when the Children of Israel stood before Mount Sinai, they received the Torah and went back to their dwellings. However upon returning, they did not find anything to eat other than milk products, for it took a great deal of effort to prepare meat. They had to slaughter an animal with a knife that had been checked, the forbidden fat on the animal had to be removed, and the meat had to be salted and cooked in a new vessel, since the vessels they had used up to that point were

now forbidden. This is why they decided to eat milk products.

A third reason for this custom is given in the Kolbo: In certain places people customarily eat milk and honey because the Torah is compared to these things, as it is written: "Honey and milk are under your tongue" (Shir HaShirim 4:11).

A fourth reason is cited by the Magen Avraham: According to the Zohar, for the Children of Israel these seven weeks were like the seven days of a woman's purification. We know that blood is transformed into milk, meaning that it goes from the color of strict justice (red) to the color of mercy (white). Now the customs of our forefathers must be considered as Torah.

Mateh Moshe cites a fifth reason: The Torah alludes to the fact that people ate milk products on Shavuot, as it states: Mincha Chadasha L'Hashem B'Shavuotaychem ("A new meal offering to Hashem in your feast of weeks" – Bamidbar 28:26), the initials of which form the word M'chalav ("from milk").

Sixth reason: When the Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to give the Torah to Israel, the ministering angels wanted to keep it in Heaven. Hashem said to them: When you descended to visit Abraham, you ate milk and meat, as it is written: "He took butter, and milk, and the calf which he had prepared" (Bereshith 18:8). When a child of theirs returns from school and his mother gives him a meat sandwich and some milk, the child replies: Today our rabbi taught us, "You shall not cook a kid in its mother's milk." From here we conclude that by the merit of the warning against mixing meat and milk, Hashem rejected the arguments of the angels. This warning earned us the giving of the Torah, hence we eat milk on Shavuot to demonstrate how careful we are to separate milk from meat.

Seventh reason: The word chalav (milk) has a numerical value of 40, alluding to the Torah that was given in 40 days. The importance of Torah is such that all the good things of the earth are worthless in comparison to it. To demonstrate how much they love Torah, the Children of Israel adopted the practice of eating milk products, which alludes to this idea.

– Sources: Rema 494; Magen Avraham al. 6; Mishnah Berurah *ibid.*;

Beit Halevi, Yitro; Baer Heitev 494; Sefer Nezirut Shimshon;

Kovetz Mivakshei Torah, par. 187; Sefer HaToda'ah.