

# The Cubit

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## These are the Generations of Noah

To every thing there is a season,  
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:  
**To every thing there is a season,  
and a time to every purpose under the heaven:  
... A time to love, and a time to hate;  
a time for war, and a time for peace.  
Ecclesiastes 3 : 1,6**

### From The Editor

B"H

*It didn't seem like a big gap in Cubit issues but I have just realised that it has been over four issues since the last Cubit.*

*So, to put this right here is the latest issue - May / Iyar - enjoy*

*Liz ❖*

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### Baseball Heroes

by Rabbi Paysach Krohn

A story for Shabbos from Ascent of Safed  
[www.ascent.org.il](http://www.ascent.org.il)

At a Chush fund-raising dinner [Chush is a school in Brooklyn that caters to learning-disabled Jewish children], the father of a Chush child delivered a speech that would never be forgotten by all who attended. After extolling the school and its dedicated staff, he cried out, "Where is the perfection in my son Shaya? Everything that G-d does is done with perfection. But my child cannot understand things as other children do. My child cannot remember facts and figures as other children do. Where is G-d's perfection?"

The audience was shocked by the question, pained by the father's anguish, and stilled by his piercing query. "I believe," the father answered, "that when G-d brings a child like this into the world, the perfection that He seeks is in the way people react to this child." He then told the following story about his son Shaya.



Shaya attends Chush throughout the week and a boy's yeshiva on Sundays. One Sunday afternoon, Shaya and

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his father came to the yeshiva as his classmates were playing baseball. The game was in progress and as Shaya and his father made their way towards the ball field, Shaya said, "Do you think you could get me into the game?"

Shaya's father knew his son was not at all athletic, and that most boys would not want him on their team. But he also understood that if his son were to be chosen in, it would give him a comfortable sense of belonging. So he approached one of the boys in the field and asked, "Do you think my Shaya could get into the game?"

The boy looked around for guidance from his teammates. Getting none, he took matters into his own hands and said, "We are losing by six runs and the game is already in the eighth inning. I guess he can be on our team and we'll try to put him up to bat in the ninth inning."

Shaya's father was ecstatic as Shaya smiled broadly. Shaya was told to put on a glove and go out to play short center field.

In the bottom of the eighth inning, Shaya's team scored a few runs but was still behind by three. In the bottom of the ninth inning, Shaya's team scored again - and now with two outs and the bases loaded and the potential winning runs on base, Shaya was scheduled to be up. Would the team actually let Shaya bat at this juncture and give away their chance to win the game? Surprisingly, Shaya was told to take a bat and try to get a hit. Everyone knew that it was all but impossible, for Shaya didn't even know how to hold the bat

properly, let alone hit with it. However as Shaya stepped up to the plate, the pitcher moved in a few steps to lob the ball in softly so Shaya should at least be able to make contact.

The first pitch came in and Shaya swung clumsily and missed. One of Shaya's teammates came up to Shaya and together they held the bat and faced the pitcher waiting for the next pitch. The pitcher took a few more steps forward to toss the ball softly towards Shaya.

As the next pitch came in, Shaya and his teammate swung the bat and together they hit a slow ground ball to the pitcher. The pitcher picked up the soft grounder and could

easily have thrown the ball to the first baseman. Shaya would have been out and that would have ended the game. Instead, the pitcher took the ball and threw it on a high arc to right field, far and wide beyond the first baseman's reach. Everyone started yelling, "Shaya, run to first! Shaya, run to first!"

Never in his life had Shaya run to first. He scampered down the baseline wide eyed and startled. By the time he reached first base, the right fielder had the ball. He could have thrown the ball to the second baseman who would tag out Shaya, who was still running. But the right fielder understood what the pitcher's intentions were, so he threw the ball high and far over the third baseman's head, as everyone yelled, "Shaya, run to second! Shaya, run to second."



Shaya ran towards second base as the runners ahead of him deliriously circled the bases towards home. As Shaya reached second base, the opposing shortstop ran towards him, turned him towards the direction of third base and shouted, "Shaya, run to third!" As Shaya rounded third, the boys from both teams ran behind him screaming, "Shaya, run home! Shaya, run home!"

Shaya ran home, stepped on home plate and all 18 boys lifted him on their shoulders and made him the hero, as he had just hit the "grand slam" and won the game for his team.



"That day," said the father who now had tears rolling down his face, "those eighteen boys reached their level of perfection. They showed that it is not only those who are talented that should be recognized, but also those who have less talent. They too are human beings, they too have feelings and emotions; they too are people, they too want to feel important.

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## ***What support is there for the claim that God spoke to all the Jewish people at the foot of Mount Sinai?***

*by Rabbi Nechemia Coopersmith and Rabbi Moshe Zeldman*

*Aish Spiritual Issues – Philosophy*

Who did God give the Torah to at Mount Sinai? Most people reply, "God gave the Torah to Moses."

And what were the Jewish people doing while Moses was receiving the Torah? "Worshipping the Golden Calf."

Correct answers -- but NOT according to the Bible.

The above answers come from Cecil B. DeMille's classic film, "The Ten Commandments." Amazing the impact one movie can have on the Jewish education of generations of Jews. It's a great film, but DeMille should have read the original.

The version found in the Torah is quite different. The Torah's claim is that the entire people heard God speak at Mount Sinai, experiencing national revelation. God did not just appear to Moses in a private rendezvous; He appeared to everyone, some 3 million people. This claim is mentioned many times in the Torah.

*[Moses told the Israelites]: 'Only beware for yourself and greatly beware for your soul, lest you forget the things that your eyes have beheld. Do not remove this memory from your heart all the days of your life. Teach your children and your children's children about the day that you stood before the Lord your God at Horev [Mount Sinai]...*

*God spoke to you from the midst of the fire, you were hearing the sound of words, but you were not seeing a form, only a sound. He told you of His covenant, instructing you to keep the Ten Commandments, and He inscribed them on two stone tablets.'* (Deut.4:9-13)

*'You have been shown in order to know that God, He is the Supreme Being. There is none besides Him. From heaven he let you hear His voice in order to teach you, and on earth He showed you His great fire, and you heard His words amid the fire.'* (Deut. 4:32-36)

Moses called all of Israel and said to them: 'Hear, O Israel, the decrees and the ordinances that I speak in your ears today -- learn them, and be careful to perform them. The Lord your God sealed a covenant with us at Horev [Mount Sinai]. Not with our forefathers did God seal this covenant, but with us -- we who are here, all of us alive today. Face to face did God speak with you on the mountain from amid the fire.' (Deut. 5:1-4)

The Torah claims that the entire Jewish nation heard God speak at Sinai, an assertion that has been accepted as part of their nation's history for over 3,000 years.

DeMille's mistake is such a big deal because the Jewish claim of national revelation, as opposed to individual revelation, is the central defining event that makes Judaism different than every other religion in the world.

How so?

## **HISTORY AND LEGENDS**

Two types of stories are part of any national heritage.

The first kind is legends. Included in this category is George Washington's admission to chopping down the cherry tree, along with his statement, "I cannot tell a lie." Johnny Appleseed planting apple trees across America with his discarded apple cores is another legend.

Then there is history. For example, George Washington was the first president of the United States. William the Conqueror led the Battle of Hastings in 1066 in which Harold, King of England, was killed. The Jews of Spain were expelled from their country in 1492, the year Christopher Columbus set sail.

What is the difference between legend and history?

A legend is an unverified story. By their very nature legends are unverifiable because they have very few eyewitnesses. Perhaps little George did chop down the cherry tree. We can't know if it happened. This does not mean that the legend is necessarily false, only that it is unverifiable. No one thinks legends are facts, therefore they are not accepted as reliable history.

History, however, is comprised of events we know actually happened. It is reliable because we can determine if the claimed event is true or false through a number of ways. One key to verification is the assertion that large numbers of eyewitnesses observed the specific event.

Why is the number of claimed original witnesses a principal determining factor in making historical accounts reliable? This can be understood through looking at the nature of the following series of claims and weighing their levels of credibility. The nature of the claim itself can often determine its degree of believability.

## **THE BELIEVABILITY GAME**

Gauge the level of credibility of the following scenarios.

Some claims are inherently unverifiable. For example, would you believe me if I told you the following:

### **Scenario #1:**

*"Last week after dinner, I went for a walk through the forest near my house. Suddenly everything was awash in a tremendous light and God appeared to me, designating me as His prophet. He told me to announce this revelation to you at this time."*

Believable?

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In theory this could have happened. It doesn't seem likely, but you don't know I'm lying. Would you choose to believe me? Without any substantiating evidence, why choose to believe me? A foolish move, indeed.

### Scenario #2:

Would you believe me if I told you the following:

*"Last night while I was eating dinner with my family, the room started to suddenly shake and God's booming voice was heard by all of us. He designated me as His prophet and commanded me to announce this revelation."*

Believable?

This could have happened too. If I were to bring in my family to confirm the story it would be more believable than the first story. You certainly don't know if I'm lying.

Would you believe me? Would you fork over \$10,000 dollars if I told you God commanded you to do so?

No way. There is still not enough evidence to trust my claim -- because it is very possible that my family is lying.

### Scenario #3:

There is another type of claim that you can know is false. For example, would you believe me if I told you this:

*"Do you remember what happened 10 minutes ago just as you began reading this article? Remember how the room started shaking, then the ceiling opened up to the skies, and you and I together heard God's booming voice come down and say 'Thou shalt hearken to the voice of Nechemia Coopersmith for he is my prophet.' And then the room went back to normal and you continued reading. You remember that, don't you?"*

Is this believable?

This kind of claim is completely different. The two previous scenarios at least had the possibility of being true. You chose not to accept them because they were unverifiable. However this third scenario is impossible to believe. I'm claiming something happened to you that you know did not happen. Since you didn't experience it, you know I'm lying. I cannot convince you of something that you yourself know didn't happen.

***I cannot convince  
you of something  
that you yourself  
know didn't happen.***

This first type of claim -- that something happened to someone else -- is unverifiable, because you do not know for

certain that the claim is a lie. Therefore it is possible for a person to decide to accept the claim as true if he really wanted to and take that leap of faith.

However, the other type of claim -- that something happened to you -- you know if it is inherently false. People do not

accept patently false assertions, especially those that carry significant consequences.

### SINAI: AN IMPOSSIBLE HOAX

So far we have seen two types of claims -- one is unverifiable and the other is inherently false.

Could the revelation at Sinai have been a brilliant hoax, duping millions of people into believing that God spoke to them?

Let's imagine the scene. Moses comes down the mountain and claims, "We all today heard God speak, all of you heard the God's voice from the fire..."

Assuming Moses is making it up, how would the people respond to his story?

*"Moses! What are you talking about?! Boy, you sure had us going there for awhile. We may have even believed you if you came down and claimed that God appeared to you personally. But now you blew it! Now we know you're lying because you're claiming an event happened to us that we know didn't happen! We did not hear God speak to us from any fire!"*

If the revelation at Sinai did not occur, then Moses is claiming an event everyone immediately knows is an outright lie, since they know that they never heard God speak. It is preposterous to think Moses can get away with a claim that everyone knows is lie.

### REVELATION CLAIMED LATER IN HISTORY

Perhaps a hoax such as this could have been attempted at a later period in history. Perhaps the claim of national revelation did not originate at Sinai, but began, for example, 1,000 years after the event was said to have occurred. Perhaps the leader Ezra, for example, appears on the scene, introducing a book purported to be written by God and given to a people who stood at Sinai a long time ago.

Could someone get away with this kind of hoax? For example, would you believe the following:

*"I want to let you in on a very little-known, but true fact. In 1794 over 200 years ago, from May until August, the entire continent of North America mysteriously sank under the sea. For those four months, the whole continent was submerged and somehow all animal, plant and human life managed to adapt to these bizarre conditions. Then, on August 31, the entire continent suddenly floated up to the surface and life resumed to normal."*

Is there a possibility that I'm telling the truth? Do you know for a fact that it is a lie? After all, it happened so long ago, how do you know it didn't happen? Maybe you learned about in school and just forgot about it.

You know North America did not sink hundreds of years ago for one simple reason: If it did, you would have heard

about it. An event so unique and amazing, witnessed by multitudes of people would have been known, discussed, and passed down, becoming a part of history. The fact that no one has heard of it up until now means you know the story is not true, making it impossible to accept.

***An event of great significance with a large number of eyewitnesses cannot be perpetuated as a hoax.***

An event of great significance with a large number of eyewitnesses cannot be perpetuated as a hoax. If it did not happen, everyone would realise it is false since no one

ever heard about it before. Thus, if such an event was indeed accepted as part of history, the only way to understand its acceptance is that the event actually happened.

## INTRODUCED LATER?

Let's assume for the moment that the revelation at Mount Sinai is really a hoax; God did not write the Torah. How did the revelation at Sinai become accepted for thousands of years as part of our nation's history?

Imagine someone trying to pull off such a hoax. An Ezra figure shows up one day holding a scroll.

*"Hey Ezra - what are you holding there?" "This is the Torah."  
"The Torah? What's that?" "It's an amazing book filled with laws, history and stories. Here, take a look at it." Very nice, Ezra. Where did you get this?" "Open up the book and see what it says. This book was given thousands of years ago to your ancestors. Three million of them stood at Mount Sinai and heard God speak! God appeared to everyone, giving His law and instruction."*

How would you respond to such a claim?

The people give Ezra a quizzical look and say,

*"Wait a second, Ezra. Something is a little fishy here. Why haven't we ever heard of this before? You're describing one of the most momentous events that could ever happen, claiming that it happened to our ancestors - and we never heard about it?"  
"Sure. It was along time ago. Of course you never heard about it."  
"C'mon Ezra! It's impossible that our grandparents or great-grandparents would not have passed down the most significant event in our nation's history to some of the people! How could it be that no one has heard about this up until now?! You're claiming all my ancestors, the entire nation, 3 million people heard God speak and received a set of instructions called the Torah, and none of us have heard about it?! You must be lying."*

If one cannot pull off a hoax with regard to a continent sinking, so too one cannot pull off a hoax to convince an entire people that their ancestors experienced the most unique event in all of human history.

Everyone would know it's a lie.

For thousands of years, Sinai was accepted as central to Jewish history. How else can this be explained?

Given that people will not fall for a hoax they know is a lie, how could national revelation have been not only accepted -- but faithfully followed with great sacrifice by the vast majority of Jews?

The only way a people would accept such a claim is if it really happened. If Sinai did not happen, everyone would know it's a lie and it would never have been accepted. The only way one can ever claim a nation experienced revelation and have it accepted is if it is true.

## SINAI: THE ONLY CLAIM OF NATIONAL REVELATION

Throughout history, tens of thousands of religions have been started by individuals, attempting to convince people that God spoke to him or her. All religions that base themselves on some type of revelation share essentially the same beginning: a holy person goes into solitude, comes back to his people, and announces that he has experienced a personal revelation where God appointed him to be His prophet.

***Would you believe someone who claims God appointed him or her as God's new prophet?***

Would you believe someone who claims to have received a personal communication from God appointing him or

her as God's new prophet?

Maybe He did. Then again, maybe He didn't. One can never know. The claim is inherently unverifiable.

Personal revelation is an extremely weak basis for a religion since one can never know if it is indeed true. Even if the individual claiming personal revelation performs miracles, there is still no verification that he is a genuine prophet. Miracles do not prove anything. All they show -- assuming they are genuine -- is that he has certain powers. It has nothing to do with his claim of prophecy.

Maimonides writes:

*Israel did not believe in Moses, our teacher, on account of the miracles he performed. For when one's faith is based on miracles, doubt remains in the mind that these miracles may have been done through the occult and witchcraft...*

*What then were the grounds of believing him? The revelation on Sinai which we saw with our own eyes, and heard with our own ears, not having to depend on the testimony of others... (Mishna Torah - Foundations of Torah 8:1)*

## A BOLD PREDICTION

There are 15,000 known religions in all of recorded history. Given this inherent weakness, why do all of them base their claim on personal revelation? If someone wanted their religion to be accepted, why wouldn't they present the strongest, most believable claim possible -- i.e. national revelation! It's far more credible. No one has to take a leap of faith and blindly trust

just one person's word. It is qualitatively better to claim that God came to everyone, telling the entire group that so-and-so is His prophet.

Why would God establish His entire relationship with a nation through one man, without any possibility of verification, and still expect this nation to obediently follow an entire system of instructions, based only on blind faith?

Yet, Judaism is the only religion in the annals of history that makes the best of all claims -- that everyone heard God speak. No other religion claims the experience of national revelation. Why?

Furthermore, the author of the Torah predicts that there will never be another claim of national revelation throughout history!

*'You might inquire about times long past, from the day that God created man on earth, and from one end of heaven to the other: Has there ever been anything like this great thing or has anything like it been heard? Has a people ever heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fires as you have heard and survived?' (Deut. 4:32-33)*

Let's consider the option that God did not write the Torah, and its author successfully convinced a group of people to accept a false claim of national revelation. In this book, the author writes a prediction that over the course of history no one will ever make a similar claim. That means if such a claim is ever made at some future time, the prediction will end up being false and his religion is finished.

How could the author include in the book he is passing off as

a hoax the prediction that no other person will ever attempt to perpetuate the same hoax when he just made that exact claim? If he could do it, he can be certain that others will too, especially since it is the best possible claim to make. If you are making up a religion, you do not write something you know you cannot predict and whose outcome you would think is guaranteed to be exactly the opposite.

However, aside from the Jewish claim of Mount Sinai, it is a fact that no other nation has ever claimed such a similar national revelation.

Let's summarize two primary questions:

1. Out of 15,000 known religions in recorded history, why is Judaism the only one that claims national revelation, the best of all claims? Why do all other religions base themselves on the inherently weak assertion of personal revelation?
2. If Judaism's claim is indeed an example of a successful hoax that falsely asserts national revelation, the author just got away with passing off the best possible claim, and others will certainly follow suit. Why then would he predict that no one else will ever make a similar claim, a prediction he knows he cannot foresee, and whose outcome is likely to be the exact opposite?

There is one simple answer to both questions. A national revelation -- as opposed to personal revelation -- is the one lie you cannot get away with. It is one event you cannot fabricate. The only way to make this claim is if it actually happened.

If the claim is true, the people will believe it because they are agreeing to something they already know. Either they personally witnessed it, or their ancestors collectively passed down the account as part of their nation's accepted history.

If the claim is false, it's like trying to convince you that God spoke to you or your parents and somehow you never heard of it. No one would ever accept such a claim.

Therefore no other religion has ever made the best of all claims, because it is the one claim that can only be made if it is true. One cannot pass national revelation off as a hoax.

When inventing a religion, the originator must resort to personal revelation, despite its inherent weakness, since it is a claim that is unverifiable. The originator can hope to find adherents willing to take a leap of faith and accept his or her religion. After all, no one can ever know it is a lie. [Of course, no one can know if it's true either.] This simply cannot work with national revelation since it's the one claim that everyone will know is a lie.

***It is no wonder that all other religions are based on a claim of personal revelation*** Only Judaism can claim national revelation since the Jewish people is the only nation in the history of mankind who ever experienced it.

## SHABBAT & HOLIDAY READINGS FOR MAY

Days start at sundown and end at sundown.

Thus Sat 5<sup>th</sup> XXX would start at sundown on Friday not midnight Friday night / Saturday morning.

Holiday	Date	Torah	Haf Torah
Shabbat	05-May	Levit. 16.1-18.30 Levit. 19.1-20.27	Amos 9.7-15
Shabbat	12-May	Levit. 21.1-24.23	Ezekiel 44.15-31
Shabbat	19-May	Levit. 25.1-26.2 Levit. 26.3-27.34	Jeremiah 16.19. - 17.14
Rosh Hodesh	23-May	Num. 28.1-15	
Shabbat	26-May	Num. 1.1-4.20	Hosea 2.1-22
Shavuot Day 1	28-May	Exo. 19.1-20.23 Num. 28.26-31	Ezekiel 1.1- 28,3.12
Shavuot Day 2		Deut. 15.19-16.17 Num. 28.26-31	Habakkuk 3.1-19

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the other major religions of the world both accept the Jewish revelation at Sinai, including the Five Books of Moses in their Bible, and hold the Sinai revelation as a key component of their religion.

When starting their own religions, why did they build upon the Jewish claim? Why didn't they just deny the revelation ever happened?

The answer is that they knew that if national revelation can never be fabricated; so too, its validity can therefore never be denied.

Now it is understandable how the Author of the Torah can confidently predict that there will never be another claim of national revelation in history.

Because only God knew it would happen only once, as it did -- at Sinai over 3,000 years ago.

Based on a segment of Aish HaTorah's Discovery seminar. ❖

Be aware of the tremendous value of being alive. When you realize the great treasure that lies in every second of life, you will experience the great joy that is inherent in each moment. This awareness will motivate you to utilize each moment to its fullest.

There is nothing greater in the world that can give a person serenity and tranquility than awareness of the Almighty and trust in Him. This awareness is the tried and true method to alleviate all of a person's emotional pain. It will calm the spirits of the brokenhearted. This is the best path to tranquility in the world.

Today, when someone happens to throw you off balance, stop and ask yourself: "What is God trying to tell me?"

(see Rabbi Chaim Zaitchyk - Maayanai Hachaim, vol.3, p.69 & p.175; Rabbi Pliskin's "Consulting the Wise")

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## From Sinai To Mashiach ~ More Than Coincidence

Nothing happens by chance. From the fluttering of a leaf in the wind to the transfer of power from nation to nation, <sup>[1]</sup> every motion in the world is controlled by a unique fiat of the divine will.

This principle applies even with regard to worldly matters; how much more so regarding events directly involving the Torah and its mitzvos.

In this light, it is significant that the sixth of Sivan, the date of the Giving of the Torah, is associated with two other landmarks in Jewish history: the passing of King David, <sup>[2]</sup> and the passing of the Baal Shem Tov, the founder of Chassidism. <sup>[3]</sup>

Concerning the passing of a tzaddik, the Alter Rebbe writes: <sup>[4]</sup> *"All the effort of man in which his soul toiled throughout his life... becomes revealed and radiates downward... at the time of his passing, and... 'brings about salvation in the midst of the earth.'"* <sup>[5]</sup>

The passing of these two luminaries on the date of the Giving of the Torah thus indicates that their lifework is connected with that event. For both King David and the Baal Shem Tov amplified the spiritual content of the Giving of the Torah.

## Bridging the Chasm

The revelation at Sinai marks a turning point in the spiritual history of the world.

Before the Giving of the Torah, there was no possibility for union between the world's material substance and spiritual reality.

With the Giving of the Torah, however, G-d <sup>[6]</sup> *"nullified that original decree and said, 'The lower realms shall ascend to the higher realms and the higher realms shall descend to the lower. And I shall take the initiative.' As it is written, <sup>[7]</sup> 'And G-d descended on Mount Sinai,' and 'To Moshe He said, Ascend to G-d.'"* <sup>[8]</sup>

This process involves two stages:

- a. "And G-d descended" - the manifestation of G-dliness in the world. This stage reached complete expression with the Giving of the Torah and with the revelation of the Divine Presence in the Sanctuary;
- b. "Ascend to G-d" - the refinement of man and his surrounding environment and the transformation of man and his world into vessels for G-dliness. This process began with Moshe's ascent to Mount Sinai and has never ceased.

## David's Achievements

This process of refinement reached a peak at the time of King David and was reflected in two significant achievements.

The first was the consolidation of the monarchy. Although Shaul had served as king of Israel before David, his

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sovereignty was not accepted by all the tribes. <sup>[9]</sup>

Furthermore, Shaul's reign differed fundamentally from that of David.

"Once David was anointed, he acquired the royal crown. From that time on, royalty belongs to him and his... descendants forever." <sup>[10]</sup> This was not the case with Shaul.

David's second great achievement was the building of the Beis HaMikdash. Although the actual structure was built by his son, King Shlomo, <sup>[11]</sup> David prepared its blueprints and building materials. <sup>[12]</sup> Indeed, the Midrash <sup>[13]</sup> refers to the Beis HaMikdash as the "House of David."

## **Homage to a king, and to the King of kings**

The establishment of the monarchy is connected to Israel's endeavor to make this world a vessel for G-dliness.

Relationships such as those between teacher and student or between two friends depend on communication and sharing.

Moreover, because these relationships are confined to the areas where this sharing takes place, they are limited in scope. The relationship between a king and his subjects, by contrast, is all-encompassing, for the existence of the subjects depends completely on the king.

For this reason, the violator of even an insignificant command is considered a rebel deserving of capital punishment. <sup>[14]</sup>

There are two aspects to this stringency:

- a) Because the subject's relationship to his king encompasses the full scope of his existence, even the smallest particulars of the relationship, the smallest possible violation of the king's will, are significant;
- b) Because this relationship reaches to the core of the subject's existence, when the subject obstructs the relationship through his failure to obey, his very existence is threatened.

An earthly monarchy stems from - and serves as an analogy to - our relationship with the King of kings.

The purpose of a Jewish monarchy is to teach the people self-nullification to the king in order to intensify their self-nullification to G-d. <sup>[15]</sup>

The self-nullification of the people to a mortal king should infuse kabbalas ol, "the acceptance of G-d's yoke," into every dimension of their divine service, deepening the intensity of their commitment until it affects their very essence. <sup>[16]</sup>

## **A Commitment to the Torah which Stems from Our Selves**

The effect of the monarchy upon our divine service mirrors

the above motif, "And Moses ascended." The commitment of kabbalas ol, accepting G-d's reign, stems from man himself, for ideally, kingship is invited by the king's subjects, and not imposed upon them. <sup>[17]</sup>

Thus it reflects man's own desire to tie the essence of his being to G-d.

In contrast, the complementary motif, "And G-d descended," the revelation of the Torah from above, introduces a new and external dimension to man's framework of reference: we serve G-d, because He commanded us to do so. <sup>[18]</sup>

## **A Dwelling for G-d in the World**

A similar concept finds expression in the construction of the Beis HaMikdash.

Although the Divine Presence was revealed in the Mishkan (the Sanctuary which accompanied the Jews in the desert) even before the building of the Beis HaMikdash, the Beis HaMikdash was unique in that its actual physical location became a dwelling place for G-d, permanently affecting the nature of the site.

Even after the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, its site remains holy. <sup>[19]</sup>

The revelation of G-dliness in the Sanctuary was a stage in the process in which "G-d descended," the revelation of G-dliness within the world. That revelation did not, however, change the nature of the world itself.

Accordingly, after the Sanctuary was moved to another location, its holiness did not remain in its previous site.

The construction of the Beis HaMikdash, however, demonstrates how the world itself can be transformed into a dwelling place for G-d.

## **The Consummation of the Process**

The ultimate goal of creation is a fusion of the two approaches, that there be both revelation of G-dliness from above and that man transform himself and the environment in which he lives into vessels for G-dliness. This ideal will be realized in the Era of the Redemption: there will be transcendent revelations of G-dliness - but in a world which has been refined. For Mashiach "will perfect the entire world, [motivating all the nations] to serve G-d together." <sup>[20]</sup>

Herein lies the connection of Shavuot to the Baal Shem Tov.

In a celebrated letter, <sup>[21]</sup> the Baal Shem Tov describes the ascent of his soul to the heavenly abode of Mashiach.

"Master," he asked, "when are you coming?" And

Mashiach replied, "When the wellsprings of your teachings spread outward."

Since G-d rewards man "measure for measure," <sup>[22]</sup> we can understand that the spreading of the Baal Shem Tov's teachings will precipitate the coming of Mashiach, because these teachings represent a foretaste of the Era of the Redemption, revealing how every dimension of our worldly existence is in truth permeated by G-dliness.

The coming of Mashiach is connected not only to the Baal Shem Tov, but also to the Giving of the Torah and to King David.

The Giving of the Torah is described as a microcosm of the Era of Redemption. <sup>[23]</sup> And of Moshe Rabbeinu, the lawgiver, <sup>[24]</sup> it is said, "He was the first redeemer, and he will be the final redeemer." <sup>[25]</sup>

The connection between the Redemption and King David is reflected by the fact that Mashiach will be one of his descendants. <sup>[26]</sup>

Indeed, Mashiach is identified with King David to the extent that we pray for his coming with the request, "Speedily cause the scion of David... to flourish." <sup>[27]</sup>

May this daily prayer be fulfilled in the immediate future, and may we witness the ultimate purpose of G-d's intent in giving man the Torah, with the coming of the Redemption.

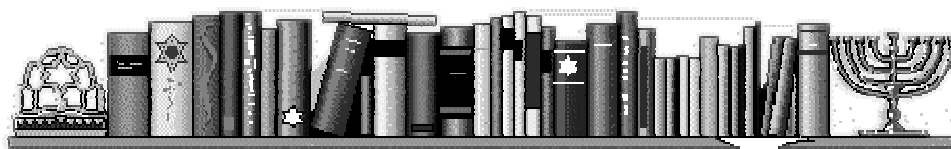
Adapted from Likkutei Sichos, Vol. VIII, Shavuos

#### Footnotes:

- <sup>1</sup> See Likkutei Sichos, Vol. VII, p. 277 ff.
- <sup>2</sup> Jerusalem Talmud, Chagigah 2:3. Birkei Yosef (gloss to Orach Chayim 494:11) explains that this is why it is customary to read the Book of Ruth on Shavuos. The Babylonian Talmud (Shabbos 30a) states that King David died on Shabbos, and according to the current fixed calendar (cf. the first footnote to the previous essay) it is impossible for Shavuos to fall on that day. This apparent contradiction can be resolved: because at the time of King David's passing the calendar was still determined by the testimony of witnesses, in that year Shavuos could have fallen on Shabbos. See Seder HaDoros, sec. 2924.
- <sup>3</sup> Likkutei Dibburim, Vol. I, p. 32a (and in English translation: Vol. I, p. 75). See also Likkutei Sichos, Vol. IV, p. 1031, which likewise explains that the Baal Shem Tov was brought to burial on the seventh of Sivan, the second day of Shavuos. Thus, he shares a connection with both of the dates on which the festival is celebrated

in the Diaspora.

- <sup>4</sup> Tanya, Iggeres HaKodesh, Epistle 28.
- <sup>5</sup> Cf. Tehillim 74:12.
- <sup>6</sup> See Shmos Rabbah 12:3. This concept is explained in the above essay entitled "What Happened at Sinai?"
- <sup>7</sup> Shmos 19:20.
- <sup>8</sup> Ibid. 24:1.
- <sup>9</sup> Bamidbar Rabbah 4:20.
- <sup>10</sup> Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Melachim 1:7.
- <sup>11</sup> Shabbos (loc. cit.) also points to a connection between Shlomo HaMelech and Shavuos, noting that David's life was not prolonged even slightly beyond its appointed span, for "the time for Shlomo's reign had already come," viz., Shavuos.
- <sup>12</sup> I Divrei HaYamim 29:2 ff.
- <sup>13</sup> Tanchuma, Parshas Naso 13.
- <sup>14</sup> Rambam, loc. cit. 3:8.
- <sup>15</sup> Derech Mitzvosecha, Mitzvas Minui Melech.
- <sup>16</sup> The sliding scale of punishment for transgressions of the Torah implies that not all of its commandments affect people in the same manner as do the commandments of a king. Developing a relationship to a king can thus intensify one's observance of the Torah as a whole.
- <sup>17</sup> See Vol. I in the present series, p. 19ff.
- <sup>18</sup> Even when one's commitment to the Torah is all-encompassing, since it stems from G-d's command it does not fully permeate the finite individual. Cf. the analogy of a student mastering a concept as discussed in the above essay entitled "What Happened at Sinai?"
- <sup>19</sup> On the verse (Vayikra 26:31), "I will lay waste to your sanctuaries," our Sages (Megillah 28a) comment, "Even when they are destroyed they remain sanctuaries." See also II Divrei HaYamim 7:15, which states: "I have chosen and sanctified this house, so that My Name will be there for eternity and so that My heart and My eyes will be there forever."
- <sup>20</sup> Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchos Melachim 11:4.
- <sup>21</sup> This letter, addressed by the Baal Shem Tov to his brother-in-law, R. Gershon Kitover, describes the ascent of his soul on Rosh HaShanah, 5507 (1746). The letter was first published in Ben Poras Yosef, and appears in part in Keser Shem Tov, sec. 1.
- <sup>22</sup> Sanhedrin 90a.
- <sup>23</sup> Tanya, ch. 36.
- <sup>24</sup> Cf. Malachi 3:22: "Remember the Torah of Moshe, My servant."
- <sup>25</sup> Shmos Rabbah 2:4.
- <sup>26</sup> Rambam, loc. cit. 11:1.
- <sup>27</sup> Siddur Tehillat HaShem, p. 56.



# Thoughts That Count

*And Pharaoh drew closer (hikriv)...and the Children of Israel cried out (Ex. 14:10)*

The Hebrew word hikriv is a transitive verb, implying that Pharaoh caused others to draw near rather than himself. The Midrash relates that this is because when Pharaoh pursued the fleeing Jews, it caused them to become closer to G-d. In fact, the entire exile in Egypt and the splitting of the Red Sea was only in preparation for the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai - the ultimate expression of closeness and attachment. (Sefer HaMaamarim Shin-Tav)

*I will sing unto the L-rd, for He is most exalted (ga'o ga'a)*  
(Ex. 15:1)

The word for exalted is repeated, indicating a double measure of pride and nobility. The ancient Egyptians were a proud people, as it states (Isaiah 30:7):

*"Thus I have called...Egypt...they are boastfulness."*

Similarly, the horse is an arrogant creature, as the Talmud

relates (Pesachim 113): "Six things are said about the horse: it loves war...and its spirit is haughty." An Egyptian riding upon a horse was arrogance upon arrogance; thus "the horse and his rider He has thrown into the sea." (Chidushei Agadot Maharsha)

*And Pharaoh will say...they are confused in the land, the wilderness has shut them in (Ex. 14:3)*

Chasidism emphasizes the importance of prayer with the proper intentions, a state of mind attained by freeing oneself from the fetters of worldly existence and immersing oneself in the holy words of the prayer book. When a person "gets stuck" on the physical plane ("they are confused in the land"), he is likely to find himself "shut in the wilderness" - that the gates of heaven are closed to his prayers. (In Hebrew, the letters of the word for wilderness, midbar, are the same as the word for speaker, medaber, i.e., the gates of prayer are shut to a person who is distracted by his corporeality.) (Tiferet Shlomo)

*From L'Chaim – Weekly Newsletter*

## HOLIDAYS & FESTIVALS FOR MAY

### PESACH SHEINI

STARTS: MON 07-MAY-01 / 14-IYAR-5761 (1 DAY)

Observed to indicate a one month grace period for those who could not deliver the Paschal lamb at the required time for Passover.

### LAG B'OMER

STARTS: FRI 11-MAY-01 / 18-IYAR-5761 (1 DAY)

The'Omer" was the offering of new barley brought to the Temple on the second day of Passover. Fifty days were counted from the day after the omer offering to determine the date of the Shavuot festival. Lag B'Omer is the 33rd day in the Omer counting period. 'Lag' represents the combined numeric value of two Hebrew letters, 'lamed'=30 and 'gimel'=3.

On this day the plague that had decimated Rabbi Akiva's disciples during the Second Century C.E. came to an end. Because of the tragic events of this period, semi-mourning is observed. On Lag B'Omer, however, marriages are performed and other mourning observances relaxed.

### YOM YERUSHALAYIM

Starts: Mon 21-May-01 / 28-Iyar-5761 (1 Day)

Jerusalem Unification Day commemorates retaking the Old City of Jerusalem from the Jordanians during the Six Day War in 1967.

Shavuot (2) Mon 28 May 2001 6 Sivan 5761

Starts: Mon 28-May-01 / 06-Sivan-5761

Ends: Tue 29-May-01 / 07-Sivan-5761

SHAVUOT (Sivan 6) thers being Passover and Succot) which were marked by pilgrimages to Jerusalem to participate in the special Temple celebrations. It is known as 'The Feast of Weeks' because it falls seven weeks after Passover. It is also called 'The Festival of First Fruits.' Shavuot is a two-day observance (one in Israel). In Jewish tradition it commemorates the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai which took place on this date.

