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**MR CJ LEVOVOITZ – CHAIM YOSEF HALEVI BEN R. REUVEN**

*REFUAH SHELAMAH FOR RABBI GAMLIEL RABINOWITZ – R' GAMLIEL BEN R' LEVI*

IN GRATITUDE FOR ALL THAT RABBI MANSOUR DOES FOR THE KLAL, IN THE COMMUNITY AND WORLDWIDE.

**MIRIAM & JUDAH PERLSTEIN AND FAMILY**



**לעילוי נשמת - Avraham Naftali אברהם שאול בן שולמית ע"ה**



**Never Allow a Mitzva Opportunity to Pass**

**Rabbi Eli Mansour**

Megilat Rut tells the story of the Moavite woman, Rut, who, after the death of her husband, returned to Israel with her Jewish mother-in-law and ultimately married a man named Boaz. Rut begot a son named Oved, who became the grandfather of King David.

Boaz married Rut in fulfillment of the Mitzva known as "Yibum," requiring a relative of a deceased, childless man to marry the widow. Boaz was a relative of Rut's husband, and thus had a Mitzva to marry her after her husband's death. When Rut first approached Boaz to ask that he marry her, he informed Rut that there was a closer relative, a man named Tov, whom he must first consult and offer the right of first refusal. The next day, Boaz spoke to Tov and asked him if he would marry Rut, and Tov declined. That same day, Boaz arranged the reclamation of the property that had belonged to Rut's husband's family, which was required as part of this Mitzva. In addition, there was some controversy surrounding the permissibility of the marriage, given that Rut descended from the nation of Moav. Boaz therefore had to convene a special session of the Sanhedrin in order to determine the Halachic viability of the marriage. Boaz arranged all this in a single day, and that night he married Rut, who conceived from that first union. The Sages tell us

that Boaz, sadly enough, died the next day.

Imagine if Boaz had not exerted himself to make all the necessary arrangements the day before. He would have lost the opportunity to perform this Mitzva, and he would never have become the great-grandfather of King David! Fortunately, Boaz understood the importance of "Zerizut," zeal and alacrity in the performance of Mitzvot. Most people in his situation would not have exerted themselves to complete all the arrangements in a single day. True, the meeting with Tov likely took just a few minutes, but he also had to arrange a major real estate transaction and convene the Sanhedrin. Both these tasks often take weeks if not months to accomplish. But Boaz, in his determination to perform this important Mitzva as swiftly as possible, ensured that his marriage to Rut would not be unnecessarily delayed for even a single moment. Had he not worked so quickly, he would have lost his eternal destiny as the progenitor of the Davidic dynasty.

If a king offered us access to his treasury, even if the offer would extend for several years, we would undoubtedly rush to fill our pockets immediately, without delay. We would be concerned that perhaps the king will change his mind, maybe he will allow somebody else to take all the treasures, or maybe the treasures will somehow be lost. With such a valuable fortune at stake, nothing else would seem to us important enough to take precedence over this opportunity.

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This must be our attitude towards Mitzva observance. A Mitzva is worth a billion dollars, or more. When a Mitzva opportunity comes our way, we must rush to grab it and not let the opportunity slip. The story of Boaz shows us what could happen when one does not pounce on a Mitzva opportunity, how much one stands to lose if he does not act immediately. There is no greater treasure in the world than the performance of a Mitzva, and it therefore behooves us to jump at every opportunity; nothing else can be important enough to take precedence over the immediate fulfillment of a Mitzva. 🏠

## Yes, the Torah is For Us

Rabbi Eli Mansour

The Mishna in Pirkeh Avot (3:14) teaches, “Man is precious, in that he was created in the image [of G-d]... Yisrael are precious, in that they were called children of the Almighty... Yisrael are precious in that they were given a beloved vessel [the Torah]...”

For each of these three statements, the Mishna brings a verse to prove the point being made. The statement that people are created in G-d’s image is supported by the verse, “for He made man in the image of G-d” (Bereshit 9:6). The statement that Am Yisrael are G-d’s children is supported from the verse, “You are children of Hashem your G-d” (Devarim 14:1). And the statement that we have been given a “beloved utensil” is supported with the verse in Mishleh (4:2), “For I have given you good teaching; do not abandon My Torah.”

The Netivot Shalom (Rav Shalom Noach Berezovsky of Slonim, 1911-2000) raised the simple question of why this Mishna is included in Pirkeh Avot, which is a collection of practical ethical and religious teachings. The Mishnayot in Pirkeh Avot give us instructions and guidance for living our lives as Torah Jews. For what purpose are we told in Pirkeh Avot that we are “precious” both because we are human beings and because we are members of Am Yisrael?

The answer, the Netivot Shalom explains, is that this Mishna seeks to bolster our self-esteem, and reassure us that we are “precious” in the eyes of G-d. One of the common obstacles to religious commitment is shame and a lack of self-worth. Many people look at themselves, their behavior and their lives and conclude that G-d has no interest in them, that the sanctity of the Torah has no relevance to them. The Mishna therefore comes along and assures us

that no matter who we are and what we have done, we are “Habib” – “precious,” both because we are human beings endowed with the divine image, and because we, as Jews, are princes, the children of the King of the world.

The Netivot Shalom explains on this basis why the Mishna chose specifically the three verses it cited.

The verse, “for He made man in the image of G-d” actually appears in the context of the prohibition of murder. G-d warns that one who murders another person will himself be killed, because every person is endowed with the image of G-d. The Mishna chose this verse, the Netivot Shalom explains, because this verse makes it absolutely clear that every human being, for all time, has the image of G-d within him, and it can never be lost. If a person murders somebody else, he is liable to the death penalty regardless of who the victim was – because all people have a sacred spark within their souls, no matter what mistakes they have made.

The second verse cited by the Mishna – “You are children of Hashem your G-d” – introduces the prohibition against self-mutilation in response to personal tragedy (“Lo Titgodedu”). The Mishna could have cited an earlier verse to prove that Am Yisrael are Hashem’s children – G-d’s message to Pharaoh, “Yisrael is My firstborn son” (Shemot 4:22). It didn’t cite that verse, the Netivot Shalom writes, because one might have then assumed that only in those times, when G-d brought Beneh Yisrael from Egypt, we had the status of His beloved children. And so the Mishna cited the verse, “You are children of Hashem your G-d” which introduces a command which is eternally binding. This verse demonstrates that for all time, and under all circumstances, we are the Almighty’s beloved children.

Finally, the Mishna proves that we are precious by virtue of our having been given the priceless gift of the Torah, citing the verse, “For I have given you good teaching; do not abandon My Torah.” This verse speaks to each and every person, in each and every era, assuring him that the Torah has been given to him, it is relevant to him, and it is binding upon him.

Each morning, we recite a special Beracha – “Birkat Ha’Torah” – thanking Hashem for giving us the Torah. This Beracha concludes, “Baruch Ata Hashem Noten He’Torah” – “Blessed are You, Hashem, who gives the Torah.” This Beracha is formulated in the present tense – “who gives the Torah” – because the Torah is given to us anew, each

and every day, no matter what situation we are in, and no matter what spiritual level we are on.

This is something to reflect upon as we prepare for Shabuot, when we celebrate Matan Torah. It is a mistake to think that Matan Torah was relevant only to previous generations, when Jews lived on a higher level, when they did not have the distractions and temptations that we face in our time. This is incorrect. We must remind ourselves that the Torah is for us – yes, even us. Let us not belittle ourselves. As the Mishna teaches us, we are G-d's beloved children, eternally. He wants us to serve Him and to build a relationship with Him to the best of our ability, no matter what we have done in the past.

The Gemara relates that when the Romans entered the Bet Ha'mikdash, just before they set the building ablaze, they entered the Kodosh Ha'kodashim – the most sacred chamber, where the Aron was kept – and they saw the two Kerubim (cherubs) on top of the Aron embracing one another. This symbolized G-d's embracing the Jewish People. Even at that moment, when G-d was angry at His nation and destroyed the Mikdash, He showed us how much He loves us. G-d's love for us is eternal and unconditional, and so our commitment to Torah must be eternal and unconditional.

Yes, the Torah is for us, on whatever level we are on, because no matter what, Hashem wants us to have this most precious of all gifts – the sacred Torah. 🇮🇱



## Torah Is Attainable

Rabbi David Sutton

This class is dedicated for the Refuah Shelemah of Avraham Ben Adel

Today we are going to share a Bitachon-related thought on the holiday of Shavuot.

The Gemarah tells us, in Masechet Shabbat 88a, that

בְּשָׁעָה שֶׁהַקֹּדֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל "נִעְשָׂה" ל"נִשְׁמָע"

When the Jewish people said the words Na'Aseh we will do, And then

V'Nishmah, and we will hear (or understand), a heavenly echo when out and said, מִי גִלָּה לְבָנָי רַחֵם זָה - "Who revealed to my children, this secret?"

גְּבִרַי כַח עֲשֵׂי דְבָרוֹ, as it says, בְּרָכּוֹ ה' מִלְּאֲכָוִי

Blessed to Hashem are these angels, these strong ones, that do His will.

וְלִשְׁמָעֵן בְּקוֹל דְּבָרוֹ--And then they hear

First, they do, then they hear. What's the concept of doing first, then hearing?

The Gemarah tells a story after this. Ravah was once learning so intensely, while sitting in a certain way, that it caused him to bleed. There was a heretic watching him who said,

"You people are Paziz/impetuous. Your mouth goes before your ears. Look how you're acting- you're not thinking. You didn't see if you could accept (the Torah) or not?"

Ravah said, "We are simple in our faith." Rashi says that this means: We go with a simple heart, like those that act out of love. We relied on G-d that He wouldn't load us with some thing that we can't handle."

The fundamental of Na'Aseh V'Nishmah means "I will do and then I'll listen,"

Because I know You won't give me anything I can't handle. I have faith in You. I trust You."

That is the whole fundamental that got us the Torah. Na'Aseh V'Nishmah. That's what made everything happen.

It's interesting that the Midrash quotes the same pasuk, about the "strong ones that first do, then ask" regarding people that keep Shemitah, because people that keep Shemitah are doing the same thing. They keep the laws of Shemittah, which means they accept before they see how it's going to work out, before they know how they'll have food. This is the secret to success in our religion: To know that Hashem will take care. You have taken that plunge and accept that there is nothing He will give you that you can't handle, because He loves you. That's why G-d uses the words, "Who revealed the secret to My children?" The Jewish people are G-d's children. It says that the relationship of the Torah is a father-son relationship. That why we say השיבנו אבינו לתורתך-

Return me, my Father, to Your Torah.

A father has an obligation to teach his son Torah. And G-d is a loving father.

It says that when G-d revealed Himself at Har Sinai, He said...אנכי ה' אלוהיך...

I am Hashem your G-d, that took you out of Egypt...

Why include the part about taking us out of Egypt?

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The Midrash says that when G-d took them out, they saw Him as a warrior. G-d was fighting the Egyptians. But now at Matan Torah they saw a loving, soft, Father figure, teaching them Torah. They realized this was the same G-d that took them out of Egypt. G-d expresses Himself differently in different situations. There is one G-d, but we receive Him and understand Him differently based on the situation.

Whenever it comes to learning Torah, He is a loving, endearing, Father teaching us. Therefore, when Hashem gives us the Torah, it's never too much. We have to know that every year, at Shavuot time, we reaccept the Torah. This doesn't just mean keeping the laws of the Torah. It means learning Torah, and understanding that it's not too big for us to handle. For example, take the people that finished the daf yomi this year; they finished Shas! They did it little by little, but you can do it. People take on projects that are hard to believe, but they finish them. Just recently, a group of young men gathered together for the Refuah Shelema of a friend of theirs, Yaakov Ben Chava Adina, who was in a car accident, he should have a Refuah Shelema. In a matter of weeks they finished the whole Shas for him! It was a humongous undertaking. But we can do more than we think we can do.

Every year, we have to recommit ourselves to learning.

Think big. Dream of more. Everyone, on their level, can do a little bit more when it comes to learning. There are many different platforms for learning, as we have seen, due to the pandemic. There are Zoom classes, Torahminds.... there are all different types of ways to learn.

When we come to Shavuot, we must accept something upon ourselves, even if we don't know how we will do it. If it's within our reach, Hashem will help us finish it. This is the Emunah and Bitachon that is necessary when it comes to Kabbalat HaTorah. This is important. We say it every single day in our prayers. Before Keriyat Shema, we say Ahavat Olam, in which we say something interesting, we say -בגדול- Grant us Torah for Your great name, -בגדול- Because of our fathers that relied on You.

We mention bitachon in our beracha, because that's one of the keys to success in our learning: To rely on Hashem .

Again we say, בגדול... בטחוננו. -We relied on You

We mention Bitachon twice in the beracha of Torah, because we rely on Hashem that He's not going to give us a project that we can't fulfill.

Have a great day and a wonderful preparation for Hag Shavuot. 🇲🇵



## The Truth of Torah

Rabbi David Ashear

On Shavuot, Hashem came down on Har Sinai and revealed Himself in front of some three million people. On that day, the Torah says it was absolutely clear that Hashem is the only G-d, **אין עוד**-and there is nothing else besides Him. Hashem gave us the Torah, which undeniably shows us His authorship and existence. For over three thousand years, all of mankind has dissected the Torah, scrutinized it, debated it, and it still remains absolutely perfect.

It says in Devarim (4:32): "Go and search history, from the beginning of creation until today, and you will find that no other nation ever claimed to hear G-d speaking to them together, like Hashem spoke to us on Har Sinai." There are over four thousand religions in the world, and they all want you to believe that theirs is correct. The first claim that any religion should make to convince people of its authenticity is that G-d spoke to their nation-not the Jews. Yet no religion ever made such a claim. How could the Torah make such a bold statement, predicting the future and putting its veracity at stake? It could only be because Hashem, its author, has the past present and future in front of Him at all times. He knows what is, what was and what will be.

The Pasuk says in Shemot (34:23) that all males have an obligation three times a year, on the **שלוש רגלים**-the festivals, to travel to Jerusalem and bring offerings in the Bet Hamikdash. They all had to pick up and leave their homes in Israel. Imagine the scene-thousands of people leaving their houses and lands unprotected. Israel is surrounded by enemies who are waiting for opportunities to take over. The fact that the Jews were traveling to Jerusalem was public knowledge openly written in the Torah. Was this not a dangerous Mitzva? Yet the Torah in the next Pasuk guarantees: "ולא יחמוד איש את ארצך"-Nobody will ever covet our land when we go to do this Mitzva three times a year. No enemy will ever take advantage of this vulnerability. How could the Torah be so bold to make such a prediction? Again, it's clear that Hashem is the author, and only He can make that guarantee.

In the beginning of Parashat Behar, all the landowners are commanded to take an entire year off from working their land. This Mitzva seems, at face value, outrageous. For generations, people's main source of income and sustenance came from agriculture. If the Torah was written by a human, Heaven forbid, who would ever dream of commanding an entire society to take off a year of work and not have food. It doesn't make sense. Furthermore, the Torah says, "If you are wondering how are you going to eat

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when you take off a year, you will discover that in the sixth year, your land will produce enough for three years.” Who would make such a guarantee? It is so easy to be proven wrong. Just count six years and see. If the blessing doesn’t come, everything would be false. Yet, thousands of years later, we are still keeping Shemitah, and our belief in Hashem is only getting stronger.

There are many more proofs in the Torah itself, and we could go on and on. However, there is no need. The Torah is אמֶן-true. Hashem is here with us. We are so fortunate to be the ones chosen to uphold the Torah, fulfill its Mitzvot and have the Zechut to live for eternity together with Hashem in the World to Come. 🇲🇵



## Everlasting Meetings!

Rabbi Eliezer Zeytounch

Rabbi Yochanan the Sandal-Maker would say: Every gathering that is for the sake of Heaven, will endure; that is not for the sake of Heaven, will not endure.

There is a seemingly superfluous phrase in our Mishna. The Mishna teaches that any gathering that is for the sake of Heaven will surely endure. This seems to allude to the fact that any assembly that is not for the sake of Heaven will surely not endure. Why, then, does the Mishna need to state this fact explicitly? There are many times that the Torah makes a deduction from the phraseology of the Mishna. There are times where these deductions contradict one another. We see this prevalence in this Mishna as well.

The Mishna first teaches that if a gathering is for the sake of Heaven it will endure. This guarantee, however, would not necessarily mean that every other assembly will not endure. The Mishna therefore needed to teach that an assembly that is not for the sake of Heaven will falter and dissipate. There are no exceptions.

In life, we often are presented with opportunities that we may either join or avoid. These decisions are not always so clear cut. The Sages teach that often the Yesser Hara poses as the Yesser Hatov, camouflaging a corrupt endeavor as virtuous. How does one distinguish a good project from an evil one? If the project endures, that is an infallible indicator that the project is noble. There is no middle ground. The sure fired test, one can easily depict and decide!

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The above insight begs explanation. Why is it that if a

gathering is the counsel of the inclination that it won’t last long?

It is possible that the nature of a project imitates the nature of the one who started the endeavor. It is possible that here too a not virtuous project, started by the Evil Inclination, takes the character of the one who initiated it.

In Parashat Vayishlah Yaakov was battling the Yesser Hara. Upon requesting release from Yaakov Avinu, the Yesser Hara is hasting to return to the Heavens. Yaakov Avinu asks the inclination for his name. The Yesser answers, “Why do you ask for my name?” The Or Hahayim teaches that the angel explained that there is no need to know his name since it is not permanent as. Always changes. The Gemara on Berachot (7b) teaches that a name is a reflection of a person’s potential and qualities. The Mefarshim explain that since the Yesser’s mission constantly changes his name does as well. The Yesser himself does not endure, as his mission consistently changes.

Therefore it would only stand to reason that his plans and strategies do not have longevity either. Since the particular inclination doesn’t have endurance, his project too are short lived! 🇲🇵

## Money and Shalom Bayit

Rabbi Max Anteby

Money management plays a pivotal role in shalom bayit. Following are a few fundamental attitudes and habits that have to be in place in order to keep money from becoming a source of tension or strife in the home especially during these unusual times.

In most couples, there is usually one person who is better at financial management and will naturally gravitate towards handling most of the family’s financial transactions, such as banking, bill-paying, bookkeeping, etc. The division of a married couple’s financial tasks can be done in any number of ways, and it is up to every couple to find the arrangement that works best for them.

Regardless of the way they divide these duties, however, it is critical that both husband and wife be aware of what is going on with their finances and involved in financial decisions.

As a rule, financial information should never be concealed from a spouse. Whether the goal is to avoid criticism over a purchase – “I don’t want my husband to

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be upset that I spent so much money” – or to protect a spouse from financial worries – “I don’t want my wife to know how little money we have in the bank” – keeping secrets erodes the trust that forms the foundation for a healthy relationship.

Lack of awareness on the part of one spouse is very often the reason for, or at least a contributing factor to, unhealthy financial behavior. This can happen either because the person is not involved in the family finances – intentionally or unintentionally – or because the person chooses to ignore financial realities.

We are frequently quick to justify our own expenditures – which we consider necessary and important – and just as quick to condemn our spouse’s expenditures, whose necessity and importance we don’t always appreciate. That’s when it becomes necessary to work on improving communication and learning to understand and respect the other person’s needs and desires.

People feel stifled and controlled when they have to give a reckoning to their spouse for every penny they spend or obtain permission for every minor purchase. Therefore, it is best if both husband and wife have the freedom to spend a certain amount of money, within reasonable limits, without having to inform or consult with the other. Each couple can decide for themselves what constitutes “reasonable limits,” taking into consideration their budget, their lifestyle, and their personalities. In some families, there is an official “shalom bayit fund” for this purpose. In other families, there is an unspoken understanding that it’s fine for husband and wife to spend small amounts of money at their discretion. Which method is better? Whichever works for you.

Beyond these small amounts of money, however, both spouses have to be aware of, and agreeable to, the way their money is managed. This means that even if only one spouse is actually managing the money, the other still has to be involved in the decision-making process.

A spouse who has a serious problem with money – such as compulsive overspending, a gambling addiction, or extreme miserliness, chas v’shalom – may need to be excluded completely from financial decisions and management. But if a spouse simply has poor financial management skills or tends to spend money in a way that is inconsistent with the family’s financial abilities, it is all

the more reason that they be aware of the family’s finances and be part of the decision making process.

It is inevitable that spouses will have differences of opinion with regard to how money should be spent. But if the lines of communication are open, then both spouses should be able to express their feelings and preferences and have those feelings and preferences understood and respected. In an atmosphere of understanding and respect, it should be possible to reach financial decisions that are mutually acceptable.

There will always be ups and downs, but if you are working as a team, you will be able to weather the difficult moments much more easily. 🏠



## Halacha:

Rabbi Eli Mansour

Giving Charity Before Shabuot;  
Learning on Shabuot Night

Rav Haim Palachi (Turkey, 1788-1869), amid his discussion of the month of Sivan in his Mo’ed Le’chol Hai (listen to audio recording for precise citation), writes that it is proper to allocate money for charity on Ereb Shabuot. He says that one should designate 91 coins for charity, and then add 13 additional coins, one coin at a time, for a total of 104 (twice the numerical value of the word “Ben”). The money should then be given to a worthy, needy Torah scholar. Rav Haim Palachi writes that through this practice one rectifies the sin of Adam Ha’rishon, the sin of the golden calf, and sins involving the Berit Mila, and also brings children to those who are childless and brings the redemption closer. (Those who wish to observe this practice can bring me a bag of coins, such as quarters, and appoint me their agent to distribute the money to needy Torah scholars before Shabuot.)

In discussing the customs of Shabuot, Rav Haim Palachi writes that if someone remains awake throughout the night of Shabuot, then his Mazal (fortune) will likewise never “sleep” throughout the year, and he is guaranteed to live throughout the year. He also is rewarded with sons who are Talmideh Hachamim. Additionally, Rav Haim Palachi writes, this merit atones for sins involving viewing inappropriate sights. He cites the comments of the Hida (Rav Haim Yosef David Azulai, 1724-1807) in his work

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Simhat Ha'regel that many things which happen to a person over the course of the year are the result of his conduct on the night of Shabuot. Accordingly, he writes, one must avoid speaking about mundane matters on this night, and even when he needs to interrupt his learning for some important matter, he should ensure to speak in Lashon Ha'kodesh. He adds that the Rabbi bears the responsibility of warning his congregants against wasting time with idle chatter, frivolity and the like, and that if one wastes time on Shabuot night, he should preferably go to sleep.

Rav Haim Palachi further writes that if one feels he will be unable to pray with Kavana (concentration) in the morning if he remains awake all night, he should take a nap during the night. Despite the immense benefits of remaining awake throughout the night, it is far more important to ensure to pray properly in the morning.

Summary: There is a custom to set aside 104 coins for charity before Shabuot, and donate them to a needy Torah scholar. The practice of remaining awake throughout the night of Shabuot is very significant and valuable, but one must ensure not to waste any time throughout the night, and to devote himself exclusively to Torah study. If one feels he will be unable to pray with concentration in the morning if he remains awake all night, he should take a nap to ensure that he prays properly. 📖

## Shavuot- Saying Shehakol Just Once While Staying Up All Night, Birkat HaTorah, Netilat Yadayim In The Morning

Rabbi Eli Mansour

As we have discussed in a previous Daily Halacha, there is a Minhag to stay up the entire night of Shavuot and study Torah. I just want to review some Halachot that is applicable to that night.

The custom is that we drink beverages like coffee and tea throughout the night. So the question is, do you make a Beracha on the drinks again if you have a Hefsek (gap/interruption) in between. For example, you have coffee at

about 1:00 AM and then an hour later and you have more coffee. In such a case, do you have to make another Shehakol?

There is a Machloket on this question between Chacham Ben Tzion and Chacham Ovadia Yoseph. Chacham Ben Tzion held that when you drink the first cup and you make a Shehakol, you should have Kavanah (concentration) that you do not want to exempt any other cups that you are going to have later on in the night. So therefore, according to Chacham Ben Tzion, you would have to say another Beracha an hour later when having the second cup. Chacham Ovadia argues on this and says from a Rabbi called Al Fandri, that you should have Kavanah on the first cup that the Beracha you recited is going to cover all the cups of the night. Even if you don't drink for 72 minutes, but that Shehakol will cover you throughout the whole night.

That is Halacha Lema'ase. So again, on the night of Shavuot, one should have Kavanah when he is drinking the first cup, that his Shehakol will cover him for all the drinking for the rest of the night even though there is going to be a big Hefsek (gap) between drinking. The Halacha, it is a proper way not to make extra Berachot, to make one with Kavanah, according to the Rabbi Chacham Ovadia based on the Al Fandri.

The next Halacha that we mention about the night of Shavuot is of our Minhag to make Birkat HaTorah the following morning. Ashkenazim that are Machmir do not make Birkat HaTorah because they didn't sleep. But the Halacha, Sephardim do make Birkat HaTorah once it reaches Alot Hashachar, once it reaches morning at dawn.

Next we discuss Netilat Yadayim. Our custom is to make Netilat Yadayim without a Beracha. It's based on Maran who says that if you stay up all night, it then becomes questionable if you have to make Netilat Yadayim or not, so you make it without a Beracha.

If someone goes to the bathroom he makes Asher Yatzar like any time.

So let's review the Halachot that we mentioned today. Regarding the Beracha on drinks that are consumed throughout the night, you should have Kavanah on the Beracha on the first drink to cover you for the rest of the

night. Regarding Birkat HaTorah, it's our custom to make it at Alot Hashachar. Regarding Netilat Yadayim, we make Netilat Yadayim without a Beracha. 🇮🇱



## Decorating Homes and Synagogues With Flowers on Shabuot

Rabbi Eli Mansour

It is customary to adorn our homes and synagogues on Shabuot with flowers and greenery. This custom is recorded by the Rama (Rabbi Moshe Isserles of Cracow, 1525-1572) in his discussion of the laws of Shabot (Orah Haim 494:3). More so than on other holidays, it is appropriate on Shabuot to decorate the homes and synagogues with flowers and other vegetation, in order to commemorate Matan Torah. At the time of the Revelation at Sinai, G-d warned the people not to allow their cattle to graze on the mountain ("Gam Ha'son Ve'ha'bakar Al Yir'u El Mul Ha'har Ha'hu" – Shemot 34:3), indicating that it was full of pasture. Mount Sinai is in the desert, where vegetation does not grow, but in honor of the event of Matan Torah G-d had flowers and grass grow on the mountain, and we commemorate this adorning of Mount Sinai by adorning our homes and synagogues on Shabuot.

The Ben Ish Hai (Rav Yosef Haim of Baghdad, 1833-1909) adds a deeper interpretation of this custom based on Kabbalistic teachings. He explains that Torah study has the effect of "Mituk Ha'dinim" – "sweetening" harsh judgments issued against a person. Even if G-d had issued a decree, Heaven forbid, against somebody, that decree can be annulled through the study of Torah. The divine Name associated with strict judgment is "Elokim," whereas the Name associated with "Mituk Ha'dinim" is "Havaya" (Y-H-V-H). When we spell out the names of the letters of these Names (e.g. the Alef of "Elokim" is spelled out, "Alef, Lamed, Peh"), the combined numerical value of the letters of "Elokim" is 300, and the combined numerical value of the letters of "Havaya" is 72. The letter representing the number 300 is "Seen," and the number 72 is represented by the letters "Ayin" (70) and "Bet" (2). The two letters of "Havaya," the Ben Ish Hai explains, surround the letter of "Elokim" to neutralize its effect, such that the letter "Seen" is placed in between the "Ayin" and "Bet." When the three letters are arranged in this fashion, they spell the word "Eseb" – "grass." Thus, we put out vegetation on Shabuot

to symbolize the profound spiritual effect of our Torah study, how it has the capacity to annul harsh judgments. As we celebrate the event of Matan Torah, we remind ourselves of how valuable and precious Torah learning is, as alluded to in the "Eseb" with which we decorate the synagogue and home.

Summary: It is customary to decorate homes and synagogues with vegetation on Shabuot to commemorate the vegetation that adorned Mount Sinai when the Torah was given. On a Kabbalistic level, vegetation alludes to the power of Torah study to protect us from harsh decrees. 🇮🇱



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