

The Torah Does not Refer to Shavuos as “Zman Matan Toraseinu” We Determine Its Status as a Festival

In honor of Chag HaShavuos, “zman matan Toraseinu”—“the time of the giving of our Torah”—it is only fitting that we examine a tremendous question that concerned the Rishonim and Acharonim. In Torah she'b'chsav, we find three names for Chag HaShavuos. In parshas Mishpatim it is referred to as “Chag HaKatzir” (Shemos 23, 16): “**וּחַג הַקְצִיר בִּיכּוּרֵי מַעֲשֵׂיךָ אֲשֶׁר תִּזְרַע**”—**and the “Festival of the Harvest” of the first fruits of your labors that you sow in the field.**

In parshas Pinchas, it is referred to as “Yom HaBikkurim” (Bamidbar 28, 26): “**וּבְיוֹם הַבִּיכּוּרִים בְּהַקְרִיבְכֶם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה לַה'**”—**“on the “day of the first fruits,” when you offer a new meal-offering to Hashem on your “Festival of Weeks.”** Rashi explains that Shavuos is called “the first fruits of the wheat harvest,” to commemorate the “Two Breads” which are the first of the meal-offerings of wheat.

In parshas Re'eh, it is referred to as “Chag HaShavuos” (Devarim 16, 10): “**וַעֲשִׂיתָ חַג שָׁבוּעוֹת לַה' אֶלְקֶיךָ**”—**and you shall observe the festival of Shavuos for Hashem, your G-d.**

The commentaries are perplexed by the fact that there is no mention in the Torah of the fact that Shavuos is “zman matan Toraseinu”—the celebration of the giving of our Torah. We learn this fact from the Gemara (Pesachim 68b): “**הַכֹּל מוֹדִים בְּעֶצְרַת דְּבַעֲיָנָא**”—**“all authorities concede that on Atzeres, we also require the criterion of “for you” (“lechem”); what is the reason? It is the day on which the Torah was given.** Rashi clarifies the Gemara’s meaning: “**דְּבַעֲיָנָא נְמִי לְכֶם, שִׂישְׂמַח בּוֹ בְּמֵאֵכֶל וּמִשְׂתֵּה, לְהֵרָאוֹת שְׂנוֹחַ וּמְקוּבֵל יוֹם זֶה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁנִיתָנָה תוֹרָה בּוֹ**”—it is essential to celebrate on this festival with food and drink—to demonstrate that Yisrael are content and pleased that the Torah was given to us on this day. [Note: In the Talmud, Shavuos is referred to as “Atzeres.”]

Hence, our blessed sages instituted the following formula in the prayers and the kiddush recited on this festival: “**חַג הַשָּׁבוּעוֹת**”

“**הַזֶּה זְמַן מַתַּן תּוֹרַתְנוּ**”—**this festival of Shavuos, “the time of the giving of our Torah.”** Indeed, it is mystifying! Why did HKB”H, who gave us the Torah, choose three distinct appellations for this festival—“Chag HaKatzir,” “Yom HaBikkurim” and “Chag HaShavuos”—yet, He chose to omit any mention of the fact that it is also “zman matan Toraseinu”—the day associated with receiving the Torah--for whose sake HKB”H created the world?

The Insightful Explanation of the Maharal of Prague

Let us begin our enchanting journey by introducing the enlightening words of Yisrael’s great luminary, the Maharal of Prague. He responds to this question adamantly: “**אֵין זֶה שְׂאֵלָה**”—**“this is not even a question!** Here is what he writes in Tiferes Yisrael (end of chapter 27):

“**אֲמַנָּם מַה שְּׁשׂוֹאֵלִים בְּנֵי אָדָם, כִּי אִם חַג הַשָּׁבוּעוֹת הוּא בְּשִׁבִיל שְׁנַתָּן לָנוּ הַתּוֹרָה, לְמַה כָּתַב וּבְיוֹם הַבִּיכּוּרִים בְּהַקְרִיבְכֶם מִנְחָה, וְלֹא כָּתַב בְּיוֹם מַתַּן תּוֹרָה, מֵאַחַר שֶׁיִּקְרָא הַיּוֹם טוֹב הוּא בְּשִׁבִיל הַתּוֹרָה, כְּמוֹ שֶׁאֵנוֹ אוֹמְרִים זְמַן מַתַּן תּוֹרַתְנוּ. אֵין זֶה שְׂאֵלָה כָּלֵל, כִּי הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ נָתַן לְמוֹעֵדִים זְמַן אֲשֶׁר הֵם שְׂמַחַת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר זָכוּ אֵל הַטּוֹב, כְּמוֹ שֶׁאֲמַר בְּחַג הַמִּצְוֹת שֶׁבּוֹ יֵצְאוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִבֵּית עַבְדִּים, וְסוּכּוֹת (וִיקְרָא כֹּג-מִג) כִּי בְּסוּכּוֹת הוֹשַׁבְתִּי אֶתְכֶם, וּבְיוֹם הַכַּפּוּרִים (וִיקְרָא טִז-ל) כִּי בְיוֹם הַזֶּה יִכַּפֵּר עֲלֵיכֶם.**

וּבְחַג הַשָּׁבוּעוֹת הַתּוֹרָה שְׁנִיתָנָה בּוֹ - נִתְּנָה מִהַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ, וְהִיא לְעוֹל עַל יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְהִיא אוֹמוֹת הָעוֹלָם לֹא הִיוּ רוֹצִים לְקַבֵּל הַתּוֹרָה, וְאֵף כִּי אֵנוֹ אוֹמְרִים זְמַן מַתַּן תּוֹרַתְנוּ, הִינּוּ מִשּׁוֹם שֶׁקִּיבְּלָנוּ הַתּוֹרָה בְּעֶצְמָנוּ וְאֲמַרְנוּ נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמַע, אֲבָל מִכָּל מְקוֹם הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ הַנּוֹתֵן הַתּוֹרָה, הִיא כּוֹפֶה הָהָר עֲלֵיהֶם שִׁיקְבְּלוּ הַתּוֹרָה בְּעַל כְּרַחֵם מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהִיא עוֹל עֲלֵיהֶם, וְאֵיךְ יִכְתּוֹב בַּתּוֹרָה זְמַן מַתַּן תּוֹרָה שְׁנַתָּן הַשֵּׁם יִתְבָּרַךְ בְּגִזְרַתּוֹ עַל הָאָדָם.”

People do, in fact, ask why Shavuos is described in terms of “bikkurim,” if it is truly a celebration of the fact that Hashem gave us the Torah. Why is this not mentioned in the Torah, seeing as this is the main focus of this festival? This is not a question at all! The Almighty named the festivals in terms of the benefits Yisrael reap and celebrate on each respective day—the freedom and exodus on Pesach, the protection of the Succot on Succot and the atonement on Yom HaKippurim.

On Shavuos, however, the Torah was given by the Almighty, and it is actually a burden placed upon Yisrael. The other nations were not interested in receiving the Torah. Although we refer to it as “the time of the giving of our Torah”—because we willingly accepted it with the proclamation “na’aseh v’nishma”—nevertheless, it was necessary for the Almighty to hold the mountain threateningly above our heads to force us to accept the Torah; for it is a burden upon us. Thus, He chose not to record this appellation in the Torah, since it is a form of a sentence issued against mankind.

Let us take the liberty to expand somewhat upon this incredible insight. We find the following elucidation of the passuk (Shemos 19, 17) concerning Matan Torah in the Gemara (Pesachim 88a): **“ויתיצבו בתחתית ההר, אמר רבי אבדימי בר חמא בר חסא, מלמד שכפה הקב”ה עליהם את ההר כגיגית ואמר להם, אם אתם מקבלים התורה—מוטב, ואם לאו שם תהא קבורתכם”**—the passuk states: **“they stood at the foot of the mountain.” Rav Avdimi bar Chama bar Chasa said: This teaches that HKB”H held the mountain over them like an upturned barrel. Then He said to them: “If you accept the Torah, fine; but if not, your burial will be there.”** The Maharal explains why it was necessary to coerce them in this manner. It was essential that Yisrael understand the following basic principle (R.H. 28a): **“מצוות לאו ליהנות ניתנו”**—the mitzvos were not given for our pleasure. In the words of Rashi: **“לאו ליהנות—ניתנו לישראל להיות קיומם להם הנאה, אלא לעול על צוואריהם ניתנו”**—not only were they not given with the intention of making Yisrael’s existence a pleasure; in fact, they represent a burden and yoke upon their shoulders.

Undoubtedly, HKB”H was ecstatic on the day His children, Yisrael, received the Torah. After all, the entire universe was only created for that sole purpose, as it is written (Bereishis 1, 1): **“בראשית ברא אלקים”**—and Rashi comments that the universe was only created for the sake of the Torah and for the sake of Yisrael—both of whom are referred to as “reishis.” Notwithstanding, HKB”H did not wish to write in the Torah the Chag HaShavuos is a day of rejoicing and celebration for receiving the Torah. For, it is feasible that from Yisrael’s perspective—having been coerced into accepting the Torah—it is not a festive, joyous day.

Therefore, from the very onset, HKB”H intentionally left the matter up to Yisrael. It is up to them to demonstrate themselves via their love and occupation with Torah she’b’al peh and their festive prayers that this day is truly: “zman matan Toraseinu.” Yes, HKB”H held the mountain over our heads in a threatening fashion, so that we would accept the Torah. Nevertheless, we

accepted it lovingly and willingly with the proclamation “na’aseh v’nishma.” Hence, for us Chag HaShavuos is a joyous occasion; it is the day on which we celebrate receiving the Torah—“zman matan Toraseinu.”

We Rejoice on Shavuos for Receiving Torah She’b’al Peh

Continuing the Maharal’s line of reasoning, we can add a nice little tidbit as to why HKB”H did not reveal in Torah she’b’chsav that Chag HaShavuos is a day of celebration for receiving the Torah. Tosafot (Shabbas 88a) ask an obvious question. Why was it necessary to coerce Yisrael to receive the Torah, had they not already expressed their willingness to accept the Torah with the proclamation: “na’aseh v’nishma”? An answer is provided in the Midrash Tanchuma (Noach 3). Their proclamation of “na’aseh v’nishma” only concerned their willingness to receive Torah she’b’chsav. Concerning Torah she’b’al peh, however, which is voluminous and demands enormous, painstaking effort, they only accepted it due to coercion.

As we all know, Torah she’b’chsav is worthless without Torah she’b’al peh. All Torah she’b’chsav issues that are obscure and incomprehensible are clarified by Torah she’b’al peh. As we have learned in the Gemara (Gittin 60b): **“לא כרת הקב”ה ברית עם ישראל—אלא בשביל דברים שבעל פה, שנאמר (שמות לד-כז) כי על פי הדברים האלה כרתי אתך ברית ואת ישראל”**—HKB”H established a covenant with Yisrael solely for the sake of Torah she’b’al peh. Thus, we can conclude that the main cause for celebration over the receiving of the Torah was only realized after Yisrael accepted Torah she’b’al peh.

We can now better appreciate the Maharal’s insight. HKB”H did not wish to convey in Torah she’b’chsav that Chag HaShavuos is related to the giving of the Torah. Seeing as Yisrael’s acceptance of Torah she’b’al peh was initially due to coercion, the joy associated with Torah she’b’chsav was severely compromised and diminished. Nevertheless, the Torah scholars who perceived the inestimable delight associated with the light of Torah she’b’al peh—possessing fifty levels of understanding with the ability to decipher and interpret all that is seemingly vague and unintelligible in Torah she’b’chsav—chose to mention and emphasize specifically in Torah she’b’al peh that this is a day of joy and celebration. Despite the fact that Torah she’b’al peh was accepted with coercion, they are ecstatic that they were privileged to receive it.

How nicely this explains Rashi’s comment, cited above, concerning the Gemara in Pesachim (68b): **“דבעינן נמי לכם, שישמח”**

—בו במאכל ומשתה, להראות שנוח ומקובל יום זה לישראל שניתנה תורה בו—is essential to celebrate on this festival with food and drink—to demonstrate that Yisrael are content and pleased that the Torah was given to us on this day. In other words, one should express one’s joy via food and drink, demonstrating one’s joy at having received Torah she’b’al peh—despite the fact that we were coerced into doing so.

Chag HaShavuos Is the Day of Judgment Regarding the Giving of the Torah

It is the nature of Torah to be elucidated in seventy different ways. Therefore, let us suggest a reason as to why HKB”H chose not to reveal explicitly in the Torah that Chag HaShavuos is associated with Matan Torah. Additionally, why did HKB”H, the giver of the Torah, choose to describe this day in the Torah with three other names—“Chag HaKatzir,” “Yom HaBikkurim and Chag HaShavuos—rather than “zman matan Toraseinu”?

Let us begin with the well-known fact that the “peiros ha’ilan”—the fruits of the tree—are judged on the festival of Shavuos. We have learned in the Mishnah (R.H. 16a): **“בארבעה פרקים העולם נידון, בראש השנה כל באי עולם עוברין לפניו בפסח על התבואה, בעצרת על פירות האילן, בראש השנה כל באי עולם עוברין לפניו כבני מרון... ובחג נידונין על המים.”** ומפרש בגמרא (שם): **“מפני מה אמרה תורה הביאו שתי הלחם בעצרת, מפני שעצרת זמן פירות האילן הוא, אמר הקב”ה הביאו לפני שתי הלחם בעצרת, כדי שיתברכו לכם פירות האילן.”** **The world is judged at four junctures during the year: on Pesach for the grain, on Atzeres for the fruits of the tree, on Rosh HaShanah all who come to the world pass before Him like “bnei maron” . . . and on the Festival they are judged for the water.** The Gemara expounds (ibid.): **and why did the Torah instruct us to bring the offering of “the two loaves” on Atzeres, because Atzeres is the time of judgment for the fruits of the tree. HKB”H said: “Bring before Me the two loaves on Atzeres so that the fruits of the tree will be blessed for you.”**

Let us endeavor to explain why HKB”H arranged for us to be judged on the fruits of the tree specifically on Shavuos—“zman matan Toraseinu.” The Shela hakadosh teaches us in the name of the divine kabbalist, the author of Tola’at Yaakov, an awesome and fascinating idea—that is worth reviewing in preparation for Chag HaShavuos. Chag HaShavuos is the judgment day related to Matan Torah. On this day, the neshamot of Yisrael—which are considered to be the “fruit of the tree”—are judged. These neshamot were produced from HKB”H’s tree of souls; hence, on Shavuos, they are held accountable for their dedication to the Torah and to what degree they performed its mitzvos.

With this understanding, let us address HKB”H’s statement: **“Bring before Me the two loaves on Atzeres so that the fruits of the tree will be blessed for you.”** First of all, why did HKB”H command us to bring two loaves; why wasn’t one sufficient? Secondly, how does bringing “the two loaves” cause the “peiros ha’ilan”—the neshamot of Yisrael—to be blessed on the judgment day of Matan Torah?

Let us suggest an answer based on a teaching in the Zohar hakadosh (part 1, 260a) that the “two loaves” brought on Shavuos represent Torah she’b’chsav and Torah she’b’al peh. It is for this very reason that HKB”H instructed us to bring the korban of “the two loaves” on Shavuos and to wave them before Hashem (Vayikra 23, 20). This act serves as atonement combined with teshuvah sheleimah to make amends for the terrible sin of not engaging in the study of Torah she’b’chsav and Torah she’b’al peh properly and sufficiently. Hence, with the waving of “the two loaves” before Hashem, we accept upon ourselves to make amends for these shortcomings. In the merit of this symbolic act, HKB”H promises to grant us tremendous gains in Torah knowledge and scholarship.

Correcting Our Midos in Preparation for Shavuos

Continuing along this path, let us focus on the preparations that are required of us in honor of Shavuos—to insure that the “peiros ha’ilan,” the neshamot of Yisrael, are blessed. In the prayer recited after the counting of the omer, we state the following: **“רבנו של עולם, אתה צויתנו על ידי משה עבדך לספור ספירת העומר, כדי לטהרנו מקלפותינו ומטומאותינו, כמו שכתבת בתורתך, וספרתם לכם ממחרת השבת מיום הביאתם את עומר התנופה שבע שבתות תמימות תהינה, עד ממחרת השבת השביעית תספרו חמשים יום, כדי שיטהרו נפשות עמך ישראל מזוהמתם—Master of the Universe, You commanded us via Your servant Moshe to recite the counting of the omer—in order to purify us of our evil exteriors and our impurities . . . “You are to count for yourselves . . . seven complete weeks . . . you are to count fifty days,” so that the souls of Your people Yisrael should be cleansed of their contamination.**

The source for this idea comes from the Zohar hakadosh (Emor 97a), and is explained in greater depth in the Arizal’s Sha’ar HaKavanos (Sefiras HaOmer Drush 4). HKB”H instructed us to count seven weeks prior to Shavuos in order to correct the seven Midos during this period of time: chesed, gevurah, tiferes, netzach, hod, yesod and malchus. These Midos encompass and incorporate all the other Midos—character traits. Each week of the sefirah is dedicated to correcting one of the Midos; the first

week focuses on chesed, the second on gevurah, and so on and so forth until all seven basic Midos are accounted for.

I would like to propose my own explanation as to why HKB”H found it necessary to make the correction of the Midos a prerequisite for Matan Torah. In Sha’arei Kedushah, Rabeinu Chaim Vital presents an amazing chiddush concerning the correction of the Midos. He addresses the famous question: Why didn’t HKB”H mention the necessity to work on correcting one’s Midos—not to get angry, not to be arrogant, etc.—in the Torah? It is because the correction of one’s Midos is essential to the performance of any of the mitzvos enumerated in the Torah; without first correcting one’s Midos, it is impossible to perform the mitzvos.

For this reason, HKB”H commanded us to correct and refine our basic seven Midos prior to Matan Torah—during the seven weeks of Sefiras ha’omer. For, without refining the Midos first, there is no purpose or value in receiving the Torah—whose entire aim is to fulfill the taryag mitzvos mentioned in the Torah. As mentioned, without first refining the Midos, it is impossible to perform the mitzvos. Yet, after correcting the Midos during the seven weeks of the omer, Yisrael become worthy of receiving the Torah. In the words of Rabbi Chaim Vital: **“כי בהיותו בעל מדות טובות—בנקל יקיים כל המצוות”**—once a person possesses good Midos, he can perform all of the mitzvos with great ease.

Refining the Midos Insures that the Torah Will Not Act like Poison

Accepting the challenge, let us expand on this concept. We have learned in the Gemara (Yoma 72b): **“אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי, מאי דכתיב (דברים ד-מד) וזאת התורה אשר שם משה, זכה נעשית לו סם חיים, לא זכה נעשית לו סם מיתה—Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said: What is the meaning of that which is written: ‘And this is the Torah which Moshe put (‘sahm’) before Bnei Yisrael’? If one is deserving, the Torah acts as a potion (the meaning of the Hebrew word ‘sahm’ spelled with a samech) promoting life; but if one is not deserving, it acts like potion promoting death—like a poison.** It is seemingly difficult to comprehend how the Torah can act like a poison.

This phenomenon can be explained, however, based on what the great luminary, the Gra of Vilna, writes in his commentary on Mishlei (24, 31) and in greater detail in Even Sheleimah (1, 11): **“ענין התורה לנפש דוגמת המטר לארץ, שמצמיח מה שנזרע בה, סם חיים או סם מות, כן בתורה מצמיח בה מה שבלבו, אם לבו טוב תגדיל יראתו, ואם בלבו שורש פורה ראש ולענה יגדל הטינא בלבו... על כן צריך לפנות לבו בכל יום קודם**

The הלימוד ואחריו, מעיפוש הדעות והמדות ביראת חטא ומעשים טובים.” The Torah’s effect on the soul is analogous to the effect of the rain on the earth. Rain promotes the growth of that which is sown in the soil; it can have a positive effect (a potion of life) or a negative effect (a potion of death). Similarly, if a person’s heart is good, the Torah enhances his fear of G-d; however, if his heart is corrupt, it promotes resentment and negativity. Therefore, it is crucial to clear one’s heart, on a daily basis—before and after one’s Torah study—of any corrupt and negative thoughts and Midos by means of fear of sin and good deeds.

In our recent essay on parshas Bechukotai, we already provided a small tidbit embellishing this notion of the Gra’s. After all, man’s body was formed from the soil of the earth. Therefore, just as the soil is incapable of producing plant-life without receiving water first; similarly, the soil which is man is incapable of producing mitzvos and good deeds without first being irrigated with the spiritual waters of the Torah.

Plow a Furrow and Do Not Sow upon Thornbushes

This is precisely the message Yirmiyahu conveyed to Yisrael with the following rebuke (Yirmiyah 4, 3): **“כי כה אמר ה' לאיש יהודה—ולירושלים, נירו לכם ניר ואל תזרעו אל קוצים”**—**For thus said Hashem to the people of Yehudah and to Yerushalayim: “Plow for yourselves a furrow, and do not sow upon thornbushes.”** Rashi provides the following clarification: learn from those who work the land; they plow the earth during the summer months to kill and eliminate the roots of the weeds, in order to prevent the growth of thorns after the seeds are sown in the winter. In similar fashion, improve your ways and deeds before ill befalls you—so that your prayers will not be viewed with disdain when you cry out.

We can now comprehend the Gra’s message. Consider a person who engages in the study of Torah—which is compared to water—but makes no effort to refine or eliminate the corrupt Midos he possesses. His situation is analogous to a person who sows thorns in his field. Even if he is blessed with rainfall from the heavens above, the soil will not yield good produce; it will only yield thorns and thistle. Likewise, a person who does not attempt to root out the thorns in his character and soul, despite his endeavors in Torah study, will only produce thorns. His Torah will act like a poisonous potion.

Let us apply this concept to better understand what we have learned in the Mishnah (Avos 2, 2): **“יפה תלמוד תורה עם דרך ארץ שיגיעת”**

“שניהם משכחת עון—Torah study combined with “derech erez” is good; for exertion in both eliminates wrongdoing. In other words, it is so much more productive when a person relates to Torah study like one relates to the land--“עם דרך ארץ”. The earth only yields good vegetation if it is plowed first to remove all of the rocks and stones. Then after the growth begins, the thorns must be uprooted; otherwise, they will ruin the plants. Similarly, one must make every effort to eradicate all of one’s negative Midos before and after engaging in Torah study. The Mishnah goes on to explain why: “שיגיעת שניהם משכחת עון”—exertion on both fronts—refining one’s Midos and engaging in Torah study—will eliminate wrongdoing. For, with the weeds uprooted, so to speak, the Torah will produce kedushah and good deeds.

This is also the lesson conveyed by the following Mishnah (Avos 3, 9): “רבי חנינא בן דוסא אומר, כל שיראת חטאו קודמת לחכמתו חכמתו “מתקיימת—Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa said: If one’s fear of sin takes precedence over his wisdom, his wisdom will endure; but if his wisdom takes precedence over his fear of sin, his wisdom will not endure. For, the fear of sin prior to Torah study is analogous to plowing the soil prior to planting the grain; it removes the rocks and thorns which inhibit healthy, productive growth. As a result, the waters of Torah will yield produce in the form of mitzvos and good deeds.

The Three Appellations Associated with Matan Torah

At this point, we can begin to appreciate HKB”H’s divine wisdom in choosing to refer to the festival of Shavuos in the Torah by the following three names: “Chag HaKatzir,” “Yom HaBikkurim” and Chag HaShavuos. In reality, these names are intimately associated with Matan Torah. For, as we have explained, there is no purpose in receiving the Torah if the Midos have not been refined and corrected beforehand. Therefore, HKB”H called

the festival both “Chag HaKatzir” and “Yom HaBikkurim.” He intended that we learn from the harvest of the produce of the earth and from the bringing of the first fruit yielded by the land. It is impossible to obtain a good, healthy yield without taking the appropriate steps at the beginning and end of the process. It is imperative to remove the stones and the thorns that inhibit proper and optimum growth. So, too, it is imperative to eradicate the negative Midos before and after engaging in Torah study.

This is also the reason for the third name—“Chag HaShavuos”—alluding to the seven weeks of the omer. This appellation conveys the fact that the celebration of Matan Torah is only possible, because we spent seven weeks prior to Matan Torah refining our Midos. Only as a result of this diligent work can we insure that the Torah will function as a potion promoting and sustaining life—“sahm hachaim”—and not the opposite, G-d forbid. Thus, we see that all three of these names that appear in the Torah for this festival are consistent with the notion that it is “zman matan Toraseinu”—a celebration of the giving of our Torah.

We can also appreciate, now, why Chag HaShavuos is the day of judgment for “the fruits of the tree”—referring to the neshamot of Yisrael. Are they worthy of receiving the Torah and its positive influence from HKB”H? As we have explained, if they have failed to work on refining and correcting their Midos, receiving the Torah serves no purpose. On the contrary, it is harmful, because the Torah functions as a poisonous potion—“sahm hamaves”—amplifying and nurturing the negative Midos, chas v’shalom. Therefore, it is essential to follow the prescribed advice—to utilize the seven weeks of the omer preceding Matan Torah to the utmost. We must make the most out of every respective week to purify the midah corresponding to that week. Also, after receiving the Torah, we must continue to examine our seven basic Midos during the seven days following Chag HaShavuos. In the merit of doing so, HKB”H will grant us abundant Torah knowledge and insights in all areas of Torah study.



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