



One Shavuot morning, an elderly Chasid posed a question to his fellow Chasidim who had traveled from great distances to be with their Rebbe in Belz. "Our trip here to Belz was a difficult one. But once we are here, our Rebbe will not be with us. He will undoubtedly be in the World Above experiencing spirituality on a far higher level than we can even imagine. Therefore, I ask you, what is the point of our coming here to be with him?"

The other Chasidim listened, but had no answer. And so, they all decided to enter into the Rebbe's room and pose the question directly to him. Although in Belz, no Chasid would dream of entering the Rebbe's room without having first been summoned, this question so plagued them that they gathered their courage to enter.

Standing before their Rebbe, the delegation asked the troublesome question and waited for the Rebbe's reply. He told them the following:

"It is true that if a person hears Torah thoughts from his Rebbe and learns them and then translates them into action in the service of G-d, then he retains his connection to his Rebbe and remains together with him in the World Above. But that is not all. Even if a person completely forgets the words his Rebbe spoke, but at the time was spiritually aroused by those words, he retains his connection.

"There is a hint of this in the words of the hymn, Akdamut, which we say today, for it says, "Pure when you hear the praise of this melody, Your places will be fixed in this company." This means that even those who are pure only when they hear, they too will remain together with the holy company."

The Chasidim left the Rebbe's room comforted and uplifted by his encouraging words.

The Shavuot prayers had ended and the Chasidim of Reb Chaim of Sanz had gathered to receive the Rebbe's blessings and to hear him recite kiddush and partake of some wine and cakes. They lingered, waiting for their Rebbe to complete his lengthy prayers until he finally emerged from the shul.

Reb Chaim had become legendary for his great compassion for the poor and needy and his generous dispensing of charity, but still, his followers were surprised at his words as he took his place at the table.

"When I was a young man, I used to deliver a carefully honed discourse every Shavuot to a group of great scholars. Now, however, I am an old man, and I don't have the strength for that kind of learned give and take. Instead, I will deliver to you only a very short word: I need one thousands reinish for a needy cause, and I will not recite Kiddush until you decide between yourselves how much each of you will bring to me. I need the money in cash, as soon as the holiday is over. I leave you to arrange it between yourselves. At that, the Rebbe left the room.

The Chasidim had no choice but to discuss how to meet their Rebbe's demand. Four of the wealthiest divided the entire amount between themselves, and a delegate was sent to the Rebbe to assure him that the matter was taken care of. Only then did Reb Chaim make Kiddush.

No sooner had the holiday ended than the entire sum of money was given to the Rebbe who handed it to a certain pauper who needed it for a dowry for his daughter.

The son of the Maggid of Mezritch, Reb Avraham, was called the Malach, "the Angel." It was related by his grandson, Reb David Moshe of Chotkov, that once his grandfather visited a certain scholar named Rabbi Feivish of Kremenets. Although the entire town turned out to greet the great rabbi, he stood with his face averted from them. He stood gazing out a window at a high mountain in the distance.

The townsfolk longed to hear some holy words of Torah from him, but he remained rooted to the spot deep in meditation. One of those gathered there was a scholarly

young man from a renowned family. Unfortunately, his self-esteem outstripped even those two qualities. A fervent opponent to Chasidic teachings, he assumed that this rabbi, whom the Chasidim esteemed so highly, was simply and purposely ignoring and slighting the scholars who had assembled to honor him. This, the young man could not abide.

Clearing his throat, the young scholar spoke. "Honored Sir, would you so kindly explain to us why you are staring so intently at that mountain, which is, after all, you must admit, no more than a pile of dust?"

The Malach didn't miss a beat in replying to the young man. "That is exactly what is so amazing to me. How is it that a mere pile of dust can inflate itself so tremendously that it can assume the shape of a proud mountain?"

With that comment, he effectively silenced the young man, and taught him a valuable lesson at the same time.

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah portion

Two Shavuot - Two Promises

The word Shavuot, along with meaning "weeks," for it is the holiday that comes after counting the omer for seven weeks, also means oaths. On this holiday two promises were made. First, G-d promised that He would not exchange the Jewish people for any other. Second, we promised that we would not exchange G-d for another. (*Book of Our Heritage*)

Eating Dairy Foods on Shavuot

The numerical value of the Hebrew word for milk - chalav - is equal to 40, which corresponds to the 40 days that Moses spent on Mt. Sinai. (*Rabbi Shimon of Ostropol*)

A Time to Eat and Rejoice

Passover and Sukkot, which commemorate physical events, may be celebrated in a purely spiritual manner, while Shavuot, which celebrates a spiritual event, must be celebrated in both a spiritual and physical manner. This is to teach us that at the time G-d gave us the Torah, the entire physical world was affected, and holiness permeated every corner of the world. (*Likutei Sichot*)

Self Esteem and Humility

The giving of the Torah is not merely an event of the distant past, but is something we are meant to relive every day. The study of Torah should be approached with fire and enthusiasm, as if we had just received the Torah today. The fact that G-d chose the smallest mountain on which to give the Torah teaches that we need humility in order to accept the Torah, but the fact that G-d chose a mountain, as opposed to a plain or valley, teaches us that we also need self esteem, pride in our Jewish heritage. (*The Lubavitcher Rebbe*)

Shavuot Holiday and Shabbat Candle Lighting Times

NY Metro Area

Thursday, May 21 / Sivan 5

Light Holiday Candles at 7:54 PM

Friday, May 22 / Sivan 6

Light Shabbat / Holiday candles at 7:55 PM

from a pre-existing flame

Saturday, May 23 / Sivan 7

Shabbat / Holiday Ends 9:02 PM



Dedicated for a Refuah Shleima
of J. Zaben
By his K&S Family

L'Chaim

בס"ד
1924
6 Sivan, 5786
May 22, 2026
The Weekly Publication
for Every Jewish Person
יוסף תורה ודברי השלשים
Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson
"Jerusalem has mountains around it, and the L-rd is around His people from now and to eternity" (Psalms 125:2)



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

The Midrash relates that the Jewish people slept through the entire night before the Torah was given on Shavuot. Their sleep was so deep and so pleasant, in fact, that we are told that the insects didn't dare to disturb them.

The next morning, the day on which the Torah was to be given, they overslept! G-d Himself had to awaken them. Unbelievably, the Jewish people arrived late for the revelation at Mount Sinai.

In commemoration of this event, it is customary to remain awake the entire night of Shavuot learning Torah in the synagogue. But how could the Children of Israel have allowed themselves to fall asleep in the first place? If the greatest human king had promised to give us a valuable treasure, wouldn't we be too excited to sleep the night before? How much more so a gift that is expected from the King of kings!

In truth, having been told that G-d would be giving them the Torah in 50 days, the Jews yearned with such anticipation that they immediately began to count the days. Each day, as they counted, they ascended one spiritual rung after the other by ridding themselves of the negative characteristics they had acquired in Egypt and transforming them into positive ones. The nearer the day came, the greater was their excitement. And yet, when the day finally arrived, they almost slept right through it!

To explain: The Jewish people did not fall asleep by accident; they did so deliberately, with good intentions. For they were convinced that going to sleep would constitute the final stage in their preparation for receiving the Torah.

When a person sleeps, his soul ascends on high. Thus, the Jews deliberately went to sleep to allow their souls to comprehend even higher levels of the Torah. Nonetheless, G-d did not approve of their behavior, as it missed the point of the entire revelation.

In His Torah, G-d commanded us to utilize physical objects in the performance of His mitzvot. Thinking about giving charity is not enough; we have to actually give a poor person the money. By utilizing physical objects (a lulav on Sukkot, for example) we imbue the world with holiness, thereby connecting the spiritual and material realms.

When a person sleeps, however, his soul is not connected to the physical world, and the spiritual and material realms remain disunited -- the antithesis of G-d's intent in giving us His Torah.

Accordingly, the proper preparation for receiving the Torah should have involved serving G-d on the highest spiritual levels while still awake, the better to fulfill G-d's ultimate intention in creating the world.

Adapted from Likutei Sichot of the Rebbe, Volume 4

From Self-Indulgence to Sacred Structure

Rich chocolate cake is often described as "decadent," a word we associate with pleasure and indulgence. Yet the word has a more complex origin. "Decay" and "decadence" both trace back to the Latin *decadere*, meaning "to fall" or "to sink." Noah Webster's 1828 dictionary defined *decadence* simply as "decay." What feels like pleasure on the tongue carries the meaning of collapse on the page.

Unchecked indulgence ends in decline. Jewish thought teaches that self-indulgence is not neutral. Left unexamined, it can gradually pull a person downward. Growth, by contrast, requires awareness, effort, and discipline.

Personal growth is one aspect of Counting the Omer. The Omer is the 49-day period between Passover and Shavuot, linking two defining moments: the Exodus from Egypt and the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. Each day is a step of personal preparation, climbing one rung higher.

Chassidut teaches that the seven weeks correspond to the seven emotional attributes inside every person: love, restraint, balance, perseverance, humility, bonding, and leadership. Each week, we work through one. Each day, we refine one dimension within it. By Shavuot, we have worked on all 49 layers of our character traits.

The Exodus opened a journey toward purpose and responsibility with Sinai as our destination.

When Hashem first spoke to Moshe at the Burning Bush, He made this connection clear, promising that the people would serve Him at that very mountain after leaving Egypt. Later, at Sinai, Hashem introduced Himself as the One who brought them out of Egypt, reinforcing that the two events are deeply connected.

The Hebrew name for Egypt, *Mitzrayim*, is built from the same letters as *meitzarim*, the word for limitations. So the exodus carries a personal layer alongside the historical one. The constraints we carry inside ourselves, many of them self-imposed, are their own form of Egypt: emotional, psychological, physical. The Omer period gives us 49 days to work on freeing ourselves and moving beyond these constrictions, preparing ourselves to receive the Torah.

Moses himself expressed doubt at the outset of his mission, asking, "Who am I?" (Exodus 3:11). The response was G-d's promise: "I will be with you" (Exodus 3:12). That reassurance continues to resonate for any Jew working on themselves. The journey toward growth is challenging, but it is supported by both inner strength and a sense of higher purpose. Indulgence promises short-term satisfaction, while discipline and mindful living build something that lasts.

This Shavuot, Friday and Shabbat, May 22 and 23, the Torah is given again. Let's get ready to accept it!

