

SHABBAT LASHEM

THE VOICE OF
BNEI AKIVA UK
THE MOST WIDELY
DISTRIBUTED YOUTH TORAH
PERIODICAL IN THE UK



Eli Gaventa | Chinuch Worker

As a young Chanich I was always fascinated by the connection between the Oral Torah (Torah She'Beal Peh) and the Written Torah (Torah She'Bichtav). Two of the questions that bothered me were: When was the Oral Torah given? And was it true that all of it was given to Moshe on Har Sinai - is that what Halacha Moshe m'Sinai means?

As I grew up I encountered two approaches to this question and it seems appropriate to discuss them as we enter into Chag HaShavuot and Matan Torah.

Approach number one comes from Shemot Rabba 47:1 and it can be classed as the 'discovery approach'. It claims that all of the Oral Torah, even innovations in Halacha in the modern world, were given to Moshe on Har Sinai. Our task is to study the texts and discover the teachings already present in it. *"When God revealed himself at Sinai to give the Torah to Israel, God communicated it to Moshe in sequence: Bible, Mishna, Talmud and Aggada, as it says, "And God spoke all these words" (Ex. 20:1)—even what a disciple asks his teacher, God told Moshe at that time."*

This is a profoundly interesting but also challenging idea. On the one hand it means that whenever we are studying the Oral Torah we are given the opportunity to directly engage with Devar Hashem - the word of God - even when studying Oral Torah. But on the other hand it is a disempowering approach as it leaves very little room for human innovation or creativity.

Approach number two provides more scope for human creativity in developing the Oral Torah and therefore can be classed as the 'creativity approach'. Primarily it is sourced

from a fascinating Gemara in Menachot 29b that tells a story of Moshe 'meeting' Rabbi Akiva. If you read the story below carefully you will notice the astounding fact that Moshe wasn't able to follow the arguments that the students of Rabbi Akiva were making - he wasn't able to understand the laws and details being discussed! *"Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav: When Moses ascended on high he found the Holy One, Blessed be He, engaged in affixing coronets to the letters. Said Moses, "Lord of the Universe, who stays your hand?" He answered, "There will arise a man, at the end of many generations, Akiva b. Yoseph by name, who will expound upon each tittle mounds and mounds of laws." "Lord of the Universe," said Moses, "show him to me." He replied, "Turn back." Moses went and sat down behind eight rows. Not being able to follow their arguments he was ill at ease, but when they came to a certain subject and the disciples said "Rabbi, whence do you know this?" and the latter replied, "It is a law given to Moses at Sinai," he was comforted".*

This source makes the following rhetorical point: It cannot possibly be that the whole of Torah She'Beal Peh was given to Moshe on Har Sinai if in this story we're told Moshe didn't recognise some of the Torah She'Beal Peh when visiting the class of Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Akiva and his students were involved in developing Torah She'Beal Peh and being 'mechadesh' - creating new laws, interpretations and derivations. Torah She'Beal Peh is not static, new parts are always being added. As Tosefta Sota 7:9 says: *"It is impossible to hold a session of a beit midrash without an (שזידוש) innovation."* As we go into Shavuot and Matan Torah I find that it I prefer to celebrate the second
Continues on page 4.

Shavuot and Simchat Torah

Rav Aharon Herskovitz | Rav Shaliach

As this Shabbat draws to a close, we will be extending the holiness into Shavuot, "chag matan torateinu", the festival of the giving of our Torah. On this day, we mark the anniversary of the revelation at Sinai, when Hashem lowered His Presence to the mountain and gave us the most significant gift we have ever been given. The midrash tells us that Hashem said "I have sold you my Torah, and it is as if I have been sold together with it." We celebrate not just the connection between Am Yisrael and the Torah, but the unique relationship with Hashem that the Torah enables and requires us to have.

There exists a certain symmetry among Jewish festivals: there are two main seven day holidays, Pesach and Sukkot, each on the 15th day of the month, six months apart from each other. The fact that both fall on the 15th is the basis for a *gezeirah shava* (one of hermeneutic principles) that connects the two and creates halachic parallels between the two. For example, on Sukkot the obligation to eat in the sukkah is usually conditional: if you are going to eat, then you must do so in the sukkah. But from the connection to Pesach we learn the following halacha: just as we are required to consume matzah on the night of the 15th (of Nissan), so too we are required to eat in the sukkah on the night of the 15th (of Tishrei).

This parallel continues to the festivals that follow Pesach and Sukkot: Sukkot is a seven day festival that is followed at the end of the seven days by an "atzeret" (Bamidbar 29:35), or gathering, what we refer to nowadays as "Shemini Atzeret". Pesach as well is followed (not seven days later, but seven weeks of seven days later) by an "atzeret", which is the

name by which Chazal refer to Shavuot.

So it is only natural that the mirror image of Shavuot, the festival on which we celebrate receiving the Torah, could develop into becoming a day that is not only Shemini Atzeret, but also Simchat Torah, on which we celebrate the completion of the Torah. It is possible that part of the custom to complete the reading of the Torah at the end of Sukkot, and the transformation of that day from "Shemini Atzeret" to "Simchat Torah" (which is more evident in Israel nowadays, in which just one day is kept, but can also be seen outside of Israel), is due to the connection with Shavuot.

"We must ensure that Shavuot is not just a once-in-a-year "experience", but that is both the culmination and continuation of a process. It is an opportunity for us to look back on the previous year in terms of our spiritual Torah growth, and also look ahead to what we will make of the coming year."

But then we must ask: why have two holidays to celebrate the receiving of the Torah? Wouldn't just one suffice? Why have both Shavuot and Simchat Torah?

It is possible that the two holidays reflect two different aspects of our relationship to the Torah. On Simchat Torah, we celebrate the emotional connection that we have,

or hope to develop, with the Torah. The day is characterised by much joy: by singing, dancing and merriment. This emotional outburst is both a culmination of a year(s)-long relationship with the Torah (as signified by our completion of the Torah), as well as embarking upon a new and renewed path (as shown by our immediately beginning it again).

On Shavuot, while there is a mitzvah of simcha, as with all holidays, the holiday offers a different aspect of our relationship with the Torah: our ability to engage with it not just with our hearts, but with our minds. On Shavuot night, Jews the world around have become accustomed to engage in Torah study all night, to express "This is not just a mitzvah that we

engage in now and then, but one in which we are able to fully immerse ourselves." As with Simchat Torah, we must ensure that Shavuot is not just a once-in-a-year "experience", but that is both the culmination and continuation of a process. It is an opportunity for us to look back on the previous year in terms of our spiritual Torah growth, and also look ahead to what we will make of the coming year. Rav

Yaakov Medan of Yeshivat Har Etzion has said that just as we are judged at four times of the year and it is decided what will receive in terms of our lives and livelihood (Mishna Rosh HaShana 1:2), each holiday has its own "judgment": on Shavuot we are starting a new journey, one which hopefully continue with the same zest and energy we display on the holiday itself. Chag Sameach!

Dvar Halacha: Weekly Question

Have a question? Please email rav@bauk.org or call/message Rav Aharon at 07976642135.

QUESTION FROM YONI ON BNEI AKIVA'S Q&A HALACHA WITH RAV AHARON WHATSAPP GROUP: When one is wearing a flag, at what point, if any, does it become a garment that would require tzitzit on it?

ANSWER: There are a few reasons why wearing a flag would not require tzitzit:

a) generally, a garment is only obligated in tzitzit if it belongs to the person wearing it. This is learned in Chulin 136a from the word כסותך ("your garment") and is the psak of the Shulchan Aruch (OC 14:3). This is the reason why one would not be required to make a bracha when borrowing a friend's tallit in shul. Usually, people dance around with flags that do not belong to them, so that is one reason there is no requirement.

b) a second reason is the purpose of your wearing it: one who wears a flag does not do so as an act of wearing clothing, but rather as an expression of something else (pride in Israel, identity etc.). A parallel case could be someone who wears shatnez [a forbidden mixture of wool and linen] not in order to benefit from it as a garment, but for an external reason. The mishna in kilayim (9:5) states: "Garment sellers can sell [garments containing shatnez] as is their usual way [which involves displaying the clothing on themselves], as long as they do not have intention [to protect themselves] from the sun when it is sunny, nor [to protect themselves] from the rain when it is raining. And the modest/humble ones put the garments on a stick behind them."

In other words, when your intention is not to benefit from the garment as a garment, there is no issue of shatnez. This as well is brought as law by the Shulchan Aruch (YD 301:6), with the Rama adding additional examples in which the wearing is not done for the enjoyment of wearing, such as to show the length of the garments in order to sell them. The Magen Avraham (basing off of Tosfot Nidda 61) writes that this leniency can extend to tzitzit as well: one who wears a garment in order to sell it would not be obligated to put on tzitzit, even were it to normally be obligated in tzitzit. One who is wearing a flag is generally not wearing it as a garment, and for that reason as well would be exempt.

c) Flags are usually made from synthetic materials. The Shulchan Aruch rules (10:4) that a garment made from leather is exempt from tzitzit. Rav Moshe Feinstein (IM OC 2:1) and others rule for this reason that garments made from synthetic materials (i.e. materials that are not naturally woven, such as nylon, polyester etc.) would be exempt from tzitzit. Even though some rule that such materials may be obligated in tzitzit (Tzitz Eliezer 12:3), others feel that this would only be true if the garment itself is woven from these synthetic threads (Har Tzvi OC 9), as opposed to being created as one whole. A flag is not woven, but is made as a whole garment, and for this reason would not require tzitzit as well. There may be other reasons as well that a flag would not be obligated in tzitzit, but hopefully this will cover you in the meantime.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE ADDED TO A Q&A WHATSAPP GROUP WITH RAV AHARON PLEASE EMAIL ELI@BAUK.ORG.

Continued from page 1.

approach to the Oral Torah. Our role as people involved with transmitted text is in partnership with it and God, working together to create a system of law that applies in every generation. This is the mission of Talmidei Torah throughout each generation.

As Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (commonly known as the Netziv) wrote: "The reason God ordered Moshe to carve the second tablets was not because they were not worthy of a

Divine act but to teach that the ever-renewing power of halakha given in the second tablets involves the active participation of the labour of human beings who with Divine aid do so, just as the second tablets were carved by Moshe and the writing was by God." (HaEmek Davar, Shemot 34:1).

May we all commit to the important task of being mechadesh in Torah. Shabbat Shalom and Chag Sameach!

Community Updates

This week BNEI AKIVA BOGRIM ran a Peulah at a young families Friday Night Dinner in Birmingham. Families from across the community were able to take part in the Bnei Akiva ruach followed by activities for the Chanichim about the Parshah. A great time was had by all. We look forward to taking part in future events with the Birmingham community and developing this great partnership.



Adath Synagogue. Rabbanit Shira has been teaching the young women an 'Introduction to Gemara' and Rav Aharon has been teaching the young men an 'Introduction to Lomdus'.

This Motzei Shabbat on Shavuot there will be a Tikkun Leil taking place at the Rav and Rabbanit's house in Edgware. Shiurim from Bogrim start at 23:45 and breakfast is at 06:30. Please contact rav@bauk.org for more info.

The Rav and Rabbanit Shaliach recently started a 4-week program at Edgware

Roshim Profiles

Over the next few weeks we're going to be profiling some of our amazing Sviva Roshim. They all do such brilliant work and we thought you would like to get to know them a bit! First up is SHIRA COLLINS, CO-ROSH BNEI AKIVA LEEDS WITH KOBI WEINER:

"Hi, my name is Shira Collins and I am co-Rosh of Leeds Bnei Akiva (with Kobi Weiner). I have been extremely active in Bnei Akiva, attending weekly peulot since I was seven! Following that I was a Madricha for two years, then became Sganit at Salford Bnei Akiva! I have partaken in and taken many machanot and last year I attended Midreshet Harova as part of the Torani programme.

This year I have encountered many challenges, mainly transitioning from the biggest sviva to one of the smallest! But do not be fooled... Leeds Bnei Akiva is possibly the strongest! It's full of caring madrichim and chanichim. Bnei Akiva doesn't just have an impact on the sviva, it has a presence within the community! My hopes and dreams for Leeds Bnei Akiva - whether there are three chanichim or 100, whoever the tzevet is they see the importance of Leeds Bnei Akiva within the Leeds Jewish Community and continue with their heads held high!"

MAKE SURE TO CHECK OUT NEXT WEEK'S SHABBAT LASHEM FOR OUR NEXT PROFILE!