

Shavuot—Joy & Accepting the Gift of Torah

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*Rebbe Nachman teaches us how to be present in the moment, especially during the holy *zmanim* such as the holy *Yom Tov* of *Shavuot*. For nearly seven weeks, we've been counting the *Omer* (since the second night of Pesach.)

During the 49 days of the *Omer*, what we are actually doing is journeying through the 49 gates of *teshuva*. As we count, we purify ourselves, and return to Hashem with love and awe. We are returning to Hashem as we count. We focus on being present on this special journey to *Shavuot*.

Day by day we count: Today is one day of the *Omer*, today is two days of the *Omer*, and so on. When we reach *Shavuot*, we will have reached the 50th gate. Rebbe Nachman explains that

the 50th gate is *Hashem's* own *teshuva*. It's when *Hashem* returns to us. It's a return and restoration. We've done all that work, diligently counting the *Omer*, working on improving our *middot*, our character traits, breaking our hearts over the times we've hurt other people or the times we allowed ourselves to step away from Hashem. But on *Shavuot*—that's when Hashem returns to us.

We have a special bond with Hashem on *Shavuot*, unique in the history of creation. We refer to this bonding experience as *zman mattan Torah*, the time when *Hashem* gives us the *Torah*. It's a very powerful joining together of us and Hashem.

What is happening on *Shavuot* is that we are accepting the *Torah* just as if we were at Mount Sinai when the *Torah* was first given. We are actually receiving it in the present. *We are literally accepting it today.*

This giving of the *Torah* is the greatest act of love. When a person gives something and the other person receives it with love and appreciation, that forges a deeper, richer and more joyful relationship. When Hashem gives us the *Torah* and we receive it with awe, love and appreciation, we are co-creating an intensity of connection that is unparalleled. We are soldering ourselves together with Hashem. It is a bond of joy and awe each of us is capable of if we do the work.

Rebbe Nachman tells us that it is very important to experience all the festivals with joy. What happens at each festival including *Shavuot*, is that all the *mitzvot* we do throughout the year are gathered together. They come together in a fragrant bouquet to bring us and Hashem the sweet fragrance of joy on the *Yom Tov*.

May you have an awe-inspiring, joy-filled Shavuot. Chag Sameach.

**Based on LM 56*

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