

## PARSHAS ACHAREI MOS - KEDOSHIM – SHMAYA ORMONDE

With the festival of Shavuos fast approaching, it is incumbent upon us to try and understand what we are celebrating on this festival. There are many beautiful ideas which can deepen our appreciation of this Yom Tov. However, in this Dvar Torah I would like to present an approach to two famous questions asked by the commentators that will hopefully open up a new layer of understanding of this great day.

1) It is commonly assumed that the reason we celebrate Shavuos is to commemorate the Torah being given to the Jewish people. Upon further contemplation it is however clear that this cannot be the reason for the festivities. The Torah was taught slowly by Moshe over 40 long years in the desert and was clearly not taught to the Jewish people at Har Sinai. We are now left with a very serious question. What exactly are we celebrating on Shavuos?

2) The Gemara in Pesachim 68b elucidates a very interesting discussion. R' Eliezer argues that there are two ways a person can celebrate a Yom Tov. One can either dedicate the day of Yom Tov to Hashem (i.e through learning Torah and prayer) or one can dedicate the day to oneself with large festive meals. R' Yehoshua argues that one has to split the day of Yom Tov into two parts. A person needs to dedicate part of the day to Hashem and a person needs to devote the other part of the day to himself. The Gemara concludes by teaching that on Shavuos however, even R' Eliezer agrees that one has to devote part of the day to himself. Upon first glance this is an extremely surprising conclusion. One would think that the day the Torah was given would be a day one should dedicate solely to Hashem. In fact our Rabbis teach that one can only gain a true understanding of Torah by subjugating his physical body totally to his soul.

In the Hallel that we sing, we proclaim that the Heavens are the domain of Hashem and the earth is the domain of man. The Medrash Tanchuma teaches us that this was true only until the revelation at Har Sinai. Before the revelation, one could only experience closeness to Hashem by breaking away from the physical world. The revelation however allowed man to draw close to G-d through the physical world itself. It was now possible for Man to reveal Hashem even in the seemingly dark physical world. On Shavuos we are not celebrating the giving of the Mitzvos of the Torah. The reason for our joy on Shavuos is that this day is when our finite physical world meets its infinite source. This is the meaning of the verse "and Hashem descended on Har Sinai". Our physical world merged with its infinite source.

It is now possible to understand why we have a special obligation to partake of the physical world on Shavuos. This Yom Tov is the day when all that exists in the physical world enters the Kingdom of Hashem. On Shavuos our lowly physical world meets its infinite source. We demonstrate this by ensuring we enjoy large festive meals which are devoted to Hashem.

In the period before Yom Tov, it is imperative to focus on the power the day brings to ensure we have an uplifting Yom Tov.