



## SHAVUOT



## Standing at Sinai

Although we celebrate *Shavuot* only one day a year, recalling the experience of standing at Har Sinai is an obligation we have every day. What is the significance of this special event? Let us look at it from different perspectives and perhaps find lessons we can instill within our own lives to keep the experience dynamic and relevant.

In the Rambam's famous *Igeret Teman* he highlights *emunah* as the essential *middah* we acquired at *Matan Torah*. This spectacular revelation acts as an anchor to the Jewish people on an individual as well as on a collective level. Having connected to the Divine so closely has enabled us to maintain our faith despite the adversity and oppression we have been through.

Rav Roth, in *Sichat Eliyahu* elaborates further. The *Aseret Hadibrot*, as we know, parallel the *Asara Maamarot* with which the world was created. These ten expressions facilitated the world's creation while the *dibrot* gave the capacity to continue its existence. "*Bedevar Hashem hashamayim naasu*" (*Tehillim* 33;5). It is the 'word' of

Hashem that creates every aspect of nature and keeps it sustained. We, with our limited vision, see nature as an entity unto itself. To most of us a tree is a tree, we tend not to see the presence of Hashem infusing life force into the tree at every moment. The word *olam* is related to *healem*, concealment. When *Am Yisrael* received the Torah, they were transported back to the moment of creation. They were able to glimpse the reality of the world as "the word of Hashem". The veil was lifted, and clarity emerged. The experience of *Matan Torah* was one of absolute clarity as to the nature of the world and the mode in which it functions. We can take this clarity into our daily encounters to guide and orient ourselves.

The *sefer Peninei Chen* focuses on a different aspect of *Maamad Har Sinai*, our constant bulwark. The Torah describes the mountain enveloped in a cloud, smoke and "*arafel*", a very thick darkness. The Torah then describes how Moshe Rabbeinu entered the "*arafel*" because there Hashem was revealed (*Shemot* 20;18). Symbolically, this is our calling in this world. Truth is covered in layers of falsehood and darkness conceals our path toward spiritual pursuits. Throughout the millennia, there is always the challenge of pushing beyond the darkness, beyond the wiles of the

evil inclination to access the core will of Hashem. *Maamad Har Sinai* teaches us not to be afraid of this darkness, of the concealment; persevere, and there one will encounter the spiritual essence.

The Tolna Rebbe in *Botzina D'orayta* adds another dimension to the message of this darkness. In the Rosh Hashana *tefila*, the *paytan* describes how Hashem revealed himself in “*arpalei tohar*”. *Arafel*, this thick darkness that conceals all light, *tohar*, everything pure, light and clarity. The phrase seems contradictory, yet the Tolna Rebbe explains that in this very darkness we find the key to receiving Torah throughout the generations. Darkness symbolizes a state of uncertainty, struggles in our *emunah* born of ordeals and pain that do not seem to make sense. It is in this dark

world of tragedy and brokenness where we are challenged to exercise the messages of light and clarity that we received at Har Sinai. To forge ahead without fear and with the knowledge that Hashem coordinates all that transpires; nothing is random. When we can press on despite the darkness, despite our doubts, then we enter the deeper dimension of ‘*tohar*’ where we can experience the bright light of clarity and closeness with Hashem, *kirvat Elokim*.

Shavuot is not only about receiving the Torah. It is an opportunity to revisit the experience of *Maamad Har Sinai* and rediscover the light in the darkness, the clarity in the concealed. When we allow it to accompany us throughout the year it will help us navigate the journey of our lives. ■

## JOIN OUR VIRTUAL OPEN HOUSE 1PM EST SUNDAY, MAY 23, 2021

For more info and to register visit [www.jct.ac.il/international](http://www.jct.ac.il/international)

### Your Future Within Reach

#### Machon Tal

International Program for Women

**B.S. in Computer Science**

Highly Regarded 3-Year Degree  
Complete Program in English  
Torah Environment  
Degree with High Earning Potential



Siona Margrett  
Program Coordinator  
[siona@jct.ac.il](mailto:siona@jct.ac.il)

**ONLY \$3,800 PER YEAR**

According to current exchange rate

### Your Future Within Reach

#### Machon Lev

International Program for Men

**B.S. in Computer Science**

**B.A. in Business Administration**

Complete Degrees in English  
3-Year Programs  
Torah Environment



Gavriel Novick  
Program Coordinator  
[gnovick@jct.ac.il](mailto:gnovick@jct.ac.il)

**ONLY \$3,800 PER YEAR**

According to current exchange rate