



PORTION FROM THE PORTION

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The Holiday of Matan Torah - A Spiritual or Physical Holiday?

Shavuot is a holiday that seems to include two very contradictory concepts. On one hand it is the day we received the Torah from God – a very spiritual day. On the other hand it also includes many physical components which are listed below.

1) The holiday is also called Chag HaKatzir (The Harvest Festival), celebrating the produce from their hard physical work in the fields.

2) During the time of the Beit Hamikdash one of the special mitzvot of the holiday was the mitzvah of *hanafat shtei halechem* – the korban of raising the two breads. This ceremony was in order that their breads and other foods (physical objects) would be blessed and be bountiful.

3) The *korban* of the *Shtei Halechem* is also called *Mincha Chadasha* - a new *mincha* sacrifice. While all other *mincha* sacrifices must not be *chametz* – this one, brought on

Shavuot, is actually supposed to be *chametz*. *Chametz* is usually connected to the physical aspects of man.

4) During the time of the *Beit Hamikdash Shavuot* was when people began bringing *bikurim* – first fruits to the *Mikdash*. Again, most *korbanot* must not include honey or leavening - *dvash* or *seor* which are actually brought in the *Bikurim* (“honey” from the dates).

5) It is a judgment day for fruits - (physical blessings).

6) In the Torah there are two seemingly contradictory verses related to *Azeret*, another name for Shavuot. One says “*Azeret l’Hashem Elokecha* – the holiday of *Azeret* is for **God**” (Dvarim 16:8) and “*Azeret Tehiye Lachem* – the holiday of *Azeret* is for **you**.” (Bamidbar 29:8). Are we supposed to celebrate *Azeret* by only doing spiritual things for God – davening, learning Torah, all day and night- which would seem appropriate for such an auspicious day as the giving of the Torah? Or are we supposed to spend the time doing things for ourselves as well– like eating and drinking festive foods? The *Gemara* (*Psachim* 58:2) says that whereas with the other holidays there is a dispute whether they are all for God or part for God and part for us – all agree that related to *Azeret* it is 50-50. It is not meant to be a day

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like Yom Kippur –only spirituality. Why so?

The Torah was given to humans - as it says in *Berachot* (25:2) "*Lo nitna Torah lmalacehi hasharet* – the Torah wasn't given to angels". The spiritual Torah was given to us to teach us how to live in this physical world. That's why the holiday has those two names "*Chag matan Torah*" – spiritual, and "*Chag Hakatzir*" – physical. We are not meant to live like hermits removing ourselves from the world around us. The *Torah* helps us bring the spiritual into the physical world that we live in. Half the day for *Hashem* and half the day for us to celebrate our receiving the *Torah* and its *mitzvot* while eating, drinking, singing, and rejoicing. The Torah was given and is continuously given to us humans. Let us enjoy this amazing present. Chag Sameach!



Sorry to disappoint all those who wanted another new cheese cake recipe for Shavuot – this year I decided to include a cute meaty recipe instead. This is an easy, yummy dish that comes out looking like the small modest mountain where God gave us the Torah. Chag Sameach.

HAR SINAI MEAT AND POTATOES

- 1/2 kilo ground chicken, turkey or meat
- 1-3 tsp Cumin
- tsp Pepper

- 1-3 tsp Garlic
- Salt, to taste
- Olive oil
- 8 small potatoes, peeled and cooked
- Paprika
- Parsley

Combine the first 5 ingredients to form one mixture. If you like things spicy add more spices – less spicy if you like it less spicy. Mix well. Spread out on a baking sheet. Spray with olive oil. Bake at 200 for 15-25 minutes or until done. Take out and cool. Slice into small rectangles. (These meat sticks can be made ahead and frozen). Arrange the cooked potatoes on a flat baking dish. Sprinkle with a bit of paprika and parsley (the flowers of the Har Sinai potato). Lay two of the meat sticks on top of each potato. You can attach them upright with a toothpick or skewer if you prefer. Spray with a bit of oil on top. Serve hot. Have fun with this recipe – let the kids come up with their own additions. ■

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