



BADERECH

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Shavuot: Stay Until Sunday

As a therapist and guide, the prominent author of *Living in the Presence*, Rabbi Dr. Benjamin Epstein, integrates traditional mindfulness with spiritual and cognitive-behavioral techniques. In advance of *Zeman Matan Toraseinu*, the celebration of the giving of the Torah on Shavuos, my dear friend (and bandmate) shares the following instructive *ma'aseh*:

There was a busy Chassidische businessman who had been procrastinating and putting off his regular visit to see his rebbe. When he finally found time to visit, he decided he would stay for Shabbos and leave immediately after.

Normally, he would receive a warm welcome from the tzadik upon arrival, but this time the rebbe barely acknowledged him. The chasid felt insulted and asked if everything was okay. The rebbe looked at him and

responded: “A chasid who can’t stay until Sunday doesn’t need to be here on Shabbos either.”

The chasid regretted the way he had come to his rebbe, had a change of heart, and said, “I’m here as long as the rebbe wants me to be.”

That Shabbos at Shalosh Seudos the rebbe taught the pasuk of Matan Torah: *Vayomer Hashem el Moshe, Alei Alai heHara, veHeyeh Sham* (Shemos 24:12), “Come up to me to the Mountain and *be there*.” The rebbe asked, “What does the seemingly extra phrase *veHeyeh Sham* teach us? Sometimes there’s a chasid who is coming to see his rebbe, and while on his way, he’s already leaving. So certainly, even when he is there, he isn’t really there.”

Hashem tells Moshe — and instructs each one of us — that it’s not enough to ascend the Mountain. ‘I just want you to be with Me, *veHeyeh Sham*, be there.’

When it comes to celebrating Shavuos, *Zeman Matan Toraseinu*, the Time of the Giving of Our Torah, there are a lot of Minhagim that come along with it. Whether it’s learning Torah all night, going to the Mikveh at dawn, or eating milchigs, we sometimes go about the Yom Tov like busy ‘businessmen’. It’s easy to forget that the main focus of Shavuos is simply to stop, be present, and ‘receive the Torah’. On Shavuos, Hashem invites us to come up to the Mountain of Revelation and just be there with Him.

A common misconception regarding Shavuos is that the primary way to celebrate it is through learning Torah. *Kabbalas haTorah* is

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not the same as *Limud haTorah*; receiving the Torah is not the same as learning Torah.

Every day, we pursue the value of *Talmud Torah K'neged Kulam*, "The Torah study takes precedence over all." All year round, we attempt to observe *VeHagisa Bo Yomam v'Laila*, "and meditate in it day and night;" there is no set time for the Mitzvah of *Talmud Torah*. We are called to Torah day and night, everywhere, at all times. Thus, '*Limud HaTorah*', studying, is not essentially connected to the observance and celebration of Shavuos.

On Shavuos we simply aim to relive the experience of Revelation, our *Maamad Har Sinai*, "standing in awe at Mount Sinai". We focus on experiencing our collective joy at receiving the Torah. This experience is beyond the activity of delving into the information, the mitzvos, and the philosophy of Torah. It is beyond observing the specific Minhagim of the Yom Tov. Shavuos is a holiday of *Dveikus*, "being with Hashem", connecting with and celebrating our relationship with the *Nosein HaTorah*, the Giver of the Torah.

Zohar teaches, *Istakel b'Oraisa uBara Alma*, "Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world." Torah predates Har Sinai, and therefore even when we are not learning, we are connected to it. On Shavuos, we realize that Torah is the context of our lives; *Ki Heim Chayeinu...* 'Torah is our life itself.'

This brings us to a deceptively profound and deep teaching of our *Bubbies* and *Savtas*: "Shavuos is the best of the *Shalosh Regalim*, the Three Festivals. On Pesach we may eat wherever we want, but not whatever we want. On Sukkos, we can eat whatever we want, but not wherever we want. But on Shavuos, we can eat whatever we want, whenever we want, wherever we want!"

Whether we are davening or reciting the *Tikkun Layl Shavuos* in shul, celebrating at home, or eating Milchigs or Fleishigs at a Yom Tov Seudah; whether it is day or night, we are sleeping or awake, the main expression of *Zeman Matan Toraseinu* is the awareness of this special opportunity to "be with Hashem." Whatever we are doing it is to celebrate our receiving of the Torah by affirming that Torah embraces and addresses every facet of our lives. Wherever we are, whatever we are doing, Hashem wants us to "be with Him," and to enjoy! ■

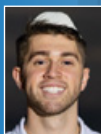
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Excerpt from Rav Judah's upcoming "Baderech: Along the Path of the Torah" (Summer 2026/5786)

Rav Judah Mischel is executive director of Camp HASC, the Hebrew Academy for Special Children. He is the founder of Tzama Nafshi and the author of the "Baderech" series. Rav Judah lives in Ramat Beit Shemesh with his wife Ora and their family.

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