



# REBBETZIN SHIRA SMILES

FACULTY, OU ISRAEL CENTER

## Powerful Preparation

It is fascinating to realize how much preparation the Torah dedicates to the holiday of Shavouth. We have the 49 day count, which automatically builds anticipation and yearning. We then have the week itself before Shavouth that is replete with special energy. On Rosh Chodesh the people come to Har Sinai, and one feels the anticipation mounting. The week before Shavouth we have a day referred to 'yom hamyuchas' a day we were told that we are the chosen and special nation. Likewise, we have the 'shloshet yemei hagbalah' the three days of preparation. Why does Shavouth have so much build up?

The Sefer Hachinuch offers a classic answer when explaining the mitzvah of Sefirat HaOmer. The count is in order to build an excitement and anticipation towards the receiving of the Torah. This anticipation is in order to

underscore the importance of Torah as the essence and totality of our lives. Each year as we enter into this time we remind ourselves of the centrality of Torah and ensure that we realign our values with that of the will of Hashem.

R. Biderman in Be'er Hachayim suggests that one method of tapping into this energy is through focusing during the week prior to Shavouth in the tefilla of Ahava Rabbah. This tefilla is the quintessential tefilla asking Hashem to help enlighten our eyes in Torah, and enabling us to experience the beauty and love of Torah. Indeed, many yeshivot despite learning the entire night of Shavouth, would spend a few hours reciting Ahava Rabbah on Shavouth morning. Where one invests their heartfelt tefillot is an indication of what is really important for them.

Another reason why there is so much build up toward Shavouth is because it is a yom hadin. Similar to Elul which prepares for the yom hadin of Rosh Hashana, the 49 days of sefira, are a preparation of the yom hadin of Shavouth. The Shelah Hakadosh notes that the yom hadin of Shavouth is on one's ruchniyus for the entire year. On Shavouth it is decided how many times we will be inspired when we daven. How often we will be inspired by listening to a shiur. How much we will be influenced by our spiritual mentors to make changes in our lives. While Rosh Hashana decides how much money we will be given during the course of the year, Shavouth is how much we will be inspired spiritually over the year.

Sefirat Haomer is a time of working on oneself in increased Torah learning, and middot

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improvement. It is a time to show Hashem and ourselves how this is the focal point of our lives, readying ourselves for this time of judgement. Minhag Yisrael is to learn Torah the night of Shavouth, and to complete sefer Tehilim on the day of Shavouth. Being moser nefesh to devote oneself on the day of Shavouth for both learning and tefilla is a zechus to be able to be judged for a year replete with spiritual opportunities of growth and connection. ■

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