



כִּלְעֵי הַחֹדֶשׁ

Clilei HaChodesh

Sivan 5781

Torah Thoughts from the YIGC Community

Yom Hameyuchas

Josh Botnick

Bet Sivan (ב' סיון) is an important day in my life. It happens to be the day I got married – which led to my accidentally finding out that it is a date with broader special meaning in the Jewish calendar.

When researching topics to talk about at our *sheva berachos*, I looked up the *simanim* tied to Shavuot, and came across an interesting line in the Magen Avraham. The Rema writes (OC 494:3) that we don't say *Tachanun* from Rosh Chodesh Sivan through the 8th. The Magen Avraham explains:

For immediately on the second of Sivan, Moshe said to sanctify themselves for the Torah, as in the 8th *perek* of Shabbos. *Hagahot Minhagim* wrote that “the three days before Shavuot, we don't fast,” for they are the “Days of Restraint” [*sheloshes yemei hagbalah*, preceding *matan Torah*]. This implies that on the second of Sivan, it is permitted to fast – but the general custom is not to fast, for the reason I wrote above.

The Gemara (Shabbos 86b) explains that on Rosh Chodesh Sivan, the first day at Har Sinai, Moshe didn't say anything to Bnei Yisrael because they were tired from traveling. But on the second day, ב' סיון, Moshe told them: “You shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Shemot 19:6). Bnei Yisrael answered, as one: “Everything that G-d has commanded, we will do” (ibid. 8). What an important day! On ב' סיון, Bnei Yisrael accepted the Torah! This is why the Magen Avraham says that while fasting on *bet Sivan* is permissible, the universal custom is not to take on a fast that day.

The Aruch Hashulchan (OC 494:7) references the same idea and calls ב' סיון a day of *simcha*, but also gives it a name. He notes that *Tachanun* is not recited on Rosh Chodesh or during the three days preceding Shavuot, then adds:

The day between Rosh Chodesh and the first day of “Restraint” is also included in *simcha*. And further: Because Moshe told them to sanctify themselves on that day, and we call it **Yom Hameyuchas** because of this.

He calls this day *Yom Hameyuchas* – the day on which we took upon ourselves to be a holy nation to Hashem and establish our *yichus*, our connection and distinction as Hashem's nation.

Rav Shlomo Kluger, in *Ha'elef Lecha Shlomo* #331, mentions a simpler reason for the name *Yom Hameyuchas*. He says the custom is to call

this day *Yom Hameyuchas* because it is sandwiched between two holy days: Rosh Chodesh (א' סיון) and the first day of *sheloshes yemei hagbalah*. Because of its connection to those special dates, we don't fast or say *Tachanun*. [Tangentially, Daniella and I received a *heter* not to fast on our wedding day.] He quotes the Gemara in Taanis (18a) regarding a different date positioned between 2 holidays:

Since this day is positioned between two holidays, they made it like a holiday in its own right, and it is prohibited [not only to fast but] even to eulogize.

Based on the analysis in this Gemara, ב' סיון is called *Yom Hameyuchas* because it shares the “*yichus*” or distinction of its neighboring days. *Yom Hameyuchas* has no intrinsic holiness, but it reflects the holiness of Rosh Chodesh and *sheloshes yemei hagbalah* that surrounds it and is therefore also a holiday.¹

I read a fascinating explanation of this concept on the OU website²:

The Sages, in their great sensitivity, were concerned even for the feelings of inanimate objects, and even for the feelings of “entities” such as units of time, like days, the existence of which is even more tenuous than that of “objects.” In the case of objects, we find them concerned for the feelings of embarrassment of the *challot*, the Shabbat loaves, while Kiddush is recited over wine, requiring the *challot* to be covered. So they assigned a name to the Day that sat forlorn in the shadow of Shavuot and the Shloshet Yemei Hagbalah, the “Day of Distinction,” a name that it didn't really deserve.

More simply, perhaps since ב' סיון sits squarely between Rosh Chodesh and the *sheloshes yemei hagbalah*, it too is swept up in the overall *simcha* of the period. As such, *Yom Hameyuchas* achieves its prestige from its proximity to the holy days that surround it – not as a concession to its embarrassment, but rather because of its unique position!

Based on this, I realized how appropriate it is to get married on *Yom Hameyuchas*. As I shared at my *sheva berachos*, we too become elevated when we attach ourselves to someone special.

1. See also *Sefer Taamei Haminhagim* #421.

2. https://www.ou.org/holidays/yom_hameyuchas_-_the_day_of_distinction/

The Golden Calf: Where Did It All Go Wrong?

Jeffrey Lautman

Most people assume that the sin of the Golden Calf was that the Israelites worshipped an idol. But was there perhaps something more profound than meets the eye?

(The genesis of this shiur, which our group learned after the *Hashkama Minyan*, is actually credited to my son Akiva and his preparation to *lein* Parshat Ki Tisa.)

In Shemot 32:1, the people believe Moshe is delayed, perhaps not

coming back at all, and they ask Aharon for a substitute: “make us a god (אֱלֹהִים) who shall go before us; for as for this man Moses...we know not what is become of him.”

Does אֱלֹהִים here mean a god? Clearly not; they want a substitute for Moshe, whom the Jewish people never perceived as a deity. They want a leader “who will go in front of us.”

The Torah then describes how Aharon constructs the calf, builds an

altar, and announces a holiday. Note that he does not say which sacrifices they will offer. He doesn't have to; he has a precedent at the end of Parshat Mishpatim, which we will soon analyze.

In *pasuk* 6, things get worse. The people brought (וַיִּגִּשׁוּ) sacrifices and sat to eat and drink, then "rose up to make merry," which implies licentious behavior not befitting a worship service.

Why did their behavior deteriorate thusly?

Here we come to my son Akiva and his *leining*. When he read *pasuk* 6, I had him read it to me a few times because I was surprised by the word וַיִּגִּשׁוּ, which is not associated with a *korban shelamim* anywhere else in Tanach. (The common verbs used with this sacrifice are: ויעלו, ויעשו, and ויזבחו.) I thought there must be a connection between that unique verb and the degradation of the nation's behavior in the second half of the *pasuk*.

To find that connection, we need the narrative that preceded this story, at the end of Parshat Mishpatim.¹ God tells Moshe to ascend the mountain, along with Aharon and other leaders, "and worship from afar" (24:1). Then, "Moses alone shall come near (וַיִּגִּשׁ) to the LORD; but they shall not come near (לֹא יִגִּשׁוּ)."

A boundary is established; there must be a distance between even these leaders and God. Only Moshe is allowed to approach – and notice that the *shoresh* used is the same one that later describes the sacrifice before the Golden Calf. As to the rest of the nation, they were not to ascend from their base camp at all.

In the next *pasuk*, Moshe descends and relays God's word, followed by a sacrificial ceremony. They offer the same types of sacrifices as later offered to the Golden Calf (Aharon would have seen them done here), but with the more usual verbs ויעלו and ויזבחו. However, these sacrifices were offered by "the young men," specific people who are sent away from the base camp to perform the service. And unlike at the Golden Calf, there is no mention of eating the שְׁלָמִים.

A few *pesukim* later, the same group mentioned in *pasuk* 1 ascends again and all experience a prophetic vision – rather, two different visions. The first group sees an exalted vision of God (*pasuk* 10), while the "nobles of the children of Israel" were not invited to the same prophetic vision and see something – we are not told what – of lesser religious significance.² *Pasuk* 11 concludes, "they beheld God, and they ate and drank."

What is the significance of their eating and drinking?

Moshe relates in Devarim 9:9 that he was on Har Sinai for 40 days without eating or drinking. Everyone else, however, was told "return to your tents" (5:27) – to resume marital relations as well as eating and drinking. Those corporeal needs and desires required departing

from God and creating distance.

The closer you are to God, the less you are a physical being. Moshe, who achieved the purest spirituality, could forgo eating and drinking for 40 days and 40 nights. The next group ascended the mountain, though from a distance; they were granted a vision of God and apparently did not eat or drink during this temporary spiritual journey.³ Those with the lesser experience of God retained their physical needs. Those 2 words, ויאכלו וישתו, illustrate their inability to rise above the physical – so their spiritual experience was less.

Back to the story of the Golden Calf: The root of ויגשו always implies a change in the relative positions of two people. (E.g., see Bereishit 27:26 and 44:18.) When it comes to God, one cannot so easily choose to come closer: as we see at the end of Mishpatim, one is invited to approach or instructed to maintain distance.

Approaching God requires reverence, preparation,⁴ and forgoing physical needs, but that lesson was lost on the people. They ate and drank and even engaged in relations while trying to be closer to God. This behavior does not reflect an approach towards God but an attempt to drag Him down to their level.

God instructed Moshe to descend from the mountain because שָׁחַת עֲמֹק: the people have corrupted the relationship between man and God (32:7). They may have been looking for a conduit to God to replace Moshe, but since they negated the space between them and God, the relationship could no longer be the same.

Then God says to Moshe, "they have strayed quickly from the path that I had recommended to them" (Shemot 32:8). What was that path?

The path was defined before *matan Torah*, in Parshat Yitro: "and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation" (19:6). If we are to be a holy nation of priests, then we need not think, like the Egyptians, that only a designated individual can connect the masses to God. We can all be conduits for the voice of God.

May we always attempt to not only to guard and revere the space between us and God, but also strive to narrow it somewhat by moving from where we are to where we can be.

1. There is a debate about where the intervening *parshiot*, Terumah and Tetzaveh, belong chronologically, but as far as the story of Har Sinai, the preceding chapter is the end of Parshat Mishpatim.
2. The word used for these "nobles," אציל, is also used in Bamidbar 11:25, where it clearly indicates people who have spiritual integrity and mobility, yet with limits.
3. This is what we strive for on Yom Kippur.
4. Note the 10 days of repentance before Yom Kippur.

This month's issue of Clilei HaChodesh is sponsored in memory of our father,

Herman Levinson

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