

Shavuot is (Sort of) a Week-Long Holiday

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During Temple times, a person who was unable to offer sacrifices on the day of Shavuot itself (celebrated in Israel on the sixth of Sivan), was permitted to do so during the six days following Shavuot, through the twelfth of Sivan. As one of the pilgrim holidays, the Torah compares Shavuot to Pesach and Sukkot in several instances. Given that these other two holidays last for seven days, the rabbis derived that Shavuot too could be extended by six additional days for the purpose of compensating, or making up (*lehashlim*) for one's inability to offer sacrifices on the day of Shavuot itself (see BT Chagigah 9a). These days are known as *Tashlumin*.

Though these days are no longer celebrated in this way, due to the destruction of our Temple, they still find expression through several contemporary practices.

The Mishnah Brurah (131:36) notes: "There are places that omit *Tachnun* for six days after Shavuot, because the sacrifices of Shavuot have seven days of *Tashlumin* - compensation."

The Alter Rebbe, the founding rebbe of Chabad, writes in his siddur: "One may not fast from the first of Sivan until after Shavuot. [This applies until, and including, the 12th of Sivan]."

It is powerful to think about the week following Shavuot as a distinct period, potent with the sanctity of Mt. Sinai and the giving of the Torah.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe offers an insight about the spiritual dimension of these unique days. In one of his *Sichos* (lectures) he notes: "Although the Jews observed Shabbos prior to Matan Torah as well, their observance then could in no way compare to their observance once the Torah was given. Since all past events are revived and rekindled at the time of year during which they first occurred, we understand that the Shabbos following Shavuot is an echo of the first Shabbos that took place after Shavuot, to wit: it is the first complete Shabbos that we observe as a result of Matan Torah" (the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, *Yemei Tashlumin: Shabbos — "Before and After"*).

The first week after Shavuot is like the week following a wedding. Every day is precious, every experience feels new. As importantly, a relationship of love is now given expression through a lasting and enduring commitment, and a formal structure. In this way, the yearly celebration of Shavuot, as a reenactment of the revelation at Sinai and Israel's marriage, as it were, to God, provides us the opportunity to recommit to *Mitzvot* and experience them anew in greater wholeness.

The Tzemach Tzedek, the third rebbe of Chabad, offers a different insight through an allegory. He writes: "After a salesperson attends a major fair in which he purchases great quantities of merchandise, he does not set back home immediately. Instead, he dwells in that location a few more days in order to carefully package his merchandise, so that it won't be stolen or get damaged on his long journey home. This is true for Shavuot as well: each of us certainly acquired some 'merchandise' from abundant flow of the holiday's revelations. We therefore need to dwell a few days after the holiday, to well pack this 'merchandise' so that it won't get lost due to daily distractions" (*Sefer Hasichot*, p. 285).

The days of *Tashlumin* will come to an end this Sunday. How might we use this Shabbat and this Sunday to celebrate each and every *mitzvah* like a bride and groom on the week following their wedding? How might we hold on to each and every *mitzvah* or Torah insight, as a merchant setting back home on a long journey filled with distractions?