

A CELEBRATION OF PREPARATION

by Rabbi Yehudah Prero

This post is dedicated to the merit of Mordechai Leib ben Ita. May he have a refuah shelaimah.

The Torah tells us about the three "pilgrimage" festivals - the Shalosh Regalim. In the discussion of the Shalosh Regalim, we find (Devarim 16:16) the following command: *Three times in a year all your males should appear before Hashem your G-d in the place that He shall choose; in the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Chag HaMatzos), and in the Feast of Weeks (Chag HaShavuot), and in the Feast of Booths (Chag HaSukkot). . . .*

The names assigned to the holidays for the most part appear to correlate to an event or commandment associated with the holiday. To start, the holiday of Sukkot is aptly named. On this holiday, we are commanded to dwell in Sukkot that commemorate our dwelling in "Sukkot" during the sojourn in the desert. The name assigned to Pesach, "Chag HaMatzos," is also appropriate. On this holiday, that celebrates the exodus of the nation of Israel from Egypt, we have the commandment to eat Matzo, which reminds us of the bread that had no time to rise while the nation swiftly departed Egypt.

The name "Chag HaShavu'ot," however, does not appear to fit this mold. We know that we have a commandment to count the days and weeks between Pesach and Shavu'ot - Sefiras Ha'Omer. Yet, the holiday of Shavu'ot, as we find in the holiday prayers, is referred to as the "Z'man Matan Toraseinu," "The time of the giving of our Torah." The holiday commemorates this monumental event in our nation's history. What is the connection between the anniversary of the giving of the Torah and weeks?

Rav Avrohom Yitzchak Kook answers that indeed, each of the names is reflective of the essence of the holiday. On Pesach, Chag HaMatzos, the fulfillment of the special commandment of the day is accomplished through matzah, which illustrates that the holiday is the Z'man Cha'rusainu, time of our freedom. On Sukkot, Chag HaSukkot, the fulfillment is through dwelling in the Sukkah, even though the holiday is termed the Z'man Simchaseinu, "time of our happiness."

A gift cannot be given unless there is a recipient to accept the gift. Shavu'ot, as mentioned, is termed the Z'man Matan Toraseinu, the time of the giving of our Torah. Because the holiday commemorates a "giving," we need to prepare ourselves to be proper recipients. Obviously, this

preparation entails more than one day's work. We are given seven weeks to prepare for this special day, for this day on which we accept the Torah anew.

Yes, from the perspective of Hashem, so to speak, this holiday is the time that the Torah was given. However, from our perspective, this is the holiday in which we celebrate the receipt of the Torah. We celebrate the culmination of seven weeks of preparing for this receipt. On Chag Ha'Shavuot, the fulfillment of the special commemoration of the day was accomplished through "Shavu'ot" - the weeks of preparation, and therefore such a name is wholly appropriate.