

TWINS - PEOPLE, UNITED

by Rabbi Yehudah Prero

Although the date is never explicitly stated in the Torah, the holiday of Shavu'os occurs on the 6th (and in the Diaspora, on the 7th) day of the month of Sivan. The B'nai Yisaschar explains that the astrological sign for the month of Sivan is Gemini, the twins. This sign relates to dual aspects of the holiday of Shavu'os. We all know that when the nation of Israel left its enslavement in Egypt, it emerged as a nation that would now be free to serve the only Master, the Master of the World. When Hashem gave the Torah to the nation of Israel shortly thereafter, unity of purpose, holiness and love was evident between Hashem and the nation. Those siblings who are developed and born together - twins - symbolize this unity. Just as a special unity and bond exists between twins, so too is there this unique feeling between Hashem and the Nation of Israel.

The special unity experienced and evidenced by the giving of the Torah was not merely between G-d and His people. It existed amongst the people in the nation of Israel as well. There was harmony and unanimity in purpose. The feelings of camaraderie were so great that the Torah refers to the encampment of the nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai in the singular, "And he (Israel) camped there." This unity, as well, is alluded to by the sign of the month of Sivan, the twins.

There is additional significance to the sign of the month as it relates to the giving of the Torah. The B'nai Yisaschar quotes a parable. A king was preparing the wedding canopy for his daughter, and he wanted to display the beauty and splendor of his daughter in a way that truly befit a princess. One of the king's advisors suggested that she ride upon an elephant. She would be elevated above the throngs and masses, seated in lofty splendor, in true royal fashion. Another advisor noted that although the elephant may be tall, it is lacking the dignity and majesty of other animals, and therefore the beauty of the princess bride would not be fully complimented. He suggested instead that she ride upon a horse, well groomed, muscular, and dignified. A third advisor chimed in. He observed that while an elephant may be tall, and a horse may be majestic, neither of these beasts have the ability to verbally expound on the beauty of the princess nor the ability to physically demonstrate their respect for her, nor to bring her the joy befitting a bride with antics and entertainment. He therefore suggested that she be carried upon the shoulders of men. In that way, her beauty will be seen and she will be properly honored.

The month of Nissan is the first in the Jewish calendar. Accordingly, the astrological sign of that month, Aries, the ram, is the highest ranking, so to speak, of the astrological signs. Each astrological

sign brings with it certain attributes and characteristics that are imparted, perhaps in a metaphysical sense, during the month. The nation of Israel left the land of Egypt in Nissan. However, Hashem did not want to give the Torah in Nissan as well. Just as the elephant signifies an elevation above, so to does Aries. Hashem did not want to give the mistaken impression that the respect or honor for Torah had to be bolstered or enhanced, which could occur by having it associated with the "highest" of astrological signs. The Torah was to be respected in it of itself, and therefore Nissan was not the choice of month for presentation of this gift.

The sign for the next month, Iyar, is Taurus, the bull. The bull, just as the horse in the parable, signifies a powerful physical presence and beauty. We know that during the month of Iyar, the trees begin to blossom and plants begin to grow after their long wintry slumber. The beauty of spring is truly one of G-d's wonders. Yet, Hashem did not want to convey the mistaken impression that somehow the giving of the Torah needed to be enhanced by beautiful manifestations. He did not want people to think that the Torah was not worthy of being honored and praised if it stood alone. Therefore, the Torah was not given in Iyar.

But, as we know, the Torah was given in Sivan. Gemini, the twins, represent the people carrying the princess in the analogy. The twins, as people, have the ability to praise, show respect and give honor. The ultimate respect for the Torah comes from us. We, creatures of flesh and blood, were endowed with the ability to comprehend and verbally express our thoughts. It is with these powers that Hashem wanted the praise of the Torah to come. It is from people who can see the Torah, appreciate the Torah for what it is, and express that appreciation, that glory comes to the Torah and G-d. Therefore, Sivan was the month of choice for the giving of the Torah.

We have the opportunity, come Shavu'os, to recall how our forefathers accepted the gift of all gifts, the Torah. They accepted it as a unified nation. They accorded it the honor, respect and dignity due to such an exalted gift. The offer and acceptance of this gift firmly cemented the special relationship, the unity of heart and soul so to speak, that existed and continues to exist between Hashem and the nation of Israel. Let the lessons of Gemini not be lost on us.

Chag Sameach!