

NEW MEANING

by Rabbi Label Lam

A great deal of preparation goes into planning for and getting ready for the Yom Tov of Shevuot. We have all been diligently counting up to the 50th Day with great anticipation. Now the cooking and food preparation intensifies and then comes the great day! I have always wondered what makes some days more valuable than others. Why are so many regular days sacrificed for one big day? I had the same question when planning a Bar Mitzvah celebration and more recently a wedding. Why are we giving away so many days for the benefit of a single day? What makes that day so much more important?

I asked this question aloud at one of my son's Bar Mitzvos, which was near Rosh HaShana time. Again, why are so many days dedicated to the production of one special day? The answer, I do believe, is that the single day is not only one day. In the case of Rosh HaShana, it's the whole year? The whole year is scripted right there in the head of the year. By a Bar Mitzvah boy-man, the entirety of his future as a Ben Torah is hinging on how he launches his career on the day of his Bar Mitzvah. So too on Shevuot! It is an extra special time! A serious new beginning! Our individual and collective lives hang in the balance on such a day. It's not just one day! It's the entire future!

That's how I have been thinking about it for a good while until I recently revisited this fundamental Rashi on a well-known verse from near the beginning: And G-d saw all that He had made, and behold it was very good, and it was evening and it was morning, **the** sixth day. (Breishis 1:31)

Rashi comments: **the** sixth day: Scripture added a "hey" on the sixth day, at the completion of the Creation, to tell us that He stipulated with them, ["you were created] on the condition that Israel accept the Five Books of the Torah." [The numerical value of the "hey" is five.] Another explanation for "the sixth day": They [the works of creation] were all suspended until **the** "sixth day," referring to the sixth day of Sivan, which was prepared for the giving of the Torah. (The "hey" is the definite article, alluding to the well-known sixth day of Sivan, when the Torah was given.)

Rashi unloads literally "earth shattering news" based on a seeming extra letter "hey" - which is a prefix equal to the definitive article "the". There was something extra special about that 6th day which is a signal and a major reminder of another 6th day that will happen in the future. Without that date with destiny on Mt. Sinai 2448 years after creation, the world and its fullness would be deemed unjustifiable and unworthy of existence right from the very beginning.

Without that grandiose national acceptance of the Torah in the future then the entirety of creation

would have been aborted. Let us park for now all the major philosophical questions that explode from this notion. How can a free willed act be determined to happen in advance? This new understanding adds a whole new giant dimension to the value of receiving of the Torah on Shevuos. It not only impacts the quality of life going forward but it breathes life into the entirety of the past.

What good is that? Why does history matter? What is the value of justifying and rectifying the past? I think we can easily understand this in a very practical way. If someone invests hours to give a presentation and then they are not called upon to deliver that generates feelings of disappointment.

We can all relate to that. If we spend 50 days preparing for an event that never happens then that disappoints all the energies and the many days of dedication. HASHEM would not dare to disappoint a creature, let alone frustrate an entire creation.

One grandmother commented with an uncommon frankness about her feelings of extra love and adoration for her Shomer Shabbos grandchildren over and above her other non-Jewish biological grandchildren, "When I see these children I see the whole past and the whole future! When I see those, I don't see the past and I don't see the future!"

The Holy Day of Shevuos serves to unify the entirety of creation. It weds the whole past with the whole future. It awakens those vast continents of time and space seemingly void of real purpose with **new meaning**.