



UPDATED / EXPANDED EDITION: SIVAN 5782

On Shavuos we celebrate "*Matan Torah*" the giving of the Torah by Hashem to the Jewish nation.

But weren't the 1st Luchos (the Ten Commandments) received [and broken] on the 17th of Tamuz, and then again, the 2nd Luchos on Yom Kippur? What exactly is it referring to when we discuss "*Matan Torah*"?

The answer is as follows: Hashem appeared to the Jewish nation on Har Sinai on Shavuos. The Ten Commandments were heard on Shavuos, and that is considered "*Matan Torah*" even though the actual tablets were not brought down until 40 days later (17 Tamuz) and subsequently broken.

Moshe davened for 40 days, for Klal Yisroel to be forgiven for the sin of the Eigel (the golden calf) and then on Rosh Chodesh Elul went back up to Shomayim to receive the 2nd Luchos.

40 days later, on Yom Kippur, Klal Yisroel was forgiven for their sin (Vayomer Hashem Salachti Kidvarecha; See Rashi Shemos 33:11 and Da'as Zekeinim M'Ba'alei Hatosefos Bamidbar 14:20), and the second set of Luchos were brought down by Moshe Rabbeinu .

Thus, although none of the actual Luchos were brought on Shavuos, the revelation at Sinai, where Hashem revealed Himself to Klal Yisroel, was on Shavuos, and that exalted day is commemorated each year on its anniversary, Chag HaShavuos. (See Pirush Binyan Yehoshua beginning of Maseches Avos D'Rav Nosson for a more detailed treatment of the timeline of Matan Torah and the Luchos)

1) There is an age-old custom, based on the teachings of the holy Zohar, to remain awake the entire night of Shavuos and spend the night immersed in Torah learning. (See Mishna Berura Siman 494 S"K 1 for the reason for this minhag)

2) Moreover, the Arizal writes that one who spends the entire night awake, immersed in Torah learning, is guaranteed to remain alive for the remainder of the year and no harm will befall him. (Mishna Berura ibid.)

Although this is a tremendously difficult thing to do, and on a practical level not achievable for most people, it is important to try and spend as much time as possible immersed in Torah learning on this

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exalted night, and certainly not squander it away with idle chatter, and certainly not with forbidden conversation.

3) One who will stay awake all of Shavuos night to learn Torah, and plans to drink sporadically throughout the night, if he had in mind when reciting the bracha of Shehakol on the first drink, that it should cover everything he drinks that night, that initial bracha will suffice to exempt all the subsequent drinks throughout the night. (provided he did not leave the building where he recite the initial bracha)

4) However, it is ideal not to have this in mind, and rather recite Borei Nefashs after each drink and a new bracha of Shehakol on each subsequent drink. (See Halichos Shlomo; Shavuos Dvar Halacha Os 4 that it isn't considered a Bracha She'aino Tzericha)

5) If one is awake all Shavuos night (or any night during the year) and is learning Torah or reciting Tefilos when daybreak (Alos Hashachar) arrives, he does not need to stop to wash his hands immediately. He can wash after he finishes learning. (See Halichos Shlomo; Shavuos, Perek 12: 4)

6) Furthermore, he may walk more than 4 Amos before washing the morning washing of Negel Vasser (unlike when one slept, where he should wash immediately and avoid walking more than 4 Amos upon rising, before washing. (ibid.)

It is also permissible, when being up all night, to touch the eyes, the clothing etc. before washing (unlike when one slept, where the eyes, mouth, ears, and other bodily orifices should not be touched before washing) . (ibid.)

7) After being awake all Shavuos night (or any other night), the hands should be washed after Alos Hashachar.

The bracha of Al Netilas Yadayim should not be recited on this washing unless the restroom was used before the washing, in which case Al Netilas Yadayim and Asher Yatzar should indeed be recited. (See Mishna Berura Siman 4 S"K 30)

8) Simply touching a covered area on the body before washing will not be enough to necessitate the recital of the bracha of Al Netilas Yadayim. (See Halichos Shlomo; Shavuos, Perek 12:5)

9) If one slept [a Shinas Keva, more than half an hour in a bed] on Erev Shavuos, he can recite Birchos Hatorah as usual in the morning, even if he stayed awake during the entire night. (Psak of Rav Akiva Eiger Zatzal quoted in Mishna Berura Siman 47 S"K 28)

The above is true even if the nap he took during the previous day was while still clothed. (See Halichos Shlomo; Tefilah, Perek 6:1 and 2)

10) If one did not sleep during the previous day and was awake all night (i.e. he did not sleep at all from when he recited Birchos Hatorah on the morning of Erev Shavuos until Shavuos morning) he does not recite Birchos Hatorah himself, rather he should hear it from someone else who did sleep, and be exempted by him. (See Mishna Berura ibid.)

However, he does not have to cease learning Torah as soon as day breaks (Alos Hashachar); he may continue learning until the time that he hears the Brachos from someone else. (See Halichos Shlomo; Shavuos, Perek 12, Dvar Halacha 7)

11) It is customary in many congregations for the entire Tzibur to stand when the Torah portion of the *Aseres Hadibros* is read in public (this occurs 3 times each year: Parashas Yisro, Parashas V'Eschana and on Shavuos), as a commemoration of when they were originally given on Har Sinai, where it says (Shemos 20:15) that Am Yisroel trembled and "stood" from afar.

12) Although some Rishonim including the Rambam (in Sh"ut HaRambam, Freiman edition, Siman 263, based on Talmud Brachos 12a) forbade it, as it seemingly gives more importance to one part of the Torah over another, which of course is not the case, many Poskim nowadays allow it, as it is clear to all that we are doing it in commemoration of Matan Torah and not to give importance to the particular portion that is being read. (See Halichos Shlomo; Shavuos, Perek 12:8 where he allows it. Chacham Rav Ovadiah Yosef Zatzal in Shu"t Yechaveh Da'as Siman 29 rules that it is still forbidden. See also Shu"t Teshuvos V'hanhagos Vol. 1 Siman 144 for a compromise ruling)

If one finds himself in a congregation that stands, he must follow their minhag even if his personal minhag is to specifically not stand, as maintaining the minhag of the place you are in is most important. (See Igros Moshe Orach Chaim Vol 4 Siman 22)

13) It is customary to eat dairy foods on [the first day of] Shavuos. (See Rama Siman 494:3)

One reason (cited in Rama ibid.) is to commemorate the Shte Halechem, the special bread offering that was brought in the Bais Hamikdash on Shavuos, and thus eating dairy followed by meat will necessitate two separate breads for each eating. (See Mishna Berura S"K 14 - 17 for more details about this and other things to keep in mind when eating dairy followed by meat at one meal)

14) Another reason (cited in the Mishna Berura Siman 494 S"K 12) is that at Matan Torah the Jews received the entire Torah (as the entirety of Torah was included in the Aseres Hadibros, according to Rav Sa'adiah Gaon), and thus when they returned to their homes they were only able to eat dairy items, as the new laws they were just given required lengthy preparations (of preparing for, and actually slaughtering the animals properly) before they were able to eat meat. Thus, we eat dairy as well to commemorate that day. (Although the Yidden ate Mann, Chazal say they also ate other things, such as meat and also fruits from orchards that traveled alongside them.)

According to the first reason, it would seem that the meal itself should be at least partially dairy. According to the second reason, the Yom Tov meal itself needn't be dairy, rather dairy should be eaten at some point on Shavuos day, before the meal or any time. Indeed, there are various customs regarding this, and each individual should follow their custom.

Some people also have the custom to eat milk and honey, as the Torah is likened to milk and honey. (Mishna Berura Siman 494 S"K 13)

The holy Chofetz Chaim writes (in his Hakdama Rishgona to Likutei Halachos on Maseches Zevachim) to explain why the Pasuk (Tehilim 19:11) says "*U'Mesukim M'dvash V'Nofes Tzufim*", that the sweetness of Torah is sweeter than the sweetness of honey and the honeycomb, as follows:

"...It is known that the nature of honey is so sweet to the point that if something, such as bread or meat or any other item, falls into honey and stays submerged in it for an extended period of time, the item that fell in will be transformed into pure honey.

In fact, according to most Poskim, if the item that fell in was a forbidden food, it will become permissible after it is transformed into honey!

This is what the Posuk is teaching us, that the powerful sweetness of Torah is even more powerful, and transformative, than honey, to the point that if someone cleaves to the Torah and toils in learning it properly, even if his nature was very bad, the Torah can purify him and elevate him and transform him into a totally different, and better person!

This is what Chazal in Pirkei Avos (Perek 6:1) mean when they say that the Torah can purify a person into a Tzadik, Chasid, Yashar V'Ne'eman!"

What better time can there be to eat honey than at the time of “Matan Torah”!

15) As many people eat dairy meals on Shavuos, we will review some relevant Halachos to keep in mind.

It has become customary in kosher kitchens to designate separate tablecloths for use with meat and dairy foods. The tablecloths should be significantly different in color, size or other easily identifiable features, and easily identifiable by all members of the household as the ones used for meat or milk. (See Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah Siman 89:4 and Darchei Teshuva 89:48)

The tablecloths should not be used interchangeably for meat and milk without being washed, even if they have been wiped down well between uses.

If, however, they were machine washed, they may be switched from meat to dairy and vice versa. (See Darchei Teshuva Yoreh Deah Siman 121:60 and Rama Orach Chaim Siman 442:11 and 451:18 and Mishna Berura there)

Some Poskim allow using the same tablecloth for meat and milk if it is flipped over and separate sides are used for each food class, since most of our foods nowadays are served on dishes and don't come in direct contact with the tablecloth.

However, it is best to be stringent, where possible. (See Pischei Teshuva Yoreh Deah Siman 89:18 quoting the RadVaz)

16) Leftover bread which was on the table at a meat or dairy meal, no longer has a status of parve, and should be placed in a bag and kept track of, so as to make sure they aren't used in the future at a meal of the opposite class.

A cutting board that is designated for cutting bread should be kept away from meat and dairy foods. Also, this cutting board should not be placed on the table and used to hold the bread during the meal, and definitely no butter or gravy should be smeared on the bread while it is on this parve cutting board.

17) A Kosher kitchen should ideally have separate salt shakers for meat and dairy use. (See Rama Yoreh Deah Siman 88:2 and Kaf HaChaim Siman 88:29. While the Rama is discussing salt dishes where we dip into them, and indeed by those it is 100% necessary to have separate dishes, and not salt shakers with covers, which technically can be used interchangeably, many contemporary Poskim (such as Rav Yisroel Belsky Zatzal, Sefer Hakashrus, and others) apply this halacha to our salt shakers too, especially in homes with children (who tend to touch the hot food to the shaker, the ketchup bottle etc.) and especially where the shaker is used at a table with hot soup and other hot dishes (as is common at a Shabbos table) as the steam from the food goes into the salt shaker. See also Sefer Badei Hashulchan Siman 88:31 and Shu"t Rivevos Efraim Vol. 5 Siman 514)

The salt shakers should be different in size, color or other easily identifiable features, so that all members of the household should clearly know which one is for dairy and which is for meat.

If for whatever reason only one salt shaker is available, the salt should not be poured directly onto the food. Rather, the salt should be poured into the hand or onto the table and then transferred to the food.

This is especially important when the food in question is emitting steam. (See Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah Siman 92:8)

On Shavuos when it is common to eat a dairy meal at the Shabbos/Yom Tov table, it is easy to forget and use the salt shakers that are usually used at Shabbos/Yom Tov meals, which are Fleishig. This should be avoided.

18) It is customary to place grasses and flora in Shuls and homes on Shavuos as a way to commemorate the joy of Matan Torah, being that Har Sinai was surrounded by grass and flora (See Rama Siman 494:3 and Mishna Berura S"K 10)

19) Some have the minhag to also place trees in Shuls and homes as well, to celebrate the fact that heavenly judgement is passed on the fruits of the trees on Shavuos. (Mishna Rosh Hashana Perek 1:2. See Mishna Berura ibid.)

The Gaon of Vilna, however, rejected this added minhag due to the fact that the Aino Yehudim now use trees to celebrate their holidays. (Mishna Berura ibid. See also Da'as Torah Siman 494 where he quotes some Poskim who are not concerned with what the Aino Yehudim do and allow the trees to be placed.)

The minhag of grasses and flora remains intact according to most Poskim and is indeed the prevalent custom by a large segment of Klal Yisroel. (Though some do say that the Gaon of Vilna objected to flowers as well as trees, and many Yeshivos refrain from putting out even any grass or flora)

20) Many congregations have the custom to dance on Shavuos in honor of the Torah.

21) This is a prevalent custom in many Yeshivos, and it is a proper custom that should continue, as even though on Shabbos and Yom Tov it is generally forbidden to dance (See Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 339:3), in certain instances when it is for the honor of the Torah, it is permitted. (Ruling of Rav Shlomo Zalmen Auerbach Zatzal in Halichos Shlomo; Shavuos, Perek 12:14, based on Mishna Berura Siman 339 S"K 8 regarding Simchas Torah. See footnote 64 in Orchos halacha on the Halichos Shlomo ibid. that the Roshei yeshiva and Talmidim of the Radin Yeshiva would dance joyously with all their might on Shavuos, in the presence of the holy Chofetz Chaim Zatzal. See also Shu"t Minchas Elazar Orach Chaim Vol. 1 Siman 29 where he defends the Minhag of many holy Tzadikim who danced and clapped on Shabbos.)

22) When lighting Neiros before the onset of Yom Tov that falls out on a weekday, the Bracha recited is "Baruch Ata Hashem... L'Hadlik Ner Shel Yom Tov" (followed by the Bracha of "Shehechyanu", when appropriate)

When Yom Tov falls out on a weekday and the candles are being lit on Erev Yom Tov, as is done on Erev Shabbos, many Poskim rule to recite the Bracha first and then light the candles, while some rule that the procedure followed on Erev Shabbos should be followed here as well, and the candles should be lit, the eyes covered and the Bracha recited. (See Mishna Berura Siman 263:27)

However, if the candles are being lit on Yom Tov itself, as is the custom of some people to not light Yom Tov candles on Erev Yom Tov, rather to light them only after the men return from Shul and are ready to eat the Seudah (and also the way it is done when the first night of Yom Tov falls out on Motzaei Shabbos, as Shavuos does this year, 5782), then most Poskim maintain that the Bracha should be recited first and then the candles lit. (See Mateh Efraim Siman 625:33 and Elef L'Mateh footnote 50)

Each woman should follow her established custom.

23) A woman who negligently or even inadvertently didn't light the Shabbos candles on a particular week must from that week on always add an additional candle to the usual amount that she lights. (Rama Siman 263:1)

If she forgot multiple times, she is required to always add an additional candle for each time she missed lighting Shabbos candles. (Mishna Berura Siman 263:7)

This requirement was imposed on her as a K'nas, a penalty, to ensure that she is more careful in the future with honoring the holy Shabbos.

However, if the woman missed due to being unable to light (*O'ines*) she is not required to add any additional candles. (Mishna Berura ibid.)

This penalty is in place only if she didn't light the candles at all, but if on a particular week she, for whatever reason, lit a lesser amount of candles than her usual number, there is no requirement to subsequently add any candles in future weeks, as M'ikar Hadin only one candle is required to be lit each week, and this that we always light two, and add additional ones for each member of the family, is just a minhag. (See Biur Halacha Siman 263:1 Dibur Hamaschil SheShakcha)

Seemingly, this would apply to Yom Tov as well, however, according to some Poskim, since on Yom Tov she can still remember to light for the duration of the evening meal and thus there is less of a chance of her totally forgetting, they did not institute this Knas on a scenario that is not likely (known in Halachic terms as 'Milsa D'Lo Sh'chicha Lo Gazru'. See Shu"t Kinyan Torah Vol. 1 Siman 87. This is also the ruling of HaRav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv Zatzal quoted in Shvus Yitzchok page 6)

Other Poskim, however, do require the extra candle to be added in the event that she missed a Yom Tov lighting. (See Shu"t Be'er Moshe Vol. 5 Siman 101 and Vol. 8 Siman 63. See also Shu"t Az Nidberu Vol. 3 Siman 3 and Shu"t Mishne Halachos Vol. 7 Siman 35.)

Some Poskim rule that a woman who forgot to light on Yom Tov would only be required to add an additional candle each Yom Tov but not every Erev Shabbos. For Halacha L'Ma'aseh a Rav must be consulted.

24) It is prohibited to ignite a new fire on Yom Tov; an existing fire that was kindled before Yom Tov must be used to do any permissible kindling on Yom Tov. (See Shulchan Aruch Siman 502:1 and Mishna Berura S"K 1)

It is permissible to light a match on Yom Tov from an existing flame, such as from a Yahrzeit candle that is already burning (it is often easier to stick an unlit match into a yahrzeit glass than to stick a candle in, which drips wax and often puts out both flames. See Mishna Berura Siman 502 S"K 4)

However, the match may not be extinguished. It must be left somewhere safe (such as in a sink, or on the candelabra tray) to go out on its own.

25) It is customary in many Jewish homes to have a Yahrzeit candle burning from before Yom Tov for the duration of Yom Tov, as to have an existing flame available for any permissible kindling needs (i.e. cooking or lighting Yom Tov candles.)

Many Yahrzeit candles on the market do not burn for as long as it says on the outside of it, and they go out before the flame will be needed on Yom Tov.

Some suggestions to avoid this issue include filling the tin or glass with a little bit of oil, which will give you additional burning time, beyond the amount of hours printed on the candle, or purchase the 3 or 7 day candle, as opposed to the 24 or 48 hour ones, and extinguish it after Yom Tov, and save for the next Yom Tov.

Another idea that has been suggested by some readers, is to place the candle in the freezer before lighting it; seemingly a frozen candle burns slower and will last a few additional hours.

26) On Shavuos the entire Hallel is recited. In Chutz L'Aretz, this applies to both days of Yom Tov.

27) A resident of Chutz L'Aretz who is in Eretz Yisroel on Motzaei [the first day of] Shavuos and davens Ma'ariv (of Yom Tov) with a minyan of Bnei Eretz Yisroel who proceed to recite Kiddush Levana after their Ma'ariv (of weekday), should not recite Kiddush Levana with them, but rather recite it the following night when it will be Motzaei Yom Tov for him.

This is the case even if this will, for some reason, cause him to have to recite it B'Yechidus, alone. (Although generally there are still plenty of days left after Shavuos for Kiddush Levana to be recited properly)

He should be as inconspicuous as possible and ensure that nobody realizes that he is not joining them for the recital; if this is impossible and everyone will know, many Poskim allow him to recite it with them even though it is Yom Tov for him. (See Shu"t B'Tzeil Hachachma Vol. 2 Siman 37 and Sefer Yom Tov Sheini K'Hilchaso Perek 11:5)

[Although Kiddush Levana is generally not recited on Shabbos or Yom Tov (for various Kabalistic and Halachic reasons), if by not reciting it on Shabbos or Yom Tov it will result in missing the deadline for that month altogether, it may be recited even on Shabbos or Yom Tov. (See Mishna Berura Siman 426 S"K 12 and Sha'ar Hatziyun Os 12)]

28) The Gaon of Vilna was extremely stringent with the eating of Melave Malka for men and women alike. Once, the wife of the Gaon accepted upon herself a fast immediately after eating Seudah Shlishis, and went to sleep right after Havdalah, without eating Melave Malka. When this became known to the Gaon, he sent someone to wake her up and tell her that her entire fasting would not be able to rectify what she will lose by missing one Seudas Melave Malka. She immediately awoke and ate. (See Tosefes Ma'aseh Rav 39)

There is a debate among the Poskim if Melave Malka is required on Motzaei Yom Tov as on Motzaei Shabbos. Many Poskim rule that there is no obligation to eat Melave Malka on Motzaei Yom Tov, and indeed many people follow this ruling. (See Shmiras Shabbos K'Hilchasa Perek 63:4. See also Shu"t Radvaz Siman 620 where he writes that there is no Neshama Yeseira on Yom Tov as on Shabbos. However, there are sources that there is indeed a Neshama Yeseira on Yom Tov too; see the Hakdama of the Tikunei Zohar, page 11a)

However, other Poskim maintain that one should indeed eat Melave Malka on Motzaei Yom Tov as well. (This was the Minhag of the Chazon Ish Zatzal quoted in the back of Ta'ama D'Kra by HaRav Chaim Kanievsky Zatzal where he lists minhagim of the Chazon Ish he heard from his mother A"H, the sister of the Chazon Ish Zatzal. This was also the minhag of the Steipler Zatzal and the Brisker Rav Zatzal, based on the Tur's understanding of the Rambam that requires it. See also Shu"t Rivevos Ephraim Vol. 3 Siman 292.)

29) Tachanun is not recited, nor should one fast, from Rosh Chodesh Sivan until the 8th of Sivan, after Isru Chag (Rama Siman 494:3 and Mishna Berura S"K 8)

Many have the custom to refrain from saying Tachanun until, and including, the 12th of Sivan, as the Korbanos of Shavuos could have been brought (as Tashlumin, make-up Korbanos) until then. (See Mishna Berura Siman 131 S"K 36. See also Moadim U'zmanim Vol. 4 Siman 317 that this is the minhag in virtually all congregations in Eretz Yisroel)

Some have the minhag to omit Tachanun on the 13th of Sivan as well. (See Sha'arei Teshuva Siman 131:7. He writes there that on the 13th of Sivan, in Chutz L'Aretz, whatever the Shliach tzibur does should be followed by all who are in that minyan.)

Every congregation should follow their accepted custom. If there is no known custom, a Rav should be consulted for guidance.

WISHING EVERYONE AN UPLIFTING AND FULFILLING CHAG HASHAVUOS!

עֲלִיוֹנִים שְׂשׂוּ וְתַחְתּוֹנִים עֲלְזוּ, בְּקַבְּלַת תּוֹרַת הַכְּתוּבָה מְסִינֵי
תֵּאָר כֶּלָּה מְאֹד נִתְעַלָּה, בְּקַבְּלַת יוֹם זֶה עֲשֶׂרֶת הַדְּבָרִים



וּבְאוּ כוֹלֵם בְּבְרִית יַחַד, נַעֲשֶׂה וְנִשְׁמַע אִמְרוּ כְּאַחַד

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