

ב"ה

Days to Celebrate

DEMYSTIFYING LESSER-KNOWN
HOLIDAYS OF THE JEWISH CALENDAR



Essence to Essence: The Sinai Connection

SUMMARY AND TEXTS



I. INTRODUCTION

- There are few special rituals on *Shavu'ot*
- The foundation of Judaism

II. TIMELINE

- Six tumultuous weeks
- Five days of discussion and preparation
- Receiving of the Torah

III. DEAL WITHOUT BENEFITS

Text 1

Midrash, Sifrei, Devarim 33:2

When G-d offered to give the Torah to Israel, He offered it not to Israel alone, but to all the nations.

First G-d went to the descendants of Esau and said to them, “Will you accept the Torah?”

They asked, “What is written in it?”

G-d replied, “Do not murder.”

They said, “Master of the Universe, the very identity of our father [Esau] is murder . . . We cannot accept the Torah.”

G-d went to the descendants of Ammon and Moab and said to them, “Will you accept the Torah?”

They asked, “What is written in it?”

G-d replied, “Do not commit adultery.”

They said, “Master of the Universe, the very identity of our people comes from sexual immorality. We cannot accept the Torah.”

G-d went to the descendants of Ishmael and said to them, “Will you accept the Torah?”

They said, “What is written in it?”

G-d replied, “You shall not steal.”

They said, “Master of the Universe, the very identity of our father is robbery. We cannot accept the Torah.”

There was no nation that G-d did not approach to ask if they wanted the Torah.

- Signing a document without reading it first

IV. ME, MYSELF, AND I

- The “I am G-d” Introduction
- The internal space that is just for us
- Inviting a spouse
- Why weddings are happy occasions
- The gift of a lifetime
- Sinai—a wedding of sorts

V. THE PRIVILEGE OF SERVICE

- Marriage is long term connection
- Commitment enhances the connection
- True freedom
- Acts of service that bring us closer

Text 2Rabbi Shnuer Zalman of Liadi, *Tanya* 46

G-d forsook the higher and lower realms, choosing none of them, but Israel His people, whom He brought out of Egypt—“the obscenity of the earth” (Genesis 42:12) the place of spiritual filth and impurity, not through an angel, nor through a messenger, but G-d Himself in His glory descended there. As the verse states, “And I descended to save him from the hand of the Egyptians” (Exodus 3:8), in order to bring them near to Him in true closeness and unity, with a genuine soul attachment.

... Like a man who betroths a wife, so that she would be united with him in a perfect bond, as the verse states, “And he shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:24). Exactly similar, and infinitely surpassing it, is the union of the divine soul that is engaged in Torah and the commandments ... with the light of the *infinite G-d*.

- Our behavior matters because we matter
- Anything He wants
- Focused on *My*, not the *Torah*

VI. REACHING THE BOTTOM

- Why murder and theft?
- Ingredients for a relationship
- Even the Jew inclined to murder
- Serving to make G-d happy
- Growing to love it

Text 3

Midrash, *Shemot Rabbah* 12:3

This can be compared to a king who decreed that the people of Rome cannot descend to Syria, and the people of Syria cannot ascend to Rome. So, too, when G-d created the world, He decreed that the heavens would be His domain and earth would be the human domain.

When G-d wished to give the Torah, He rescinded this decree and stated, “The lower realms can now ascend to the higher, and the higher realms can descend to the lower—and I will be the first.”

VII. SQUARE TABLETS

- Two tablets for two groups
- First set inspires the second
- Each commandment links to its opposite.
- The symbiotic relationship

VIII. CONCLUSION

- Time to prepare for the wedding