



Twin Torahs

Yitro 2020

“In the third month after the Exodus from Egypt, the Children of Israel came to the Wilderness of Sinai” (Sh'mot 19:1). Rashi explains that Israel arrived at the Wilderness of Sinai on Rosh Chodesh Sivan, 6 days before we received the Torah there. According to the Talmud in Shabbat, the month of Sivan is represented by T'OMIM (Gemini) which means TWINS. Why did G-d choose to give us the Torah in the month symbolized by twins?

One explanation is because G-d gave us Twin Torahs, the Written Torah and the Oral Torah. This is what King David means “G-d has spoken once, but these two have I heard” (The Two Torahs) (T'hilim 62:12).

Rav Dovid Feinstein gives another interesting interpretation of why the Torah was given under the sign of the Twins. The Torah is called Torat Chesed (Mishlei 31:26). The Talmud in Sota 14a teaches that King Solomon calls it Torat Chesed because the Torah begins with Chesed, where G-d clothed Adam and Chava, and ends with Chesed where G-d buries Moshe. In order to keep the Torah properly, we must relate to our fellow Jews in the same way that one twin

brother relates to another. The Torah wants us to strive for twin-like sensitivity to each other's joys and sorrows.

This was the level that Israel attained at Mount Sinai under the monthly sign of the Twins. Thus, the Torah states “Israel encamped there, in front of the mountain.” Rashi wonders, why the word VAYICHAN - ENCAMPED is in the singular form when there were 600,000 men there plus many women and children? Rashi answers because at the Giving of the Torah all of Israel was united as one person with one heart. As the famous song goes, “UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL.”

This is the goal to which we should aspire in all of our relationships with our fellow Jews. Even though we are separate individuals each with different unique personalities and needs, we are still closely connected to our fellow Jews with love and responsibility for one another. As the Torah states in Vayikra 19:18, “Love your fellow Jew as yourself” and Rabbi Akiva said that this is THE cardinal rule of the entire Torah.

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