



Shavuot

The Importance of the Journey

We are all familiar with the concept of a countdown, but in Jewish tradition, we've got a count *up*. That's exactly what we have been doing since Pesach, all the way until Shavuot.

When it comes to a *countdown*, the journey doesn't matter. When you count down, only the goal matters, the destination, that which we have been dreaming of and longing for.

But when you count *up*, the destination, though important, is secondary to how you get there. When on each successive day, you go one step higher, you're growing.

One of the finest examples of such a journey was the greatest of them all: "Lech Lecha". Hashem said to Abraham and Sarah, "Make a pilgrimage from your household, from the place where you were born, from your country" - to where?

“אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר אֶרְאֶךָ”
“To the land which I will show you.”

They didn't even know what the destination was going to be. But that journey was epic, because every step of the way was filled with deep rooted faith in Hashem. But our tradition goes even one step beyond that: sometimes you don't even need to reach the destination.

That's the teaching in Pirkei Avot the ethics of the fathers:

”לא עָלֶיךָ הַמְּלָאכָה לְגַמּוֹר
”ולא אַתָּה בֶן חוּרִין לְבַטֵּל מִמְּנָה”
“It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.”

Sometimes we will pass the baton on to other people so that they can complete that task. The fact that we might not personally be able to achieve the goal should never stop us from starting the journey towards it.

So it's with all of those considerations that Shavuot has the most unusual and extraordinary name. "Shavuot" means "weeks". It relates to the seven weeks leading up to the festival, the weeks of counting, the count *up*. The actual festival is named after the journey that precedes it.

Yes, our celebration is of the anniversary of מִתֵּן תּוֹרָה, the greatest day that has ever happened in the history of the world, when Hashem gave us the Torah at Mount Sinai, that is still so critically important to us. However, the journey on our way to reach that moment is of great importance as well.

Chag Sameach.