

Why is it that Shavuos is known by the name that it is known by? On this holiday we receive the Torah on Mt. Sinai. Why isn't this holiday known as the giving of the Torah instead of by the name weeks, Shavuos? This seems a very strange name to give to such an important holiday. When the Jewish people were to receive the Torah on Mt. Sinai we learn that the mountain, Mt. Sinai, arched over them making a wall and G-d said, "If you will not accept the Torah it will fall on you but if you will accept the Torah it will go back to its original position". The Rabbis ask why should this be so? After all, the Jewish people had said Na Asheh V'Neshmah, we will do and we will observe. Why didn't G-d consider this sufficient? The answer given is because the Jewish people gave the wrong answer. They should not have said, we will do and we will observe. They should have said, I will do and I will observe. Many times people say we when they want to get out of an obligation, like we in the Shul are doing this when really they mean let's let the President do it. They want the glory but they do not want to do the work. Shavuos is a holiday of personal commitment. It does not have the outside show of Pesach because it is directed to man's inner life. It tells us that each of us must be committed and commitment demands that we give of our time. Many people are willing to give of their resources but only a few people are willing to give of their time. Judaism requires personal commitment. The Rabbis say that even the names of the first five books of the Bible point this out. The first five books of the Bible are Bereishes, Shmos, Vayikro, Bamidbar, and Devoreem which means in the beginning a name, an identity then and he called in the desert words, commandments. First the Jewish people must know who they are and what they are then G-d called to them in the desert. Every Jew must feel personally committed. Without this personal commitment we are in trouble. Before the Jewish people could receive the Torah they had to do three things. They had to set limits, they had to purify themselves, and they had to count time. In order to be committed one must have these three characteristics.

He must be willing to give of his time, he must personally have integrity and mean what he says, and, thirdly, he must realize that there are certain things he cannot do. There are limits to what you can impose on others and there are limits to what you can allow yourself to indulge in. This is what commitment requires. Shavuos is called Shavuos because it stresses the fact that we must give of our time. We cannot accept the Torah unless we are willing to give of our time. The Rabbis say that on this day the Torah was given but every day we can receive it. That's why the actual date of its giving is not important but our receiving is. We cheapen the Torah which is venerated in an Ark. The only way to honor the Torah is to personally implement it.

The story about the Martian who came down to earth. He was met by a panhandler who said, "Have you got a quarter?" The Martian asked, "What's a quarter?" to which the panhandler replied, "You're right, why don't you give me a dollar?"