

FIRST DAY SHAVUOS 1985
Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

On the holiday of Shavuos we have very little symbolism. We would think that on this holiday on which we really became Jews with the acceptance of the Torah, which really makes the Jewish people Jewish, that this would be our greatest holiday. Why isn't this holiday filled with more pageantry and ceremony? After all, it is the day we received the Torah. The answer, to my mind, is because the Torah as a object is not the most important thing. What we are supposed to do is internalize the Torah. We are supposed to become the Torah. We are not supposed to worship an object outside ourselves and then feel we have done our duty. The Torah was not meant to be idolized. It is not receiving the Torah but implementing it that is important, making ourselves the Torah. The Torah can be sold to rescue captives or to get married. Moshe Rabbeinu, when he came down with the first set of Ten Commandments, broke them. How could he break something given to him by G-d? The answer is that these Ten Commandments had no basic holiness. They were holy only if they could have an effect on people, change the people so that they would want to live good and decent lives. The purpose for studying the Torah is to make us want to do what we should do, to internalize our faith. It is not the showy outward appearance that is important. Shavuos stresses that by not having many symbols. It stresses that it is the inner man that counts. The study of the Torah should have transformed us so that we do not want to do anything else but live good and decent lives.