

## FIRST DAY SHAVUOS 1997

Rabbi Joseph Radinsky

Why is it that on Shavuos the number two and three predominate? We know that there were two tablets, upon which the Ten Commandments were written that were given to Moshe Rabbeinu. Why did there have to be two tablets? Why couldn't G-d just give it on one tablet? Also, we know that there are two loaves that were waved on the altar. We also know that the Adonos, the special prayer we say on the first day, is a double acrostic, so we see that the number two predominates on the holiday of Shavuos.

The rabbis teach us that the holiday of Shavuos is actually the marriage of G-d to Israel, and the Torah is our ketubah, that there are mutual responsibilities that we have to G-d and that G-d has to us. This is similar to life where we all have responsibilities one to another. We also learn how when the Jewish people came to Mount Sinai, it says, "And he camped," usually the singular, and Rashi says, "like one man with one heart." That is interesting because when the Egyptians pursued the Jewish people and trapped them by the Red Sea, it said that they pursued them "with one heart and as one man". What is the difference between how the Jewish people were at Mount Sinai when it says they were "as one man with one heart", or the Egyptians where it says they were with "one heart as with one man". When the Egyptians pursued the Jewish people they had one goal and that was to destroy the Jewish people. That caused them to have unity. They were not interested in individuals at all. They just wanted to achieve their goal, the same way that Stalin wanted to achieve his goal. He did not care if it cost millions of lives, like Hitler wanted to achieve his goal. He did not care if it cost millions of lives. He was not interested in individuals. He was only interested in achieving his goal. This is not what Judaism teaches. Judaism teaches that we

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always have to be concerned about the individual man. You always have to be responding and responsive to him, and that only after we are concerned about every individual can we be concerned about having one heart. In other words, if everybody knows they are part of a people who cares for them, then they will respond by giving their allegiance to this people wholeheartedly, just as we do in a family. If you know that your parents care for you and are concerned about you, you will respect them and care for them and be concerned about them, too. There is a mutuality here, so it is our responsibility to always be responsive.

That, of course, is what Judaism teaches us. Judaism teaches us that that is how we complete ourselves. Other religions have different ideas about how we complete ourselves. Some say by receiving passive love, but Judaism says by being responsible one for another. If we are responsible one for another, then we fulfill ourselves and create beautiful families and beautiful communities. What we all have to do is learn how to respond to our family, to our community.

The rabbis teach us that we have three responsibilities, and that is why the number three predominates on Shavuos. We have the Torah that was given after three days of preparation. Later the Tenach has three-fold parts: the Torah; the Neviim; and the Pesukim. The Torah was also given to the third child, Moshe, in the third month, the month of Sivan. This teaches that we are responsible to G-d, to our family, to our community, and to ourselves. These are our responsibilities, and if we fulfill these responsibilities, then we do a good job,

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but if we do not fulfill these responsibilities, then we have not lived a good life. The person we are honoring today has fulfilled these responsibilities. He is always there and willing and never says no to anything that is asked of him. He is always there for his family, for his community. He does such a good job for us reading the Torah. He is a learner of great note. He is not like that lawyer who came into a restaurant and looked at the menu and said, "I don't like things on this menu. Manager, come here. I request a change of menu." We know, of course, that a person has to also be humble in the way he asks and what he does. That, of course, is in consonance with having a wonderful relationship. We cannot just be demanding in a relationship. We have to give as well as take.

That's why the number two predominates on Shavuos to teach us that we all have to respond. We have to respond one to another, one to G-d, and one to our abilities. The number three also predominates because we need to realize that we have these three responsibilities. Let us all hope that we will realize we have these three responsibilities so the Mashiach will come quickly in our day. Amen.