

*Science says if we see "A" followed by "B", there is a possible relationship. With more cases, more credibility is earned. Last week we recounted the Talmud's story of an idolater who prayed to his god and was suddenly healed. Rabbi Akiva said this was coincidence.*

# WHAT WOULD HE SAY IF THIS HAPPENED MANY TIMES?

*(Discussed in this week's article)*

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# JewishTimes

Volume II, No. 30...May 9, 2003

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## IN THIS ISSUE:

PARASHAS EMOR	1,3,4
DOES IDOLATRY WORK? PART II	1, 2
GOD'S WARNING	4
SEVEN WEEKS	5

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## Parashas Emor

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"And Hashem said to Moshe, "Speak to the Kohanim, the sons of Ahron and say to them 'Let no Kohen defile himself through contact with a dead body from his nation'" (VaYikra 21:2)

This passage prohibits a Kohen from becoming defiled through association with a dead body. The only exceptions are the Kohen's

*(continued on page 3)*

## Does Idolatry WORK? Part II

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Following is a reader's response to our article "Does Idolatry Work" printed in last week's JewishTimes. In that article, we quoted Tractate Avoda Zara 55a deriving two principles from two cases; Case 1) a cripple "simultaneously" healed while praying to his wooden god, or Case 2) rain falling in "response" to idolaters' compliance with their godly commands in a dream. We stated that these are in fact nothing but coincidence, and falsely assumed cause and effect relationships, respectively. In Case 1, the healed idolater is nothing more than a coincidence with his idolatrous prayer. In Case 2, rain that falls immediately after an idolatrous practice, cannot be in "response" to idolatrous practices. The reason the Jew recorded in the Talmud had questioned the truth of such phenomena was due to his false sense that a relationship exists between two events that occur, either simultaneously, or subsequently. When phenomena coincide or appear in subsequent fashion, man is usually correct, and there is a relationship. But this cannot be the case when when we see phenomena occurring while idolatrous rites are performed. In such cases, there is no relationship between two events, except for the imagined relationship an idolater projects.



*Interesting dichotomy: Greeks were intellectuals, but believed in Apollo and other deities*

The reader's questions now follow:

**Reader:** Dear Mesora, in Case 1, the cripple who entered into a church and left in a recovered state is a singular, isolated event, so Rabbi Akiva's "coincidence" explanation seems acceptable. But if the same situation happened to several cripples, would the "coincidence" explanation still hold?

**Mesora:** Your question displays a misunderstanding of Rabbi Akiva. The Rabbi's theory is not valid due to a singular occurrence as you suggest. His theory is based on the fact that a stone or wood idol is a created thing, and therefore cannot manipulate laws of creation. Again, that which is created, is 'governed', and not the 'governor'. It is an unavoidable and irrefutable

conclusion that objects - which by definition are created - must follow laws, and cannot manipulate laws. Therefore, a created stone, quarried thousands of years later, carved into an idolatrous form and prayed to, cannot change reality or laws set in motion millennia prior to itself. A chair cannot alter its form, much less, control the carpenter who created it.

**Reader:** I am a physicist. Your statement about "A real relationship is one where there is perceivable, physical interaction" follows perfect, physical logic. Your statement "In case 1, the relationship is baseless, as a simultaneous occurrence does not suffice to create a relationship between two events" is however not logically precise. It is a fundamental methodology in physics to search

*(continued on next page)*

# Does Idolatry WORK?

## Part II

**RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**

(continued from page 1)

for simultaneous events to determine the POSSIBILITY of the existing relationship. The next thing a physicist would do is to see if these simultaneous events are repeatable. Only when the evidence shows no sign of reproducibility, do we conclude they are coincidence.

**Mesora:** To clarify, you suggest that when man repeatedly performs event "A", and each time that event is followed by event "B", that there is a proof that A causes B. So if ten times, dolaters pray to a stone for monetary success, and ten times, these ten idolaters see immediate success, you suggest that idolatry works.

How many times must event B follow event A before the physicist "determines" a relationship exists? If you respond with any number, you claim that a relationship is not based on true laws of cause and effect, but on hypothesized, unknown means. You have not determined laws explaining phenomenon, but simply suggest "there is a relationship based on repeated, identical results." This is not scientific, nor truth. Science explains what is real. It is based on fact, not theories forced onto reality simply to fill the void of our being answerless. A true scientist - as was Rabbi Akiva - will not accept repetition of cases as evidence for something being a cause of something else. Idols of stone cannot control themselves, let alone other things. Stone cannot hear a person's prayer. Stone cannot respond to anything, including prayer. Stone cannot alter reality. A rock cannot control God's unchangeable laws. Based on these unshakable laws, Rabbi Akiva's knowledge of reality - not his theory - determined that no matter how many times a fool prays to stone, the success witnessed following the prayer is in no way connected. Rabbi Akiva teaches us that we are to follow proven principles, not

inexplicable seemingly "repeated" relationships. Proven principles can never change. Assumptions do.

Another problem with the "repetition" approach is this: When formulating theories based on repeated events, you do not know why the assumed "effect" is happening. All you say is that B always follows A in time. You make no determination of a real law explaining this phenomenon. You admit ignorance. You are therefore wrong to suggest a cause and effect relationship. When one witnesses B following A many times, all one can say is that "I see B after I see A." He cannot say that A caused B, if there is no principle explaining this phenomenon. Incorrectly, your scientific equation requires no proven principle, whereas Rabbi Akiva held that with no proven law, there is absolutely no relationship. Regardless of the amount of times one can "repeat" phenomena, one is wrong to suggest relationships exist, if no principle explains such a duplication. Coincidence is the only possible explanation. In truth, one merely thinks he is repeating a phenomenon. Also, be mindful that we do not see 10 people praying at different time to different idols, followed by immediate success. So there is no real question here.

It is truly an emotion which generates this question - not a clear understanding of reality.

**Reader:** There are two issues here. One, to search for physical cause or relationship. Second, to search for supernatural cause. I think the second issue is the real interest of the discussion. It is clear that one needs no supernatural events to draw the conclusion about G-d's existence. Abraham arrived at his conviction without or before experiencing apparent miracles (Am I right?)

**Mesora:** Yes you are.

**Reader:** However, were there no miracles as recorded in the Torah, Heaven forbid, would Judaism still be the same as we know it today? Do all miracles recorded in the Torah have physical causes? Should one view the event of the arrival of Moses' Army and the split of the Sea of Reed as merely simultaneous events? Can we say that G-d uses

miracle to enforce people's faith or understanding on Him?

**Mesora:** You move to an area totally different an incomparable to natural causes, our first topic. You embark upon miracles, which are God's actions, not nature's laws. There is no comparison, but I will read what you have to say. Why God uses miracles is God's knowledge, something we are not anywhere near fathoming. We can seek a good possibility for His miracles though, and offer them as possible explanations.

**Reader:** For the Jews, it is natural not to be led by any other miracles into the belief of any other gods. But for a non-Jew, to closely exam a miracle. he can hardly be a fool.

**Mesora:** Jew and gentile alike must not be impressed with miraculous phenomena if they contradict truth. One may see all the miracles in the world, but this in no way can change  $2+2=4$  and make it  $2+2=5$ .  $2+2$  will always equal 4. So too, miracles cannot make a person believe an idol controls the world. Yes, we may have a question how a phenomenon was performed, but our question is no match for a proven law. Seeing 25 idolaters healed subsequent to their foolish prayers will not make a wise man even consider that the rock prayed to can hear, respond, reward or punish.

**Reader:** Maybe this is what people have in mind when they ask "Does Idolatry Work?" In this case, "A relationship where there is perceivable, physical interaction" is not a miraculous relationship and "A relationship where there is NO perceivable, physical interaction" could be a miraculous relationship. Is this reasonable? Of course, if one would argue that everything is a miracle, then there is no miracle. To identify a miraculous relationship one should use a rational method similar to what a physicist uses to identify a physical (real) relationship. If two events occur simultaneously with no other intervention, one may further explore if the phenomena is reproducible. If it is, then one should further explore if there is any possible perceivable, physical reason. If not, then this is a possible

miraculous event. No?

**Mesora:** "Miracle" refers to a suspension of a natural law. If the sea splits in half, that is a miracle. If a staff composed of elements turns into a devouring serpent, that is a miracle. But this seems of the subject.

**Reader:** Back to Case I. Rabbi Akiva said about diseases, "they are to visit man for a certain time, and they are to leave at the certain day, at a certain hour, through a certain means, and by a certain medicine". It just so happened that the idolater left the church precisely when his disease expired. From common medical knowledge, we also know the probability for certain disease to be healed without special means (I am also a medical professional BTW). If medical statistics show 0% natural recovery rate of certain crippledness, when several such cases "naturally" recovered under certain event, only a fool will not raise question why.

**Mesora:** Yes, one should always investigate what his mind registers as curious, this is how we learn.

**Reader:** Of course, this is not the case in Case I, where the phenomenon is an isolated incident of one idolater praying, and healing at the same time. Normally, a person would immediately endeavor to offer a cause even if it is a singular event, just because the chance is so odd. Rabbi Akiva's immediate conclusion about Case I as coincidence implies (to me) a radical disbelief of the possibility that a miracle can come out from Idolatry. Is that a general view of the main stream Judaism?

**Mesora:** Yes, a miracle (i.e., God's intervention) will not be performed by God to endorse idolatry. This is the height of impossibilities, as God's primary concern for man is man's conviction in His absolute, exclusive creation and control of all we see. To suggest that God would endorse idolatry is the most absurd of all absurdities. □

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# Parashas Emor

RABBI BERNARD FOX

(continued from page 1)

closest relatives. The Kohen may care for these departed. The pasuk specifies that the Kohen is prohibited from coming into contact with a dead body from "his nation". What is the meaning of this phrase?

Rashi interprets the phrase to mean that a Kohen can defile himself on behalf of a mait mitzvah – a deceased for whom there are no relatives. The obligation to bury this body supercedes the Kohen's prohibition against defilement. The meaning of the pasuk is that the Kohen may not defile himself for a body that is within the nation. The means that the departed is part of the community and will be cared for by relatives. But if the body is outside of the community – there are no relatives to care for the body – the Priest must bury the body.[1]

Seforno understand the phrase differently. The Kohen cannot defile himself on behalf of a deceased from the general community. However, he does defile himself to care for the body of a close relative.[2]

One very interesting explanation of the phrase is quoted by Mishne Le'Melech in the name of Sefer Yerayim. Mishne Le'Melech explains that the passage specifically excludes the body of an idolater from the prohibition. In other words, the Kohen is not prohibited from contact with the dead body of an idolater. This, of course, raises a disturbing question. The Kohen is not permitted to defile himself. Contact with any dead body – even the cadaver of an idolater – results in defilement. Why should the prohibition be limited to contact with deceased who are not idolaters?

Mishne Le'Melech proposes an interesting answer to this question. He explains that there are three basic means through which a dead body transmits impurity. The first is through physical contact with the

body. If one touches a dead body the impurity is transmitted. The second means is through carrying the body. This means transmits the impurity even without direct contact with the body. The third means is through occupying the same covered area as the cadaver. In other words, through being under a single roof the impurity is transmitted from the body to the person.

Only two of these methods apply to the body of an idolater. This body will transmit though direct contact and through being carried. However, if one is under the same roof as the body, impurity is not transmitted. This suggests that a lesser degree impurity is associated with the body of the idolater. Mishne Le'Melech proposes that the Kohen is not prohibited from contact with this lesser degree of impurity.[3]

Mishne Le'Melech's approach does not seem to completely answer the question. A problem remains unsolved. Assume a Kohen touches the dead body of an idolater. The Kohen will be unclean for seven days. Purification will require sprinkling with the ashes of a red heifer. These consequences are as same as those that occur through contact with the dead body of a Jew. Let us accept Mishne Le'Melech's assertion that the dead body of the idolater does not have the same degree of impurity as the cadaver of a Jew. Nonetheless, the consequences of contact are indistinguishable! Why then, is contact with the idolater's body permitted?

Mishne Le'Melech does not directly answer this question. However, he does provide an interesting hint. He explains that the prohibition against a Kohen defiling himself has a parallel. The Nazir – one who makes a Nazirite vow – is subject to the same prohibition against defilement. In fact, some of the specific parameters of the Kohen's prohibition are derived from the laws of the Nazir.[4]

This parallel suggests that there is a single consideration underlying the prohibitions upon the Nazir and the Kohen. What is this common denominator? Sefer HaChinuch suggests an explanation for the Kohen's prohibition that can easily

be applied to the Nazir as well.

The Chinuch explains that the Kohen is distinguished from the rest of Bnai Yisrael. The Kohen is expected to live a more spiritual life. He is provided with material support through the tithes, the sacrifices and special cities set aside for the Kohanim and Shevet Leyve. These provisions allow the Kohen to disassociate from the mundane and immerse in the spiritual.

The prohibition against contact with the dead is designed to communicate a message. The message is transmitted through symbols. In order to understand the prohibition, we must identify the message and its representation.

Let us begin with the symbolism. The object of the prohibition is the deceased. What does the dead body represent? The human is composed of a material body and a spiritual soul. In death the soul abandons the body. The dead body is the physical element of the human separated from the spiritual soul. In life the human is spiritually clean. With death the body becomes defiled. There is a clear message in this transition. The spiritual soul renders the body sacred. It elevates the material element. Without this spiritual element the material shell loses its sanctity and is reduced to an unclean cadaver. In short, sanctity is derived from the spiritual. The material body, alone, is mundane and impure.

Now we can turn to the message of the prohibition. The restriction against contact with the dead provides an admonishment to the Kohen and Nazir. These individuals are required to live on an elevated spiritual plane. The prohibition against defilement reminds them of their mission. They must concentrate on spiritual development and not be deceived by the allure of the material world. The prohibition communicates this message through symbolically expressing the relative importance of these elements and commanding the Kohen and Nazir to distance themselves from the dead.[5]

Before we can return to the Mishne Le'Melech's comments, we must consider an additional issue. Why is the idolater's body associated

with a lower degree of impurity? The insight of the Chinuch provides a response to this question. Defilement represents contrast. When alive, the human possesses a spiritual element. In death, the body is reduced to a purely physical level. The lesser degree of defilement of the idolater extends this symbolism. The idolater failed to adequately develop spiritually. Instead, the idolater brought a material element into the spiritual world. The reduced degree of defilement corresponds with the reduced contrast between life and death.

We can now explain the comments of Mishne Le'Melech. The prohibition against the Kohen's contact with the dead is not dictated by the results of the contact. Contact with the dead body of an idolater has the same consequences as contact with the remains of a Jew. Mishne Le'Melech's position is that the prohibition against defilement – for the Kohen and the Nazir – is symbolic of the mission of these individuals. This symbolism contrasts the spiritual complete human with the material remnant created by death. Only those dead that capture the highest degree of contrast are included in the prohibition. Therefore, idolater's body is not included.

**“Whether it is a bull, a sheep or a goat, do not slaughter it and its offspring on the same day.”**  
(VaYikra 22:28)

This pasuk prohibits the slaughter of a mother and its offspring on a single day. This prohibition applies to slaughtering animals for sacrifice and for personal consumption.

Nachmanides relates this commandment to another mitzvah found in Sefer Devarim. There, the Torah commands us to send away the mother bird from her nest before removing the eggs or offspring. Nachmanides explains that both commandments share a common dual purpose. First, these commandments teach us not to be heartless and cruel. Second, these mitzvot remind us that we are permitted to slaughter animals. However, we cannot destroy the species. Slaughtering the mother

(continued on next page)

# Parashas Emor

RABBI BERNARD FOX

(continued from page 3)

and child simultaneously represents disregard for the preservation of the species.

Nachmanides raises an important question. The Talmud teaches that one should not declare that the mercy of the Almighty extends even to the bird's nest.[6] In other words we should not ascribe the mitzvah of sending away the mother bird to the Almighty's mercy. Nachmanides analyzes this teaching. What is wrong with this interpretation of the mitzvah? Why can one not suggest that this is a possible motivation for the commandment? Apparently, the lesson is that we should not ascribe reasons to the commandments. We should regard the mitzvot as decrees from Hashem. We should not attempt to seek rational explanations for the laws of the Torah! Nachmanides acknowledges that this interpretation of the Talmud would render inappropriate his own interpretation of these mitzvot.

Nachmanides explains that he does not intend to dispute the position of the Talmud. Instead, he explains that the Talmud's admonishment must be more carefully considered. He asserts that the Sages never intended to discourage interpretation of the commandments. According to the Sages, King Shlomo interpreted virtually all of the mitzvot.[7] There is no indication that he acted improperly. The Sages were explaining that a specific type of interpretation is inappropriate.

Nachmanides explains that all mitzvot are given to benefit humanity. Mitzvot do not benefit the Almighty. Hashem is perfect and complete. He is does not derive any benefit from our performance of the mitzvot. Neither is He harmed by our transgression. Therefore, we cannot assert that Hashem's mercy extends to the bird's nest. Such an assertion would result in a series of

false conclusions. First, it would imply that the Almighty feels mercy for the bird. Second, in order to respond to this feeling He commands us to send away the mother. Third, the Almighty's sense of mercy will be frustrated by our neglect of the commandment. All of these implications are false.

Instead, these mitzvot are designed to make us better individuals. We learn mercy and compassion from the commandments. Similarly we acquire other positive traits through the observance of the other mitzvot.[8] □

[1] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer VaYikra 21:1. [2] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer VaYikra 21:1. [3] Rav Yehudah Rosanes, Mishne Le'Melech, Hilchot Avel, 3:1. [4] Rav Yehudah Rosanes, Mishne Le'Melech, Hilchot Avel, 3:1. [5] Rav Ahron HaLeyve, Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzvah 263. [6] Mesechet Berachot 33b. [7] Midrash Rabba, Sefer BeMidbar 19:3. [8] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Devarim 22:6.



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## God's Warning

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

In parshas Shilach, (Numbers, 15:31) we find God's warning that whoever commits idolatry "despises God's word". Rashi states "the warning for idolatry is from God, all other (warnings) are from Moses." The question is what necessity is there for God to be the One admonishing us in this single case? Directing our question more towards the answer, what would be lacking in the warning of idolatry if Moses or man, had been the one warning us, and not God? I believe this second formulation of the question directs us to the concept of "warning", and how in the case of idolatry alone, is God's warning essential.

A warning, by definition, is part of the Torah system. The gemara asks at times, "The punishment for such and such a crime we see, but from where is the warning derived?" Meaning, the Torah system does not only state punishments for violations, but it also includes passages which serve in part to warn man from acting in a certain way. One reason why we may have warnings, and not punishments alone, is to educate man on the destruction that prohibited actions cause to our soul. By investigating the ruin which results from such actions, man may better understand why not to engage in these acts. Man will come to conquer his drive for such actions by understanding the good derived from abstention. Thereby, man comes closer to the life of reality and goodness which is only derived from complete adherence to the Torah's principles.

A warning then must carry with it some principle whereby man is not forced to abstain through fear. Man is encouraged to abstain due to his appreciation of what is real and good. As the argument offered to abstain becomes more conclusive, man will be more convinced and his chance for abstention will be greater.

Not only is the content of an argument essential, but the delivery can also play a role. What is the best argument from abstention from idolatry? It is a warning delivered by God Himself, from an ablazed Mt. Sinai. Such a warning against idolatry which all the Jews heard, is the most compelling argument. God creates a miracle, and couples it with the two first Commands, "I am God", and "Have no other gods." God created an indisputable demonstration of His exclusive mastery over all existence: An entire mountain aflame, and intelligent principles were heard from inside those flames. God ruled out any possibility that an organism was at the source of the enunciated wisdom. No earthly being can survive fire. Those present, and equally true - we today, by way of second hand knowledge - are fully convinced that this intelligent Being Who gave the Torah controls the world exclusive of impostors. God eliminated the notion of idolatry by the statement that he is God and there are no others, while demonstrating so through miracles.

Sinai was the best formulation of a warning against idolatry, and remains our proof of God's existence. □

# Seven Weeks

RIVKA OLENICK

We just relived our Pesach seder as God removed us from bondage, He saved us, He redeemed us and then He took us as His people. We are now spiritually uplifted and we do feel joy. The second day of Pesach through Shuvuuous is called Sefiras HaOmer, the counting of the Omer. These are the seven weekly periods that coincide with Spring, the time when we anticipate the upcoming harvest that provides our food all year. We count the Omer, the new barley offering that was brought when the Temple stood. We still count the Omer although we've lost our Temple and we reflect deeply regarding its destruction with the hope that God may help us rebuild it. We are also aware of the Spring and the rain. Rain doesn't "just happen" and without it we have nothing. God provides it all for our benefit. We ask for God's mercy and that He not withhold His great blessing of rain. "Then I will provide rain for your land in its proper time, the early and late rains, that you may gather in your grain, your wine and your oil. I will provide grass in your field for your cattle and you will eat and be satisfied." "Beware lest your heart be seduced and you turn astray and serve gods of others and bow to them. Then the wrath of Hashem will blaze against you. He will restrain the heaven so there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its produce..." (The Shema). Do we realize how fortunate we are when God gives us the needed rain or do we just take the rain for granted and then become annoyed by it when it interferes with our plans! Each time we count the Omer we should remind ourselves how much God gives us. Each time it rains it should remind us that He watches over His creation and provides our sustenance.

"When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon the mountain." (Exodus 3:12.) We wait with anticipation the upcoming historical event of Shavuuous. At the end of the seven weeks we are claiming and declaring that we are no longer bound to man, for God has taken us to Him. Our freedom has worth and value only

when it is expressed through the foundations and principles of Torah. The goal of freedom and redemption is that one's true purpose in life is as a servant of God, not man. People think a "sophisticated culture" gives a person absolute freedom, it doesn't. Living in a culturally rich country doesn't give a person automatic freedom either. Egypt enslaved us yet it was considered culturally rich and sophisticated. Judaism has no culture, what it has is Torah as its way of life, its "lifestyle". For the Jewish person who lives the correct life this is the only means for freedom, "freedom only through Torah". This is the freedom that the Master of the Universe gave us at Mt. Sinai and for all future generations. We should be fulfilled spiritually and intellectually by internalizing this idea and naturally live our lives according to this understanding.

Before the Temple was destroyed the Omer was a joyous time now it is a time of partial mourning with no public expression of joy; no weddings and no cutting of hair. There is a reprieve from mourning on the day of Lag B'Omer but we are to be mindful of the great tragedy that befell us when twenty four thousand disciples and Rabbi Akiva died. Their deaths occurred between Pesach and Shuvuuous. It is astounding to think of 24,000 deaths within a seven-week period and curiously our mourning is not pushed off until Tisha B'av. We should seriously reflect on this tragic event and think into what it says in Yevamoth, 62b: "that they suffered and did not show respect for each other." In Bereshith Rabbah, 6I, it says: "They were envious of each other. To the bearers of Torah they were disrespectful and so they were disrespectful of the Torah itself." Disrespect and envy are a lethal pair and we must always be on guard against these feelings and thoughts that are provoked so easily. A person can have the desire to take revenge or feel hate towards another person at any time. This is what destroyed our Second Temple.

We can learn from the grave consequences that took place during that time and the

tragedy that befell us again during the horrible massacres of Jewish communities during the Crusaders and hopefully internalize the reasons for all their suffering. "Bear love to they neighbor as to thyself, I am the Lord." Leviticus 19:18. We are all part of our "Father's House..." The saying of Hillel is well known: "Do not do unto thy neighbor that which thou would hate to have done to thee." This is the guiding principle of all our interaction with each other. This changenesselfishness and self-love into consideration and love of our neighbor. To love our neighbor as we love ourselves is the realization that we were all strangers in Egypt and that we share the same goal to serve and to love God. What we are speaking about here is not love of the person himself, meaning his personality, but everything that pertains to the person. We are obligated to assist each other in everything that furthers each other's well-being and happiness. This is required of us even if someone's personality irritates us. It's not an easy task! But if he/she should suffer misfortune we cannot look at this as an opportunity to find great happiness in our own progress if it is at the expense of our neighbor's disadvantage. When God gave us the Torah at Mt. Sinai He elevated our existence and gave us the instructions to become "the light" unto the nations. Today is not any different, we are all here to assist each other, not to compete with each other. We are all here to grow and fulfill our true purpose. The remaining weeks can be used by each of us as a time to look inward and ask: What does Shavuuous and God's precious gift of Torah mean to me now? How can we help bring each other closer to Torah? Have I sincerely expressed my gratitude to The Creator for what He has already given me?

Master of the Universe, You commanded us through Moses, Your servant, to count the Omer Count in order to cleanse us from our encrustations of evil and from our contaminations, as You have written in Your Torah. Psalm 67.

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ShopFiveTowns.com (SFT) is new website designed by NYDesign.com. Its goal is to promote local businesses and merchants. But it's not your typical website. You don't buy any products here....you promote, and promote big time. The website offers numerous, well thought-out programs which are easy to join, inexpensive, and effective.

SFT proactively advertises your business: The "specials" page is not only a page on the site, but that page is also emailed every week to thousands, displaying merchants' promotions. Businesses may buy text or banner ads which can be linked to their websites and/or emails. SFT offers webpage design so businesses may display even more of their wares.

The coupon program (right image) enables merchants to offer 10-20% discounts. The coupon is also mass-emailed weekly to drive in-store traffic. Customers print the coupon from their own PC and redeem it upon their purchases. Below is a snapshot of the SFT home page. Various sized banner ads link to vendors' SFT webpages - an effective means for displaying new products and sales - Sort of a web-based window display! SFT webpages also enable customers to email vendors. This interactivity is not available in print ads, and generates increased sales. It also allows vendors to save that email address for future marketing.

ShopFiveTowns.com home page displaying merchants' banner ads

A powerful, store traffic magnet is the "directory" feature. It allows anyone to quickly locate any store, business or establishment by category.

The "classified" page is a cost-effective way to announce, advertise, post or search jobs, and more. Ads remain online for 30 days and can contain your website and email links.

All these promotional features increase your reach to more customers. Instead of passively waiting for walk-ins, SFT enables merchants and businesses to proactively and aggressively market themselves to larger audiences via new, exclusive opportunities. SFT harnesses the 24/7 web availability and the immediate reach of the internet, delivering your message to its ever-growing subscriber list.

Emailed coupons, sale announcements, banner ads, classifieds, and directory listings drive new traffic to those establishments purchasing these programs. Advertising is easy, and can be purchased online with a secure credit card transaction. To those of you interested in selling nationally, SFT webpages enable just that, with e-commerce already available for you.

SFT is also promoting itself on major search engines, and forging alliances with high-trafficked websites to increase your publicity. But to benefit from this publicity, you'll have to advertise on SFT.

Future plans include articles, a community events calendar, SFT street sales, LIRR timetables, selling goods online, and much more!

**ShopFiveTowns.com launches soon.**  
 Visit our new website and take advantage of exclusive advertising opportunities to grow your business!

Developed by NYDesign.com  
 This logo means savings at participating merchants

