

Thanks to Dr. Shaiya Rothberg from the Conservative Yeshiva for some of these ideas.

Today we are celebrating the receiving of *Torah* from Mount Sinai. Even though it's traditionally told that God gave us only the first 10 Commandments on this day, when we say *Torah*, we mean the whole first five books. And so this is a little piece about the first chapter of the first book of that *Torah*.

In that chapter, we learn about how God created the world in a very orderly and organized way. On each of six days, He created something different until He was finished and then rested on the Seventh Day, on *Shabbat*. But when we read the way God numbered those days, we see something very interesting.

In the Hebrew, we read the days in this order: one, second, third, fourth, fifth, the sixth, *Shabbat*.

Our Sages questioned this numbering [*Bereshit Rabbah* 4:9] saying it should either be one, two, three, etc. or first, second, third... Why one and not first?

And every number except six is given as a general one and not specific. And then we read, 'The Sixth Day.' So we can ask The Sixth Day of what?

We know that everything in our Torah has a reason for being there. We know, therefore, that these two anomalies have a purpose. Let's see what our rabbis tell us.

In trying to figure out why day one and not first day, the Rabbis look through our Torah and do find the term 'first day' in *Bemidbar*, [Numbers 7:12], when it says, 'And he who presented his offering on the first day was *Nachshon ben Aminadav*...' *Nachshon* was the first head of a tribe to present his offering to God during the dedication of the *mishkan*, the traveling sanctuary. This was the place that God would dwell with the Israelites as they traveled through the desert until they reached the Holy Land.

In reading that verse, *Rebbe Shmuel Bar Ami* says, This is the missing 'first day' that should have come before the 'second day' of creation! Why does it appear so late, a full three books after *Bereshit*, when Israel is dedicating the *mishkan*? And why in *Bereshit* does it say 'day one' instead? Because 'one' was the Holy One's state at the very beginning: He was completely alone. As opposed to the 'first day' which appears only at the time of the *mishkan* because then God was no longer alone but finally was dwelling among His creatures.

The listing of 'day one' tells us God's first intention. He wanted that connection of unity with His creations and by building the *mishkan*, the Israelites made a place for God to dwell with them. So the day of the dedication of the *mishkan* was the first day of God's dwelling with the Israelites.

And about 'the sixth?' *Reish Lakish* said [*Shabbat* 88a], this teaches that God made a condition when he was first creating the world. He said, 'If Israel accepts the *Torah*, it will endure. If not, I will return my people to *tohu vevohu*, to void and emptiness.' Building the *mishkan* fulfills the purpose of creation. The instructions on how to build the *mishkan* are found in the *Torah*. And the *Torah* was given on the sixth of Sivan at Mount Sinai.

Even in its first chapter, the Torah tells us how important we are to God. He created us to be in perpetual connection with him and he gave us the tools for that connection on *Shavuot*. May we all have a connected and holy Holiday.

*Hag Sameah.*