

THE AVODA OF SHAVUOS

100

לימוד הדבר תורה לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שי' בן רבקה לגאולה קרובה מן המיצר אל המרחב

THE KEDUSHA OF THE DAY

The tzaddik and mekubal Reb Shlomo Alkabetz recorded the happenings of Shavuos night in Tzfas: "The Beis Yosef and I decided to stay awake on the night of Shavuos and read parts of torah (which later became the *tikkun leil shavuos*). After *chatzos*, as we reached the section of Mishnayos, a loud and sweet voice was heard from the mouth of the Beis Yosef, causing us all to fall on our faces from fright. The voice grew increasingly louder that even the neighbors were able hear it, though they were unable to understand it. The voice, having been created by the Mishna we had learnt, told us of the Shechinah's pain and the great impact our learning this night had, silencing all the Malochim and piercing all the heavens. It then spoke of our great zechus of staying awake this night, and the greater effect it would have had with a minyan. It then encouraged us to continue learning throughout the night, not wasting even a moment. The Shechinah then told us to stand up and recite *boruch sheim* out loud as is done on Yom Kippur. When this ended, we wept profusely from the joy of our experience and for the pain of the Shechinah.

"Meeting three other chachomim in the Mikvah the next morning, we related to them what had happened the previous night. They were understandably distressed, and we resolved to gather again on the second night, this time with a minyan.

"That night, because of our joy at having a minyan, the voice of the Shechinah began speaking just as we started reading the '*aseres hadibros*' of Devarim. It praised our greatness, told us of the *ruchnius'dike* fire surrounding the house, and then commanded us to recite *boruch sheim*. As *chatzos* approached, the Shechinah spoke again and told us that for hundreds of years no such accomplishment has been accomplished."

The Shaloh Hakadosh copied this story from the writing of Reb Shlomo Alkabetz and concluded, "It is apparent in his writing that there was much more that he was not allowed to reveal. We must learn from this story the importance of behaving with special *kedusha* on this night."

(של"ה הקדוש מס' שבועות נר מצוה ה')

The Frierdiker Rebbe said: Shavuos is an *eis ratzon*, and Hashem confuses the one accusing the Yidden, similar to the way he

confuses him during the Shofar blowing on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

Shavuos is an opportune time to improve one's Torah learning and avodah in *yiras shamayim* and strive in *teshuvah* concerning torah without the Satan's interference. It is just like the time when the shofar is blown on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur.

(היום יום, ג' וד' סיון)

The Rebbe Maharash related: Once on the first night of Shavuos, I went to say 'Gut Yom Tov' to my great uncle Reb Chayim Avraham, son of the Alter Rebbe. I found him sitting with his hands covering his face and tears flowing from his eyes, so I asked him why he is crying on Yom Tov. He explained that the Baal Shem Tov said that when one prepares himself properly during *sefiras ha'omer*, he merits the '50th gate' on Shavuos. "And I am unable to feel it," said Reb Chayim Avraham.

The Rebbe Maharash concluded, "My great uncle Reb Chayim Avraham was then seventy seven years old and was completely removed from all worldly matters. Yet, on the night of Shavuos he wept for the revelation of the fiftieth gate. This impressed me."

(ספר התולדות אדמו"ר מהר"ש)

On the first night of Shavuos, the Rebbe Rashab would daven mairiv as he would on the first night of Rosh Hashana, *ba'arichus* (at length) and with much *dveikus*. However, he did so in his room, without anyone's knowledge.

(סה"ש תש"ב ע' 119)

The Frierdiker Rebbe said: On the first night of Shavuos, every Yid, with his full heart, is required to accept upon himself the '*ol torah*' (the yoke of Torah). One should actually say, "Ribono Shel Olam, I accept upon myself the '*ol hatorah*'."

(סה"ש תד"ש ע' 127)

RECEIVING THE TORAH

The davening of the tzaddik Reb Yitzchock Aizik of Ziditchov was always filled with fear of Hashem, but and this was even more so when the tzaddik read the *Aseres Hadibros*. The entire shul stood in awe and trembled as they listened; his neshama would seem in danger of being consumed.

Lma'an Yishme'u

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Once, while reading the torah on Shavuos, one of his chassidim became so swept up, that he lost his vision until the end of *krias hatorah*. Alarmed, he reported it to the Rebbe, who explained that this occurred because they had been passing through the "darkness, cloud and fog" which surrounded Har Sinai.

(סיפורי חסידים זוין מועדים ע' 409)

Every year, the chossid Reb Peretz Beshenkovitcher, a poor and humble melamed, would visit the Rebbe Maharash in Lubavitch for Shavuos. One year many *orchim* came for Shavuos and the line for Yechidus was very long, so it did not occur to Reb Peretz that he would have a chance to go into Yechidus. However, the Rebbe on one of his walks, noticed Reb Peretz and asked the gabbai Reb Levik to call him in.

Once inside, Reb Peretz bemoaned the fact that he was like an empty vessel, totally unworthy. The Rebbe said, "In order to truly feel the lacking, one must do something. Do you say Tehillim with tears?" Reb Peretz responded that he does. The Rebbe then instructed him that he say two kapitlach in this manner every day for the rest of his life, and concluded, "But to *kabbalas hatorah* one must go with *simcha*."

Reb Peretz would later relate that each year on Shavuos he would remember this Yechidus and contemplate the great *yeridah* (descent) of the Rebbe, lowering himself from *Gan Eden* down to his level to direct him in his *avodah*.

Regarding this, the Friediker Rebbe related, "On the night of Shavuos in the year תרמ"ז (at the age of seven), I quietly left out the back door of our home to visit the Beis Medrash. Amongst the large crowd, I noticed two Yidden who had tears flowing down their cheeks as they read from their "Siddurim" (which I later learned was a *tikkun*). One of those Yidden was Reb Peretz Beshekovitcher."

(סה"ש תש"ה ע' 102)

The Friediker Rebbe, and the Rebbe as well, would wish all Yidden with the brocho of "*kabalas hatorah b'simcha ubipnimius*", receiving the torah with joy and in a manner that permeates the person.

The Rebbe explained this wish: when we will feel joyous for being Hashem's holy nation and for having the ability to connect to him through torah and mitzvos, it will then cause us to be permeated with torah and not treat it as a burden *ch"v*.

(לקו"ש ח"ה ע' 292)

The Friediker Rebbe described his experience of Shavuos תרמ"ה, when he was a child of five years old: "On Erev Shavuos, our melamed told us how Moshe Rabbeinu led the Yidden to *matan torah*. He then called to us, 'Kinderlach! Come with me and I will take you to *matan torah*.' The Melamed took all thirty of us to Reb Binyomin's Beis Medrash and instructed that on the following morning, the first day of Shavuos, we should wake up an hour earlier than usual and come to this Beis Medrash for *kabalas hatorah*.

"Shavuos morning, I awoke at seven o'clock and prepared to go to the Beis Medrash. My mother, Rebbetzin Shterna Sara, asked

that I eat something before leaving. However, I insisted that I would not eat before *matan torah*, and I left to the Beis Medrash. All of the talmidim came, and afterwards our Melamed took us on a walk."

(סה"ש תש"ה ע' 100)

The chossid Reb Eizik Homiler related that once before Shavuos the Chassidim discussed among themselves what they should ask from Hashem on the night of Shavuos. They decided to ask the Mittlerer Rebbe, thinking that he would surely say 'the learning and understanding of *pnimius hatorah*'. However, the Mittlerer Rebbe told them, "I would wish to have the fiery flame of *matan torah*."

(סה"ש תש"ה ע' 108)

The Friediker Rebbe said: Every year on Shavuos, the same revelation of Hashem that was revealed during *matan torah* is revealed again, and a Yid who arouses within himself to establish set times for learning torah, is successful in his *avodah*.

(סה"ש קיץ ה'ש"ת ע' 116, תש"ג ע' 129)

THE YAHRTZET OF THE BAAL SHEM TOV

The Alter Rebbe would refer to the Seudah of Shavuos day, as "The Zeideh's Seudah", in reference to the Baal Shem Tov who passed away on Shavuos. During the Seudah the Alter Rebbe would call out "*baruch haboh*", signifying the entrance of the Baal Shem Tov.

The Tzemach Tzedek related the following episode which he witnessed when he was six years old, in תקנ"ו: That year at the Seudah, the Alter Rebbe delayed the call of "*baruch haboh*", so some elders who remembered the Baal Shem Tov, related stories of him, intending to draw him down. The Alter Rebbe said that the Baal Shem Tov was still in *Gan Eden Ha'elyon*, and only a few minutes later did the Alter Rebbe make the usual announcement.

At the Farbrengen on the second day of Shavuos תשט"ו, the Rebbe related this story, and concluded, "Whoever sees and feels it, should announce..." and the Rebbe called out "*baruch haboh*"...

(סה"ש תש"ה ע' 107, תו"מ חי"ד ע' 133)

It was the Minhag of the Rebbeim to say over a torah and story of the Baal Shem Tov at the Shavuos Seudah. The Rebbe said that it is appropriate for everyone follow this Minhag, in honor of the Baal Shem Tov's Yahrtzeit.

On Shavuos תר"ד, after repeating a torah of the Baal Shem Tov, the Tzemach Tzedek related the following story: The Baal Shem Tov, in his earlier years, would travel from village to village, drawing the simple Yidden closer to Yiddishkeit. In one village, he gathered together all the men, women and children and said that although there are many levels in *avodah*, nevertheless, regarding answering '*amein, yehei shmei raboh*' everyone is equal. With this, he created a love within them for answering '*amein, yehei shmei raboh*'.

(סה"ש תד"ש ע' 140, יום ב' דחה"ש תשכ"ד)