

The Weekly Farbrengens



880 • לחמן ישמעו • חג השבועות תשפ"ו •
EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

SHAVUOS

AN AUSPICIOUS DAY

What happens when two *tzaddikim* and *mekubalim* of the stature of Reb Shlomo Alkabetz and Rav Yosef Caro spend the awesome night of Shavuos together?

The answer is recorded in a 16th-century manuscript written by R. Shlomo Alkabetz: "The *Beis Yosef* and I decided to stay awake on the night of Shavuos and read passages of the Torah. [These passages are the basis of what later became the *Tikkun Leil Shavuos*.] After *chatzos*, as we reached the section of *Mishnayos*, a sweet voice was heard aloud from the mouth of the *Beis Yosef*. We all fell on our faces from sheer fright. The voice grew ever louder, until 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 pain suffered by the *Shechina* [in exile], 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*. The voice then encouraged us to continue learning throughout the night, not wasting even a moment. Finally, the *Shechina* instructed us to stand up and say *Boruch Shem*... aloud, as is done on Yom Kippur.

We wept profusely, from the joy of our experience and for the pain of the *Shechina*. "When we met three other *chachomim* in the *mikve* the next morning, we related to them what had happened that 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 *Shechina* began speaking as soon as we started reading the *Aseres HaDibros* of *Devarim*. The voice praised our attainment, told us of the *ruchnius'dike* fire surrounding the house, and then directed us to say *Boruch Shem*. As the time of *chatzos* drew near, the *Shechina* spoke again and told us that for hundreds of years no such accomplishment had been attained."

The Shaloh HaKadosh copied this story from the manuscript of Reb Shlomo Alkabetz and concluded: "It is apparent in his writing that there was much more that he was not allowed to reveal. From this story we must learn how important it is to conduct ourselves with a special *kedusha* on this night."

(של"ה הקדוש מס' שבועות נר מצוה ה')

The Friediker Rebbe said:

Shavuos is an *eis ratzon*, when *HaShem* confuses the one who accuses Yidden, just as He confuses him during the sounding of the *shofar* on Rosh HaShana and Yom Kippur.

Shavuos is an opportune time to make every effort to improve one's Torah learning and *avoda* in *yiras shamayim*, and to strive to do *teshuvah* concerning one's Torah study, without Satan's interference.

(היום יום, ג' ד' סיון)

CONSIDER

What brought the revelation of the Shechina in the beis medrash of the Beis Yosef: their learning or the auspicious night?

What should one do to receive the revelation of Matan Torah?

RECEIVING THE TORAH

The Friediker Rebbe said: Every year on Shavuos, the same revelation of *HaShem* that was revealed at the time of *matan Torah* is revealed anew, and a Yid who at this time arouses himself to establish set times for studying Torah is successful in his *avoda*.

(סה"ש קיץ ה"ח ע' 116, תש"ג ע' 129)

"Once," related the Rebbe Maharash, "on the first night of Shavuos, I went to say *Gut Yom-Tov* to my great-uncle Reb Chaim Avraham, son of the Alter Rebbe. I found him sitting with his hands covering his tear-stained face. I asked him why he was crying on *Yom-Tov*. He explained that the Baal Shem Tov said that when one prepares himself properly during *Sefiras HaOmer*, he is found worthy on Shavuos of being admitted to the Fiftieth Gate of *kedusha* - "and I can't feel it," concluded Reb Chaim Avraham."

The Rebbe Maharash concluded, "My great uncle Reb Chaim 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 left me with a deep impression."

(ספר התולדות אדמו"ר מהר"ש ע' 73)

The eminent chossid, Reb Aizik Homiler, recalled that once before Shavuos, a number of chassidim discussed what they should ask of *HaShem* on the night of Shavuos. They decided to ask the Mitteler Rebbe, and assumed that he would surely speak of the study and understanding of *primiyus haTorah*.

Instead, he shared his own wish: "I would wish to have the fiery flame of *matan Torah*."

(סה"ש תש"ה ע' 108)

Recollecting his experience of Shavuos in תרמ"ה (1885), when he was a child of five, the Friediker Rebbe once said:

"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*.' He took all thirty of us to Reb Binyomin's *beis medrash* and told us that the next morning, the first day of Shavuos, we should wake up an hour earlier than usual and come to this *beis medrash* for *kabbalas haTorah*.

"On Shavuos morning I awoke at seven o'clock and prepared to go there. My mother [*Rebbetzin* Shterna Sara] wanted me to eat something before leaving, but I insisted that I wouldn't eat before *matan Torah*. I set out to the *beis midrash*, where I found all of my classmates, and after *davening* our *melamed* took us all on a walk."

(סה"ש תש"ה ע' 100)

It was the custom of the Friediker Rebbe, and also of the Rebbe, to wish all Yidden the *brocho* of *kabbalas haTorah besimcha uvipnimiyus* - that we receive the Torah with joy, and that it permeate us.

The Rebbe explained this dual blessing as follows: Appreciating that we are *HaShem's* holy nation and that we are able to connect to Him via the Torah and its *mitzvos*, we are joyful - and this joy will enable us to be permeated by the Torah and not regard it (*chas veshalom*) as a burden.

(לקי"ש ח"ח ע' 292)

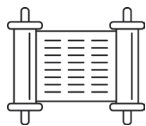
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TEACHING TORAH TO CHILDREN

What is a father's obligation to teach his son Torah?

The father is obligated *mide'oraisa* to teach his son Torah. After introducing him to Torah from a young age (see previous issue), once the son turns six or seven (depending on his strength and ability), the father brings him to a teacher.

Whether personally or through a teacher, he must ensure his son covers the entire Torah: *Torah shebichsav* and *Torah sheb'al peh* in their entirety, including Tanach and every conclusive halacha with its reasons, and even for mitzvos that aren't currently applicable. Where Chazal disagree, all the opinions must be studied, since *eilu va'eilu divrei Elokim chayim*. He must also be taught the Aggados and Midrashim, though halachos take priority.¹

The Mishna in Avos sets out a fifteen-year curriculum: five years each for Mikra, Mishna, and Gemara. Mikra is the root of Mishna, and Mishna of Gemara, so each foundation must be acquired before moving on.²

In Chazal's time, all of this was learned orally. Mikra was written without *nekudos*, and Mishna and Gemara could not be written down at all. Five years were needed to commit Tanach to memory with the proper *nekudos, trop, and kri uksiv*; five more for Mishna *baal peh*; and five more for Gemara. In that framework, the father would ensure that his son learned every part of the Torah from beginning to end.

Today, with Mishna and Gemara now available in text, Gemara could be started much earlier, alongside Mikra and Mishna.³ Gedolei Yisroel deliberately moved up the order, since the latter areas of Torah are primarily what set Yidden apart from other nations.⁴ And since the Gemara incorporates Mikra and Mishna, one who learns Gemara is learning them as well.⁵

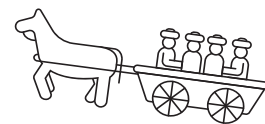
In addition, a father is no longer obligated to teach his son every part of Torah, but instead he must train him to understand Gemara well (including deep *sugyos* with early and later *poskim*), so that he can learn, understand, and reach halachic conclusions on his own. Once the son reaches that level, he can continue independently and acquire the rest of Shas, Poskim, Tanach, and Aggados.

However, if the son cannot reach that level, or he won't learn on his own, the father must hire a teacher who will teach him properly, until the son learns every halacha with its reasons.

A father is also obligated to influence his son to learn Torah,⁶ and pay for expenses related to his son's learning, including food and lodging when the son travels to learn in another city.⁷

1. הל' ת"ת לאדה"ז פ"א ה"א וה"ד.
 2. אבות פ"ה מכ"ב. מוהר"ל בתפארת ישראל פנ"ו.
 3. ערוך השלחן י"ד סי' רמ"ה סי"ג. תו"מ.
 4. ד"ה לא צריכא.
 5. הל' ת"ת לאדה"ז שם ה"ו.
 6. ראה יוסף אומץ הקדמון ע' 284. ס' חסידים.
 7. שם ה"ז.

לע"ג מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה



REB PINCHAS REIZES

Reb Pinchas Reizes, one of the greatest chasidim of the Alter Rebbe, was an incredible *gaon*. The Rebbeim trusted him fully, often involving him in private and clandestine activities involving themselves or chasidim at large. Reb Pinchas was also a wealthy and influential resident of Shklov and did a great deal for the Alter Rebbe in that respect. While in the Rebbe's court, Reb Pinchas served as a *chozer*, renowned for the precision of his *hanachos* (transcriptions). The Mittlerer Rebbe called Reb Pinchas the "field marshal" of *chasidei* Chabad.

Though Reb Pinchas's father was a great *gaon* in Shklov, his last name, Reizes, was taken after his mother-in-law Reizah. This came about after the following story:

His mother-in-law, an especially wealthy woman, was greatly impressed by the Alter Rebbe after his visit to Shklov. "Look," she said, "A *maggid* hailing from Vitebsk shows up riding a horse with no entourage, and yet, when he discussed Torah issues with the *geonim* of Shklov, he could respond to everything they

asked, while they couldn't answer three of his four questions."

She had three sons-in-law and promised that whoever would spend time learning by the "Magid of Liozna" would inherit all her wealth, and Reb Pinchas agreed. When he arrived in Liozna he discovered that the Alter Rebbe was traveling through various towns to speak before the simpletons. He waited four months for the Alter Rebbe to return and then spent three months learning under the Rebbe. He brought his mother-in-law a letter affirming that he had learned by the Rebbe and true to her word, she gave him all her wealth.

Reb Pinchas took the money and gave it to the Alter Rebbe for public matters. The Alter Rebbe blessed him with Torah and riches.

(סה"ש תרצ"ו ע' 126)

The Alter Rebbe once complained to Reb Pinchas, "Pinchas, Pinchas! You say that I am a *tzaddik*, but if so, why do I feel so 'cold'?"

(למען ידעו ע' 253)

A Moment with The Rebbe



UNNECESSARY SPENDING

On multiple occasions, the Rebbe expressed his displeasure at the unnecessary spending at chassunos, which took a toll on the families and took away from the pure and simple joy that once characterized Yiddishe simchos.

When Mrs. Esther Serebryanski was preparing to marry her husband, Reb Chaim, in 5719 (1959), they did not have much money to spend and therefore planned a small-scale wedding to be held on a Friday, the cheapest day to book the local hall. She shared her plans with the Rebbe.

"Very good," the Rebbe said. "I wish others would do that too."

The Rebbe added that all that is required for the meal is a minyan of men, and that the event could even be held in an apartment.

Similarly, before Rabbi Gershon Mendel and Bassie Garelik were married in 5718 (1958), the kallah's mother, Mrs. Chaya Posner, shared with the Rebbe during *yechidus* that she was planning to make a small wedding in buffet style.

"Ah!" the Rebbe declared. "Maybe now we will break the custom of making large chassunos."

(Here's My Story, Issue 687; as heard from Rabbi Levi Garelik)