

The Weekly Farbrenge

MERKAZ ANASH
מרכז אנאש

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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*.

(ס"ה קי"ז ה"ש"ת 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*."

(ס"ה ש"ת 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."

(ס"ה ש"ת 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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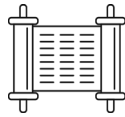
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FLOWERS FOR SHAVUOS

Is it our practice to place trees and flowers in shul on Shavuos?

The Maharil records a custom to spread greenery and flowers in shul for the joyous celebration of Shavuos. The Terumas Hadeshen would sprinkle his home with greenery and pleasant smelling herbs. The Rama — quoted in the Alter Rebbe as well — combines both and writes, "For Shavuos, it is customary to spread greenery in the shul and at home, to commemorate the joy of Matan Torah."

Poskim explain that we commemorate the greenery that was on Har Sinai at the time of Matan Torah. Others note that the aromatic flowers are reminiscent of the special fragrance that filled the world during the giving of the Torah, or to signify how the Jewish people were like a "rose among the thorns" when they accepted the Torah.

A related custom is recorded by the Magen Avraham and Alter Rebbe: trees are placed in shuls and homes to remind us that on Shavuos we are judged concerning fruit of the tree and we should therefore specifically daven for them on Shavuos.

The Vilna Gaon famously opposed this custom, arguing that since non-Jews began to celebrate their holidays with trees, it is forbidden to act similarly due to chukos hagoyim.

Some poskim are opposed to placing trees in shul for a different reason. The Torah warns against planting a tree near the mizbe'ach, and the Rambam holds that it applies anywhere in the Beis Hamikdash. Some poskim extend this prohibition to a shul, which is compared to a Beis Hamikdash. However, most poskim aren't concerned since not all halachos of a Beis Hamikdash apply to a shul. Moreover, the prohibition is only for tall, shady trees since that is what the idolaters would plant so that people should gather by their idols.

Many later poskim countered that if we practice a custom with a good reason, we need not be concerned if the goyim do it as well. Additionally, our customs are not the same, as the goyim place the trees outdoors as well, while we only place them indoors.

The Rebbe related that in the Chabad shul of Nikolayev where he grew up, they followed this custom of decorating the shul with greenery in honor of Shavuos. Yet, although this custom is mentioned in Luach Kolel Chabad, it is not practiced in most Chabad shuls. Many however maintain the practice to bring flowers and greenery into their home for Shavuos.

1. רמ"א סי' תצ"ד ס"ג, ושוע"ר שם סי"ד. 2. ראה משנ"ב שם סק"י. 3. לבוש שם ס"א. 4. ראה הרבה טעמים מלוקטים בס' מנהג אבותינו בידינו - מועדים ח"ב פכ"ו. 5. ראה פסק"ת סי' תצ"ד ס"י והמציון שם. 6. המלך במסיו ח"א ע' שט"ז. 7. שו"ת מהרש"ם ח"א סי' קכ"ז וח"ו סי' ה'. 8. ראה פסק"ת סי' תצ"ד ס"י והמציון שם. 9. ראה משנ"ב שם סק"י.

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



R. AVRAHAM KLATZKIN

R. Avraham Klatzkin was the son of R. Naftali Hirtz Klatzkin, a chossid of the Tzemach Tzedek who was a famous gaon and the Rov of Shimberg, Latvia. R. Avraham served as the Rov of Romanov, and then Liozna. After the Tzemach Tzedek's passing he became a chossid of the Chabad Rebbes of Liadi, as his father was. He eventually became a chossid of the Rebbe Rashab and corresponded with him on matters of halacha.

R. Avraham was a well-known Rov in his time, and talmidim of Tomchei Temimim in Lubavitch would visit him to receive semichah. Some of his chidushim are published in Amudei Sheish, and comments he wrote in the margins of his seforim have been published in various journals.

R. Avrohom was an exceptional masmid. He didn't have anyone with whom to share his Torah insights, yet he would rise in middle of the winter night and learn for hours while standing.

Once, the Rebbe Rashab spoke in a maamar about the importance of studying Torah lishma, for its own sake, and not for any ulterior motive.

Afterwards, R. Shmuel Levitin, who was then a tomim in Lubavitch, commented to his fellow tomim, R. Hirshel Gurary, "The Rebbe isn't speaking to us since we don't learn perfectly anyway. He's referring to the rov Klatzkin."

(ניצוצי אור - וויינגארטן)

Passing by his son who sat learning Gemara to a tune, R. Avrohom severely admonished the boy. R. Avrohom's brother expressed his wonder, since the boy had been learning well. R. Avrohom explained that from the boy's tune of learning he could sense that it wasn't lishma, but rather to pride himself with his knowledge.

R. Avrohom is described as having an incredible anticipation for Moshiach, which put him in good spirits. He would sleep half dressed in his clothing so that he would be able to quickly run to greet Moshiach.

As a result of his bitachon he was unfazed by his poverty, and to worry about tomorrow seemed to him foolish and heretical.

(היכל הבעש"ט ח"מ ע' רצב ואילך)

A Moment with The Rebbe



THE BRACHA IN THE BEARD

"In the 5720s (1960s), I once had the chutzpa to write to the Rebbe asking for bracha for Torah alongside financial prosperity," related the philanthropist Reb Berel Weiss a"h from Los Angeles. "However, I received no response.

"A short while later, at a yechidus, I banged on the table, and beseeched the Rebbe for the bracha.

"Suddenly the Rebbe grew solemn. It looked like he was in a different world, and I immediately regretted my request. The Rebbe then said, 'For this you must grow a beard.'

"I wanted to immediately commit, but

the Rebbe held me off, saying that I would need my wife's consent.

"Years passed. On the first day of Shavuos 5749 (1989), as I stood in inspiration, davening with the Rebbe, that yechidus from years back suddenly came to me. Then and there, I made a commitment to let my beard grow.

"The next day, at the farbrengen, the Rebbe suddenly began talking of the importance of growing one's beard, and that there are businessmen who think that their business will suffer if they have a beard, while the opposite is true."

(Kfar Chabad 8 Sivan 5771)