

HAVINEINI

חג
השבועות
תשפ"ה

YEAR 3
ISSUE 125

HARAV SHIMON
SPITZER SHLIT" A





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Kabbalas haTorah* Is a Wedding Bond Between Hashem and Every *Yid

The Exalted Wedding Celebration of *Matan Torah* Is Repeated Every Year

Celebration of a Marriage

It is known that the Yom Tov of Shavuot is designed like a marriage. The *sefarim haKedoshim* explain that on Shavuot we celebrate the great wedding, so to speak, between the Ribono shel Olam and Klal Yisrael.

Indeed, the entire Shavuot schedule is reminiscent of a wedding. We prepare for it, just as a bride prepares to go under the *chuppah*. There are also other customs in preparing for Yom Tov that are similar to those of a wedding.

Preparing the Jewels

The entire *avodah* of ליל שבועות תיקון is the *inyan* of preparing קישוטים, *adornments*, for the *neshamah*. The 24 volumes of Tanach are the adornments for the *kallah*, and they prepare the *neshamah* for the great wedding that will take place in the morning. We also immerse in the *mikveh* toward morning, cleansing and purifying ourselves—all so we will properly internalize the great bond and connection with the *Aibishter*.

This is an *inyan* of a marriage, an inner, warm connection, which plays out every year on Shavuot, between the Ribono shel Olam and Knesses Yisrael, which is referred to as “*kallah*.”

How to Deal with the Practical Preparations

When a *Yid* hears this and becomes inspired for the great wedding that is to come, a critical question arises: **What should we do if we have many טרדות, *distractions and preparations*, that come up before a Yom Tov, preventing us from focusing on the spiritual nature of the day?**

Every Erev Yom Tov brings with it a myriad of preparations. There's so much to do, and this hampers a person in the approach to Yom Tov. This is especially true for people who host their married children or other guests for Yom Tov.

Very often, the *yetzer hara* works to ensure that a person should be *even more* preoccupied and harried than usual in the run up to Yom Tov. The Ribbono shel Olam didn't arrange the world so that when Yom Tov comes, a sense of tranquility and calm descends on the world. On the contrary, it tends to be more hectic than usual.

Beautiful Inspiration vs. Hard Reality

Thus, a person stands amid the very holy and exalted days that precede Shavuos, including יום המיוחס and שלשת ימי הגבלה... but the world doesn't stand still. The *tirdos* and worries continue to pile up....

Sometimes a *Yid* may become discouraged by this—because he has heard so much inspiration regarding the Yom Tov. He listened to *shiurim* and speeches about the beauty and holiness of these days... it's *mamash* so sweet to hear—**but then he's faced with hard reality**. As he goes out to shop for ordinary things *l'kavod* Yom Tov, or during preparations at home, he faces reality head on. Not only is he left with old problems; there are new hassles and worries to boot!

This person feels like there are two worlds; the abstract world of *der-ashos* and inspiration that wax poetic about the exaltedness of the days, and then there's "the real world" that plays out in his home.... A person may become saddened by this clash of realities.

Every Wedding Is Accompanied by Hassles

But there's a simple insight that we must remember:

Everyone knows that when a wedding approaches, there are countless errands and hassles that rob people of their peace of mind—even as they prepare to celebrate a happy and joyful occasion.

When we talk about a wedding, it sounds fun and joyful, because it truly is a wonderful and blessed occasion. But in both reality and practice, the time leading up to a wedding is often filled with many things that aren't necessarily all that enjoyable. There's an entire list of complications, financial burdens, technical details, last-minute issues... all of which are completely normal and part of the process.

A wedding is often accompanied by hecticness and aggravation—sometimes even during the wedding event itself.

A *Chasunah* Signifies Something Very Deep for the Long Term

So, is this our consolation? That *everyone* goes through headaches and disappointments around the time of a *chasunah*, and this includes the wedding that we celebrate on Shavuot?! Of course not.

The true consolation is that even though a person may have disappointments and unpleasant feelings around the time of his child's wedding, and even if he is unable to enjoy it to the fullest extent... he's unable to be fully present... there is something eternal that takes place at a wedding that we will celebrate for a long time to come. We will always know that, *baruch Hashem, there was a wedding!*

This reality, and this joy, are much more important and much more eternal than the feelings that the person may or may not have experienced at the time that the bond was forged.

The Wedding Takes Place Regardless

Of course, it is proper and correct, as well as desirable and preferable, that a person should be fully present with all his senses during such

a joyous occasion as a wedding—and the same goes for the spiritual pleasure of a Yom Tov. How wonderful is it when a *Yid* experiences the elevation of a Yom Tov, he feels literally lifted off the ground! It's truly wonderful!

But even if it didn't work out that way—we weren't perfectly present, we weren't on fire due to our heightened feelings, **we still believe in the essence of things!** We believe that the Ribbono shel Olam gave us a Yom Tov during which He brought an incredible light to the world, and the tzaddikim revealed to us how deep and true this is: **an actual wedding is taking place!** A radical change is taking place in our *neshamah*.

When a person stood under the *chupah*, he became a new person! Previously, he was a פלג גופא, *half a body*, and now he has become complete. **A kallah who has entered the chuppah has been completely transformed.** She is now a married woman! She is a completely different being—whether or not the person feels it, whether or not the person is aware of it, and whether or not some technical problems transpired during the wedding. **The person has become transformed.**

Sometimes, the Ribbono shel Olam ordains that the air conditioning in the wedding hall breaks down. It's hot, uncomfortable, and unpleasant. But this doesn't change the great realities that have now taken place.

The Real Story: "A Wedding Has Taken Place!"

Capturing the Essence

One of my English teachers taught his students narrative writing. As an assignment, we all had to write a personal story that we experienced and give the story a title that would reflect the story.

After my teacher reviewed my story, he called me over and said, "I want to show you where you went wrong." He indicated to me that the title of the story didn't capture what really transpired in the story,

the *soul* of the story. Perhaps it reflects what happened in the first paragraph, but it didn't capture the essence of the *entire* story.

Find the Right Name

When a *Yid* goes through a situation in life, he must always go back and think: **What is the proper title of this story? What is *really* happening here?** People are often mistaken when it comes to capturing the story. The truth is that getting the right title is a very important component of understanding the story.

I witnessed the way a *Yid*, an *askan*, solicited a wealthy *Yid* for an important *tzedakah* cause. The *baal tzedakah* was indeed taken by the appeal, and he pledged a large sum. As they departed the home, one of the *askanim* said, "Do you know what just happened?! A *Yid* gave ten thousand dollars!"

Said another person in the group, "That's not what really happened here. That's not the name of the story! The true title of the story is that a *Yid's* heart became so enflamed for the *Ribbono shel Olam* that it overpowered his earthly desire to hoard his money!"

Giving New Meaning

Naturally, a person has a strong connection with his money. He has toiled for it and feels connected to it. But this person was able to extricate himself from this stranglehold due to his love and warmth for the *Ribbono shel Olam* and His children. *That's* the *real* story.

When we look at the incident from this viewpoint, it changes our entire understanding of the story. Merely transferring money from one person to another isn't such a big deal... money comes and goes. But the fervor of this person to overcome his earthly desires because of his fervor for the *Ribbono shel Olam* has eternal ramifications and after-effects.

A Marred Wedding Is Still a Wedding

Imagine that a wedding took place, but the police cut off the electricity due to a lack of permits. It was terribly aggravating for all involved.

As people make their way home, what do they think is the name of the story of the evening? One person will say, “The evil police...” and another person will say, “The wedding flopped.”

But if we look at it properly, these titles don’t tell the real story. **There was a wedding that night—which is a magnificent thing, much loftier and farther reaching than anything else that took place that evening.**

Understanding What Happened

Something happened that evening that will last not only for fifty-sixty years—but for generations upon generations to come! The next *gadol hador* could potentially come forth from this marriage, if not in this generation, then in the forthcoming ones. **Do we understand what** *שהמחה במעונו*, *there’s joy in His dwelling*, **means?!** Do we properly appreciate what a *Yiddishe* wedding means and signifies?

It’s very important—throughout our lives—to properly analyze the true story behind the events we witness or experience. We must always ask ourselves: “What is the true title of the story?”

Don’t interpret the story according to its superficial and external elements. There’s something deeper that transpired here. A *Yid* who learns Torah must learn to analyze events on a deeper and truer level.

The Pitfalls That Come Just Now

As we stand before such an exalted Yom Tov, let us not fool ourselves, and let’s speak openly: Despite all the warm ideas and thoughts about the Yom Tov that we learn in the *sefarim haKedoshim* about these holy and exalted days, **the yetzer hara never leaves us alone.** Somehow, he gets us to be drawn to undesirable things, to be distracted from the *avodah* of the days, and he presents us with nuisances that disturb us. It’s not so simple for a *Yid* to properly immerse himself in the *avodah* of these days with a clear mind.

Sometimes, the *yetzer hara* will place special pitfalls in our way precisely during more elevated days. A person will ask himself: Why, pre-

cisely now, did I need to speak this way? Why did I need to excoriate this person just now? Why did I choose this time to answer back to another person? *Davka* now, before an upcoming Yom Tov?!

Our Mission Before *Kabbalas HaTorah* Is *Bittul*

In these days preceding *kabbalas haTorah*, when Klal Yisrael will stand under the *chuppah* as a *kallah*, there ought to be such *bittul*, submissive-ness and self-nullification. The Ran (*Nedarim* 30a) tells us that the way that *kiddushin*, the process of acquiring a wife, works is that the *kallah* must not speak at all—but accept the *kiddushin* from her *chassan*. If she interjects or takes any other action, the *kiddushin* will not take effect—because the entire concept is that the *kallah* submits to her husband.

Klal Yisrael is the *kallah* in the story of *Kabbalas haTorah*, and thus, these days must be days of *bittul* and humility to the Ribbono shel Olam—a time when a *Yid* bows to the will of the *Aibishter*. **“If this is what the Ribbono shel Olam wants, I accept it with great love!”**

During these days, a *Yid*’s קבלת יסורים באהבה is worth exponentially more than on ordinary days. It’s not merely a matter of accepting challenges with love and acceptance, **it is the greatest possible preparation for the great wedding**. He’s paving the way to be married!

The Best Preparation for a Wedding

What is the greatest possible preparation for a person’s wedding? To learn humility, acceptance, and submissiveness to another person’s desires and personality. This is the long-term preparation for a successful marriage.

True preparation isn’t for today and tomorrow, but for the long term. **The true preparation is to adopt a lifestyle with which a person will live long after the wedding day.** When it comes to establishing a new home, everyone knows that it’s not always easy. After all, these are two people, with two distinct backgrounds and personality traits. But if they want to be married, they must learn to bow and defer to the desires of their spouse.

This is how we should ideally look in the days preceding *Kabbalas haTorah* — and if we're presented with a situation in which we must practice submitting and bowing to the Ribbono shel Olam, this is the most beautiful קבלת התורה for הכנה.

Nothing to Do with Your Feelings

But even if a person's feelings weren't entirely in place during this special time, he must remember that something very deep and special transpired here. The "title of the story" is that a wedding took place — the effects of which will be etched in a person's *neshamah* for generations to come! He will derive *chiyus* and spiritual energy from that Yom Tov of Shavuot for a long time to come.

It is unpleasant to invoke this scenario, but even if, *chas v'shalom*, the *chasan* and *kallah* parted ways soon after the wedding... something momentous still transpired here, and it takes an entire process to undo the wedding.

Thus, this is the first thing we must remember as we approach this *heilige* Yom Tov; we're preparing ourselves for Shavuot, knowing that no matter what else happens, the real title of the story is: **A special bond is being forged here. The Ribbono shel Olam is acquiring us as His kallah. A Yid is becoming connected with the Aibishter like never before!** On Shavuot, we're acquired by the Ribbono shel Olam, and this changes a person indelibly!

A Long-Term Acquisition

When we look at things this way, we understand that marriage is a long-term acquisition and connection. A person is committed to the marriage. Whether I feel like it, whether or not I sense it, is another matter. **The fact remains that an acquisition took place here.** We have become committed and beholden to the Ribbono shel Olam.

Before a *chasunah*, we ask the *kallah*: "Are you prepared to become משועבד, *beholden and committed*, to your husband?" She must agree to it, or the marriage is void. Every *Yid* must be able to answer this question

before Yom Tov Shavuos: **“Yes, I agree to submit myself completely to the Ribbobo shel Olam!”**

Despite the Challenges

Sometimes, before a *shidduch* is completed, someone will tell the father of the *kallah*: “I hope you’re aware that this this boy—who’s truly wonderful and *chashuv*—is human. He will need to air out and rest.... I hope your daughter is not delusional, thinking that he’s an angel.”

When a person marries, he knows that he’s entering into a commitment. This doesn’t mean that he will become an angel overnight, and it doesn’t mean that his *nisyonos* and challenges will vanish on the day after Shavuos. He will likely experience the very same challenges. But he must know that something very big changed. A marriage has taken place.

A Yid enters into the Yom Tov of Shavuos knowing that he will be committing himself! He gives over all of his thoughts and desires to the Ribbono shel Olam—even if he will later experience downturns and *nisyonos* in his *avodas Hashem*. He knew from the start that it would be this way, and **he entered into the marriage while knowing that it will be this way.** He submitted himself to the Ribbono shel Olam *despite* the fact that these challenges will remain in his life!

Our Heartfelt Tefillos on Shavuos Are the Tears Under the Chuppah

Why Chassan and Kallah Cry

We’re accustomed to seeing the *chassan*, the *kallah*, and their parents shed tears beneath the *chuppah*. In many communities, heartfelt *niggunim* are sung, with the goal of awakening the hearts of the *mechutanim* to cry their hearts out.

There’s a very simple reason for this: **People comprehend that something monumental is transpiring here, an event that will have ripple**

effects for generations! It is a good thing for people to experience these moments with utmost seriousness and emotion, for so often, people are preoccupied with making sure that everything is in place... forgetting that a remarkable thing is happening here that will affect generations!

Baruch Hashem, these days, a wedding is a common occurrence. The wedding halls are booked night after night, and people don't become so moved at a wedding. But when a person comprehends the monumental nature of a *Yiddishe chasunah*, he understands that it is a significant and deeply special occasion. Given this, a person will surely shed many tears that the couple merit to bring into the world children and grandchildren who will engage in Torah and mitzvos, *be'emes*. He davens from his heart that this union should be an everlasting one, and that it should merit to bring השראת השכינה into the world, thus fulfilling its ultimate purpose.

Pleading for the Holy *Shechinah*

We have just now recited the תפילת השל"ה on Erev Rosh Chodesh Sivan, the *tefillah* of fathers for their children. This isn't just any *tefillah*; it is a supplication that is built like an edifice, with an incredible insight.

The *tefillah* begins with the declaration that the Ribbono shel Olam created the world with a purpose: **to reveal His Presence in the world**, that we should proclaim His existence. *For this reason*, He commanded us the mitzvos of פרו ורבו, *to bear children*, and ולמדתם אותם את בניכם, *to teach those children Torah*.

With this, a *Yid* has been commanded to bring the Presence of the Ribbono shel Olam down to this material world—and this is what we plead for at a wedding: That the plan should work out—that we should succeed in making known the Name of Hashem in This World.

The Night Before the Wedding

When we comprehend that on Shavuos, we're reliving the most important wedding and union in the world, our entire night will take on new meaning and energy. When a *Yid* enters the Yom Tov, he under-

stands that a great wedding is taking place—whether or not he feels it—and that his *neshamah* is experiencing an awesome transformation.

A *Yid* sits and learns on Shavuot late at night. His eyes are drooping ... he gets up, he sits down... he makes himself a black coffee.... His body is tired, but then he thinks for a moment: **Can we imagine what is transpiring right now?! We're preparing for an event that will have ramifications for many generations!**

When a person is overcome by this awareness, it will be much stronger than his exhaustion. He will no longer feel so tired—just as a *chassan* isn't tired during his own wedding! He becomes refreshed and energetic—because he's filled with emotions of joy and anticipation. His blood begins to flow, and his joy overcomes his tiredness.

Our Heartfelt *Tefillah* Before Yom Tov

We must simply internalize this idea—regardless of whether or not we feel it. **The fact remains that we're about to go under the *chuppah*.** The consequences thereof will affect us for generations, for our entire future—in fact, it is *the most* important moment for our future.

When a person understands this, he begins to think feverishly, “What can I do to make this succeed? I want this so much!” **He speaks to the Ribbono shel Olam about it. He davens with simplicity and earnestness for the marriage to be successful!** That he should internalize the right thoughts! That he should merit to serve the Ribbono shel Olam *be'emes*. That he himself should merit to be עוסקים בתורה ובמצוות, *engaged in the pursuit of Torah and mitzvos*.

Davening for *Torah Lishmah*

Why shouldn't a *Yid* daven to merit learning *Torah lishmah*, for its own sake? People tend to feel despair about this *avodah*. “*Halevai* that I should merit to simply learn, and then we will worry about learning *lishmah*,” they say.

But this isn't right! If we were learning of our own volition, with our

own abilities and strength, we could say, “This I can do, but that I cannot do.... I won’t daven for something that I’m incapable of achieving.”

But the reality is that **simply to turn the first page of the Gemara requires great *siyata diShmaya*!** Even to learn *aleph-beis*, one needs great *siyata diShmaya*! To be spared from spiritual pitfalls and *aveiros*, we *certainly* need *siyata diShmaya*. Thus, we need so much *tefillah* in any case for success in Torah. So why stop at the first step? Why not go further?

Everyone Can Merit Torah Lishmah

The world needs more *Torah lishmah*... *much more Torah lishmah*! And there are many levels in this *avodah*. **There are levels in *Torah lishmah* that aren’t at all out of reach. Every *Yid* can attain it.** And it is so important.

The Shelah HaKadosh says that the most basic level in *Torah lishmah* is when a person learns Torah for the purpose of knowing how to perform the mitzvos. ‘I want to learn Torah so I will know how to better perform mitzvos.’

A *Yid* performs so many mitzvos *d’Oraisa* every day. *Birchos haTorah* is a *d’Oraisa*. *Krias Shema* is a *d’Oraisa*. *Tzitzis* and *tefillin* are *d’Oraisa*.... A person must say, “I will take one of these mitzvos and learn how to perform it better. I want to know the insights of the Arizal in this mitzvah, so my heart will become excited by the inner meaning of this mitzvah. I want to know what the Rishonim have to say about the impact that this mitzvah has on my *neshamah*. Help me, Ribbono shel Olam, so that I learn Torah in such a way, with such an intention! **This is *Torah lishmah*! This eradicates the *yetzzer hara*!** This burns out the תאוות of a person!

Channeling Desire Towards Torah

We all know that the Rambam says: The very same pull and desire towards negative and improper things can be channeled toward *cheshek* and desire for Torah.

There aren't two separate forces of desire within a person—there's only one. The body tends to pull it to itself. But a person can channel it towards spiritual pursuits.

In essence, the body is a thief—for the *neshamah* was here first. But if you take back the force of your desire, you can utilize this energy of lust and desire to acquire Torah with abandon. If so, we must daven for this! Daven that you should merit to channel this warmth to percolate in mitzvos, to experience fervor in Torah! In this way, you will become more refined, better, and higher.

Grabbing the Opportunity

Sometimes we see a *chassan* who was considered aloof and unemotional all the years, but under the *chuppah*, the dam breaks, and the tears flow forth. What happened? This boy experienced a יום החופה. He fasted, he became more refined, and his eyes opened. He realized that life is serious, and that he stands before an awesome moment. He cries for success in life, for a good future.

If we were to comprehend that something very real and awesome is happening on Shavuos, something that will leave a long-lasting impact, we would understand that this is a greatly auspicious moment during which we can draw down great *shefa*. We are going under the *chuppah*! **Erev Shavuos and the night of Shavuos is the יום החופה for every Yid!**

Reliving the Wedding Day

People believe that they have the immense power of the יום החופה only once in a lifetime. But the truth is that we experience it every year on the Yom Tov of Shavuos. It is a true יום החופה, with all the meaning that it carries—and we must properly utilize it.

Although we do not fast the way a *chassan* does on his wedding day, we must daven from the depths of our hearts with the understanding that nothing in the past matters. There's only one thing right now: It is my wedding day, and I don't want to squander it.

The Ribbono shel Olam listens to such a *tefillah*, and it arouses great love in Him. Such *tefillos* are the תכשיטים and קישוטים, *the jewelry and the adornments*, which soften the *neshamah* and enable it to properly absorb the עשרת הדברות we will hear in the morning....that the "לא תחמוד" should penetrate (it's truly okay if someone else has more than me)... that the "אנכי ה' אלוך" should enter deep into our hearts with a clear *emunah*!

May we all merit to relive this great *chasunah* and be *mekabel* the Torah with true, long-lasting commitment, filled with joy and fervor. *Amein*.



Allowing the Light of Torah to Permeate and Transform

Properly Absorbing the *Aseres HaDibros*

Everything Lies in First Commandment

We all know that during the great revelations at Har Sinai, the first two *Dibros*, אנוכי ה' אלוקיך and לא יהיה לך, were told to the *Yidden* by Hashem Himself. But they couldn't handle the great light, and their *neshamos* flew out of their bodies. The rest of the *Dibros* were transmitted to them by Moshe Rabbeinu.

But the *sefarim haKedoshim* tell us that all the *Dibros*—and indeed the entire Torah—are contained in the very first word of אנוכי! The entire revelation of Has Sinai lies in the word אנוכי.

Etching *Anochi* into Our Hearts

This would seem to be an esoteric concept that has no real bearing on us—and it is true that these are lofty ideas. However, they're relevant to every *Yid*, at every level of *avodas Hashem*, so we will know how much to pine and yearn for the אנוכי ה' אלוקיך to become etched into our very hearts and souls.

How much better would our lives be—in This World as well as the Next World—if we were to always live with the awareness of אנוכי ה', אלוקיך, *I am Hashem, your G-d*. How many silly and unfortunate mistakes do we make simply because this awareness isn't etched into our hearts?

The Blissful Life of a Person of Faith

The Ramban and other Rishonim explain that living with *Anochi Hashem Elokecha* means that when something happens that we don't like—whether at home, at work, with friends or neighbors, or anything else that pains us—we will always remember: **“This has nothing to do with this one or that one! This is what *had* to happen because it is best for me!”**

This is what it means to *feel* אנכי ה' אלוך, and to live with it.

When a *Yid* merits *siyata diShmaya* from Hashem on the Yom Tov of Shavuot such that the עשרת הדברות penetrate his heart, then, when challenges later arise, he will possess true tranquility. He will simply feel calm and serene in the knowledge that they all come from Hashem.

“I Don't Know Why It Doesn't Bother Me”

This is a tremendous gift. *Emunah* is the key to all 613 mitzvos! A *Yid* who merits to live with the light of *Anochi Hashem Elokecha* will tell his friend, “Don't think I'm so special because I'm calm in all situations, and I don't argue with other people. I will tell you the truth, **I don't even have the temptation to blame others...** it doesn't require an inner battle, because it doesn't bother me much in the first place.”

Says the friend to him, “What are you telling me? I have known you for a long time... and I remember how you would react in situations like these.... You would turn over the world and really lose your mind when someone did this to you. What do you mean by saying it doesn't bother you?”

But he insists, “Maybe I'm older.... Maybe I have bigger problems.... I don't know, but it doesn't bother me.”

This person himself doesn't know that it is the result of the Yom Tov of Shavuot, when the Ribono shel Olam illuminated his heart with the light of אנכי ה' אלוך, that there's nothing but Him!

A Clear, Pure *Emunah* Is the Greatest Gift

There's no greater gift than this! Such a *Yid* walks around, and his life is simply amazing! You look at such a *Yid* and you wonder, "How can he daven properly when he's going through such a challenge?" But he will tell you: "I am not the great tzaddik you think I am.... It's just not getting to me. I don't know why, but it's not affecting me."

When we see such a person, we know that **this is a great gift that the Ribbono shel Olam gave him: the gift of clarity in *emunah*.** Of course, the challenge gives him a small tickle... he's human, after all. But this is immediately followed by the knowledge of and the belief in Hashem the calm him. He can go on with his life! His life hasn't been disrupted and overturned!

It is so important for people to understand this—to know that a *Yid* can always daven that Hashem illuminate for him and allow the *Aseres HaDibros* to penetrate his heart and permeate his emotions.

Feeling the Light of Shabbos

The Ribbono shel Olam commands us: **זכור את יום השבת לקדשו!** Leave everything behind on the exalted day of Shabbos! It should be **כאילו כל עשיתיך עשויה**, *as though all your work has been completed!* **But the heart must agree!** If a person hasn't internalized this, he is in a constant battle. The heart wants one thing, and the *neshamah* says something else. We can go through an entire life in this conflict. But **if we daven to the Ribbono shel Olam, He will surely help *emunah* penetrate the heart.**

A *Yid* can and must daven for the feeling of **כאילו כל מלאכתך עשויה** to permeate his heart. When Friday afternoon comes around, and he still wants to send a few emails, his heart will tell him: "You don't need to. It's okay...." Where did his heart get this message? **From the *Aseres HaDibros*! The Ribbono shel Olam placed the light of Shabbos into his heart!**

Feeling the Light of *Kibbud Av v'Eim*

The same applies to all the mitzvos of the *Aseres HaDibros*, all of which

are such important and fundamental mitzvos. So many of the *sefarim haKedoshim* elaborate on how the mitzvah of *kibbud av v'eim* brings a person to *bittul* to the Ribbono shel Olam.

The mitzvah of *kibbud av v'eim* is so fundamental to our *Yiddishkeit* that the Gemara says that one must give honor to his parents even *after* their passing! It isn't an emotional desire to pay tribute to his parents—it is a real feature of a central mitzvah in the *Aseres HaDibros*.

Looking Ahead

When a *chassan* stands under the *chuppah*, he usually thinks, **“What do I know about how my life will pan out, and what awaits me over the coming years?”** As long as he's young and single, he doesn't think much about the future, but as he steps into marriage, he tends grasp that life is serious... it isn't so simple.

Shavuot is the same. As much as a *Yid* pines for a life of closeness to Hashem and success in *avodas Hashem*, he *knows* that there will be challenges and *nisyonos* in the upcoming year.

Let's speak clearly and openly: **There will be strong and difficult *nisyonos*!** Why? Because this is our world! This is our life. There are challenges and *nisyonos* of all kinds.

A Time for *Tefillah*

We know right now that there will be *nisyonos* in the area of אנכי ה' אלוקיך, *to believe in Hashem and that He runs the world*. We know that there will be serious challenges in לא תגנוב, and we know that we will struggle with our שמירת עינים. All these *nisyonos* tend to come to a person when he's least ready for them... and we will need great *siyata diShmaya* to overcome them.

Says the *Aibishter*, **“Now, in the days of Shavuot, is the time that you can daven for your success and be granted!** I want to see your level of yearning as you daven for this!”

The Rebbe Rebbe Hirsh of Rimanov teaches that during the שלשת ימי

הגבלה, the three days before the Torah was given, Klal Yisrael were days preoccupied with the *tefillah* of *והאר עינינו בתורתך*, *illuminate our eyes in Your Torah*. **We are in the very same situation that the Yidden were at that time!** The more a *Yid* understands how much his very life depends on this, the more he will daven for it without letup!

Every Yid Can Begin Living a Life of *Kirvas Elokim*

The Little Worm of Despair

In order for a *Yid* to daven for this with strong yearning and desperation to *receive* the *Aseres HaDibros*, he must first come to terms with the idea that he has given up on certain things. **People don't like the word "despair"...** they think that it applies only to brokenhearted *Yidden*; it doesn't apply to them.

But the simple definition of despair is when a person has looked at a certain reality and concluded that it's not for him.

For example: one person wanted a certain *shidduch* very much. But the *shadchan* tells him, "Forget it, it's not happening." And the person listens, and he gives up on it. **This doesn't mean that he will now lie in bed, completely depressed.** It simply means that he has closed a certain window in his mind, and he has come to the decision, "Let it go. Forget about it. Try another *shidduch*. Yes, you wanted it very much, but it's not meant for you."

The Aspirations We Gave Up On

In the same way, many people have clearly and determinedly concluded that certain things in their *ruchniyus* life will never happen. **They have closed the window in their mind to certain spiritual aspirations.** Why? Because they tried and they didn't succeed.

A *Yid* finds himself at a certain stage of life, and he thinks, "I am no longer a *yeshivah bachur*...." When I was young, I had aspirations. I thought I would complete *Shas*, and so forth.... Should I take out those dreams now and dust them off?! They were delusions!"

It's true that when people grow older, they become more practical. They see how things work in a way that they haven't before. But a *Yid* must know that **if the Ribbono shel Olam helps him, then he can indeed attain anything he sets out to do.** If so, it makes no sense whatsoever to despair!

There exist *Yidden* in our generation who changed their entire lives at fifty or sixty years old! They changed the way they speak to people, they changed their daily schedule, and they changed their approach to davening and learning. The *only* way that this happened was through *tefillah* and with the simple faith that Hashem will help them attain the light of Torah.

We Can Always Start Davening Properly

Even a seventy-year-old *Yid* can conclude that while his davening is acceptable, **he can still improve in the area of *tefillah*.** He may not speak during davening, but sometimes he comes late to davening; or his mind isn't always present during davening; he can use some improvement in the עבודה שלב זו תפילה.

The *Aibishter* should help us all to have long and healthy years, but let's assume that this *Yid* will live to eighty years old. Even so, the tremendous gain that he will have in attaining new levels in *kirvoas Elokim* for the coming decade is eternal!

Understanding the Order of Prayer

This *Yid* contemplates the way *tefillah* follows an order. The evening before, he prepares himself so that he can head to shul in the morning without becoming preoccupied with anything else. As he heads to the *beis medrash*, he meditates on the idea that he is about to encounter the Ribbono shel Olam. **"I am going to speak to Him!"**

This *Yid* will visit the *sefarim* store and purchase a few *siddurim* that provide insight into the meaning of *tefillah* and the *mehalech* of *tefillah*—which is such a sweet *limud*.

Just as the Ribbono shel Olam ordained that our generation should have easy access to *narishkeitn* and foolishness, and to the *Sitra Achara* itself, so too—זה לעומת זה—He has given us ready access to so many resources that bring much meaning into our *avodas Hashem*. **There's something for every Yid, at every level.** Everything has been catalogued and brought to one place, and every simple Yid can learn and understand and gain deep insight into *tefillah*.

Appreciating the Impact of Our Actions

This Yid learns a bit about *tefillin*, and how elevated he becomes—*ma-mash* like a *Malach*—when he tethers himself to the Ribbono shel Olam through *tefillin*. He mediates on the meaning of *tzitzis*. He begins to appreciate the order of our תפילת שחרית. He offers a *korban*, and he does *teshuvah* as he recites the *pasuk* of ...ושחט אותו about which the *Tanna d'Bei Eliyahu* tells us that *even a non-Jew* becomes elevated if he recites it.

This person buys a new *siddur*, in which he inscribes his own insights on davening. “Here, I will contemplate bringing a *korban* for Hashem and doing *teshuvah* for my sins. Then comes the *avodah* of *Ketores*. Then comes the *Kaddish*, which will elevate my offering to the Ribbono shel Olam.”

Yiddishe Thoughts During Pesukei d'Zimrah

Then comes *Pesukei d'Zimrah*. He sings the praises of Hashem. He embellishes הודו with some personal issues for which he seeks to give thanks to Hashem. As he recites the הלליה chapters, he imagines the entire creation singing along. The trees in the forest, the birds in the air, the water in the oceans... they're all singing and praising—and I want to be a part of it. The *olam* is singing... let's sing along.

At הפכת מספדי למחול לי, *you have transformed my lament into joy*. This Yid studies the *pirush hamilos* in order to understand what he's saying, and he analyzes every component of the davening to understand why it was placed where it is.

He derives such strength and encouragement from אשרי: The Ribbono shel Olam is so good! טוב ה' לכל ורחמי על כל מעשיו, *the Aibishter is good to*

all and His compassion is upon all His creations—and I have experienced this goodness myself! This *Yid* resolves to tell others of the Ribbono shel Olam's kindness to him: להודיע לבני האדם גבורותיו. The problems that I have? Now is not the time for this—it's an occasion to offer thanks and praise for the good I have been given.

Contemplation and Meditation in *Tefillah*

This *Yid* sings and praises from his heart. He learns why ויברך דוד follows the הלל-ה chapters. When he comes to the שירה, he says to himself, "There are *kelipos* that surround my *neshamah*—but when I recite the שירה, the Ribbono shel Olam extricates my *neshamah* from the *kelipos* of Paroh! They become smashed through my *Shirah*, תפול עליהם אימתה ופחד, *may fear and terror befall them*. The Ribbono shel Olam raises up my *neshamah* and transplants it in Eretz Yisrael, תביאמו ותטעמו בהר נחלתך, *You will bring them and implant them on the mount of Your heritage*."

Then, he recites the Thirteen Attributes in ישתבה, and the *Kaddish* thereafter elevates it. He comes to ברכת יוצר אור, and he sings the praises in unison with the angels. Then comes אמת and קריאת שמע and אהבת עולם. ויציב. Do we know what we're saying during אמת ויציב?! We declare that the life of a *Yid* who upholds the Torah is so sweet and pleasant. He simply has an illuminated life!

And then he arrives at שמונה עשרה and תחנון—fulfilling the *mitzvah d'Oraisa* of וידוי, *confession*. There's a whole *avodah* happening! This *Yid* understands what's transpiring at every part of *tefillah*.

Every *Yid* Can Merit New Life

If a *Yid* were to do this even when he's seventy, and he merits **dav-**ening in this way for ten more years—**has he not saved his own life?!** Has he not "bought his world"?! He has literally gained a new lease on life! **Must one be a young *bachur* in order to make such a turnaround?!** To the contrary! A young person has a much more difficult time comprehending the weight and the magnitude behind many of these *tefillas*.

And one needn't be a Heavenly angel to do this. We don't need lofty

attainments, and we don't need to be completely removed from This World. **We must simply grasp that there is so much good and sweetness in the world!**

The Greater Light in Our Generation

The greatest proof that there's so much light in our generation is the immense amount of negativity that exists in our generation. When we see how many challenges and *nisyonos* exist in this generation—the way the Ribbono shel Olam *mamash* opened the gates of *Gehinnom* for our generation in so many ways—**then we know clearly that we can attain more goodness and light than ever**, for the world always works on *זה לועזת זה*, *the competing sides of good and evil are equal*.

It says in the *sefarim* of Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin that with the end of the era of prophecy came the end of the era of sorcery—because it cannot be that the side of evil should have more power than the forces of *kedushah*. If a person were to see wonders and miracles from sorcery, says Rav Tzadok, and there would be no *נבואה* to counter it, this would create insurmountable *nisyonos*. The playing field wouldn't be leveled.

Opportunities As Never Before

When a *Yid* sees how easy it is to access the worst of the worst, he must take encouragement from this—for **all aspects of darkness are really here to bring greater light!** Appreciate the opportunities for *kedushah* that we have today! Grab these opportunities and take advantage of them!

The Arizal once told his primary student, Rav Chaim Vital, that in days of yore the *avodah* was to toil greatly and to fast countless fasts in order to become close to the Ribbono shel Olam. **In today's generations, the path is so much easier**, for the *Shechinah* has nowhere else to be but with the *Yid* who creates a dwelling for It.

The *Shechinah* is in exile. And so, when a *Yid* gets up and says, "I want to daven. I want to guard my *kedushah*, but I need Your help, Ribbono shel Olam, in order to succeed," he will merit a special *siyata diShmaya!*

He will experience such sweetness and joy in davening and learning that **he'll never want to leave the environs of the Beis Medrash**, and he will absorb the light of Torah and *tefillah*.

The Brilliance of Our Generations

Our generation is also blessed with many gifted people who have the ability to understand Torah, more than in the past. There is a greater ability for more people to understand Torah. This is because we're taught from a younger age to utilize our talents and abilities.

In generations of yore, there were true boors and ignoramuses. An *am ha'aretz* didn't mean someone who didn't know a *Rashba* or a *Ketzos* — we see clearly from the Gemara (e.g., see *Chagigah* 22a) that an *am ha'aretz* is someone who knows *nothing* and understands *literally nothing*. Today, there's almost no such thing.

People today possess tremendous analytical skills; they need only apply it to the right things.

Utilize Your Talents and Abilities

The fact is that our generation is blessed with more talent, ability, and giftedness than in past generations. If so, why shouldn't people realize that they can channel these qualities for understanding in *avodas Hashem*? I can utilize my analytical skills to better understand things that I am already doing in any case.

Why shouldn't these deeper meanings interest us? Why shouldn't we channel our wisdom to understand these things? Why shouldn't we explore the depth of *Yiddishkeit*?

Searching for the Sweetness

Everything we're already doing in *avodas Hashem* has such an exact *cheshbon*. To whom were these things given?! To us! We must meditate on the sweetness of Torah, its warmth, and its pleasantness.

When a person cries his heart out in reciting **והערב נא**, *Hashem should*

sweeten the Torah for him, he understands that the Torah is sweet. We must only discover the sweetness. Instead of going to the *sefarim* store for silly books, find those volumes that will open doors for you in Torah and *tefillah*.

We must fulfill what the Gemara says, יבקשו רחמים ממי שהחכמה שלו, *plead for mercy from the One to Whom wisdom belongs* (Niddah 70b). Again and again, we must beg and plead to be granted benevolence and wisdom to understand Torah. Then the Ribbono shel Olam will surely grant us *siyata diShmaya*.

May the *Aibishter* helps us to merit to receive and accept the Torah, that it should penetrate and permeate our hearts, that the world should be illuminated for *Yiddishe kinder*, and we should merit to become *davuk* in the Ribbono shel Olam. *Amein*.



The Light of Torah Is an Antidote to the *Nisyonos* of Every Generation

For The Sake of Our Fathers Who Have Trusted

As we approach the Yom Tov of Shavuot, it is worthwhile to study the incredible *berachah* of אהבה רבה, in which we express our most heartfelt supplications to merit that the light of Torah will permeate our lives.

We're all familiar with the words of אבינו אב הרחמן המרחם רחם עלינו ותן —there's no deeper and more precious supplication than this. But the words before and after this sentence are likewise instructive to us, and they give context and meaning to our supplication.

We precede our request for the light of Torah with the words בעבור אבותינו שבטחו בך ותלמדם חוקי חיים לעשות רצונך בלבב שלם, *for the sake of our fathers who have trusted in You, and You have taught them statutes for life*, and we follow this heartfelt supplication with mention of our own trust in Hashem: למען לא נבוש ולא נכשל לעולם ועד, כי בשם קדשך הגדול בטחנו, *in order so that we may not be ashamed or stumble forever, for in Your great and holy Name we have trusted*.

Trust Is the Ultimate Vessel for Torah

That is, when we approach the Ribbono shel Olam with our request to merit a life of Torah, we first acknowledge that our forefathers received חוקי חיים, *the statutes for life*, only because they placed their trust in Hashem.

In order for a person to succeed in Torah and understand how he must conduct himself, which thoughts of Torah he must contemplate in order for his world to be illuminated and for his life to become filled

with light and joy, he must receive Heavenly *shefa*. And for this to happen, he must make himself a vessel to accept the *shefa*—coming before the Ribbono shel Olam and acknowledging, “I cannot do it alone. I know that only You can give it to me, and I rely on You, knowing that You want to give me the light and the understanding in Torah I need, and that You want only that I come before You, daven before You, and trust that You will grant them to me.”

Following Our Forefathers

Now, when we come before Hashem and ask to be granted for the sake of our forefathers who trusted, this doesn’t mean that we expect to have our wish granted because of *their* trust—for it would be illogical to ask for something based on *someone else’s* trust. Surely, we mean to say that we promise to emulate them and trust in Hashem the same way our ancestors trusted in Him.

We *want* to daven, we *want* to trust, we *want* to understand and acknowledge that we’re in need of *shefa* from Above—and only then to appeal to the mercy of Hashem: אבינו אב הרחמן המרחם רחם עלינו —and we conclude with the hope that the Ribbono shel Olam will accept our supplications because בטחנו והגיבור הגדול כי בשם קדשך הגדול והגיבור בטחנו, *we have followed the example of trust*, and we’re therefore confident that נגילה ונשמחה בישועתך *we will rejoice and be glad in Your salvation*.

Each Generation with Its Challenges and Its Torah

Each and every generation has its unique *inyanim* in Torah, because each and every generation has its unique challenges and *nisyonos*—and the Ribbono shel Olam creates new light every day to chase away the darkness of the *nisyonos*, for לעומת זה עשה האלוקים, *Hashem made one opposite the other*.¹ Yes, there are *nisyonos* in the world, but together with them come great revelation and light as the antidote.

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1. This *pasuk* in *Koheles* (7:14) teaches us that the Ribbono shel Olam created the world with complementary opposites, such as good and evil, light and darkness. When there’s darkness, Hashem will introduce a level of good and light that is able to stand up to the darkness and evil.

We say יוצר אור ובורא חושך עושה שלום, *the Ribbono shel Olam forms light and creates darkness, [and then] He makes peace [between them]*. Peace refers to the Torah, which makes peace between the light and the darkness—because **through the Torah, the Ribbono shel Olam illuminates for us that which we must do in every *nisayon***. This is the true understanding of זה לעומת זה.

Practical Performance

To illustrate the point that every generation has a unique mission and a unique corresponding light of Torah, let us look at the history of the way the Torah was revealed in the world.

We know that the *Avos HaKedoshim*, our holy Forefathers, fulfilled the mitzvos of the Torah thousands of years before it was given—each according to what was needed in his generation. Avraham dealt with the idol worshippers in his time, Yitzchak with the Philistines, and Yaakov battled Lavan and Esav. **Each of the *Avos* drew down the light according to what he needed to accomplish.**

Avraham arose as a three-year-old child and observed that the entire world worshipped *avodah zarah*. He trusted in Hashem, and he received revelations and inspiration from Above. The world went on from there, and we come to Yitzchak, and the challenges and dilemmas of *his* era. He, too, drew down the Torah light to address the unique challenges of *his* generation. This went on, generation after generation, until we come to Moshe and Aharon—when the Torah could no longer reside in the mind, but it was practiced through the performance of practical mitzvos.

Why? Because the world became too distant from its Source, and it could no longer be tethered to the Ribbono shel Olam through wisdom and knowledge alone. A person must now be surrounded by mitzvos at all times if he's to be connected to Hashem.

Illuminating *Our* Darkness

Thus, every generation has as its mission to draw down the Torah to reach a new level. People think that when they bring new generations

into the world, they're creating a new link in the chain, more soldiers in the army of Hashem. This is true, and we allude to this in the *Tefillas HaShelah*: the purpose of bringing children into the world is to grow the ranks of servants of Hashem.

But really, it goes much deeper than this. **Through a new generation, the Torah is drawn down to a new level and a new frontier.** It's not a matter of new yeshivah buildings being built to accommodate more children—as wonderful as this is. It is the essence of what we daven for when we ask Hashem to have mercy upon us: “Ribbono shel Olam!” we cry out. **“We're now in need of a Torah that will illuminate the unique darkness and challenges of 5785/2025!”** This state of affairs was predetermined long ago; the Ribbono shel Olam arranged that every in generation and in every year the world will be in a new state, and we will be able to draw down the light of Torah to match these deeper and deeper situations.

Every Generation and Its Unique Remedy

Thus, we tell the Ribbono shel Olam, “What worked then will work today as well—*bitachon* in our eternal G-d! You have taught our forefathers חוקי חיים, *statutes that give us our very life!*

Imagine that a person comes to a physician and tells him, “I have a friend who came to you, and you prescribed him a remedy. Ever since then, he's been healthy and hearty for many years. I would like you to give me that very same remedy.” Says the doctor, “Foolish man! This remedy won't be effective for you, because you don't have the same ailment as your friend. I can give you a different remedy that is appropriate and effective for you.”

Similarly, **when we daven to Hashem for the חוקי חיים, we're pleading for the statutes that will address the unique ailments of our generation—the situations and confusions that are unique to our generation, according to the era, the time, and the place.**

Each Year and Its *Kabbalas HaTorah*

And this is really the concept behind accepting the Torah anew ev-

ery year on the Yom Tov of Shavuos. The world of *this year* isn't the same world that we lived in last year. Let's not fool ourselves. The new innovations that are being introduced year after year are very real; this is how the world works.

We all know in advance that a new year will come, and it will be nothing like the previous year—and this is all in order to enable us to reveal yet another aspect and chapter of Torah. Regrettably, it is known that in everything, the *kelipah* comes before the light, just as the inedible shell precedes the wheat kernel. Similarly, in our world, we tend to see the problems and challenges first, and only then are the light and the solutions revealed.

We see this regarding our children. In their youth, they prance around and behave energetically and childishly, but as they grow older and settle down, they tend to channel those qualities and energies for positive things, for fulfilling their mission in the world.

And so, **if the Ribbono shel Olam didn't give us the Torah anew every year, we wouldn't be able to remain servants of Hashem—for the world keeps moving and changing, and we require a Torah that can address the unique challenges and ailments of that year.**

Continuing Our Forefathers' Tradition

For this reason, we daven every day that the Ribbono shel Olam give us חוקי חיים, and in this way, we perpetuate the tradition of our forefathers, who likewise relied on the same *Aibishter* for their Torah. And although we must not change an iota from the Torah of our forefathers, we must be prepared to accept the new light of Torah that comes down at every time.

This is similar to the *chinuch* of our children, in which we illuminate their individual *neshamah* with the light of Torah that is appropriate for them. We don't use methods that we ourselves innovated, and we don't use methods that others developed—we **utilize the new light of the Torah that descended from Above especially for your child to battle his or her unique *nisyonos*.**

The Ribbono shel Olam will *never* bring a *nisayon* to the world without also introducing the light of Torah as an antidote to that unique *nisayon*.

And this is precisely how we perpetuate the *mesorah* of our forefathers. How do we ensure that the golden chain won't be broken, and that the *mesorah* won't be altered? By davening during אהבת עולם that just as the Ribbono shel Olam helped the *Avos* in *their nisyonos*, so too, should we open our hearts and minds, enabling us to find new pathways and illuminations for our generation. This isn't a contradiction to *mesorah*—it is precisely the *mesorah*!

Each and every day, the Ribbono shel Olam gives a person new opportunities to understand, to grow, and to advance—and our success is assured, because of our trust in Hashem.

