

Sefer HaSichos 5705

Talks Delivered in 1944-45 by

**RABBI YOSEF YITZCHAK SCHNEERSOHN
OF LUBAVITCH**



**The Eve of
The First Day of Shavuos**

SEFER HA-SICHOS 5705

ספר השיחות תש"ה

TALKS DELIVERED IN 5705 (1944-1945) BY

RABBI YOSEF YITZCHAK SCHNEERSOHN

צוקוללה"ה נבג"מ זי"ע

THE SIXTH LUBAVITCHER REBBE



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THE EVE OF THE FIRST DAY OF SHAVUOS



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Dedication

THIS SEFER IS DEDICATED
IN HONOR OF

SHMUEL AND ROSALYNN MALAMUD שיחי

BY THEIR CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN,
THE MALAMUD FAMILY, CROWN HEIGHTS, NY

MOSHE AND ELKE MALAMUD
YISRAEL, LEBA, HADAS AND RACHEL ALEXANDRA

YOSSI AND KAYLI MALAMUD
YISROEL, SHLOIME, YECHEZKEL, MENACHEM MENDEL,
LAIVI YITZCHOK AND ELIYAHU

CHESKY AND CHANA MALAMUD
HADAS, SHAINA BATYA AND RACHEL

DAVID ELIEZER HALEVI AND SARAH RACHEL POPACK
Dov HALEVI, NENA NECHAMA, HADAS
AND SHLOMO HALEVI

THE EVE OF THE FIRST DAY OF SHAVUOS AT THE SEUDAH

1. Childhood Memories. This week I received a letter from someone in Canada who learned together with me in our childhood years, in the *cheder* in Lubavitch. This reminded me of Shavuos in the year 5645 (1885).¹

On *erev* Shavuos, our *melamed* told us that the Torah says that "Moshe led the people out toward G-d"² – to *matan Torah*, to the Giving of the Torah. He then said: "*Kinderlach!* Come with me and I will take you to *matan Torah*." He took all thirty or thirty-five of us to R. Binyamin's *beis midrash* 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 midrash* for *kabbalas haTorah*.

On Shavuos morning I awoke at seven o'clock and prepared to go there. My revered mother (*Rebbitzin Shterna Sarah*) wanted me – her precious only son – 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 *davenen* our *melamed* took us all on a walk down Chachloiker Road.

2. Sweet and Saintly Simplicity. Education once upon a time was utterly different. Everything was done with innocent, childlike *temimus* – both by the children and by the teachers, and it was apparent both in the teachers and in the parents. Basically, *temimus* is unsophisticated simplicity. People used to relate to teachers with respect. Today people say, "What's he teaching there – outdated stuff?"

1. The Rebbe Rayatz was almost five years old at the time.

2. *Shmos* 19:17.

In those days, the simplicity – the *pshitus* – was palpable. There is a well-known teaching on the verse, “You shall be *tamim* with the L-rd your G-d.”³ On this verse the Mitteler Rebbe said: “Through your *temimus* you can reach G-d’s own *temimus* – which is *pshitus haAtzmus*, the simple Essence of G-d Himself.”

3. Tears of Joy. R. Peretz Beshenkovitzer was a chassid who served as a *melamed*,⁴ who would visit Lubavitch every Shavuos. He was very poor and far removed from self-importance. My grandfather, the Rebbe Maharash, showed him marks of closeness by virtue of his lineage: his grandfather belonged to the inner circle of the chassidim of the *Tzemach Tzedek*.

As R. Peretz was arriving in Lubavitch for one of his Shavuos visits, the Rebbe Maharash noticed him while taking a walk out of town. That year so many visitors came for Shavuos and wanted to be admitted to *yechidus* that the *gabbai*, R. Levik, never dreamt of admitting this visitor. In fact R. Peretz himself never imagined that this would happen – until suddenly R. Leivik called for him and told him that the Rebbe would like to see him at *yechidus*.

Once inside, R. Peretz bemoaned the fact that he was a disgraceful empty vessel.

The Rebbe said: “One has to know how to truly feel that lack. Tell me, do you shed tears as you say *Tehillim*? ”

R. Peretz responded that he did. The Rebbe then instructed him to say two *kapitlach* in this manner every day for the rest of his life, and concluded, “But for *kabbalas haTorah*, when you are now going to receive the Torah, you must do so with *simchah*. ”

In later years R. Peretz related that every Shavuos, recalling that *yechidus*, he would contemplate how the Rebbe

3. I.e., “Trust the L-rd your G-d with simple faith” (*Devarim* 18:13).

4. See the Foreword to *Kuntres Uma’yon*, p. 36.

had lowered himself from the Higher *Gan Eden* all the way down, in order to address him in This World.

On the first night of Shavuos in the year 5647 (1887),⁵ I quietly left via the back door of our home to visit the *beis midrash*. Amongst the large crowd, I noticed two *Yidn* whose tears flowed down their cheeks as they read from their “*siddurim*.” (At that age I didn’t know that they were reading from copies of *Tikkun Leil Shavuos*.) One of them was a tall man with a long beard. It was R. Peretz Beshenkovitzer.

And that was his “*kabbalas haTorah* with *simchah*.”

4. A Deep Desire. One *erev* Shavuos, my father entered the study of his father, the Rebbe Maharash, for *yechidus*, and asked him: “With what kind of *avodah* should one prepare himself for the night of Shavuos?”

The Rebbe Maharash replied: “At the time of the Giving of the Torah, three things were given – *galia deTorah*, the Torah’s revealed dimension; *sisrei Torah*, the secrets of the Torah; and an empowerment to do one’s *avodah*. The revealed dimension of the Torah everyone has, and the secrets of the Torah have been known to many. By contrast, the empowerment to do one’s *avodah* is granted only to a person who *desires* it – and that means yearning for it from the innermost essence of one’s soul.”⁶

The Rebbe Maharash continued: “The Sages teach that the secrets of the Torah ‘may not be relayed except to a person whose heart trembles within him.’⁷ The Alter Rebbe notes that the Sages do not say ‘may not be revealed,’ but ‘may not be relayed,’ meaning that it is *Atzmus Ein-Sof*, G-d’s infinite Essence, that is relaying these secrets to the *atzmus*, the innermost essence, of the soul. These are the secrets that are called *razin derazin*, the most secret mysteries. And when one

5. When the Rebbe Rayatz was almost seven years old.

6. In the original, *ga’aguim atzmi’im*.

7. *Chagigah* 13a, where the word for “relayed” is *mosrin*.

hears a Torah teaching from a *tzaddik* who is in the higher *Gan Eden*, one can come to know such secrets."

In response, my father said, "Father, bless me!"

The Rebbe Maharash then gave him a blessing for the empowerment of the *atzmus*, the innermost essence, of his soul. That blessing he gave him by virtue of the power of his father, the *Tzemach Tzedek*; by virtue of the power of his great-grandfather, the Alter Rebbe; and by virtue of the power of our mentor, the Baal Shem Tov.

When my father related this to me, he concluded: "That Shavuos night I had no inclination to sleep."

The above episode took place when my father was seventeen years old.

5. Fruitful Meditation. *Hisbonenus*, meditation, does not relate to comprehension alone. It should relate to all levels – thought, speech, action and conduct. *Hisbonenus* means weighing one's thoughts and rearranging them.

In this activity lies the difference between a person who is deliberate and a person who is impulsive. If the impulsive person is a scholar, his scholarship is impulsive; if he is a fool, his foolishness is impulsive. So, too, both his good *middos* and his bad *middos* will be impulsive. In the case of the deliberate individual, everything is as it ought to be: his scholarship is scholarly, his foolishness is foolish, and his *middos*, too, are as they ought to be.

There are three kinds of *hisbonenus*: meditation that focuses on the person himself;⁸ lengthy meditation; and profound intellectual analysis. The last kind is not appropriate for everyone, nor is lengthy meditation appropriate for everyone – but meditation that focuses on the thinker himself is everyone's task. Every individual should ask himself how he is and what state he is in.

Tonight, the eve of Shavuos, everyone ought to ask himself how he *is*, how he *should* be, and how he *can* be.

8. In the original Aram., *adaata denafshei*.

Shavuos night is the time to prepare oneself to gather the energy to do his *avodah*. How does one get that energy? By studying the letters of the Torah, for “the entire Torah comprises the Names of the Holy One, blessed be He,”⁹ and that transcends even the level of perception called *shlilah atzmius*.¹⁰



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9. *Ramban*, in the introduction to his Commentary on the Torah, based on *Zohar* II, 87a.
 10. The superrational connection Above that one gains via the letters of the Torah transcends even the level of perception called *shlilah atzmius*, in which the essence of the soul perceives the simple Essence of *Elokus*.



