

Getting Back to What's Real

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My dear friend, Rav Lipa Yisraelson, recently published the latest volume in his Siach Ish series of seforim on Yomim Tovim. They contain halachos, hanhagos and stories from his grandfather, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, and uncle, Rav Chaim Kanievsky; and are presented in a compact, easy to read fashion.

The newest volume is on the Yom Tov of Shavuos, which is upon us. Rav Elyashiv was known not to be a fan of segulos, but in the new sefer, I read about the one segulah that Rav Elyashiv actively publicized and brought to the attention of many people.

He would say that Shavuos presents a segulah for refuos. This is because the Medrash (Shemos Rabbah 7) teaches that at the time of Kabbolas HaTorah, all those who were sick recovered from their illnesses. Since the hashpa'os from when the Torah was given to the Jewish people on Shavuos are present again each year as we read of Matan Torah on Shavuos, those who concentrate properly during the laining of the parsha of the Aseres Hadibros can merit those same hashpa'os.

Rav Elyashiv would always tell people who were seeking segulos for various things that the best segulah for everything is Torah, but he made an exception regarding this particular segulah.

Let us examine the meaning of the segulah of Shavuos.

When Hashem asked the Bnei Yisroel if they would be interested in accepting the Torah, they unanimously responded, "Naaseh v'nishma." Joyously and without asking what the Torah contains, they said that they would accept to follow whatever it says and would study it. By doing so, they demonstrated great faith in Hashem, believing that He would not give them something that would not be beneficial for them physically and spiritually. They also showed that they trusted that they would have the ability to follow the Torah.

Thus, when they offered their response, Hakadosh Boruch Hu questioned, "Who revealed this secret of the malochim (angels) to My children?" Angels do not have a choice – bechirah – about whether to do what Hashem tells them or not. They were created to serve Hashem and carry out their missions. They do not have a yeitzer hora that interferes to block them from following the word of Hashem.

Thus, when humans, who do have a choice, responded that they would set aside their ability to choose whether or not to follow everything the Torah would tell them to do, they were accepting upon themselves to act like angels.

In fact, the Medrash (Shir Hashirim Rabbah 1:15) teaches that when the Bnei Yisroel at Har Sinai heard the first of the Aseres Hadibros from Hakadosh Boruch Hu, that of Anochi Hashem Elokecha, the learning of Torah was established in their hearts. When they heard the second one, that of Lo yihiyeh lecha, the yeitzer hora was taken from them.

This seems to indicate that when Hashem gave the Torah, He justified to them the faith that they had placed in Him and gave them the ability to observe all of

the mitzvos, removing from them the yeitzer hora that seeks to block their ability to keep all the mitzvos.

The Jewish people asked that their bechirah and ability to choose be returned to them, but the strength and ability that Hashem gave to them at Matan Torah remained with them. This koach is evident every year again at the time of Shavuos, when we read the pesukim that discuss Matan Torah. Those who properly prepare for that moment and apply themselves can benefit from those abilities that Hashem gave when presenting the first two dibros. [See Pri Tzaddik Rosh on Chodesh Sivan.]

This is based upon the idea that the influences of the day that we are commemorating on a Yom Tov are present once again thousands of years later, as developed by the Ramchal in Derech Hashem (4,7,6). He writes there that Hakadosh Boruch Hu arranged that any tikkun that was rendered and any great holy light of that time shines once more on that calendar day and the tikkun is available again.

This idea is also cited by the Sefer Korban Ha'eidah, a peirush on the Yerushalmi. The Yerushalmi (Rosh Hashanah 4:8) cites Rav Misharshiya in the name of Rav Idi, who said, "Regarding all korbanos, sin is mentioned, but with respect to Atzeres – Shavuos – there is no mention of sin, because Hakadosh Boruch Hu said that since you accepted upon yourselves the Torah, I will consider it as if you never sinned in your lives."

The Korban Ha'eidah adds that every year on Shavuos, it is as if we are standing again at Har Sinai and receiving the Torah anew. He is basically saying the same idea, that every year, on this day, we have the ability to receive the

same influences and blessings as when the Bnei Yisroel originally accepted the Torah. Of course, this is only if we accept upon ourselves the yoke of Torah, as our forefathers did on this day.

When does this happen? The Yalkut Shimoni (Yisro 271) writes that Hakadosh Boruch Hu told Am Yisroel, "Read this parsha [of Kabbolas HaTorah] every year and I will consider it as if you are standing at Har Sinai and accepting the Torah."

We can now understand the basis behind the segulah that Rav Elyashiv promoted. In fact, it is plainly evident in the Yerushalmi, Midrashim and seforim hakedoshim. From here we also see the power of properly preparing ourselves for laining and paying attention as the baal korei reads the holy words of the Torah. As we listen, we hear Hakadosh Boruch Hu speaking to us. Not only do we merit to connect to the brachos that are read, as well as the hashpa'os of the mitzvos that are mentioned, but we also become connected to Hashem, as we say, "Yisroel v'Oraysa v'Kudsha Brich Hu chad hu," the Jewish people and the Torah and Hashem are all one.

Not only on Shavuos, but each week at krias haTorah, we have a chance to connect to Hashem and His brachos. And not only at the time of laining, but also every time we open a Chumash, or a Gemara, or a sefer, and we begin studying Torah, we are connecting to Hashem as we study His words. They touch our hearts and soul, and affect our lives. Torah is not just some esoteric study. It is connecting with the words of the Creator himself.

There is no greater segulah than learning Torah. There is no better way to improve our lives physically and spiritually than the study and comprehension of

Torah, reviewing and internalizing its teachings. It is for that purpose that Hashem created the world and created us. Can there be anything greater than achieving the Creator's goal?

Conversely, someone who finds other things to do during laining is not only missing an opportunity to realize their purpose in life and gain for themselves all types of segulos as Hashem's words jump off the parchment into the souls of the listeners, but they are also being spiteful and making as if they aren't interested in fulfilling their goals and connecting with Hashem.

The words "Yisroel v'Oraysa v'Kudsha Brich Hu chad hu" don't only make for a nice tune often sung over Shavuot. They remind us of who we are and what we are about.

When we chant on Simchas Torah, "Ein segulah kaTorah," those words are not merely an appealing annual chant. They guide us in how to succeed all year round.

When we have proper emunah and bitachon, like the Yidden who proclaimed, "Naaseh v'nishma," and we accept upon ourselves the Torah as they did, we become like the Bnei Yisroel at the time of Matan Torah.

As we sing "Yisroel v'Oraysa v'Kudsha Brich Hu chad hu," we become one with Hashem. Our lives become better, our illnesses become cured, and we are raised to a higher level where petty things don't bother us anymore. Silliness no longer interests us, and fleeting superficial nonsense no longer tempts us.

If you are looking for a segulah - and let's be honest, who isn't? - Shavuos presents an opportunity with the best one around. Yes, it's harder to do than lots of the things that people do as segulos, but it's real and will make you a better person as well.

This Shavuos, let us get back to what is real. Let's recommit and renew. May we all merit receiving all the brachos that are available for us at this time.

When we sing, "Ashreinu mah tov chelkeinu," let's really feel it this time.

Have a great Yom Tov.