

Pardes Yehuda

Weekly Torah Journal By Yehuda Z. Klitnick

Shavuos 5786

חג שמחה

חג השבועות תשפ"ו

Inspirational stories and insights for Shavuos, as well as a story from the Baal Shem Tov, the Yahrtzeit is Shavuos. We are sure you will enjoy, We wish you all a Chag Sameach.

The deeds of the patriarchs are a sign for the children. מעשה אבות סימן לבנים

Regarding the famous Talmudic statement, **כפה עליהם** "He coerced them [by holding] the mountain over them like a barrel"—there is a well-known question: Since the Jewish people had already willingly declared, "Naaseh V'Nishmah" ("We will do and we will hear"), why was any coercion necessary?

Rather, it can be said that the trials of the holy patriarchs were not for their own sake, as they were already spiritually very elevated. Instead, their spiritual service (avodah) was meant for future generations—so that we would have the strength to endure our own trials, serving as a timeless lesson for how one ought to conduct oneself. This is the meaning of "Maaseh Avot"—from their actions comes a "Siman L'Banim" (a sign/empowerment) to help their children later on. Indeed, it is brought down in Seforim that when a Torah giant scholar breaks through a difficult topic (sugya), this breakthrough opens up the pathway for other Torah scholars to understand it as well.

The exact same principle applies to Torah study: even if a person occasionally feels a strong desire (cheshek) for Torah and a diligence (hasmadah) to study, that feeling eventually cools down a bit. Therefore, "He held the mountain over them like a barrel" was directed toward future generations, for those times when the desire and diligence for Torah study would weaken. In those moments, there must be a sense of "coercion": a person must force themselves to study "like an ox to the yoke and a donkey to the burden."

As the heilige Beis Aaron brings down: First, a person must toil like an ox to a yoke without feeling any initial sweetness or pleasure (geshmak), and through that effort, they will subsequently merit to receive a true pleasure in avodah. (Yehuda Z. Klitnick)

Do we count 49 days or 50 days?

וספרתם לכם ממחרת השבת מיזם הביאכם את עמר התנופה שבע שבתות המימית תהיינה: עד ממחרת השבת השביעית תספרו חמשים יום: (כג טו טז)

"And you shall count for yourselves, from the morrow of

the rest day from the day you bring the omer as a wave offering seven weeks; they shall be complete. You shall count until the day after the seventh week, the fiftieth day," The obvious difficulty here is: that the phrases contradict. The first posuk states that you shall count seven full weeks which is 49 days. Yet in the second posuk it states you shall count 50 days? Now if we begin to count from the first day of Pesach we have 50 days until Shavuos. If we begin to count from the second day of Pesach we have seven weeks until Shavuos. The key here is the days of Sefira - counting the Omer, which are very holy days and according to the Ramban they are on the same holiness as Chol Hamoed. What is the secret of the Sefira days? The Arizal and the talmidei Baal Shem Tov have revealed to us that on the night of Pesach we are elevated to great heights in spirituality. Then Hashem takes it away from us and the Avoda and Tachlis of the Sefira days for seven weeks, is to regain that spiritual level on Shavuos. The seven weeks of Sefira are seven Sefiros or Middos. Chesed, Gevurah, Tiferes, Netzach, Hod, Yesod and Malchus. These Middos are the channels how Hashem controls this world. Being so, each day of the Sefira is important and has the level of Chol Hamoed. Now to answer our question: The counting of 50, is from Pesach. Then we received the elevation of Kedusha from Hashem, The 49 days are the Chol Hamoed for which each day is against another spiritual Sefira; and our task is to rectify that Sefira. Then we finally come to Shavuos the day of Kabalas Hatorah after cleansing our souls and rectifying the Heilige Sefiras and Middos.

Good Middos are the remedy for Kabalas Hatorah

עד ממחרת השבת השביעית תספרו חמשים יום: (כג טו)

You shall count until the day after the seventh week, the fiftieth day, The Rambam writes, "Just as a person must repent for his sins, so must one seek out his bad thoughts and middos that need correction, such as anger, hatred, and the like. One must do teshuvah on all of these." During the days of Sefiras

Ha'Omer, it is especially important for one to improve on his middos, and in particular, to increase his Ahavas Yisrael. While it is true that the Jewish people received their physical freedom on Pesach, that freedom was essentially without purpose until they were given the Torah on Mount Sinai on Shavuos. Thus Shavuos was the ultimate purpose of the Pesach miracle. The Midrash (Vayikra Rabbah 9:3) states דרך ארץ קדמה לתורה.

דרך ארץ קדמה לתורה / *Derech Eretz Kadma L'Torah*. The way of the world precedes the Torah. Middos Tovos, good attitudes, and fine behavior, are essential in order to have a part in the Torah. Therefore the 49 days of the Omer are essential to improve on the Middos Tovos, and one must correct his character traits, in order to insure a Chelek in the Torah by following the Midrash דרך ארץ קדמה לתורה. It is for that reason we learn Chapter 6 of Pirkei Avos the Shabbos before Shavuos, which teaches the right Middos that a person should have. Hence, here again we have the obligation of good Middos as a requisite to receiving the Torah. The Sefas Emes of Gur states that the entire Pirkei Avos is learned the six weeks prior to Shavuos, and Pirkei Avos opens with the words, "Moshe received the Torah from Sinai," as if to say: While all the lessons and guidelines for proper behavior contained in this tractate are a credit to those who follow them, the primary intent in following them should be to make oneself a fitting receptacle for Torah.

The great Baal Mussar, Reb Elyah Lopian always said: without middos, there is nothing at all. Once he told a maashal to express the importance of good middos: Two people in Russia were arrested for dealing with counterfeit Money. One was caught with thousands of counterfeit bills in his possession. Not one counterfeit bill was found by the other crook but police found the printing press, which printed the counterfeit money, in his home. The holder of the counterfeit bills was sent to jail for a year. The second criminal, who owned the press, was sent to jail for seven years. "Is this justice?" he asked the jury. "This other man had thousands of counterfeit bills, and he is only imprisoned for a year. Not one counterfeit bill was found in my possession. Why should I be imprisoned for seven years?" The judge explained, "Everything is just and everyone receives what they deserve. The punishment for owning thousands of counterfeit bills is only one year imprisonment. But you have the printing press in your home, and there is no limit of the amount of harm you can produce. Therefore, your crime is even worse, and the verdict was more severe." Reb

Eliyah Lopian explains that there are people who have sins on their hands, but bad middos are even worse. When one has bad middos there is no limit to the corruption that he can create, hatred, arguments arrogance, all this is an obstacle to Kabalas HaTorah. (Yehuda Z. Klitnick)

The prelude to Kabalas Hatorah

וידבר ה' אל משה במדבר סיני: (א א)

"Hashem spoke to Moshe in the Wilderness of Sinai"

בג' דברים ניתנה התורה, (1:1) The Midrash Rabbah says: *"The Torah was given with three things – with fire, with water and with wilderness... Why with these three things? Just as these things are free for all mankind, so are the words of Torah free...."* The Dubno Maggid explains that fire, water and wilderness symbolize the three qualities needed to grow great in Torah. Fire: The person's Divine service must be aflame and with fervor within him. Water: The person must thirst for words of Torah just as one thirsts for water. Wilderness: He must be content with little and be as free of materialism as the wilderness. This is a prelude to Kabalas Hatorah on Shavuos.

Shabbos before Shavuos

The Rebbe Rav Menahem Mendel of Vorka was once asked: The Shabbos before Pesach is called Shabbos Hagadol. The Shabbos before Yom Kippur is called Shabbos Teshuva. So what do we call the Shabbos before Shavuos? The rebbe quickly answered: Chazal teach us *דרך ארץ קדמה לתורה*. One must possess proper derech eretz before embarking on learning Torah. Meaningful limud hatorah must be conditioned on proper relations with others. Therefore the Shabbos before Matan Torah should be called ***Shabbos Derech Eretz***, so as to launch limud Hatorah upon the proper foundation.

Praying for understanding the Torah

The day that the Torah was given to Klal Yisrael, is the right time to pray to Hashem to give us the right frame of mind to understand His Torah, and the aura of it.

והאר עינינו בתורתך ודבק לבנו במצותיך The righteous Yidden have throughout the generations, spent hours on the Tefilah of Ahavas Oilam before Krias Shema. Our goal in this prayer is לשמך הגדול, that Hashem should bring us closer to Him, which will come as a result of להודות לך וליתרך באהבה when we praise and thank Hashem. The first Rebbe of Belz, Rav

Shalom, praised the Shacharis prayer of the Chasam Sofer on Shavuos. The Rebbe said: his prayer of Neila on Yom Kippur, could not come close to the elevation of Kedusha that the Chasam Sofer had. The Rebbe stated, that is one of the reasons that he is known as the heilige Chasam Sofer.

The Magen Avrohom says that Shavuos is the time of Kabalas Hatorah **תורה שבכתב**. Chanukah is the time of Kabalas Hatorah **תורה שבעל פה**. Shavuos is the third month of the summer months (Nisan, Iyar, Sivan). Chanukah is the third month of the winter months

(Tishrei, Cheshvon, Kislev). The Ribbono Shel Olam is called with the name **אור** because His light illuminates all of the worlds and all of creations. The Torah is called **אור** as it says in the Posuk **נר מצוה ותורה אור**. The Neshama of a person is also called **אור** as it says in the Posuk **נר ה' נשמת אדם**. By Klal Yisroel toiling in **תורה שבעל פה** and **תורה שבעל פה** they kindle the light of the Torah Hakdosha. Therefore through Torah one becomes closer to Hashem. That was the reason the Yivanim decreed against learning Torah,.

STORIES FOR SHAVUOS (By Yehuda Z. Klitnick)

*******The Belzer Rebbe's gartel rescues a Yid from harm*******

A chosid of the first Belzer Rebbe, HaRav Shalom זצוק"ל of Belz" also known as the "Sar Shalom", once traveled from deep in Russia, from a faraway shtetl, to be in his Rebbe's holiness for Yomtov Shavuos. But things did not unfold as he anticipated. When he approached to give "Sholom Aleichem" greeting to the Rebbe, he was met with an altogether unnerving response: "Return now to your home. You will reach it in time for Yomtov. I am giving you this gartel as a gift. When you are awake throughout the night of Shavuos, and you will recite the saying of *Tikkun Leil Shavuos*, make sure that you wear it the entire time. Go *lechaim ule'sholom*, my son."

The Rebbe's pronouncement struck the man like a thunderbolt. With a bitter wail, he exclaimed: "But Rebbe, I beg you, let me stay here in your presence. I suffered greatly on the long and hard road from my town, just to be here with the Rebbe for Shavuos. How can I just turn around and repeat the journey in reverse?" The Tzaddik appeared unmoved. He merely emphasized: "Now is not the time to ask questions. Just follow my instructions. Another detail: Beware of removing this gartel the entire night, and this year don't go to beis medrash as you usually do to recite the Tikkun. Say the entire nusach at home after your Yomtov meal and all will be well." Having exhausted all appeals, he had no choice but to return home.

After an exhausting and strenuous journey, he rolled into the shtetl late in the afternoon on Erev Shavuos. Needless to say, his wife was startled to see him back so soon and quickly surmised that something was odd. "What are you doing back here, Husband? The idea was for you to spend Shavuos with the Belzer Rebbe, so what happened? Not only that, but do realize how late it is? The zman is in forty-five minutes, barely enough for you to get ready for Yomtov. "Believe me, I am as puzzled as you are. With barely a word, the Rebbe sent me back home with this gartel in hand, which he instructed me, without the slightest hint of an explanation, to wear the entire night of Shavuos."

His wife, whose *emunas tzaddikim* was very firm, simply said: "If the Rebbe told you what to do, then we have to obey. We must not think into it. There's obviously something going on here that we don't understand." The chosid ate the Seuda, and sang nice Zemiros. After the meal, the chosid instead of going to Shul as he would always do that night, sat at home, wrapped in the gartel as the Rebbe had directed, and said the Tikkun Leil Shavuos as he did every year, with a loud and studious niggun. Suddenly, he heard heavy footsteps at his door and knew instinctively what they meant.

His *gubernia* -locality- had been plagued by an elusive band of merciless, bandits, who would invade houses, steal what they could and eliminate any witnesses. He was prepared to meet his Maker when the bandits starting pounding on the door with their hatchets. They managed to break in, but upon seeing the Yid, they became paralyzed and speechless, glued to their spot helplessly. Our chosid took the Rebbe's gartel and used it to tie the leader's hands and feet as the others watched helplessly. He ran to call the police who came and arrested the whole band, showering our hero with praise for apprehending the vicious fugitives. Now the Rebbe's intentions became clear as day: the purpose for the man's return home was to rescue his wife from a cruel end and to save his property, but one thing remained a mystery: why did the paralysis envelop the intruders the instant they stepped across his threshold? Upon interrogation, the truth emerged: the robbers revealed that they had heard that the man would be away for the Jewish holiday, which made his family and property a tempting and easy target. Their plan was to kill, and empty the house of all valuables. But when they viewed the chosid encircled in the Rebbe's gartel, a panic took them in its grip and their criminal career came to a crashing end. The chosid saw now, that the Belzer Rebbe's wondrous gartel and Ruach HaKodesh guarded him at long distance from the Rebbe, and kept him whole in body, spirit, and worldly possessions.

***** ***The Shpoler Zeide brings Moshe Rabbeinu on Shavuos to save a city********

Not far from the City of Shpole, where the famous Tzaddik, Harav Aryeh Leib-, the Shpoler Zeide resided, there was a Shtetl where the Yidden lived peacefully with the Gentiles. One day an Anti-Semitic Poritz, purchased the entire Shtetl, and began to persecute the Yidden. Initially, the Poritz's decrees were bearable. But, as time went on, the decrees became harsher and harsher, but the Yidden suffered quietly, and life went on.

The Poritz was a low life person, who loved to drink. He often threw parties for his friends, where alcohol was consumed by the barrel; at every party, the Poritz and his friends became drunk. At one party, when the Poritz was drunk, he told his friends that he wanted to cause some mischief for some Yidden and that would make him happy! He ordered his servants to bring the Yidden who had rented inns and taverns from the Poritz, and demanded that they pay an astronomical sum for the privilege to rent their holdings. When they responded that the price was too high for them, the Poritz had them beaten, and thrown into the dungeon. This made the gentiles very happy, and the Potitz was thrilled at what he had done!

(After the party everyone went home.) In the morning, when the Poritz woke up, he was reminded of what he had done the night before. This reignited his hatred of the Jews, and he was very happy about what he had done. He sent a messenger to the Leaders of the Kehilla, demanding an enormous sum to ransom the captive Jews from his dungeon. The Yidden sent a respected delegation, and begged the Poritz to have mercy on them. He softened, and agreed to settle on a smaller amount. The delegation was releived and promised to deliver the money that day. When the Poritz received the ransom, he released the imprisoned Yidden.

Life was back to normal until the Poritz became drunk again. At the next party he came up with an idea how to really make the Yidden suffer. The Poritz decreed that all the Yidden in the Shtetl must hang a portrait of Yoshka in their home within the next 30 days, and that all businesses must be open on Shabbos. Whoever would not follow the rules, would be expelled together with their families from the Shtetl. This decree hit the Yidden very hard. Again, a respectful delegation was sent, and they begged the Poritz to nullify the decree, but this time it was to no avail. The delegation left the Poritz with a heavy heart.

It was only a few weeks before Shavuos; and Leaders of the Kehilla, decided it was an urgent matter, they had to act fast. They traveled to the Shpoler Zeide to seeking a

Yeshua and poured out their pain from the evil Poritz. The Rebbe went into a trance, when he awoke, he said: "there's no need to worry, I have a plan to soften the heart of the Poritz! You invite the Poritz to listen on Shavuos when you read the Aseres Hadibros, the Ten Commandments, from the Torah."

The delegation was perplexed; they didn't understand. The Rebbe continued: "I will come with my Chassidim, and daven in your Shtetl this Shavuos. You should set up a large tent to accommodate the crowd. Then invite the Poritz and his friends to come to our tent and listen to the davening, as it would be interesting for him to watch."

The delegation understood, and promised to follow the Rebbe's instructions. The Kehilla found a nice empty space to set up a huge tent, and let out the word that the Shpoler Zeide would daven in their Shtetl this Shavuos. Everyone was excited, and prayed that the Rebbe would be able to nullify the Poritz's decree. The preparations were in place, and a delegation was sent to invite the Poritz to join them in their tent in Shavuos morning. They assured him that he and his friends would have a ball there.

The Poritz was always interested in new forms of entertainment, agreed to come with his friends. Shavuos morning, they Poritz and his friends arrived at the tent, they were greeted with great respect, and were given elegant chairs to sit on. They found the davening amusing. As they were about to read the Ten Commandments from the Torah, the Rebbe asked the Poritz to come closer and told him that he will have someone interpret what they were reading. The Rebbe told the Chazan to read aloud, and the interpreter began, "You shall not make for yourself a graven image or any likeness; You shall neither prostrate yourself before them nor worship them, for I, the Lord..." Then he continued "Remember the Sabbath day to sanctify it." The Poritz paled and sent his friends home. Then he came over to the Shpoler Zeide, and said he wants to meet him after davening. The Rebbe reassured the Kehilla, that the decree will be nullified soon.

The Poritz met the Rebbe and apologized for his behavior towards the Jews. He said that he didn't realize how important it was to keep Shabbos as how important it was not to worship idols. The Poritz promised to nullify the decree immediately! The Shpoler Zeide thanked the Poritz blessed him. Afterwards, the Shpoler Zeide revealed that to remove the decree, Moshe Rabbeinu had to come and read the Ten Commandments; that's why the Poritz softened.

**** ***Reb Meir Premishlaner's brocho pays big dividends for a sincere but poor Yid*** ****

In Krakow lived Reb Yossel Zehnwrith, son of the gaon and tzaddik Rav Avrohom Abish of Vishnitza. who told his story. He was poverty-stricken and as Pesach approached he was faced with a real financial crisis. He had no funds to bring in a proper Pesach and refused to borrow money,

knowing that he had no way of repaying any loans. In desperation, he left his wife and child at his father-in-law's and then set off for his Rebbe, Reb Meir Primishlaner, hoping to collect from the chassidim at the Rebbe's court. He was used to a warm reception from the

Rebbe, but this time was greeted initially by a cold and angry rebuke: "You're destroying Simchas Yomtov for your family and have the nerve to while your time away by a Rebbe? Who asked you to come, and who needs you here?" But a total change in the Rebbe's tone set in, as he spoke, "Nu, somebody travels home, borrows enough money to make a comfortable Pesach, then goes to Lemberg to close a business deal earning him ten thousand Reinish, after which he spends Shavuot as a rich man, back with the Rebbe." Reb Yossel left the Rebbe overflowing with brochos and celebrated a deluxe Yomtov with his family amidst joy and plenty of Simcha. After Pesach, brimming with emunah and faith in his Rebbe, he hired a wagon and headed straight for Lemberg. After renting a room, he set off for the local Beis Medrash for his daily seder of davening and learning, from which he never deviated. Then it was off to the marketplace in search of a business deal to complete the Rebbe's vision. But four days slipped by, with not a even a glimmer of a deal on the horizon. But finally, on Day Five, a shopkeeper, who had noticed his wanderings in the marketplace, inquired about his Revelation. Yossel explained the obvious: that he was trying to arrange a business deal, but had no capital and was davening for Hashem's assistance. The kindly merchant warmed up to Yossel and made him a generous offer. "I see that you are a G-d fearing Jew and I feel I can trust you. Listen to me. I have to go out of town for a few weeks and need someone to manage my store while I'm away. It's not that I actually need the business, but I'm afraid my steady customers will head to the competition and it might be hard to woo them back. So: you tend the store during business hours and any profit the business realizes will belong to you. You just pay me for the expenses of keeping the store open, including the wholesale cost of any merchandise you sell. What do you say?" "I accept, and promise to do a faithful and loyal job." They shook hands on the deal. Yossel's job was to record all cash sales, so as to determine the wholesale cost, which would have to be returned to the store owner, with Yossel retaining the markup as his profit. The owner departed, and Yossel managed with a fervent and constant prayer in his heart to Hashem for success, in keeping with the Rebbe's brocho.

One fine day, on the way to open the shop, Yossel noticed a great tumult in the marketplace square. A string of richly appointed wagons had pulled into town, driven by men in fancy clothes. Yossel quickly learned that they were from the royal palace, seeking goods for the Court. A neighbouring shopkeeper explained that the Court would send buyers a few times a year, but that now, large purchases were in the offering for an upcoming royal wedding. The buyers would solicit bids with the lowest

prices, and if accepted, paid with cash on the barrel. Yossel sensed a golden opportunity staring him in the face, and was sure it stemmed from his Rebbe's brocho. In his position, he could afford to add only a small markup to his wholesale cost, relying on volume to realize a good profit on the overall transaction. Yossel ran to his store and promptly made a list of anything the palace buyers could possibly need. The captain made a copy of the bid and returned to confer with the palace officer. Meanwhile, Yossel resumed his usual business dealings in the shop. To his delight, a week later, the buying team returned and headed straight for his shop, told him his bid was the lowest, and wanted to complete the sale. Yossel had scored a deal beyond his wildest dreams when he saw soldiers fetching merchandise and loading up the palace's wagons. The captain kept a running tally. Before long, they had completely cleaned out the store and paid the tab with a small sack of gold, right into Yossel's hands. The wagons returned to the palace, sure that their overseer would be very happy with the goods and the price they had obtained.

At this point, Yossel was left to watch over an empty, sold-out store. He saw no point in that, shuttered the store and repaired to the Beis Midrash and became immersed in Torah learning. Meanwhile, the owner returned on schedule and rolled into town. The first thing he did was to hurry to inspect his shop, expecting to find it running like a well-oiled Swiss watch with Yossel in charge. When instead he found it shuttered and padlocked, he became livid. Fearing the worst malfeasance on Yossel's part, he tracked him down to the Beis Midrash, sitting calmly and coolly, bent over a sefer. This sight only served to pour fuel onto the fire. He let loose his entire vocabulary of abuse and opprobrium upon poor Yossel's head, accusing him of dereliction of duty and laziness to boot. Yossel absorbed the verbal assault without answering back, until the owner simply ran out of steam. When he could squeeze in a word edgewise, Yossel gave the man a full account of the amazing good fortune which his business had reaped -- and that, after all, there was nothing to be accomplished by sitting in an empty store. The man was openly incredulous, but, still seething, agreed to go with Yossel to the premises. Actually seeing the bag of gold pieces convinced him to lower the heat on Yossel. After the owner calmed down after his tirade, and saw the empty shelves in the shop, he actually viewed the deal with the palace as better than he originally thought. After all, he managed to sell a lot of inventory that had not been moving for a long time. Yossel and his benefactor settled their accounts, as did Yossel with his hotel. He hired a wagon back to Krakow, repaid the money he had borrowed from making the past Pesach, and made an overall accounting of his new-found profits.

Wonder upon wonders, his take from the management stint added up to exactly ten thousand Reinish -- the Rebbe's prediction to the penny.

That Shavuos, Yossel arrived in Premishlan to almost a hero's welcome at the Rebbe's. Said Reb Meir: "This is how somebody comes to the Rebbe for Yomtov. He has ten thousand Reinish in his pocket, gives handsome tips to the gabboim, buys the most prestigious aliya's to the Torah

reading and provides a lavish kiddush for the shul which makes everybody happy." The Yomtov Shavuos was exalted beyond words. When Yossel took his leave of the Rebbe, there was another message: "Now that you have ten thousand reinish in your pocket. There's no reason for you to stay here in Poland. Move to Eretz Yisroel without delay, and make Torah your profession. You will merit to have more children there."

The Baal Shem Tov teaches a valuable lesson to his student

The second day of Shavuos is the Yahrzeit of the heilige Reb Yisrael Baal Shem Tov. There were two carts clattered along the dusty road. Inside one sat Rabbi Meir Margulies, author of the Meir Netivim. In the other sat the Baal Shem Tov. Rabbi Meir asked the Baal Shem Tov "They say you can perform miracles and can even read people's minds," he began. "Is that true?" "Well, I'll just tell you this," replied the Baal Shem Tov. "When you were praying this past Shabbos, you accidentally chanted the weekday blessings instead of the special insert for Shabbos." "Yes, it's true!" replied Rabbi Meir in amazement. "Now, please tell me what I can possibly do to correct this lack." The Baal Shem Tov advised him to carefully scrutinize his deeds and think thoughts of remorse, the standard course of correction for such an error.

"Rebbe," said Rabbi Meir. "I was looking for something more." "In that case," replied the Baal Shem Tov, "you should be sure to be patient in judgment." With that, the two men returned to their respective carts, and they were off. Rabbi Meir made a point to travel through every Jewish town and hamlet in the area at least once a year. Upon his arrival in a rural community, the villagers asked the rabbi to help them solve a weighty problem that had torn their tight-knit group apart.

"You see," explained one of the elders, "there is a young man who lives a ways out of town. None of us know who he is or where he comes from. He dresses all fancy, like a non-Jewish prince, and operates a

tavern. One day, one of our men asked his wife to go pick up some vodka at the tavern. She took her time in returning. Things seemed just a bit suspicious, and rumors began to swirl about the tavern keeper." After listening to the accounts of various villagers, the rabbi determined that the Revelation did seem suspicious, and called the tavernkeeper to appear before him.

Sure enough, the young man soon swaggered in, decked out in colorful silks and furs. Yet despite the accusations of the villagers, the man steadfastly maintained his innocence. Unable to conclusively rule on the matter, Rabbi Meir left the village, feeling uneasy about the entire affair.

As he traveled along, he came upon the Baal Shem Tov once again. He stopped his horses and asked the Baal Shem Tov to do the same. Sitting in the Baal Shem Tov's cart, Rabbi Meir recounted the chain of events that he had just encountered.

"Did I not tell you to be patient in judgment?" the Baal Shem Tov chided him. "You should know that in every generation there are 36 righteous people in whose merit the entire world stands. That tavernkeeper is the greatest of them all." Rabbi Meir immediately climbed into his cart and asked his driver to return to the village so that he could personally beg the young man for forgiveness. But it was too late. The mysterious man was already gone without a trace. All Rabbi Meir could do was share the Baal Shem Tov's words with the villagers, thus at least restoring the tavernkeeper's good name.

******* Eliyahu HaNavi's magic honey wine rewards the mohel *******

Rav Simcha Bunim Kalisch -the son of Reb Mendel of Vorka- (תר"א - ב' שבט תרס"ו) was Rav in Otwock Poland. He made Aliya to Eretz Yisroel and is buried in Teveria. Many distinguished chasidim flocked to him. Once, however, two young chasidim from a Polish shtetl were determined to spend Shavuos in Otwock with their Rebbe. They had no way to get to Otwock other than walking and so they set off on foot. The trip was difficult, and they failed to notice that the sun had set and they were facing a night in the field.

But in the distance they spied the lights of a wayside *kretschma* (a Jewish tavern). The owner was a chassidishe Yid who welcomed the pair warmly into his establishment.

The two young men seemed extremely troubled and worried, which did not seem to the host to be fitting for two chassidishe Yidden. They lamented their state of poverty, which prevented them from buying a suitable gift for the Otwock Rebbe. The innkeeper brought out a bottle of honey wine (called "mehd"), which started

flowing freely. The three men spent a long time carousing, with "Lechaim"s ringing loud, until the hour grew late. The host showed the travelers two comfortable beds. In the morning, they took their leave with blessings and "thank you"s all around. The innkeeper delivered a nice parting message:

"You're going to the Rebbe for Shavuos. Take this bottle of honey wine with you and make sure that it gets to the Rebbe. He will derive great pleasure from it." The two young men were overjoyed that they would not have to come empty-handed to the Rebbe. When they were admitted to his receiving room, they gave him the bottle of honey wine, which made the Rebbe very happy. He bentsched them both with prosperity and wealth. Later that night, at the Yomtov tisch, there stood many expensive bottles of wine which had been brought by wealthy chassidim. Yet to everyone's surprise, the Rebbe drank only from the humble bottle of mehd which the two impoverished chassidim had brought, and spurned the fancy vintage bottles. But still more amazing, after sipping the mehd, the Rebbe exclaimed, An actual taste of Gan Eden!"

The young visitors were delighted beyond words that the wine they brought found favour with Rebbe, who bestowed yet another heartfelt brocho on them. The ensuing yomtov Shevuos was utterly exalted and uplifting. The young visitors tarried a few days in Otwock, basking in the Rebbe's holy atmosphere, and then set out for home on foot. They decided to return by way of the kretschma, to obtain a few bottles of the gourmet mehd "from Gan Eden", to lay them away for future Shavuos trips to the Rebbe. They found the innkeeper dressed Yomtov'dik, although it was a weekday. He received them like old friends and thirsted to hear a full accounting of the past Shavuos in Otwock, from recounting the Rebbe's toyros to sharing his personal practices. They schmoozed until a late hour, and the young men stressed how the Rebbe had passed over a slew of expensive wines, and drank only his special mehd. They asked for a few bottles to store for future gifts to the Rebbe. The innkeeper did not respond directly, but instead, with a long face, launched into a long monologue.

"I make a nice living from my kretschma, Boruch Hashem. But some twenty years ago, I was a shochet in a small shtetl, and also the only mohel in the entire region. The positions were honourable, but the income from them was hardly enough to live on. One year I was faced with a dilemma. I was preparing the chickens for Kapporos on Erev Yom Kippur, which brought in a large sum of money from the

"shchita-gelt" tips. In fact, Erev Yom Kippur was a day every shochet waited for an entire year. Still, a man approached me and said he needed a mohel in a nearby shtetl that Erev Yom Kippur -- and gave me the address on a piece of paper. A back-and-forth ensued in my mind. On the one hand, I was loathe to forgo a large sum by missing the shechita. I was sorely tempted. But then again, how could I not bring a Jewish baby into full membership in Klal Yisroel? I went to perform the bris, and left the Kapporos shechita for the younger shochet in town, who accepted the assignment quite willingly. When I arrived at the house where the bris was supposed to be performed, the man of the house was not at home, since he had to be at his job. He left a message with his wife to proceed without him. For my part, aside from doing the mitzvah, I was preoccupied to making it back home in time for Kol Nidrei. I hurried outside to recruit the requisite minyan for a bris and also to find a fitting sandek. On Erev Yom Kippur, with many men on the street, the minyan came quickly and for a sandek, I encountered an elderly gentleman with a friendly countenance who gladly accepted the *sandakous*. The bris proceeded smoothly and I received a generous payment for being the mohel. When it came to thanking the old man who served as sandek, he was nowhere to be found. I rushed home, needing to have a decent *seudah hamafsekes*, the last meal before Yom Kippur. To my wonderment, whom did I see standing at my house but the same elderly gentleman, the sandek from the morning's bris. I hastily invited him inside for the meal, and then to come daven in our local shul. But he declined, saying he had no need to eat, but instead asked for a bottle of mehd, from which he poured a small amount and we drank a lechaim together. Then, he uttered these amazing words: "I bentsch you that you should always be able to drink from this bottle of mehd and that it will never become empty, until such time as you marry off your youngest grandchild. Then the bottle will be used up." I wanted to go with him to shul on the Holy Day, but for the second time that day, he suddenly vanished from before my eyes. I must tell you that the mysterious brocho was fulfilled to the letter. That bottle continued to yield mehd, without ceasing, and I enjoyed a great success from it. You see me now in Shabbos clothing. It's because just today I completed the week of sheva brochos of my youngest grandchild. At the chasuna I poured glasses from that miraculous bottle, but when the chasuna ended, there was not a drop left over. Of course, I would gladly give you a

few bottles of that mehd to take to the Otwock Rebbe, but now you know why that is impossible. There is simply no more left -- not even one drop!" The two chassidim drank in every word of the amazing story they had just heard, and said to the innkeeper,

The heilige Baal Shem Tov Blesses a Yid with Long Life

In a shop in Poland stood an elderly Jew with a white beard, selling goods to customers. Sitting next to him was a young man with a black beard. From time to time, the young man would yell at the older Jew and get angry with him.

When one of the customers witnessed the young man's behavior and how he treated the older Jew, he spoke up: "Are you not ashamed? Where is your refinement and respect (derech erez)? Is this how one speaks to an elderly Jew?"

But both Jews—the older one and the younger one—smiled, and the young man replied: "I will tell you a story. When I was a small child, I had the merit to know the holy Baal Shem Tov (Besht), and I was also privileged to pray with him in his study hall (Beis Midrash). Once, the Baal Shem Tov lost his prayer book (siddur), which caused him great distress. Everyone searched for it, but it could not be found. I decided to go and help search for the siddur. God helped me, and I found it. When I handed the siddur to the Baal Shem Tov, he blessed me that I should merit long days and years, and that I should always look young and healthy. Now do you understand? I am not a young man at all; I am well over one hundred years old. And the Jew next to me with the long white beard is my son—and that is why I am allowed to behave this way with him in my shop.

"The Baal Shem Tov Reveals the Revelation of Mount Sinai

Before the Baal Shem Tov was revealed to the world, he worked as a rebbe (melamed) for young children. He would show his students their specific portion in the Torah through the spiritual lens of the Revelation of Mount Sinai, complete with thunder and lightning. Ma'amad Har Sinai (the Revelation at Mount Sinai) is

"Without a doubt, the old man was Eliyahu HaNavi, who supplied you with mehd straight out of Gan Eden. Not only that, but you were worthy to see Eliayhu twice in one day.

the foundational event in Judaism when the Israelites gathered at the base of the mountain to receive the Torah and enter an eternal covenant with God.

Once, during the holiday of Shavuot, he was teaching his students the order of the Giving of the Torah (Mattan Torah). He asked the students, "Do you remember the Revelation of Mount Sinai?"

With one voice, they all answered, "We remember!" This was because he had opened their minds and intellect to the point where they truly and physically remembered it. To achieve this was a minor thing for the Baal Shem Tov. However, one boy spoke up and said, "Rebbe, I do not remember!" Later in life, this student tragically strayed from the path of Torah, may Hashem protect us. (Sefer Ma'aseh Hashem)

Witnessing the Revelation of Mount Sinai During Akdamus

When the heilige Reb Eizik of Ziditchov would recite the Akdamus -liturgical poem- on Shavuot, his face would burn like fire.

Once, a member of the holy inner circle named Reb Koppel—who had also been a disciple of the heilige Chozeh of Lublin—gazed directly at the Zidichover Rebbe. Suddenly, his eyes went blind, and he could no longer look at the Rebbe. After the Rebbe finished reciting Akdamus, Reb Koppel's sight returned.

He approached the Rebbe and recounted everything that had happened. The Rebbe said to him: "Because your soul is bound up with mine (mokusher b'nafshi), you had the merit to see the spiritual level of the Station of Mount Sinai, which was characterized by 'darkness, cloud, and thick gloom' (Devorim 4:11). Because you witnessed this, your eyes became blind from that spiritual darkness." (Pe'er Yitzchak Ziditchov)

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