

Havineini

Shiurim of Harav Shimon Spitzer

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170



Exalted Days SHAVUOS

The Incredible Revelations of Kabbalas HaTorah Affected Every Neshamah

▼ Shavuos—The Yom Tov of Preparation

In studying the *pesukim* of Kabbalas haTorah, we learn the concept of *hachanah* for a mitzvah. The idea of preparing ourselves for a *davar shebikedushah* is seen in relation to *Matan Torah*.

In essence, the entire Yom Tov of Shavuos is a Yom Tov of *hachanah*, of preparation. Different from other Yamim Tovim in which we perform all preparations *before* Yom Tov—such as Pesach and Sukkos, when we experience the aura of the essence of Yom Tov from the moment it comes in—Shavuos features a great emphasis on *hachanah* during the first part of the Yom Tov.

Following the preparation for Kabbalas haTorah we performed during the days of *Sefirah*—

The Inner Reason for Joy on Shavuos

the Yom Tov itself features further preparation. We remain awake the entire Shavuos night in anticipation of Kabbalas haTorah—preparing the *קישוטין*, adornments, for the holy bride, the *neshamah*, in order for it to be able to accept the Torah the next morning. Even the entire *davening* and *akdomus* are also a form of *hachanah*. One might say that the entire first half of the Yom Tov we are consumed with preparation for the few moments during *krias haTorah* when we actually accept the Torah anew.

▼ Further Preparation

Furthermore, says the Divrei Yoel of Satmar, the *krias haTorah* of Shavuos begins with an entire section devoted to Klal Yisrael's arrival in *Midbar Sinai* and the ensuing days prior to Kabbalas haTorah. This is, again, to enable us to experience a *hachanah* for Kabbalas haTorah.

Havineini Weekly

Dovid HaMelech

The Song of Dovid HaMelech in the Worst of Times

Greatness Means Singing Praises After Receiving a Blow

Shavuos, as we know, marks the *yahrzeit* of Dovid Melech Yisrael, the great singer of Yisrael. The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 92b) states that Nebuchadnezzar also wished to sing the praises of Hashem, just as Dovid HaMelech did, and his *shirah* would have outshone Dovid HaMelech's praises. But an angel descended from Heaven and delivered a blow to Nebuchadnezzar's mouth to prevent him from singing *shirah*.

Asks the Kotzker Rebbe, if Nebuchadnezzar truly wished to sing the praises of Hashem on such an exalted level, why did he deserve a blow upon his mouth?

Says the Kotzker Rebbe, Dovid HaMelech sang *shirah* to Hashem in the worst of times that he endured in his life. And so, when Nebuchadnezzar wished to sing, he was slapped across his mouth, as though to say, *it's easy to say shirah when things are going*

It is known that the *krias haTorah* evokes the essence of the moment, thus, reading about the *hachanah* that Klal Yisrael made for *Kabbalas haTorah* evokes that spirit of preparation for the *pesukim* of the *Aseres HaDibros* that we will soon read.

One may ask, we work so long and hard—the entirety of *Sefirah* and most of the Yom Tov—to prepare for mere moments?!

▼ Above Time

To understand this, let us share an incredible *vort* from Rebbe Mendele of Vitebsk, who said, “It is entirely possible that the *Yidden* heard no more than the *aleph* of the word *Anochi*.” That is, we know that the first two *Dibros* were said to them by the *Ribbono shel Olam* Himself. They couldn’t tolerate hearing any more, and their *neshamos* left their bodies. Says the Rebbe, it’s possible that they didn’t hear any more than that first *aleph*. The rest was said to them by Moshe Rabbeinu.

The *talmidim* of Rebbe Mendele explained that the Rebbe did not intend to *minimize* the revelations that transpired at Har Sinai—that they heard *only* one *aleph*. That isn’t the way it works when it comes to *ruchaniyus*. To the contrary: **when we’re speaking about such exalted revelations, the rule is that the more concentrated**

they are, the more deeply they penetrate the soul.

The Rebbe is explaining that this exalted event, with all the incredible revelations that took place there (as we describe in the *Mussaf* of Rosh Hashanah)—an event that has never been seen before—isn’t measured in time or space.

On the contrary, so long as something is measured with material rubrics, it indicates that the revelations aren’t so profound. Thus, the revelation at *Kabbalas haTorah* was even shorter than we think; because it was truly *pnimiyus’dig*... something that isn’t measured in time and space.

▼ The Chassan Isn’t Concerned with the Wedding Details

To understand this concept, let us think about the example of a wedding. There are people who have an interesting temptation; they wish to arrange a wedding for their child that will be talked about for weeks. They locate a venue that no one ever heard of before, and everything—from food to music to flowers—is over the top.

But there’s a great divide between the feelings of the *mechutanim*, the parents of the *chassan-kallah*, and the *chassan* himself, who’s far more consumed with the essence of the wedding. His life changes

well...but can you sing Hashem’s praises when you’re smacked around as well?! Indeed, the *rashah* was unable to do so, and he became silent. Through this, the true greatness of Dovid HaMelech’s praises were revealed: They were said even as he experienced great suffering from all sides.

This is the real story of the *shirah* of Dovid HaMelech.

Singing Amid Suffering

The *Zohar HaKadosh* (*Parashas Mishpatim*) refers to Dovid HaMelech as *בדחנא דמלכא*, the King’s jester, for he had the ability to bring joy to the *Shechinah*. The *Zohar* explains that even when Dovid was in the most terrible state, he continued to offer *שירות ותשבחות* to Hashem, for this was his calling and mission in the world. He never stopped praising, no matter what he went through.

He knew that it was his essence and mission in the world to always sing to Hashem and emphasize that *טוב ה' לכל*. And indeed, the entire *Hallel*, and so many other praises that we sing, were composed by Dovid HaMelech.

One may ask, how indeed do the two go together? Here was a man who endured so much suffering—from the day he was born and throughout his life. **How can this person be the one to keep on singing to Hashem?**

The answer is that he understood that his calling was to be the *בדחנא דמלכא*, and to do so despite the challenges. He understood that to sing and praise Hashem when things are going well can be accomplished by anyone. The *sheleimus*, the pinnacle of praise is to do so when it’s hard... and this is indeed reflected in so many of the *pesukim* in *Tehillim* that Dovid authored during his worst moments.

A New Song in Honor of the Occasion

When Dovid HaMelech was being pursued by his own son, Avshalom, he didn’t merely cope with the situation—he composed a song of joy: *מזמור לדוד בברחו מפני אבשלום בנו*. This *mizmor* is filled with the confidence that Hashem is his

drastically the moment he placed the ring on the *kallah's* finger, and he doesn't think as much about the tablescapes in the wedding hall....

Meanwhile, his father does find space to think about these things, and his mind is far more focused on the outer trappings, the dignitaries who came, etc., and he's able to look back on the wedding night with pleasure for a long time to come.

▼ Rare Revelations

This is obviously a very mundane example. But this scenario exists even in *ruchniyus*. A person may think: Pesach is a “real” Yom Tov... Sukkos even more so.... There are many days in those Yamim Tovim, and there are so many mitzvos we must do. There's something to “grab onto.” But when it comes to Shavuos, it seems to end before it even began....

But this is only when we look at the “wedding event.” The more that is happening, the more it occupies a place. But when we look at it through the proper lens, at the *פנימיות* of the Yom Tov, at the *יחוד* that takes place on this Yom Tov—a unification that doesn't exist during the entire year—it can take a split second!

The great revelation of Shavuos is so great and exalted. The *neshamah* attains a

connection with the *Ribbono shel Olam* that will last the entire year. We renew our bond with Hashem—which is necessary to get us through the challenges that we will experience this year, and in accordance with the *hasagos* that we will attain this year. **This transpires so deep within our neshamah, yet it doesn't occupy time or space.** There's a great wedding and joy in our heart—יום חתונתו ויום שמחת לבו.

▼ Beyond Feeling

We live in bodies, and we may thus not always feel this—although we believe that it is so. But great people *do* experience it. I once heard from the great *chassid*, Rav Aharon Yosef Brizel, that once, on Shavuos night, he asked several *tzaddikim* to “take him along” for *Kabbalas haTorah*. He later reported that it worked; he literally *felt* the great moment of *Kabbalas haTorah* that Shavuos morning.

We must be pure in order to feel something that transpires within our *neshamah*. But we believe with a complete belief that whether or not we feel it, it's happening. All the *sefarim hakedoshim* teach us that the *neshamah* receives a great light on this exalted day, and this is indeed why we must prepare so hard and so extensively for this moment.

protector; He has always helped him, and He will continue to help him, because he relies upon Him. *I will not fear the tens of thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around... Salvation belongs to Hashem; upon Your people is Your blessing, forever (Tehillim 3:1).*

Chazal indeed ask regarding the choice of the word *mizmor*, psalm, a song of praise. It should have been “a lamentation for Dovid.” And the Gemara answers (*Berachos* 7b) that when Hashem had informed him “Behold, I will raise up evil against you from within your own house” (*Shmuel II* :12:11), Dovid feared that the tragedy would come from a servant of his home who had no pity or compassion on him. When he saw that it was his own son, who would show him some mercy, he was moved to praise Hashem for this kindness.

Note: Rav Yosef Leib Nenedik, *Hy”d*, pointed out that Chazal's question isn't how Dovid could have composed any *Tehillim* at all in such a state, for it was clear to them that he always maintained his peace of mind and *bitachon* in Hashem. The only question was whether it was more appropriate to compose a lamentation rather than a song of praise on this occasion.

Dovid HaMelech Revealed New Depths of Hashem's Mercy

When we delve into the *pesukim* of *Tehillim*, we will see that Dovid HaMelech was the first to express the concept that טוב ה' לכל, *Hashem is good to everyone*. No one before this had expressed so clearly the idea that the *Ribbono shel Olam's* kindness is for everyone—even when things seem difficult. Even when we don't behave as we should, and we must be admonished for our actions, Hashem's kindness continues.

When we wish to express Hashem's eternal kindness, we do so through the praises of Dovid HaMelech. This was

The Great Avodah of Shavuos Is to Accept Hashem's Ways

▼ Proclaiming Na'aseh v'Nishmah Again

The tzaddikim have taught us that in addition to the *avodah* of the Yom Tov in speech and action, there's also a great *avodah* in *מחשבה*, to meditate upon the great phenomenon of accepting the Torah, and to be prepared to accept the Torah—to submit ourselves completely to carry out its dictates, come what may.

Rav Elya Roth once accompanied the great tzaddik Rav Shlomk'e of Zvill to the *mikvah* on Shavuos at dawn. When he emerged, Rav Shlom'ke said, “**At this very moment, every Yiddishe neshamah is being asked whether it's willing to accept the Torah; let us call out together** נעשה ונשמע.” Rav Elya explained that indeed, this transpires every year anew, and every year we must cry out together *na'aseh v'nishmah*!

While this Yom Tov features the greatest revelations for the entire year, we must not forget to resolve—albeit if only in our hearts and minds—to accept everything that says in the Torah.

▼ The Definition of Malchus

The *Sefirah* days are a constant trajectory of *avodas hamiddos*, beginning with *chessed* and concluding with *Malchus*, as our preparation for *Kabbalas haTorah*. The *middah* of *Malchus* is a lofty concept in *kabbalah*—but practically, for us, it simply means accepting the kingship of Hashem. Open any *chassidishe sefer* and you will see that *Malchus* means to be a *mekabel*, a receptacle that accepts... to bow our heads in submission to the will of Hashem.

Acceptance is the greatest tool with which we can approach *Kabbalas haTorah*; to submit to the will of Hashem. It's not always easy to be a *mekabel*. We wanted something, and it wasn't granted to us... the answer was “no.” We may not hear a Heavenly voice denying us, but the answer is clearly “no.” It's difficult to accept this. “But why? I have done so much...” For this, we need the *middah* of *Malchus* to accept the *ratzon Hashem* with humility and submission.

The tzaddikim (Rebbe Pinchos of Koretz, the Beis Aharon, and others) explain that this is indeed the *avodah* of Shavuos, which we usher in immediately after the week of *avodah* on *Malchus*. A *Yid* bows his head and says: If this is what I need to do, I will do with a complete heart and with

a concealed area of Torah that Dovid HaMelech revealed and brought down to the world.

When we look into the חמשה חומשי תורה, we will see the concept of reward for those who behave as they should. But there's another dimension in Torah that remained hidden until Dovid HaMelech revealed it: We should always know that the good of the Ribbono shel Olam endures even if things don't go as we wish. Dovid HaMelech stumbled as well, and from that place, he brought forth the light of the Ribbono shel Olam's *chessed*. This was a revelation in Torah that didn't exist prior to Dovid HaMelech and his *Sefer Tehillim*.

Yissurim Bring a Yid Closer to His Purpose

Every Challenge Is Contained Here

Indeed, the *Degel Machaneh Ephraim* explains that Dovid HaMelech composed five books of *Tehillim*, corresponding to the *Chamishah Chumshei Torah*. At every trial and travail he experienced, he composed another chapter—because he derived heavenly revelations from every *tzarah* he underwent. He explains that the revelations are essentially contained in the Torah, but they remained hidden until Dovid HaMelech revealed them.

If Dovid had had an easy and uneventful life, it would have been very easy for him to sing *shirah*. It's easy to stand and give thanks for everything that's going wonderfully. And for this reason, he was *required* to go through these situations, for this is part of the *sheleimus* of his life's work. Thus, he was able to proclaim, “I have endured every type of difficulty, and I have come away with the understanding that Hashem is pure good and everything He does is good.”

acceptance and *bittul*. When we accept the Torah with humility and submission, we become a vehicle for the middah of Malchus. This is the essence of Kabbalas haTorah!

▼ Being Acquired

It is remarkable to note that this idea is found in the *nigleh* aspect of Torah just as it is in the later Chassidic works.

The Ran (*Nedarim* 30a) explains the mechanism of *kiddushin*, stating that all the work must happen on the man's side, with no action on the part of the woman. She must only stand and accept the *kiddushin*. Says the Ran: Even if the woman proclaimed, "I am betrothed to you," that is, placing herself completely into the domain of her husband, it still won't be effective. She must only nullify herself and allow herself to be taken.

This is because true unification happens when there's a *משפיע* and a *מקבל*. The *משפיע* must give over completely, and the *מקבל* must submit and be completely passive.

Kabbalas haTorah, as we know, is a wedding. The great light of Hashem descends to This World, and it is *משפיע* to us—and our *avodah* is to nullify ourselves completely. That is how this *יחוד* works. This is our *avodah* in order to be *מקבל* the Torah.

▼ Rejoicing in Our Great Lot

After davening and *krias haTorah* begins the *avodah* of the joy of Yom Tov. This is a *d'Oraisa* obligation that is an important part of the Yom Tov. But it is important to emphasize that all this *simchah* and celebration are due to our joy at accepting the Torah. As we know, Rav Yosef asked his family to prepare a luxurious calf to celebrate the day, for *לאו האי יומא*, if not for this day, I would be just another Yosef in the street.

We have no inkling of the lofty *madreigos* of Rav Yosef—but it was clear that he saw the need to express his great joy on this day, to sing and dance and rejoice, and show his children that this day changed everything.

Let us remember what *Kabbalas haTorah* really is; it changes the entire essence of what a *Yid* is—and the joy only grows year after year. The lower the world around us is, the more foolish and debased it is, the more animal-like it becomes, the more elevated we become. Despite the challenges, despite the *nisyonos*... a *Yid* is elevated and engages with his *yetzer hara*. We're *Yidden*! We're different!

This is the greatness and the light of this Yom Tov, and this is the cause for great joy on this day.

Learning from Suffering

In *Kappitel* 119, Dovid HaMelech gives us insight into his life's saga. טוב לי כי ענתי. למען אלמד חוקיך. It is good for me that I was afflicted, so that I might learn Your statutes (v. 71). It was good... he uses the word טוב! "All my suffering was good for me."

And why was it indeed good? למען אלמד חוקיך—because every situation represents the potential to learn from it. And if we utilize the lesson, we will attain great *kirvas Elokim*. We may learn from this how to behave in the future. Thus, this situation is an eternal good, for it brings our *neshamah* closer to the Ribbono shel Olam, and it brings the entire world closer to perfection.

If It Led to Teshuvah, It Was Worthwhile

There are certain lessons that we can learn only by going through a trying situation. If so, when we look at the purpose of the suffering, it is essentially good—for this leads us to "learning Hashem's statutes." It brings us to *teshuvah* and to rectification, to good in This World and in the Next World.

The Ribbono shel Olam feels our pain, as it were, more than we do. But He takes the pain upon Himself because He is a טוב ומטיב, and He knows that good will come from it.

A Silver Lining

We cannot fathom the pain of Dovid HaMelech after he stumbled with the sin of Bas Sheva—but even then, he sang to the Ribbono shel Olam, amid the pain. Because he understood the great lesson that we can learn from this episode: the power of *teshuvah*. (Indeed, the Gemara [*Shabbos* 56a] teaches us that the entire episode transpired only to teach us the power of *teshuvah*.)

As Dovid HaMelech understood that we can learn this great lesson, he said, "If

so, there's no limit to the good." Not only when it comes to a *gashmiyus tzarah* can we rest assured that the good will eventually be revealed, but even *bruchniyus*, there's no end to Hashem's goodness—and even in such a situation, there's a lesson of *teshuvah*. Even when an *aveirah* seemingly can't be rectified, there's an opportunity there for *kirvas Elokim*.

The Sooner We Improve, The Sooner the Good Will Come

Every time we endure a saga of challenge or difficulty, Dovid HaMelech is our rebbe who teaches us and reveals to us that in every ill there's hidden good—even if we don't always see the good immediately. When will it become revealed? When we will learn the inherent lesson. The more it will be *למען אלמד*, the more it will be *טוב לי* חוקק.

We can compare this concept to a child who was punished by his parent or *rebbe*, and he immediately changed his ways. In this case, it's immediately revealed that the punishment was worthwhile and good for him. But so long as it didn't yet bring about the intended purpose, we must wait for the good to be revealed. The punishment always contains the good within it, but it must become revealed. The same applies to all challenges in our lives: When we learn the lessons and takeaways, the good is revealed.

Dovid HaMelech Teaches Us to Give Thanks While It's Still Dark

Acceptance Brings Kindness

We daven, ותגמלנו חסדים טובים, *Hashem, give us revealed kindness*. But the way to draw down revealed kindness is by recognizing that the *yissurim* are good for us, and by accepting suffering with love—as the *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh* teaches us, “סמא דיסור”, קבולי, the remedy for suffering is when we accept it.”

Why is this the remedy? Because when we accept our *yissurim*, knowing that they're good for us, it brings our *nefesh* closer to the *emes*. So long as a person lives in falsehood and confusion, he will feel lost. But when a *Yid* brings his *nefesh* closer to the truth of the Torah, to understand that Hashem is *always* doing good for him, this brings him to love and fear of Hashem, and then he is able to give thanks to Hashem for the good and for the difficult in equal measure—and *this* draws down immense kindness and mercy.

This is indeed the light of Mashiach—when a *Yid* gives thanks in the darkness, when things are difficult. Mashiach will reveal that everything that transpired was for the good, and then we will see it clearly with our eyes. But in the meantime, while we remain in *galus*, our *avodah* is to draw down this light into the darkness. To sing to Hashem even before we see the good in a revealed way.

Thanking Amid Suffering

This is what Rashi explains on the *pasuk*, כהולל אקרא ה' ומאובי אושע, *I will call out in praise of Hashem and I will be spared from my enemies* (*Tehillim* 18:4). Dovid HaMelech praised Hashem even before he saw the salvation—amid his suffering! He was so certain that there was hidden good there, and he knew that Hashem would remove him from his suffering.

Says Dovid HaMelech through his *Sefer Tehillim*: You can and must begin praising now... and your singing will not be in vain. Although you may not feel it yet... your heart is broken and shattered... but you can sing, because the truth is that it is good. Every *tzarah* will lead to good.

Tehillim Is an Eternal Gift

The *Tiferes Shlomo* points out that Aharon HaKohen was lauded for his silence

in the face of suffering. וידום אהרן, *Aharon was silent* (*Vayikra* 10:3). Came along Dovid HaMelech and introduced a new level: למען יזמר כבוד ולא ידום, *I will sing in your honor and not be silent* (*Tehillim* 30:13). Not only will he not complain about his suffering, but he will also even sing praises to Hashem!

The Ribbono shel Olam taught us this idea—through His exalted servants—incrementally. First came the stoicism of Aharon, through which we learn not to voice complaints when things are difficult. But then came along Dovid HaMelech, the great בדחנא דמלכא, who taught us to sing amid suffering. This was the great gift of the *Sefer Tehillim*—the eternal gift for our *galus*—enabling us to give thanks to Hashem amid the most difficult circumstances... We should always be able sing even if we don't feel the good yet.

We're Surrounded by Kindness

Later, Dovid HaMelech says כי רגע באפו חיים ברצונו, *For His anger lasts only a moment, but life comes through His favor* (*Tehillim* 30:6). People challenged Dovid HaMelech, “How can you sing now? You're enduring so much suffering!” But he answered, “You're looking only at the present moment... and indeed, this instant seems bad... and you wonder how it's possible to give thanks. But when you look at the entire picture, you will see that it's חיים ברצונו—your entire life is good.”

There's so much good in our lives; we're surrounded by good and kindness. Proof of this is that we become so distressed when things *don't* go as planned. However, when we understand this *yesod*, then we can indeed sing, fulfilling the concluding verse in this chapter: למען יזמר כבוד ולא יאלץ, לעולם אודך, *So that my soul may sing praise to You and not be silent; Hashem, my G-d, forever I will thank You* (v. 13).

Point to Ponder

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asked him to leave. It was then that the Ba'al Shem Tov called out to him, "Why don't you give sustenance to the Ribbono shel Olam? If you don't feed Him, He will become hungry!"

This gave the man pause.... "What are you talking about? Feeding the Ribbono shel Olam?!" "Yes," said the Ba'al Shem Tov. "Every one of us sits upon the *parnassah* that Hashem provides us. But what does the Ribbono shel Olam sit upon? ואתה קדוש יושב תהילות ישראל, *the Holy One sits upon the praises of Klal Yisrael*. When we thank Him for our health and our *parnassah*, this is the sustenance, as it were, of the Ribbono shel Olam... and he then bequeaths us even more goodness."

Thanking Hashem Brings Great Shefa

Thus, the Ba'al Shem Tov revealed that there's a great *avodah* to express and sing the praises of the Ribbono shel Olam for all the good that He does for us. It is a great aspect of *avodas Hashem* to recognize the *chessed* of Hashem, and when we do so, we sustain Him, as it were. In fact, the Zohar HaKadosh says, ישראל מפרנסים לאביהם שבשמים, *The Jewish People sustain their Father in heaven*. This is a kabbalistic reference to the fact that from below we arouse Hashem to send us *shefa* from Above.

This episode is just one of the many lessons the Ba'al Shem Tov taught in this important area of *avodas Hashem*. A *Yid* must always have Hashem's Name upon his lips, thanking Hashem for His goodness and kindness.

This is something that we must constantly reiterate—for ourselves and for our children. When we ask a child, "How was your day?" and they answer, "Fine," we must teach them that this isn't the way we answer. We must say "*baruch Hashem*, thanks to Hashem, it was good." This, the Ba'al Shem Tov taught, opens the conduits of *shefa*.

The Neshamah Yearns to Praise

The Toldos Yaakov Yosef (*Parashas Vayeitzei*) teaches us the great importance and the preciousness of a *Yid* expressing even the simplest praise of Hashem. **"I heard from my master and teacher, the Ba'al Shem Tov, that when the *neshamah* descends from the world of Atzilus to the world of deed, and it witnesses the strength of the *kelipah* here, and that the honor of the King is so weakened and desecrated here, the *neshamah* is moved to give praise to Hashem that it isn't like one of them."**

This is the essence of the *tefillah* that we say, ברוך אלוהינו שבראנו לכבודו, והבדלינו מן התועים, *blessed is Hashem Who created us for His honor and*

separated us from the wayward and has given us a Torah of truth. A *Yid* must give thanks to the Ribbono shel Olam for this alone: that in such a dark world, he merits being able to thank and praise Hashem because he isn't like the *goyim*... that he isn't so low as to forget the Ribbono shel Olam even in this lowly world.

The Great Avodah of Thanks

It is indeed a great *avodah* to give thanks and praise to Hashem—in our own language. The Ba'al Shem Tov taught us that this brings *chiyus* and sustenance, as it were, to the Ribbono shel Olam. The reason for this is that Hashem always wants to bring *shefa* to This World, and when we give thanks to Him, He is indeed able to fulfill this wish—and that is His greatest pleasure.

As we stand at the Yom Tov of *Kabbalas haTorah*, a person can say to himself, "אי לאו האי יומא, were it not for this day, how would I look? How would my life look without Torah?" This thought will move us to offer such thanks and praise to Hashem... long after Yom Tov. We will always recognize and appreciate the kindness that Hashem has done for us in giving us the Torah. We should give thanks for all our many *gashmiyus* gifts, but even more for the greatest kindness that Hashem has given us: the Torah, which transforms and elevates us.

Point to Ponder

Praising Hashem in the Tradition of the Besht

The Ba'al Shem Tov and Kabbalas haTorah

When the Ribbono shel Olam gave us the Torah, he also bequeathed to us those who will teach and transmit the Torah; i.e., the tzaddikim in every generation who will teach a *Yid* the way to attain *deveikus* in Hashem.

The Yom Tov of Shavuot coincides with the *yahrzeit* of the holy Ba'al Shem Tov, and it is no coincidence. We must give thanks for to Hashem for revealing to us this great light, and that we, simple *Yidden*, in the days before Mashiach, will be able to grasp onto Ba'al Shem Tov's holy Torah, which illuminates the life of a *Yid* in every area.

"Thank You, Hashem"

One of the great *yesodos* in the teachings of the Ba'al Shem Tov is a

great and holy *avodah*, an easy *avodah*, but one that draws down wonderful *shefah* from above.

The Rayatz of Lubavitch writes that when the Ba'al HaTanya was with his *rebbe*, the Maggid of Mezrich, the Maggid told him the following story that transpired with his *rebbe*, the Ba'al Shem Tov: It was in the period before the revelation of the Ba'al Shem Tov, and he would make the rounds from city to city, and from hamlet to hamlet. And he had an *avodah* that he would ask the simple *Yidden*, "How are you? How is your family? How is your health?"

He did this because he simply loved to hear the replies of these *Yidden*, who would answer with praise and thanks to Hashem, each in his own language. The men, women, and

children would each give thanks for what Hashem has given them.... This was his way of inducing the people to express their thanks to Hashem.

Hashem "Sits" upon Our Praises

One day, the Ba'al Shem Tov arrived in a hamlet; as usual, he went around asking and inquiring about people's well-being. He encountered an older *Yid*, a great *talmid chacham* who was completely removed from all matters of *Olam HaZeh*. He had been learning Torah for fifty years straight... completely devoted to *avodas Hashem*, eating little and sleeping little.

When the Ba'al Shem Tov—who was dressed simply and unassumingly—approached this *Yid*, the man only became annoyed and

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