

## Bringing the Farbrengen Home

### 4 QUESTIONS

by Rabbi Shaul Wertheimer

Many people would write letters to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, asking for blessings and guidance. Some would pose questions. On the 28th of Sivan 1957, the Lubavitcher Rebbe responded to four questions; I believe that his succinct answers may be of interest to you. My free translation follows.

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In response to your letter from 24 Sivan, in which you present questions for which you have not yet received clear solutions:

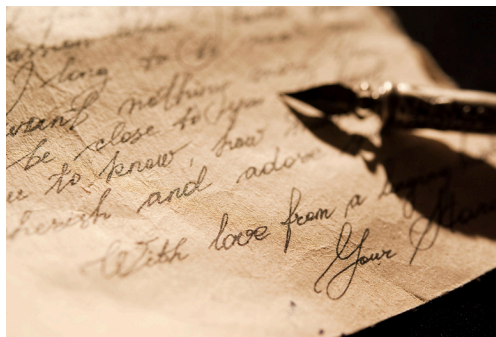
**1. There are times when you have a desire to learn, and other times when the opposite is the case, and you turn to other matters. You ask in how you can attain constant energy [in Torah study]?**

The advice given to such a situation is that when one repeats something regularly, it becomes their second nature. In order to ascend from level to level, one should indeed go level-by-level, not jumping from one extreme to another [as such a jump cannot be sustained]. Moreover, this ascent need be a result of vigorous effort, for as our sages tell us, "if one says that they succeeded without effort -- do not believe them."

**2. In what way will you be able to remember the new things you learn in Torah?**

In general, people are not the same in this matter, because it depends on their talents and so forth, as our sages say, "people's opinions are not the same and their appearances are not the same."

For general guidance, reference the second chapter of the Alter Rebbe's Laws of Torah Study [editor's note: excerpted below in the grey box]; there, one will find guidance how even a person who is naturally forgetful will be able to amass a great wealth of Torah knowledge.



**3. What is the concept of intent and prayer?**

The general *kavana* (intent) of prayer is to know before Whom one is standing. This itself is subdivided into three categories: Who is standing; before Whom one is standing; and the connection between them via prayer. There is also a more specific type of *kavana*, which differs based on the section of prayer, the meaning of the words, and so forth.

**4. Which book of ethical teachings (mussar) will enable you to reach the level that every Jew must attain?**

In order to "reach a level," a book alone will not suffice. Rather, you have to work with great exertion, and then you will have success. You should fix times to study the Tanya, and other works of Chassidus; when you delve into them with proper focus, your eyes will be illuminated.

An overarching point: Turn away from your questions, and instead, learn Torah with diligence -- then you will see the fulfillment of our sages' words, "If you toil, you will succeed."

You certainly adhere to the recitation of the daily allotment of Tehillim, as it is divided according to the days of the month. And if you do not yet recite it, you will certainly begin to do so going forward.

Best wishes for a very happy Shavuot. *May we merit to receive the Torah with joy -- and internalize it!*

קבלת התורה בשמחה ובפנימיות

### שו"ת JUST ME A QUESTION

**Q: Why don't we say tachanun for the first twelve days of Sivan?**

A: The custom is to omit tachanun beginning on Rosh Chodesh Sivan because that is the date that Moshe began preparing the Jewish people to receive the Torah. Every day from Rosh Chodesh Sivan through the eighth of the month (i.e. *Isru Chag*, the day after Shavuot) contains a joyous event, and thus tachanun is omitted. See *Rama 494:3*.

Sefardim and Chassidim refrain from saying tachanun through the 12th of Sivan, because when the Beit Mamikdash stood, one could still bring the Shavuot *korbanot* if for some reason they were unable to bring it at the proper time (i.e., on yom tov itself). Some omit tachanun through the 13<sup>th</sup> (due to *sfeika d'yoma*). See *Kaf HaChaim 494:52*.

So there are actually "phantom" days of Shavuot: They are not yom tov at all, however, one can bring the *korbanot* for the holiday! Due to this added holiness, some don't say tachnun during these days.

**Q: Why do we take off tefillin before Mussaf on Rosh Chodesh?**

A: Tefillin are a sign of our connection to Hashem, and thus we don't need them on major Jewish holidays (Rosh Hashana, Pesach etc.), as the day itself attests to our connection with Hashem.

Rosh Chodesh is also a holiday (although to a lesser degree), and therefore we do not wear tefillin during the prayer that affirms the special nature of the day (i.e., Mussaf). Thus, we remove tefillin before Mussaf. Source: *Shulchan Aruch O.C. 423:4 & Mishnah Berurah*.

# In the Town Square

## The Forgotten Baal Shem Tov Story

Before the Baal Shem Tov passed away, he told a few of his disciples what the focus of their Divine service would be. One of the students, Reb Yaakov, was told that he was to travel from place to place and recount stories of the Baal Shem Tov; from this, he would acquire great wealth.

Reb Yaakov did as he was instructed. He traveled from city to city and village to village, telling stories of his holy Rebbe. He did not limit his travels to nearby locations, but he would also travel great distances to fulfill the final instruction of his great teacher.

One time, he arrived in a certain hamlet, and was told that not far from there, was a very affluent man who was willing to pay a great sum to anyone who would tell him an authentic Baal Shem Tov story.

Reb Yaakov decided to travel to meet this person. Upon arrival, he asked the wealthy man, "Is it true that you pay those who will recount a story of the great Baal Shem Tov?"

"Yes, it is true," said the man, "I am one of his disciples, and I know many stories."

"Great!" the man said to Reb Yaakov. "Permit me to provide you with a room to rest. During the week, I am simply too busy, so let's wait until the Holy Shabbos when many people will arrive at my home after prayers in synagogue. You will then tell us a story of the Baal Shem Tov, and after Shabbos I will pay you generously."

Reb Yaakov agreed to stay, and on Friday evening after the Shabbos prayers, a large crowd gathered, eager to hear a Baal Shem Tov story.

Much to his chagrin, Reb Yaakov found himself unable to recall a single story. Reassuring him that his forgetfulness could be attributed to being tired from travel, the wealthy man told Reb Yaakov to rest for the evening, and the following morning, he would then certainly be able to regale them with a great story.

The following morning, Reb Yaakov was once again, much to his dismay, unable to remember a story. At the celebrated Seudas Shlishis (third meal), he once again drew a blank.

Reb Yaakov was baffled! What was going on?!

A few more days passed, and Reb Yaakov eventually despaired of ever being able to recall a single Baal Shem Tov story. He hired a wagon driver to take him home. As he was about to ascend the carriage, it hit him like a bolt of lightning: "Ah! I remember!"

The wealthy man was not willing to wait until Shabbos for the story, and Reb Yaakov began to tell the long-awaited story:

One time, on motzei Shabbos, the Baal Shem Tov told a few of his students -- and I was there at the time -- to journey with him to a specific location. As is well known, the carriage of the Baal Shem Tov did not need a driver, and we rested wherever the horses would stop.

"We traveled through the night. When the morning sun began to shine, we arrived at a house. We alighted from the carriage, and approached the house.

The Baal Shem Tov told us to knock loudly on the door. Answering the door, we were greeted by a Jew who said, 'Get out of here -- quickly! It is dangerous for you to be here, and it is also dangerous for me!'

"He told us that nearby is a large town square, and it was a secular holiday when many people would arrive from all around. They would erect a temporary platform, and their antisemitic preacher would incite them to violence against the Jews. If the crowd were to see a Jew, they would attack us! The man told us that he would lock his doors and bolt his windows shut, not leaving his home for the entire day."

Reb Yaakov continued: "The Baal Shem Tov told him: 'My name is Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov, and I promise you that nothing bad will happen to you; just let us in!'

"We were allowed to enter the man's home, and then the Baal Shem Tov opened one of the windows. The homeowner pleaded with the Baal Shem Tov to close the window, but the Baal Shem Tov did not pay attention.

"We soon saw a rowdy group gathering in the town square. We could hear their preacher beginning to speak.

"The Baal Shem Tov told me that I should go to the town square, approach the preacher, and tell him that the Baal Shem Tov wants to see him. "'But Rebbe,' I told him, 'I am scared!'"

"'Take my staff,' the Baal Shem Tov told me, 'and no one will touch you.'"

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# In the hopes that this will be the story

"Then I said, 'But Rebbe, I don't speak the local language.'

"Speak to him in Yiddish!' the Baal Shem Tov told me, 'he will certainly understand. Tell him that the Baal Shem Tov wishes to speak with him.'

"So I went to the town square and did as I was told. The preacher told me, 'I will come soon.'

"I returned to the house and reported what happened. The Baal Shem Tov told me to return to the town square and tell the preacher to come immediately. I did this, and the preacher came right away.

"When the preacher arrived, the Baal Shem Tov went into a private room with him and they stayed there together for a while. Afterwards, the preacher departed. The Baal Shem Tov then told us that we should all return to Mezibuzh."

"And that is the story," concluded Reb Yaakov.

The wealthy man was elated and said, "Please stay with me until Shabbos. On Shabbos, many people will once again arrive in my home. We will make kiddush, and then you can tell them this story."

On Shabbos, Reb Yaakov retold the entire story. When he finished, the rich man said, "Now please permit me to tell you a story: "The preacher in the story was me. As soon as you arrived here, I recognized you from that day in the town square.

"I was a student of the Baal Shem Tov for many years. For various reasons, I veered from his path, began to study other things, and eventually converted and became a priest.

I hated Jews with a passion. When I would preach, I would always incite violence against Jews, and I caused much harm to many people.

"When you arrived in the town square that day and told me that the Baal Shem Tov had called for me, my heart was immediately turned over; I wished to run immediately to see him.

Yet my desire for honor did not permit me to do so.

When you came a second time, I simply could not resist, and I ran to the Baal Shem Tov.

"At first, the Baal Shem Tov spoke with me, encouraging me to repent from my ways. But I told him that I did not believe that G-d Almighty would forgive me for all the bad things I had done, especially all the harm I had caused the Jews. The Baal Shem Tov promised me that I would be forgiven Above. He even gave me a sign: When a man will tell me this very story, then I will know that I have been forgiven by Hashem.

"I have waited for this moment, and I spread word that I am willing to pay anyone who will tell me a Baal Shem Tov story, in the hopes that it will be this story.

"When you arrived here, I recognized you immediately. When it was apparent that you had forgotten all the stories you knew, I understood that it was actually my fault, for my teshuva was not yet complete. I fasted all these days, and recited a lot of Tehillim, pleading with Hashem to forgive me. Then, you remembered the story.

"In fact, I have previously vowed that when someone will tell me this story -- thereby indicating that I have been forgiven -- I will give him half of all my wealth. Stay here until I can make an exact accounting of my finances, and you will then receive half of my wealth." And that's what happened. 🕊

## Hayom Yom Sivan 6

The Baal Shem Tov passed away on Wednesday, the first day of Shavuot, 5520 (1760) and is interred in Mezibuz. The Alter Rebbe commented (on Wednesday, the 20th of Kislev 5559 (1798) in Petersburg): "On the fourth day the luminaries were taken away."

## THE INTENTIONAL OMISSION

Why doesn't the Torah state explicitly that the holiday of Shavuot is the Giving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai?

The Kli Yakar (Rabbi Shlomo Ephraim Luntschitz, 1550-1619, Prague) writes that the reason for this intentional omission is that Hashem did not want to limit the Giving of the Torah to one specific day (see his commentary on Vayikra 23:16).

A person must view himself as if he just received the Torah that very day; the Torah must always feel fresh.

In order to help me avoid compartmentalizing and thinking that the Torah is only "new" one day a year, the Torah steered clear of directly associating the Giving of the Torah with Shavuot. It is, however, alluded to in the name of the sacrifice of the day: "A new offering."

## Shavuot Schedule

*Chabad House is at the corner  
of Main Street & 69<sup>th</sup> Avenue*

**THU. MAY 21  
EREV SHAVUOS**

7:53pm Candle Lighting  
8:00pm Mincha &  
Maariv  
11:00pm Tikkun Leil  
Shavuos

**FRI. MAY 22  
SHAVUOS DAY 1**

10:00am Davening  
11:00am Torah Reading  
12:30pm Dairy Kiddush  
Farbrengen  
7:54pm Candle Lighting  
7:55pm Mincha  
& Kabbalas Shabbos

**SHABBOS MAY 23  
SHAVUOS DAY 2**

9:00am Chassidus  
10:00am Davening  
5:00pm Shiur for men  
& women  
7:40pm Mincha  
9:01pm Maariv

# BOAZ REMOVES HIS SHOE – THE INTENTIONAL RELATIONSHIP OF BODY AND SOUL

by Tzipah Wertheimer

Before Rus the Moabite can marry & be redeemed by Boaz they must consult a nameless individual.

Rus had inherited a field from her late husband Machlon. In order to keep the property within the family it must be redeemed by the closest relative. Rus has made the sale of the field conditional – whoever buys the field must marry her as well.

The closest relative is her late husband's uncle who is not referred to by name in the megillah. He declines the offer.

"I cannot redeem [it] for myself," says the unidentified man, "lest I disgrace my heritage." He continues addressing Boaz, "you redeem my redemption for yourself because I cannot redeem." (Megillas Rus 4:6).

The anonymous relative doesn't want to redeem Rus because he's afraid that her status as a poor Moabite will ruin his family's legacy and reputation. Boaz acquires the field and marries Rus by removing his shoe (4:7) through a process known as *chalitza*. The unnamed uncle refused to marry Rus and therefore does not need to remove his shoe.

In Shores Yishai, the commentary of Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz on Megillat Rus, he explains that the shoe brokers the relationship between man and Earth. When that relationship is dissolved the shoe comes off.

Shoes allows us to walk on the ground, they protect our feet from danger and they keep our legs clean.

My shoe separates my feet (and entire body) from the rough and coarse ground. This is also why Moshe Rabbeinu removed his shoes, by Divine command, at the burning bush. In a place of such holiness no shoes were needed. He did not want to be separated from the holy grounds where Hashem spoke.


In a similar fashion the Kohanim in the Bais Hamikdash serve barefoot. In places of complete Kedusha, feet should be connected directly to the ground. You need protection on hard, dirty and jagged surfaces.

The shoe allows us to have a relationship with the earth, a metaphor for one's legacy remaining in the world. By refusing to marry the widow of a relative, one is effectively refusing to carry on the name of the one who passed. The late husband is relegated exclusively to the next world. Symbolic of the fact that the one who is no longer living will have no legacy in this world, the shoe is removed.

Boaz understood that our world in general is not a place of complete holiness and if you want something to last, you must elevate it. By removing his shoe, he turns his marriage to Rus (and redemption of her field) into a G-dly and enduring relationship.

The anonymous relative is only concerned about his reputation and immediate gains.

This is the true argument between him and Boaz. The nameless uncle would take the field but he refuses to marry Rus. Ultimately, we don't even know his name. His legacy is lost.

Boaz understands the need to connect to eternity and this is why he takes off his shoe and creates an atmosphere of holiness. Rus had nothing. Together, she and Boaz create everything; the most enduring Jewish dynasty. The Eternal kingdom on David. May we be zoche to the coming of Moshiach ben David speedily and in our days. 



BH

## SHAVUOT CHEESE CAKE

Cooking Time: 1 Hour  
Servings: 8 Servings

**INGREDIENTS:**  
8oz Cream Cheese  
Filling:  
2 eggs  
3/4 Cup Sugar  
9 inch pie shell

Topping:  
8oz Sour cream  
1 tsp Vanilla  
2 Tbsp Sugar

**DIRECTIONS:**  
Combine cake ingredients and pour into pie shell. Bake at 350 for one hour. Let cool and add topping. Bake an additional 10 min.

\*Optional: top with caramel, chocolate or fruit.

