



RABBI JUDAH

MISCHEL

Mashpiah, OU-NCSY

Executive Director, Camp HASC

Author of *Baderech: Along the Path of Teshuva* (Mosaica 2021)

# Shavuot: A Happy Birthday

Reb Zushe Wilmsowsky, zy'a, the legendary chasid, tireless spiritual builder and activist, was affectionately referred to by the Lubavitcher Rebbe as 'mein partisan'. During the war Reb Zushe escaped a Nazi labor camp and joined the Bielsky brothers' resistance movement, and became renowned for his physical and religious strength, determination and persistence.

Reb Zushe was raised in a Litvishe home and was a talmid of Rav Elchonon Wasserman HY"D. After the war, while in a DP camp in Italy, he was introduced to Chabad Chassidus. Upon arriving in Eretz Yisrael, Reb Zushe dedicated his life to fulfilling the directives of the Chabad Rebbes. He was one of the founders of Kfar Chabad as well as dozens of other schools and yeshivos, spearheading countless programs to teach Torah and spread *Yiddishkeit* throughout the Holy Land.

Few Chasidic holy days are as significant as *Chai Elul*, the 18th day of the Hebrew month of Elul. The day marks both the birthday of the holy Baal Shem Tov, founder of the Chasidic movement, as well as that of Reb Shneur Zalman, the

Alter Rebbe, author of *Tanya* and the first Rebbe of Lubavitch.

On Chai Elul in 1970, a major celebration was held at Kfar Chabad, and a massive crowd gathered to participate. The planned highlight was to be a satellite hookup to virtually join the Lubavitcher Rebbe's *farbrengen*, broadcast live from 770 Eastern Parkway in Brooklyn. Guests arrived from all over Israel to join the Rebbe in real-time, and to receive 'divrei *Elokim Chayim*', Divine, life-giving words of Torah from his mouth.

As the *farbrengen* was about to begin, technical difficulties prevented the broadcast from airing. As the night wore on, the enormous gathering of women, men and children patiently waited, eager to see and be seen by the Rebbe. After a few hours, they were finally disappointed; it had become clear that there was not going to be a broadcast. A collective sigh of longing spread through the crowd.

At that very moment, the indefatigable optimist, Reb Zushe, leapt upon a table and captured the attention of all those assembled:

אלו קרבנו לפני הר סיני ולא נתן לנו את התורה - דיינו!

"If Hashem had brought us to Har Sinai" he shouted, "but did not give us the Torah, *dayeinu*, it would have been enough!

רפואה שלמה

הרבנית פייגא ציפורה בת הדסה

Even without hearing the Rebbe's words tonight, *ashreinu*, how fortunate are we to be among those who yearn to be close to him! Tonight is a Yom Tov and there is no room for disappointment or frustration. Let's celebrate! Yidden, we came here to *farbreng!*"

Each year on *Shavuos*, we relive the revelation at Sinai. We celebrate the privilege of having received the Torah, and we re-commit ourselves to accepting it again every day.

Three million women, men and children gathered together to experience the greatest moment in human history. There we heard *מפי הגבורה*, from the mouth of Source of Strength, the Divine words of His mission statement, His user's guide and declaration of purpose for Creation. How then can we sing on Pesach night that 'it would have been enough' just to gather there and wait, and to not receive the Torah? *Dayeinu?* Really?

Our *kesher*, our connection and relationship with Torah goes well beyond the content contained within the holy book. And *Shavuos* is much more than a holiday marking the receiving of the laws, stories and instructions of the Torah. It is a celebration. It is the birthday, so-to-speak, of our *kesher* to the *Nosein HaTorah*, the Giver of the Torah. We celebrate our *kesher* with each other, as well. We relive that great *farbrengen*, that gathering of all our souls together *k'ish echad b'lev echad*, as one person and with one heart.

In this way, Matan Torah is more about the *kesher* than it is about the words we heard; *Shavuos* celebrates 'contact', not

just 'content'. Sometimes in our Torah learning we may experience 'technical difficulties' or an inability to receive the 'broadcast'. We may feel we have failed to understand the intended *p'shat*, or to focus and learn with proper intention. We may even feel disappointed and frustrated with ourselves, as if we are unable to 'hear' the Torah's pure commands, fascinating ideas and endlessly profound words.

However, on *Shavuos*, as we are thanking Hashem for the great gift of Torah, may we also rejoice in the *zechus*, the great pleasure and privilege, of having simply been invited to draw close to the Giver. Even if we had arrived at Har Sinai, and not received the Torah, *Dayeinu*. Let's celebrate! ■

## SHIUR SPONSORS

**Tuesday, May 31** - Rabbi Goldin's shiur is sponsored by **Estelle Harris** on the 10th yearzeit of her dear husband, **Rafael Meir ben Zvi Hirsch z"l (Richard Harris)** - 2 Sivan, who enjoyed Rabbi Goldin's shiurim and writings in NJ; and in appreciation to HKBH for the recent birth of a great grandson (Yaakov Yosef)

**Rebbetzin Shira Smiles shiur** is sponsored for the 2022 academic year by **Dr. & Mrs. Menachem Marcus** in memory of their parents **Rose & Dr. Emanuel Marcus** רייזל בת יוסף מאיר ומרדכי בן משה מרקוס ז"ל and **Rosi & Ernest Strauss** לימוד בת אברהם ודניאל בן דוד שטראוס ז"ל

**Rabbi Goldin's shiur** is sponsored for the 2022 academic year by **Dr. & Mrs. Menachem Marcus** in memory of beloved aunts **Irma Haas a"h and Hilde Myer a"h**

**Rabbi Manning's shiur** has been sponsored for the 2022 academic year לעילוי נשמת ברנה בת בנדית ע"ה וזליג בן קלמן ז"ל

**Rabbi Kimche's shiur** has been sponsored for the 2022 academic year לעילוי נשמת מרים בת אברהם ע"ה ושם טוב בן שלמה ז"ל

**Rabbi Taub's weekly Thursday Parshat HaShavua Shiur** is sponsored by **The Jewish Legacy Foundation**

**Rabbi Breitowitz's Sunday shiur** for the 2022 academic year has been sponsored in Loving Memory of **Rachel bat Yehuda Aryeh & Hensha a"h**