



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

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Each year on *Shavuot*, we are granted the opportunity to return — if only symbolically — to that awe-filled moment in Jewish history, when we stood אחד בלב אחד, united as one, to receive the *Torah* at *Sinai*.

The first of the *Aseret HaDibrot* proclaims: “*Anochi Hashem Elokecha Asher Hotzeiticha Me’Eretz Mitzrayim, Mi’Beit Avadim*” — “I am *Hashem* your G-d, Who has taken you forth from the Land of Egypt, from the house of servitude...”

Many of our *mefarshim* are troubled by a fundamental question: Why does *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* choose to introduce Himself specifically as the One Who redeemed us from Egypt, rather than as the Creator of heaven and earth? Why is the defining attribute, as it were, in this opening declaration, the redemption from servitude, rather than the act of creation itself?

The *Kedushat Levi, Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev, zy”a*, offers a deeply moving insight. *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, he explains, deliberately emphasizes that the *Torah* is given to *Am Yisrael* only after their redemption from Egypt. Had the *Torah* been presented to them while they were still enslaved, their acceptance might have been perceived — internally or externally — as compelled, as though their very freedom were contingent upon their acquiescence.

By first redeeming them, by lifting them out of the *Beit Avadim*, and only then offering the *Torah*, *Hashem* affirms that *Kabbalat HaTorah* is not an act born of coercion, but rather one rooted in love — an expression

of the deep and enduring relationship between the *Ribbono Shel Olam* and His people.

Hashem first freed us, teaches *Reb Levi Yitzchak*, so that we might shed the very mindset of servitude, so that we could stand at *Sinai* not as subjects under duress, but as בני חורין — free souls — capable of entering into a covenant of love. The *Torah*, then, is not imposed; it is bestowed. It is a gift — like that of a loving parent to a cherished child.

In this spirit, we find a foundational teaching of the *Baal HaTanya zy’a* is that the *Torah* and *mitzvot* are an expression of divine *chesed*, through which *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, metaphorically, binds Himself to *Knesset Yisrael*. Like a parent who gives not as a formal obligation but as an expression of essential love and identity, so too *Matan Torah* is the revelation of an unbreakable bond between *Hashem* and His children, the Jewish People.

This foundational idea, embedded within the very first of the *Aseret HaDibrot*, is one that we are called upon to revisit each year on *Shavuot*. It reminds us that the *Torah* is, at its core, a manifestation of divine love, and that our acceptance of it is meant to mirror that love in return.

Yehi ratzon, as we prepare for *Chag Matan Torateinu*, may we merit to internalize this profound message — to receive the *Torah* anew, not because we feel compelled to accept it, but rather to accept it with love.

Chag Sameach ■