



THE VOICE FROM SHAMAYIM

On Shavuos night, Jewish men and boys around the world stay up to read Tikkun Leil Shavuos. But where did this minhag come from? Let's take a journey back in time to find out...

Many years ago, in Greece, in the city of Salonika, there were two great tzaddikim: Rabbi Yosef Caro, who is famous for writing the Shulchan Aruch, and Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz, who wrote Lecha Dodi, which we sing every Friday night on Shabbos.

About 500 years ago, on Shavuos night 5293 (1533), they gathered with five other talmidei chachamim to learn Torah. Light was shining in their eyes as they bent over their sefarim, learning and singing with all their hearts. They concentrated on the holy words with great



respect for Hashem, planning to stay awake all night long.

After reading a long list of pesukim from Torah, Neviim, and Kesuvim, they started learning the Mishna. At exactly Chatzos (midnight), something happened that made them freeze in shock:

Rabbi Yosef Caro began to speak, but it wasn't him talking. A different, holy voice from Shamayim began speaking from Rabbi Yosef Caro's mouth!

The voice was very sweet and grew stronger and louder. Soon, even the neighbors could hear it – but they couldn't understand it. Only some people could understand what the voice was saying, while others could not.

Everyone in the room began to shiver. They fell on their faces, feeling very scared, not daring to look up.

The voice spoke:

“Listen, my loved ones, who honor Hashem: You should have peace. You are very lucky, because tonight, you crowned Hashem with your Torah learning. Many years ago, my crown fell off and I was thrown into the dust, and no one could make me feel better - until now. Hashem's Shechina has suffered for so many years in galus, and the Torah you learned tonight with such kavana lifted me back up.

“Continue learning and be happy, because you were zoche to come inside Hashem's palace. Your Torah went straight up to Hashem, making all the malachim quiet. If you were a minyan of ten people, you would have reached an even higher spiritual level.

“You made Hashem happy tonight because you chose to honor Him instead of sleeping, so continue learning. Hashem's kindness is upon you, and your Torah is so sweet before Him. Stand on your feet and lift me up by saying the words, ‘Baruch shem kevod malchuso l'olam va'ed!’”

The voice stopped and waited.

The seven tzaddikim stood up in awe, saying in loud, shaky voices, “Baruch shem kevod malchuso l'olam va'ed! – The name of Hashem's great kingdom is blessed forever and ever!”

The voice continued speaking:

“Continue learning Torah, and don't stop for even a minute. And don't stay in Greece - move to Eretz Yisrael, as soon as you can. That way, Moshiach can come! Don't worry about your gashmiyus (material) things, because you will enjoy the highest ruchniyus (spiritual) levels.”

The voice told them many Torah secrets and made great promises to them. They all cried from the joy of hearing this heavenly voice, and from the pain of the Shechina that was still in galus.

When the voice stopped talking, they continued learning until morning, with great joy and fear. They didn't stop for even a second.

The next morning, they met three other chachamim on their way to enter the holy waters of the mikva. “Why weren't you with us last night? We would have reached an even greater level of kedusha if we'd been learning Torah with a minyan!”

The three chachamim felt very sad and started to cry. “Oy! We'll join you tonight, on the second night of Shavuot! We'll learn all night long, even though most people don't learn all night on the second night of Shavuot.”

Even though Rabbi Yosef Caro and Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz were very tired, they agreed. On the second night of Shavuot, they gathered together once again and began saying the same pesukim from the Torah as the night before. This time, they said it with even more simcha and energy, because they now had a minyan.

To their surprise, the voice from Shamayim didn't wait until they started to say the Mishna. It didn't even wait until midnight, like it had the night before. It came right away, while they were reading the pesukim of Shema.

It taught many of the Torah's secrets and then said, "Be happy, my dear ones, because you lifted me up again. You were brought up to the highest level tonight because you have a minyan. You lift up all the Yidden, so don't even pay attention to the people who make fun of you.

"There is a great fire of kedusha around you, so continue learning Torah. Say out loud, 'Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem Echad! Baruch shem kevod malchuso l'olam va'ed!'"

Everyone said those words with shaky voices. The voice continued speaking through Rabbi Yosef Caro's mouth for another half an hour, and then they continued learning Torah.

At Chatzos, the voice came back for the third time, teaching the deepest secrets of Kabbalah for over an hour and a half. "You are the first ones in hundreds of years to reach such high levels of kedusha and learn such secrets! From now on, you are the leaders of the Yidden, princes in Hashem's palace. You were zoche to enter the hallway of the palace. Now, work hard

to enter the deepest room. The day is coming soon, when Moshiach will finally come."

The next Shabbos, the voice came again to Rabbi Yosef Caro's mouth and told everyone, "Come into the deepest room of Hashem's palace!" At that moment, they were raised to a very high level. They decided to stop caring about gashmiyus and all the physical things in their lives, and they stopped eating meat and drinking a lot of wine. All they wanted was to connect to Hashem with all their might.

Sometime later, Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz and Rabbi Yosef Caro kept the promise they made and moved to Eretz Yisrael. They settled in Tzfas, beginning the Golden Age of Kabbalah. They learned a lot of the Torah's secrets and wrote many sefarim that affect the Yidden to this very day.

Reb Yosef Caro was zoche to be visited by the voice from Shamayim many times over a period of fifty years. Each time it came, he wrote down what it told him in his personal notes. Later on, these notes were printed in a book called the Maggid Mesharim.



We know this specific story of Shavuos night because the Shelah HaKadosh copied it from the writings of Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz. The Shelah wrote at the end, "I see that the voice said many more secrets that they weren't able to reveal to us. This story shows us how important it is to behave with extra kedusha on the night of Shavuos."

That's why men and boys around the world stay up on Shavuos night to read Tikkun Leil Shavuos. Even though we aren't zoche to hear great voices from Shamayim like these holy tzaddikim did hundreds of years ago in Salonika, Greece, we stay up all night and say the same pesukim as they did – known as Tikkun Leil Shavous – because it gives Hashem so much nachas.

Hashem is waiting for us to enter His palace through learning His Torah – so let's start learning!

Another time, Rabbi Yosef Caro was learning a really hard part of the Gemara. He was having

a hard time understanding part of what he was learning. After many days and nights of hard work, he finally understood what that part meant.

At a nearby table, there was a businessman who came every night to learn for an hour or two. He didn't really know how to learn Torah, but he worked hard to learn a page of the Gemara each night.

Because the man was learning out loud, Rabbi Yosef Caro noticed that he had almost reached the same part that had been so hard for him to understand.

To his great surprise, the businessman understood it right away! As soon as he read that part of the Gemara, he understood it as well as Rabbi Yosef Caro did.

Rabbi Yosef Caro was shocked. How had it been so easy for this man? Maybe I'm doing something wrong, he thought, sadly.

That night, Rabbi Yosef Caro had a dream, where Hashem revealed to him what had happened: "From the time the Torah was given



at Har Sinai, no one understood the part of Torah you uncovered. That's why you had to work so hard – that part of Hashem's wisdom had never entered a person's mind before. Only Shamayim understood it. Your hard work opened a path to bring this truth into the world. Because of your good work, every Yid will now be able to understand it easily.”

Now Rabbi Yosef Caro understood. Because he had worked so hard to understand it, it was now possible – even easy – for others to understand it too!

Because Torah is in charge of the world, we can see this idea in regular, everyday things, too.

For example, for many years, professional runners thought it was impossible to run a full mile in less than four minutes. As much as they tried, no one could do it. People kept on trying until 1954, when a man named Roger Bannister ran a mile in three minutes and fifty-nine seconds. Suddenly, within the next year, more runners were able to do the exact same thing!

Until then, it had seemed impossible – but when he proved that it was possible, others were able to follow. The path was now open.

We can use this lesson to help us better serve Hashem. When doing a mitzva seems hard, let's keep trying – so we can open the path, not just for ourselves, but for others, too. When we work hard to learn Torah and do mitzvos, we clear the way for the brachos to flow easier.

At Matan Torah, more than two million men, women, and children – including each of our neshamos – gathered at Har Sinai to accept the Torah from Hashem.

But the Avos who lived before Matan Torah already knew the Torah and kept all the mitzvos. Why did we need Matan Torah if we didn't get anything new?

The Midrash explains that when Hashem created the world, he made a rule: Ruchniyus is only for Shamayim, and gashmiyus is only for the earth. They couldn't mix, so when the Avos kept the Torah and did mitzvos, the world wasn't brought up and made holy from the mitzvos they did.

All this changed at Matan Torah, when Hashem took away His rule and made it possible for gashmiyus and ruchniyus to mix.

That's why when Hashem said the Aseres HaDibros, His voice didn't have an echo. An echo happens when the sound bounces off the things around it instead of going inside. Before Matan Torah, the voice of Torah had an echo. Because ruchniyus belonged in Shamayim, the world couldn't truly hear it. Doing mitzvos didn't affect the world. They just bounced right off.

At Matan Torah, everything changed. Hashem made it possible for Elokus to go deeply inside the world, so gashmiyus could be lifted up to serve Hashem.

Hashem did this by coming down to Har Sinai – which brought the ruchniyus of Shamayim down to the earth. Then, he told Moshe to come to Shamayim – which lifted the earth up to kedusha.

This made all the difference. Now, things in the world could become holy, and holy things could come into the world!

When we give a coin to tzedaka; or when we turn flour and water into matza for Pesach; or when we use leather for Tefillin – all these gashmiyus things are elevated to kedusha. They become holy, because they're fulfilling Hashem's mitzvos.

Because of Matan Torah, we can finally work to bring Moshiach, which is Hashem's biggest wish – to elevate the world to kedusha and make a home for Hashem down here.



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