

Tikkun Leil Shavuot

Edward Queen

Source sheet

1.

Zohar 1:8a

Rabbi Shimon was sitting and studying the Torah on the night when the Bride, unites with her husband [on the eve of Shavuot the Shekinah prepares to unite with Tiferet]. For we have learned: All those companions initiated into the bridal palace/chamber need—on that night when the Bride is destined the next day to be under the Chuppah with Her Husband [on Shavuot day when the Torah was given. Bride/Shekinah represents the Oral Torah and Husband/Tiferet the written Torah]—to be with Her all night, delighting in Her adornments in which she is arrayed, engaging in Torah, from Torah to Prophets, from Prophets to Writings, midrashic renderings of verses, and mysteries of wisdom: these are Her adornments and finery. And the Bride receives corrections, adorns herself with them, and rejoices with them all of that night. And on the next day, on the holiday of Shavuot, she only comes to the Huppah together with them. And her friends, who studied the Torah all night long, are called the sons of the Huppah. And as she approaches the Huppah, the Creator asks about them, blesses and adorns them with the Bride's adornments. Happy are those who merit this!

This is why Rabbi Shimon and all of his friends stayed up that night, and each of them renewed the Torah again and again. Rabbi Shimon was joyous, and so were his friends. Rabbi Shimon said to them: "My sons, how blessed is your lot, for it is you who shall accompany the Bride tomorrow to the Huppah, for all those who correct Her and rejoice in Her this night shall have their names recorded in the Book of Remembrance. And the Creator shall bless them with seventy blessings and adornments of crowns of the Upper World."

2.

Zohar Parashat Emor 88a

Therefore, the pious in ancient times did not sleep that night but were studying the Torah, saying, "Let us come and receive this holy inheritance for us and our children in both worlds." That night, the Congregation of Yisrael is an adornment over them, and she comes to unite with the King. Both decorate the heads of those who merit this. R. Shimon said the following when the friends gathered with him that night: Let us come and prepare the jewels of the bride... so that tomorrow she will be bejeweled... and properly ready for the King.

3.

Zohar, Parashat Emor 98a

If a man reaches this day (Shavuot) in purity and has not lost count, then it behooves him on this night to study the Torah and to preserve the special purity which he has attained on this night. We have learned that the Torah which he ought to study on this night is the Oral Torah, and afterwards in daytime the Written Torah can come and he can attach himself to it, so that both may be interlocked above. Then proclamation is made concerning him, saying, "And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says the Lord; My spirit which is upon you and my words which I have put in your mouth" (Isa 59:21). Therefore the pious ones of old used not to sleep on this night, but they used to study the Torah...When the companions gathered around on this night Rabbi Shimon used to say, "Let us go and prepare the ornaments of the Bride, that tomorrow she may appear before the King fitly adorned and bedecked.

4.

Shir HaShirim Rabba 1:57

"Israel slept all that night, because the sleep of Shavuot is pleasant and the night is short. R. Judah said: Not a flea worried them. ... G-d came and found them sleeping..... Moses roused Israel and brought them out to meet the supreme King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, as it says: 'Moses brought the people out from the camp towards G-d' "

5.

Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer 41

Rabbi Chanina said: In the third month the day is double the night, and the Israelites slept until two hours of the day, for sleep on the day of the (feast of) 'Azereth is pleasant, the night being short. And Moses went forth and came to the camp of the Israelites, and he roused the Israelites from their sleep, saying to them: Arise ye from your sleep, for behold, your God desires to give the Torah to you. Already the bridegroom wishes to lead the bride and to enter the bridal chamber. The hour has come for giving you the Torah, as it is said, "And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God" (Ex. 19:17). And the Holy One, blessed be He, also went forth to meet them; like a bridegroom who goes forth to

meet the bride, so the Holy One, blessed be He, went forth to meet them to give them the Torah, as it is said, "O God, when thou wentest forth before thy people" (Ps. 68:7).

6.

Magan Avraham 494 (c.1665 - c.1671 CE).

"It says in the Zohar that the original pious ones would be awake all the night working in Torah. And already most of those who learn do this. It's possible to give a reason for this according to its simple understanding, that Israel slept all the night, and the Holy One Blessed be He had to wake them, as the midrash says. Therefore, we need to fix this."

7.

Mishna Berura 494:1 (Chofetz Chaim, 1838-1933)

.....On the 50th day of Sefira.... Delay praying maariv because Shavuot starts at *tzeit ha-kokhavim*, and this is done in order to make sure the 49th day of the omer was yesterday. It comes to us from the Zohar that the Pious ones used to stay awake all night and concern themselves with Torah. It is already the custom of many to do this. The Ari ZL brings down that One should know that anyone who doesn't sleep at all, and is engrossed in learning Torah, can be assured that his sleep will be made up and nothing wrong will occur to him. The reason (for this minhag) the Magen Avraham writes that because Israel slept all night (prior to the revelation at Sinai) and Hashem had to awaken them in order to receive the torah. Therefore, we need to now stay up all night on Shavuot as a Tikkun. . . . It is proper to be careful according to Kabbalah on the subject of marital relations on the night of Shavuot."

8.

First Tikkun Leil Shavuot?

Excerpt of a letter from the Kabbalist, Rabbi Shlomo HaLevi Alkabetz

The pious one (Rabbi Yosef Caro) and I agreed to make a mighty effort on Shavuot night to keep sleep from our eyes, and not to stop learning for even one second. Thank God we were successful. Indeed, when you hear what transpired, it will enliven your souls.

For the night of *Shavuot*, this is the order of study I prepared. Verses from Scripture:.... All this we chanted aloud in a spirit of great fear and awe, with melody and trepidation. But what will be told next won't be believed. After all the verses, we recited aloud all the *mishnayot* of *Zeraim* (the first of the Six Orders) and then we started again, learning it in the way of true learning, and we completed two tractates. At that moment, the Creator graced us and we heard a great voice coming from Rabbi Caro. Many of the words were unintelligible, the syllables chopped short. The people nearby heard but could not understand. The voice was very pleasing but at the same time was growing continually stronger and we fell on our faces from the great awe; no one dared to lift his eyes and face to see.

The voice spoke, "Listen my beloved, those who most glorify the Creator, my loved ones, peace to you. Happy are you and happy those that bore you. Happy are you in this world and happy you will be in the World to Come, because you took it upon yourselves to crown Me on this night. It has been many years since my crown has fallen, and there has been no one to comfort Me. I had been cast to the dust embracing the filth, but now you have restored the crown ...

"I am the Mishna that admonishes mankind. I have come to speak to you. If only there were ten of you, you would have ascended higher. Even so, you have elevated yourselves, and those who bore you. You are fortunate, my dear ones, for because of you, sleep passed from the eyes of those who bore you. I have been summoned this night through those gathered in this great and prestigious city. You are not like those lying on their beds, sleeping a sleep that is 1/60th of death, besmirching their beds. You cleaved to the One and have pleased Him. Therefore, my children, strengthen yourselves and strive forth in my love, my Torah, and my fear ...

The voice then resumed, "Happy are you, my children. Return to your learning and do not stop one minute. Go up to the Land of Israel, because not all times are equal, and there is no preventing salvation, whether by much or by a little. Do not value your belongings, for you will partake of the best of the supernal levels. And if you desire and will obey, the choicest of that land you will consume. Therefore, hurry and move there for I am the cause that sustains you, and will continue to sustain you. Peace to you in your houses, and peace in all there is to you. Eternal God gives strength to His people and blesses them with peace'."

All these things were spoken to us, and our ears did hear. Additional matters of wisdom were shared, and great were the promises that brought us all to tears from so much joy. We also heard of the Shekhinah's suffering, due to our sins, and the Voice was as a sick person imploring us. Then we strengthened ourselves until daybreak, reciting verses unceasingly with joy and trembling.

Maggid Mesharim. Trans. Louis Jacobs, *Jewish Mystical Testimonies*,