

## **Shavuot: Tikun Lel Shavuot: The Jew Is Like a Sefer Torah**

- Shavuoth, The Jew is like a Sefer Torah. The sources for the shiur of the Rav, which can be developed into a fine shiur for Tikun Lel Shavuoth. During a series of shiurim once published in Yiddish by Harav Yoseph Dov Soloveitchik zt"l, he laid down as an axiom that the Jewish personality is like a Sefer Torah. A number of sources indicate this identity. While it would be too long to translate the entire shiur, it may be helpful to some chaverim to summarize the sources used in that shiur and present a summary of the concluding ideas. From these sources a fine Tikun Shiur can be made. The more obvious quotes are given without sources, for each Rabbi will easily find them if he needs them.

### **TIKUN LEL SHAVUOT: THE JEW IS LIKE A SEFER TORAH SHIUR BY RAV J.B. SOLOVEITCHIK ZT"l**

(During a series of shiurim once published in Yiddish by Harav Yoseph Dov Soloveitchik zt"l, he laid down as an axiom that the Jewish personality is like a Sefer Torah. A number of sources indicate this identity. While it would be too long to translate the entire shiur, it may be helpful to some chaverim to summarize the sources used in that shiur and present a summary of the concluding ideas. From these sources a fine Tikun Shiur can be made. The more obvious quotes are given without sources, for each Rabbi will easily find them if he needs them. [Nisson Shulman])

Examples;

Gemara Shabbat 105b; Haomed al hamet beshaat yetziat neshama, hayav likroa; ha lema ze dome, leroeh Sefer Torah shenisraph.

Rashi on the spot, says, "As we find in Moed Katan (26a), regarding the megila that King Yehoyakim burnt, where it says, 'They were not afraid, neither did they tear their garments'" (Jeremiah, 36: 24).

So too, even if a Jew who lived a base life should die, it is nevertheless considered as if a Sefer Torah has been destroyed, for there is no Jew so empty that he has no Torah and mitzvot whatsoever.

We find in the Talmud, Megila 26b, "And Rava said, Sefer Torah shebalah, A Torah that became tattered, is buried together with a sage."

Rambam cites this as halakhah; Sefer Torah shebalah o shenifsal, notnin oto biklei cheres vekovrin oto etzel talmidei chachamim, vzu hi genizato. (Hilchot Sefer Torah X:3)

The requirement to stand for a Sefer Torah is based on the pasuk, Mipne seva takum vehadarta penei zaken." (Vayikra 19, 32). See Kiddushin 33b.

Another example; When a Talmid Chacham is buried, a Sefer Torah must be brought out. (Divrey Hayamim II, 32:33 and Baba Kama 17b. [See also, Eruvin 26b, Talmid Chacham

shehalah, meshivim Yeshiva al pitcho (Ed.)].

If the entire Jewish community mourns, the Sefer Torah must mourn also! "They take out the Teva to the street, and place ashes on the Sefer Torah, on the Ark, on the head of the Nasi, and on the head of the Av Bet Din, and each places ashes on his own head. (Taanit 16, Mishnah.) (See also Rambam, Hilchot Taanit, 4:1)

Another example: Berachos 47b, Amar rav Huna, tisha vearon mitztarfin.

True, later the gemara demonstrates Rav Huna meant something else, but the have amina is interesting. Also in the Midrash, Bereshit Rabbah, 91:3, Katan veSefer Torah osin oso senif...

So we see that there must be an attitude that the Sefer Torah is like a living personality. And the converse is also true. That the Jewish personality in general and especially the Talmid Chacham is considered like a Sefer Torah, has the Kedusha of a Sefer Torah. In the Agada we find many metaphoric uses of Sefer Torah for Adam Gadol. Here are some examples:

a) Rabbi Eliezer, was sick. His students who visited wept. They explained why by saying, Efshar Sefer Torah sharuy betzaar velo nivke? (Sanhedrin 101a).

The same incident in Sanhedrin 68a includes Rabbi Eliezer's final moments, when Rabbi Akiva folded Rabbi Eliezer's arms across his heart and said, Oi lachem, shtei zerootav shehen kishtei Sifrei Torah sheniglalin. There are many other such sources, such as Berachos 8b, "Beware a sage who forgot his Torah because of accident, for the tablets and the broken tablets were together in the ark", and Makot 22b, "How foolish those who stand for a Sefer Torah and not before a sage.

2. Now, except for Shabbat which is sanctified from on High, there is no Kedusha in Jewish life without a human act to create it or mark it. Kedusha doesn't happen by itself.

For example: [The additions to the area of the Bet Hamikdash, was dedicated with a parade around the Mehitzot and the sacrifice of a Todah eaten in its precincts to indicate its holiness Rambam Hilchot Beth Habechira 6:10-12. Ed.]. (Rabbi Soloveitchik also used as an example, the Rambam's opinion that "Though the kedusha of the Bet Habechira was forever because it was the kedusha dependant on the Shehina, the first kibbush kedushah by Joshua of the land of Israel was temporary, for the kibbush did not last, but the Kedusha of the second Aliyah by Zerubavel, was permanent since it was sanctified by yishuv....." (Hilchot Bet Habechira 6:16). In the same way Yom Tov is sanctified through Kiddush Hahodesh, by Bet Din, declaring Mekudash Mekudash,,,, And today also, through the ceremony symbolizing that it happens through kelal Yisroel, as indicated by mekadash Yisroel vehazemanim. Or a Korban must first be dedicated through being makdish, and in the same way teruma, maaser, bikurim, and hala cannot become holy automatically, for no object is intrinsically and automatically holy, by itself. The times of Matan Torah, yetziat Mitzrayim, Yom Hadin, all conform to the same rule. Nothing happens without kelal Yisroel creating the sanctity. Remember Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabban Gameliel Atem afilu shogegin, atem afilu mezidin (Rosh Hashana 25a).

The same rule must therefore apply to a Sefer Torah. In fact, it is most apparent with a Sefer Torah, which requires *Ibud Lishma*, writing the Torah *Lishma*, and according to Rambam, says Rabbi Soloveitchik, even the handwriting, individual as it is, helps by investing the Torah with the human personality, and thus lends the sanctity to the Sefer Torah. For the human being pours from his very soul into the handwriting, and they are no longer cold black ink, but living expressions of his personality engraved on the parchment. Then the ink becomes *esh shehora*, and the parchment *esh levana*... Even the holy name of God cannot raise itself to the status of *kedusha* unless the human being invests it through *kavana* and *ketiva* with the holiness. To sum up, *Kedusha*, in all its forms can never be realized without human initiative.

But the problem is; how can a man give that which he doesn't have himself? *Ein adam makne davar sheeno shelo!* In fact, it is not sufficient that he have theoretical *baalut*, he must also have factual possession, the ability to actually give away the object to another. See *Baba Metzia, 7a*, If the object was stolen, and there was no *yiush*, both cannot sanctify, the thief because it isn't legally his, the owner because it isn't in his possession. [See *Mishnah, Kilayim 7:5*, *Gemara Baba Batra 88a*, and the *Mishnah, Erachin 26a*; *Ein adam makdish davar sheeyno shelo*. See also *Baba Kama 69*, *Ein adam makdish davar sheeyno birshuto*. (Ed.)].

We must say that there is an innate sanctity in the Jew. If the Halakhah required that the *kedusha* of *Yom Tov* and *Torah* be given by the Jew, the Halakhah has predicated that the Jewish personality is blessed with all these *kedushot!*

But if we predicated that a Sefer Torah cannot become sacred by itself, but must have it infused by the human being, so too the human personality must also receive its *kedusha* through some deed or act. And just as the Sefer is the receptacle for *Kedushas Hashem*, so too the human being. Who plants the *Kedusha* there?

Moshe is *Eved Hashem*: Rabbi Eliezer translates this *Safra Rabba (Sota, 13b)*.

Is this technical skill in writing the thirteen Sefer Toras the greatest praise we could find for Moses?

But if Moshe is a *Safra Raba*, it is not for his technical achievements of writing the Sefer Torahs! Scribes could also do that and well! It is for the greater scribal work of writing and consecrating the Jewish heart, and that is the secret of the *Torah shebal pe!* Because Moshe created the *kedusha* in the Jewish *kelal* and *yachid*, transforming them into a Sefer Torah! And that is the sense in which we are to understand the method by which Moshe Rabbenu taught the Torah as stated in *Eruvin* and recreated by Rambam. Moshe is the *Safra Rabba* because he wrote with holy letters on the hearts of the Jewish people! Not just 13 Sefer Torahs, but 600,000... *Moshe shakul kenegeg shishim ribo*... . If the premise that the Jewish personality is like a Sefer Torah is correct, then we must take this premise to two further conclusions: That the Jewish personality also is comprised of *kelaf* and *otiyos*, and that it needs *ibud lishma* and *ketiva lishma*.

Where do we find this halakhikally and historically? In two performances:

The first is *Hinuch*. Not just of learning, but for doing: *Halacha lemoshe misinai*; *Limud al menat*

laasot. The second is Limud Lishma.

How did our people learning Torah in Moshe's time? Ketzad seder Mishnah.... [See the Rambam's Perush Hamishnayot, Hakdama Lededer Zeraim, second paragraph, Divrei Hamatchil "Da", or the original Talmudic source in Eruvin 54b. The way Moshe Rabbenu taught each mitzvah, with its perusha veinyana (Torah sheb'al pe) four times, once each to Aharon, Elazar veItamar, the Zekenim, then Kelal Yisrael, then each of the above repeated it, then went home and studied it, then wrote private notes though publicly it had to be transmitted orally, for the Jew is half the Sefer Torah, the Torah shebeal Pe (Ed.)].

But in the entire exercise, Yehoshua is missing! Where was Joshua? Lo Yamush... He did not leave the tent of Moshe Rabbenu, meaning that he was always with him, learning from the text and learning from the Master's conduct. That is why Moshe kibel Torah MiSinai umesara liYehoshua! Who was the bearer of Tradition? Joshua! Because Torah sheb'al pe has levels of personal transmission of rebbi to student, transmission of personality! Torah hi velilmod ani tzarich! (Berachot 62a, Megillah 28a, Zohar Tzav, 28a). So Joshua, and not others, was the transmitter. Thus we understand the zugot....

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(Submitted by Nisson Shulman)