

**ALWAYS BE HAPPY. KNOW AND BELIEVE WITH PERFECT FAITH THAT THE DIVINE PRESENCE IS ALWAYS NEAR YOU AND IS WATCHING OVER YOU. WHEN YOU LOOK TOWARD YOUR CREATOR, HE WILL BE THERE LOOKING BACK AT YOU.**

THE BAAL SHEM TOV, YISRAEL BEN ELIEZER (1698-1760)

**HASHEM IS FULL OF COMPASSION, AND THE WHOLE WORLD IS FILLED WITH KINDNESS, AND HASHEM VERY MUCH DESIRES THE SUCCESS OF THE WORLD. THEREFORE, MY DEAR BROTHER, MY HEART AND SOUL, BE VERY STRONG AND COURAGEOUS, AND TRUST IN HASHEM, FOR HE WILL NOT LEAVE YOU... RELY ON HIS IMMENSE COMPASSION, WITHOUT MEASURE. FOR HASHEM IS VERY GREAT, AND HIS GREATNESS IS UNFATHOMABLE, AND THERE IS A REALITY THAT EVERYTHING TRANSFORMS INTO GOODNESS... JUST BE STRONG AND COURAGEOUS.**

REBBE NACHMAN (1772-1810)

**TORAH SCHOLARS ARE LIKENED TO FRUIT-BEARING TREES, WHEREAS SIMPLE JEWS ARE LIKENED TO TREES AND BUSHES THAT DO NOT BEAR FRUIT.**

**WHEN HASHEM SPOKE TO MOSHE, THE FLAME OF FIRE APPEARED IN A BURNING BUSH - LIKENED TO A SIMPLE JEW. THIS TEACHES US THAT ALTHOUGH THE SIMPLE JEW MAY NOT UNDERSTAND THE MEANING BEHIND PERFORMING THE COMMANDMENTS OR THE WORDS HE SAYS IN PRAYER, HE STILL HAS THE FIRE OF HOLINESS BURNING IN HIS HEART. THE BUSH WAS NOT CONSUMED - THIS IS THE FIRE WITHIN EACH JEW WHICH CAN NEVER BE EXTINGUISHED.**

BAAL SHEM TOV, YISRAEL BEN ELIEZER (1698-1760)

**"SHEVUAH" MEANS AN OATH. AT SINAI, HASHEM AND BNEI YISRAEL EXCHANGED OATHS, SWEARING ETERNAL ALLEGIANCE TO EACH OTHER. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE GONE THROUGH PERIODS OF SEVERE SUFFERING, WE HAVE NEVER SEPARATED FROM HASHEM, AND HASHEM HAS NEVER ABANDONED US.**

OHR HACHAIM, CHAIM IBN ATTAR (1696-1743)

**ON THE OTHER HOLIDAYS WE CELEBRATE AN ASPECT OF OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HASHEM; ON SUCCOS WE BUILD SUCCOS TO CELEBRATE HOW HASHEM PROTECTED US, AND ON PESACH WE EAT MATZAH TO CELEBRATE THE EXODUS. BUT ON SHAVUOS WE CELEBRATE THE RELATIONSHIP ITSELF, THE ETERNAL BOND WE SHARE WITH HASHEM.**

RABBI SHAIS TAUB

**REB LEIBELE EIGER TAUGHT THAT OUT OF ALL POTENTIAL THINGS TO PRECEDE THE GIVING OF THE TORAH, THE TORAH TELLS US ABOUT YISRO JOINING KLAL YISROEL. WAS THERE NOTHING ELSE MORE FITTING?**

**THE LESSON FOR US IS THAT IS IF YISRO - WHO WAS AN IDOLATOR, AND EVEN A LEADER OF IDOLATORS, SERVING AS THEIR PRIEST - WAS NEVERTHELESS ABLE TO LEAVE HIS PAST AND BECOME A SERVANT OF HASHEM, THEN THE JEWISH PEOPLE - WHO ARE HASHEMS CHOSEN NATION - CERTAINLY HAVE POTENTIAL TO DRAW CLOSE TO HASHEM DESPITE WHAT WE MAY HAVE DONE IN THE PAST.**

RABBI ELIMELECH BIDERMAN

**SHAVUOS IS THE ONLY BIBLICAL FESTIVAL IN CONNECTION WITH WHICH THE TORAH DOES NOT COMMAND THAT A SIN OFFERING BE BROUGHT. FOR ON SHAVUOS, THE DAY ON WHICH THE TORAH WAS RECEIVED, EVERY JEW IS IN THE CATEGORY OF A CONVERT, WHO IS CONSIDERED TO BE A YOUNG CHILD WHO IS JUST BORN. JUST AS A NEWBORN INFANT IS WITHOUT SIN, SO TOO ARE THE JEWISH PEOPLE WITHOUT SIN ON SHAVUOS.**

KEDUSHAS LEVI, REB LEVI YITZCHAK OF BERDITCHEV (1740-1809)

**THE JOY OF THE FESTIVALS THEMSELVES IS A CULMINATION OF THE JOY OF ALL THE MITZVOT OF THE ENTIRE YEAR. THERE ARE NO LIMITS TO THIS JOY!**

REBBE NACHMAN (1772-1810)

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