IDEAS OF SHABUOT #1: My Treasure

SEGULA OF SHABUOT

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As we know, the giving of the Torah took place within the framework of a more comprehensive event: the celebration of a Covenant between God and the Jewish people. This "Covenant" is oftentimes referred to as a "marriage" between us and HaShem. Let us compare the process of this Covenant to that of a wedding ceremony. There is first an offer to enter the Covenant- a proposal; followed by the verbal presentation of the Covenantal terms by HaShem. The terms and conditions are written down (Sefer HaBerit, "The document of the Pact," following our comparison this would be like the Ketuba) and the document is then read publicly by Moshe. Finally, on the morning of the 6th of Sivan, we see the final definitive acceptance of the pact (think of the "I do" in a non-Jewish wedding…) on behalf of the Jewish people, as they say, "Na'Ase VeNishma."

AM SEGULA

When HaShem offers the people of Israel to partake in this Covenant, He says the following; (Shemot 19: 5-6) "And now, if you agree to listen to My commandments and keep a covenant with Me, you will be for Me a segula among all peoples…" What does this word "segula" mean? It appears very rarely in the Hebrew Bible. In Dibre HaYamim (I, 29:3) "segula" means "treasure." Addressing the people of Israel, King David says that he has allocated the gold and silver reserves of his kingdom; the money collected through taxes to build the Bet HaMiqdash. He further adds, "In addition [to the royal reserves], in my desire [to build] the Temple for HaShem my God, I am also donating my personal "segula" (=treasure) of

gold and silver.”King David referred to his personal treasure, his private capital, as a “segula.” Being the “segula” of HaShem means we are God’s most precious asset, His personal possession. And through this beautiful and profound metaphor, the Tora wishes to indicate to us that HaShem is committed to taking care of and protecting us just as a man protects his treasure- his most valuable possession. God assures us that the Jewish people will never disappear. Israel will be “treasured” directly by God. And as we have seen, against all odds, after being persecuted since time immemorial by almost all peoples and civilizations of history, we still exist. Thanks to the most powerful “Segula,” HaShem’s direct supervision.

THE OTHER SIDE OF AM SEGULA

This closeness to God, to be supervised directly by The Almighty, is a coin with two sides. On one hand, HaShem guarantees the eternity of the Covenant and our existence as a people. But on the other hand, being the chosen people does not mean having more privileges than other nations. Quite on the contrary, since we are the sole witnesses of Divine Revelation, God expects from us exemplary behavior. HaShem examines our behavior more strictly, more closely than the rest of the nations. He has high expectations and high demands from us. I don’t believe that anyone has better formulated this important concept than the prophet Amos. (3:2) “Thus says HaShem: □□ □□ □□□□□ □□□□ □□ □□ □□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□ □□□□□ □□□□ □□ □□□□□□□, Only you [the people of Israel] have I known (=have I chosen) out of all the [nations] on the earth; and therefore, I will consider you responsible (and NOT negligent) for all your mistakes (=sins)…” Being the chosen people does not grant us more rights, rather more obligations. More responsibility for our actions. And it is a yoke on our shoulders, but it keeps our backs straights and heads held high.