

**How to Have****By: Rabbi Yanki Tauber**

What do you have? And what makes it yours?

Look around you and make a mental list of the things that are "yours": your husband or wife; your children; your home; your job; your knowledge; your car; your socks; your friends; your reputation; your magazine subscriptions --

These things differ greatly from each other. They differ also in the meaning of the word "your" as applied to them. But they are all, in some sense, yours. How did you come to possess them?

Certain things you **earned**. You paid for them with cash, toil and derring-do. Perhaps these are the things from which you derive your deepest sense of accomplishment. You are invested in them. You have achieved them.

Certain things were **given** to you. A brand new car that is a gift from your parents. A wise man you met somewhere taught you something you would never have figured out on your own. Someone loves you, generously, more than you deserve to be loved. Perhaps these are the things that you desire most of all. After all, you could never have achieved them on your own. They are beyond you; they belong to a reality greater than yourself. Being gifted these things means that you have transcended your limitations.

Finally, certain things are yours because they are **inherently**, intrinsically, yours. They are your birthright, your inheritance. You did nothing to earn them and no one gave them to you: you possess them by virtue of who and what you are. Your soul. Your mind. Your inborn talents. Your homeland. Your traditions.

Perhaps these things do not afford you the depth of fulfillment you get from the things you earn. Perhaps you do not experience the intensity of desire and striving for them evoked by the "gifts" of life. But these are more yours than anything else you possess.

Your earning power will fluctuate as you traverse the rises and dips of life, as you grow or diminish in strength, mental proficiency and spiritual sensitivity. The gifts you receive will always depend on forces beyond your control. But the things that are inherently yours will be yours in all circumstances and under all conditions. Even if you reject them and disavow them, they will remain ever, irrevocably yours.

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On the sixth day of the Hebrew month of Sivan in the year 2448 from creation (1313 BCE), the newborn nation of Israel assembled at the foot of Mount Sinai to receive the Torah from G-d. Ever since, the event is referred to in the language of our sages as the "Giving of the Torah." Indeed, the Torah calls itself our "gift from the desert" (Numbers 21:18).

The Torah, however, also describes itself as Israel's "acquisition" (Proverbs 4:2), as well as "the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob" (Deuteronomy 33:4).

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21 January | 16 Shevat

**Yitro**

Shabbat Begins: 4:15 pm

Shabbat Ends: 5:23 pm

So which is it -- gift, acquisition or inheritance?

The Torah is an acquisition for which we must struggle and toil, which becomes ours through diligent study and meticulous observance. As such, we experience the deep sense of fulfillment that only a fully-earned achievement can bring.

The Torah is a divine gift, for its wisdom is above and beyond anything our finite selves could attain. As such, it wakens our most transcendent strivings, elevating us above our temporality and mortality, making of us infinitely more than we are on our own.

And the Torah is our inheritance, our birthright. As such it is always ours. Even when we do not earn it. Even when we close ourselves to the gift of it being bestowed upon us from above. For it is of a piece with our essence.

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