

THE EVER NEW IN THE NEVER OLD

by Rabbi Label Lam

HASHEM said to Moshe saying, "Speak to Aaron and say to him: When you "light-up" the lamps, toward the face of the Menorah shall the seven lamps cast light." Aaron did so- (Bamidbar 8:1-2)

Aaron did so: To teach you the praise of Aaron that he did not change. (Rashi)

What's so great that Aaron lit the lights? Anybody could do that! Why would he do differently than what he understood with perfect clarity G-d had told him to do? So what's the great praise for?

The Sefas Emes offers an answer that not only did Aaron not deviate in the behavior of lighting the first time but for all forty years in the desert he maintained the same high degree of intensity and excitement as if it was the first time. Even though people are naturally dulled by repetitive actions and driven to search for something fresh the "first time" is the choicest of them in terms of pure passion!

The \$64,000.00 question is, "How do we bottle the enthusiasm of that "first time"? Perhaps that's why people hire photographers and videographers for weddings and Bar Mitzvos! That alone does not do the job! Not only is this a curious psychological point but it might touch upon the greatest challenge of our time and understood properly may yield the secret to our real happiness. How does one always enjoy the old and not be tempted to constantly search for new stimulation!

The Sefas Emes quotes a well-known Rashi on a familiar verse in the 2nd Paragraph of Shema, "And it will come to pass if you continually hearken (accept and review) My commandments that I command you today..." (Devarim 11:13) Rashi explains the double expression of listening, "If you will listen to the old you will understand the new!" On the latter word "today" he says that words of Torah, the commandments should be new and fresh to you as if you heard it spoken to you today!

A joke is told about a general that heard his troops were grumbling and complaining and it disturbed him even more when he discovered that they were upset about the food! He assembled his men and gave them a piece of his mind. Drawing on his knowledge of the history of war, he asked rhetorically, "Do you think Napoleon's men at the Waterloo complained about the bread being stale!?" Just then one of the soldiers interjected, "No sir! It was fresh then!"

How does one retain freshness of that which is no longer "new"? Our national commitment to Torah was 3324 years ago and privately at the time of our Bar Mitzvah and so it is with a marriage! What's the secret? The answer is that there is no such thing as "old" in the world of the spirit! We recite

twice daily, "Who renews continually with His kindness the action of creation." Everything is actually new!

Reb Aryeh Levin ztl. of "A Tzadik in Our Time" fame was observed gazing at a flickering flame! When what he was doing, he replied joyfully, "I'm drinking in the light!" "Simple" things do not lose their luster to spiritually sensitive individuals! The candle is casting off fresh light each moment! A glass of water can be more enjoyable to a tuned-in person than a can of coke to the man on the street! King Solomon says, "The person with a good heart is always drinking!" His good thoughts lead him to become intoxicated by any and all aspects of life! The "old" is as fresh as a "first time"! One need only to go up to the light- like Aaron!

One of my boys once told me he was bored! I told him that he is not bored! He's boring! To prove the point I asked him to survey the room and find anything blue. Then I blindfolded him and asked him to tell me what in the room is brown! He immediately reminded me that I had said blue. However, now I want what's brown! Then I asked, for what's green-glass-round-metallic- etc. He realized that he had never explored the room. He never looked at that room or any other the same - and we had only just begun. We may not yet merit the hidden joy of the "new" until we first encounter **the ever new in never old**. DvarTorah, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Label Lam and Torah.org.