

RENEWABLE JOY

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Tzav

Renewable Joy

This Shabbat, we look forward to the arrival of the joy of Purim, which will then give way to the season of Pesach. Rashi z"l states (in his commentary to Ta'anit 29a) that the famous expression, "When the month of Adar arrives, we increase our joy," refers not only to the joy of Purim, but also to Pesach. Indeed, just as we read in Megillat Esther (8:16), "The Jews had light and sasson / gladness and simcha / joy . . .," so we recite in kiddush on the night of Pesach that Hashem has given us the festivals for "simcha and sasson."

What is this joy? R' Shalom Schwadron z"l (1912-1997; the Yerushalmi Maggid made famous by the "Maggid Speaks" books) relates that an acquaintance once gave him a check for \$5,000 to be distributed to charity. "At first," said R' Schwadron, "my joy knew no bounds. But, after several hours, that initial exhilaration had worn off. I felt no happier than a millionaire feels when he holds \$50,000 in his hands."

This is *not* how we should feel about spiritual pleasures, such as the joy of Torah and love and awe of G-d. King David says in Tehilim (119:162), "I rejoice over Your words like one who finds a great treasure." King David always felt about mitzvot the way one feels at the first moment after finding a great treasure. His joy did not diminish over time.

This is how a Jew's joy at serving Hashem must be--a joy that constantly renews itself. (Haggadah Shel Pesach R' Shalom p.32)

"The fire on the Altar shall be kept burning on it, it shall not be extinguished; and the Kohen shall kindle wood upon it every morning; he shall prepare the olah-offering upon it and shall cause the fats of the shelamim-offerings to go up in smoke upon it. A permanent fire shall remain aflame on the Altar; it shall not be extinguished." (6:5-6)

R' Ben-Zion Yadler z"l (1871-1962; Maggid / preacher of Yerushalayim) writes: The Torah is hinting to us that, if a person wants the fire of love and awe of Hashem to burn within him, it is not enough that he doesn't actively extinguish the flame. Rather, he must add fuel to the fire every day.

R' Yadler continues: R' Yosef Karo z"l (Spain, Greece and Eretz Yisrael; 1488-1575) opens the Shulchan Aruch with the instruction, "One should be strong like a lion to arise in the morning to serve his Creator." R' Moshe Isserles z"l (Krakow, Poland; 1520-1572) adds in a gloss, "Likewise, when one lies down to sleep, he should know before Whom he is sleeping." R' Yadler comments: In order to arise like a lion in the morning to serve Hashem, one must go to sleep with an awareness of before Whom he is sleeping.

It goes with saying, R' Yadler concludes, that this requires sustained study of mussar works. (B'tuv Yerushalayim p.147)

"This is the Torah of the chatat-offering . . ." (6:18)

"This is the Torah of the asham-offering . . ." (7:1)

The Gemara (Menachot 110a) teaches: "If one studies the Torah (laws) of the chatat-offering, it is as if he offered a chatat. If one studies the Torah of the asham-offering, it is as if he offered an asham."

R' Yissachar Ber Eilenburg z"l (Central Europe; 1570-1623) writes: Our predecessors considered the study of the sections of the Torah which have no practical application in our days to be more necessary than studying those sections which do have practical application. The reason for this is that attaining perfection requires studying and practicing all parts of the Torah. But, there are parts of the Torah that we cannot practice today; instead, if one toils in the study of those sections, that toil is considered the equivalent of performing the mitzvah in practice. Of course, one does not accomplish this by superficially reading the verses. (Be'er Sheva: Introduction)

R' Moshe ben Yosef Tirani z"l (1505-1585; Greece and Eretz Yisrael) writes: If one studies Torah, it is as if he has fulfilled the commandments he is studying. It follows that, if one does *not* study a particular section of the Torah, it is as if he has transgressed those commandments. (Bet Elokim: Sha'ar Ha'teshuvah ch.9)

"The kohen who performs [the] sin-offering service shall eat it." (6:19)

Rashi z"l comments: Only a kohen who was fit to perform the service, i.e., he was not tamei, at the time of the sprinkling of the blood, may eat from that particular sacrifice. However, the verse cannot

mean that only the kohen who performs the service for a particular sacrifice may eat of the sacrifice, for we read below (verse 22), "Every male from among the kohanim may eat it."

R' Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin z"l (1816-1893; Volozhin, Russia) asks: Why then does the Torah imply that only the kohen who sprinkled the blood may eat of the sacrifice? He answers: The Torah is teaching that that particular kohen has a greater duty to eat from the sacrifice. Why? Because one who begins a mitzvah should see it through to its conclusion. And, since our Sages say that the one who brings a sacrifice attains atonement when the kohanim eat of it, the eating is an important part of the mitzvah. (Ha'emek Davar)

"Gather the entire assembly to the entrance of the Ohel Mo'ed / Tent of Meeting." (8:3)

Miraculously, hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people were able to gather at the entrance to the Ohel Mo'ed, a space that was approximately 40 feet wide. As Rashi z"l comments: "This is one of the instances where the lesser held within it the greater."

R' Yerucham Levovitz z"l (mashgiach ruchani of the Mir Yeshiva; died 1936) explains Rashi's comment. The midrash which Rashi quotes does not mean that a large group of people *crowded* into a small space. Rather, the miracle that occurred was that the space was not small. Indeed, space is meaningless to G-d. As the Gemara (Ta'anit 25a) says in another context, "He who said that oil should burn and give light can just as well make vinegar burn and give light." He who enabled 600,000 people to fit comfortably in a large space can just as easily make 600,000 people fit comfortably in a "small" space. (Da'at Torah p.37)

"Moshe took the breast [of the ram] and waved it as a wave-service before Hashem; from the ram of the dedication it was a portion for Moshe, as Hashem had commanded Moshe." (8:29)

R' Akiva Yosef Schlesinger z"l (1835-1922; rabbi in Hungary and Yerushalayim) asks regarding the phrase: "it was a portion for Moshe" - did Moshe, who three times went without food or drink for 40 days, consider such a large piece of meat to be a "portion"?

He answers: It was Moshe's love of mitzvot that made him eager to eat from the sacrifice. In a related vein, we find that kohanim in the Bet Hamikdash often received only very small morsels from the sacrifices (see Pesachim 3b), yet they eagerly recited blessings over those pieces. Likewise, we recite blessings over matzah and maror [which may not be particularly appetizing] because eating them is a mitzvah. And, over the korban Pesach, from which each person receives only a k'zayit/ a small share the size of an olive, we will even recite Hallel / songs of praise to G-d. (Torat Yechiel)

Memoirs

R' Yaakov Halevi Lifschutz z"l (1838-1921) was the long-time secretary to R' Yitzchak Elchanan Spektor z"l (1817-1896; rabbi of Kovno), who was one of the leading halachic authorities of the second half of the 19th century as well as a spokesman and lobbyist for Russian Jewry in the Czar's court. Through his position, R' Lifschutz was a witness to, and a participant in, many important events of that era. His memoirs are entitled "Zichron Yaakov."

[R' Lifschutz continues his introductory overview of Jewish history. He writes:] Over these last 2,000 years, since Yisrael was exiled from its land and ceased to be an independent kingdom or political entity, many mighty nations and kingdoms have been destroyed and forgotten, while immortal Yisrael is alive and well. Why? Because its existence is dependent only on its Torah and its religion. Before the destruction of the First Temple, Hashem, in His eternal wisdom, prepared the way for the Torah scholars--"he'charash v'ha'masger" (literally, "the craftsmen and smiths"--Melachim II 24:14)--to be exiled before the other exiles so that they would plant the tree of Torah in Bavel (Babylon). Similarly, before the destruction of the Second Temple, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai succeeded in saving Yavneh and its wise men and the dynasty of Rabban Gamliel. At the end of the Geonic period [approximately 1000 C.E.], when the yeshivot of Bavel (Iraq) were destroyed, Providence prepared the "Captive Rabbis" [who were on a ship hijacked by pirates and who were redeemed by different communities around the Mediterranean Sea, thus spreading Torah knowledge]. Thus, the nation of Yisrael continued to exist on its eternal foundations and pillars--Torah and mitzvot--which no enemy could defeat, as our long history testified. The great yeshivot [of Bavel] in Nehardea, Sura, Pumbedita, etc. were the royalty of Yisrael. We find that our Sages (Berachot 64a) described leadership of the yeshiva as royalty--"Rabbah reigned for 22 years," "Rav Yosef reigned for two years." . . . Many spiritual storms and gales passed over our nation in each generation and era, some of which left many casualties and some of which breathed new life into us and brought much good. For example, the episode of the Karaite sect took many casualties and led to an irreparable schism, but it also brought a blessing to the House of Yisrael in the form of a rich literature written to defend our nation and our Torah from destructive groups, including Emunot V'deot of Rabbeinu Saadiah Gaon z"l (892-942) and both the first and second Kuzari [by R' Yehuda Halevi z"l (1075-1141) and R' David Neito z"l (1654-1728), respectively].

The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page.

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