



INSIDE SHEMINI ATZERES

In the future, the *goyim* will rise to a higher level and they will reach their *tikkun*. However, even when the *goyim* become fixed and purified, *Klal Yisrael* will still be more prominent than the *goyim*.

This is the secret behind *Shemini Atzeres*. The *Midrash* states that on *Shemini Atzeres*, Hashem tells us, "Stay with Me one more day." The deeper meaning of this is because on the 7th day of *Succos*, throughout all the 70 *korbonos* brought which would atone for the nations of the world, we unify the *goyim* with *Klal Yisrael* and we give them a *tikkun*, and when the 7 days of *Succos* are over, a higher level comes: *Shemini Atzeres*, which contains the power of *Simchas Torah*.

There are two kinds of *simchah* (joy) found in the month of *Tishrei*. On Yom Kippur, we received the second pair of *Luchos*, which can be considered to be a degree of *Simchas Torah* to us. And we also have the actual *Simchas Torah* that is on *Shemini Atzeres*. So there are two kinds of *Simchas Torah* that we have in *Tishrei*. What is the difference between these two kinds of "Simchas Torah" in *Tishrei*? The *Simchas Torah* that we have on Yom Kippur was that the second *Luchos* fixed the *cheit ha'Eigel* (the sin with the golden calf), but the *Simchas Torah* that is on *Shemini Atzeres* comes after *Hoshanah Rabbah*, after we have been sealed in with the "*chotam b'toch chotam*", the "seal within a seal" – in which we reach the level that is beyond any possibility of *cheit*. Chazal said, "Praiseworthy is the one who never sinned" – this refers to the very special inner light, the original light that was around before Creation, the point in our soul in which there is no possibility of sin. The revelation of this point is on *Shemini Atzeres*, after we have

the "*chotam b'toch chotam*" of *Hoshanah Rabbah*. It calls for a newer level of *Simchas Torah* that is even more joyous than the Torah we received on Yom Kippur.

The *simchah* that we have on *Simchas Torah* is called a "*simcha l'gomrah shel Torah*", a joy upon completing the Torah. When we make a blessing in the morning to learn the Torah, we ask Hashem, "*V'haarev na*", that Hashem should make the words of Torah sweet to us. The sweetness of Torah learning, which is called "*areivus*", is especially what can counter the impure influences of the *Erev Rav* in the final days [a *tumah* that appears to be 'sweet' and tantalizing which appears to offer us so much, but which leads a person into destruction].

On *Simchas Torah/Shemini Atzeres*, the light becomes revealed which there is a point of no sin, thus, it is the time where we make a *simchah* over the completion of the Torah. After *Hoshanah Rabbah*, we can come to the level of *Simchas Torah*. The *Shemini Atzeres* we have in today's times is a lower kind of "*shemini*", for on the eighth day there is a *bris*, which removes the impure *orlah* from a person. But the perfect level of *Succos* [which will be in the future] is to have a kind of *Shemini Atzeres* in which the concept of *shemini* is not about removing *orlah*, it is not for the purpose of simply removing *tumah*. It will be the true level of "*shemini*", which reveals the "*gomrah shel Torah*". The "*shemini*" of the future will be about this completion of the Torah. Of the future, it is written [in the Shabbos *Zemiros*] that "*Sasson and simchah* (joy and happiness) will remove all *yagon* and *anachah* (worry and groans)." The word *sameich* (being joyous) has the same letters as the word *chamesh*, which means "five", hinting to the deep level of *simchah* which can counter the "five" groups of *Erev Rav* (see *Gra Tikkunei HaZo-*

har 41a, and *sefer Even Shelaimah* 11:6).

This will not just be *sasson*, a deep joy, it will be the original heavenly light, the light of *Shmini*, 8, preceded Creation. The Sages revealed that Shabbos is really the eighth day, because there was a Shabbos that came before the world. This was not a Shabbos in the sense of resting from work, for there was no work then. It was a deeper kind of Shabbos. The Shabbos that came before the world (and which will return in the future) is the level of *Hoshanah Rabbah*, which is a festival that doesn't require any abstaining from work. The root of this is before creation, in which there was no *melachah* yet. That power is what will rectify the entire world in the future.

Klal Yisrael is essentially that power that preceded the world. It is *Klal Yisrael* in the future that will repair all the other nations. Thus, even though all the nations will be perfected in the future, the nation of *Yisrael* will still be above them. In the future, *Shemini Atzeres* will reveal that even in the future when there will be no possibility of sin, the nation of *Yisrael* is still superior to the other nations. For on *Shemini Atzeres*, Hashem requests of *Klal Yisrael*, "Stay with Me one more day". It is the day after *Succos* ends, after we have repaired the *goyim*, where now *Klal Yisrael* can be alone in their union with Hashem. When the perfected level of *Shemini Atzeres* comes in the future, it will revealed the perfect level of **ישראל ואורייתא וקודשא בריך הוא** **הוא** "Yisrael, the Torah, and Hashem are all **one**." There will a perfect level of *simchah* on *Succos*, followed by the ultimate "completion of the Torah" that will take place in the *Shemini Atzeres* of the future, where it will be revealed that only *Klal Yisrael* is truly "one" with the Torah and with Hashem. (סוכות.038.הושענא.רבה.תשע"ד)

PNIMIYUS ON SIMCHAS TORAH

We see from the Torah and from the words of *Chazal* that we all have times in which we must drink. On *Yom Tov*, we have a *mitzvah* to drink a *reviis* of wine; on Pesach, we drink the Four Cups, and on Purim, we have a *mitzvah* to drink until *ad d'lo yoda*. These are the specific times of the year in which we drink alcoholic beverages. In previous generations, when our ancestors lived in the colder countries of the world - such as Europe - they were very accustomed to drinking [to warm their bodies]. Therefore, because they were accustomed to drinking, many of us carry on their *minhag* to drink, and this also includes eating certain kinds of meat and fish that they ate. There all kinds of *minhagim* like this. But in our times, drinking has gotten out of hand. Anyone familiar with the situation today is well aware of how the *minhag* to drink has become so extreme and abused. Much of the drinking these days, especially in the last couple of years, has gotten way overboard, and it has nothing to do with keeping the *Halachah* of drinking on *Yom Tov* or with the *minhag* of our ancestors to drink alcoholic beverages. Unfortunately, *Simchas Torah* today has become like 'Purim' to many young people. People are spending tons of money so they can be able to drink alcohol at different opportunities. It has become 'acceptable' for people to sit and drink alcoholic beverages together. There are whole sections of the supermarket just for alcoholic beverages, and it is not being sold to people who need to have enough to drink "a *reviis* of wine" for Shabbos. It is being sold to many people who simply drink for the sake of drinking. And it is a very painful reality. We can all recognize people whose entire *Simchas Torah* is about getting drunk, and it has nothing to do with wanting to fulfill any *mitzvah*.

There is a kind of desire for drinking that stems from the *yesod aish*, from the element of "fire" in the soul which seeks excitement and passion, but which also

can come from feeling dried up inside, just like a lot of heat of fire will dry something out. A person seeks to drink because he is seized with a feeling of inner emptiness. Sometimes a person wants this for temporary relief, which is not as much as an issue, but sometimes a person will form a desire to drink on a regular and more permanent basis, meaning that he regularly feels empty inside, and this is a problem. Drinking has become a staple of life to this kind of person. This is a particular problem that has become dominant in our current generation, in which many people are feeling empty all the time, and not just every once in a while - people are feeling empty on a regular basis and are seeking to relieve this emptiness they keep feeling.

A few people are truly immersed in Torah, *kedushah* and good *middos*. Their Torah learning fills the void of the *ne-shamah* and they don't feel empty inside, because they are deeply satisfied within themselves. But sadly, most people, even in the world of Torah, can feel an ongoing inner emptiness in their life. That is why there is a very big pursuit of physical gratification in this generation, and a desire to drink on a regular basis. When a person pursues the desire for drinking on a regular basis, the person is really disconnecting from himself. Some people are only drinking because they are influenced by their surroundings that are into drinking, but most people who drink are drinking because they keep feeling an inner emptiness in their life and they want to fill that painful emptiness.

The desire for drinking is affecting even people who keep Torah and mitzvos - that is, those whose Torah learning hasn't yet penetrated into their being. Therefore, they feel an inner emptiness from their life. The addiction to drinking can therefore be present even in a boy in *Yeshiva* who is smart and brilliant in his Torah learning, because he can still feel very empty inside himself from having any real inner content. His heart might be empty, even though his brain works very well and he knows how to

learn Torah very well.

Let us point out that the desire for addictive drinking has come into the Torah world from the outside world. It did not originate from within the Torah world. It has now recently entered the Torah world, and it is a painful reality that will be here until *Moshiach* comes. When a *frum* person who learns Torah and keeps mitzvos is addicted to drinking, the problem will not be solved by simply trying to slowly pull away from the desire in steps (as it was explained in the previous chapter). This is because it doesn't solve the ongoing inner emptiness that he is feeling.

Since the source of the problem is that the person feels empty in his life, we will need to show him how he can **build his *pnimiyus*** (inner world). This is a vast subject, but generally speaking, building one's *pnimiyus* will involve three things. (1) One needs to exert his mind in Torah (which he is already doing, and he must keep doing that), (2) and he needs to be willing to really work on his *middos*, and (3) he needs to begin to put his heart into what he does. With these three conditions met, one is building his *pnimiyus*, developing a rich inner world of his own, which will deeply satisfy him. (ארבעת דיוטין. 010)

...The truth is that every person is able to feel empty sometimes, but most people never become consciously aware of it, so they aren't aware how empty they feel deep down. If a person does get some subconscious feeling of it, he will probably get busy with some activity that takes his mind off this feeling of emptiness, so that he shouldn't have to feel the emptiness. Those who do feel their inner emptiness, in most cases, are terribly depressed. In rare instances, a person is very truthful with himself and he discovers this emptiness. How does he discover it? Because it is screaming out to us from every corner of the world! One does not have to sink to very low levels to feel it. We can feel it as a result of our very existence on this world, which is an empty

place to be in, because we are living on a world that doesn't pursue Hashem but their own gratification.

A person should contemplate the truth, that indeed, this world is truly empty. When you feel the emptiness, you can fill its emptiness with reminding yourself of "Ain Od Milvado ("There is nothing besides Hashem") - even in the *chalal* (empty space) of the world." From there, you can connect yourself to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, to Torah, to the *neshamos* of the Jewish people & to your own *neshamah*. (תיקון.בכ.הריכז.ס"ו)

Q&A - SHMINI ATZERES

QUESTION The *Sfas Emes* says that Shmini Atzeres corresponds to Yosef. In another place he says it corresponds to Dovid, and in another place he says it corresponds to Moshe. How do we reconcile this? **ANSWER** Shmini Atzeres corresponds to Yosef because it is the added day onto the festival, for Hashem says "Stay with Me one more day", and the *sefarim hakedoshim* refer to Yosef as the *tosefes*, the "additional holiness" upon the *Avos*. Shemini Atzeres also corresponds to Dovid, because Dovid is the all-inclusive soul of Klal Yisrael, and **Shemini Atzeres holds within it all the other revelations of every festival** that came before it and contains it all within it. Shemini Atzeres also corresponds to Moshe, because it is the day of Simchas Torah, and Moshe gave us the *Toras Hashem Temimah*, the Torah of Hashem which is perfect. **QUESTION** The Midrash says that the *aravos* correspond to the *reshaim*, and their *tikkun* is to be taken together in one *agudah* (bundle) with the other species [the lulav and esrog and hadassim, who are compared to *tzaddikim* (the esrog) and people who have good deeds (hadassim) or Torah learning (the lulav), and by being joined together] they "atone" for the *aravos* - the *reshaim*. Since the other species correspond to *tzaddikim* (on varying levels), especially the *esrog*, can we deduce from this Midrash that the *tikkun* for the *reshaim* is to become connected with the *tzaddikim*, and even more so, to connect to the personal "tzaddik" that is within every Jew's soul, the "Yechidah" level of the soul,

that pure place inside of us which never sins and is always connected to Hashem - and if that's correct, can we take this insight further and say that the way to be saved in this generation [if we are on the level of *reshaim*, *chas v'shalom*] is to become connected to *tzaddikim*? **ANSWER** That is a good insight, but even more so, we know that after the *arba minim* (4 species) of Succos comes Shmini Atzeres in which there is no *arba minim*, in which Hashem says "Stay with Me one day", and **this high level of closeness of Hashem available on Shmini Atzeres doesn't require the *arba minim*** [Thus there is a deeper level than Succos, which is the level of connecting to the *tzaddikim*. And that is Shmini Atzeres, where we can connect to Hashem directly with no intermediary in between]. Understand this.

Q&A - TORAH

QUESTION I understand that most of one's time to himself should be spent on learning Gemara *b'iyun* (with some time also to learn *halachah* and on learn about *avodas Hashem*), but the problem is that I don't enjoy my learning that much, so it doesn't feel how my learning is making me closer to Hashem.

ANSWER: If you just close your Gemara at the end of your *seder* and you come back the next day to your Gemara to 'get back into it' again, then I agree with you that you won't find learning Gemara enjoyable. You keep splitting apart your learning, and there is a constant interruption in your learning like this, because in the way you are going about your learning, you aren't thinking about what you're learning throughout the course of the day. Instead, **prepare for yourself a question in your learning to think about during the day** - for example, throughout the day, contemplate something you learned about in the Gemara. This will give you a taste of enjoyment in your learning. Experience with this shows that it is a tried-and-tested solution to give you enjoyment in learning. There are also other methods of advice too which can help, but the question one must first ask himself is if he's willing to even start.

QUESTION Is there some way for me to feel *chiyus* in my learning?

ANSWER Think that you are standing at the foot of Har Sinai, together with the rest of the Jewish people, and you are hearing the *possuk* being called out from Heaven.

QUESTION Whenever I begin to learn I start off excited, but slowly my excitement goes away until I lose the whole thing. Then my learning eventually peters out and I don't get anywhere. What is the reason for this and how can I solve this issue? **ANSWER** **Whenever you begin to learn, the main power you need to use is your *seichel*, your intellect, and not your *lev* (heart).** You need to enter into Torah learning with the abilities of logical thinking. In contrast, when [you start with excitement], you are starting from your heart [from a place of emotion], and this excitement will tend to weaken. You can certainly bring some of your heart into the process when you start your learning, but you mainly need to be applying your cold intellect. This is needed so that you can use your logical, rational mind to build the *sugya* you are learning, step by step. The more solid your foundation is when you start, by mainly using your *seichel*/intellect as opposed to starting off with your *lev*/heart, the more your Torah learning will last and succeed, with *siyata d'shmaya*. **QUESTION** I have a certain problem focusing when I'm sitting and learning in the *beis midrash*. Even when I'm very focused on the *sugya* I'm in middle of learning, I keep trying to discern where others are "holding", like trying to discern their level of *yiras shomayim*, etc. How can I become more focused when I'm learning in the *beis midrash* and to stop being "into" other people?

ANSWER There can be many reasons for this. But it seems that in your case, your focusing problems are coming from having a very emotional personality, which isn't balanced enough by the intellect. The imbalances in your emotions are awakening you to feel a sense of love and connection with other people, and this makes you constantly "leave" yourself and to try "entering" into other people.

This makes you want to discern their nature and their level. The more you balance your emotions with your intellect, to that extent you will become a more inward person, and you will be able to avoid going outward from yourself and trying to always connect to what's going on by other people. This will help you stay more focused on your learning and on your responsibility of learning Torah.

QUESTION Does one's daily learning sessions need to include learning *sugyos* of Gemara (*shmaatsa*), *halachah*, and *agadta*? Or does every person need to spend most his Torah learning sessions on difficult *sugyos* of Gemara? **ANSWER** This is a matter that is different with each person, and each person needs to find his unique *cheilek*, his own "share" in the Torah. For example, it is clear to anyone that Rav Shach's daily schedule of learning [which focused on *sugyos* of Gemara] did not look like the daily schedule of Rav Wolbe [who delved more into *agadta*]. And it is clear to anyone that the daily learning schedule of the Alter of Slobodka [who delved into *agadta*] did not look like the daily learning schedule of Rav Shimon Shkop [who focused on *sugyos* of Gemara]. **QUESTION** How can I make my learning more *lishmah*? **ANSWER**

Increasing *lishmah* is a gradual process. You can do it by getting used to learn even when you don't have *cheishek* (desire) or by reviewing Gemara when you don't feel like it, or by trying think more deeply into the Gemara even when you don't have the desire to concentrate that much right now. **QUESTION** The *Ramchal* says that when a person learns Torah *shelo lishmah*, he is ruining the upper worlds. Why then do people learn Torah *shelo lishmah*? **ANSWER** Hashem "first created worlds, and destroyed them". [These were the worlds called "*Tohu*" which didn't last and broke apart], until He created our world, the world of *Tikkun* (repair). This process is also reflected in people. There is a rule of *kelipah kodemes l'pri*, the "shell that comes before the fruit" – there is always an incomplete level which must become before a person can grow higher and more complete. And Chazal said that "Words of Torah are not acquired unless a person first stumbles in it." [However, even

though that is true, a person must make sure that everything he does is within the bounds of *halachah* and he is not allowed to let himself deliberately stumble, *chas v'shalom*]. **QUESTION** It seems that the *Litvish* path of *avodas Hashem* is to just learn Torah all day and not be involved with trying to study what *yiras Hashem* and *ahavas Hashem* is. Is that a *derech* of *avodas Hashem*? **ANSWER** I don't know of such a *derech* in *avodas Hashem*. Only those who truly learn Torah *lishmah* can be *zocheh* to everything by "just" learning Torah all day. **QUESTION** How do we reach our purpose in life? Does it depend on using one's personal and unique capabilities that Hashem gave him? Or does it depend on simply knowing the words of Chazal about this subject, and directing ourselves towards it? **ANSWER** In the words of our Sages and *sefarim hakedoshim*, we find many different views about what exactly the "purpose of life" is. We can simply understand it as another argument of our Sages, as if it's an argument between Beis Hilel and Beis Shamai. But the true, deeper way to understand it is that all of our Sages agreed that the purpose of life is to become attached to the reality of Hashem, and this is called *d'veykus*. It is just that there are several ways to get to this closeness, and the issue was, where to put the emphasis. To be very general, there are three root paths, based on the three pillars of the world: Torah, *avodah* (prayer) and *gemilus chesed* (kindness). Some *neshamos* in Klal Yisrael mainly become close to Hashem through Torah, some mainly connect to Hashem through *tefillah*, and others are mainly connected to Hashem through *chessed*. **When it comes to how Klal Yisrael should act as a whole, though, it is learning Torah that must be the emphasis: the main way which Klal Yisrael connects to Hashem is through learning Torah.** (On a deeper level, even the pillars of *avodah* and *gemilus chassadim* are included in the path of learning Torah, because everything in the universe ultimately comes from the light of the Torah.) But when we deal with the 'branches' of our *avodah*, here there is a dispute in the words of our Sages about where to put the emphasis. We see that the sage Ben Azai and others would only learn Torah and do nothing

else. Abaye and Rava, though, were very involved with *chessed*; they were the ones that said that one should learn Torah and do *gemilus chesed* as well. The entire issue is: Which *levush* (garment) do we mainly 'wear' in order to attach ourselves to Hashem? The answer depends on each person's individual *shoresh neshamah* (soul root), and there is no sefer that can write the answer to this issue. If you do find a sefer that gives an answer, you should know that the answer is based on that author's personal *shoresh neshamah*. You can have a very holy author of a sefer, but that does not mean that everyone must follow his path, even if other great people agree that the author is holy and a 'reliable' teacher. Of course he is a 'reliable' person, we aren't questioning that. But he's 'reliable' only for those who share the same *shoresh neshamah* as he does. One needs much inner clarification, as well as a lot of *siyata d'shmaya* (heavenly assistance), in order to find the path that is meant for him to take. In any case, the goal of life is clear, according to all of our Sages and *tzaddikim*: **The purpose of life is to reach *d'veykus* with Hashem.** The only issue is, which particular *levush* (garment) of *d'veykus* one needs to use. It depends on each person's unique situation, and it needs a lot of hard work on one's part, in order to reach it.

This weekly Bilvavi parsha sheet is based on translations by talmidim from the divrei Torah of HaRav Itamar Schwartz, Shlit"a the author of the Bilvavi and DaEs series. The Rav attended the Pachad Yitzhak Yeshiva of Rav Yonasan David, Shlit"a and graduated from the Ponovitch Yeshiva of Rav Gershon Edelstein, Shlit"a. The earliest of more than 50 sefarim of the Rav where enthusiastically endorsed by Rav Gamliel Rabinovitch, Shlit"a, Rav Moshe Sternbuch, Shlit"a, Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlit"a, the Tolna Rebbe, Shlita, Rav Yitzchok Meyer Morgenstern, Shlit"a, Rav Moshe Mordechai Karp, Shlit"a, Rav Sherayah Deblitzki, z"l, Rav Chizkiyahu Erlanger, z"l, amongst others. Using an eclectic approach, the Rav's teachings speak to the hearts of Jews from all walks of life.