

The Sweetness of Torah

Everywhere we turn, there is discord and dissension—in the world at large as well as within the Orthodox community. *Chazal* inform us that God's covenant with the Jewish people was sealed with the Torah Shebe'al Peh—the Oral Law.

The recent completion of the entire Talmud by thousands of people of all ages reflects the unifying power of the Oral Law. For the Oral Law is not a fixed body of law; it is not a staid cistern but a gushing fount, ever replenishing and refreshing the minds and hearts of the Jewish people.

The astonishing creativity of the Torah Shebe'al Peh is a reflection of the awareness that Torah is the word of God and that the Jew is afforded the opportunity of contributing his share to the ever-expanding corpus. It is this partnership with Hakadosh Baruch Hu that produces supreme joy. At one of the *siyumim* Rabbi Nosson Tzvi Finkel, whose every moment is devoted to the dissemination of Torah, pointed out that all our efforts in spreading Torah can succeed only if we communicate the sweetness of Torah. As the Sochatshaver Gaon, *z"l*, demonstrates (in his introduction to *Eglei Tal*), the sheer joy and

pleasure of learning and producing fresh insights are an inherent part of the mitzvah of learning Torah.

Rav Aharon Kotler, *z"l*, poses a question: Why do we constantly recall the Exodus but have no comparable requirement for the receipt of the Torah at Sinai? He answers: The Exodus is over, and we need to recall it; the voice from Sinai never ceases—if we relate to it—and thus we need not recall it. Because the Sinai voice is ongoing, Hashem makes Himself accessible via our learning His Torah. In the words of the Chazon Ish, “When we toil in Torah, a new gate of light opens up, from which we derive infinite pleasure.”

The *siyumim* around the globe drew thousands of men and women. There was an electrifying feeling in the air. During one such program, which called for many speeches, there were many references to the Shoah and to the many, who with their last breaths, begged us not to be defeated, to remember them by starting anew. And then something that was not on the program happened: Just as the last words of the Talmud were uttered, the entire audience spontaneously burst into song and dance. Though there was no room to

“And Israel camped there before the mountain.”

(Exodus 19:2)

“As one person with one heart.”

(Rashi)

The Siyum HaShas at Madison Square Garden, New York.
Photo: Menachem Adelman

dance, the people somehow overcame. Every segment of Orthodoxy was represented in a startling demonstration of unity.

Much has been said in recent years about the need for greater spirituality. Such an event demonstrates that the greatest impetus for spirituality is the Torah itself, through which God speaks to man. The highest spiritual level the Jewish people ever attained was at Sinai, when they were as one. If only our estranged brethren can learn to taste the sweetness of Torah, there is hope that we will once again become as “one person with one heart.” **IA**

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Continental Airlines Arena, New Jersey.
Photo: Moshe Yarmish