



Sicha Summary

Chelek 19 | Bracha | Simchas Torah

The Context:

The Previous Rebbe taught that the *Shehecheyanu* blessing we recite on the holiday of Simchas Torah is recited not just to thank G-d for, in the words of the blessing, enabling us “to reach this occasion,” but also to thank G-d for enabling us to complete the Torah once again. (*Sefer Hasichos 5705*, p. 55)

The Question:

The *Shehecheyanu* blessing is recited when we begin something new or partake of something for the first time in a year. But the obligation to study Torah has no beginning or end. The moment we conclude the Torah, we begin it again, because the obligation to study is constant. What “new” element in Torah warrants us making the *Shehecheyanu* blessing?

The Seed of the Explanation:

Because the Torah is G-d’s wisdom, it is infinite. Therefore, there are infinite levels of depth within Torah. Every year, when we finish learning the Torah, a new dimension of depth is available to us as we begin again. This opportunity for studying Torah with new eyes and a new depth warrants the *Shehecheyanu* blessing — thanking G-d for bringing us to yet another new experience in our study of Torah.

This is why we celebrate the renewal of Torah during the High Holiday season, and not on Shavuot, when the Torah was given. The Torah was given on Shavuot to perfectly righteous people. Subsequently, the people sinned. They repented and gained G-d’s forgiveness on Yom Kippur, and then they received the Second Tablets. The penitent is one who remakes

himself into a new person. Thus, following the transformational power of repentance on Yom Kippur, we are empowered to approach Torah study as new people, able to plumb new depths in the Torah.

The Question:

This explanation seems to apply only to unique Torah scholars who are able to find deeper and deeper depths within the Torah. How does this apply to business people and laymen who do not have the time or ability of scholars? What sort of “newness” do they experience in their Torah study?

The Preface to the Explanation:

In order to understand this, we need to gain clarity regarding the structure of the *Shehecheyanu* blessing itself.

What is the distinct meaning of each of the three phrases, “a) who has granted us life, b) sustained us, and c) enabled us to reach this occasion”?

And more fundamentally: How can a person thank G-d for granting him “life... to reach this occasion?” Most of life is spent in discomfort and pain. The moments of actual meaningful life, when a person is doing what they intrinsically want to be doing, are rare. How, then, can one thank G-d for a life that has been fraught with, or can devolve any moment into, frustration?

Torah, however, gives us the opportunity to infuse meaning and intentionality into every moment of our lives. Even when engaged in business, or necessary physical activity, a person can make these mundane moments “alive” with purpose by sanctifying them with Divine intention. Thus, with Torah, we can truthfully thank G-d for “granting us life,” because every moment of our lives can be filled with spiritual life.

The phrase, “sustained us,” refers to the physical body, while “life” can refer to abstract spiritual inspiration. We therefore thank G-d for giving us “life” that “sustains us,” meaning, spiritual purpose that elevates and infuses our physical bodies as well.

The final phrase, “enabled us,” can also be read as “caused us to toil,” meaning that G-d brought us here by dint of our own exhaustive efforts. True life and happiness is attained when a person finds spiritual purpose through their own efforts, not when it is gifted from Above.

When we recite the *Shehecheyanu* blessing, we thank G-d for giving us the opportunity to find true, constant spiritual purpose in our material lives through our own toil and effort.

The Explanation:

Upon completing the Torah on Simchas Torah, a new level of depth becomes available. For the Torah scholar, this means that he can apply himself to uncover this new dimension with his intellect. But for the majority of Jews, this means that there is a new energy available to create a meaningful, Torah-infused life.

The *Shehecheyanu* for the layperson on Simchas Torah expresses this joy: We have again been given the opportunity to exert ourselves in order to find ever deeper Divine purpose and meaning in our daily lives through the power of a renewed Torah.