



# Likkutei Sichos

Volume 19 | Simchas Torah

Light, Blessing, Success

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## 1.

### THREE GATES

In a talk delivered on Simchas Torah, the Previous Rebbe once said:<sup>1</sup>

“On Simchas Torah, the gates are open. The gate of *light*, the gate of *blessing*, and the gate of *success* are open. All the gates are open, and we acquire them {light, blessing, and success} through the Torah.”

The words of our Rebbeim are extremely precise. Since the {Previous} Rebbe specifies “the gate of light, the gate of blessing and the gate of success,” in particular, even though (he says in the very next words that) “**all** the gates are open,” this proves that the main accomplishment of Simchas Torah is that **these** three gates are open. We need to clarify the particular connection between these three gates and the Torah.

Furthermore, we need to clarify the following: As known,<sup>2</sup> the six days of Creation correspond to the six thousand years {of history before the messianic era}. Light was created on the first day — **before** the third day, which corresponds to the third millennium, when the Torah was given.<sup>3</sup> Seemingly, this proves that the “gate of light” is independent of the Torah.

The same applies to “the gate of blessing”: As known,<sup>4</sup> one reason that the Torah begins with the letter *beis* in the word “בראשית, in the beginning,” is because *beis* stands for ברכה, blessing. Since the idea of *blessing* existed at the beginning of Creation, why do we say that “the gate of blessing” is connected specifically with the Torah?

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<sup>1</sup> On the day of *Simchas Torah*, 5705 (*Sefer Hasichos* 5705, p. 59).

<sup>2</sup> Ramban and Bachayei on *Bereishis* 2:3; *Toras Chaim*, “*Shemos*,” 320b. {Each day of the week encapsulates a thousand years as it plays out during history. So the first day of Creation, its energy, and thus, what was created on that day are a template for the first thousand years, etc.}

<sup>3</sup> See Ramban and Bachayei on *Bereishis* 2:3; *Toras Chaim*, “*Shemos*,” 320b.

<sup>4</sup> *Jerusalem Talmud*, *Chagigah* 2:1.

The question is even stronger: Since the world was created in a **complete**<sup>5</sup> state, it turns out that the idea of *blessing* (to which the *beis* of “*bereishis*” alludes) already existed at Creation, {when the world was in} a state of **completion**. The same applies to *light*, and more so, in fact, since the light created on the first day was unlimited, as our Sages taught<sup>6</sup> that Adam peered (and could see) **from one end of the world to the other**.

Meaning, not only is the general existence of *light* and *blessing* not dependent solely on the Torah, but even the *light* and *blessing* in their most exquisite state were not dependent on the Torah. So, why do we say that we acquire them specifically through the Torah?

## 2.

### REAL PERFECTION

Perhaps we could answer that, true, Creation, per se, is perfect, from the perspective of created beings. This was the case even at its genesis, when the world was created in a **perfect** state. Nonetheless, because the perfection was limited, it wasn't truly perfect.

Therefore, we say that the gate of light and the gate of blessing are received through Torah, because when we say “light” and “blessing,” we mean the **true** light and blessing, as they are in their most perfect state, from the perspective of Hashem, Who is truly perfect. Therefore, they are received through Torah, for as known<sup>7</sup> — (the giving of) the Torah dismantled the partition between the higher and the lower worlds. And through the medium of the Torah, everything is received as they exist from supernally, from the perspective of the Creator.

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<sup>5</sup> *Bereishis Rabbah* 14:7, 13:3.

<sup>6</sup> *Chagigah* 12a; *Bereishis Rabbah* ch. 11, sec. 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Tanchuma*, “*Va'eira*,” sec. 15; *Shemos Rabbah*, ch. 12, sec. 3.

However, this explanation doesn't suffice:

(a) According to this, the main point is missing. Since the general idea of *light* and *blessing*, even in their complete form, exists without the Torah, it should have been emphasized that through the Torah, we acquire the *light* and *blessing* as they exist from the perspective of the Creator's perfection (or the like).

(b) The reason<sup>8</sup> that Simchas Torah is observed on (the second day of) Shemini Atzeres and not on the festival of Shavuos (when the Torah was given) is that the joy of Simchas Torah is associated with the Second Tablets (given on Yom Kippur), which were a "double comfort."<sup>9</sup>

Since the words, "we acquire them through the Torah" are preceded by "on **Simchas Torah** the gates are open," it is clear that the expression "through the Torah" refers to the Torah as it is connected with Simchas Torah, which refers to the higher state of the Torah attained with the giving of the Second Tablets.

Since this is the case, even if we say that reference to "the gate of light, etc." refers to the way these things are from the vantage point of the Creator's perfection, it would have sufficed to receive them through the Torah associated with the giving of the First Tablets. So why do we connect these things specifically with Simchas Torah?

### 3.

#### THREE ASPECTS TO SIMCHAS TORAH

We can understand this by first pointing out that there are three facets to Simchas Torah that correspond to the three gates (the gate of light, the gate of blessing, and the gate of success).

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<sup>8</sup> *Or HaTorah*, "Shemini Atzeres," p. 1779 ff.

<sup>9</sup> {*Iyov* 11:6.} *Shemos Rabbah*, sec. 46.

The second day of {every} Yom Tov has two facets: (a) the second day of Yom Tov is a result (and a continuation) of the first day; (b) the second day of Yom Tov {which was rabbinically instituted to be observed in the Diaspora} has an advantage over the first day, as “the statements of the Sages are more pleasant to me {than the wine of the Written Torah}.”<sup>10</sup>

This is true of the second day of every festival. Simchas Torah, however, has a third facet: As discussed several times,<sup>11</sup> this Yom Tov has its own name — *Simchas Torah*. This proves that (aside from it being the second day of Shemini Atzeres), it also has its **own** theme, the theme of Simchas Torah.

Just as is the case with the second day of Yom Tov, although it is only rabbinic, we say that on the contrary, for this very reason, it has an advantage over the first day {which is biblical} because the statements of the Sages are more pleasant to me than the words of Torah. The same would apply to the third facet {of Simchas Torah}. Although its observance is not at all obligatory, not even by the Sages, as it is only a custom [as the *Zohar* puts its:<sup>12</sup> “The Jewish people are **accustomed** to rejoice on this day and call it *Simchas Torah*”], however, because of this, there is an added advantage over the first two facets. As explained in many places,<sup>13</sup> a Jewish custom enjoys a special quality that a biblical or rabbinic mitzvah does not.

#### 4.

##### THE NAME SIMCHAS TORAH

The three previously mentioned facets are also found in the festival of Simchas Torah itself:

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<sup>10</sup> *Avodah Zarah* 35a (according to Rashi’s commentary there). {The Torah only mandates one festival day, while the second day is a rabbinic institution. The Talmud, paraphrased here, interprets a verse in *Shir HaShirim* to mean the institutions of the Sages enjoy a special sort of appreciation exceeding even those of the Written Law.}

<sup>11</sup> See *Likkutei Sichos*, vol. 9, p. 226 ff.

<sup>12</sup> *Zohar*, vol. 3, p. 256b.

<sup>13</sup> *Likkutei Torah*, “*Sukkos*,” 80c; *Siddur im Dach*, 269b.

The name “Simchas **Torah**” (the word “Torah” here being unqualified) shows that the joy is connected with the Torah **in general**, and the Torah in general was given with the First Tablets.

Nevertheless, (as discussed in Section 2) the reason that Simchas Torah was fixed on Shemini Atzeres (and not on Shavuot) is because the joy of Simchas Torah is linked (mainly) with the Second Tablets, and the Second Tablets are (in the Written Torah itself) considered analogous to the institutions of our Sages.<sup>14</sup>

And this idea of Simchas Torah itself — that Jews make Simchas Torah — is a Jewish custom. As the *Zohar* phrases it, “The Jewish people are **accustomed** to rejoice on this day....”

Since a Jewish custom reaches a loftier level than the Torah {commandments} and even loftier level than rabbinic institutions (as discussed in Section 3), the *Zohar* therefore says (in connection to the teaching that “the Jewish people are **accustomed**... call it Simchas Torah”): “And they crown the Torah scroll with its **crown**.” After (and through that which) the Jews observe their **custom** to “rejoice with it on this day,” they make a **crown** for the Torah. And the crown of Torah is loftier than the Torah, even loftier than the Torah as given with the Second Tablets (and the words of our Sages).

## 5.

EFFORT IS GREATER

The explanation: The reason that the Second Tablets are considered loftier than the first (“double comfort”) is because they were given as a result of the Jews’ *teshuvah*, and the root of Jewish souls is more sublime than the Torah.<sup>15</sup>

However, since the Second Tablets were also given from **Above** (it was the *avodah* of Jewish *teshuvah* that served as the **catalyst** for the giving of the

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<sup>14</sup> See *Shemos Rabbah*, sec. 46.

<sup>15</sup> *Bereishis Rabbah* 1:4.

Second Tablets, but the Second Tablets were, in fact, given from Above), the Second Tablets were also part of Torah (compared to which, the Jewish souls are loftier). But within Torah itself, the Second Tablets are considered a “double comfort” because they were given as a result of the *avodah* (of *teshuvah*) of the Jews.

The custom “for Jews to rejoice with it” {on Simchas Torah} is different, however, since this entire facet originates with the Jews. Therefore, the celebrations bring the **crown** of the Torah, which is **loftier** than the Torah, (even its level of “double comfort”).

## 6.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE RECIPIENT

This is also the connection between Simchas Torah and “the gate of light, the gate of blessing, and the gate of success,” because these three facets of Simchas Torah (Torah in general; the virtue of the Second Tablets; and the custom “to rejoice with it”) are analogous to “light,” “blessing,” and “success.”

Simply put, the difference between “light” and “blessing” is the following: When one person blesses another, the focus is on the person being **blessed**, that he should receive the substance of the blessing and the benefit from it. Light, on the other hand, is associated (not with the benefit of the recipient, but) with (the nature of) the **luminary**. That is why one of the properties of light is to shine **automatically**. Moreover, “the sun rests upon all of the world,”<sup>16</sup> even shining on a garbage heap, although the garbage heap derives no benefit from the light.

This is the connection between the First and Second Tablets, and the gate of light and the gate of blessing:<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Sanhedrin* 39a.

<sup>17</sup> **In general**, the first 26 generations (**prior** to the Giving of the Torah) were treated with the kindness of Hashem (*Pesachim* 118a) and there were no consequences. Hashem treated them like a generous man who gives to everyone even to those who don't deserve. At the giving of the Torah, things changed, and everything was meted out with a calculation [Like a blessing which its focus is on the betterment of the recipient.] But **more**

When the First Tablets were given, the emphasis was (primarily) on their being given from **Above** (and not so much that the **Jews** should [first] become listeners, striving to understand, absorb, and unite in a wondrous union [as happens when one understands and grasp concepts]<sup>18</sup> with the Torah). Therefore, the Jews (because of their situation), at the Giving of the Torah on Shavuot, could not grasp and absorb it. This is the reason that the First Tablets are associated with the “gate of light” — the import of light is (as we said) that the **luminary** shines.

The Second Tablets were markedly different. They were given as a result of the *avodah* of the Jews. The *teshuvah* of the Jews evoked a response from the Heavens, so to speak, that **they** should be given the tablets. This means that the Second Tablets underscore the point that the Jews should receive and absorb the Torah. For this reason, the Second Tablets are associated with the “gate of blessing,” where the focus is on the person being blessed — that **he** should receive the blessing.

Since “the final action is first in thought,”<sup>19</sup> the inner intent of shining light is for it to be **received**, absorbed, and united (deeply) with vessels.<sup>20</sup> Therefore, the Second Tablets were loftier than the First — serving as a “double comfort.”

## 7.

### THE END IS EVEN BETTER

The deeper explanation<sup>21</sup> of “the final action is first in thought” is (not that the desire of one’s initial thought is actualized in the final action, but) that the end, which is a result of the action — **following** the action — is rooted in “the beginning,” which precedes the thought even prior to the initial thought.

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**specifically**, even at the giving of the Torah there was a difference between the First Tablets and the Second Tablets, as will be explained in the main text.

<sup>18</sup> See *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 5.

<sup>19</sup> Text of the “*Lechah Dodi*” prayer in *Siddur*.

<sup>20</sup> *Hemshech 5672*, vol. 2, p. 1120.

<sup>21</sup> See *Toras Chaim*, beg. of *parshas Vayigash*; *Hemshech 5666*, p. 19ff.; *Hemshech 5672*, vol. 2, p. 1117ff.



And as the example given<sup>22</sup> of an artisan who accepts a job and his work turns out “exceptionally good... very successful.” It doesn’t mean that the artisan initially expected that his handiwork would be “a success,” because he couldn’t have known. He could only have undertaken to do the work “as best as he could in his trade.” Therefore, the fact that the work turned out (even better than he had anticipated —) “successful” was rooted in the “beginning” before the initial thought.

## 8.

### THAT IS REAL SUCCESS

Analogously, this applies to the idea, so to speak, of “success” Above (since everything in this world evolves from Above): The “home for Hashem” that Jews create by serving Hashem is “the absolute best... in a way of success” — even better, so to speak, than what was desired in the initial thought, as discussed above. Even though clearly, this itself (for the home to be “the absolute best”) was the intent of Creation from the outset, however, this {the final result} is the level of “beginning” that is more sublime than “thought.”

The explanation in brief (at least) is as follows: The ultimate purpose {of existence} is for Jews to make a home for Hashem in the lowest world through their own *avodah* — their own effort. Since Hashem’s desire for the worlds (including “the initial thought”) is linked with Creation and affects it, then **this** intent (that “Hashem desires to have a home in the lowest world” {specifically} through the *avodah* of Jews, and completely by their own effort) was not instilled into the “initial thought” of Creation. Rather, it remained hidden in the level of “beginning,” which is **loftier** than the “initial thought.” This was so the intent would not affect this world, and the home for Hashem would be accomplished **completely** by the *avodah* of Jews through their own power.

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<sup>22</sup> *Hemshech* 5672, vol. 2, p. 1123.

Now we can understand why, when Jews fulfill the (goal of the) intent that “Hashem desires, i.e., to have a home for Himself in the lowest world,” it happens with “**success**.” This is because this intent is too sublime to be drawn into a manifest will for the worlds, or even into the initial thought.

## 9.

### REAL SERVICE OF HASHEM

Even though the “home” created by Jews with their own abilities is accomplished by means of the *avodah* of Torah and mitzvos with all their details, it is most revealed when a Jew does a mitzvah for no particular reason **other than** because Hashem has “commanded us” to do so. (He does the mitzvah not for any tangential benefit that may accrue from its fulfillment.) As the famous expression goes: “Even if we were commanded to chop wood....”<sup>23</sup> The same applies to Jewish customs: They were not commanded from Above; therefore, they are **completely** a result of Jewish initiative.<sup>24</sup>

This means that the desire that Hashem has for the Jews to observe Jewish customs remains even more obscure than His desire for Torah and mitzvos in general, to the extent that there isn’t even a command to observe customs.

This is the (possible) explanation why it is by means of customs — “for Jews to celebrate joyously with it” — (it follows that) “they crown the Torah scroll with its crown,” because the crown of Torah is loftier than the Torah, even {the Torah that was given} with the Second Tablets.

Although the main emphasis of the Second Tablets was **receipt** of (the tablets and) the Torah by the Jews (as discussed in Section 6), since they were **given** from Above [similar to the idea of *blessing* — although its main point is

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<sup>23</sup> *Likkutei Torah*, “*Shelach*,” p. 40a.

<sup>24</sup> Perhaps this is the deeper reason why the Previous Rebbe revealed several customs. Certainly his intent was that these customs should be further publicized so that they would be {adopted and} practiced. Nonetheless, he publicized these customs only through a story, etc. {so that their acceptance and practice should come about through a person’s own initiative and *avodah*}.

the benefit derived by the one being blessed, the blessing still comes from the one conferring the blessing], the Second Tablets are still not in the realm of “final thought.” Accordingly, through them, only the Divine intent as it was drawn into the “initial thought” is fulfilled.

However, since Jews have a custom “to rejoice with it” — to rejoice with the Torah **after** it has already been given from Above — it is analogous to the idea of *success*, which is specifically in the level of “final thought” (following the action). This level apprehends the {Divine} intent behind “the beginning,” which is more sublime than “initial thought.”

## 10.

LETS ANSWER THE ORIGINAL QUESTION

In light of all that we have explained, the question above (in Section 1) becomes even greater. Since Simchas Torah accomplishes the idea of “success,” and the ideas of “light” and “blessing” were also inherent in the First Tablets (Shavuot) and in the Second Tablets (Yom Kippur), why did the Previous Rebbe say in his talk that also “the gate of light” and “the gate of blessing” are associated (specifically) with Simchas Torah?

We will understand this by first explaining why Jews (with their appropriate *avodah* and Torah study, i.e., with “toil”<sup>25</sup>) add to the Torah. In fact, Jews are even expected to **innovate** in Torah, “to expand it.”<sup>26</sup> This applies similarly to Jewish customs — Jewish customs are considered Torah.<sup>27</sup> And so it turns out that when Jews establish a custom, the Torah is augmented.

True, it makes sense to say this because the root of the Jewish soul is loftier than the Torah, so Jews can introduce a new concept into the Torah. But

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<sup>25</sup> {*Megillah* 6b.}

<sup>26</sup> *Zohar*, vol. 1, 12b; see *Iggeres Hakodesh*, epistle 26 (145a); Alter Rebbe’s *Hilchos Talmud Torah*, ch. 2, par. 2.

<sup>27</sup> See *Jerusalem Talmud*, *Pesachim* 4:1; *Tosafos* on *Menachos* 20b, s.v., “*nifsal*.”

this reason doesn't explain everything: How can the {new} concept (especially that which Jews innovate with a custom) become a **part of Torah**?

[In other words, not only are we obligated to **fulfill** the “decrees, ordinances and customs”<sup>28</sup> that the **Sages** have **innovated**, but they have become part of **Torah**.<sup>29</sup> As the saying goes concerning Jewish customs, as mentioned above (even those customs not established by “the Jewish High Court”):<sup>30</sup> “A Jewish custom is **Torah**.”]

The explanation:

The Torah has two aspects:<sup>31</sup> (a) the Torah expresses the wisdom and will of Hashem, and from this aspect (of wisdom and will), Torah has determined that there are matters that will be innovated by Jews; (b) “Torah and Hashem are one.”<sup>32</sup> Torah is rooted in His Essence, and on account of this aspect, the new idea **can** become a part of the Torah, as will be explained.

Since Hashem's intention is that Jews should innovate in Torah by their own effort (through which their root in His Essence is uncovered), therefore, after the Jews (through their innovations) bring about a diffusion of His Essence, they bring about a diffusion {of His Essence} into the Torah as well. [This is similar to the teaching in *Sefer HaBahir*<sup>33</sup> that King David “joined” the Torah to Hashem.] Then, the novel idea [both the “new ideas” that Jews derive from the Torah through their “toil,”<sup>34</sup> and also “the decrees, ordinances, and customs,” which Jews innovate] become a part of Torah.

Accordingly, we can also understand why in his talk, the Previous Rebbe said that (not only “the gate of success”, but) even “the gate of light” and “the gate of blessing” share a special connection with Simchas Torah, a custom that

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<sup>28</sup> See *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Mamrim*,” ch. 1, par. 2.

<sup>29</sup> See *Megillah* 19b.

<sup>30</sup> See *Jerusalem Talmud*, *Pesachim* 4:1.

<sup>31</sup> See the conclusion of *Maamar* “*Yechayeinu*” 5659.

<sup>32</sup> *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” the beg. of ch. 23, quoting *Zohar*.

<sup>33</sup> {Sec. 196.}

<sup>34</sup> See *Hemshech* 5666 (pp. 383, 393, et passim).

was put into practice by Jews, although “light” and “blessing” already exist in Torah fundamentally:

The ultimate point of “light” is that it openly illuminates all that lies within the “luminary,” even that which is inherently beyond the realm of what can be revealed. (A similar characteristic applies to “blessing.”)

Since the true crux of Torah is that “Torah and Hashem are all one,” it comes out that specifically on Simchas Torah — when Jews “crown the Torah scroll with its crown” and elicit and reveal the source of Torah the way it is rooted in His Essence — it is then that along with the “gate of *success*,” also the “gate of *light*” and “the gate of *blessing*” are perfectly revealed.

— Based on a talk delivered on Simchas Torah, 5730 (1969)