

SICHA SUMMARY

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 29

Bracha - Simchas Torah

The Context:

Parshas Vizos Habracha opens with the blessings given by Moshe to the Jewish people before he passed. As a preface to these blessings, Moshe first praises G-d and mentions the merits of the Jewish people, so that they are worthy of blessings.

Thus, Moshe says, “Indeed, You showed love for peoples; all his holy ones are in Your hand, for they let themselves be centered at Your feet, bearing Your utterances.” (Devarim 33:3)

Rashi interprets this (in his second explanation) as alluding to the persistence and dedication the Jewish people showed to G-d even as He allowed other nations to subjugate them.

“Indeed, You showed love for peoples — even when You displayed Your affection towards the nations of the world, showing them a smiling face, and You delivered Israel into their hands, still All his holy ones are in

Your hand. All Israel’s righteous and good people clung to You; they did not turn away from You, and You guarded them... And they gladly accepted Your decrees and Your laws. And these were their words:

The next verse famously continues, paraphrasing what these righteous individuals would say in the face of difficulty and oppression:

“The Torah that Moses commanded us is an inheritance for the congregation of Jacob. (Devarim 33:4)

Rashi comments: *The Torah that Moses commanded us is an inheritance for the congregation of Yaakov* — “We have taken hold of it, and we will not forsake it!”

Clearly, this echoes the sentiment of the previous verse, that the Jewish people will not relinquish the Torah even in the face of hardship.

The Question:

The verse uses the word “inheritance.” But the idea that we will not relinquish the Torah is compatible with the imagery of a gift given by G-d as well. In fact, with an

inheritance there is a greater risk that the inheritor does not value the item passed down and might forsake it. What, then, is the connection between “inheritance,” and “we have taken hold and will not forsake”?

The Explanation:

The word Rashi uses in Hebrew, **חֵירוּשׁ**, should not be understood as “taken hold” but as **חֵירוּשׁ**, meaning, an ancestral field which is passed down within a family. In parshas Behar we learned the law that an ancestral field never truly is lost from a family. Even if it is sold, it returns to the descendants in the Jubilee year.

Rashi means to explain that the inheritance we are describing here is like an ancestral field. The Torah can never truly be severed from a person. Even if their own ancestors became disconnected from the Torah, “giving away” their ancestral field, it will always remain connected to the person, and can always be reclaimed.

The Simchas Torah Connection:

This will allow us to understand a deeper thematic connection between this parshah and the time that is read, on Simchas Torah.

The reason for celebrating the Torah at this point in the calendar, and not during Shavuos, when the Torah was given, is because we are rejoicing over the giving of the second tablets, which were given on Yom Kippur after G-d accepted the repentance of the Jewish people.

But if we are commemorating the reconciliation of Yom Kippur, why do we mark this on Shemini Atzeres, the final day (in some respects) of Sukkos?

The Explanation:

The three biblical holidays of Pesach, Shavuos, and Sukkos reflect the agricultural cycle in the Land of Israel. Pesach is the holiday of the spring, when the crops have just begun to ripen but are not mature enough to be gathered in. Shavuos is the holiday of reaping, when the crop is ready to be cut from the trees and prepared for consumption. Sukkos is the holiday of ingathering, when the produce is brought into the home and fit to be consumed.

This is why the Torah uses the word “joy” three times in regards to Sukkos, once in regards to Shavuos, and not even once regarding Pesach. The joy is commensurate with how readily available is the produce of the fields. During Pesach, the future of the produce is unknown, at Shavuos, the joy can begin to be felt, and at Sukkos, the joy is revealed and complete.

But the same symbolism holds true eternally, even if we are not observing the agricultural milestones of the holidays. Spiritually speaking, Torah and mitzvos are our a. And the three holidays reflect three stages in our ripening, reaping, and gathering of this spiritual crop.

During Pesach, the Jewish people possessed only faith in G-d, which is the foundation

and seed of all future fruit. But that faith did not yet yield tangible fruit. On Shavuot, we received the Torah, but did not yet begin to fulfill it. By the time the calendar turns to Sukkot, we had ample time to accrue mitzvot and gather the produce of Torah into the home. Therefore, the joy is most intense on Sukkot.

Seemingly, however, between Shavuot and Sukkot there was a great rupture of the sin of the golden calf, hardly an example of bringing the produce into the home. Yet this does not diminish our connection to Torah during the time. On the contrary, because the Jewish people returned to G-d, they demonstrated that their connection with

Torah is so durable it can even withstand the burdens of this sin.

So, it was only after this display of resilience and connection of Yom Kippur that the joy of Sukkot could be fully manifest. After we emerged from Yom Kippur with a deeper ownership of Torah than before, then we can be confident that, indeed, the Torah is firmly in our homes.

Thus, we celebrate Simchas Torah after Yom Kippur at the end of Sukkot, because it is then when we finally come to the “end” of Torah, to the final truth, that the Torah is our ancestral inheritance; *“we have taken hold of it, and we will not forsake it.”*
