



Sweet Spirituality

A Yom Tov comes out on a particular day that an occurrence happened. For example on Pesach, we left Mitzrayim. On Shavuos, we received the Torah. So, why does Simchas Torah come out this time of year if nothing occurred at this juncture?

The Torah is naturally sweet as we say ומללו ומלה במתיקא כדובשא, the words of Torah are as sweet as honey (Askinu Seudasa on Shabbos day). Likewise, the Pasuk says מתוקים מדבש ונפת צופים, sweeter than honey and drippings from the combs (Tehillim 19:11).

If this is the case, why do we daven for the Torah to become sweet to us- in Birchas Hatorah- והערב נא- if it naturally is? Not only that, but we see that many do not feel that the Torah is sweet?

Let us imagine one who brushes his teeth in the morning and then drinks great tasting orange juice. He won't enjoy the orange juice because he has a different taste in his mouth. We too may have a different taste in our mouth (desires and the like) that prevents us from truly enjoying the taste of Torah. This explains why we request והערב נא as we should feel the sweetness of Torah.

This is comparable to a surgeon who performs surgery with dirty utensils. Even if he is a top surgeon the surgery won't be successful as tainted utensils produce tainted products. The same applies to spirituality as one can't expect to use his mouth for all types of prohibitions and then expect to feel the sweetness of Torah.

We cause the bitterness by sinning and creating barriers between us and Hashem. The analogy is given of one whom after a long journey is told to smell a special fragrance. Upon smelling it, he is repulsed. The man realizes that the fragrance smells fine rather he is the one who smells after the long journey. Smelling the fragrance after taking a shower, he realizes it is indeed a great smelling scent. The same is true of Torah as if it doesn't taste good to us it is because we smell.

This is the meaning in the Pasuk in מכם רק הוא מכם (Devarim 32:47)- if the Torah appears empty, it is מכם - because of you, meaning the deficiency is in you not in the Torah (See Yerushalmi Peah 1:1).

Many stories are told that illustrate the sweetness of Torah. When R' Chaim Shmulevitz suffered a stroke, the doctor told him that normally I would instruct a patient to rest and not to strain himself. However, the best therapy for you is to deliver your Torah lectures.

R' Baruch Ber Leibowitz expressed his love for Torah in these words: what can compare to my situation as I have the Ketzos, Shaagas Aryeh, R' Akiva Eiger waiting for me at my bedside. I can't wait to wash my hands and arise to my riches.

When the Gerrer Rebbe was ill, the doctor advised him to gain strength by getting more sleep. The Rebbe's response was that a Jew gets his strength from Torah and Tefila.

The fast of the 10th of Teves was over at 5 p.m. in New York. At midnight, the wife of R' Shmuel Birnbaum (1920-2008), Rosh Yeshiva of the Mir in Brooklyn, knocked on the door of his Shiur room and said you didn't break your fast yet, in addition to that you have a heart condition! He replied that really he was on his way home after the fast but then he thought of a question on the Gemara he was learning. As a result, he returned to his Shiur room and opened the Gemara thereby forgetting about the fast. Seven hours later he still hadn't broken his fast!

Due to the poverty of R' Tzadok Hakohen (1823-1900) when there was no candlelight, he didn't have light from where to learn. Since he had such diligence and love for Torah, he would go outside with his Gemara and learn by the moonlight (Introduction to his Sefer השרת).

R' Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz interpreted כל הנהנה מד"ת נוטל חייו מן העולם (Avos 4:7) as one who finds such pleasure in Torah, nothing else in the world can compare to it. The Ohr Hachaim (Devarim 26:11) tells us that if people would feel

the sweetness of Torah, they would go crazy and run after it and not give any importance to gold and silver because the Torah includes every good that there is in the world. The חלק ב (Beshalach, s.v. וישם) writes הש"ת הכניס כל העונג בדברי תורה, Hashem put all delight in the words of Torah.

When Rav Chaim Ozer's daughter died, he said לולי תורתך שעשעי אז אבדתי בעניי, if the Torah had not been my delight, I would have perished in my affliction (Tehillim 119:92). If not for the Torah, he would not have been able to overcome the tragedy.

The sweetness and enjoyment of Torah is shown to us in Hilchos Tisha Bav as one can't learn Torah then since it makes him happy (Orach Chaim 554:1).

The Chazon Ish once remarked that if non-Jews would know the joy we have when we learn Torah before Shacharis on Shabbos morning, they would convert just to have the opportunity to experience this bliss.

When R' Yechezkal Abramsky was sitting Shiva, he learned like regular. He said it is analogous to the prohibition of איסור רחיצה, washing on Tisha Bav as it is only forbidden if it is for pleasure - תענוג. However, if one has dirt on his hands, he can remove it on Tisha Bav (Orach Chaim 554:19). He applied this to his learning during Shiva as he reasoned it is not for pleasure that he was learning rather just to remove the pain of not learning that would be there otherwise (See the Shevet Hakhasi, Yoreh Deah, 321:4 and the Gesher Hachaim, p. 222, footnote 4.).

Simchas Torah follows Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur and Succos. That is, the revelation of the מלכות of Hashem (Rosh Hashana), a day of תשובה (Yom Kippur) and sitting in the צילה (Succos), the shadow of faith (Emor, Zohar). After experiencing that, we merit to break the barriers and be purified. So, only now, can we truly feel the sweetness of Torah. This is why it is called שמחת תורה since only now can we feel the true sweetness of Torah.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt

To join the thousands of recipients and receive these insights free on a weekly email, obtain previous articles, feedback, comments, suggestions (on how to spread the insights of this publication further, make it more appealing or anything else), to support or dedicate this publication which has been in six continents and over thirty-five countries, or if you know anyone who is interested in receiving these insights weekly, please contact the author, Rabbi Yehoshua Alt, at yalt3285@gmail.com. Thank you.

*לעילוי נשמת שמואל אביגדור
בן יצחק מאיר*

EXCITING NEWS:

The newly released Sefer, Fascinating Insights, is now available for purchase by sending an email to yalt3285@gmail.com or at <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08929ZCNM>.