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This issue is dedicated in memory of
Sandra G Lehman, ז"ל

DVAR TORAH THE HOLINESS FRAMEWORK

The Sfas Emes (Vayikra Parshat Emor, year 5655, p. 184) analyzes the fourth blessing of the Shemoneh Esrei, “**אתה קדוש** – You Are Holy” and thereby gives us a framework to begin thinking about kedushah, holiness, the lofty yet central concept that dominates Parshat Shavua and so much of Judaism.

Each of the three sections of that blessing, says the Sfas Emes, describes one of the three aspects of holiness.

1. **אתה קדוש – You are holy: This refers to God’s holiness**, for He is above all and the source of all holiness. As we say in Kedushah, “קדוש קדוש קדוש ה' צבאות מלא כל הארץ כבודו” – Holy, holy, holy is Hashem, the God of hosts, His honor fills the entire world.” Similarly, Parshat Kedoshim begins, “קדושים תהיו כי קדוש אני ה' אלקיכם” – Be holy, for I, Hashem your God, am holy.” Kedushah is a Divine quality.
2. **ושמך קדוש – And Your Name is holy: This refers to the Torah’s holiness**. The Torah is the medium whereby God enables His holiness to come down to the lower worlds. God contracted His holiness into the Torah. The Torah is also referred to as God’s Name in Birkot Hatorah, the daily blessings over the Torah, when we pray that we and our descendants will be **יודעי שמך**, those that know the Divine Name. The Ramban says this in his introduction to his commentary on the Chumash. “We also have a true tradition that the entire Torah is composed of Divine Names.”
3. **וקדושים בכל יום יהללוך סלה – And the holy ones praise you every day for eternity: This refers to the receivers of God’s holiness**. This includes the angels, who praise God’s holiness every day, and the people of Israel, who are able to tap into the holiness of the Torah. Through the Torah – learning it and living it – the people of Israel are able to sanctify themselves and access the Divine.

Shabbat gives us a special opportunity to access kedushah. Each one of the three meals of Shabbat relates to a different aspect of holiness. The second of two verses in the book of Yishayahu about Shabbat (58:14) tells of the great things that Shabbat will bring; the Zohar attaches one expression to each of the three Shabbat meals (listed here in the order of the Shabbat meals).

1. “**והרכבתוך על במתי ארץ**” – I will cause you to ride on the high places of the earth,” relating to Israel, the receivers of holiness, refers to the **night** meal.
2. “**אז תתענג על ה'**” – Then you will have pleasure with God,” relating to God’s own holiness, refers to the **day** meal.
3. “**והאכלתיך נחלת יעקב אביך**” – I will give to eat of the inheritance of Yaakov your father,” relating to the Torah (Yaakov, the man of truth’s inheritance), refers to **Seudah Shlishit**, the third meal.

The Sfas Emes not only gives us a framework for thinking about kedushah; he gives us two places where we can focus on accessing kedushah. Every day during the fourth blessing of the Shemoneh Esrei, and every Shabbat during the three Shabbat meals, we can focus on tapping into Divine holiness through the Torah.

SOURCE GUIDE: JOY AND TORAH

The days of Sefirat Haomer are devoted to personal change, repairing what we might have harmed, and purifying ourselves. This theme is incorporated into a prayer that appears in a number of early siddurim and many say after counting the Omer.

This dovetails with the custom the Rema (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 292:2) records, to learn Pirkei Avot during the summer months. We refer to the sixth chapter of Pirkei Avot as Perek Kinyan Torah, a baraita tacked on to the five chapters of Mishnah Avot. It includes a list of forty-eight things one should focus on in order to “acquire” Torah, שהתורה נקנית בהם. One of those forty-eight is joy, simchah.

This source guide collects the Maharal’s and Rav Chaim Volozhin’s comments about the special connection between joy and Torah, in addition to a number of related passages in the Gemara.

Acquiring Torah with Joy

Here is where joy appears in the baraita of Kinyan Torah:

1. Pirkei Avot 6:6 And the Torah is acquired through forty-eight things. They are: through learning, listening with the ear, formulating with the lips, understanding with the heart, with awe, fear, humility, joy , purity ...	אבות ו:ו ... והתורה נקנית בארבעים ושמונה דברים, ואלו הן, בתלמוד, בשמיעת האזן, בעריכת שפתים, בכינת הלב, באימה, בקרא, בענוה, בשמחה, בטהרה
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Why is it important to learn with joy?

Efficiency

Rav Chaim first explains that learning with joy is simply more efficient than learning with sadness:

2. Ruach Chaim on Avot 6:6 For a person who learns one hour with joy can learn much more than he will learn in a number of hours in sadness.	רוח חיים על אבות ו:ו כי הלומד בשמחה בשעה אחת ילמוד יותר הרבה ממה שילמוד בכמה שעות בעצבות.
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The Maharal goes in a similar direction:

3. Maharal Derech Hachaim 6:7 ... For because of the depth of the Torah one’s mind must be clear. And thus they said in Eiruvim 65a: Rav Nachman son of Yitzchak said “Torah learning requires clarity like a cool day.” The explanation is as follows: His mind must be clear like a day when a northerly breeze blows, where the day is exceedingly pure and clear. There is no need to prove this, for when a man’s head is clear his heart is open wide. In Shabbat 77b: Rav Ada found Rav Yehudah standing at the opening of his father-in-law’s house and saw that he was in a joyous mood and if he would ask him to reveal all the secrets of the universe he would have. You see that a mindset of joy is a great cause of learning Torah.	דרך החיים ו:ז כי לעומק התורה צריך שתהיה דעתו צלולה וכן אמרו בפרק הדר (עירובין ס"ה ע"א) אמר ר"נ בר יצחק שמעתא צריכא צלולתא כיומא דאסתנא, פי' שצריך שיהיה צלול בדעתו כיומא דמנשב בו רוח צפון שהיום הוא זך וצלול ביותר. ודבר זה אין צריך ראייה כי כאשר האדם דעתו צלולה לבו פתוח יותר, ובפרק המוציא (שבת ע"ז ע"ב) רב אדא אשכח לר' יהודה דהוה קאי אפתחא דבי חמוהי וחזית' דהוה בדיחא דעתיה ואי בעי מיני' כל חללא דעלמא הוה אמר לי' ע"כ. הרי לך כי בדיחת הדעת היא סבה גדולה לתלמוד תורה.
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Completion

The Maharal explains that not only is joy essential to learning Torah efficiently, but it is also the proper mindset for Torah learning. Joy is the appropriate inner environment for the Torah.

4. Maharal Derech Hachaim 6:7

For joy is a great character trait. For when a man is joyous he is in a state of wholeness, and through this he receives the Torah that brings man wholeness (completeness). But when a man is in pain he is deficient and cannot receive the Torah which is man's wholeness. The principle is: man is not fitting for this Divine wholeness, the Torah, unless he is joyous, which is wholeness of the soul. And when a man's soul is joyous then it is fitting to receive the wholeness of the Torah.

דרך החיים ו:ז

כי השמחה מדה גדולה כי כאשר האדם הוא בשמחה הוא בשלימות ועי"ז מקבל התורה שהיא שלימות האדם, וכאשר האדם בצער אז הוא בחסרון אין מקבל התורה שהיא שלימות האדם, כלל הדבר כי אין ראוי לאדם שלימות האלקי הזה היא התורה כ"א ע"י שמחה שהיא שלימות נפשי, וכאשר האדם נפשו בשמחה אז ראוי לקבל נפשו שלימות התורה.

See Netivot Olam, Chapter 4 of Netiv Hatorah, where he further develops this point. Joy is associated with wholeness and sadness with fragmentation. The Torah completes man, brings him wholeness, and receiving it requires a joyous environment. This idea illuminates a passage in Gemara Shabbat:

5. Shabbat 30b

... The Divine Presence does not rest on a person when he is in a state of sadness, laziness, laughing, lightheadedness, conversation, or idle chat – rather, when he is joyous over a mitzvah. For the verse says (Melachim II 3:15), "Now take me a musician, and when the musician played the hand of God was upon him (Elisha)." Rav Yehudah said: The same is true for Halachah. Rava said: The same is true for a good dream.

שבת ל:

... אין שכינה שורה לא מתוך עצבות ולא מתוך עצלות ולא מתוך שחוק ולא מתוך קלות ראש ולא מתוך שיחה ולא מתוך דברים בטלים אלא מתוך דבר שמחה של מצוה, שנאמר "ועתה קחו לי מנגן והיה כנגן המנגן ותהי עליו יד ה'." אמר רב יהודה: וכן לדבר הלכה. אמר רבא: וכן לחלום טוב ...

Joy is the appropriate inner state for wholeness and (see Netzach Yisrael Chapter 62) connectedness. In prophecy, Torah learning, and dreams (one sixtieth of prophecy – Berachot 57b) man is completed, made whole, through his connection with the Divine. The same is true for prayer (see Berachot 31a).

Plaything

Rav Chaim Volozhin adds another line to explain the joy-Torah connection:

6. Ruach Chaim on Avot 6:6

Furthermore, the Torah is the plaything of the Holy One, blessed be He, and he should be joyous about something as great as that.

רוח חיים על אבות ו:ו

וגם כי התורה היא שעשועים של הקב"ה צריך שישמח בדבר גדול כזה.

He refers here to Mishlei 8:30, "[The Torah says ...] I was His plaything every day, playing before Him at all times." The Torah is likened to God's beloved child, which He plays with constantly. The Torah is intimately connected with God, full of Divine secrets, that which He looked into and created the world. Being able to be involved with such a lofty thing – brings great joy.

We now have three approaches:

1. Joy is necessary to properly learn Torah; it allows one to think clearly, opens up the heart.
2. Joy is appropriate for Torah; for Torah brings with it wholeness and joy is the emotion of wholeness.
3. Learning Torah brings joy; for we are fortunate to be able to encounter God's beloved Torah.

EXCITED JEWISH CHILDREN BY RABBI YITZCHAK LERNER

Our parshah begins with a prohibition against the Kohanim becoming tamei, impure. It begins, “Say to the Kohanim the children of Aharon, and you should tell (literally, say) to them ...” (Vayikra 21:1). Rashi comments that the repetition of the words אמור, say, and אמרת, you should say, is meant to admonish adult Kohanim not to allow their children to become tamei.

Rav Moshe Feinstein, in the sefer Darash Moshe, asks, “Where is there any allusion in the verse to the Kohanim’s children?”

To answer this, Rav Moshe gives some child-rearing advice. He says that the attitude of “It’s hard to be a Jew – *s’iz shver tsu zayn a Yid*” but nevertheless I continue to do mitzvos – will not transmit well to the next generation. They may say – and history has proven in many cases that they actually did say – “**You** may want to commit even though it is hard, but **I** do not want to follow.”



Rabbi Yitzchak Lerner

On the other hand, if one’s attitude is, “It’s a privilege to be a Jew; what a great simchah it is to be a Jew; even though there are restrictions, we are always involved in avodas Hashem,” then children will naturally want to follow suit. Children want to see that what you are doing has tremendous meaning and joy in your life.

Said Rav Moshe: the idea of telling about the restrictions even to the children is based on the explanation of another repetition. The verse says, “Say to the Kohanim the children of Aharon.” Is it not obvious that only the children of Aharon are Kohanim?

Rav Moshe answers: First Hashem told them what is involved in being a Kohen. “Say to the Kohanim” all the laws, the details, and prohibitions. Then Moshe spoke with them in a way that would cause it to be passed down to the “children of Aharon.” He explained to the Kohanim the beauty, magnificence, and privilege of being a Kohen. With this approach the father will have the mitzvah and delight of being a Kohen even with all its restrictions, and his children will naturally be educated by it and want to follow it.

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