



KINDER TORAH

T"01

PARASHAS VIZOS HABRACHA

Dedicated in Loving Memory of our Father - Sholom Ben Shlomo Meir – Mr. Stanley Weiner z"l – By his Daughter and Son-in-Law

A SMALL FAMILY GATHERING

"Kinderlach, please come gather together in the Succah. We want to say farewell to our beloved Succah before the end of the *chag*."

"Abba, if today is the last day of Succos, then tomorrow is not Succos. Why is tomorrow called Shemini Atzeres – the eighth day? It sounds like it is a continuation – the eight day of Succos."

"That is a very astute question, Chaim. Shemini Atzeres is actually a completely separate holiday. When I make Kiddush tonight, I will b'ezras Hashem, say the *beracha shehecheyanu*. This *beracha* is only said on something new; therefore we see that Shemini Atzeres is a new holiday."

"Can you please explain the purpose of this holiday to us, Abba? Also, what is the connection between the holiness of the day, which is mentioned in the Torah, and the custom to finish reading the Sefer Torah, which originated in the time of the Gaonim?"

"Your scholarly questions reflect a real desire to understand the depth of this *chag*, Avi. Rav Chaim

Friedlander has a fascinating explanation of this very special day. It will answer all of your questions." "We can hardly wait, Abba."

"Rashi's commentary on the Chumash (Bamidbar 29:35) states, 'Stay with Me a little longer.' We have come close to our Father in Heaven for the months of Elul and Tishrei. We have gained immeasurably from this intimate relationship. Now the last *chag* is coming to a close. Hashem expresses His affection, 'It is difficult for Me to part with you. Stay one more day.' This request is compared to a King making a big feast for all of his servants. The last day he says to his most beloved subject, 'Make a small private meal so that I can enjoy your company.'" "Abba, how does a small private meal make it easier to part ways? And how does it show the King's love more than a big feast?"

"Excellent question, Shoshie. Let us compare the big feast to a wedding. The *baalei-simcha*, the parents of the *chossan* and *kallah*, invite all of their friends and family to a huge *seudah*. One of the purposes is to strengthen their connections with the friends and distant relatives. Contrast this with the small *seudas sheva berachos*. This is very often just for close family members. They do not need a big fancy meal to strengthen the love between them. They are already beloved, and get together to share the warmth of their relationship. Similarly, it is the intimacy of the small *seudah* of Shemini Atz-

eres that celebrates the great love between Hashem and His chosen nation."

"Wow, Abba. I never realized that Shemini Atzeres was such a special day. However, does this small *seudas preida* (meal of separation) really ease the sorrow of parting ways after so much time together? And what is the connection to finishing the Torah?"

"Leah, the answers to both of your questions are one. What forges that close intimate connection that we have with our Creator? The Torah. We say this every night in the evening prayers. 'With an eternal love You have loved the House of Israel. (Therefore) Torah and commandments, decrees and judgments You have taught us.' The Torah is the purpose of our life; it is the source of our connection to Hashem. He revealed His will to us, and therefore He delights (so to speak) in our learning and fulfilling it. Speaking and understanding the holy words of the Torah has a direct powerful influence from the Almighty onto our *neshamos* (souls). Therefore, the connection between

Shemini Atzeres and finishing the Torah is clear. By finishing the Torah with great celebration and *simcha*, we demonstrate our great love for Hashem by rejoicing with the very thing that brings us close to Him. It is clear that the *seudah* of Shemini Atzeres is not a *seudas preida* at all! Our Sages say, 'Yisrael, vi'Oraysa, vi'Kudshu Breech Hu, *chad hu* – Klal Yisrael, the Torah, and The Holy One, Blessed be He, are One! We cling to Hashem by learning His Torah! We finish it, and commit to learning it anew with a deeper understanding. This will forge a deeper connection between us and our Father in Heaven."

Kinderlach . . .

What a special day! Shemini Atzeres is the day when we gather everything that we have gained since Rosh Chodesh Elul, rejoice over it with the Torah, and use it to propel us into a revitalized, closer relationship with Hashem in the new year. See how much we can accomplish in this day! See how happy this day is! See how this day is full of a deep love between us and Hashem! Enjoy Shemini Atzeres, kinderlach. Enjoy your closeness to HaKadosh Boruch Hu.

YEDID HASHEM

"To Binyamin he (Moshe Rabbeinu) said, 'Yedid Hashem...'" (Devarim 33:12). What is this blessing of Yedid Hashem that the tribe of Binyamin received? The spelling of the word "yedid", *yud-daled-yud-daled*, reveals its meaning. The word "yad" (hand) is spelled *yud-daled*. "Yedid" is the word "hand" repeated

twice. A handshake, one hand clasping the other, is a sign of closeness between two people. Hand clasping hand; that is the symbol of the closeness to Hashem that Binyamin was blessed with.

The Sifrei expounds on this idea. Binyamin was dear to Hashem. We see that he was called *yedid*. The King has many people that He cherishes, however the *yedid* is the most beloved of all. There are six who are called *yedidim*...Yisrael are called *yedidim*. We, the Jewish people, have this special status of being beloved to Hashem.

Does this sound familiar? It should. The month of Elul is spelled *aleph-lamed-vuv-lamed*. Those letters form an acronym of the words of the verse, "Ani li'dodi v'dodi li" [I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine] (Shir HaShirim 6:3). The word "dodi" has the same root as "yedid" - beloved. Our Beloved One is Hashem. We are beloved to Him, and He is Beloved to us. This has been the theme of our Avodas Hashem since the beginning of the month of Elul. We are His *yedidim*; therefore, we have the opportunity to become very close to Him. The door is open. We only need to walk in. He will receive us with open arms. For every small step that we take closer to Hashem, He takes giant steps closer to us. For we are limited physical beings, and our steps are small. He is the Almighty, who has unlimited power to give. We have worked on becoming closer to Hashem through *teshuva*, *tefillah*, *mitzvos*, and celebration of the Holy Days, our appointed times with Him. These are not merely external actions, but ways to bring Hashem deep into our hearts. That is the true avodah.

Kinderlach . . .

Today is the last day - Shemini Atzeres. Today is the culmination of our special time with Hashem, which began on Rosh Chodesh Elul. Today we dance, sing, and rejoice with the Torah, Hashem's most precious gift to His most precious people. Today is our final chance to show our yedidus. The matter is identified by its ending. How will you "sign off" the Yemei Ratzon? Kinderlach, show Hashem how much you love Him, how you cannot bear to part with Him. End on a strong note today, and take the inspiration with you into the winter months ahead.

Parasha Questions:

- Where does the wealth of Yissacher and Zevulun come from? (Rashi 33:19)
- What was required of the tribes that lived on the borders of Eretz Yisrael? (Rashi 33:20)
- Which tribe had the most sons? (33:24 and Rashi)
- Who were the strongest nations in the world? (Rashi 33:27)

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