



MRS. LEAH FEINBERG

OU ISRAEL FACULTY

Torat Imecha
NACH YOMI

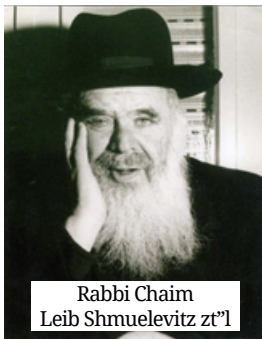
בס"ד

Relighting the Fire

In Chapter 29, Yeshayahu HaNavi castigates the people for performing mitzvot rotely, offering lip service without engaging their hearts. He terms this service "*Mitzvat Anashim Melumadah*" - learned behaviors, mimicked by their practitioners without understanding or intent.

Rav Chaim Shmulevitz zt"l taught that הרגל, habit, is the archenemy of sanctity and spiritual elevation. When a person stands before Hashem, lofty and exhilarated, he initially feels sparks of holy fire in his soul, but then along comes הרגל and extinguishes his excitement. "We've been down this road before, been there done that," argues the voice of habit, as we slide into the routine of the same words, the same actions performed day after day. The essence of man's *Avodah*, his service of Hashem, is to relight the fire of enthusiasm with which we perform the mitzvot, not to fall into the trap of מלומדה but to really think about what we're saying and doing, with the intent of drawing closer to Hashem through our service.¹

In instructing Moshe Rabbeinu regarding



Rabbi Chaim
Leib Shmulevitz zt"l

the *Hatzotzrot*, the silver trumpets blown in the Beit HaMikdash, the Torah teaches that they are to be blown in times of war and at times of rejoicing. Rav Avraham Schorr notes that the Rambam counts these two situations as one mitzvah, despite the fact that they appear in two separate *pesukim*. He explains this phenomenon in light of a verse in Sefer Tehillim: "חסד ומשפט אשירה לך" - In times of mercy and in times of judgment, I will sing to You." The trumpets, as musical instruments, are a form of song offered before Hashem. The intent of David HaMelech in this verse, explains HaRav Schorr, was to teach that both חסד and משפט, mercy and judgment, share the same underlying principle - Hashem is sending us a wake up call to rouse us from the state of habit in which we are rotely performing

the mitzvot. Whether we are celebrating a special simcha or experiencing a personal or national challenge, we must recognize that it's an opportunity to renew our close relationship with Hashem. This spiritual awakening is given expression through song, or the music of the *Hatzotzrot*.²

A story is told of the Ba'al Shem Tov, who on a freezing winter day, when icicles were hanging from every rooftop, went with his students to immerse in the mikveh. The Besht warmed the waters through supernatural means, and remained immersed for several hours, until the candle the students had brought with them

1. שיחות מוסר עמ' רפב-רפג

2. הללקו והלבוש תשס"ב פרשת בהעלותך

began to flicker and threaten to burn out. A student cried out to the Baal Shem Tov that the flame was about to be extinguished, and he responded, “Fool! Take an icicle and use it to relight the flame! He Who causes fuel to burn will cause the ice to burn.” The student did as he was told and the candle burst into flame, remaining lit for another two hours until the Besht emerged from the water and returned home. The story is told by Hasidim to illustrate that even a heart which is spiritually frozen can be warmed through the light of Torah and genuine service of Hashem. Even one who is distanced from Hashem, whether through estrangement or simply through habituation to religious observance, can relight the flame of enthusiasm in his service.

Rav Schorr, in the essay cited above, notes that today, in the era of *Ikveta d'Meshiha*, the era in which we hear the approaching

footsteps of Mashiah, many hearts are sealed off from apprehending Hashem in the world. We have experienced so much tragedy that we are inured to bad news, and we lack the silver trumpets of the Mikdash to wake us up and shatter our complacency. However, the inner meaning of the *Hatzotzrot* lives on in our memories, so that when we find ourselves threatened by war or rejoicing in our victories, we can experience these events as opportunities to awaken ourselves, to shake off the mode of *מלומדים מלומדים* and relight the fire of passion in our service of Hashem, bringing Mashiah closer with each passing day. ■

Mrs. Leah Feinberg is a master educator who taught at the SKA High School for Girls in Hewlett for twenty-one years, also serving as Tanach Department chairperson and New Teacher Mentor. Leah is currently on the faculty of the OU Israel Center and has taught in all three cycles of the OU Women's Initiative Nach Yomi program

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