

Strong Glue

"Oh no."
 "What happened?"
 "I broke this plate."
 "Maybe we can fix it. Let's have a look."
 "Here are two big pieces, which fit together on most of the broken spot. There are just a few gaps where the pieces do not fit."
 "I have some strong glue that can put this plate back together. Due to the gaps, weak glue cannot work. However, strong glue can overcome the gaps."

The Torah states, "[It is] the inheritance of the congregation of Yaakov" (Devarim 33:4). "When will the Torah be upheld?" asks the Baal HaTurim. "When the congregation of Yaakov is gathered together." The Ramban adds that the Torah describes the descendants of Yaakov as a congregation. We should congregate - gather together - to learn and teach Torah. Then it will be an eternal inheritance for us. Sometimes it seems so difficult to gather together. Where is the "strong glue" that once united people through thick and thin? In truth, we have much more in common than we realize. We are like the plate that almost fits together perfectly. Strong glue - a desire to focus on the similarities - will overcome our differences and hold us together. If we focus on the minor differences between us, we will never achieve unity. Weak glue will not hold this plate together.

*Kinderlach . . .
 Let us make some strong glue today. Simchas Torah is an excellent opportunity to strengthen our unity. Today we gather together and dance for hours on end with the Sifrei Torah. True, we may have differences with our family, friends, and neighbors in the Beit HaKinesset. Forget about the differences! Focus on the similarities! We are all good Jews who love Hashem and love each other deep in our hearts. We have all come to the Beit HaKinesset today to be happy together rejoicing over the Torah! Be happy! Enjoy your family, friends, and neighbors! What a beautiful way to stick together! Get stuck today, Kinderlach, with glue so strong that you will never come apart.*

Supernatural

"Have all of the passengers boarded the plane?"
 "Yes they have, sir."
 "Then let us prepare for take-off. Start the jet engines!"
The co-pilot pressed the "start" button on engine number one, and waited for the familiar whine of the jet turbine firing to life. A few seconds passed. The engine was silent.
 "There seems to be a problem, sir. Engine number one is not starting."
 "Try engine number two."

The co-pilot pressed the "start" button on engine number two. The plane remained silent.

"What shall we do sir?"
 "Try starting the other engines."

The co-pilot attempted to start engines three and four, but found them equally unresponsive.

"That's it. We'll have to inform the passengers and call in the maintenance crew to fix the problem."

The passengers slowly filed off the plane. The maintenance crew arrived and began to check the jet engines. One of them opened the fuel tank, and found it filled with a thick, black, smelly liquid.

"What is this?"
 "It looks like diesel fuel to me."
 "Diesel fuel? That is ridiculous! A jet engine cannot run on diesel fuel."
 "Perhaps that is why the engines did not start."

The fuel was checked out and found to be diesel fuel. The mighty jet plane, fastest vehicle on earth, sat paralyzed on the runway. Without the proper fuel, it was useless - slower than the proverbial turtle.

The verse states, "From His right hand He



presented the fiery Torah to them" (Devarim 33:2). What is the meaning of these words? The Gemora (Beitza 25:b) compares Klal Yisrael to fire. We are a nation that is "fired up" about life. The Gemora calls us the most powerful and boldest of all nations on earth. Therefore, it is only fitting that we receive Hashem's Torah, which is itself fire, as Rashi elaborates, "The Torah was written black fire on white fire" (Devarim 33:2).

Rav Yerucham of Mir has a long discourse, which explains the fiery nature of Klal Yisrael as being supernatural. We are a people that are not bound by the laws of nature. Even a casual glance at Jewish history will reveal that the Chosen People have survived every possible tragedy against all odds. We have soared to great heights under the impossible conditions. How? What is the key to our survival? The fiery Torah. When we are strong in our Torah learning and observance, no one can touch us. We prosper and blossom. However, when we weaken, we lose our Divine Protection - our super-

natural advantage. Then we fall to the lowest depths of persecution, suffering more than any other nation.

This concept is reflected beautifully in the verse, "See, I present before you today a blessing and a curse" (Devarim 11:26). The Sforno explains that there are only two options here - blessing and curse. These are both extremes. Blessing is prosperity over and above what is needed to live. Curse, on the other hand, is a lack of even the basic necessities of life. Where is the middle road? There is no middle road for Klal Yisrael. We do not live a comfortable low-keyed existence. We are either blessed, above and beyond the natural laws, or cursed down to the depths.

Therefore, the Jewish people can be compared to a jet plane, with the Torah as our jet fuel. When the plane is flying on the proper fuel, it is the fastest, most wondrous vehicle on the face of the earth. It travels in the air, above natural obstacles. However, just try to substitute another fuel, and the jet becomes paralyzed and useless. So too, the jet fuel that "fires our spiritual engine" is the fiery Torah - "aish daas". With it, we fly to the highest heights. Without the Torah, we are grounded, at the mercy of the elements.

Today is Shemini Atzeres/Simchas Torah, a day that has a supernatural character. Seven days are a complete cycle of time within the framework of nature. We see this reflected in the weekly cycle, the days of celebration of a chosson and kallah, and the days of mourning "shiva" after death. We also see it in the days that have just passed - Succos. The eighth day after that cycle is above nature. Today is Shemini Atzeres - the eighth day. How fitting that Am Yisrael - the supernatural nation, rejoices over the supernatural Torah, our key to life, on Shemini Atzeres - the supernatural day.

*Kinderlach . . .
 Today is a great day. Today we complete the Torah. We celebrate by dancing and singing with the Sifrei Torah, making seven hakafos (circuits) around the Beit HaKinesset. Dance with a great fire, kinderlach. Show that you are a member of the fiery nation - the greatest on earth. Hold and kiss that fiery Sefer Torah, kinderlach. It is our very life. Today is our private celebration with Hashem. Show Him how much you love Him and His Torah.*

- Parasha Questions:
- Why was Gad compared to a lion? (Rashi 33:20)
 - Why is Israel fortunate? (33:29 and Rashi)
 - What did the Bnei Levi have to do after Chet HaEgel? (Rashi 33:9)
 - Which was the only tribe that performed bris mila in the Midbar? (Rashi 33:9)