

From His right hand He presented the fiery Torah to them. (33:2)

Rashi explains that Hashem gave the Torah to Klal Yisrael amid fire and lightning. This mode of presentation carries great significance for the way we should study the Torah and for our level of commitment to it. Horav Elimelech, zl, m'Lizhensk comments that this spectacular manner of delivery was designed to impress upon the people that one must fulfill the Torah with the fire of fervor and self-sacrifice. This has been the legacy of Har Sinai – fire and self-sacrifice. Anything less than total commitment is no commitment. There are countless stories that demonstrate our People's devotion to the Torah. In light of the siyum, culmination of the Torah, I will relate a Simchas Torah story.

In the Hassag Camp of the Czestochowa Ghetto, the spoils taken from the Jewish inmates were kept under the guard of the SS. As impossible as it may seem, one man managed to penetrate the warehouse where a small Torah scroll was stored. He was the Jewish cobbler whom the Germans honored and even called, "der shuster-meister," the master shoemaker, for his excellence in his craft. Somehow, he got his hands on a Sefer Torah on the day that was Simchas Torah. Naturally, when he brought it in to camp, the inmates danced around it. After all, it was Simchas Torah, the day on which we celebrate with the Torah.

How did he do it, and why? The "why" was easy. He cared. It was Yom Tov. That they were interred in a dread Nazi concentration camp did not mean that they should renege on their obligations. It was Simchas Torah, and one is supposed to dance with the Torah. How did he manage to smuggle out an entire Torah scroll under the watchful eye of the Nazis? It was a small scroll, and the cobbler wrapped it tightly around his body. Miraculously, the guards did not notice it. Miracle of miracles! Furthermore, he did this as the Nazis were gathering all the scrolls to make a large bonfire and burn them.

The men placed the Torah between the boards of one of their beds. On Simchas Torah they made hakafos, walking around the bed. They were afraid to expose the Torah to public view, lest it be confiscated and destroyed. They did not fear for themselves; they feared for the Torah. They cared. Silently they sang, Sissu v'simchu b'simchas Torah, "Rejoice and be happy in the Torah's

rejoicing, for it is our strength and our light!" Eventually, this Torah made its way to Eretz Yisrael where it was placed in the Gerrer shtiebel in Bnei Brak. Mi k'amcha Yisrael, "Who is like Your nation, Yisrael?" From the fire of Sinai, through the fires of the Crusades, the pogroms and the Holocaust, we have not lost our fervor and our commitment.