

**Sparks**  
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**Simchat Torah: The Joy of Torah**

More than truth, Torah is a living encounter with G-d. The experience at Mt. Sinai was not only a revelation of G-d's truth, but more importantly, it was a revelation of G-d's love. Torah was and continues to be G-d's love letter to the Jewish people.

Imagine one day you receive a love letter. You are at work and eating lunch at the employee cafeteria, and someone drops a letter in front of you. You see that it's a letter from the one you love. Do you rip open the envelope and start to speed-read through the letter? No, of course you don't. You save this letter. You're going to read it in a very special place because this letter deserves more.

Now imagine you're in that special place. You open the letter carefully, you start to read your beloved's words and you actually begin to hear her voice. And then you feel her presence.

If you're anything like me, you'll read the letter over and over again, because you know there's much more to this letter. The first time you read it you get the simple meaning. But then you read it even more carefully. You notice that she tells you about the weather and then she starts talking about her mother. What's the connection, you wonder. You then read the letter again and now you see that there are hints in this letter. You pay attention not only to what she says, not only to the way she's structured her sentences, but you look at how she forms the very letters. Then you go over it again because you realize that it's even deeper than even that. There are secrets in the actual letters. Then you start looking for the deeper subtle meanings.

Once you've analyzed every nuance, you carefully refold the letter, place it in its envelope and tuck it away for safekeeping. You save this letter because you sense the presence of your beloved within the sheets of paper.

Now let's imagine that someone else is reading that letter. Is that person going to feel the presence of someone else's beloved? No. He'd just get the letter's simple meaning, the information. But for you it would be different. You wouldn't just be reading the letter, you'd get involved in it. And through your involvement with the words, nuances, and deeper meanings, you'd meet your beloved.

This, in essence, is learning Torah. Through our involvement with the text, we hear G-d's voice, feel the Divine presence and experience G-d's love. Getting involved in Torah is a living encounter with G-d—the Author.

To learn Torah, you have to get involved with its Author through the text. Other books, however, you can just read or study regardless of any relationship with the author. In fact, most of the time when you read a book you know next to nothing about the author and you are generally not so interested in getting to know him. You simply want the story, ideas, facts, and information contained in the book.

Torah knowledge is not just about amassing ideas and facts. To know Torah is to connect with the Author. The more involved we are with it, the better we get to know and connect with G-d—its author. G-d speaks to us through the text.

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