



From the desk of
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עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

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TORAT

Parashat Behaalotecha

HAMELECH

Aharon HaKohen and Pesach Sheini

As the *parashah* opens, we find Aharon HaKohen feeling bad that he did not participate in the *korbanot* which were brought at the inauguration of the *mishkan*. Hashem comforted him that he will light the menorah daily.

Without going into the details of how that specific job comforted him, let us focus, for now, upon Aharon's yearning to take part in the *chanukat habayit*.

Later on in the *parashah*, we find a group of men who were unable to bring the *Korban Pesach* in its time. They came to Moshe, expressing their disappointment. They had really wanted to be part of that mitzvah. They were granted a second chance: *Pesach Sheini*.

Mitzvot With Joy

Yearning for mitzvah opportunities displays appreciation for the mitzvah. So does joy for a mitzvah.

Rambam (Hilchot Lulav 8:15) teaches: The joy which a person has when doing a mitzvah and the love of the Almighty Who commanded the mitzvah, are great service to Hashem. One who refrains from expressing joy over mitzvot is

deserving of harsh punishment! The *tochachah* was "in response to this that you did not serve Hashem joyously and good-heartedly."

Berachot (9b) teaches that Rav Bruna is called an "Odom Gadol – Great Man" because he expressed joy at doing mitzvot.

Being happy over a mitzvah is itself a mitzvah, more important than the mitzvah itself! (Rabbeinu Bechaye, Kad HaKemach, Simcha). In Avot (4:2) we are taught: Reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah. Rav O. Bartenura expounds: The enjoyment one derives from doing a mitzvah is an additional mitzvah, in and of itself. A person will receive reward also for the joy which accompanied the mitzvah. Sefer Chareidim says: "One's reward will be in proportion to his joy over the mitzvah."

One who does a mitzvah joyfully will receive one thousand times as much reward as one who did it without joy! (Orchot Tzaddikim, Shaar Hasimcha).

Arizal teaches: When you do a mitzvah, do not view it as a burden. Instead, imagine you are closing in a million dollar deal. You would be overjoyed, wouldn't you? So too, when you do a



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mitzvah, feel like someone just handed you a million dollars and jump for joy!

The Arizal told his close friend: How did I merit to become privy to secrets of Torah? In response to this that I did mitzvot with great joy!

Being Happy Also with Daily Mitzvot

The Alter fun Kelm (Chochma U'Mussar II p. 107) points out that many people get excited by mitzvot which come their way infrequently, but do not get so excited over daily mitzvot.

He explains this with a parable. Most people also get more excited over finding a diamond or a gold mine than drinking a cup of water or taking in a breath of fresh air. Of course, they could live without the diamond and the gold, but could not survive without water and air! So we ought to be even happier over air and water upon realizing that those are the ingredients of life itself!

So too, while we should appreciate rare mitzvah opportunities, we should also appreciate the daily mitzvot and understand that if Hashem prescribed them for our daily diet, they must be necessary parts of living life as a Torah Jew.

Praying with Joy

Brachot 31a teaches to attempt to arrive at a state of joy before beginning to pray. Shulchan Aruch says this in 93:2.

Shabbat 30b explains that when Shlomo Hamelech praised happiness (in Sefer Kohelet) that referred to joy at performing mitzvot.

In Suka 56b, we find an entire family of Kohanim punished for disgraceful words said by one of their children. Why? The Gemara explains that children pick up attitudes and sayings from their parents. The girl's disdainful attitude towards mitzvot and leading a Torah life testifies to her upbringing. (Certainly this is not always the case, especially in our turbulent time. This is only brought as a source text to encourage performance of mitzvot with excitement and joy.)

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov is well known for his saying: It is a great mitzvah to be happy at all times.

In Kidushin 31a, Rav Yosef (who was blind) pledged to throw a party if he were to be told that blind people are obligated to keep mitzvot. This was his degree of excitement over mitzvot.

Dancing Souls

In one of the death camps during World War II, a group of bachurim were sent into the gas chambers on Simchat Torah. One of the bachurim told his friends, "Today is Simchat Torah. We do not have with us Sifrei Torah. But let us dance with Hashem."



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So they began dancing and singing, planning to give up their souls to their Creator with this level of dveikut.

The Nazi commander was upset at their joy. He asked what is going on. They told him how happy they are on their holiday and that soon their souls would reunite with the souls of their relatives whose lives were already taken.

Not willing to allow them this level of ecstasy, the commander ordered them to exit the gas chambers until he would decide how to make them suffer in a different manner.

That night, a higher authority had this commander be relocated to a different station, and the lives of the dancing souls were spared.

Happy in Prison

Two pious brothers, Reb Zusha and Reb Elimelech, were sent to prison in Russia under false charges. The conditions were horrifying, and to top it off, the prison ward put the communal "bathroom" pail in the center of the shared cell. This made Torah and tefillah not an option.

It came time for mincha, and one of the brothers burst into tears that he was unable to pray, given the circumstances. His brother smiled and said,

"Let's dance at that mitzva opportunity of refraining from prayer in unclean surroundings."

So the two brothers began singing a nigun and dancing. Other Jewish inmates asked what they were doing. They explained themselves and the circle got larger. They danced around the odiferous pail. The non-Jews asked what they were dancing about. They did not answer. They simply pointed to the pail and continued dancing.

The prison officials heard the ruckus and came to see what it was all about. The non-Jewish inmates explained that the Jews were really excited about that pail.

At that, the head of the prison ordered that the pail be removed immediately. From now on, any prisoner who needed facilities would be escorted by a guard to a special room.

The pail was taken out, the singing subsided, and mincha services began...

Happy in a Hut

Reb Tzvi Hirsch Meisels (Rav in Chicago) and Rav Dov Israel (Rav in Curacaos, Venezuela) spend the war years together in a concentration camp.

As Sukkot was approaching, Reb Tzvi Hirsch yearned for an opportunity to fulfill the mitzva of



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suka. He found a corner in the camp where broken furniture was tossed and he used it to build a minimal size suka, so as not to attract attention.

Now he needed some bread for kiddush and mitzvat suka. Reb Dovid had a kitchen job, so Reb Tzvi Hirsch confided in him and asked him to smuggle out two loaves of bread on Erev Sukkot.

On Sukkot Eve, under the veil of darkness, the two crawled to the suka, made kiddush with shehecheyanu and bit into the bread.

Years later, they would retell the story and say that their simchah over mitzvat suka that year has yet to be matched.

Selling Aliyot

The Bobover Rebbe used to love to listen as the *gabbai* auctioned off the *aliyot*. Each time someone would bid, the Rebbe got excited over the yearning to acquire a mitzvah. The very selling of mitzvot shows that we value them.

Reb Moshe and the Matzoh

Each year before Pesach, Reb Moshe Kofshitz could not stop talking about the upcoming mitzvah of Matzoh. On Erev Pesach, when he

took out the matzoh, he would kiss them and dance with them!

Kiddush Levanah

Harav Ben Tzion Abba Shaul had a heart attack and had to be hospitalized. His brother-in-law, Rav Reuven Sharbani stayed with him overnight. Although Rav Ben Tzion was connected to numerous machines, once evening set in, he remembered that he had not yet said Kiddush Levanah. He begged Reb Reuven to move over his bed closer to the window so that he could see the moon and recite the blessing.

The whole next day, many visitors came, and he excitedly told each one how fortunate he was to have recited Kiddush Levanah the night before.

What is a Mitzvah?

In some homes, mitzvot are looked at as burdens and people avoid them and try to get out of them, or take shortcuts and try to finish with them as soon as possible. It is no wonder that children who grow up in such homes do not really want to do mitzvot altogether. Then there are homes in which each mitzvah is greeted with enthusiasm. These are homes which produce observant Jews of the highest caliber!

It's your choice! Pick what to be happy about!



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Shver Tzu Zein ah Yid?

With this, Rav Moshe Feinstein explained the phenomenon of twentieth century America where so many families who gave up their jobs for *Shemirat Shabbat* did not merit to see the next generation going in the ways of the Torah.

Reb Moshe explained that in many such instances, although they kept Shabbos, it was done with a *krechitz* – a sigh of anguish: It's so hard to be a Jew!

Well, what child wants to continue a tradition which is full of travail and despondency?!

Homes which appreciated the peace, tranquility and serenity of Shabbat – those were homes which kept the *mesorah* and saw generations of Torah-abiding citizens.

Sefer Reishit Chochma (Ahava, Chap. 10) teaches us to appreciate a mitzvah and think of it as if the King is asking a favor from us. The King is granting us the opportunity to serve Him.

Wouldn't you be honored if a current Gadol Hador would call you up and ask you to come and pour him a drink or escort him down the stairs? Most certainly!

And if you would have received such an invitation from Rav Ovadiah Yosef or Rav Shach? From the Chofetz Chaim or the Ben Ish Chai? From the Vilna Gaon or the Chid"ra? You could not contain your joy! You would get there early and make sure to do it just right!

What about if you had been called upon to do something at the behest of the Arizal or the Beit Yosef? The Ramban, Rif or Rashi? Rav or Shmuel, Hillel or Shammai, Dovid or Shlomo, Moshe or Aharon?

All the much more so for HaKadosh Baruch Hu! Maybe think about this for a moment before the next time you say *Birkat Hamazon*. I think it may be a bit less hurried.

Happy is the house in which mitzvot are performed with joy! This is something which everyone can do! It is so healthy and enjoyable; why not go ahead and do it! You are doing the mitzvah anyway; you may as well enjoy it! The benefits are unfathomable!

People with proper *hashkafot* enjoy the mitzvah itself even more than the reward!

Shabbat Shalom Umevorach,
Mordechai Malka