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נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד  
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,  
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## Parashat Ki Tavo

### "Because You Did Not Serve Hashem With Joy"

Our *parasha* teaches us about the *tochacha*, the terrible punishments that could befall the Jews, *chas ve'shalom*. The *pasuk* (28:47) relates that the reasons the punishments come are "because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d with joy and a happy heart when everything was abundant."

#### Questions

- 1- The aforementioned *pasuk* is somewhat puzzling. It is clearly speaking about someone who is a servant of Hashem, who observes the Torah and mitzvot. Nevertheless, it states that all of the curses befall him because he did serve Hashem with joy. Why does the Torah punish him to such a degree if he actually observed the mitzvot, just not happily?
- 2- Furthermore, happiness stems from an individual's specific life situation. Therefore, how can there be a claim against a person for not being happy? How can he be punished for this?

#### The Present Day World

We bear witness to the fact that in today's world we constantly live with social pressure and competition which blinds mankind. These are accompanied by jealousy, which robs man of his peace of mind. He is always racing against the clock to try and reach the pinnacle of comfort in life [which, incidentally, has no end. As we are taught that man does not leave the world having attained even half of his worldly desires]. This reality causes man great stress and takes away his happiness in life. He never feels content and his every action is therefore performed unhappily. When it comes to performing mitzvot, he is even farther removed from feeling joy. Generally, an individual is happy to be exempt from having to do a mitzva. This is as our Sages have explained the Jews' complaint in the desert (*Bamidbar* 11), "We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt for free." Our Sages explain that they were alluding to the fact that they were "free" from having to perform mitzvot, for at that time they had still not been commanded to observe the mitzvot. As the well-known saying goes, "The congregation likes *al ha'michya* and *yihei Hashem*." In other words, people prefer to say *al ha'michya* and not have to recite *bircat ha'mazon*, which is a long *bracha*. Similarly, they do not wish to say *tachanun* in *shacharit*, because they wish to shorten the *tefilla*. However, our holy Torah teaches us that every individual is required to be happy, and that happiness determines the value of our actions. Without happiness, despite the fact that man may have done many good deeds, they nevertheless lack true worth. What's more, he will even be punished for this, as we will soon explain.

#### Explanation of the *Yaarot Dvash*

In his *sefer Yaarot Dvash* (*chelek* 2, *drush* 5), the Torah giant, R' Yonatan Eibshitz *zt"l* explains that sadly, a person is not happy when he performs a mitzva. Rather, he performs the mitzva as if a demon is forcing him to. If he would be told that he is exempt from the mitzva, he would be joyous. He explains, however, that really the opposite should be the case. One should learn from the joy exhibited by important officers of the king. When a mortal king honors an officer by ordering him to carry out one of his commands – how happy is he? How, then, can a puny human being of flesh and blood not rejoice when the King of All Kings tells him to do something that will cause Him much gratification. He should rejoice more than when he discovers the most precious fortune. For example, let us say that he performed a small act, such as sounding the *shofar*, for example. What did he do already? He blew into the horn of a ram. It wasn't an action that required much exertion. Nevertheless, it finds favor in the eyes of Hashem and provides Him with gratification. Is there a greater joy than this? All the mitzvot are easy to perform and do not require much effort. Even regarding the mitzva of *succa*, our Sages state (*Succa* 25b) that one who is distressed is exempt from sleeping in the *succa*. For mitzvot were not given to be a burden;



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rather, they are good and provide gratification. **However, in our times the opposite is true.** People view mitzvot like they are a burden. Rather, continues the *Yaarot Dvash*, every man who wears *tefillin* or a *tallit* should be happy ... for how can he not be happy; he performed an easy action, for which he will now merit the World to Come and finding favor in the eyes of Hashem. He quotes the Arizal (*Shaar Hamitzvot* pg. 1) as stating that most of the exile is due to the fact that we do not perform mitzvot happily, as the *pasuk* states, "Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d with joy and a happy heart..." One sin leads to another, and by not performing mitzvot happily, it leads us to being lax in the actual observance of the mitzvot. Man wears a pair of *tefillin* for a considerable amount of time and does not give heed to whether they conform to all the details of the mitzva or not. He is not careful that they should be perfectly square and in conformance with all the other *halachot* of *tefillin*. People act foolishly, he states. For he sees all of the new clothing that people wear - every *chag*; every summer and winter, both weekday and Shabbat clothing. Heaven forbid that there should be a stain or patch on any of them. Certainly the hat on his head must be clean and free from any speck of dust ... If he will be made a hat that is different than the style of the country, longer or shorter, he will not wear it on his head. The same thing applies to shoes; an individual changes them from one *chag* to the next, and they must perfectly fit his feet, with the straps and hooks totally conforming to the style, and Heaven forbid altering from the accepted style ... **This all comes from viewing mitzvot as a yoke and a burden, lacking any reason for joy or exuberance. However, if he was happy the way he should be, he would be meticulous in all of their details.** The more exact and pure his mitzvot are, the more they increase his joy, because it arouses the soul. This is in the same manner that a foolish type of joy arouses man's base, animal soul, as we find with music. Certain notes that a musician plays can gladden the soul, and it will cure man from depression. This was the case by Shaul HaMelech, whose depression was cured when David played music for him. The same thing applies to the joy generated by a mitzva; it arouses the Divine soul in man. However, the opposite is also true. One who is sad when performing a mitzva awakens a spirit of impurity. So said R' Yonatan Eibshitz zt"l.

### The Rambam and Maggid Mishna on Happiness

In *Hilchot Shofar ve'Succa ve'Lulav* (8:15), the Rambam writes, "The joy with which man rejoices when performing a mitzva and with his love for the One Who commanded them, is a very important Divine service. Anyone who prevents himself from having this joy is deserving of punishment. This is as the *pasuk* states, 'Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d with joy and a happy heart...'" The Maggid Mishna adds (ibid.) that a person should not perform a mitzva because he is obligated and forced to do so. Rather, he should view it as if he is required to do it but is happy to fulfill it. He should do good deeds because they are good and choose the path of truth because it is true. He should disregard the effort he must invest in performing them. Rather, he should understand that this is his purpose in creation, and when he does what he was created to do, he should rejoice. This is because happiness generated by other things is dependent on fleeting items that do not last. However, the joy of performing mitzvot and learning Torah is the true joy.

### Only for Mitzvot Performed With Joy Does Man Earn the World to Come

R' Chaim Vital, in the introduction to *Shaar Hamitzvot*, writes that one should know that it is not enough simply to perform a mitzva. For we have found that our Sages have stated that someone who performs even one mitzva is granted good in this world and his life is extended. We find other similar statements from our Sages as well. Yet, asks R' Chaim, we find that people do many mitzvot and do not see a fulfillment of our Sages' words regarding the great reward that is bestowed in this world. He explains that what lies at the very root of the issue is one's perspective on mitzvot. Man should not view a mitzva as being a great burden that he wishes to hurry and free himself from. Rather, he should think that by performing a mitzva he will reap a profit of thousands upon thousands of gold coins. He will then feel boundless joy when performing a mitzva, both in his heart and soul. He will perform the mitzva with great yearning, as if they are actually giving him thousands of gold coins to do the mitzva. This is the secret of the *pasuk*, "Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d with joy and a happy heart



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when everything was abundant." In other words, he did not perform the mitzvot with the happiness that he would feel if he would be granted an abundance of financial prosperity.

### In the Merit of Joy

In *Tehillim* (100:2) it states, "Serve Hashem with joy; come before Him with jubilation." *Maran HaChida* writes in *Chomat Anach (Tehillim 100)* that according to the simple explanation of the verse, the performance of mitzvot and Torah study should be accompanied by joy, for the benefit of being happy when performing mitzvot is very great. R' Chaim Vital writes that his *rebbe*, the Arizal, told him that he only merited his great knowledge and grasp of the Torah's secrets because of the happiness that he would exhibit when studying Torah and performing mitzvot. The Rambam and Rav Ovadia *Me'Bartenura* comment on the words of the Mishna, "The reward for a mitzva is a mitzva," that the joy one exhibits when performing a mitzva **is itself** considered an additional mitzva. Therefore, Moshe Rabbeinu commanded us to "Serve Hashem with joy," in this chapter of *Tehillim*, which is one of the eleven chapters composed by Moshe Rabbeinu.

### Story About the Arizal

It is told that when the *Arizal* went to buy a mitzva item, he never argued over the price. Rather, he would place his pouch before the seller, who would take as much money as he wanted. When the Arizal was asked why he did this, he answered that all of his extraordinary grasp of the hidden secrets of the Torah is only because he rejoiced over every mitzva, more than if he had received the greatest fortune. Therefore, money has no value when compared to a mitzva, which is an opportunity to carry out the Will of Hashem. Therefore, the Arizal did not ask for a price; he simply placed his pouch before the seller. The more the seller would take, the more it expressed the value of the mitzva.

In our times it is difficult to act in such a manner; unfortunately, there has been a decline in righteousness in every subsequent generation. The seller may not be an honest man, and if someone leaves his wallet open before him, he is likely to take advantage of the customer's purity and take everything that he has. However, the story nevertheless teaches us how an individual must relate to the merit of performing a mitzva with boundless joy. He must view it as if the greatest fortune cannot compare to the mitzva. This is as David HaMelech stated in *Tehillim* (119:72), "The Torah of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of gold and silver [coins]." About the mitzvot David would say (162), "I rejoice over Your sayings like finding a great treasure." Our Sages expounded in *Masechet Shabbat* (130a), "Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel said: Every mitzva that the Jews accepted upon themselves with joy, like circumcision ... they still perform with joy." It has therefore been stated, "It is a great mitzva to constantly be happy."

### Words of Mussar

We have learned that when someone is not happy when performing a mitzva, it stems from a lack of faith. He does not feel or believe that he brings Hashem gratification with his mitzva. He should at least be as happy to perform a mitzva as he would be to be the messenger of a man who was great and honorable in his eyes, like the *gadol ha'dor* or, *le'havdil*, the President of the US, for example. If they wanted him to do something, he would rejoice over the fact that he merited to be in the presence of such a great man. He would certainly run happily to carry out the request. However, over the fulfillment of mitzvot he is not happy. It therefore seems like Hashem is less important to him than the individual whose request he happily fulfilled. Therefore, there will be a separate claim leveled against him for lacking joy when performing a mitzva. For even if he fulfills the Torah and mitzvot, if he does so unhappily, he will be punished, *rachmana litzlan*.

Shabbat Shalom,  
Ketiva Va'chatima Tova,  
Rav Mordechai Malka



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