

Simcha Shel Mitzvah

"Oy! I have to go to school."
"Oy? Why do you say oy, Moishie?"
"I have to get up out of bed, dress, pack my schoolbag, catch the bus, pray, eat breakfast. Then, if I have any strength left, I have to learn for three hours, and sit in class and listen for another hour. Oy!"
"Hmmm . . . I see. You are missing a very big point, Moishie."
"Really? What is that?"
"Talmud Torah kineged kulam - each word of Torah that you learn is equal to all 613 mitzvos combined. Each mitzvah gives you unbelievable blessing in this world, and unimaginable reward in the next world. Not only that, the Orchos Tsaddikim writes that the reward done for a mitzvah *b'simcha* (with happiness) is 1000 times greater than a mitzvah performed unhappily. You should be ecstatic over every word of Torah that you learn."
"You are right. I am missing the point. I got too caught up in negative thoughts."

The next day . . .

"Oy! Shabbos is coming."
"Oy? Why do you say oy Mrs. Kvetch?"
"Because there is so much work to do before Shabbos. Cook the food, wash the dishes, make the beds, wash the floors, bathe everyone, dress them in Shabbos clothes, set the table, prepare the candles, the list is endless. Oy!"
"Hmmm . . . I see. You are missing a very big point, Mrs. Kvetch."
"Really? What is that?"
"Shabbos is a tremendous gift from Hashem to the Jewish people. When observed properly, it is a day of total spiritual and physical pleasures a bit of the World to Come. Besides all of the enjoyment in this world, we get unfathomable reward in the Next World for keeping the mitzvos of Shabbos. Shabbos is fantastic!"
"You are right. I am missing the point. I got too caught up in negative thoughts."

"Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart when everything was abundant" (Devarim 28:47). The Torah elaborates a long list of curses, misfortunes, and tragedies that will befall the Jewish people. Why? Because we did not serve Hashem with happiness. Happiness is a prerequisite to proper avodas Hashem. And the true happiness is the enjoyment of doing Hashem's

mitzvos.

The Chofetz Chaim zt"l has a parable about simcha shel mitzvah . . .

"Hello family! I'm home from my trip!"
"Father! It is wonderful to see you. Tell us all about your trip."
"It was fantastic."
"I see that your face is beaming with happiness. You look ecstatic."
"I am. I had a private audience with the emperor."
"I don't believe it. THE emperor?"
"Yes. The emperor. After waiting weeks for an appointment, I was escorted in to see him. He received me warmly and listened to everything I had to say. He



commanded his royal stenographer to write down my statement. Then he gave me a mission to accomplish with specific instructions. It was glorious!"
"Father, you are glowing."
"I am savoring this moment. I can't wait to tell my friends about it."

And so, the father was happy for years after his meeting with the emperor. That is the parable. A man can become so excited after meeting an emperor, who is only flesh and blood, and whose days on this earth are numbered. He should be much more excited after speaking with The Holy One Blessed Be He. Every time that we perform a mitzvah, making a blessing beforehand, we are speaking with Hashem, just as a man speaks with his neighbor. His angels record our deeds in His book, and announce them every day before the myriad of holy beings. These deeds praise the person forever. Is there a greater reason to be happy?

Kinderlach . . .

"David HaMelech revealed the secret thousands of years ago. "Serve Hashem with happiness. Come before Him rejoicing." (Tehillim 100:2). We are ecstatic to serve Hashem. Time to pray? Wonderful! An opportunity to serve Hashem. Shabbos preparations or cleanup? Fantastic! I'm serving Hashem! Time to learn Torah? I love it! I'm serving Hashem . . . with simcha!

Excuse Me

"Selicha." Anyone who has ever been to the Land of Israel has heard this word many times. If someone accidentally bumps into another person he says, "Selicha". If he comes late to an appointment he says, "Selicha". What does the word *selicha* mean? Excuse me. When a person says, "excuse me", he realizes that he has done something wrong. That is why he is asking you to forgive him.

In Elul and Tishrei, we say *Selichos*, prayers of forgiveness. We ask Hashem to forgive us for our mistakes. In order for this request to have any meaning, we first must realize that we did something wrong. Then we can say, "excuse me".

Kinderlach . . .

Who wants to stay up late tonight and go with Abba to say selichos? It is a very moving prayer. Many people cry when they say selichos, begging Hashem for forgiveness. However, we should know what we are asking for. Now is a time to think about the mistakes that we have made over the past year. Perhaps we did not honor Abba and Imma properly. Perhaps we did not always listen to our teachers. Perhaps we fought with our brothers and sisters. Did we say our berachos (blessings) and tefillos (prayers) carefully? Now is the time to think about these things. Ask Hashem for forgiveness for the past mistakes. And resolve to correct those mistakes in the coming year.

Parasha Questions

- From which fruits do we bring Bikurim? (Rashi 26:2)
- Why do we mention Lavan when we bring Bikurim? (Rashi 26:5)
- To whom do we give maaser rishon? Which years of the Shmitta cycle? (Rashi 26:12)
- To whom do we give maaser oni? Which years of the Shmitta cycle? (Rashi 26:12)