

Kindert Torah

בס"ד

Parashas Re'eh

Holy, Holy, Holy

“Come everyone, let’s finish packing. We want to leave soon. The *chag* is coming, and we want to be in Yerushalayim before the *regel* begins.”

“Will we go to the Beis HaMikdash?”

“B’ezrat Hashem, kinderlach.”

“I have a question, Abba?”

“Yes, Yossie.”

“Why are we taking so many fruits with us to Yerushalayim this year? We have two oxen loaded with fruits. Last year we hardly took any fruit. We bought what we needed in Yerushalayim.”

“Very perceptive Yossie. That is an excellent question. This year is different from last year. This year is the fourth year of the *shmitta* cycle. This is one of the years that a portion of our crop has the *kedusha* (holiness) of *maaser sheini*. Hashem commanded us to take these fruits with us up to Yerushalayim and eat them there.”

“Let’s see if I understand, Abba. We eat *maaser sheini* - holy fruits - in Yerushalayim - the Holy City.”

“Correct, Yossie.”

“We ourselves must be very holy to do this, Abba.”

“You have touched on a deep point, Yossie. Hashem gave us a big beautiful Torah, full of 613 mitzvos. Each one is an opportunity to become holier. This particular mitzvah takes a very mundane physical activity - eating fruit - and sanctifies it. It turns eating into an opportunity to come one step closer to Hashem.”

“How do we know that, Abba?”

“The Torah itself says it, Yossie. ‘You shall surely *maaser* (take one tenth) all of your crop...and eat it before Hashem your G-d in the place that He chose to rest His Name...so that you will learn to fear Hashem your G-d all of your days’ (Devarim 14:22-23). This mitzvah teaches us *Yiras Shamayim* (Fear of Heaven), a foundation of *Avodas Hashem*.”

“How does it work, Abba.”

“Very simple, Yossie. Hashem blesses us with a beautiful crop of fruits. It is all from Him. He wants us to eat it and enjoy it. However, He knows that it is easy to forget Him, and fool ourselves into thinking that the crop came solely from the work of our hands. Therefore, He reminds us that He is The Provider. First, we must separate the holy portion of the crop, and give it to His agents here in this world, the Kohanim and Leviim. They have no land of their own; therefore, we must support them while they perform Hashem’s Holy Service. There is still a

portion of holy fruits left - *maaser sheini*. This is our opportunity to ‘taste’ a bit of the holiness of the Kehuna. We purify ourselves, go to the Holy City, and eat these holy fruits *b’kedusha v’tahara* (in sanctity and purity). In this way we are like the Kohanim, when they perform their *avodah* of eating the *kodshim* (holy foods) *b’kedusha v’tahara*.”

“We eat them before Hashem, Abba. How can we help but be inspired to fear Him and love Him for all of the good that He has given us.”

“Yossie, I could not have said it better myself. This is the true *simcha* (happiness): coming close to The Holy One by elevating all of our activities, even eating, to serve Him. In this way we learn to fear Him all of our days.”

Kinderlach . . .

This story is based on the commentary of Rav Shimshon Refael Hirsch on the mitzvah of maaser sheini. He inspires us to see the holiness in all areas of our lives and all activities - even eating. This idea is expressed as a halacha in Shulchan Auruch Orach Chaim 231. “A person should place his eyes and heart on his ways. He should weigh all of his deeds on the ‘scale’ of his seichel (common sense). Whenever he sees something that will bring him to serve The Creator, he should do it. If it will not, he should refrain from it. One who does this will always be serving Hashem.” Kinderlach, involve yourselves with holy activities all the time. Spend your whole life serving Hashem!



Mah Tov

“Abba, thank you so much for letting me accompany you to the Beis HaKnesses this morning.”

“My pleasure, Avi. We both have the privilege of walking with the four holy angels who escort one who leaves his house wearing *tallis* and *tefillin*. We have arrived at the door of the Beis HaKnesses. Let us stop for a moment to say ‘Mah tov’.”

“I have always wanted to know why we say this prayer at this time, Abba.”

“Come, let me teach you, Avi. ‘*Mah tov*’ is a collection of five verses, the first one from parashas Balak (Bamidbar 24:5), and the next four from Tehillim (5:8, 26:8, 95:6, 69:14). Balak wanted to curse the Jewish people; however, he ended up blessing them. Here he proclaims how good our tents and dwellings are. The Sforno explains that ‘tents’ are referring to our *Bottei Midrashim* (study halls) and ‘dwellings’ are referring to our *Bottei Kinseios* (shuls) and *Bottei Mikdashim* (Holy Temples). They are good to the people who take the opportunity to learn in the *Bottei Midrashim* and pray in the *Bottei Kinseios*. Additionally, they bestow goodness on all of Klal Yisrael, as everyone benefits from the Torah learning and the prayer that emanates from these holy places. Therefore, as we are about to enter the Beis HaKnesses we stop for a moment to proclaim how good this place is, and how we are privileged to enter it.”

“I am so grateful, Abba.”

“So am I, Avi. We continue by declaring that it is only through Hashem’s great *chesed* (kindness) that we are able to enter this holy place and bow down to Him in awe. We love the house where He dwells and His *Shechina* (Divine Presence) resides. We bend the knee, bow the head and even prostrate our entire bodies before our Maker. Finally, we ask that our prayer come at a favorable time, and that it may be answered with a true salvation.”

“Amen. This *tefillah* gives me a whole new appreciation of the Beis HaKnesses, Abba. It is a very holy place. It is a place set aside for learning Hashem’s holy Torah and praying to Him. We are in awe of the house where the *Shechina* dwells. What a privilege we have to come here and be close to our Creator.”

“Avi, may you always feel this way about the Beis Hashem. Come, let us enter now and pray to Him with all our hearts.”

Kinderlach . . .

Before you enter the Beis HaKnesses in the morning, stop for a moment. Think. “I am about to enter a holy place, the Beis Hashem, where the Shechina dwells. This is a place set aside for Torah and tefillah. I must have respect for such a place, and feel gratitude for the privilege to be here. I will fulfill Hashem’s will in His house and refrain from improper conduct.” Then say the prayer Mah Tov with great kavanah (intention), kinderlach, enter the Beis HaKnesses, and enjoy your special time with Hashem.

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