1st Seder Weekly Divrei Torah
A BAIS MEDRASH PROGRAM FOR MEN

ADAR – LIFE'S A PARTY

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

"With the advent of Adar we increase simcha" (Taanis 29a). While the Gemara explains that Adar is a fortuitous month and one should plan certain undertakings for Adar, there is no explanation of how we are to rejoice. The Rema in Shulchan Aruch (OC 697:1) cites a dispute regarding the requirement to celebrate the 14th of the first Adar in a leap year. Since Purim is to be celebrated by "simcha umishteh" – joyfulness and feasting, some say that on the 14th of the first Adar one should have a festive meal to celebrate the joy of the day. He notes that this is not the practice and suggests that one should merely eat a larger meal. The Rema concludes by citing the pasuk: "And a good-hearted person feasts – mishteh – perpetually" (Mishlei 15:15).

What did the Rema intend by citing this pasuk? Perhaps he meant that although feasting is the standard way of expressing joy, the perpetual joy of feasting is accomplished only by having a 'good heart.' The ultimate simcha is one that arises from the heart. How can we acquire this quality of a good heart?

Let's examine this pasuk a little more closely. At this point it is important to note that the word mishteh connotes imbibing (from the word shoseh – drink). Thus, the pasuk, in its entirety, should be translated: "All the days of a poor man are bad, but a good-hearted person has a perpetual party." The Gra explains that the pasuk is not referring to a person who is poor financially. Rather the definition of poverty must be derived from the Mishna in Avos (4:1): "Who is rich? He who is happy with his portion." It follows that a poor person is one who is not happy with his portion. He is not happy with his financial status – no matter how much he has. He is not happy with his lot in general, not his family, not his friends, not his shul et al. Everything could and should be better. Naturally he lives a very unhappy life. Thus, "All the days of this poor fellow are bad!"

However, one who has a good heart refers to one who is happy with his lot. This, says the Gra, is better than a party. The man who drinks to relieve the pain of his disappointments is only happy until the drinks wear off. The good-hearted person remains happy perpetually.

The Gra has not only explained the pasuk and defined a good heart. His approach has given us a better understanding of another Mishna in Avos. Rebbi Yochanan ben Zakkai had five exceptional students. He asked them what they felt was the most important trait. Rebbi Elazar ben Arach answered, "A good heart." to which Rebbi Yochanan replied, "I concur with the words of Rebbi Elazar ben Arach, for your words are included in his words" (Avos 2:9).

How did Rebbi Elazar understand the concept of a good heart? Indeed, the Gra on this Mishna cites this very same pasuk in Mishlei as the source for Rebbi Elazar's opinion: "A good-hearted person has a perpetual party." A good heart is the trait of one who is happy with his lot and the other suggested traits are all included in it. A happy, contented heart is the foremost key to serving Hashem. Thus, in the tochacha Moshe warns Bnai Yisrael that the failure to keep the Torah's Mitzvos occurs "because you did not serve Hashem your G-d with simcha and a good heart when everything was abundant" (Devarim 28:47). (See Mishulchan Shlomo on Parshas Ki Savo for a further discussion of this explanation of this pasuk.)

All year long we must follow the advice of Shlomo Hamelech in Mishlei and of Rebbi Elazar ben Arach: Be contented and happy with whatever Hashem has provided for us. However, when Adar begins, we must intensify this simcha. How? The more we recognize that what Hashem decided and provided for us is really for our own good and for the best, the happier we will be.

HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

Please contact R' Ungar (Ymungar@gmail.com) with questions or comments

QUESTION: Outside on the sidewalk there are some frozen puddles. May I deliberately crack the ice with my shoe on שבת? There are icicles hanging from my house and shed, may I playfully knock them off on שבת? ANSWER: The מגן אברהם says that one may not crack the frozen ice that formed in a river or well. It is attached to the ground and it is the מלאכה of סותר to break it. The משנה ברורה brings that there are many that argue on the מגן אברהם and really it is okay, and it is not סותר, but one should defer to the opinion of the מגן אברהם and only crack ice if there is a צורך שבת. Ice that is stuck to the ground and icicles attached to a house would also be סותר. If the patches of ice or icicles present a סכנה, then it is מותר to crack and break them as that is considered a צורך. Playfully or absent-mindedly breaking patches of ice or cracking off an icicle is not a צורך שבת and should therefore not be done. Rabbi Ribiat in his sefer says one should not crack ice on the ground nor crack off icicles. (Cracking ice cubes into smaller pieces is okay, as long as you don't crush it into a liquid.)

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WOKEN BY THE AIR RAID

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner

The following interesting question was presented to Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky.

Moshe and Dovid were friends who met daily at the nearby shul for Shacharis. Over time, Dovid began waking up late, consistently arriving 10 to 15 minutes after Shacharis had started.

One day, Moshe remarked, "It seems you've been arriving late daily. I guess you'll be late tomorrow too." Dovid countered, "No, I can wake up early. I'll be on time tomorrow." Skeptical, Moshe replied, "Given your track record, I doubt that." Dovid then proposed, "Let's make a bet. I'll wager 100 shekels that I'll arrive on time. If I do, you'll pay me 100 shekels; if not, I'll pay you." Moshe agreed, and they sealed the bet with a handshake.

The following day, 10 minutes before 7:00 AM, an air raid siren sounded due to missiles launched by Israel's adversaries. Dovid arrived at the synagogue, visibly tired and partially dressed, but punctual.

He claimed, "I won our bet. I'm here on time." Moshe retorted, "The only reason you awoke on time was the air raid siren." Dovid acknowledged, "True, that's why I woke up, because of the air raid siren, and I ran to the bomb shelter but ultimately, I am here on time."

Moshe disagreed, "That doesn't count. You didn't wake up by yourself. Let's try another day." Dovid insisted, "I fulfilled the bet's conditions. Why should the reason for my punctuality matter?"

They decided to seek Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky's opinion: Should Dovid receive the 100 shekels for winning the bet? On one hand, he arrived on time; But on the other, his punctuality wasn't due to an early awakening but because he hurried to the bomb shelter following the air raid siren. What do you think?See Upiryo Matok Vayikra Page 294

Regarding last week's question about the Airbnb, Rav Mordechai Shuchatowitz of the Baltimore Beis Din answered as follows: The house that the Winklers rented and used that weekend was not defective. The power outage was not related to this particular house, and was not something that they should have been notified about beforehand. It was their mazal that the outage occurred when they were there, and the rental payment was made properly.

THE "KITCHEN" THAT RIPENS DELICIOUS FRUITS

A person once asked Rav Avigdor Miller why Hashem made it hot and humid. Rav Miller answered with the following analogy.

A man comes home and he has to go through the kitchen in order to go to the restroom. He tells his wife, "What? In this hot weather, you're cooking? It's too hot in here." So she says, "Yes, dear, I'll turn off the stove," and she turns off the stove. He comes out and he says, "Is supper ready?" And she says, "Sorry, not today."

So, too, in September all the ripe red apples are out on the stands. How does an apple become red, juicy, and sweet? It's only because Baruch Hu turns on the heat. The summer is the "kitchen" that ripens delicious fruits that we are going to eat all winter. So the next time it is hot and humid, rather than complain, we should think of the good times that are waiting for us.

From Rav Avigdor Miller, His Life and Revolution, By Yaakov Y. Hamburger, Published by Judaica Press, Reprinted with Permission of Table Talk.

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Good Shabbos!