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PARSHAS KI SAVO – SIMCHA

Rabbi Shlomo Caplan

The tochacha in this week's Parsha describes the punishments which, chas ve'shalom, will befall Bnai Yisrael if they don't keep the Torah. In the middle of the tochacha the Torah states, "Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, with joy and goodness of heart when everything was abundant" (Devarim 28,47). It appears that the reason for the punishments is not serving Hashem with simcha, joy. Why is simcha so critical to our avodas Hashem?

One who performs Mitzvos by rote or merely due to fear of retribution is implying that he really wishes that he didn't have to do them. He derives no enjoyment from fulfilling a Mitzvah nor does he appreciate the importance of the One Whom he serves.

The Gemara in Kiddushin (31a) states, "There are some sons who may feed their father pheasants and yet are punished for it." Rashi cites the Talmud Yerushalmi which relates the following scenario: There was a son who always fed his father pheasant. On one occasion his father asked him, "Where did you get all this?" The son replied, "What do you care, just eat it." He demonstrated that it was a hardship for him. The same holds true for our avodas Hashem. If we don't perform the Mitzvos with simcha, we show Hashem that we really would rather not be doing them.

However, all this being true, it is difficult to comprehend that one who has kept all the Mitzvos religiously, albeit without simcha, should deserve all the harsh punishments spelled out in the tochacha. Furthermore, the Torah states the reason for the punishments very clearly, "And it will be if you do not listen to the voice of Hashem your G-d, to observe and perform all His Mitzvos and decrees that I command you this day… (Devarim 28,15).

I believe that the intent of the rebuke for not keeping Mitzvos with simcha was to explain why Bnai Yisrael would have abandoned the Mitzvos. Since they found no joy in keeping them they became a burden – a real burden. So gradually they slackened off in their observance. First by being overly lenient in their performance, then by shedding one Mitzvah after another. How long can a person put up with performing rituals and refraining from their temptations when it is all too distasteful and painful? It is really no way to live.

As we approach the Yamim Noraim and initiate a process of Teshuva, this is a critical question to ask ourselves. Do we find joy and happiness in keeping the Torah? Has it become a burden? Do we look for excuses to extricate ourselves from these responsibilities? If this is so, then doing Teshuva might be very difficult, since next year we'll be faced with the same predicament.

Maybe the first prerequisite to doing Teshuva is to rekindle - or kindle - a sense of joy in keeping the Mitzvos by recognizing Whom we are serving and that observing them is only for our own benefit. Let's dispense with the kvetch in our hearts, wipe the frown off of our faces, and put on a smile (even if it is not 100% sincere). As the habit intensifies, it could create the securest path to Teshuva and become our most worthwhile investment.

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HALACHA Q&A FROM RABBI YISROEL UNGAR

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

QUESTION: When I teach my 3- and 4-year-old to say ברכות may I say ה' 's name to help him with saying the ברכה? May I answer אמן to his ברכה? May I encourage him to say אמן after someone makes a ברכה by saying אמן with him even if it is a child that is making that ברכה?

ANSWER: When teaching a child to make ברכות one is allowed to say out ה' 's name. Since the purpose is to teach the child to properly say the ברכה it is not considered as if you are saying ה' 's name in vain. This is very vital. Many do not pronounce ה' 's name properly and if they are taught when they are young to say it properly then that will stick with them when they get older. It is so important not to swallow words and certainly not ה' 's name. Answering אמן to a ברכה of a 6-year-old is certainly okay as he is old enough to understand Who he is making the ברכה to. To answer אמן on a ברכה made by a child younger than 6 is not allowed if you are saying to yourself as if it is obligatory, but if you are saying out loud in front of a child with the purpose of training them to also say אמן then one can say אמן. One is allowed to say ה' 's name when saying a whole פסוק. So certainly, while you are learning חומש or תנ"ך and you are saying a whole פסוק, you should say ה' 's name.

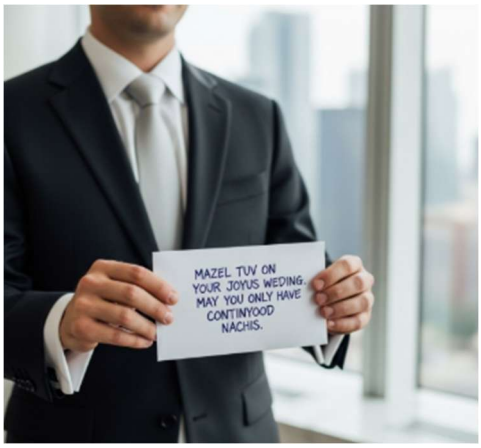
עי' או"ח סימן רט"ו סעי' ג' ומ"ב ס"ק י"ד. וארחות רבינו ח"ג עמוד רכ"ג בשם ר"ח קניבסקי ור' אלישב.

This week's questions:

1) **Pirkei Avos lists 48 prerequisites which are needed in order to acquire Torah, including, "Learning, listening, speaking clearly, understanding, etc." Why does this list include "simcha"? Is happiness a study tactic?**
2) **Hashem promises that if we follow the mitzvos, He will send us beracha, "V'hisigucha," "It will catch you." Are we running away from berachos such that they must catch us?**

THE TYPOS

Questions for discussion at your Shabbos table by Rabbi Yitzi Weiner



This week's Torah portion discusses Bikurim, one of the sources for the mitzvah of expressing gratitude. That brings us to the following true story:

One day, Mordechai asked his neighbor, Yaakov, "Are you going to the Greenberg wedding tonight?"

"Yes," Yaakov replied.

"I really wanted to go," Mordechai said, "but I'll be out of town. Could I trouble you to bring this envelope to the chosson's father?"

"Of course, I'd be happy to," Yaakov answered.

The envelope was clearly a wedding gift. On the back, a short letter was written. That night, Yaakov attended the wedding. When it came time to hand the envelope to Mr. Greenberg, Yaakov noticed the letter. It was written in block letters and filled with glaring spelling mistakes. While the message warmly expressed Mordechai's appreciation, the errors were so obvious that Yaakov worried it might embarrass Mordechai.

Now Yaakov faced a dilemma. He considered three options: 1.) He could deliver the envelope exactly as it was, but that might risk Mordechai's embarrassment. 2.) He could open the envelope without reading its contents, copy the message onto a new envelope in his own handwriting, and correct the spelling. Or, 3.) He could refrain from delivering it altogether, and wait until Mordechai returned so that he could rewrite the letter himself.

Yaakov felt torn. According to the Torah, what was the right thing to do?

This question was eventually brought before Rav Zilberstein: According to the Torah, how should Yaakov act? Should he follow Mordechai's instructions precisely, risking his embarrassment? Should he take the initiative to rewrite the message and deliver it? Or should he hold off entirely and let Mordechai handle it later? What do you think? See Vharev Na Hebrew Edition Volume Four Page 204

Regarding last week's question about the e-bike that was replaced with an old bike, Rav Zilberstein (Vharev Na Hebrew Edition Volume Four Page 194) writes that we have a principle called stam g'neiva yei'ush ba'alim, which means there is an assumption that the owner gives up hope, is meya'eish, when something is stolen. Therefore, in both scenarios, whether the thief gave his own old bike or stole another bike, the replacement bike may be kept. This is because either it was given by the thief or the original owner had already given up hope of recovering it. However, while the finder may use the bike, it would be considered lifnim mishuras hadin, beyond the letter of the law, to make an extra effort by putting up signs in the area to see if anyone lost a bike. Still, in the meantime, the finder is permitted to use it.

ALL OF THIS RIPPLE EFFECT, GENEROSITY, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND HEIGHTENED TORAH STUDY, WAS TRACED BACK TO THAT ONE HEARTFELT "GOOD MORNING" SAID WITH A SMILE

Rav Avigdor Miller often spoke about the importance of giving a warm greeting with a smile. He once shared the following story:

A man named Chaim passed away and came before the Heavenly Court. As he looked at his record, he was astonished. Page after page showed hours of Torah learning and chidushei Torah written in his name. He was bewildered, because he had been a simple man who had never accomplished such things.

It was explained to him that there was no mistake. One morning, as Chaim was leaving shul, he greeted another man named Moshe warmly. That cheerful greeting lifted Moshe's mood. Soon afterward, Moshe was approached by a rosh yeshiva for a donation. Since Moshe was in good spirits, he gave far more generously than usual. The donation encouraged the rosh yeshiva, who entered the yeshiva uplifted. His happiness carried into his shiur, which he delivered with greater passion and energy. Inspired by his enthusiasm, the talmidim pushed themselves harder in their learning.

All of this ripple effect, generosity, encouragement, and heightened Torah study, was traced back to that one heartfelt "Good morning" said with a smile. (From Rav Avigdor Miller, His Life and Revolution, by Yaakov Y. Hamburger, Judaica Press. Reprinted with permission from Table Talk.)

Answers to this week's questions:

1) ***One can learn more in one hour of happy learning, than he can in many hours of sad learning. Also, Hashem enjoys the Torah, so we should too! - Ruch Chaim***
2) ***Typically, a person becomes excited by even a minor financial gain. However, when he is absorbed with Torah thoughts, his mind rises above such petty concerns. Hashem promises that we will be given such tremendous beracha that even when a person is preoccupied with Torah and "fleeing" involvement in olam hazeh, the beracha will be so big that it will "catch" even his attention. - Netziv***

Learning for the month of Elul has been dedicated in memory of
Mordechai Ben Carmela A"h
Dorit Rivka Bat Leah A"h
Dedicated by the Matityahu family