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PARASHAH

SERVING HASHEM WITH SIMCHAH

Touched By the Parashah by Rabbi Yechiel Spero

Parashas Ki Savo contains a chilling description of the terrible curses that may befall the Jewish people. Yet the Torah gives a surprising reason for these punishments—not one of the gravest sins, but a failure to serve Hashem with joy: “*Tachas asher lo avadta es Hashem Elokecha be’simchah* — Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, with *simchah*” (*Devarim* 28:47).

How can the punishment fit the crime?

To understand this, we must first define *simchah*.

A humorous parable tells of an alien who landed on earth and asked to be shown where people go to enjoy themselves. His guide brought him to a gym.

The alien was horrified. One man strained beneath a barbell; another ran breathlessly around a track. “Why did you bring me to a place of torture?” he asked.

His guide explained that these people were not only happy to be there — in fact, they were paying for the privilege. They had set a goal of becoming healthy and fit, and every difficult step brought them closer to it.

True happiness is not the same as fleeting fun. *Simchah* is the deep satisfaction of living with purpose. When a person knows his goal, even struggle can bring joy.

Now that we know what *simchah* really is, the severity of not serving Hashem with joy can be easier to understand. The Chofetz Chaim illustrated this idea with another parable.

There was once a poor fellow whose family was starving and miserable. They had no food to eat, and there was no end in sight to their suffering. One day, the pauper passed a lottery booth. Although he had only one coin in his pocket, he whispered a prayer and bought a ticket.

A few hours later, he discovered that he had won the lottery! He ran home to tell his wife and children that they would suffer no more. When they heard the good news, they could hardly contain their joy. The entire family began jumping, singing, and dancing.

A stranger passed by the home. He knew that the family was terribly poor and could not imagine what they were celebrating. His curiosity getting the better of him, he knocked on the door.

The man answered with a huge smile. “I am the richest man in town!” he exclaimed. “I won the lottery!”

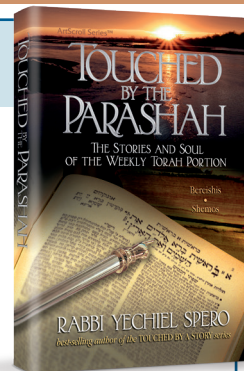
The stranger was confused. “But right now, you are still so poor. Why are you so happy?”

“You fool!” the winner replied. “I have the winning ticket in my hand. Who cares what my house looks like right now? In a short while, I will cash in my ticket and become the richest man in the region. What I have right now is irrelevant. It is what I am going to have that matters.”

The Chofetz Chaim explains that although we may experience suffering in This World, if we truly believed that we were holding the winning ticket in our hands, we would be filled with joy.

And, indeed, we are all holding winning tickets.

This helps us understand why the Torah treats the seemingly insignificant sin of lacking happiness and joy so seriously. *Simchah* is not merely a pleasant emotion; it reflects a person’s recognition that his life has purpose and that his service of Hashem is leading him toward eternal reward. A lack of *simchah* can therefore reveal a lack of faith in Hashem and in the precious destiny awaiting us. 



THE MYSTERY OF FORTY: THE MIKVEH OF ELUL

Inspired By Time by Rabbi Yehoshua Frankenhuis



Every moment of life is precious, but the days from Rosh Chodesh Elul through Yom Kippur possess a unique power. Together, these forty days form a “mikveh in time,” through which a person can be purified, transformed, and renewed.

The number forty repeatedly appears at moments of rebirth. The rain of the *Mabul* fell for forty days, cleansing a corrupted world and preparing it for a new beginning. Moshe Rabbeinu spent forty days on Har Sinai, elevated by Torah until he could descend carrying the *luchos* engraved by Hashem. A human embryo is considered formed only after forty days have passed, when it takes on a new halachic identity.

A *mikveh*, too, must contain forty *se'ah*. With even slightly less, it cannot purify. Once the measure is complete, however, a person descends impure and emerges renewed.

The Maharal explains that forty represents complete transformation — the passage from one state of existence into another. This was also the purpose of Klal Yisrael's forty years in the *Midbar*. A nation weakened by fear after the sin of the *meraglim* was not ready to enter Eretz Yisrael. Forty years sustained by the *mahn*, the *Ananei HaKavod*, and the *Be'er Miriam* produced a new generation, prepared to enter the Land with *emunah*.

Each year, Hashem gives us such a cycle. From Rosh Chodesh Elul through Yom Kippur are forty days — the very days when Moshe ascended Har Sinai after the sin of the *eigel* and descended on Yom Kippur with the second *luchos*. They became days of forgiveness, closeness, and Divine favor.

This truth took on almost unimaginable meaning in Elul 5701 (1941), in the Kovno Ghetto. Thousands had recently been murdered at the Ninth Fort, and nearly every family had lost someone. Yet one night, beneath the ruins of a shul, a group gathered secretly to recite *Selichos*.

Among them was R' Ephraim Oshry, who continued

answering agonizing questions of halachah even in the ghetto. As the whispered *Ashamnu* rose from the cellar, a young man broke down.

“Rebbi,” he cried, “what meaning can Elul have in this *Gehinnom*? Outside they slaughter us, and inside we are starving. What are these forty days worth, when the world is burning?”

R' Oshry answered, “A *mikveh* must contain forty *se'ah*. Thirty-nine cannot purify. But once the forty are complete, a Jew immerses and emerges new.

“Elul is our *mikveh*. Every day we cling to Hashem, every *Selichos* we whisper, every kapitel of *Tehillim* recited with tears, is another drop. One day may seem too weak, one prayer too faint, one heart too broken. But drop by drop, we fill the *mikveh*. When Yom Kippur comes and the forty days are complete, Hashem Himself immerses us in His mercy. Even here, even now: *Mah mikveh metaher es hatemei'im, af HaKadosh Baruch Hu metaher es Yisrael.*”

The room erupted in tears, and the *Selichos* continued with renewed strength. In the darkness of the ghetto, those forty days became a *mikveh* of hope. The Nazis could torment their bodies, but they could not sever their bond with Hashem or prevent their *ne-shamah* from emerging pure.

The words *Ani l'dodi v'dodi li* — *I am to my Beloved, and my Beloved is to me* spell Elul with their first letters; their final letters are four *yuds*, totaling forty. Elul begins when we turn toward Hashem — and Hashem turns toward us.

Every *tefillah*, act of self-restraint, and sincere step of *teshuvah* adds another drop. These days are not isolated moments of inspiration, but one continuous process. By beginning at Rosh Chodesh and guarding each day, we fill the measure until, on Yom Kippur, Hashem purifies us and enables us to emerge renewed. 

	SHABBOS AUGUST 29 ז' אלול	SUNDAY AUGUST 30 י' אלול	MONDAY AUGUST 31 י"א אלול	TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 1 י"ב אלול	WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 2 י"ג אלול	THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 3 י"ד אלול	FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 4 י"ה אלול
BAVLI	Chullin 121	Chullin 122	Chullin 123	Chullin 124	Chulin 125	Chulin 126	Chulin 127
YERUSHALMI	Yevamos 21	Yevamos 22	Yevamos 23	Yevamos 24	Yevamos 25	Yevamos 26	Yevamos 27
MISHNAH	Keilim 27:8-9	Keilim 27:10-11	Keilim 27:12-28:1	Keilim 28:2-3	Keilim 28:4-5	Keilim 28:6-7	Keilim 28:8-9
KITZUR	128:1-4	128:5-11	128:12-End	129:1-7	129:8-13	129:14-19	129:20-End
ORAYSA	Yevamos Chazara 99a-100a	Yevamos 100b Chazara 100a	Yevamos 101a Chazara 100b	Yevamos 101b Chazara 101a	Yevamos 102a Chazara 101b	Yevamos 102b Chazara 102a	Yevamos Chazara 100b-101a

תְּכִלֶּה שָׁנָה וְקִלְלוֹתֶיהָ, תַּחֲלֵל שָׁנָה וּבִרְכוּתֶיהָ

*May the year and its curses cease, may the year and its blessings begin.**(See Megillah 31a and the piyyut, Achos Ketanah, recited by many congregations on the first night of Rosh Hashanah)*

R' Yaakov Moshe Twerski reads novel meaning into the above blessing commonly shared in advent of the new year.

Instead of reading *tichleh* as addressing the previous year itself, he reads it as a directive to us all to shift perspective from negative to positive.

Tichleh — stop talking about the troubles you have experienced in the past year.

Tachel — start expressing appreciation for all the gifts you have received!

Replace your complaints with gratitude by focusing on all the positive blessings the last 12 months have brought to your door.

Chazal inform us that *simana milsa hi* — symbolism has a tangible effect. We are therefore instructed on Rosh Hashanah to partake of *simanim*, specific foods whose names allude to the blessings we hope will be included in the new year ahead. (*Kereisos* 5a)

The Sfas Emes adds depth to this custom and its meaning. It is not for naught that we engage in this practice of symbolism specifically with food.

Eating fuels the body but provides no nourishment for the soul. It is seemingly unspiritual, a totally unremarkable and earthly pursuit.

Only people connected to Heaven while on Earth have the insight to turn base pleasure into a vehicle for prayer. Ingesting pomegranates becomes an ap-

peal for our merits to increase and consuming the head of a fish or a lamb is an entreaty for a seat at the head of the table. Dates,

leeks, and beets declare war on our enemies, and simple carrots invoke a deep-seated wish for Hashem's abundant merit.

Everything in this world can be made holy, and eating the *simanim* on Rosh Hashanah relates this even to food.

The Mesillas Yesharim in his introduction strikes a similar chord. He famously writes that when a Jew cleaves to his Creator, he is not just uplifting his own soul. The entire world, and all that is within it, ascends along with him. He points to the stones on Har HaMoriah that fought over the privilege of having Yaakov's head rest on its surface. Even stones are rooted in holiness and strive for perfection.

Every action we make influences the entire gamut of creation.

All these interesting foods are not placed on the table tonight in the interest of expanding the menu. Instead, they invite us to understand the true purpose of eating, and by extension, the true purpose of all

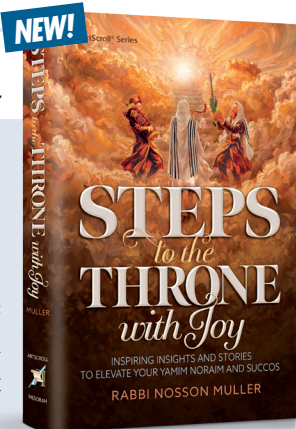
earthly pleasure.

When a Jew eats with the proper intent, he is indulging in a spiritual feast. He uplifts the world with every prayer-infused bite! 🍴



Simanim

TICHLEH — STOP TALKING ABOUT THE TROUBLES YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED IN THE PAST YEAR.
TACHEL — START EXPRESSING APPRECIATION FOR ALL THE GIFTS YOU HAVE RECEIVED!



THE WEEKLY QUESTION

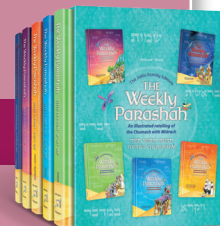
WIN A \$36
ARTSCROLL
GIFT CARD!

What declaration does a farmer make on the last day of Pesach of Year 4 of the Shemittah cycle?

Kids, please ask your parents to email the answer to shabbosquestion@artscroll.com by this Wednesday to be entered into a weekly raffle to win a \$36 ARTSCROLL GIFT CARD! Be sure to include your full name, city, and contact info. Names of winners will appear in a future edition. HINT: The answer can be found in *The Jaffa Family Edition Weekly Parashah*.

The winner of the question for Eikev is: AARON WEILL, Lakewood, NJ

Question for Eikev was: Can you find a part of the parashah that is found in the first berachah of Shemoneh Esrei?
 Eikev Answer: In perek 10, pasuk 17 it says HaKel, HaGadol, HaGibbor, v'HaNora



PART 25: THE STONE CHUMASH: A REVOLUTION CARVED IN STONE

The quick and widespread popularity of the ArtScroll Siddur taught us something very important. Although there was a thirst for classic *sefarim* in the everyday language of English-speaking Jews, there was an even greater need to present the *daily* tools of Jewish life in terms that helped people understand them better. So the logical next step after the ArtScroll Siddur was the Chumash.

The Alter of Kelm, a leading disciple of R' Yisrael Salanter and one of the greatest architects of the Musar Movement, made a penetrating observation. We were all introduced to the narrative of the Chumash when we were little children, so naturally it was presented in terms that a child could understand. If we can put his observation into the modern idiom, the story of Yaakov and Eisav was taught on a superficial level, and children can think of them similarly as they do good guys and bad guys, cops and robbers, or cowboys and Indians. Indeed, most illustrated children's books show Eisav as an ill-clad ruffian with a sword and Yaakov as a yeshivah *bachur* huddled over his *gemara*. The Alter observed that most people grow up with that immature image – unless they take the trouble to study and understand the Chumash on a mature level, which so many simply do not do.

Popular Chumashim with English commentaries were available at the time, but *Gedolei Yisrael* encouraged us to produce a work that would cite only traditional rabbinic sources, transmitting strictly unadulterated Torah. Guided by our mission to faithfully fulfill their mandates, we undertook the creation of a one-volume Chumash featuring an original translation, generally following Rashi. Its flowing commentary would have to explain and inspire, and reflect unwavering fidelity to *Chazal* and the classic early and later commentators, while incorporating insights from



Mr. Irving I. Stone

contemporary Torah leaders and thinkers. Introductions would clarify difficult topics and demonstrate the Chumash's relevance to issues facing today's Jew.

Like all major undertakings, this one required funding. Thanks to R' Moshe Mendel Glustein, Rosh Yeshivah of Montreal, a contact was made with Mr. Irving Stone of Cleveland. Mr. Stone was a major advocate for Jewish education and Rabbis Glustein and Scherman presented the proposal to him. He warmly agreed to dedicate what became the Stone Edition of the Chumash.

The enormously formidable task of writing it was entrusted to Rabbi Scherman due to his vast knowledge, sound judgment, and engaging style.

R' Zlotowitz read every word, and his incisive comments and suggestions were an integral part of the final product, as were the comments of R' Hersh Goldwurm and R' Avie Gold. Obviously, the commentary and Overviews of the original ArtScroll Bereishis and Vayikra served as a major source.

Rabbi Scherman was asked how he chose what to include. He says that he looked at himself as an ordinary reader trying to understand the Chumash. In other words, he wrote for the reader and explained the Chumash in terms that would benefit and fill the needs of the reader. Did he succeed? Thirty-three years of success have provided the answer.

The Stone Chumash was published in July 1993 and was an instant best-seller. All parts of the Orthodox community, and many beyond, embraced it, and it has become the standard Chumash in shuls and homes, all over the world, wherever people speak or read English. Well over a million copies are in print.

Inspired by the success of the Stone Chumash, Morry Weiss, Mr. Stone's son-in-law and associate, later dedicated The Sapirstein Edition of Rashi, a groundbreaking undertaking that ushered in a new phase of ArtScroll.

UP NEXT: The Gedolim Approve and Encourage