



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES,
OU ISRAEL

Our Sedra opens with the words:

Vhaya Eikev Tishmaun, eit hamishpatim haeleh, ushmartem vaasitem otam, v'shamar Hashem Elokecha lecha et HaBrit v'et HaChesed asher nishba laAvotecha.

And it shall be, if you will heed these statutes, and fulfill and do them, Hashem your G-d will fulfill the covenant and Kindness He promised to your ancestors.

The great Chasidic Master, **Reb Mordechai of Lekovitch zy'a**, offered a very novel interpretation of this *pasuk*. The *Rebbe* points to a teaching from the *Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh*, that the word *V'Haya*-Literally and it shall be, connotes *simcha*-joy, while the word *ekev*-which literally mean the heel, or bottom, connotes humility.

The *Rebbe* explained if one merits to personify these two character traits, of serving *Hashem* with joy and humility, he will indeed succeed in heeding the words of the *Torah HaKadosha*, succeed in fulfilling the *mitzvot*, and merit that in turn, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* will bless us through his covenant of kindness.

Similarly **Rabbeinu B'Chaya** taught that *"the simcha one experiences as they perform*

a mitzva, is a mitzva in and of itself!"

But how are we to condition ourselves to feel joy in each and every mitzva? How exactly are we meant to see each and every mitzva as a joy filled experience?

There is a well known teaching the *Mishna* in *Masechet Makkot* : *Rebbe Chananya ben Akashya omer: Ratza HaKadosh Baruch Hu Lzakot et Yisrael, Lefichach hirba Lahem Torah Umitzvot...Rabbi Chananya Ben Akashya taught: HaKadosh Baruch wishes to bestow merit upon the Jewish People, therefore he gave them so many mitzvot within the Torah....*

At face value, this teaching seems contradictory. If *Hashem* truly wants us to succeed and to receive merit, why then are there so many laws and statutes, which we are expected to fulfill? Seemingly having so many regulations might for many seem intimidating, or as potential obstacles to success. How are we to understand this teaching?

The **Rambam**, in his commentary on this *mishna*, brilliantly clarifies the message that *Rebbe Chananya* intended to convey. The *Rambam* explains, that since *Hashem* has given us so many *mitzvot*, it is impossible for one to go through an entire lifetime, and not have at least one *mitzva* that they excel at and fulfill completely, and through that one *mitzva* they give eternal life to their soul.

The *Rambam*, in this important insight, teaches us to pivot in our definition and relationship to *mitzvot*, to begin to see *Mitzvot* not



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solely as obligations, but more so as opportunities. Opportunities to demonstrate our fidelity to *Hashem* and the *Torah HaKedosha*, and simultaneously to feel *Hashem's* covenantal commitment and fidelity to each one of us.

Yehi Ratson, may each of us indeed merit to take to heart these two important insights, to see each and every *mitzva* as an opportunity to serve *Hashem* with joy and humility, and to merit to receive the blessing of the promise of Divine Kindness inherent in each and every moment. ■

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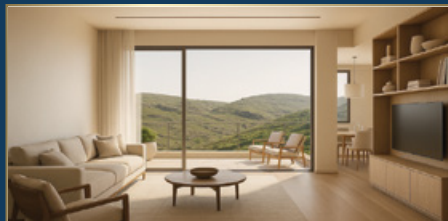
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