



TORAH 4 TEENS

BY TEENS

NCSY ISRAEL



YOSEF GINSBERG
REGIONAL DIRECTOR,
NCSY ISRAEL

SIMCHA LE'ARTZECHA

Parshat Ki Tavo opens with the words **וְהָיָה כִּי תָבוֹא אֶל הָאָרֶץ...** "And it will be when you enter the Land (of Israel)." Many commentaries discuss why we need the extra word *vehaya*, "and it will be." In my love for Israel, the Ohr Hachayim Hakadosh spoke to me. He says that 'Vehaya' is a *lashon of Simcha*, and there is no greater Simcha than that of the mitzvah of dwelling in the Land of Israel.

The Rambam tells us that for a mitzvah to be done properly, it needs the proper *kavanah*. Furthermore, in order to have the proper *kavanah*, the mitzvah needs to be done with Simcha. The question then begs to be asked: what about the mitzvot where you are commanded to be sad, like that of mourning? How are you supposed to have Simcha? Unfortunately, this is a question every Jew faced this year.

I'd like to suggest that Simcha does not only mean happiness. It could mean happiness, but first and foremost I would define it as contentment. Not everything in Israel is easy or makes one happy. Not everything

tastes as good as where one used to live or runs as smoothly as things used to. Coming to the Land of Israel is a sacrifice and won't always make one happy. But knowing that you're in the right place, where you belong, with your people, and being content with that knowledge can trump any level of happiness. It gives one the ability to smile when they are sad and laugh when they are happy. We should be content and confident in knowing that as hard as it may be and with all its challenges, we are living the word of Hashem.

Shabbat Shalom!



ZVI FISHER
11th GRADE, JERUSALEM

WHY ARE WE WHISPERING THE LOUDEST WORDS IN THE TORAH?

This week's parsha, Ki Tavo, contains the *Tochacha* - dozens of *pesukim* describing what will happen to us if we fail. Rebuke isn't unusual in the Torah. What's strange is that this *aliyah* is read especially quietly and quickly - and we read it now, in Elul, the month when *tochacha* is most on our minds. Is this really how *tochacha* is supposed to be delivered? The Rambam tells us the opposite: *tochacha* should be gentle, private, spoken softly, and repeated (Rambam, *Hilchot Deot* 6:7). So what's actually going on here?

Rabbeinu Bachya (Devarim 28:47) notices that the Torah doesn't list our sins as the cause of these curses. It gives one reason — **תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר** — because we **לֹא עָבַדְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה** — because we

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didn't serve Hashem with joy. Strikingly, this same parsha opens with bikkurim, commanding us to rejoice in all the good Hashem gave us (26:11). The parsha that opens by commanding joy ends by naming its absence as the root of everything else. Maybe that's the answer to our question: this tochacha couldn't be gentle and private, because the failure wasn't one sin you could quietly point to. It was the joy missing from the whole relationship, so it had to be named for the whole nation, all at once.

This idea comes to life in something as ordinary as taking out the garbage. Do it while complaining the whole way, and you've technically finished the task but not given it your heart. Hashem wasn't punishing us for skipping the mitzvot. He was responding to mitzvot done without the heart behind them.

At the end of the day, it doesn't matter that we fall. We fall, and we sometimes feel incompleteness that's part of being human. What matters is what we do with the life we're given: that we serve Hashem, and live, with genuine joy. ■

Shabbat afternoon
Parshat HaShavua Shiur
Given by Rabbi Chanoch Yeres
At Beit Knesset Ohel Yitzchak
Rechov Washington at 5:30pm

As Elul is here, and Rosh Hashanah the Day of Remembrance draws near, we remember to help our over 200 poor and needy families.

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