



SIMCHAT SHMUEL

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Our *sedra* contains the account of the birth of *Yitzchak*, the fulfillment of one of the most extraordinary promises in the entire *Torah*. After years of waiting, *Avraham* and *Sara* are blessed with a child, and *Sara* exclaims, צָחַק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹקִים — “Hashem has brought me laughter” (Bereisheet 21:6). The joy surrounding *Yitzchak*’s birth is so profound that it becomes part of his very identity. His name will forever remind us of the wonder, gratitude, and joy that accompany the fulfillment of what once seemed impossible.

Yet the *Torah* records another celebration associated with *Yitzchak*: וַיַּעַק אֲבִרְהָם מִשְׁתֶּה גָדוֹל בְּיוֹם הַגְּמֹל אֶת יִצְחָק — “Avraham made a great feast on the day *Yitzchak* was weaned” (21:8). The **Chatam Sofer**, building on an interpretation found in earlier sources, offers a remarkable reading of the word *higamel*. Rather than referring simply to the day *Yitzchak* was weaned, the word may be read as ה' ג' מל: ה' and ג' represent five and three, totaling eight, while מל alludes to circumcision. The verse thus hints at *Avraham*’s celebration of *Yitzchak*’s *brit milah* on the eighth day. This interpretation is rooted in the teaching cited by **Tosafot** in *Masechet Shabbat* (130a), based on **Pirkei DeRebbi Eliezer**. The **Chatam Sofer** takes this idea a step

further, explaining that *Avraham Avinu* not only celebrated the *brit* itself with a festive meal, but also commemorated its anniversary each year with a celebration.

There is something deeply meaningful about the *Torah*’s association of this mile-

stone with a *mishteh gadol*, a great feast. A *brit mila* is an intensely personal and meaningful moment for a family, yet its significance extends far beyond the individual child. It marks his entry into the covenant of *Avraham Avinu* and his place in the unfolding story of the Jewish people. The celebration gives expression to the joy of that sacred moment, transforming a

family’s gratitude into a shared experience.

Indeed, **Rabbeinu Bachya** points to this verse as a source for the enduring Jewish custom of celebrating a *brit mila* with a *seudat mitzva*. Such a meal is more than an opportunity to gather and rejoice. It gives expression to the *simcha* of fulfilling a *mitzva*, inviting family and community to share in the gratitude and holiness of the occasion. The fulfillment of a *mitzva* becomes not only an individual or familial milestone, but an opportunity to bring others into its joy.

Perhaps this is one of the lessons of *Yitzchak*’s birth and the celebrations surrounding him. The fulfillment of a divine



promise is not meant to remain a private experience of gratitude. Its joy can - and should - be shared. The *mitzvot* of the *Torah* shape our lives, but they also create moments in which we pause, gather, and recognize the privilege of living within the covenant of *Hashem*. In this way, *simcha shel mitzva* becomes something greater than personal happiness: it becomes a source of connection, strengthening our bonds with one another and with the generations that came before us.

As we recall the birth of *Yitzchak Avinu* and the celebration of his *brit mila*, may we each merit to experience the enduring joy of *simcha shel mitzva*, to recognize the many blessings woven into our lives, and to find meaningful opportunities to express our gratitude with joy and share that *simcha* with others. ■



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