

The Joy of Doing A Mitzvah

פרשת כי תבוא

“Rebbe Chananiah ben Akashia says: ‘The Holy Blessed One, desired to make Israel worthy. Therefore, He gave them much Torah [to study] and many commandments [to perform] etc. (Makos 3:16).’” The Rambam comments on this Mishnah; “It is a fundamental belief of the Torah that if a person fulfills one of the 613 Mitzvos appropriately, without impure intent, and does it lovingly for the sake of the Mitzvah, he will merit life in the next world. Regarding this, Rebbe Chananiah commented that through our increased opportunity for Mitzvos, it will be impossible for a person to not perform at least one Mitzvah with complete perfection.” We see from this Rambam the importance of performing a Mitzvah with proper intent, as well as the challenge in doing so. In this week’s Parsha, Rabbeinu Bachya shares with us an insight that can help reduce the challenge in achieving perfection in Mitzvos.

The Pasuk states that the devastation and tragedy that will occur in the Galus will be “because they did not serve Hashem with joy etc.” (28:47) Rabbeinu Bachya comments; “The Torah is punishing you for not serving Hashem with joy because

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a person is obligated in joy while performing a Mitzvah. The Simcha in the Mitzvah is its own Mitzvah, and there is a separate reward reserved exclusively for the Simcha. Therefore a person is punished for not performing Mitzvos with Simcha. It is for this reason that it is necessary for a person to do Mitzvos with joy and perfect intent. This idea is also expressed in a Medrash in Rus. The Medrash states “If Reuven would have known that Hashem would write about him ‘And Reuven heard and he saved him from their hand,’ he would have brought Yosef back to his father while carrying him on his shoulders. If Aharon would have known that Hashem would write about him ‘That he saw him and he rejoiced in his heart,’ he would have greeted Moshe

with musical instruments etc.’”

At first glance this Rabbeinu Bachya requires further clarification. He seems to be saying that the obligation to serve Hashem with joy and perfect intent, stems from the fact that the Simcha is a separate Mitzvah, and you are rewarded and punished for the joy. However, this can’t be what the Rabbeinu Bachya means, as reward and punishment don’t cause an obligation, but are rather the result of an obligation. In addition, perfect intent can’t be generated by rewards and punishments. Furthermore what is the relevance of the Medrash regarding Reuven and Aharon?

Upon further reflection, it is clear that the Rabbeinu Bachya is not referring to our obligation to serve Hashem with joy, but rather to the root cause of the Simcha. Rabbeinu Bachya is telling us that since Simcha is it’s own Mitzvah, with its own independent reward and punishment, it shows how valuable and important it is to Hashem. That realization of the significance of the Simcha to Hashem generates the Simcha. This idea is supported by the Medrash. The Medrash illustrates that if Reuven, Aharon, and Boaz would have realized how dear and precious their actions were to Hashem they would have done them with increased Simcha. We can glean from here a powerful lesson into perfecting our Mitzvah performance. The more we realize how precious and valued that perfection is to Hashem, the more we can achieve it.

BASED ON THE WEEKLY SHMUSS GIVEN BY HARAV SHAYA COHEN, ROSH HAYESHIVA ZICHRON ARYEH

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