

Kinder Torah[®]

Parashas Eikev

Simcha Shel Mitzvah

"Chaim, what a beautiful smile you have on your face."

"I am very happy, Abba."

"That is wonderful, Chaim. May I ask why?"

"I just did a small mitzvah - one that I have never done before in my life."

"How can a small mitzvah lead to such great happiness, Chaim?"

"We learned the answer to that question in our parashas ha'shavuah class, Abba. The Ohr HaChaim HaKadosh quotes the Medrash (Vayikra Rabba 11:7), which explains that the very first word in the parasha, *'vihoya'*, always denotes *simcha* (happiness). What is the great *simcha* here in our parasha? 'This will be the reward - *'eikev'* - when you listen to these laws.' Rashi explains that the word *'eikev'* also means heel. If a person will listen to (and fulfill) all of the mitzvos, even those seemingly insignificant ones that people step on with their heel (so to speak), his heart will be happy."

"Fantastic, Chaim."

"Pirkei Avos reinforces this when it states, 'The reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah' (4:2). The reward for fulfilling a mitzvah is *simcha*, which is itself a mitzvah."

"Chaim, the word *'vihoya'* also appears in the parasha at the beginning of the second paragraph of Kriyas Shema, 'It will be that if you listen to My commandments' (Devarim 11:13)."

"Abba, the Ohr HaChaim on that verse relates that *simcha* is a prerequisite for performing a mitzvah. Any other happiness is futile, as Shlomo HaMelech said, 'Joy, what does it accomplish?' (Koheles 2:2). Now you see why I am so happy, Abba. I did a mitzvah!"

Lev. I am going to send you for a stress test. This will give us a better indication if anything is wrong with your heart."

"Thank you, doctor."

Mr. Lev proceeded to the cardiology clinic. There, he met the heart specialist who would perform the test.

"Shalom Mr. Lev. I see you have come for a stress test. Let me explain to you what is involved. We will hook you up to a monitor, which will measure how well your heart is working. It is relatively easy for your heart to pump the blood properly when you are resting. When you are under stress, we see how well it really works. Therefore, we will put you on this treadmill and make you walk briskly on an incline. Your heart will begin to pump harder and harder. The monitor will show what is inside your heart - if it is really strong."

"I'm ready doctor. However, I must tell you that this physical test of my heart is almost a parable to the spiritual test that the hearts of the entire Jewish people



underwent over 3000 years ago in the desert."

"Sounds fascinating, Mr. Lev. Please tell me about it."

"The verse states, 'You shall remember the entire road on which Hashem, your G-d, led you these forty years in the desert in order to test you, to know what is in your heart, whether you will observe His mitzvos or not' (Devarim 8:2). What was the test? Total dependence upon Hashem. Following Him into an unlivable desert, and staying there for forty years with no provisions or normal shelter. Dependent totally upon His Kind Hand for daily bread, water, and safety from the elements. Learning Torah and performing mitzvos was their only priority in life. Only those who have total trust in Him can live like that for forty years. The *meforshim* have various explanations of the words, 'To know what is in your heart.'"

"Please share them with me."

"The Sforno explains that passing the test revealed to the Heavenly Angels that the Jewish people were truly on a higher level than they were. The Keli Yakar expresses a similar idea. The word for test - *'li'nasosecha'* is similar to the word *'nes'* - pole. When we passed the test, it was as

if our hearts were displayed on a pole for all of the nations of the world to see. They ask, 'Why does this nation merit such success when they observe Hashem's mitzvos?' The answer is, because they sacrificed everything they had to serve Him in the desert for forty years. No one can claim that we do not deserve preferential treatment. We earned it."

"This is so interesting."

"The Ramban has a different approach. Hashem wanted to know (so to speak) if we would keep the mitzvos forever under the most difficult of conditions. Therefore, He tested us. If we observed the mitzvos under the harsh conditions of the Midbar, then we would always observe them. Lastly, the Malbim highlights a different aspect of a test - to strengthen the one being tested. If I took this stress test every day, doctor, the exercise would surely strengthen my heart. Similarly, the tests of the forty years of the Midbar strengthened the *ruchnius* (spirituality) of Klal Yisrael, and weakened the *gashmius* (physical desires). Only then were they ready to receive Hashem's great gift of Eretz Yisrael. This test developed their hidden potential and brought out their strength."

"Mr. Lev, I could sit here and listen for hours. However, we must begin the stress test. We want to see what is in your physical heart. We already know the condition of your spiritual heart. It had been beating strongly for over 3000 years. Ever since the stress test of the Midbar."

Kinderlach . . .

What is in your heart? Is it strong or weak? There is only one way to find out - test it. Put it under stress and see how it performs. Did your friend constantly bother you today? That is a great stress test of your patience. Did you encounter a difficult sugya (subject) in the Gemora? A real test of your mind. Did someone need your help? You have encountered test of your middah of chessed (kindness). Did Imma ask you to do something that you did not want to do? Your obedience is being tested. Did you have a great desire to eat cookies shortly before dinner? A test of your control over your tayvas (desires). We have so many tests, kinderlach. However, they are all for the good - to reveal what is in our heart. They show us how much we have accomplished, and they help us to grow. Welcome the tests, kinderlach. They are very good for you.

Parasha Questions:

- Who made the aron for the second luchos? What was it used for after the Mishkan was built? (10:1 and Rashi)
- Why did the tribe of Levi have no inherited lands in Eretz Yisrael? (10:9 and Rashi)
- What does Hashem request from us? (10:12-13)

Kinderlach . . .

Are you feeling a little down? How can you cheer up? Find a mitzvah to do. Think about what a great deed you are about to do. You are going to serve Hashem. You are going to give Him nachas ruach. In return, He is going to give you double reward - in this world and the next. The reward in this world is another mitzvah - simcha! That makes you happy even before you perform the mitzvah. After you do the mitzvah - you are ecstatic. Be happy, kinderlach! Do mitzvos!

Stress Test

"Shalom, Mr. Lev, what brings you to my office?"

"Doctor, I am having heart palpitations."

"That can be serious, Mr. Lev. Let me check you out."

The doctor took Mr. Lev's blood pressure and pulse. He also listened to his heart-beat with the stethoscope.

"Everything appears to be normal, Mr.

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