

## A LESSON FROM THE PARASHA

# The Happiness Game




WHERE DO WE GET PEACE OF MIND? RAV SIMCHA Bunim Cohen decries a troublesome system of beliefs to which many fall prey. People believe peace of mind seems to come from success (*hatzlocha*). The problem is, we don't get to control success. We can do everything right, but if Hurricane Sandy is on the menu, millions are without running water, electricity, and other basic necessities. We cannot rely on our own success. Last week's *parasha* warned us not to become deluded into thinking that our strength is what makes things happen (7:17).

Alternatively, we can choose to be satisfied. I ask my students, "Does a piece of bread satisfy you?" I still am waiting for a student to say yes. I then press the students, "Could it?" I have yet to find a "no." Satisfaction is a state of mind. It is a choice. Circumstances do not determine whether one is satisfied. Only one's outlook on life makes that determination. The same is true every time we face adversity. Without a basic sense of satisfaction, we may be susceptible to a sad existence. However, if all we care about is peace of mind, we're missing out on living!


As Elul approaches, we may consider past years' resolutions. How is this year going to be different? Many may have already given up on setting any goals for fear we will not attain such a lofty level. Unfortunately, this is utter folly. If we don't give ourselves a chance, we will never overcome. How is it that we can challenge our status quo? How can we focus on being more than

satisfied? The answer is *simcha* (joy). Happiness is electrifying. It changes our outlook on everything. Our *avodas Hashem* is "more complete" when we approach *davening*, learning, and Shabbos from *simcha*.

Rabbi Eitan Feiner points out that *simcha* is mentioned seven times in this week's *parasha*, connoting that the idea is being explained in an unusually thorough way. He then quotes Rav Chaim Elazary, Rav of Canton, OH, who asks a famous question, "Where is the source for *simcha* (joy) in the Torah? Clearly, the Jews are punished for not serving Hashem correctly with *simcha*, but where is the Biblical warning (*azhara*)?" Rabbi Elazary finds an answer in the Sforno on this week's *parasha* (12:7). "Before Hashem you shall rejoice – Serve Hashem with joy the way any loving servant should. With your every undertaking – for then you will be successful in all you do, and become wise." In other words, our choice to be happy is the determination of our success in *avodas Hashem*, but how can we get there? How do we work on *simcha*, especially as a prerequisite to our *avodas Hashem*?

Rav Noach Weinberg suggested a way. He called it the Happiness Game. Take one hour out of one day. Spend the entire hour writing down all the things you appreciate. This list is meant to be exhaustive. Don't worry about repeating yourself. At the end of the hour, you have shocked your system. We have so much to be grateful for! It does not stop there. Now, every night for thirty days, read over the entire list, consciously. Think about each thing for a moment. Then add one thing every day. It takes five minutes a night. Appreciating all the *bracha* that Hashem gives us is an incredible way of increasing our happiness, and what better way is there to serve the Creator than to appreciate all His gifts? 

## A RIDDLE FOR YOU

Which vessel of the *mishkan* had a specific length, width, and thickness, but only two of these dimensions are actually mentioned in the Torah? 

See reverse side for the answer

## A TIMELY HALACHA

RABBI CHAIM HEINEMANN

We are about to enter the month of Elul, which is a time when there is a special closeness between *Klal Yisroel* and Hashem. It is a period when people should be working on improving their ways in preparation for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

Below are some of the *halachos* and *minhagim* that are practiced during this special month.

There are communities that are careful to recite *Seder Yom Kippur Kotton* specifically on Erev Rosh Chodesh Elul, even though it is not done throughout the year (*Mateh Efrayim O.C. 581:3*).

It is customary that when one writes a letter during the month of Elul (through Yom Kippur), to end off wishing the recipient a *Kasiva V'chasima Tova*. (Elya Rabbah 581:1 in the name of the *Maharil*).

Some have the practice of reading ten *kapitloch* (chapters) of *Sefer Tehillim* (Psalms) daily with the intention of completing the whole book twice before Rosh Hashanah (M.B. 581:1).

Almost everybody recites *L'Dovid Hashem ori ve'yishey* in the morning at the end of *Shachris* and in the evening. The *Medrash* writes that the first verse of this Psalm "Of David: Hashem is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" alludes to the High Holidays: Hashem is my light on Rosh Hashanah, and is my salvation on Yom Kippur. Because of this allusion, we say the psalm in the period before the High Holidays, the month of Elul. Those who daven *Nusach Askenaz* will insert

— CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE —>

Sponsorship & feedback:  
[parasha@cincynollel.org](mailto:parasha@cincynollel.org)

Sponsored anonymously in appreciation of the  
"Brunch N Learn Program"

Cincinnati Torah  
is distributed weekly  
to local shuls  
and the community  
e-mail list.



## A TIMELY HALACHA

CONTINUED

this special *Tefillah* at the conclusion of *Maariv* while *Nusach Sefard* will do so after *Mincha*.

A well-known *minhag* is to sound the *shofar* the whole month of Elul after *Shachris* except for Shabbos and the day before Rosh Hashanah. According to R' M. Feinstein (O.C. 4 21:5), if the *shofar* was not blown after *Shacharis* it should be blown after *Mincha* or *Maariv*.

Even though when there is a *bris* on Rosh Hashanah, we first circumcise the little boy and then blow the *shofar*, in Elul we first blow the *shofar* and only do the *bris* afterwards (R' S Kamenetzky in *Kovetz Halachos* p. 15).

Since the idea behind sounding the *shofar*, as explained by the Rambam (Maimonides), is to remind the listener that Rosh Hashanah is coming and one should amend/improve his ways, one does not need to be meticulous in regards to the *shofar* blasts throughout the month of Elul. One who missed part of the sounds, or did not hear the *shofar* at all, is not required to make it up. Additionally, one can sit while the *shofar* is being blown and, if necessary, a minor can blow for the entire congregation. Someone who finds himself in the middle of *Shemoneh Esrei* while the *shofar* is being sounded should stop for a moment and listen to the *shofar* (*Kovetz Halachos* p. 10). 🕊



Welcoming Rabbi Ephraim  
and Mrs. Shoshana Skolnik  
to the Kollel

## GREAT ACTS OF ORDINARY PEOPLE

MORRIS WAS IN DIRE STRAITS. HE HAD TRIED several business ventures to support his family, but one after another never took off, and he was left drowning in debt without an income to support his family or begin to pay his debts. He called his close friend Heshy, the owner of the town Jewish bookstore, to ask if they could sit down and talk things over. Heshy agreed and they went out a couple of days later. Morris began to pour out his heart while Heshy listened quietly. After Morris finished, Heshy sat deep in thought. Finally, he spoke. "I think you should open a Jewish bookstore." "What did you say!?" "You should open a Jewish bookstore." "I

Cincinnati Community Kollel

# אלול כולל Elul Kollel

From Rosh Chodesh Elul until Yom Kippur, increase your commitment to limud haTorah with an extra half hour a day!

Join the Elul Kollel Sunday through Thursday evenings from 8:30-9:00 pm.

The limud will be the 8th perek of Yoma and the halachos of the 5 inuyim of Yom Kippur.

To order your free Kintress or for more information on how to join, contact Rabbi David Tzvi Meissner 248-943-6890

know what you said! But how could I open a bookstore! You own a bookstore!" "Exactly. So I'll be able to help you get started and give help along the way." Morris was incredulous. He did not at first believe what his friend Heshy was saying, but as Heshy kept insisting Morris finally agreed to go ahead with it. Soon Heshy had Morris all set up in a bookstore of his own. When still it did not seem that the business would make it, Heshy suggested that Morris move closer to where the other Jewish shops were so that people would find it more convenient to pop in while shopping. The idea worked and finally, Morris was turning a profit and supporting his family 🕊

## RIDDLE ANSWER

The Kabbalah

### Kollel Women's Learning

Mrs. Shifra Motzen will be giving a shiur this Shabbos at the Heinemann home at 5-6pm. Babysitting will be provided.

Upcoming shiur by Rabbi Heinemann this Tuesday night from 7-7:45 on September 3rd at the Gabay residence, 6733 E. Farm Acres Dr.

## BEYOND ELLIS ISLAND

### THE TRAILBLAZERS, TRIALS, & TRIUMPHS OF AMERICAN JEWRY

RABBI MOSHE TZVI CRYSTAL

Among the *responsa* of the eminent Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, is a letter addressed to an unnamed rabbi of an unnamed Cincinnati *shul*. A question had been sent to Rabbi Berlin following an incident at this *shul* in Cincinnati. A new *aron kodesh* (holy ark) was being dedicated one Sunday at a great celebration, replete with dancing with the *sifrei Torah* that belonged to the *shul*. As the dancing finished, there was a motion among the congregants to end the ceremony with a public Torah reading in honor of the new *aron*. The rabbi, however, nixed the idea on the grounds that a public Torah reading on a day not instituted by the Sages would transgress the prohibition of "*bal tosef*," of adding to the *mitzvos* of the Torah. It seems that some congregants were not too happy. The rabbi wrote to Rabbi Berlin to ask if he had been correct in not allowing the Torah reading. Rabbi Berlin dismissed the reason that the rabbi gave, as he held *bal tosef* would not apply in the circumstances. He did, however, fully support the rabbi's decision for different reasons, and he ended with encouraging words to the rabbi who now encountered bitter feelings from some constituents. 🕊

SOURCES: Berlin, HaRav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin. *Siman* 16. *T'shuvos Meishiv Davar*.

Cincinnati Community Kollel

2241 Losantiville Avenue, Cincinnati OH 45237 • 513-631-1118 • kollel@shul.net • cincykollel.org

Please remember the Kollel with a gift in your will, trust, retirement account, or life insurance policy.



CREATE YOUR JEWISH  
LEGACY