

**You shall observe the month of springtime and perform the Pesach offering ... You shall count seven weeks for yourself ... You shall rejoice before Hashem... You shall make the festival of Succos for a seven-day period ... You shall rejoice on your festival ... And you will be completely joyous.
(16:1,10,11,13,14,15)**

The *Baal HaTurim* notes that with regard to the *Yom Tov* of *Pesach*, the Torah does not mention the *mitzvah* of *simchah*, joy. Concerning *Shavuos*, the Torah mentions *simchah* once, while regarding *Succos*, the Torah mentions it twice. He explains that, on *Pesach*, the crops are still growing in the field. Nothing has been harvested. Understandably, the farmer is (the Jews lived an agrarian lifestyle) nervous, hoping that he will be blessed with a good yield. Until that takes place, however, he is a bundle of nerves. The Torah does not compel him to rejoice. We have a *mitzvah* of *simchah*. The Torah does not state it explicitly in connection with *Pesach*. On *Shavuos*, the crops have been harvested, but the olives have not been pressed; neither have the grapes and other fruits. We have joy, but until he sees the oil in the bottle and the wine in the cellar, he is not completely filled with joy. Thus, the Torah writes *simchah* only once. *Succos*, however, is the festival of the ingathering. Everything has been harvested, pressed and bottled. The year's work is safe in storage. Now he can truly rejoice. Thus, the Torah writes the term *simchah* twice, because *simchah* on *Succos* is total, with nothing held back.

Why is it that for one who has toiled in the field, his crops have survived and now he is thankful to Hashem, the Torah downplays his joy? If we have a *mitzvah* to rejoice, then one should rejoice. Why hold back? I think the reason is the "little guy," the fellow who does not have much and his family's sustenance for the coming year is riding on his field's yield. He is much more nervous than his neighbor who has an abundance of property with crops to spare. He has much less to worry about and, thus, can afford to express himself with joy. The Torah expects us to be cognizant of -- and empathetic with -- our neighbor. True, joy is an integral component of *yom tov*, but not at the expense of our friend's emotions. Indeed, how can I rejoice when my neighbor cannot? With regard to *Pesach* and *Shavuos*, the Torah does not negate joy, just tone it down; think of those who are waiting for that yield.

As long as another Jew is unable to rejoice, as long as my neighbor is in pain, my joy is incomplete. *Horav Moshe Shmuel Shapiro, zl*, makes the following observation. The *mitzvah* of *Bris Milah* is seminal. Indeed, *Chazal* (*Mishna Nedarim* 3:11) state that *milah* is so great that if that *mitzvah* had not existed, Hashem would not have created the world. Furthermore, thirteen covenants were made upon *Bris Milah*. (In the *parsha* discussing Hashem's command to Avraham *Avinu* to circumcise himself, the word *bris*, covenant, is mentioned thirteen times.) The place where Avraham *Avinu* circumcised himself is considered to be a *mizbayach kaparah*, an altar

of atonement. The day that the circumcision took place goes down in history as the day of atonement (the *bris* occurred on *Yom Kippur*). The *geulah ha'asidah*, Future Redemption, will take place due to the *z'chus*, merit, of *bris milah*. As such, it goes without saying that the day of a *bris* is a day of unbridled joy. Nonetheless, the *halachah* states that the blessing of *she'ha'simchah b'Me'ono*, in whose abode is this celebration (recited prior to *bentching* for a *sheva brachos*) is not recited at the *seudah*, festive meal, following the *bris*, because the newly circumcised infant is in pain! In Heaven, this is a moment of heightened joy, but, in this world, an eight-day-old infant is in pain and crying. Heaven's celebration is incomplete; thus, no blessing.

The following two vignettes, albeit not new, are classics, in that they show how thoughtful *gedolei Yisrael*, Torah giants, were with regard to a person's feelings. A young couple were blessed with the birth of their *b'chor*, firstborn son. They wanted to name him Yehonasan after the mother's father who had passed away at a relatively young age. A day prior to the *bris*, a tragedy occurred in the apartment building where they lived. A young child whose name was Yehonasan was tragically *niftar*. The parents were devastated. Every tenant in the building was shaken to the core. The young parents who were about to usher their firstborn into the *bris* of Avraham Avinu were especially shaken up. What should they do now about naming their son? Their original decision to name him Yehonasan was predicated on the fact that it would be a name for the grandfather who had died an untimely death. Now, however, the young mother felt that the name Yehonasan, which was also the name of the deceased child, would be a bad omen, would be the source of ill fortune for their child. The father felt that his wife was carrying on too much. They had nothing to fear. He wanted to adhere to his original decision to give the name Yehonasan. In order to resolve their impasse, they decided to seek the sage advice of *Horav Shlomo Zalmen Auerbach, zl*.

The Torah giant listened to their story and replied, "Absolutely not! Under no circumstances shall you name your son Yehonasan." The young parents left happy that their quandary had been resolved. One of *Rav Shlomo Zalmen's* students, who happened to be present during the conversation was a bit surprised by the *p'sak*, *halachic* ruling, and especially the manner in which *Rav Shlomo Zalmen* had communicated it. He expressed his incredulity. *Rav Shlomo Zalmen* explained, "I have no concern with the name being a bad omen or sign of foreboding. My concern is down the road, in a few years, when "little Yehonasan" will be a young boy running around the apartment complex. His mother will have reason to call out to him. At that moment, the mother who was left bereft will hear the name, "Yehonasan," and it will bring back sad memories. Why should a broken-hearted woman suffer more? I am certain that if the young mother wants to pay tribute to her father's memory, she would be giving him greater honor and merit if she demurs from naming her son Yehonasan."

The second vignette demonstrates the extraordinary *middos*, character refinement, that the *Mashgiach* of *Yeshivas Ohr HaChaim* in Slabodka manifest. For some people, life is all about being present on time. Anything that gets in the way that will delay him is simply not acceptable. All one has to do is watch people push and shove to get on a subway, go through the doors of an

event, so that he may procure the seat of his choice. If, for some reason, a person is in his way, he is pushed aside. Some people act with refinement, never fighting over a piece of bread or a slice of pizza. They do not have to be the first ones to get bagels or pizza *motzei Pesach*. Some rare individuals believe in thinking of others and moving aside, so that the individual who is in a rush -- or obsessed with being first -- can pass.

The *Mashgiach* left his home accompanied by his student, *Horav Meir Rubman, zl* (who later became *Rosh Yeshivah* of Tiferes Yisrael/Haifa). Their destination was the *yeshivah*, a twenty-minute walk away. Suddenly, the *Mashgiach* slowed his pace and began walking very slowly. *Rav* Rubman became concerned, lest his *Rebbe* was not well. The *Mashgiach* motioned to him to look in front of them, where an elderly Jew was trudging along ever so slowly. He explained, "If we continue with our pace, we will soon overtake him. Let us wait until he is unable to see us, and then we will catch up. If we pass him, it will cause him to remember his youth when he, too, could walk briskly. He has aged, and now his walking is painful. I refuse to cause a Jew pain." It took them an hour and a half to reach their destination.