

On the eighth day, his foreskin shall be circumcised. (12:3)

Chazal (Midrash Tanchuma) teach that *Bris Milah* is so beloved to Hashem that the Almighty promised Avraham *Avinu* that anyone who is *mahul*, circumcised, will not descend to *Gehinom*, Purgatory. While this idea in and of itself is incredible, it becomes more compelling when we take into consideration that it grants a free pass to even the most profligate sinner. *Horav Shalom Schwadron, zl*, explains this based on the conclusion of the *Midrash*, “Come and see how much *Klal Yisrael* love the *mitzvos*. They spend (large amounts of) money to celebrate and fulfill the *mitzvos* with great joy – even though the Torah does not demand this of them.” *Chazal* seem to attribute special significance to one who spends considerably to celebrate a *seudas mitzvah/milah*.

We see clearly from *Chazal's* emphasis on spending money for the *seudas bris milah* that the *mitzvah* (and, truthfully, all *mitzvos*) should not be an unbearable yoke with which one must contend, but rather, a *mitzvah* in which he joyfully carries out Hashem's command. [Duty and joy are not synonymous.] When one is happy concerning his *mitzvah* performance, if it is his greatest joy, he spends what he can, and he does so with complete delight. When one is “stuck” doing something about which he could care less, he demonstrates this attitude in every step of the endeavor. The joy manifest in carrying out the *mitzvah* of *milah* is a merit to protect the baby from *Gehinom*. This may be a *z'chus*, merit, for the father, but the *rach ha'nimal*, circumcised infant, concerning whom the *midrash* is speaking, is not part of the joy. His parents are spending the money. He is the reason. How is the parent's joy related to the infant's merit to be spared from *Gehinom*?

Horav Yosef Reiner, Shlita (V'Taheir Libeinu), relates the following vignette about two sons – which we can use to explain the relationship between parental joy and the infant's accrued merit. The father of the first son is a distinguished *talmid chacham* and *marbitz Torah*, successfully reaching out to Jews of all stripes and bringing them closer to a life of Torah and *mitzvos*. The second son's father is an accomplished businessman, who spends more time in a plane than on the ground. He has succeeded in providing all the material comforts that he could want. One would expect that their respective sons would follow in their footsteps. No. The son whose father has been fully devoted to Torah study is today a successful businessman, while the son whose father has climbed the ladder of success in the world of commerce is today learning in a reputable *kollel* and has already made a name for himself. Opposite outcomes? Why?

The attitude of the parents sends a message to the children. The father who spent his days and nights immersed in Torah was not available to his children. Whenever they asked to go on a family trip (*Chol HaMoed*), the father would respond with a tale of financial woe, “We do not have the money to go here, to go there, to go anywhere.” It was always about money. “We cannot afford it.” Everything was a luxury which was inaccessible due to lack of money. When a boy grows up in a home where all he hears is, “We have no money: for this, for that, for anything,” he decides that money will buy happiness. Thus, this son made up his mind to pursue material success, so that his family could be like everyone else. Learning is a way of life. It is how the *ben Torah* lives. The

individual who studies Torah with the attitude that he is giving everything up to learn Torah manifests an inappropriate attitude, which sends a deleterious message to his children.

The other father spent most of his days immersed in the business world. Whenever he had a free moment, however, he would attend a *shiur*, listen to a tape, or have a study partner over the phone. He learned every moment that he could – on the plane, preparing for a business meeting, in the car. He gave *zedakah* in excess. This father demonstrated that his material endeavors were something he was compelled to do. Learning Torah and supporting those who were learning were most important to him. A son growing up in such a home derives the message: Torah study is most important. Everything else is present to facilitate it. Thus, if he could devote himself to growth in Torah, this would be the life he would seek for himself. A home in which money is spent freely to celebrate a *seudas mitzvah* will produce children who will never be candidates for *Gehinom*.

The following *bris* story was related by *Horav Asher Weiss, shlita*. The story concerns a soldier fighting in Gaza whose son was due to have his *bris milah* on *Shabbos*. The soldier was well aware that his position on the front line precluded his leaving to attend the *bris*. The question that he presented was: Could he take off just for *Shabbos*, so that he could attend the *bris*? The Rav was very straightforward: He had no heter, dispensation, to allow him to travel on *Shabbos* to attend the *bris*. This halachah was in force regardless of the family relationships that would suffer as a result. If the soldier felt that taking a furlough would grant him renewed strength and vigor, however, he was permitted to leave before *Shabbos* and simultaneously attend the *bris*. Rav Weiss spoke with the soldier and, after the conversation, was convinced that this young man was not in need of a furlough in order to continue fighting. The Rav said, "I was moved to tears. It would have been so easy for the soldier to say that he needed the rest, so that he could fight better. He did not." The soldier said, "I hope that when my son grows up and hears why I did not attend his *bris*, he will grow in *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven." Rav Weiss concluded, "How easy it is to see the beauty and the charm of our soldiers."