

# MITZVOT AND JOY

*by Shlomo Katz*

## Parshas Bo

**By Shlomo Katz**

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Today's Learning:  
Kilayim 3:2-3  
O.C. 313:9-314:1  
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Nidah 28  
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Bava Kamma 35

This past Tuesday was Rosh Chodesh Shevat. Although our Sages tell us that "Mi'shenichnas Adar marbim be'simchah" / "We increase our joy when the month of Adar arrives," R' Avraham Shalom Halberstam shlita (the Stropkover Rebbe in Yerushalayim) reported that his father used to feel added joy as early as when the month of Shevat began. This was because, beginning with Rosh Chodesh Shevat, we observe a special day on the calendar at least once every two weeks, i.e., Rosh Chodesh Shevat, Tu B'Shevat, Rosh Chodesh Adar, Purim, Rosh Chodesh Nissan, Pesach, Rosh Chodesh Iyar, Pesach Sheni, Rosh Chodesh Sivan and Shavuot.

R' Halberstam also observed that beginning with Parashat Bo, the next seven parashot allude to the major holidays in order, as follows:

Bo describes the Exodus, which occurred on the first day of Pesach.

Beshalach describes the splitting of the Yam Suf / Red Sea, which occurred on the seventh day of Pesach.

Yitro describes the Giving of the Torah, which occurred on Shavuot.

Mishpatim speaks of judgement, which alludes to the Days of Judgment.

Tetzaveh speaks of the oil for the Temple menorah, and thus alludes to Chanukah.

Finally, Ki Tissa speaks of the shekalim / the coins that were donated to the Mishkan, and thus alludes to Purim. [The Megillah records that Haman offered shekalim to Achashveirosh as payment for the right to kill the Jews. However, says the Midrash, the mitzvah of shekalim protected the Jewish People.] (Heard from R' Halberstam on 29 Tevet 5765)

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"Hashem said to Moshe and Aharon, 'This is the decree of the Pesach-offering -- no alien person may eat from it'." (12:43)

The Gemara (Pesachim 3b) relates that a certain gentile bragged to the sage Rabbi Yehuda ben Beteirah that he (the gentile) went to Yerushalayim on Pesach and ate from the Korban Pesach even though the Torah prohibits it. The Gemara then tells how Rabbi Yehuda tricked the interloper into giving away his identity the next time he (the gentile) went to Yerushalayim for Pesach.

The Talmud commentary Tosfot asks: It is apparent from this story that Rabbi Yehuda himself did not go to Yerushalayim to fulfill the mitzvah of Aliyah La'reggel / making the pilgrimage to Yerushalayim for the holidays. Why not? Tosfot answers that only landowners are obligated in that mitzvah. Perhaps Rabbi Yehuda did not own land.

R' Yechezkel Landau z"l (the Noda B'Yehuda; died 1793) asks: Why was Tosfot bothered by the fact that Rabbi Yehuda did not fulfill the mitzvah of Aliyah La'reggel, but seemingly not bothered by the fact that Rabbi Yehuda did not fulfill the mitzvah of Korban Pesach?

R' Landau answers: Unlike the mitzvah of Aliyah La'reggel, the mitzvah of Korban Pesach does not impose an obligation to travel to Yerushalayim. Rather, only a person who is in Yerushalayim on the fourteenth of the month of Nissan is obligated to bring the offering. Rabbi Yehuda lived far from Yerushalayim and had no obligation to go there. Indeed, since the mitzvah to bring a Korban Pesach does not begin until the fourteenth, there cannot exist an obligation to travel to Yerushalayim before the fourteenth in order to be in a position to perform the mitzvah.

(Tziyun L'nefesh Chayah)

R' Yosef Babad z"l (19th century Poland) takes strong exception to R' Landau's suggestion that one is not obligated to travel to Yerushalayim in order to bring a Korban Pesach. R' Babad writes: I do not understand his words at all, for of course every Jew is obligated to bring a Korban Pesach! Moreover, a Jew is obligated to travel from the end of the world to be in Yerushalayim for Pesach! There simply is no rational basis for contending that a person is not obligated bring himself to Yerushalayim in

order to offer the Korban Pesach, R' Babad argues.

Elsewhere R' Babad writes similarly: Technically, a person who owns no Chametz on the 14th of Nissan is not obligated to burn Chametz. Likewise, a person who has no four-cornered garment has no obligation to wear Tzitzit. Nevertheless, a Jew is obligated to love mitzvot and to cause himself to become obligated. In this way, he emulates Moshe Rabbeinu who wanted to enter Eretz Yisrael in order to become obligated in the agricultural mitzvot.

(Minchat Chinuch: Mitzvah #5 and Mitzvah #2)

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*"It shall come to pass when Hashem will bring you to the land of the Canaanites . . . And it shall be a sign upon your arm and an ornament between your eyes . . ." (13:11 & 16)*

The Gemara (Kiddushin 37b) asks: Why are the entry into Eretz Yisrael and the mitzvah of tefilin mentioned in the same paragraph? The gemara answers: It was taught in the yeshiva of Rabbi Yishmael, "Do this mitzvah so that you will enter the Land."

R' Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook z"l (died 1935; first Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Palestine) explains the connection between tefilin and Eretz Yisrael as follows:

Tefilin, by virtue of where they are worn, parallel the heart and the mind, the organs through which the neshamah and the intellect reveal their powers. However, the heart and the mind, being physical, are subject to man's will, and the powers of the neshamah and the intellect can be lessened by the choices man makes. Therefore, Hashem commanded that we wear tefilin, a crown which is separate from the body and which therefore will be unaffected by man's will. To the contrary, the holiness of the tefilin causes rays of spiritual light to spread out over the entire body and reach the heart and the mind. As a result, the power of the intellect dominates over the power of the will.

R' Kook continues: The Gemara (Menachot 44a) states: "One who wears tefilin lengthens his life." Why?

Long life usually is dependent on having a healthy constitution. Thus, the person who lives long is not necessarily the most fortunate, for the stronger and healthier a person is, the more likely he is to be challenged by physical desires and other destructive traits. The exception is a person who wears tefilin, because the external "mind" and "heart," which the tefilin are, rein in this person's desires and reinstate his intellect to its proper place. For such a person, long life is a true blessing.

The uniqueness of Eretz Yisrael lies in the fact that there a Jew can reach such a lofty level that the bounty of the land enhances, rather than challenges, his spiritual growth. This explains why the Torah repeatedly promises material blessings, the very things that a wise person avoids. When a

Jew is under the influence of his tefilin, he can live in Eretz Yisrael and enjoy its bounty without being challenged thereby.

(Chavash Pe'er, Drush 1)

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R' Yosef ibn Tzaddik z"l

born approx. 1075 - died 1149

R' Yosef was born in southern Spain and died in Cordova, Spain. As a dayan / rabbinical judge in that city for the last eleven years of his life, R' Yosef served on the same bet din / court as R' Maimon, father of Rambam.

R' Yosef, a disciple of R' Yitzchak ibn Giat, delved deeply into philosophy, and his fame rests upon his religious philosophical work, Olam Kattan, in which man is portrayed as a miniature world. Originally written in Arabic, Olam Kattan was translated into Hebrew by R' Moshe ibn Tibbon. Rambam, in a letter to R' Shmuel ibn Tibbon (father of R' Moshe), wrote, "Although I have not seen Olam Kattan, I am familiar with the man and his work, and I recognize both his and his book's value." In later centuries, when the study of philosophy became a matter of controversy, Olam Kattan was cited by poskim / halachic authorities as an example of an unobjectionable philosophical work.

R' Yosef also wrote a book on logic, which is quoted in Olam Kattan, but has been lost. Later writers acclaimed R' Yosef's poetry; however, only a few pieces and some liturgical compositions appearing in North African machzorim have been preserved. (Sources: The Artscroll Rishonim, p. 73 & 177; She'eilot U'teshuvot HaRashba Vol. I, No. 418; She'eilot U'teshuvot Rema No. 7. Note that the cited responsum from She'eilot U'teshuvot HaRashba is a letter to Rashba, not by him. The letter, known as Iggeret Ha'hitnatzlut / "Letter of Apology" was written in response to Rashba's banning the study of philosophy for those below the age of 25. Its author was R' Yedayah Ha'penini, a 13th century sage from France's Provence region, who also cites R' Yosef's Olam Kattan in his other works)

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