

PARSHAS BEHAALOSCHA - GENUINE SIMCHAH

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Genuine Simchah¹

On the day of your simchah and your appointed holidays and your new moons you shall sound the trumpets over your olah-offerings and the slaughter of your shelamim.

We know what this pasuk asks of us. It is not at all clear, however, what it means.

Halachically, the Torah requires that the sounding of the chatzotzros accompany some of our korbanos, including those of Shabbos, Yom Tov, Rosh Chodesh, and even the two daily temidim[2]. We know all of this through amplifying the plain meaning of the text through accepted methods of derash. Each word or phrase extends the primary motif, i.e. days of your simchah, to demand the same simchah-associated practice of sounding the trumpets on other occasions. The derashos make abundant sense. We still would like to know what the Torah means in its plain sense by these days of simchah, which would represent some basic and fundamental sense of rejoicing.

Ibn Ezra opts for times of national triumph over an enemy, either in returning from a successful military campaign, or in repelling the attack of an invading enemy army. This approach lacks support. We do not find that any of the Shoftim or righteous kings of Israel marked their victories in the manner suggested here[3].

Rather, the days of simchah in our pasuk refer to occasions of inaugurating the altar. This follows from a mishnah[4] explicating a pasuk in Shir Ha-Shirim[5]: "On the day of his wedding, and the day of his heart's rejoicing." The wedding, according to Chazal, refers to the great union of Hashem and His people at Sinai; the rejoicing of His heart means the building of the beis ha-mikdosh.

The inauguration of a mikdosh is a time of rejoicing of Klal Yisrael as well. Indeed, we find references to thankful rejoicing with hallel - and with chatzotzros! - when both the first beis ha-mikdosh[6] and the second[7] were moved into operational service.

With this approach, understanding a gemara in Horayos[8] comes as a dividend. The gemara explains that Moshe ordered a twelve-day long observance of the inauguration of the mishkon in order to honor the nesi'im, rather than a seven day celebration like the one that Shlomo ordered. By questioning Moshe's motive rather than Shlomo's, the gemara shows that it finds the seven day

period more intuitive than the twelve. Our pasuk provides the source for this assumption. By juxtaposing "days of simchah" with "appointed holidays" we understand that the two are organically related. We know that the basic units of Yom Tov celebration are one day (Shavuos, Shmini Atzeres) and seven days (Pesach, Sukkos). It follows that the period of simchah ought to be seven days as well.

Taking this theme one step further, we could argue that a Torah siyum occupies a parallel position of national simchah. We have shown elsewhere^[g] that the reason we recite Hallel with a brachah on Simchas Torah is not because we treat it as a second day of Shmini Atzeres, similar to the second day of observance of other holidays occasioned by our living outside of Israel. Rather, Simchas Torah enjoys its own obligation of Hallel, because of the rejoicing that follows the completion of the Torah.

The siyum of Torah is related to the joy of inaugurating a beis ha-mikdosh. (We display the parallel between them in our Torah reading, which differs from all other days of the year in our calling up everyone for an aliyah. The korbanos of the chanukas ha-bayis of the mishkon were also anomalous. The nesi'im were allowed to bring chatas and ketores offerings on a voluntary basis, something the law does not ordinarily permit.) We readily understand this relationship. When Klal Yisrael lived in their land, and the beis ha-mikdosh stood in its place, Hashem's providence over us flowed from His Shechinah, which dwelled within it. That presence depended chiefly upon our avodah in the beis ha-mikdosh. In galus, without a beis ha-mikdosh, Torah study takes the place of the avodah of korbanos. Completing a cycle of the Torah and immediately beginning anew becomes the day of the rejoicing of our hearts.

There is no greater simchah - nor could there be- than providing the basis for Hashem resting His Shechinah in our midst. It is our very life.

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1. *Based on Haamek Davar and Harchev Davar, Bamidbar 10:10*
 2. See Sefer Ha-Chinuch #384, unlike Rambam, Kelei Ha-Mikdosh 3:5
 3. Commentators struggle with this assertion, since Ibn Ezra himself points to two examples of special days of rejoicing in the wake of military victory: Chanukah, and Chezkiyah's celebration in Divrei Ha-Yamim² 30:23. What Netziv seems to mean, however, is that there is no evidence that chatzotzros were sounded.
 4. Taanis 26B
 5. Shir Ha-Shirim 3:11
 6. Divrei Ha-Yamim² 5:13
 7. Ezra 3:10

8. Horayos 6B

9. Haamek She'eilah 171
