

# IT'S A MITZVAH TO BE HAPPY

*by Rabbi Yissocher Frand*

## Rabbi Frand on Parshas Ki Savo

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*These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 428, Mentioning G-d's Name in Vain.*

*Good Shabbos!*

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### It's a Mitzvah to be Happy

This week's parsha contains the mitzvah of bringing one's first fruits (Bikurim) to Jerusalem. The farmer must thank G-d for the bounty with which he has been graced. In addition to the declaration, the Torah commands the farmer to rejoice: "You shall be glad with all the goodness that Hashem, your G-d, has given you and your household..." [Devarim 26:11]

Rav Mordechai Gifter (1916-2001) asks, why it was necessary for the Torah to add the command for the farmer to be happy? The farmer has just had a bountiful harvest and has arrived in Jerusalem loaded down with first fruits. He already feels terrific. So why must the Torah specify a new positive command -- be happy with all that G-d gave you?

Rav Gifter explains that this command is necessary. A person could come up to Jerusalem with a bounty of Bikurim and still be thinking to himself "it could have been better!" He could be jealously looking at his neighbor's fruits and thinking, "he had a better crop than I did". Unfortunately, one can be blessed with the biggest bounty and yet choose not to be happy. Therefore, as part of the mitzvah of Bikurim, The Torah commands that we should be appreciative. We must look at what we have and be happy about what we have.

We must be happy with what we have even if it COULD have been better and even if our neighbor DID have a better crop. If G-d has seen fit to bless us with this, then we must be happy with it.

In fact, this may be the interpretation of the verses in the middle of the Tochacha [Curses] in our parsha [Devarim 28:47-48] "Because you did not serve Hashem your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart, when everything was abundant". These terrible curses, described in graphic detail in the Tochacha, are occurring because we failed to serve G-d out of joy and happiness -- when we had abundance of everything (m'rov kol).

These two words ('rov' and 'kol') should remind us of an earlier passage in the Torah. Eisav is the one who said [Bereishis 33:9] "yesh li ROV" [I have plenty] and Yaakov is the one who responded [Bereishis 33:11] "yesh li KOL" [I have everything I need]. The difference between an Eisav and a Yaakov is that however much Eisav possesses, he only sees it as "plenty". Yaakov, however, recognises that what he has is, in fact, "kol" - everything that he needs.

The pasuk in the Tochacha is explaining that the source of a person's unhappiness is "m'rov kol" -- the fact that he views all the good things that he possesses as only "plenty", in the same way that Eisav viewed his possessions. Anytime a person thinks that he does not have "kol" [everything], he will never be happy. The greatest amount of "rov kol" [plenty] will never make a person happy, as the Talmud teaches, "One who has one hundred wants two hundred".

### **'Faithful' Illnesses Are Part of the Curse**

At the end of the Tochacha [Devarim 28:59] the pasuk states, "Then Hashem will make extraordinary your blows and the blows of your offspring -- great and faithful blows (makos gedolos v'Neemanos), and evil and faithful illnesses (Cholayim gedolim v'Neemanim)." The Talmud [Avodah Zarah 55a] comments on the peculiar choice of adjective for the blows and the illnesses: faithful. This is certainly not a modifier that we would ever choose to describe an illness.

The Gemara teaches an amazing insight. Before G-d decides to send illness upon a person, he (figuratively speaking) makes the illness take an oath. The illness is instructed that it will reside within the person for so many days, it will cause so much amount of pain, and it will be cured by such and such medicine and then depart. The illness 'swears' that it will abide by these instructions and only then is it sent out to inflict the person.

Sometimes a person may have a chronic disease. It can drag on for days and weeks and even months and then one day it disappears. Then it can reappear later and the cycle is repeated. Chronic illnesses can be like that. But whatever the case may be, the Gemara teaches, is all part of the oath. The oath insures that the illness will cause a specific amount of suffering, will last a specific duration and not a moment longer.

Rabbeinu Tam [Rosh HaShanna 16a D.H. Kman Matzlinan] states that the exact time when a person will become sick is in fact a decree from Heaven, however the timing of the cure is not decreed. This statement of Rabbeinu Tam seems to contradict the previously quoted Gemara in Avodah Zarah that explicitly states that the cure and duration of the illness is also decreed.

The Yavetz in Tractate Rosh HaShanna explains that Rabbeinu Tam means to say that the suffering can leave earlier than expected through the power of prayer. In other words, Rabbeinu Tam agrees that there is a decreed time when the illness will leave, however a person has the power through his prayers to expedite that departure.

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Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.  
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This week's write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissochar Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#428). The halachic topics dealt with in the portion of Ki Savo in the Commuter Chavrusah Series are the following:

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