

A JOYFUL TIME SHOULD BE HAD BY ALL

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 369, Bris Millah That Causes Chilul Shabbos. Good Shabbos!

A Joyful Time Should Be Had By All

At the beginning of Parshas Tazria, the Torah says that after a woman gave birth to a male son she is ritually impure for seven days. Then, following immersion in a Mikveh, a ritual bath, she returns to a state of ritual purity. On the eighth day, male sons are circumcised. The Talmud [Niddah 31b] provides a very interesting reason for performing the milah [circumcision] on the eighth day.

During the seven days of ritual impurity following the birth of the son, relations between husband and wife are prohibited. In early generations, prior to subsequent rabbinic prohibitions which exist today, husband and wife were allowed to be together and have relations by the eighth day.

The Talmud explains that the reason we wait until the eighth day for the bris milah and the accompanying celebration is that prior to this time, the happiness of the husband and wife would be limited by the prohibition against intimately sharing their joy together. The lack of ability by husband and wife to celebrate fully might even dampen the spirits and restrict the enjoyment of the other guests. Therefore the Torah established that milah be 'delayed' until the eighth day, so that everyone will be able to fully participate in the joyous occasion.

Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein (the Slobodka Rosh Yeshiva, zt"l), points out that the Torah is expressing tremendous sensitivity for people's feelings. This passage says, essentially, that milah should really be performed sooner. The Torah has us wait until the eighth day to make sure that everyone present at the Simcha [happy occasion] will be able to fully enjoy themselves.

The concept of sharing happy occasions and maximizing the Simcha for everyone present is so basic to Torah ethics that it justifies 'postponing' milah until the eighth day.

Four times a year, on Yom Kippur and the end of the three major festivals (Shemini Atzeres [following Sukkos], Pesach, and Shavuos), the Yizkor prayer is recited in memory of the dead. There

is a virtually universal custom that when Yizkor is said, those worshippers whose parents are both still living leave the sanctuary during the recital. What is the reason for this custom?

Rav Moshe Mordechai Epstein wrote that the reason for the custom is the very thought mentioned earlier. Yizkor is usually recited on Yom Tov. If reciting Yizkor is not exactly a joyous experience for the people whose parents are deceased, it can at least be a comforting experience to remember their loved ones on Yom Tov. But if the other people witness this and watch friends and relatives perhaps shedding tears for departed parents, that would affect and contradict their enjoyment of the Yom Tov. This is what we are trying to avoid. We try to provide the appropriate form of Simchas Yom Tov [happiness on the holiday] for everyone.

Transcribed by [David Twersky](#); Seattle, Washington.
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This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Tazria are provided below:

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