

# WHAT MAKES YOU SAD? WHAT MAKES YOU HAPPY?

by Rabbi Yissocher Frand

## Parshas Behaaloscha

### What Makes You Sad? What Makes You Happy?

*These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 816 - Nidui - Excommunication. Good Shabbos!*

There is a theme that emerges from Parshas BeHaloscha that at first glance is not readily apparent. The 9th Perek mentions a group of people who were not able to bring the Korban Pessach at the proper time because they were ritually impure as a result of contact with a corpse. They came to Moshe and asked, "Why should we be deprived of offering the Pessach offering together with the rest of the Children of Israel?" Moshe then taught them the law of the Pessach Sheni ["Second Pessach"] offered as a "make up" offering, one month later for people who were either Tameh Mes [ritually impure] or too far from the Temple on the 14th of Nissan to offer the primary Paschal Sacrifice.

The Sifrei comments that these people were righteous individuals and they took great effort (literally "trembled" = Charedim) to observe the commandments. What exactly is the Sifrei emphasizing by telling us this?

The matter can be understood as follows. These people were excused (patur) from bringing the Paschal offering. Patur is patur. They had no obligation to bring it. There was no need to get upset about this fact. They could have just walked away from the mitzvah and calmly accepted the fact that they were excused. The Sifrei points out that these were righteous people. Their attitude was "why should we be deprived?" (lamah neegarah?). Those words were a testimony to the type of people they were.

"Good, I'm patur! But how can I miss out on a mitzvah? Their attitude was that missing a mitzvah is a deprivation. It is something that I am going to miss, and I do not want that to happen. It is not a question of punishment and it is not a question of blame. It is a sense of lacking something if they miss the opportunity. This is what the Medrash calls "charedim al haMitzvos" [trembling to do the commandments].

There is a similar concept in the beginning of the sixth chapter of Tractate Berochos [35b]. The Talmud asks "What is the difference between the earlier generations and the later generations?" The Gemara explained that the earlier generations brought their crops in through the front door (so that they would be sure to be obligated to give the tithes from the crop) while the latter generation purposely sought out loop holes and brought in the crops through the back-door, so to speak, in order to become exempt from the need to tithe their crops.

This is the difference between the earlier generations and the later generations. The earlier generations had an attitude "Why should we be deprived?" The latter generations are looking for every excuse they can find to circumvent the laws requiring them to give.

At the beginning of the Parsha, the pasuk says: "Hashem spoke to Moshe saying: Speak to Aaron and say to him: 'When you kindle the lamps, toward the face of the Menorah shall the seven lamps cast light.'" Rashi famously asks "Why is there a juxtaposition of the section relating to the Princes' offerings with the section relating to the lighting of the Menorah?"

Rashi answers that when Aaron saw that the leaders of all the other tribes participated in the dedication of the Mishkan and neither he nor his tribe participated, he felt badly about it (chalsha da'ato - he became depressed).

Here too we should note: What was Aaron depressed about? There were 12 Tribes with 12 Princes. Their job was to bring offerings during the 12 day consecration period of the Mishkan. That was not his job. What is he getting so depressed about?

The phenomenon is the same as those of the people who were impure and could not offer the Pessach offering in its proper time. Aaron felt deprived. "Why should I be left out?" Winston Churchill once said, "It is the measure of a man - what makes him angry." We can paraphrase that: "It is the measure of a man of what makes him depressed."

Some people get depressed when the Orioles (or whichever favorite sports team / location) lose. It can be a bad week in Baltimore for a lot of people when their baseball team goes on a losing streak. Some people get depressed when their stocks take a hit or when they lose a lot of money on some other investment. What depresses Aaron? He is depressed because he missed out on a mitzvah, because he could not participate in the dedication of the Mishkan.

Later in the Parsha, there is another example of people who were depressed - but they were depressed about something else. They were depressed because they missed the luscious cucumbers and watermelons they had in Egypt. These people became depressed about food.

This is a question we must ask ourselves. What makes us depressed and what makes us happy? Aaron became depressed about not participating in a mitzvah. The carriers of Yosef's coffin became depressed about not being able to bring a Korban Pessach. The "Complainers" became depressed about not having cucumbers and watermelons! The measure of a man is what makes him sad and

what makes him happy.

## People Always Complain About Their Leaders

Parshas Be'Haloscha and the story of the "complainers" begins a long series of episodes that stretch all the way through the end of the book of Bamidbar with tale after tale of complaints against Moshe Rabbeinu and challenges to his leadership. We read of crises after crises. Moshe Rabbeinu goes around putting out fires and he always seems to be at the center of it.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky writes a very interesting homiletic thought in the name of his father, the Kehillas Yaakov or Steipler Gaon. The Steipler Gaon once gave an insight on the pasuk in Tehillim [106:16] "They were jealous of Moshe in the camp; of Aaron, Hashem's holy one." The Steipler points out that the people's primary complaint against Moshe was "in the camp". They complained that he was not a man of the people but he rather sequestered himself in an ivory tower. Their problem with him was that he was "too holy". He talked to G-d the whole day and was not involved with the people. Their complaint about Aaron (who was the consummate man of the people - loving peace and running after the ability to make peace between husband and wife and warring factions) was just the opposite - he is not holy enough!

What is the problem with your leaders? Are they too holy or are they not holy enough? The Steipler says we see from here that when one is in a position of authority in the community (or even if one does not have such authority) whatever one does, people will have complaints. You are holy? Then they will complain that you are not personable enough? You are personable? Then they will complain you are not holy enough.

The Steipler writes a very interesting parable: A man and his father were travelling on the road. The father was riding a donkey and the son was walking besides him. They came upon a person who saw them and told the father: "You are cruel. You ride on the donkey and you make your son walk! What kind of father are you?" The father then got off the donkey and put his son on the donkey in his place. They walk a little further and came across someone else who attacked them: "What kind of son are you raising? How can you let your child ride there like he is a prince while he makes you walk along on such a hot day? What kind of education are you giving him to allow him to do that?"

He then took his son off the donkey and they both walked alongside the donkey. They met a third person who attacked them: "What a bunch of fools you are! Why doesn't someone ride the donkey?" They both got on the donkey and went a little further until a fourth man saw them and said "How cruel you are, both of you riding this little donkey! Don't you have any concern for the welfare of animals?" They both got off the donkey and they both carried the donkey. They meet another person who shouted: "You fools!"

What is the point of the story? Whatever you do, people are not going to be happy. And if you try to

react to what everybody says and make everybody happy then you will wind up as two people carrying a donkey!

I believe it was Abraham Lincoln who said "You can fool all of the people some of the time and you can fool some of the people all of the time, but you can't fool all the people all the time." An extension of that is "You can never please all of the people EVER." Any person who has been a Rav, who has been a principal, who has been president, who has been a Gabbai, no matter what -- People have complaints. A person must take counsel from a respected confidant that what he is doing is right and keep on doing what he knows and what others have told him to be right. If anybody is not happy that is just too bad!

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