



True Simcha

Rav Soloveitchik was fond of discussing a comment of the Ramban in his *Hasagot* to *Sefer HaMitzvot* (*shoresh rishon*, s.v. *vehapli'ah*). The Ramban believes that the recitation of *Hallel* is a *d'oraita* obligation. This is in contrast to the Rambam, who did not count the recitation of *Hallel* on Yom Tov in the count of *taryag mitzvot* because he held it is only a *mitzvah deRabbanan*. The Ramban cites the *pasuk* in reference to the *shira* of the *Levi'im*: “On a day of your gladness, and on your Festivals, and on your New Moons, you shall sound the trumpets over your *olah*-offerings and over your *shelamim*-offerings” (Bamidbar 10:10).

This *pasuk* describes that during the *nisuch haYayin* (wine libation) of *korbanot tzibbur* (communal offerings), the *Levi'im* engaged in *shira* through singing and musical accompaniment (on weekdays), which included the use of *chatzotzrot*. The Ramban suggests that *Hallel* is a similar obligation to the *shira* sung during the *avodah* – both of them are manifestations of the *mitzvah* of *simcha*.

Indeed, one of the sources in the Gemara (Arachin 11a) for the *shira* of the *Levi'im* is the *pasuk* found in the *tochecha*, תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא עֲבַדְתָּ אֵת – “Because you did not serve *Hashem*, your G-d [a reference to *avodah* in the *Beit HaMikdash*] with joy and goodness of heart” (Devarim 28:47). Rashi adds, “One sings *shira* only out of a feeling of joy and goodness of heart.”

Thus, the *mitzvah* of *simchat Yom Tov* includes more than the offering of a *Korban Shelamim* and the partaking of its meat and of wine. According to the Ramban, one of the manifestations of this *mitzvah* is the singing of praises to *Hashem* in the form of *Hallel*. *Simcha* also includes the obligation to provide colored or pressed linen garments for one’s wife and to distribute nuts and almonds to one’s children (Pesachim 109a; Yerushalmi Pesachim 10:1).

The Rambam (Hilchot Yom Tov 6:18; Hilchot Chagigah 2:14) writes that *simcha* on Yom Tov requires not only that we ourselves eat, drink, and be in a joyous mood. The Rambam terms such enjoyment as *simchat kreiso* (joy of one’s stomach), instead of *simchat mitzvah*. Rather, on Yom Tov, there is also a *mitzvah* to provide for the poor and those who are less fortunate, to enable them to have food and drink for Yom Tov. In other words, an important part of the *mitzvah* of *simcha* is to be *mesameach* others.

That is why there is a *minhag* to make a *tzedaka* appeal every Yom Tov, as an expression of *simchat Yom Tov*. In fact, it is because we pledge *tzedaka* on Yom Tov that the *Yizkor* prayer was introduced (Levush, Orach Chaim 490:9). The pledge of *tzedaka* should be considered as a *zechut* for one’s parent(s) who raised a child with proper attitudes and values regarding sharing their assets with others. Thus, the recitation of *Yizkor* is not at all a form of *aveilut*, but rather a fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *simcha*.¹

The notion of sharing one’s *simcha* with others may be relevant to a

chatan during his seven days of *Sheva Berachot*. The Rama (Orach Chaim 135:1) records the *minhag* that a *chatan* should be given an *aliyah* since it is like a Yom Tov for him. What is the halachic basis for this *minhag*?

The Rav explained that a *chatan* has a *mitzvah* of *simcha*. Since *Talmud Torah* is a form of *simcha*, as evidenced by the restrictions to learning that apply to an *avel* and on Tisha B’Av, it follows that teaching Torah is a further fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *simcha*. Through teaching others, one causes them to experience *simcha*. For this reason as well, the *minhag* is for the *chatan* to deliver *divrei Torah* at the *chatan’s tish*. The *chatan* receives an *aliyah* in which he is *melameid Torah* to the *tzibbur* that listens to the *kriya*, essentially the function of every *oleh laTorah*, in order to enhance his *mitzvah* of *simcha* by being *mesameach* others.

According to this explanation, it would seem one should endeavor to be called up for an *aliyah* on every Yom Tov, not only on the Yamim Noraim (as mentioned by the Mateh Efrayim 584:17). This way, one adds to the joy of others by teaching them Torah, and by so doing, he fulfills the *mitzvah* of *simchat Yom Tov*.²

1 See TorahWeb.org, Pesach, 2006, “True Simcha.”

2 See B’Ikvei HaTzon, pp. 94-95.

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