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GROWTH

At The SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT KI TAVO

The Real Source

"תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב, מרב כל."

"Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart, when everything was abundant..." (Deut. 28:47).

This verse appears in the rebuke of this week's Parsha. At first glance, it seems to mean that the dreadful curses befall Klal Yisrael when they serve Hashem without joy — performing mitzvot mechanically, simply because they must.

The *Meshech Chochmah*, however, offers a strikingly different reading. Punctuating the verse differently, he reads:

"תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך, בשמחה ובטוב לבב מרב כל."

Notice the subtle shift — the comma moves from לבב to אלקיך. With this change, the *pasuk* reads: "Because you did not serve Hashem. Rather, your happiness came from rov kol — an abundance of material things." This small adjustment unveils a profound lesson: it is a tragic error if our primary source of joy comes from wealth and possessions. Materialism may be the hallmark of the nations of the world, but for the Jew, true joy must come from bringing satisfaction to our Creator.

The Torah subtly reinforces this point: in this Parsha, "simcha" appears only twice more: by Bikkurim (Deut. 26:11) and by Korbanot (Deut. 27:7). In both cases, the joy is tied to closeness with Hashem, not to physical acquisitions. Our deepest happiness should ideally be rooted in our spiritual connection, not in materialism.

Of course, it is human nature to feel excitement over material blessings. The goal is not to strip away all enjoyment of this world, but to cultivate an even greater joy in mitzvot and avodat Hashem. Growth in this area is a lifelong journey, not an overnight transformation. Step by step, as we train our hearts to rejoice more in the spiritual than in the physical, we align ourselves with the true purpose of our simcha.

(Based on a d'var Torah shared by R' Avraham Mirsky)

Don't "Just Do It," Say It

A couple once visited a marriage counselor, and as soon as the session had started, the wife complained, "My husband never tells me 'I love you.'" The husband countered, "I don't understand. I said 'I love you' thirty years ago; if anything changes I'll let you know!"

At the start of this week's Torah portion, it discusses the declaration that is pronounced when a person brings his first harvest as a gift to the Temple. The Torah emphasizes that it's not enough just to bring the fruits as *bikkurim*; the individual must verbally declare (paraphrased): "G-d, our history as a people began with Yaakov Avinu going down to Egypt, and You took us out of bondage with incredible wonders and miracles. You allow me to have an orchard and field, so that I can bring You these gifts today. Look from Your Heavenly abode how far we've come in our ability to have blessings in our lives..."

The Torah here is teaching us an eternal lesson. When it comes to expressing gratitude, both to G-d and to other human beings, action alone is insufficient. Keeping the feeling to ourselves is inadequate. There is unparalleled power in actually *verbalizing* one's thankfulness, and doing so has unimaginable effects on making the world a much happier place.

So, take a moment to appreciate something profound in your life and whisper a heartfelt *thank you* to Hashem. And the next time you make a purchase or do something special for a loved one, take the extra step to actually say how deeply you appreciate the individual.

I saw a beautiful quote that sums it up perfectly. "*Feeling gratitude and not expressing it is like wrapping a present and not giving it.*"

(Based on an idea shared by Reb Chaim Bruk)

Refuah Sheleimah, b'toch she'ar cholei Yisrael:

Ariel Ben Frida Rachamim Ben Shifra Yitzhak Ben Naama Frida Bat Yaffa Yisrael Ben Miriam Ehud Ben Miriam Shlomo Zalman Ben Miriam Miriam Bat Bakol

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"Be like the ocean: strong enough not to be destroyed and gentle enough so others find comfort in your presence."