

## BE HAPPY!!

### PARSHAS PEKUDEI

*A chasid was sent to a prison in Siberia for the "crime" of teaching Torah. On his first Shabbos afternoon in the prison, he went outside and was surprised to hear someone singing Shabbos songs. He followed the sound until he came to a Jew with long hair. The Jew's eyes were closed, and he was singing with passion. He was not aware that another Jew had come. When he opened his eyes, he said that he had been in Siberia for 20 years and hadn't seen the face of a religious Jew until now. Anxiously, he asked the newcomer if he had any religious articles with him, as he had none. The newcomer responded that he only had a tefillin shel yad. Everything else had been confiscated. He said that he would bring the tefillin the next day. The next morning, the old timer excitedly put on tefillin for the first time in 20 years! He performed the mitzvah with immense joy! (Torah Wellsprings, Parshas Vayakhel, by Rabbi Elimelech Biderman)*

*In contrast, during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, many Jews were heard saying, in Yiddish, "It is difficult to be a Jew". Those Jews had to endure poverty and deprivation to be able to keep the mitzvos of Shabbos, Kashrus, and Family Purity. Yet, often, their children abandoned Torah Judaism. **Rav Moshe Feinstein** zt"l said that hearing this refrain frequently from their parents caused untold numbers of Jews to forsake their religion. (Derash Moshe Bereishis 31:14)*

When serving in the *Mishkan* and later in the *Beis HaMikdash*, the Kohain Gadol wore 8 special garments. The ordinary kohanim wore 4 special garments. The Kohanim were forbidden to enter the *Mishkan* in the manner of mourners. "Do not let your hair grow long and do not tear your garments"

*"Clothe Aharon with the sacred garments. Anoint him and sanctify him so that he may serve as a kohain to Me."  
(Shmos 40:13)*

(Vayikra 10:6). The **Sefer HaChinuch** (149) explains that the Kohanim were forbidden to enter the *Mishkan* with torn clothing or not having had a haircut for 30 days. The root of

this mitzvah offers an insight which is relevant to all Jews. Just like the Kohanim, all Jews are required to treat the *Beis HaMikdash* with respect and honor. One should enter the House of Hashem in a state of happiness, joy, and delight and not in a state of mourning or grief. Each Jew coming to the *Beis HaMikdash* should feel joyous at his good fortune to be in the place where Hashem's Holy Presence dwells. He should not enter in a sad state or with outward manifestations of grief.

This joyous feeling was not limited to the *Beis HaMikdash*. The entire city of

Yerushalayim had a special status of joy. The **Midrash Rabbah** (Pekudei 52:5) says that there was a bookkeeping room outside the city of Yerushalayim. Anyone who had to make financial calculations would leave the city and go to this special room. The **Maharzu** and **Matnos Kehuna** explain that sometimes a person would make financial calculations and realize that he lost money. That would make him feel sad. It would be inappropriate to feel this sadness in a city of joy. Thus, the room was situated outside Yerushalayim.

**Rav Pam** zt”l says that when a person exudes joy when doing mitzvos, he has a profound

influence on his children. There was a person who was a devoted rav of a shul as well as the head of a yeshiva. Unfortunately, all his children strayed from the path of Torah. Apparently, his attitude played a major role in this tragedy. At home, he constantly complained about the difficulties that he had in the rabbinate and in the yeshiva.

During COVID, most of us were unable to daven with a minyan. We couldn't answer amen, say borchu or kedusha. When we returned to shul, did we exhibit the same joy of a mitzvah as the man in Siberia did when he put tefillin on for the first time in 20 years? Do we still feel that joy?

**It is a special privilege to be a Jew. We have the joy of doing mitzvos,  
and the rewards inherent in following the ways of the Torah.**

**It is important for us to demonstrate our joy to others.**

**How beautiful our heritage is! How lucky we are!**

(dvar Torah based on Rav Pam on Chumash by Rabbi Sholom Smith)

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*Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.*

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