

At this time of year, many of our homes fill up with married children or children returning from yeshivah or seminary, coming to visit for Pesah. What a precious gift! It is one that some would give all the money in the world to experience. This is true in

concept, but we know that it is not always experienced this way. Sometimes it is taken for granted. Why?

Rabbi Katsenbaum answers with a *mashal*. Imagine you find yourself in the most expensive restaurant. You order the cheapest thing on the menu, a two-hundred-dollar steak. It has a fancier name, but essentially it's a succulent piece of steak. You are expecting a portion the size of a football, but it is average size. How fast will you eat that steak? Not fast at all. You will probably savor every piece. At ten dollars a bite, you want to enjoy it to the fullest. On the other hand, if you are grabbing an ordinary lunch, you might quickly stuff it into your mouth.

We pray, learn, or perform many *misvot*, but we might not be enjoying them the way we should. Very possibly, it is because we rush through them. When a person is in a hurry to get something over with, looking at what is next on his list rather than what is on his plate, he will not enjoy what he is doing.

On the holiday the focus is on getting things done. The focus is on the next meal and all the practicalities. There is surely a lot of planning, energy, stress and effort expended, and it's not always easy to manage, but we mustn't allow that to prevent us from enjoying the treasure before our eyes. We need to stop every so often, look around the room, and thank Hashem for the life He has bestowed upon us. As the verse quoted above, appreciating spending time with one's family is part of the *misvah* of *Simhat Yom Tob*.

Now more than ever, in this fast-paced society, we are running from one thing to another. There is rarely a dull moment. Although the holiday of Pesah teaches *zerizut* (alacrity), that refers to excitement and anticipation for a *misvah*. We rush to do a *misvah*; we don't rush through a *misvah*. On the contrary, we have to deliberate and drink up all that the *misvah* encompasses.

May we enjoy our *misvot* and utilize them for their purpose of drawing closer to Hashem. May we enjoy our families, develop closer relationships and derive much pleasure and joy. Shabbat Shalom and Happy Holiday. Rabbi Reuven Semah

Pure Confusion

In this week's *perashah*, in addition to defining the laws that distinguish different types of sacrifices, the Torah tells us of the concepts of *tum'ah* and *taharah*, loosely translated as spiritual purity and impurity. Of course, these laws have nothing to do with sanitary conditions, rather they define a state of spirituality that varies with the state of life and death. The Torah tells us that the meat of a sacrifice that will contact any *tum'ah* (impurity) shall not be eaten.

The law is that when *tahor* meets *tameh*, pure meets impure, *tameh* prevails and lowers the *tahor* to a state of *tameh*. The Kotzker Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Morgenstern, was bothered: Why is it not the opposite? When purity meets impurity, it should purify it! Let the impure become elevated with its contact with purity.

Rabbi Shaul Kagan, the *Rosh Kollel* of Kollel Bais Yitzchok in Pittsburgh, related the following story:

A man was committed to an insane asylum due to his aberrant behavior. After months of treatment the doctors felt he was cured and allowed him to leave. The man, however, refused to go. "I will not leave this institution unless you sign a document that I am sane," he declared. The doctors had given him a clean bill of mental health and figured they might as well acquiesce to the strange demand.

Not long after his release, the man went for a job interview. After answering the questions quite impressively, the man leaned toward his prospective boss and asked in earnest. "Now that you asked me about myself may I ask you a question?"

The interviewer replied, "Certainly!"

"Mr." the former mentally-ill patient began, "are you normal?"

The supervisor was taken aback but replied, "I surely think so. Why do you ask?"

"You see, mister," declared the applicant while proudly displaying his signed document, "you only think that you are normal. I have a certificate!"

The Kotzker Rebbe explained that when it comes to the world of pure and impure there are facts we know for certain, and there are particulars we can never be sure of. The world of purity, unfortunately is not as assured as the world of impurity. We may think something is actually pure. However, we may never truly know the truth. We do not know its history; where it went; what it touched or what affected it. We are shocked with horror at the deeds of youngsters who were deemed innocent and pure, or leaders who should guide us on high moral ground. We thought they were *tahor*. Unfortunately, though, what we may think is pure, innocent and holy is sometimes not.

Tum'ah, impurity, on the other hand, is well defined. We know with certainty what is not pure and holy. It has a certificate. Therefore, explains the Kotzker Rebbe, when bona-fide *tum'ah* attaches to something that is at best hopefully and assumedly pure, definite impurity prevails and defiles that what was assumed *tahor*.

In a world of mixed-messages and confusing signals, we can try to cling to perceived purity. And we can hope and pray that the role-models and values that we have chosen are the correct ones. But we surely can keep away from those ideas and actions that are clearly defined as impure. Those deeds can leave an impact powerful enough to taint the purest of *neshamot* (souls). And we can avoid them. After all, they have a certificate! (Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky)

How Old Are You?

Two three-year-olds accompanied their father to the store, where they spotted a bin full of rubber balls. Each started the singsong nagging which little children believe is necessary in order to get what they want. To avoid trouble later, the wise parent chose two balls and gave one to each child. Much to his surprise, within minutes each was insisting that the ball his brother was bouncing was his. The father switched the balls from one child to the other – but the squabbling broke out again! The children were never satisfied with the balls they had; each demanded the one his sibling was playing with. Silly children!

People don't easily outgrow the possessiveness of their childhood years. Jealousy and competition drive individuals to prefer that which belongs to another. Learning the truism that "Hashem gives everyone exactly what they need to perform their life mission" is easier said than done – but it is a lesson we must internalize.

Inevitably, the time will come when you see a person with something you wish could be yours. You might react with an envious stare, or you might not. It takes a healthy outlook and emotional maturity to focus on what you have and not compare it to another's acquisitions. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

Financial Advice

"And G-d spoke to Moshe saying: 'Command Aharon and his children as follows, This is the law of the (completely) burnt offering...'" (*Vayikra* 6:1-2). *Rashi*, explains that the expression "command" used here is intended to exhort the *Kohanim* to act. Why do they need encouragement here? It is because there is a loss of money in the fulfillment of this commandment, and there is an extra need for encouragement.

What loss of money is there in this particular commandment? One explanation is that since this is a completely burnt offering, the *Kohanim* receive no share of it, and

they will prefer to bring the offerings in which they do receive a share. Others explain that the fact that there was an obligation to keep a fire going all night on the altar