

Parashat Re'eh 5782, 2022:

*Rejoicing on Yom Tov*

Rabbi David Etengoff

Dedicated to the sacred memories of my mother, Miriam Tovah bat Aharon Hakohen, father-in-law, Levi ben Yitzhak, sister, Shulamit bat Menachem, sister-in-law, Ruchama Rivka Sondra bat Yechezkel, Chana bat Shmuel, Yehonatan Binyamin ben Mordechai Meir Halevi, Shoshana Elka bat Avraham, Tikvah bat Rivka Perel, Peretz ben Chaim, Chaya Sarah bat Reb Yechezkel Shraga, Shmuel Yosef ben Reuven, Shayndel bat Mordechai Yehudah, the *Kedoshim* of Har Nof, Pittsburgh, and Jersey City, the *refuah shlaimah* of Mordechai HaLevi ben Miriam Tovah, and the health and safety of our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world.

The concluding section of our *parasha* focuses on the *moadim* (festivals) that we encounter throughout the year. Herein, we are met with two *pasukim*, the first in reference to Shavuot and the second in reference to Succot, that contain very similar terminology:

And you shall rejoice before Hashem, *Elokecha*, you, and your son, and your daughter, and your manservant, and your maidservant, and the Levite who is within your cities, and the stranger, and the orphan, and the widow, who are among you, in the place which Hashem, *Elokecha*, will choose to establish His Name therein. (*Sefer Devarim* 16:11, this and all Tanach translations, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach* with my emendations)

And you shall rejoice in your Festival, you, and your son, and your daughter, and your manservant, and your maidservant, and the Levite, and the stranger, and the orphan, and the widow, who are within your cities. (*Sefer Devarim* 16:14)

A careful reading of these verses reveals two groups differentiated by the terms, “your” and “the,” respectively; your son, your daughter, your manservant, and your maidservant (personal); and the Levite, the stranger, the orphan, and the widow (public). In both instances, we are obligated to provide for the festival needs of these individuals, to ensure that they, no less than we, will celebrate *yom tov* with true joy (*simcha*).

The Torah’s emphasis on these two classes of people is expanded upon in the *Midrash Yalkut Shimoni* 897:6:

Rabbi Lulinos of Rome in the name of Rabbi Yehudah bar Siman said, “The Holy One blessed be He said: ‘You [the Jewish people] have four *b’nai bayit* (family members), namely, *bincha*, *bitecha*, *v’avdecha v’amatecha* (your son, your daughter, your manservant, and your maidservant), and I, too, have four *b’nai bayit*: *halevi*, *hager*, *v’hayatom*, *v’ha’almanah* (the Levite, the stranger, the orphan, and the widow); and they are all found in one verse: “And you shall rejoice in your Festival, you, and your son, and your daughter, and your manservant, and your maidservant, and the Levite, and the stranger, and the orphan, and the widow, who are within your cities.” (*Sefer Devarim* 16:14, this and the following *midrash* translation and brackets my own)

Just as we are joined by our *b’nai bayit*, that is, our extended family, in rejoicing on the *yom tovim*, so, too, is Hashem joined by His *b’nai bayit*, the Levite, stranger, orphan, and widow. The *midrash* continues stressing the reward we will receive when we fulfill this *mitzvah*:

The Holy One blessed be He said: “I have told you to help that which is Mine and that which is yours to rejoice on the *yamim tovim* that I have given you. If you have done this, then I, too, will enable that which is Mine and that which is yours to rejoice. For in the future, I will help both to rejoice in My Chosen House (*beit habechirah*) ...

It is crucial to understand that ministering to the needs of the down-trodden in society on the *yom tovim* is more than a midrashic ideal; it is a halachic imperative. As the Rambam (Maimonides, 1135-1204) states:

When a person eats and drinks [in celebration of a *yom tov day*], he is obligated to feed converts, orphans, widows, and others who are destitute and poor. In contrast, a person who locks the gates of his courtyard and eats and drinks with his children and his wife, without feeding the poor and the embittered, is [not indulging in] rejoicing associated with a *mitzvah*, but rather the rejoicing of his belly. (*Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Yom Tov* 6:18, translation, Rabbi Eliyahu Touger with my emendations)

With Hashem’s help and our fervent desire, may we strive to fulfill this *mitzvah* and witness the realization of Hashem’s promise soon, and in our time. As Yeshayahu the prophet declares (56:7), “I will bring them to My holy mount, and I will cause them to rejoice in My house of prayer... for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” *V’chane yihi ratzon*.

Shabbat Shalom

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Please contact me at [rdbe718@gmail.com](mailto:rdbe718@gmail.com) to be added to my weekly email list.

\*\*\* My audio *shiurim* on the topics of *Tefilah* and *Tanach* may be found at:  
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\*\*\* I have posted 164 of Rabbi Soloveitchik's English language audio *shiurim* (MP3 format) spanning the years 1958-1984. Please click on the highlighted link: [The Rav](#)