

## **D'var Torah: Parashat Ki Tavo**

by Benjamin Gee - Wednesday, September 18, 2019

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### **Invite everyone to the simcha...**

Here are two ways to create happiness!

Parashat Ki Tavo commences with the mitzvah of 'bikkurim' the bringing of the first fruits in Temple times. The person bringing the fruits would then make a declaration in the temple through which they would recognise all of their tribulations in the past and the way in which Hashem has brought them to that point. And then the Torah says 'you must treat this occasion as a Simcha, as a joyous event - "v'samachta b'chol ha'tov asher natan lecha Hashem Elokeicha uleveitecha", you must rejoice with all the good that the Lord, your God has brought for you and your household, "ata, v'ha'levi, v'ha'ger asher b'kirbecha", you and the Levi, and the stranger in your midst.

But, how do you fulfil - 'v'samachta' - make this into a Simcha? Be happy? Haketav VehaKabbala gives this perush: He says: sing! Sing songs and include others, like the Levi'im and the strangers. Widen the gathering, because ruach is attained through many people singing together in a spiritual way.

Ibn Ezra, however, gives a very different perush. He highlights the fact that our celebration includes the Levi and the Ger. The Levi who can't earn a 'parnassah' - a living, who works in the temple and therefore needs your support. The stranger in your midst who may be struggling financially. If you include them in your celebration, share your food with them, make them happy, then you, as a result, will become happy.

According to the Ibn Ezra, therefore, happiness is not a state of mind that you achieve by going out of your way to stimulate it by singing. Rather, says the Ibn Ezra, it will happen automatically! It will happen because you are sharing what you have with others, you are including them in your Simcha, and when you give in life, that is how you receive!

So therefore from the mitzvah of Bikkurim we learn, that when it comes to our own simchas, our joy is enhanced by including many others in our celebration, and in life, it is by giving what we have to others that we ourselves become happy.

Shabbat Shalom