



MISHNAS CHAYIM

משנת חיים

MISHNAH ON THE PARSHAH

פרשת תזריע - מצורע תש"ע ~ Parshas Tazria - Metzora 5770

SEPARATING MIXED EMOTIONS

GAIN VS. PAIN

The blessings prescribed for us by Chazal cover the gamut of human emotions and experience. As such, blessings exist for both happy and sorrowful occasions. As the Mishnah in Berachos (9:2,3) relates:

עַל בְּשׂוֹרוֹת הַטּוֹבוֹת אוֹמֵר בְּרוּךְ הַטּוֹב וְהַמְטִיב, וְעַל שְׂמוּעוֹת רָעוֹת אוֹמֵר בְּרוּךְ דַּיָּן הָאֱמֵת. בְּנֵה בַיִת חֲדָשׁ, וְקָנָה כְּלִים חֲדָשִׁים, אוֹמֵר בְּרוּךְ שֶׁהֶחְיֵנוּ.

“Upon receiving happy tidings, one recites the blessing of ‘Hatov Vehameitiv’ (He is good and bestows goodness). For sad news, one recites ‘Baruch Dayan Ha’emes’ (Blessed is the true Judge). If he builds a new house or acquires new clothing, he recites the blessing of ‘Shehecheyanu’ (Who has provided us with life).”

(In truth, the real difference between the blessings of “Hatov Vehameitiv” and “Shehecheyanu” lies in the number of beneficiaries. If one person benefits, he recites “Shehecheyanu”; when others stand to share in the good fortune, the blessing changes to “Hatov Vehameitiv.” In general, “Shehecheyanu” is recited on the joyous occasions of new and significant acquisitions, receiving glad tidings, and the performance of beloved *mitzvos*, which arrive at infrequent intervals [see *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim, secs. 222, 223*].)

Interestingly, we do find occasions that necessitate the recital of both types of blessings together. Such is the case when someone loses a parent but receives an inheritance as a consequence. Such an individual is instructed to recite the “Dayan Ha’emes” blessing over the *petirah* (passing) of his loved one, followed by a “Shehecheyanu” over the financial acquisition (*Berachos 59b*).

Yet here, an issue arises. As mentioned previously, another event that occasions the recital of “Shehecheyanu” is the fulfillment of a mitzvah, as we recite “Shehecheyanu,” for example, on the first night of Chanukah upon kindling the lights of the menorah. The *poskim* debate whether one recites this blessing upon fulfilling the mitzvah that is mentioned in the beginning of this week’s *parshah* – namely, performing a *bris milah* (*Vayikra 12:3*).

The opinion of the Rambam (*Hilchos Milah 3:3*) is that one does recite “Shehecheyanu” when circumcising a son, just as is done with other *mitzvos*. The *Hagfos Maimoni* (*ibid. 4*), however, contends that “Shehecheyanu” should not be recited in this instance.

Why should *milah* be different from other *mitzvos*, that the “Shehecheyanu” blessing would be unwarranted? The *Hagfos Maimoni* offers a few explanations. One of the reasons he gives is that reciting the joyous blessing of Shehecheyanu would not be appropriate here due to the fact that it is also a time of anguish, as the baby experiences pain.

And this is where the issue arises. The Rashba (*Responsum 246*) reminds us of the aforementioned situation, in which an individual unfortunately loses a relative but receives an inheritance at the same time. In that instance, he is instructed to pronounce both blessings: “Dayan Ha’emes” for the *petirah* and “Shehecheyanu” for the inheritance. Why, then, should *bris milah* be any different? The anguish over the loss of a parent was not enough to disqualify the obligation to bless over the joy of receiving an inheritance; why

Dedicated in loving memory of our dear father
משה בן מרדכי ע"ה
Dr. & Mrs. Avraham Wax, South Bend, Indiana

Kindly take a moment to study MISHNAS CHAYIM in the merit of
מאשה יהודית בת מאיר ע"ה, a fellow Jew who passed away with
no relatives to arrange Torah study on behalf of her neshamah.

MISHNAS CHAYIM is brought to you by CHEVRAH LOMDEI MISHNAH, a network of Torah scholars dedicated to bringing the merits of Mishnah study to the greater Jewish public. Encompassing Mishnah, Gemara, and a variety of other services, CHEVRAH LOMDEI MISHNAH primarily assists mourners interested in acquiring the merit of Torah study for their loved ones.



MISHNAS
CHAYIM

משנת חיים

should the pain associated with a *bris milah* cancel the necessity to bless over the joy of the performance of this beloved ritual?

With masterful precision, R' Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg (*Mishmeres Chaim*, vol. 3, p. 60) attempts to reconcile these two *halachos*. While the two cases do bear a superficial resemblance, the nature of their joyous occurrences are actually quite divergent.

While no one can deny, of course, the magnitude of the sorrowful quality of the loss of a parent, it is nevertheless possible to isolate the event of the monetary acquisition from the tragedy itself. In other words, the attainment of this particular sum of money can be viewed as its own separate entity. For argument's sake, let us say the inheritance consisted of \$100,000. True, this individual only received it due to his parent's passing. Theoretically, however, this did not have to be the case; the parent could have granted the same \$100,000 as a gift while he was still alive. As such, the actual circumstances of how the individual

received this sum are, in a sense, incidental.

Technically speaking, then, one can view the tragic event and the beneficial event as two distinct entities: this individual lost a parent, a tragedy which occasions the "Dayan Ha'emes" blessing. Another, separate, event occurred – he received a "windfall" of a significant sum of money. While both events happened at the same time, they are not inherently co-dependent, as demonstrated above. Hence, the acquisition can be viewed in its own right, necessitating a "Shehecheyanu" blessing.

The situation of a *bris milah*, on the other hand, is quite different. There, the "pain" is inseparable from the joyous occurrence, for the very physical act that is a cause of joy is the same act that is a cause of pain. Therefore, the joy cannot be viewed in isolation from the anguish, rendering the "Shehecheyanu" inappropriate.

LET'S SUM THAT UP

In short, we have two seemingly similar circumstances that contain, beneath the surface, quite different properties. As such, they are treated differently as far as the *halachah* is concerned.

A *bris milah* is an occasion of both joy (for the parents) and anguish (for the physical discomfort involved). Since these two qualities are both the direct result of a single act, the joyous aspect cannot be isolated from the pain. As such, one can't view the joy over this mitzvah as complete, and so the "Shehecheyanu" is omitted.

The other situation – in which someone loses a parent but receives an inheritance – is a different matter. It goes without saying, of course, that the benefit of the money in no way cancels out or even tempers the sorrow of the loss; it's just that the two can be viewed independently. Since the acquisition of these monies is not inherently tied to the *petirah* of the parent (since the child could theoretically have received the same money during the parent's lifetime), these two events are viewed and treated individually. The passing of the parent warrants a "Dayan Ha'emes," and the receiving of the inheritance occasions a "Shehecheyanu."

Mishnas Chayim

Insights on the weekly parshah
based on the Mishnah.

- SUBSCRIBE BY MAIL OR E-MAIL
- DISTRIBUTE MISHNAS CHAYIM IN YOUR SHUL



Don't miss a week!
Join today.



732.364.7029
ChevrahLomdeiMishnah.org

To sponsor MISHNAS CHAYIM, to distribute it to your shul, or to receive this publication via email, please contact CHEVRAH LOMDEI MISHNAH at 732-364-7029 or info@chevrahlomdeimishnah.org.