

Luxuries and Distractions

Toras Avigdor Junior

Adapted from the teachings of Rav Avigdor Miller z"l

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"Excuse me Totty," said Yosef Leibowitz as he knocked on the door to his father's study. "Can I talk to you for a minute?"

Anshel Leibowitz finished writing the last zero on the check he was making out to Mosdos Horki and stood up from his desk. "Sure, Yosef," he smiled. "What's on your mind?"

"I wanted to talk to you about my upcoming seudas Bar Mitzvah," Yosef said hesitantly.

"Ah, gevaldik!" said Totty. "Becoming a Bar Mitzvah is a tremendous occasion! We must make sure to properly celebrate it! I was thinking that we would rent out the brand new simcha hall in the basement of Kehillas Ateres Yehoshua. We could hire the twin entertainers Yaakov and Yedidya Menson to do the music. And "Banquets by Basya" can do the catering. I hear that many of your classmates used them, and they have a nice Bar Mitzvah package."

Yosef's face fell. "Oh, that's — that's nice." he said with a forced smile.

Totty looked at his son. "Obviously you had something different in mind, Yosef. Why don't you tell me what you were thinking?"

"Well," Yosef began slowly. "I was thinking about something really special. Like maybe we could rent out the entire American Dream Mall. And we could hire the full Menapetz Oznayim Orchestra, with Avraham ben David as the singer, and the Tampa Boys Choir, as well!"

Totty raised his left eyebrow, but kept listening as Yosef continued.

"The caterer should be more fancy, maybe Rebecca's Royal Repasts. They would serve a smorgasbord with meat carving stations, salad bars, and a sushi bar or two. Waiters in tuxedos could walk around with trays of franks-in-

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blanks, hot knishes, and drinks. After the first dance we would have a meal with a first course of grilled salmon, followed by french onion soup. Next we would serve a choice of chicken or meat salad and for the main course there would be a choice of rib-eye steak, rotisserie chicken, or roast turkey. And of course an entire milchig section for the people who might want to go out for pizza and ice cream afterwards...

“Of course it won’t be as fancy as the Horki Dinner,” Yosef finished, “but it’s my Bar Mitzvah — we need to show how important it is! Everyone knows we have a lot of money, and if we make a plain Bar Mitzvah in Ateres Yehoshua, it would seem like we don’t care about how special it is.”

Totty let Yosef finish and then put a hand on his shoulder. “Yosef,” he said. “I want you to take a look at something in this week’s Parsha.”

Totty opened the Chumash on his desk and Yosef read:

”וידבר ה' אל אהרן לאמר: יין ושכר אל תשת אתה ובניך אתך בבאכם אל אהל מועד ולא תמתו...”

“And Hashem said to Aharon... do not drink wine or liquor, neither you nor your sons, when you come into the Mishkan, so that you shall not die...”

Yosef looked up from the chumash, “I’m confused,” he said. “This posuk is talking about Kohanim. And I didn’t say anything about serving alcohol. Even if you do have l’chaims for the adults, we can have a sign saying that Kohanim aren’t allowed to have any.”

Totty smiled. “No, Yosef. That’s not what I meant. You see, Rav Avigdor Miller explains that the Torah is telling us something important here, not just for the Kohanim. The Torah is saying that we must be careful when we serve Hashem, not to get distracted by extra gashmiyus and things that we don’t need.

“Just like someone who drinks wine might be distracted and not serve Hashem properly, so too, any extra fancy things in our lives will only take our mind off of our main purpose of serving Hashem.

“Yes, Hashem has bentched us with enough money to make the event you described, but we can’t get carried away with making too much of a big deal out of these things and forget about what being a Bar Mitzvah is all about! We are celebrating your new responsibility as a Bar Mitzvah who will now devote his life to serving Hashem. Of course Hashem put many delicious and beautiful things in this world for us to enjoy, but that is only to help us serve Hashem even better.”

Yosef thought quietly to himself for a few minutes.

“I see,” he said to Totty, and his eyes suddenly lit up. “I have an idea! Can we then instead spend all that extra money on sponsoring the junior Toras Avigdor so that children all around the world can learn these important lessons?”

Totty beamed. “What a wonderful idea, Yosef, and a great way to celebrate becoming a Bar Mitzvah!”

Have A Wonderful Shabbos!



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