

Parshas Korach 5762 (Bar Mitzvah)

Prepared hard for Bar Mitzvah. Even though it's just one day.

Relates to parsha:

ולבני לוי הני נתתי כל מעשר בישראל חלף עבודתם אשר הם עובדים את עבודת אהל מועד (י"ח כ"א)

על כן לא היה ללוי חלק ונחלה עם אחיו ה' הוא נחלתו - רש"י: לפי שהובדלו לעבודת מזבח ואינם פנויין לחרוש ולזרוע ... נוטל פרס מבית המלך (דברים י"ט)

How many days did לוי work?

24 משמרות, each one divided into days of week. One day out of 24 weeks.

And for that he receives תרומות ומעשרות, a stipend the whole year round.

Good work if you can get it.

You can't just show up and do the עבודה. The עבודה is the service of Hashem, on behalf of the entire ישראל. It requires a special spiritual stature, a special spiritual state of mind. And there are many הלכות that one has to know, so it requires someone of Torah stature, as well. To do the עבודה even for one day every half a year, a person has to prepare for the entire year.

And that is the very basis of אידישקייט. Other religions - you go to services once a week and that's it. But in אידישקייט we're surrounded by מצוות every single day, almost everything we do is regulated by מצוות, by halacha. And every מצוה requires the knowledge of many הלכות that pertain to it. (Story of how a father would offer a prospective son-in-law a bowl of fruit, and see how well he navigated the complex הלכות of קדימה in ברכות.)

It is almost no exaggeration to say that one has to study a lifetime to know how to get through a single day.

Because the purpose of תורה ומצוות is to raise us into people of spiritual stature.

Rousseau - noble savage. Civilization corrupts. Last century has taught just the opposite: Civilization is a thin veneer. Strip it away and man is a savage. Torah said long ago: עיר פרא אדם יולד.

The purpose of Torah and מצוות is to transform that savage into someone who can stand before the רבונו של עולם. Into someone who has spiritual dignity and grandeur. That requires a lifetime of work.

Bar Mitzvah is not over. A Jew is Bar Mitzvah every day. After all, becoming בר מצוה means accepting the yoke of מצוות, and a Jew does that each day, when he says קריאת שמע. And therefore you have study hard - for a lifetime, really - to know how to live for even one day.

But if that seems daunting, remember this: While you had to study hard to reach this day, today is a celebration. Being בר מצוה is a cause for rejoicing. And if a Jew realizes that he is Bar Mitzvah every day, that the way he lives each day is the product of all the Torah that he has learned until that day, then each day is cause for celebration.

Mazal Tov.