



# THE LIGHT, LIFE & LEGACY OF R' MICHOEL FORSHLAGER ZT"L



Issue 7

Parshas Re'ah

אמרי חיים קדוה אורח חיים

## The Light

**You are children of Hashem your God; you shall not tear your flesh or your hair over the dead. Because you are a holy nation to God** (Devarim 14:1-2). As stated here - the Torah commands us not to mourn excessively over the dead because 'You are children of God'. What is the connection between these two seemingly unrelated statements? The Sforno explains as follows: It is not appropriate to mourn excessively over the passing of a relative when one has a much closer relative still alive. The reason for that being that one can ultimately find solace in the relative who is still alive. So too, Jews should never mourn excessively over a death since our heavenly Father - God is still 'alive' and we can take comfort in his existence. The Sforno further elucidates that one should also not be concerned about the suffering of the dead because 'You are a holy nation to God' and are promised eternal life in the world-to-come where the fleetingness of this world fades away in comparison to the eternity of that world.



This offers us an incredible amount of comfort. No matter the suffering a person has, they can always take solace in the fact that we have a loving, devoted and Eternal Father and that helps us bear the suffering. The suffering of this world is nothing compared to the everlasting goodness of the world-to-come. When one can truly embrace this, they can spend their days with less suffering and angst.

In the conclusion of this week's Parsha, we read the commandment to rejoice on Sukkos - especially in the Bais Hamikdash. **"And you shall rejoice on your holiday, along with your entire household...seven days you shall rejoice before God in the place He has chosen and you shall be exclusively joyful"** (Devarim 16: 14-15). The Gemara shares the words of Hillel the Elder that conveyed the great joy that occurred in the Bais Hamikdash. "If I am here, all is here; and if I am not here, who is here?" (Sukkah 53b). There are several explanations as to what these words mean. Rashi explains that Hillel was speaking in God's name. "If I am here / as long as I am here and desire to rest my Presence on this temple, all will come. If however, you sin, I will no longer want to be here and no one will come here any longer.

What is the connection between Hillel's statement and the joy in the Bais Hamikdash? According to the Sforno's concept the connection is obvious. The source of joy in this world is our connection to the divine. On Sukkos the great joy in the Bais Hamikdash came from being so close to God. Hillel was explaining this by saying: if God is here and the Jews are connected to him, all is here - meaning all the joy and excitement that comes from this connection. But if the opposite occurs and God is not here because the Jews have turned away from him, the connection is no longer there either. Which doesn't leave any of this incredible joy to exist.

Now the words of the Piyut of Sukkos make sense. "In the Simchas Beis Hashoavah Hillel would praise with song, If I am here all is here; to comfort mourners". What is the connection to mourners? Hillel's words can be used to comfort mourners and really anyone who experiences pain in this lifetime. If God is here all is here and thus all the suffering one experiences can be more easily endured.

This week's Dvar Torah is dedicated in memory of Sam Cohen שמואל צבי בן ר' פינחס הכהן, who passed away last week. Those who knew Sam knew that he had a tremendously warm heart. Sam always had a smile and a good word for those he encountered. He was a talented artist who amongst his many areas of creativity particularly devoted himself to Judaic art. He is survived by his daughter Dawn and her family. May we all be comforted in his loss.