

# THE PATH TO HAPPINESS

## THE CAUSE FOR JOY

The Rambam writes that when rejoicing on Yom Tov, one should not be involved in drinking and frivolity, and claim he is increasing in simcha, for this is not simcha, just wildness and foolishness. We were commanded to have 'simcha', which always involves avodas Hashem, and this cannot be done when wild or drunk.

(רמב"ם הל' יו"ט פ"ו ה"כ)

During the times of the Baal Shem Tov, there lived a chossid in the town of Lubavitch known as Reb Yisroel der Lebediker (the lively one). Even at ninety years old, he would still daven and learn Tanach and Mishnayos with the excitement and energy of a young man. He was wont to say: "A mitzvah without kavana is like a body without a neshama. The kavana must be that it comes from the commander, Hashem, Who shleps us out from all sorts of mud (בלאטע). So, if I, Yisroel, who am nothing, merited to fulfill the command of Hashem, I should jump and dance from absolute joy!"

(לקוטי דיבורים חלק א' ע' 228)

The Torah says that as a result of not serving Hashem with simcha, the Yidden will have to serve their enemies. The Alter Rebbe explained that these refer to the many challenges (מקטרגים) which a Yid encounters in parnasa, health and children. They are destroyed through one's davening with התפעלות and being joyous from recognizing Hashem.

The Alter Rebbe would command those who have troubles to daven with song and simcha, for it sweetens the judgments on a person (דינים) and chases away all the adversaries (מקטרגים). The Mittlerer Rebbe noted that this has been tried with successful results ("בדוק ומנוסה").

The Mittlerer Rebbe writes that every person, even those who are immersed in deep thoughts of chassidus when they daven, must literally say Pesukei D'zimra out loud, with song, for it brings simcha.

In addition, it is necessary to have 'simcha shel mitzvah' in the literal sense, to the extent that when putting on Tallis and Tefillin or giving tzedaka, one should feel an excitement in his heart that he is able to cause pleasure to his creator. He should ignore those who mocks him in this, and who only derive happiness from physical pleasures.

(אג"ק אדהאמ"צ ע' רס"ה)

The Arizal once told his talmid Reb Chaim Vital that the reason he merited Ruach Hakodesh and revelation of Eliyahu Hanavi was because of his great joy in fulfilling mitzvos. The Rebbe said this is a lesson for every person, that through joy in fulfilling mitzvos, one can reach great heights.

(תורה אור כב, שמחה ובטחון בה')

A chossid complained to the Alter Rebbe that his mind was being assailed with foreign thoughts. The Alter Rebbe told him, "They gather in empty space!" (They come when the mind is not filled with thoughts of Torah and mitzvos). The Rebbe explained that the same is with simcha; if a person does not have joy in fulfilling mitzvos, then his happiness will be expressed in other things...

(תו"מ חל"ו ע' 221)

## THE AVODA OF SIMCHA

When his chassidim davened, the holy tzaddik Reb Naftali of Ropshitz would walk up and down the Beis Medrash, scrutinizing each one. One morning, after davening, he commented, "Today, I saw Reb Tzvi the shamash dancing with great ecstasy! He can dance, and it is not in vain, for he will grow into a mighty tree from which many great men will find shelter. But quite in contrast to him, I saw another man dancing (and he named him). What a pity to wear out a good pair of shoes on dancing of that sort!"

(סיפורי חסידים זוין מועדים ע' 188)

One night on Chol Hamoeid Sukkos, the talmidim of Tomchei Temimim in Dokshitz went to the chossid Reb Yehoshua Lein to farbreng and rejoice in Simchas Beis Hashoeiva. Entering the sukkah he asked them, "What kind of simcha can one possibly have without learning the maimar 'U'sh'avtem' beforehand?" The bochurim went to bring a few Lekutei Torah from home, and they then learned the maamer together for over an hour. Then, with an appreciation and feeling of chassidus, they were able to rejoice, dancing till late at night.

(לקוטי סיפורים פערלאוו ע' ש"ה)

In the beginning of the Alter Rebbe's nesius, he discontinued the practice of the chassidim to arouse Atzvus (sadness) over their wrongdoings. The chassidim, thought they were also to do away with Merirus (bitterness over aveiros) and were therefore

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constantly in a state of simcha. Later, the Alter Rebbe wrote in Tanya that there is a benefit to feelings of bitterness for aveiros, for it serves as a necessary prerequisite for joy. The chassidim then understood that it was only melancholy and despair which the Alter Rebbe had negated.

The Rebbe said that in our times, we no longer have the emotional strength to do teshuva with bitterness; rather, we must do teshuva with simcha. The Rebbe explained that truthfully, teshuva is a great cause for simcha. For there can be no greater joy than 'finding oneself' and being reunited with our father, like a prince returning, after a long separation, to his father the king.

(סה"ש תש"א ע' מה, תו"מ תשמ"ו ח"א ע' 667, תו"מ תשמ"ג ח"א ע' 90)

The tzaddik Reb Nachman of Breslav writes, that a person should discover within himself the minutest amount of good and be joyful from it. Furthermore, a person should be joyful even through pointless activities (such as dancing etc.), and this will bring him to simcha.

The Rebbe said that one should make sure to be joyful, even from gashmiusdike things, if that is what makes him happy in his current state. Once a person will be in a state of simcha, he will be able to draw himself towards joy of mitzvos. Of course, this does not include הוללות, because even if the person feels happy during that moment, he will later regret it and there will not be any simcha...

(לקוטי מהר"ן מהדו"ב סו"ס מ"ח, תו"מ תשמ"ה ח"ב ע' 1112, תו"מ תשמ"ב ח"ג ע' 1523)

On Yud Tes Kislev תקס"ב the Alter Rebbe held a Seudas Hoda'a for his release from prison three years previous. Many hundreds of chassidim gathered from far and wide to take part in this great simcha. After the Maimar which the Alter Rebbe said before all of the chassidim, the Alter Rebbe sat down for a seudah together with his sons and brothers, and a few selected Eltere Chassidim. During the seudah the Alter Rebbe spoke, revealing many new ideas.

After the seudah, some chassidim begged the Rebbe's son Reb Moshe to share with them that which said, and Reb Moshe agreed, on condition that they would not pass it on. The chossid Reb Eizil Homilier who heard from Reb Moshe, related one point, as it is relevant to all chassidim:

"I have a tradition from the Baal Shem Tov that foolishness, sadness and feeling of self worth are considered by chassidim as aveiros of the Torah. Acute perception, joy brought about through finding the good in everything and calm swiftness are considered to be mitzvos of the Torah."

(סה"ש קיין ש"ת ע' 52)

## BEWARE OF הוללות

On the words of Tehillim that one should not mingle with לצים (jokers), Chazal say that this refers to Plishtim. The Alter Rebbe explains that this is a kelipah which directs a person to be unrestrained (מפולש) and speak as he pleases. In order to reach true simcha, which comes from Ahavas Hashem, one must preface

it with fear of Hashem which is the beginning of all avoda.

The Rebbe explains that there are two opposite expressions of laughter. One of kedusha, where the joy in one's connection to Hashem is openly expressed, and another of klipah, when לצים express an empty joy of הוללות. To prevent the joy of kedusha from leading to הוללות, it is necessary to have bittul and fear of Hashem.

(עבודה זרה י"ט ע"א, תורה אור סא,ג, תו"מ תשמ"ה ח"א ע' 446)

Chazal established that to be trusted as a Chover regarding Maisei and Tahara, one must refrain from excessive laughter. Laughter and lightheadedness can lead to negative behavior.

(דמאי ב,ג, אבות ג,ג)

On the possuk comparing torah to oil, the medrash explains: Just as oil does not blend with other liquids, Torah cannot mix with Leitzonus. If a drop of water falls into a cup full of oil, it will not combine, but rather replace an oil drop. Similarly, a word of Torah that enters one's heart automatically replaces a ליצנות, and conversely, empty ideas will take the place of Torah.

(שיר השירים רבה א)

In a sicha said to children (חוה"מ"ס תשד"מ), the Rebbe explained a lesson to be learned from "זמן שמחנתו". The Yetzer Horah, seeing a Yiddishe child in a state of simcha, tries to confuse him and draw him into הוללות and acting wildly, breaking the order of Torah and mitzvos. From Sukkos, celebrating Simchas Beis Hashoeiva and Simchas Torah, we see that simcha is to come from Torah and mitzvos. When simcha comes from serving Hashem, one must be much more careful to follow the directives of Hashem.

When this is so, then even when joyous and tired from the dancing as well, he will not forget to make a bracha on food or drink taken to continue his Simchas Yom Tov. This does not subtract from his simcha, but adds to his enthusiasm in fulfilling the entire Torah.

(תו"מ תשד"מ ח"א ע' 269)

On one occasion the Rebbe said: Simcha needs to be connected with mitzvos and not in a manner of הוללות. There is no reason to warn Yidden about this, especially chassidim, and particularly chassidim of the nasi of the generation.

(תו"מ תשמ"ג ח"א 179)

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