

The Rebbe's Pharmacy

Pills of Chizuk for Today's Spiritual Illnesses—Part 12

The Illness: No matter what I do, I can't find a way to be happy.

Happiness is perhaps the most elusive thing in the entire world. We could have all the riches we could ever imagine, and still be utterly depressed. We could have a beautiful, healthy family, and still be completely broken on the inside. We could even be a huge talmid chacham with incredible knowledge of the Torah, and still feel depressed about our life.

We try this and that to see if it will make us happy, but it seems that no matter what we do, we simply can't get rid of the dark, cold, and bitter sadness which we feel. We've asked all of our rabbonim. We've gone to multiple therapists. Each one of them tells us things that, in theory, seem like good ideas. But when we try to put their ideas into practice, the result is always the same: we

remain stuck in the mud of our depression.

Sometimes, we try a pill or a certain method which seem to be helpful for a little while. Unfortunately, after short period of time, they run out of gas and we're back on empty. So, we convince ourselves that there really is no way to find joy in our lives, and we succumb to our depression.

The Rebbe's Prescription: Sometimes, we simply need to "fake it till we make it," and just do something silly.

(Based primarily on Likutei Halachos, Hilchos Nefilas Apayim, 4:5)

Through happiness, we can reach our greatest potential in avodas Hashem.

We all know that happiness is our ultimate goal, since it is the key to success in all areas of life. Even the non-Jews recognize this fact, like it says the Declaration of Independence, "Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

When we're happy we're able to serve Hashem on a very high level. We can cast away all the clouds of confusion, worry and doubt which cover our mind. All of our fears about the future and our guilt about the past which weigh us down and prevent us from davening and learning, are completely obliterated in a moment of true simcha.

Then with a clear mind, we're able to focus on the words of our prayers and taste the sweet deveikus of tefilah. Instead of wasting hours a day with our head spinning around in circles

from one worry to the next, we are able to sit down and learn every single moment we can find. We're able to fill our day with avodas Hashem, going from one mitzva to the next without any distractions.

Since our thoughts are free of the burden of doubts and questions, we don't get so tired all the time and we need much less sleep. We are very productive at work and we get things done very quickly and efficiently. We can easily climb the social ladder and become very successful, and still have plenty of opportunities to learn and do avodas Hashem.

In addition, we are not so enticed by physical pleasures, since we're able to constantly remember that they never really satisfy us and only cause us more suffering in this world, and all the more so in the next one. Plus, when we're able to experience the love and awe of Hashem through our attachment to His Torah and mitzvos with joy, then physical desires don't attract us at all. We've got something so much better! In short, through happiness we're able to live a truly good life in this world and the next.

Because of the influence of non-Jewish culture, many of us are very far from true happiness.

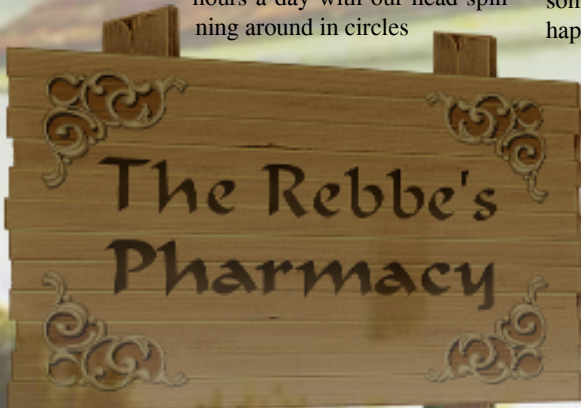
However, most of us would admit that we're very far from achieving true happiness. In fact, we feel like it is almost impossible for us to find simcha in our lives. If this is our ultimate goal and the key to our success in our avodas Hashem and at work, isn't it strange that only a minute fraction of us are actually successful in reaching it? Certainly we are all working very hard to acquire that which is

the most important to us, so why are we not seeing any results from our efforts?

The reason is that we're not getting the right advice. The non-Jewish world around us is pumping us full of mis-information. They're telling us that the way to happiness is through making lots of money, having an extraordinarily beautiful wife and an even more stunning mistress, buying the fastest sports-cars, and eating the most juicy steaks. They're telling us that the way to happiness is through drinking, drugs, and pills. They're telling us that the way to happiness is to "live it up" in this world.

It seems to us like their right. They seem to really have it good. They don't have to do any mitzvos and they can just enjoy themselves. It seems like their always smiling and flying high. It seems that way, but it's not that way.

Really, they're suffering more deeply than we could ever imagine. Even though they have so much money, they are so greedy that it's never enough. They're constantly jealous of their associates who have even more than them. They have only two vacation houses, and the other guy has got four. He even has one in Switzerland,



which he flies to for an entire week each month.

Since their not faithful in their marriages, they cannot build any real connection with their spouse. They both know that they're just using each other to satisfy their own desires. In addition, most wealthy goyim have no real friends, because anyone who has anything to do with them, just wants their money.

Even though on the inside we are still really depressed and we're just acting like we're happy, by pretending to be joyous and funny, we can quickly remove all of the heaviness that is stuck in our body and soul. By putting our suffering aside and forcing ourselves to be silly and playful, we can break ourselves free of all our chains and get out of our darkness. It is usually a matter of minutes before our "faking it" becomes "making it," and we actually start to feel true happiness

ies of modern medicine which lengthen our days on this earth, the life expectancy rate in the U.S. is declining rapidly because the rising amount of suicides. Clearly, the goyim are not good examples for us to achieve happiness.

Real joy and contentment, can only come through our attachment to Hashem and His mitzvos.

Rather, we must know that true happiness can only come from our spiritual pursuits. Only through serving Hashem can we find contentment with our lives, since we know that we we're fulfilling our purpose in this world and preparing ourselves for the next one. Every single mitzva that we're able to do, and every single word of Torah and tefilah is worth millions of in our spiritual bank account. Every single religious Jew has exponentially more wealth than Bill Gates! That's a reason to be happy.

Just by keeping the basic halacha, we're sustaining all of the physical and spiritual

worlds. Just by saying brachos on our food, we're fixing all of creation. Just by saying kiddush on Shabos, we're testifying to all the world the Oneness of Hashem. We have a personal relationship with the Master of the Universe through our prayers. We are His beloved children, for whom He created everything, and to whom He gave His most treasured gift. Amazing! These are reasons to be happy.

But very often, our sadness is so severely ingrained in our being, that we can't get away from it, even when we focus on our spiritual wealth.

However, sometimes our depression seeps so deeply into our bones, that we can't find a way out. It becomes so attached to our body and mind, that we feel like we have absolutely no ability to escape from it. We feel like we're tied down with heavy chains and stuck inside of a straight jacket. We sincerely try to strengthen ourselves to be optimistic. We give everything we've got to be see ourselves positively, and to be happy with the fact that we believe in Hashem and we follow His holy mitzvos. But we still can't shake off our sadness. It's glued to us like leeches all over our skin.

At such times, we must force ourselves to act silly.

Rebbi Nachman shows us a way out. He says that since our depression is so deeply ingrained in us, the only way to release it is to "fake it 'til we make it." We must force ourselves to pretend that we're really happy. We must imagine as if it's Purim and it's our turn to do a "shpiel." We can get up and do a funny dance. We can speak in strange voice or comically imitate a different accent. We can read from a joke book, or tell our own jokes. We can sing a silly song. Much like a badchan (Jewish jester) at a wedding, we can lighten our own mood with all types of humor.

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When we're in exile, we must connect to the simcha which is also in exile with us.

Reb Noson explains in a very deep way why it is that this method works. He says that since we ourselves are in exile, our joy and happiness are also in exile with us. This means that, even though we should be able

to be find happiness through our mitzvos and avodas Hashem—since these things are the only true source of happiness in this world—nonetheless, many of us find it very hard to do so. We are so lost in exile amongst the goyim, that we can't appreciate what a mitzva really is. We are so lost in the exile of physical desire, that we can't get any spiritual enjoyment from davening a shmona esrei. Therefore, it seems impossible to for us to connect to true simcha.

However, there is hope. Reb Noson explains that much like the Shechina which follows us into exile, no matter how far we may fall, so too the joy of a Jew (which really is the Shechina itself, see LM I 24)) follows us into our exile. This means that it becomes clothed or disguised in the humorous actions which make us externally happy. This happiness is an "exiled" happiness, since it is not coming from a deep internal place.

While on the one hand this is a lack, on the other hand it is an incredible benefit to us, because we can always access this disguised simcha, even when we are lost in the external world and we have no way to directly reach the true internal happiness from where we are. Therefore, it is only through humorous and silly actions that we can find a way to be happy even in our physical and spiritual exile.

Our external happiness will then lead us to the true happiness of being a Jew and doing mitzvos.

In addition, once we tap into this superficial joy and we attach ourselves to the simcha which is with us in exile, we free ourselves from our exile altogether. This is express clearly in the verse, "And through happiness, you will go out [of exile]." Similarly, we say in musaf on Shabos, "May it be Your will, that you should lift us up through simcha to our [holy] land."

Thus, we see that by faking happiness by doing something silly, even if it's completely insincere, we can liberate ourselves from the exile of our constricted consciousness and free our mind and body from its depression. We can shake off — literally and figuratively speaking — the heavy sadness which has sunk into our bones and grabbed hold of our thoughts.

Then, once we're out of our exiled state of mind, we can connect to the true joy of being a servant of Hashem. We can find the real, internal happiness that is in every single mitzva and word of Torah. We can rejoice over the incredible blessing that Hashem chose us to be Jews. We can remember that every good deed that we do is fulfilling the purpose of creation and giving us great reward in the world to come, and through this our heart can be filled with joy.

(To be continued . . .)