

## Darkei HaChizuk

ארבעה צריכים חזוק (ברכות לב:) – שיתחזק אדם בהם תמיד בכל כחו (רש"י)

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### The Joy of Mevakshei Hashem Lasts All Year

One of my *talmidim* asked me what to do to ensure that the joy of Adar, the month in which joy is increased, continues after Purim as well. He wanted to hear some advice about this idea, how to carry over the *simchah shel mitzvah* throughout the year.

Actually, there is a *pasuk* (Tehillim 105:3), *Yismach lev mevakshei Hashem* — “The heart of those who seek Hashem will rejoice.” The Siddur HaGra asks a question on this: A “*mevakesh*” is only a “seeker,” someone who is searching and putting in effort, but who still hasn’t received his request. So how can he be happy before he has received what he needs?

The Siach Yitzchak, in the Siddur HaGra, explains: “In all other matters, when a person seeks out something specific but does not attain it, all his toil is in vain. This is not so regarding *mevakshei Hashem*, however. The ‘seeking’ itself serves the lofty purpose of becoming close to Hashem Yisbarach.” That is, even though in physical matters when someone seeks and searches for something specific, he is not happy as long as he does not attain his request, and only is joyful once he gets what he needs; when it comes to spiritual matters, the actual seeking makes him happy. That is why *mevakshei Hashem* are happy.

This is because when a person seeks out Hashem through thought, and all the more so, through actual *hishtadlus*, since he has an aspiration for *kedushah*, for Torah and *mitzvos*, he becomes sanctified through this. The Ruach Chaim at the beginning of *Pirkei Avos* writes that if a person entertains a thought to perform a mitzvah, the *kedushah* of the mitzvah immediately envelops him. So too, Chazal say (*Kiddushin* 40a), if a person planned on doing a mitzvah and was prevented, Scripture considers it as if he has done it, for the thought alone sanctifies.

When a person increases *kedushah*, it changes his whole essence, and he experiences a very pleasant feeling. This is the meaning of “the heart of those who seek out Hashem will be happy.” The actual seeking and aspiration for *ruchniyus* sanctifies the person, and the *kedushah* makes him happy!

When someone does a good deed, he is happy and he has a pleasant feeling. Take, for example, a person who loves doing *chesed*. When an opportunity to do *chesed* arises,

he is happy and joyous. This joy is the result of the *kedushah* of the mitzvah, which sanctifies him and makes him happy. After all, if someone else would perform that act of *chesed* instead of him, he wouldn’t be as happy as he is when he does it himself. I think I saw the reason for this written, that even though he is happy that the other person received what he wanted — after all, he pities him and wants his benefit — in any case, when he does the mitzvah himself, it is a completely different *simchah*, since the mitzvah sanctifies him. Indeed, we say in davening “and sanctify us with Your *mitzvos*,” “Who has sanctified us with Your *mitzvos*.” Joy comes from this.

If so, the way to carry the *simchah* over, the way to maintain constant *simchah* throughout the year, is to lead a life of being constantly involved in *kedushah*, in Torah and *mitzvos* that sanctify a person and give him joy.

### Simchah shel Mitzvah in Physical Needs

However, it’s impossible to constantly be involved with only Torah and *mitzvos*. People do get tired and must rest and sleep, and there are also other physical needs one must take care of. So how is it possible to be happy then?

Indeed, we’ve already mentioned the Rambam’s comments (*Hilchos Deios* 3:3) that if a person’s every action is done *l’shem Shamayim*, if he goes to sleep in order to have energy for *avodas Hashem*, then even his sleep is considered *avodas Hashem*. So too, when he is busy with his other physical needs, if his intention is *l’shem Shamayim* — so that he’ll have energy to be involved in Torah and fulfill the 613 *mitzvos* — then even his physical needs are considered a mitzvah. It thus turns out that he is involved in *mitzvos* all day long, for all his bodily needs are for *avodas Hashem*.

The *Sefer HaChinuch* writes (mitzvah 488) that the body needs four things: food, sleep, rest, and happiness. That means even happiness is a necessity for physical health, as is written (*Mishlei* 18:14): “A man’s spirit sustains his illness.” We see sick people *Rachmana litzlan* who are told to do things that are enjoyable in order to disengage from their situation, for joy strengthens a person and gives him the *kochos* to overcome illnesses. That’s why a person also needs happiness, because it strengthens the body and gives *kochos*.

In *Berachos* 32 they said there are four things that need strengthening, and one of them is *derech eretz*. Rashi

explains what “*derech eretz*” is: “If he is an artisan, whatever he needs for his artistry; if he is a businessman, whatever he needs for his business etc.” Similarly, all physical needs are included in “*derech eretz*” and this needs strengthening. The body must be healthy to serve Hashem, to be able to learn Torah and fulfill the 613 *mitzvos*.

Additionally, family matters that a person must take care of are a *chiyuv*, obligatory, and *pri'as baal chov mitzvah*, “it is a mitzvah to repay one’s debts [obligations].” It’s a *chesed* for the family when he helps them, and by doing so, he is performing a great mitzvah. It turns out that he is constantly involved in *mitzvos*, and all physical needs — even his own — are a mitzvah, since they are necessary so that he will be able to perform other *mitzvos* as well, *bein adam laMakom* and *bein adam lachaveiro*.

Anything a person does, if it’s a necessity, it’s a mitzvah! The *Chovos HaLevavos* writes (*Shaar Avodas Elokim* chap. 4) that nothing is voluntary — any action a person does is either a mitzvah or an *aveirah*. If it’s necessary, it’s a mitzvah, if it’s unnecessary, it’s an *aveirah*, for it’s a waste of time.

For example, if a person needs to rest, and the rest is necessary for his health, it’s a mitzvah. But sleeping more than necessary is an *aveirah*, for during that time, he could have done something, he could have been busy with Torah and *mitzvos*. How can one gauge when is necessary and when is not? The *Mesillas Yesharim*, chap. 9, writes that the rule is to do what seems right, what’s accepted, and we can rely on this.

### Happy to Help Family Members

If a person is aware of the fact that he is involved in *mitzvos* all day long, he is automatically happy! Because he is involved in a mitzvah and is sanctified with every single action he performs, and the *kedushah* gives him happiness. He should not think that he is helping his family because he doesn’t have a choice in the matter; after all, he has a family and he has to work hard on their behalf, so what can he do? If he didn’t have a family, so to speak, he would be able to relax — he only has to work hard because he has a family. A person with this mindset feels that his family is a burden on him, but that’s not true! *Adaraba*, his family gives him *zechuyos*.

Sometimes, a person only deserves to exist because of his family. The story is told about someone who wanted to buy life insurance for his family, and he asked the Chazon Ish *zt”l* about this. The Chazon Ish told him not to, because maybe the only reason he’s alive is to take care of his family, and if the family would be insured and wouldn’t need him anymore, he wouldn’t have the *zechus* to continue living. [This is in line with the well-known Israeli axiom, “When the thief is needed, they take him down from the gallows.” Even if someone is sentenced to death, if he is needed, they waive his sentence. So too, if

someone’s family needs him, it may be that he is granted life in their merit.]

Therefore, a person must be happy that he has a family to help; after all, this is easy, pleasant *chesed*, because a person loves his family and is happy to help them. And it’s imperative to rejoice in one’s “servitude” to his family, as this servitude is for his own benefit.

### Happiness Amid Ahavas Torah and Chesed

A certain *avreich* told me something that does not pertain to most people here, but it’s worthwhile to hear in any case, because it reveals a lot of *chochmas chaim*. Many *kollels* are particular about “*shemiras sederim*.” If someone is late, either he loses money or doesn’t gain “extra” money. Many *avreichim* don’t pay much attention to this rule and don’t mind coming a few minutes late. After all, they need their sleep, and they can’t understand why this extra pressure about coming on time to *seder* is necessary. But one *avreich* told me that he’s happy about this rule, and it gives him that extra push to come to *seder* early. Let’s analyze the difference between these two opinions, and the reason for it. Why are some people happy about being forced to come on time, while others are upset and annoyed about it?

The simple reason is that if someone enjoys learning and learning makes him happy, then he wants to have more pleasure. If we force him to enjoy himself, he’s happy, because he might have forgotten and may not have come on time — perhaps he might have thought that he had more time. But now that there’s a push, he hurries, and runs happily to start the joy earlier! But for someone who has a difficult time learning and isn’t happy when he learns — and there are reasons for this: maybe the way he’s learning does not fit his nature, so he learns without enthusiasm or pleasure. He comes to *seder* because he simply doesn’t have any other choice, and he can’t wait till it’s over. So he’s not happy to come on time. That’s the difference between those who are happy about *shemiras sederim* and those who are not.

The same is true with familial obligations. A person who loves *chesed* is happy to help his family and he enjoys his role and the “servitude” he must bear, which is both a mitzvah and a pleasure. He derives pleasure from the *chesed*, from *ahavas chesed*! But if someone does not feel this way, his actions aren’t even from *yirah*, for he is not acting out of *yiras Shamayim*, but simply because he doesn’t have a choice. This is not *yirah*, nor is it *ahavah*. It is *avdus*, slavery, and he’s like an *eved Kena’ani* who is forced to work without any remuneration.

In any case, this is one way to continue the *simchah* throughout the year. If one is aware of the reality and believes it and remembers it, it’s a mitzvah! And a mitzvah grants a person *Olam Haba* — and he loves doing it. When a person feels it and believes in it, he’s automatically happy. He is happy all day long since he’s

busy with *mitzvos* all the time, and *kedushah* makes him happy.

Indeed, we see that *tzaddikim* are always happy — because they don't think about themselves; instead they're always thinking: What am I obligated to do and what can I do right now?

I remember when Maran HaGaon HaRav Elazar Menachem Shach *zt"l* came to yeshivah in 1952, he walked around asking people if there was anyone he could help. He searched until he found a poor refugee *bachur*. Maran HaRav Shach personally went over to him and spoke with him in learning for a half an hour. He didn't call the *bachur* to come to him — it's hard for some people to go over to *bachurim*; instead they summon the *bachur* to them, and that's good too, but Maran HaRav Shach went personally and stood near this *bachur* and spoke with him for about a half an hour! That was what he thought about — with whom can I do *chesed*? Maran HaRav Shach, with all his *ahavas Torah* and *hasmadah*, looked for someone with whom he could do *chesed* — and he was delighted because of it, for that's what was necessary. He didn't do it because he had no choice, he did it with joy, the *simchah* of *mevakshei Hashem*.

### Good Middos Effect Success and Joy

Actually, anything that involves searching out Hashem makes one happy: Torah, or thoughts of *emunah*, and behavior based on *emunah*, behavior based on *middos tovos*. All these things provide a person with success, blissful contentment, *kedushah*, and *simchah*.

There are many examples of this, and we'll mention one simple example. Every factory has an owner. The owner has many workers — he's the employer and they are the employees. It's very common that the employees hate the employer because they feel he works them too hard and doesn't take their needs into consideration, and he mainly needs the monetary profit and doesn't treat them properly. Therefore, generally speaking, employer-employee relations aren't good.

But in some instances, the workers do like their employer — if he treats them well and makes them feel good, and tries as much as possible to make things good and comfortable for them. While he does make a profit through them, he still likes them, *ahavas habriyos*, and takes their needs into consideration, and they like him too.

After the Russian Revolution, anyone who had been wealthy and had owned a factory, was automatically slated for death. This is because they wanted to, ostensibly, give equal rights to the working-class. They would take away the factory, and either kill the owner or send him to Siberia. In some factories, the workers were happy because they hated their employer, but in other places, the workers protected their employer and didn't

let anyone harm him — because he had treated them well and they loved him. This is an example of what a person can gain from acting with *ahavas habriyos*.

This applies to teachers as well. I know that in the Bais Yaakov system in Eretz Yisrael, every school has a principal and many teachers who teach various subjects, and working out the schedule for each class, each grade, and each teacher requires great wisdom so that all the teachers end up with a decent schedule, without too many free periods or too many hours on one day and too few on another day. In a large school especially, great wisdom and talent is required to create a schedule that fits everyone's needs.

I know of a principal who invested a lot of thought in arranging the schedule in a way that all the teachers would be satisfied. She devoted special attention to every single teacher and in the end, she received a promotion and became a supervisor over many schools, which is an easier job with a higher salary. Even if she wouldn't have become a supervisor, there's a very pleasant feeling when there is *ahavah v'achvah, shalom v'rei'us* among the entire teaching staff.

### The Fruits of Good Middos in Olam HaZeh

The general rule is that if you act with good *middos*, you always gain! If you don't act with good *middos*, even if you think that you're in the right, you will lose out in the end. This is true both regarding *derech hateva*, and regarding *hashgachah pratis*, because good *middos* are *zechuyos* and Heaven gives reward in this world for good *middos*, as is written in the beginning of *Peah*: These are the matters for which a person enjoys the fruits of his labor in this world." And the things mentioned there are mainly actions *bein adam lachaveiro*. The Rambam in his commentary on the Mishnah, explains that this is *middah k'neged middah* — since he performed acts of kindness with others in this world, he is given a good life in this world.

I just thought of an explanation of the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 97:11) "A light is sown for the *tzaddik* and for the straight of heart, joy." "A light is sown" refers to the light of the seven days of creation, which is a light that is not presently found, but it is sown. First it's sown and then it blossoms. In this world, we are involved in planting, "those who sow in tears," for there is a *yetzer hara*, and through that, we "will reap in joy" — in this world as well. In any case the "light is sown" is for the future world, in Olam Haba or the days of Mashiach.

"For the straight of heart" can be referring to those with good *middos*, because "the heart" is the *middos*.

"Straight of heart" is good *middos*. "Joy" is mentioned regarding good *middos*, because when someone has good *middos*, he immediately has joy in this world, and does not have to wait for the "light is sown" in the future. Of course, there is joy planted for the future

world, the great joy of “Hashem will rejoice over you as a *chasan* rejoices over a *kallah*,” but there is joy now as well. So too, there is “light is sown” in the future, and there is light now as well, the joyous light of *mevakshei Hashem*.

In the Iggeres HaGra, a Midrash is cited: Every moment that a person closes his mouth, he merits the *ohr haganuz*, the hidden light, that every angel and creature cannot fathom [its greatness]. That is the light hidden for the future world, which will be in Olam HaBa afterward. Of course, there is also light that is not hidden which one can merit immediately in this world, and that is the light of *mevakshei Hashem*’s joy.

“One who seals his mouth” is referring to a time when there should be control and sealing, such as (*Devarim* 25:4): “You shall not muzzle [seal] an ox when it is

threshing [the grain]” — the ox wants to eat and you muzzle him up so he cannot eat. So too, sealing one’s mouth when he has a *yetzer hara* — when he wants to speak about matters that include a suspicion of *lashon hara* or *ona’as devarim*, that someone may be hurt or suffer due to his comments — if he controls himself and seals his mouth, he is *zocheh* to the hidden light in Olam Haba, and he merits the joy of *mevakshei Hashem* immediately in Olam HaZeh.

This is how one can attain constant joy. I am not saying any *chiddushim*; just simple matters which are self-understood. Anyone who ever tried this saw that this is the reality, and this is how one can continue the joy of Adar throughout the entire year. *Yehi ratzon* that we merit *siyatta d’Shemaya*, for we need *siyatta d’Shemaya*, and one who comes to be purified is helped!

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