

# Clinically Insane Happiness

## Chizuk and Inspiration on Purim

**Most of the time, we're extremely careful to always be depressed.**

Purim is the most serious holiday on the Jewish calendar. It's a time when we have to be extremely careful to dance and sing wildly. It's a time when we have to be very makpid to wear a silly custom, or at least an unusual hat. It's a time when we have to make sure to have lots of fun with our family and friends. Most importantly, it's a time when we have to be extraordinarily machmir to drink wine until we completely lose our "right" mind. It's very serious.

Why is this so? The answer is that for the other 364 days of the year we're being very serious for all of the wrong things. We're very machmir to beat ourselves up. We're very machmir on ourselves for every mistake that we make. We're very machmir to worry about everything we could possibly worry about. We're very machmir to be extremely pessimistic. We're very machmir to make sure that we're absolutely and utterly depressed.

Even when something good happens in our life — a new child is born to our family, we get a raise at work, or we finish a mesechta of the Talmud, etc.— nevertheless, we're very careful not to let these things disturb our depression for more than a few moments, G-d forbid. Although the ten commandments are very important, being depressed is even a greater mitzva! It's mamash the top. It's the highest level in avodas Hashem. So we work extremely hard to achieve it.

**We even have depression competitions with our friends.**

However, it's stiff competition. Everyone around us seems to be doing it with the utmost perfection. They're constantly complaining about this and that. Their morning coffee wasn't strong enough and there were only a few drops of milk left in the fridge. Then, some guy in shul turned up the heat way to high, and another guy who had a yartzeit decided to daven kaddish like a snail. Even though they woke up early to beat the traffic, they still got stuck unexpectedly. By the time they got to work, their back was in severe pain. How can we compete with that?

We try to do our best. We try to do mitzvos with the most sincere and bitter sadness. Our talis is like a straight jacket and our tefilin are a ball and chain. Our

Shabos is the ideal time for delving deeply into our fears about money.

**Anyone who is happy belongs in an insane asylum, especially Rebbi Nachman.**

Thus, we go from day to day making sure that everything in our life is completely bad and we have absolutely no reason to be happy. Not only that, but when we see other people who are happy, we think they've lost their mind. Don't they know how miserable life is? Don't they know about the extraordinary mitzva of depression? They must be on some crazy drugs, or maybe they're really drunk. Why else would they be so lenient with such an important mitzva?

In the midst of our seriousness about being depressed, Rebbi Nachman comes along and says, "It is a great mitzva to be happy all the time! A person must force himself to be happy at all costs!"

How do we react to that? We say, "That rabbi is completely insane! He's really lost it. Anybody who follows him is a lunatic. Anybody who's happy is clinically insane and must be excommunicated on the spot! Life is about being very serious, very very serious. Our fathers were always depressed and so were their fathers. It goes all the way back to Har Sinai. Let's get back to our depressive thoughts and activities."

**As Purim approaches, however, we begin to be more lenient with our depression.**

Then, out of nowhere, after a long and successful winter of complete and utter depression, it's Rosh Chodesh Adar. We start thinking about Purim and we remember that the Sages tell us that we must increase our simcha. Since we're commanded to do so, we try to be a little happier, even though it's completely against our nature. Of course, after eleven months of depression, being happy doesn't come so easy. But that's o.k., we can be lenient. After all, it's only a mitzva derabbanan. In fact, it's really only a minhag. What's the big deal?

However, as we get closer and closer to the day of Purim, something starts to change. We imagine all of the fun we're going to have. We imagine all of the joyous songs we're going to sing. We imagine the exuberant dancing after the megillah reading. We especially imagine all of the wine we're going to drink and the feeling of complete intoxication.

Before we know it, we're really not so depressed anymore. In the preparation and expectation of the big day, some of the clouds of darkness are lifted from our head. We're actually looking forward to something in our life. It's exciting!

**When the big day comes, we make a complete turn around.**

Finally, we hit Purim and we completely break out of our depression. Not only that, but we're extremely machmir to be utterly happy and joyous. It's mamash "ve'nohafech hu" — a complete turn around. We read the incredible story of the salvation of the Jews. We remember how Haman wanted to destroy us, but we were able to turn the tables and destroy him. We relive that very same salvation by attaching ourselves to the simcha and blessing of Mordechai and eradicating the depression and curse of Haman.

We're so happy that we're even able let go of our precious

money and give it to tzedaka.

We do anything and everything that will increase our simcha. We have extravagant meals with our favorite fish and meat. We buy lots of candy for our kids and we end up eating most of it ourselves. We listen to our most leibadik Purim music. We take off our clothes of depression and put on a ridiculous custom. We act silly. We even act crazy! Being crazy is normal now. Everyone is doing it. In certain places where there are a lot of Jews, we can even act silly and insane in the middle of the street!

We drink cup after cup of simcha until it reaches every single blood vessel in our body. Since we're so accustomed to depression, our body sometimes throws up the simcha. But that's o.k., we just fill another cup.

**Our crazy simcha on Purim, is considered "receiving the Torah with love."**

This is what the Sages call "receiving the Torah with love," which is an even higher level than when we received it at Har Sinai out of fear. What?! That's absurd. This is just a little silly vacation from our depression which we will soon return to in our serious preparations for Pesach. What could this possibly have anything to do with receiving the Torah with love?

To answer this question, Rebbi Nachman comes once again and says, "Remember when I told you that it is a huge mitzva to be happy all the time, and one must force himself to be happy at all costs? You thought I was nuts, what do you say now? Perhaps simcha is actually the highest level we can reach? Perhaps even acting silly and doing ridiculous things in order to be happy gives Hashem the greatest nachas? Why? Because when we're happy, we're showing Hashem that we like Him. He created an amazing world for us and we're grateful to Him. When we're happy we're showing Hashem that we like His Torah. We cherish every mitzva so much, that we can't help but be joyous. Simcha is a sign that we've received the Torah with love."

**Once Purim is over, we realize it's time to change our minhag.**

However, immediately after Purim is over and we're laying in bed with a bad hangover, our depression begins to creep back into our blood stream. Like a rattle snake bite, its poison starts spreading quickly to all of our limbs. What do we do now?

Now's the time to be even more happy. We must strengthen ourselves to remember that Rebbi Nachman is not crazy.



Rather, our depression is crazy. Being happy is really the most normal thing for a Jew to do. Every single mitzva and every single word of Torah and tefilah are reasons for us to rejoice day in and day out. We are “Yehudim” — from the root word of “praise.”

***It's time to change our minhag. Instead of being very serious about our depression, we must have the utmost seriousness about being happy! All the time. All the time!***

excuses. Anyone who refuses to be happy must be sent to an insane asylum or excommunicated immediately! They're not acting like Jews.

When we see someone who is not happy, we must ask them, “Are you nuts? Have you completely lost your mind? You are a Jew. You have Hashem's

It's time to change our minhag. Instead of being very serious about our depression, we must have the utmost serious about being happy! All the time. All the time! There are no

holy Torah. You have at least three personal conversations with the Creator of the Universe every single day! Get with it!”

We must despise our depression with the most despicable hatred. Anytime it comes to hang us, we must hang it with absolutely no mercy.

Even though we may not be able to drink tons of wine and dance in the streets, nonetheless, we can still act silly in the privacy of our own home. We can still be playful and comical with our children. We can still put on a funny hat and dance around the room when no one is looking. We can still remember the unbelievable miracle of the Jews' victory over Haman. We can still be hopeful for our own personal salvation.

In addition, after breaking out of our depression during Purim, we must infuse all of our mitzvos with the exact same simcha. When we pick up our talis each morning, we must remember the incredible love that Hashem has for us. He cares about us so much, that He gave us His own personal prayer

shawl to make us feel spiritually warm and close to Him.

When we put on tefilin we must be completely overjoyed. The King of all Kings of all Kings gave us His own personal crown to put on our head. Wow! This is really exciting. Every single Shabbos we should be so joyful that can't stop singing and dancing, just because we're Jews and we keep Hashem's holy day.

By carrying the simcha of Purim into the rest of the year, we can be truly close to Hashem at all times. We can show Him just how much we love Him and His Torah, and feel His eternal love in return. Now, we're ready to say Shir HaShirim and sing with our whole heart our deepest yearning for Hashem. Now, we're ready to prepare for Pesach with only one chumra in mind: to be completely and absolutely happy as we clean. Now we're ready to really bring the ultimate redemption of the Jewish people, like the verse says, “and through joy, you will go out [of exile.]”

## *The Rebbe's Pharmacy*

### *Pills of Chizuk for Today's Spiritual Illnesses — Part 13*

This week's article is a continuation from last week. The Illness: No matter what I do, I can't find a way to be happy. The Rebbe's Prescription: Sometimes, we just need to “fake it till we make it,” and just do something silly.” For copy, you may contact [leventermusic@gmail.com](mailto:leventermusic@gmail.com)

**In order to be silly, we must first realize that we're not so big and important.**

However, this advice of Rebbi Nachman — to act silly and humorous — is itself hard for many of us to fulfill. We are not little kids anymore. We are grown ups! These things are far beneath our dignity. How can we lower ourselves to such an immature level?

To overcome this obstacle, we must take ourselves down off our lofty pedestal. It's true that we are adults and we have the capability to think about very complex things and perhaps we have very important work that we do in the world. Maybe we're even the president of a business or head of a yeshiva or kollel. Nonetheless, we're still suffering in exile. We have not reached the level of true tzadikim who have completely cleansed themselves of all their bad middos and desires and attained the highest levels in avodas Hashem. Since they're not living in spiritual exile whatsoever, perhaps they don't need to go down to such low places to bring themselves to simcha. We, on the other hand, are struggling with our desires for money, food and women. We're struggling with anger and depression. We're far away from true attachment to Hashem and His service in every moment and aspect of our lives. We are still in a physical and spiritual exile.

By recognizing our place, however, we can find our way out. By being honest with ourselves and letting go of our ego, we can accept the deep advice of Rebbi Nachman and use it to free ourselves from our exile. We know who we are and the sins we've committed, so we know that we're really not to “big and important” to act silly for a little while. Thus, we're able to receive this incredible advice and give it a try.

**If we feel too inhibited, we can use our children as an excuse to be playful.**

However, even if we were willing to try to act comical, we often feel so self-inhibited and self-conscious that we couldn't actually bring ourselves to do it. The first thing we should try is to use our small children as an excuse. Even though it is considered absurd for an adult to act really silly, if we

do it together with our kids, this is more acceptable. We can pretend that we're doing it for their sake — as if we want to connect and engage with them on their level — while on the inside we really have another intention in addition to making them happy: to make ourselves happy.

We can have conversations with our kids in gibberish. We can pretend to be wild animals and growl and roar with them. We can sing the funny kids songs that they like, for example: “I'm so happy, I want to be happy, etc.” (Uncle Moishe) We can even try to improvise new words to the same tune and make up comical rhymes. We can read them amusing books, or make up silly stories. We can have a mock “laughing contest,” and see who can come up with the most absurd laugh.

Through all of these things and more, we can overcome our inhibitions, express our silly selves and free ourselves from our bitter darkness, while covering our tracks as if we're simply being playful parents.

**We can also go to a place where we're alone and let our sillies out.**

Another thing we can do is go to a private place where we won't feel embarrassed by other people. In fact, if there aren't any children around, our silly actions should be done specifically in private, since they may not be considered proper conduct in public and are therefore not suitable for the image of Jew in today's society. (With the exception of Purim, or course!)

When we're all alone in a room, a car, or another discrete place, we can be sure that what happens there will stay there and no one else will find out about it. This can ease our self-consciousness a bit. Nevertheless, even in such a situation, most of us are so unaccustomed to acting comical and silly that it is still very hard for us to actually do it. We are self-inhibited even in front of ourselves. It is hard for us to watch ourselves doing such crazy things.

**We can't stop to think. Rather we must simply act spontaneously.**

The way to overcome this obstacle is just to force ourselves to get up and do it. Once we start to think about what we're going to do and how to do it, then our analytical mind kicks in and we get lost in questions, doubts, and inhibitions. After this, our depression takes over and we convince ourselves that there's no way we could actually act in such a bizarre way. We've never done such a thing be-

fore in our entire lives, except maybe once or twice when we had to much to drink.

Therefore, we must simply act as though we are drunk! A drunk person doesn't think or analyze his actions. He doesn't care about what other people think, all the more so about what he himself thinks. He just does what he wants. This is exactly what we must do, but without the aid of alcohol (except on Purim, of course!). Without thinking, we must get up and start imitating a chicken dance. “Bok, bok, bok!” Without thinking, we must just start singing the national anthem with a funny southern accent. “Oh, say doz dat star spangled bannir yet waive” (My sincerest apologies to all the southern Jews who are reading this, may they live and be well.) Whatever it is that we instinctively feel like doing, we must just force ourselves to do it without having any doubts or second-guessing ourselves.

(Note: Of course, we shouldn't do anything that is mamash prohibited by the Torah, G-d forbid, such as cursing, saying dirty words, or anything that is immodest, etc.)

**Once we've achieved true silliness, then we should connect simcha to its source: Torah and mitzvos.**

The result of this is that we bring ourselves from the depths of our depression to joy and happiness, in a matter of minutes. We break ourselves free from our bonds of slavery, and liberate our mind from its clouds of confusion and sadness. However, as mentioned before, we shouldn't stop there. We should then connect this happiness, which is exiled along with us in these superficial actions, to the true source of all happiness—to be a Jew who has the holy Torah and mitzvos. We should remember who we really are—Hashem's very own children.

We should go immediately from our private silly session, to open a sefer and learn, or do mitzva. We should take our new freedom and use it to serve Hashem. Through this, we can sustain our state of happiness and use it to get closer and closer to our Creator. We can take advantage of our clear mind to strengthen our attachment to Torah and tefilah. We can climb higher and higher in every aspect of our lives and escape our spiritual exile.

And if we fall back down, it's not a problem. We now have the recipe for success. We now know just how to “fake it till we make it.”

*Based on the Torah of Rebbi Nachman of Breslov zt”l and his primary talmid R' Noson zt”l, as given over by R' Nisan Dovid Kivak, Shlita. For further comments and questions, or to sign up to receive the articles by email, you may contact: [leventermusic@gmail.com](mailto:leventermusic@gmail.com)*