

Cheerful

SIMCHA FROM MITZVOS

ALTHOUGH THE DAYS OF PURIM PASSED, the *simchab* that it brought is still palpable in the air. This special Yom Tov brings a lot of excitement along with it. In essence, *simchab* isn't something limited to the days of Purim, but rather is related to *avodas Hashem* in general. In this week's sheet, we'll discuss the great benefit of *simchab*, and we'll see that it is not limited to Yom Tov days and Purim.



The renowned Maggid of Yerushalayim, **Reb Sholom Schwadron**, would use humor and charisma in his *drashos* to help bring out mussar points and to influence his listeners.

Once, during his weekly Friday night *drashab*, in the Zichron Moshe *shtiblach*, a person got up and announced, "This is *leitzaanus*, light-headedness. It is improper to speak this way."

Reb Sholom took the rebuke to heart. He feared that perhaps the man was right, and he feared continuing to give his speech in his normal manner. So, he went to the **Chazon Ish** for advice and guidance as to how he should proceed.

The Chazon Ish asked for a demonstrational speech so that he could better decide whether Reb Sholom should continue speaking in his humorous fashion or not. Since Reb Sholom wanted the Chazon Ish to experience his *drashos*, he began to speak as he normally would, as if he were speaking before a large audience.

The performance found favor in the Chazon Ish's eyes, who laughed and confirmed he should continue speaking in this way.

The Chazon Ish explained: "In Lithuania, there was a lot of *yiras Shamayim*, but the joy was by the *maskilim*, and that is why so many youths fell away. By you spreading *yiras Shamayim* in this fashion, you are preventing this downfall."

Reb Sholom took the Chazon Ish's words to heart, and from then on continued spreading his moving words, ultimately influencing Klal Yisroel in an impactful way¹.

This story indicates the importance of joy and how the lack of it can result in heresy or *avodah zarab, r"l*. When we are happy, then our children won't look for happiness in other places.



"HAPPINESS AVERTS TZAROS"

A child was choking on a coin, and his face was turning blue. His life was in great danger. The **Chazon Ish** exclaimed, "The only solution is to bring the child to the Ponovitzer Rav. Why? The Ponovitzer Rav is an expert in getting coins out of people, even from the tightest places...he is the man for the job."

Everyone laughed, including the child, and by Hashem's will, the laughter caused the coin to dislodge from his throat and come out.

About the incident, the Chazon Ish said, "Happiness saves people from all *tzaros*."

Along the same lines, the **Baal HaTanya** was once imprisoned, and after fifty-three days, with Hashem's kindness, he was released from jail on the 19th of Kislev.



Sometime afterward, people tried to convince the government to reimprison the Baal HaTanya. The Baal HaTanya heard about this, and this caused him immense distress.

Reb Shmuel Minkas wanted to lighten the Baal HaTanya's mood, so he suspended himself from a rope outside the *beis midrash*. It was an unusual sight, especially since this was below his dignity. People from all around came to watch the scene. "Why is Reb Shmuel hanging outside the *beis midrash*?" they wondered.

When the Baal HaTanya walked outside, he looked up and asked, "Reb Shmuel! What are you doing there?"

He replied, "Craftsmen hang samples of their products outside their shop so that people should know what is being manufactured inside. A cobbler hangs a shoe outside his store, a tailor hangs a suit outside his store, and so on. In this *beis midrash*, the Rebbe produces chassidim. I am hanging here as an example so that people who pass by will know what is manufactured here."

The plan succeeded in getting the Baal HaTanya to laugh. Once R' Shmuel saw his success, he knew his Rebbe would be back to himself in no time. The Baal HaTanya's joy helped him get out of his sadness, and within a short time, he was saved from the hands of those who attempted to harm him.



THE PURIM PARTY!

This past Simchas Torah, there were many mixed emotions. On the one hand, it was Simchas Torah, a time of great joy, but on the other hand, people were finding out what was happening in Eretz Yisroel. At the *Neilas Hachag*, the uncertainty over the future was palpable in the air. My Rav, **R' Moshe Schreiber sblita**, gave a legendary speech addressing the dilemma, and he gave us great guidance as to how we should proceed. He mentioned an incredible story that shed light on the perspective. And so it goes:

Amsterdam is situated aside a great ocean. Alongside the ocean is a strong dam preventing the water from overflowing into the city. In the days of **R' Eliezer Rokeach**, known as the *Ma'aseh Rokaach*, there was a terrible decree. On Taanis Esther, an enormous number of sharp-headed fish attacked the dam, endangering the entire city from overflowing waters.

The king sent an urgent message to the Rokeach saying that he should declare a fast to nullify this *gezeirah*, decree. It was a matter of life-or-death!

¹ Someone asked the Brisker Rav זצ"ל, "What can one do to control his mind and avoid forbidden thoughts?"

The Brisker Rav replied, "Chasidim drink *l'chayim* and dance. They say this is a *refuah* for bad thoughts, and they are right." (Reprinted with permission of *Mechon Be'er Haparsha, V'yikra* p. 26)

זכרו תורת משה

The Rokeach replied that he shall do whatever is in his ability to get rid of the fish on condition that the king grants the Yidden however much wine they needed to drink for Purim.

Hearing this, the king was very insulted. He sent a return letter expressing his frustration. "He's rebelling against the kingdom. I'm requesting that he fast and daven to nullify the decree, and he's responding that he's going to party, disregarding the facing destruction!"

"This is my condition," responded the Rokeach firmly. "I wasn't the one who initiated this agreement."



The next day, the Yidden of Amsterdam received a plentiful amount of wine, and the joy in Amsterdam was greater than they'd ever experienced. They were certainly joyful because it was Purim, but it was particularly exuberant from their overabundance of wine.

At nightfall, a message came from the king saying that the danger has passed and the city was miraculously saved. What the Rokeach had been requested to do with crying he accomplished through his joy in doing mitzvos, which in and of itself saved the entire Amsterdam.

We see that unlike what the king had expected, the salvation came about through being happy. The great reward that lies in our doing Hashem's mitzvos saved the entire city from this decree in a supernatural way.



MALACHIM'S SIMCHAH

When a person is upbeat, that is a time when he can be certain that his tefillos will be especially answered.

When R' Moshe Leib Sasiver was *niftar*, his son **R' Elazar Mendel** proclaimed at the burial that the attended congregants should submit a *kvittel* to him right then and there, and that they would *b'ezras Hashem* see good results from it.

This surprised the audience. Why would the first thing the new Rebbe is suggesting after his father's burial is to try and get a *yeshuah*? And why is this time *mesugol* to see a *yeshuah*?

He explained that the reason for this was because right then, there was great joy in *Shamayim*. His father, R' Moshe Leib, was coming to *Shamayim*, and they were thrilled with that.

However, R' Elazar Mendel explained why this was. "When they see R' Moshe Leib coming to *Shamayim*, they will go to greet him and give him a proper *kabbalas panim*. When they see this, they surely will be asking, 'Who's replacing you? Your son or perhaps someone else?'"

"The answer will be that I, R' Elazar Mendel, will be the replacement. Upon their hearing, they definitely will laugh. So, we can assume that at this point they are laughing, and when they are laughing, it is definitely a time to get whatever is on a person's mind."



THE SOLUTION

Simchah, a normally joyous figure in the shul, once came into shul looking downtrodden. Something was on his mind, and his friends approached him to alleviate his pain and console him.

Simchah explained the reason for his disappointment. "My grandfather told us that we should drink milk and eat healthy. Why? Because eating these things would allow us to move walls. But today, after years of eating all these healthy foods, when I had to move the wall in my house, I was unable to do it."

The next day, Simchah's mood was visibly different. He was upbeat and energized. Clearly, they thought, he'd figured out how to move the wall.

"How'd you do it?" they asked him.

"I drank vodka," he replied.

"Vodka?" they questioned.

He responded that the vodka made the wall disappear. "Once I drank the vodka, I didn't see the wall anymore."

There may be things on our lives which seem like brick walls standing in front of us, but by simcha and joy they won't bother us. Through this we'll be upbeat, whatever situation we face.



THE SHIKAR

Two weeks prior to Purim, the *shikar* of Krakow started drinking. He was under the influence of wine for the entire two weeks, unlike the rest of the year where he drank periodically, pausing after every drink. This conduct didn't stop at Purim but continued two weeks after Purim, as well.

"Why did you drink so much?" they questioned him.

He explained: "I'm outdoing Haman's plan."

"How does your drinking for a whole month outdo Haman's strategy?"

"There's a deep question on Haman. He planned to destroy all the Yidden on one day. Why only one day? Shouldn't he have taken an entire month to do that? Maybe some Yidden will have managed to hide from him on that day, but soon after they'd get caught and he'd have to get them afterward. So why only one?"

The *shikar* continued: "Deep down, Haman knew that Hashem might have *rachmanos* and save them from the decree. If that would be the case, what will become of these days? It'll become a Yom Tov. Now, how long would that Yom Tov be? As long as the salvation. If their salvation was for one day, then they'll have a Yom Tov for a day. If they have a salvation for an entire month, then it'll be a month of Yom Tov!"

"For the Yidden to have a month-long Yom Tov, that Haman couldn't tolerate. So, he concluded that the official decree would be for only one day, and that's it, so even if they have a salvation, they nevertheless would only have a one-day Yom Tov."

"Now" continued the *shikar*, "Do you think I should just agree with Haman's logic? I absolutely won't follow his guidance, trying to prevent me from celebrating a month-long Purim. That is the reason why I drink throughout the entire month. (*Si'ach Sarfei Kodesh* 20, who brings that **R' Avraham of Sokachover** would repeat this chronicle.)"

B"H, we are not this *shikar*, but we definitely should be *b'simchah* during this month and remember that Hashem is at our side in all situations and that He cares for us in whatever we are facing.

