



Adapted from the sefer **במוצאי שבת** a collection of maamarim on
תנא דבי אליהו given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Melave Malka

Melave Malka Parshas Shemini 5767

In Masseches Megilla, we find that the **יום השמיני** described in our parsha, was a day of happiness before Hakadosh Boruch Hu, equaled only by the day that the heavens and earth were created. (מגילה י:).

Nonetheless, specifically on that day, Hashem took the two sons of Aharon, who were Bnei Aliya, at the beginning of their lives, before they even had children. The resulting sorrow transformed that day of simcha into a day of mourning.

In the Pesikta Zutresa, (קהלת ב"ב), Chazal apply the **לשחוק אמרתי**, to the ever-present possibility that simcha will turn to sorrow. This led Shlomo Hamelech to question the value of simcha. The Pesikta then brings an example from our parsha.

“So it was with the simcha of Aharon on the eighth day. His simcha was transformed into sorrow. In so many situations, man can’t know how long his happiness and laughter will last. Therefore, a person should be in awe of his creator at all times. No one ever finds perfection in his world. This is why Shlomo Hamelech wrote, **ולשמחה מה זו עושה**. What benefit does a person have from his simcha?”

We have to try to understand why Hakadosh Baruch Hu disturbed such a great day of simcha, a day that was anticipated from the beginning of creation. Am Yisroel worked on the construction of the Mishkan for an entire year. Why didn’t Hakadosh Baruch Hu delay the tragedy till the completion of the celebration?



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The Zohar Hakadosh, (ויקרא ח.) says that, “Simcha is upheld by the Kohanim, who are constantly distant from דין. Kohanim must always display faces lit up with simcha, more that the rest of Am Yisroel”

The Zohar Hakadosh in our parsha, adds that Aharon Hakohen and his sons had to continue the avoda in a state of simcha, at the same time that Bnei Yisroel cried over the death of Nadav and Avihu. Had they not maintained their state of simcha, מדת הדין would have struck them down as well.

This teaches us that in the Ohel Moed itself, the avoda b’simcha continued, while at the same time, outside the Mishkan, Am Yisroel cried over the sons of Aharon who were burnt by Hashem. This requirement to maintain simcha, must have been a very difficult nisayon for Aharon Hakohen and his children. This reinforces our previous question. Why did Hashem bring such a nisayon to Aharon and his children, who had to serve in the Mishkan with joy, and to Moshe Rabeinu, who had to leave the simcha of Ohel Moed, and join Bnei Yisroel in mourning the great loss?

The well known chossid R. Shimon Kastelanitz z”l, told me that he once attended a shalom zachor where many great Talmidei Chachomim had come to say Mazal Tov. The Gerrer Rebbe, the Lev Simcha zy”a, posed a question. In our parsha it says, ואת שעיר החטאת דרוש דרש משה והנה שורף, (Moshe Rabeinu inquired about the שעיר חטאת, and it had been burnt). “Where”, he asked, “was Moshe Rabeinu when the שעיר חטאת was burnt? This was the eighth day of מילואים, and all the avoda performed was done על פי משה? To where did Moshe Rabeinu disappear?

R. Shimon said that all of those talmidei chachomim, who, in their many years of learning, delved deeply into the complex sugya of the burning of the שעיר חטאת, never thought to ask such a simple question. The Lev Simcha answered, that Aharon Hakohen and his sons, Elazar and Itamar, were commanded by Hashem not to leave Ohel Moed. Moshe Rabeinu, the uncle of Nadav and Avihu, certainly went to the levaya and joined



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B'nei Yisroel in their mourning. It was during that absence that the שעיר חטאת was burnt. A wonderful solution to the question!

We find that Moshe Rabeinu had to alternate between two places, and between two emotional extremes, simcha in Ohel Moed, and the opposite outside of Ohel Moed. Once again, I ask what Hakadosh Boruch Hu wants us to learn from the unique combination of events on that יום השמיני.

I believe that Hakadosh Boruch Hu wanted to teach B'nei Yisroel throughout the generations, that in Olam Hazei, we can never experience total simcha. This world is imperfect and temporary. Every simcha will be marred by some form of נפש, great or small. Therefore, Hashem created us with the ability to simultaneously experience two contradictory emotions, sadness and joy. In the Zohar Hakadosh, (ח"ג ע"ה:), R. Eliezer teaches that crying is implanted in one side of the heart, and joy in the other.

It's clear that if Aharon and his sons were not capable of continuing the avoda with simcha, Hakadosh Boruch Hu would never have commanded them to do so. Only because our hearts can contain both emotions at once, did they receive that instruction.

All of us have experienced this to some extent in our lives. At every event of simcha, we find something that disturbs the simcha. Since we are able to experience both simcha and sadness simultaneously, we must be careful not to let sadness dominate. In fact, we must do everything we can, to focus on, and amplify the aspect of simcha.

In the sefer הרועים, we find the following story. The Avnei Nezer zy" a went to Otvozk to be menachem the Rebbe, R. Bunim of Vorka zy" a. He told R. Bunim in the name of the Kozhitzer Magid, that the letters of the word אבל, form the acronym of the Yiddish phrase איך בין לוטיג (I am joyful). The Avnei Nezer explained this puzzling statement with Chazal's definition (סוכה כ"ה). (The אנינות stage of mourning is fulfilled in the heart, the following



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period of אבל is meant to display our כבוד for the one who passed away.) Rashi explains, אבל, אינו חייב להצטער, אבל. (Even though he must perform the actions of aveilus, he is not obligated to suffer. An אבל is not obligated to mourn in his heart.)

I often share a wonderful lesson that the Pnei Menachem zy”a heard from his maternal grandmother, Rebbetzin Biderman a”h, the daughter of the Sfas Emes zy”a. Once, a member of the Sfas Emes’ family passed away at a tragically young age. All of the family were in a state of anguish. She noticed that her father, the Sfas Emes zy”a, continued his avoda with his usual simcha and התלהבות. She wasn’t able to refrain from asking him how one can be בשמחה at such a time. He answered, "געשענישעין זענען באשערט, דאס עגמת נפש מאכט זיך דער מענטש אליין". (Events are decreed from above, however, a state of agony is caused by the person himself.)

He taught his daughter that the agony one experiences, both qualitatively and quantitatively, is not part of the heavenly decree. The person who experiences the event has the ability to determine the level of עגמת נפש that he will experience.

In truth, we know that in the final reckoning, no evil comes from Hashem. He is טוב ומטיב ורחמיו על כל מעשיו. Our problem is that we are not able to fathom חשבונות שמים.

The Medrash teaches us that Aharon was rewarded for his silence by Hashem speaking to him directly. The possuk "פקודי השם ישירים משמחי לב" says the Medrash, refers to Aharon, whose heart was sad because of the death of his sons, yet happy because Hashem spoke with him directly.

The Torah prohibits a kohen from drinking wine before or during the avoda. Rav Bunim of Parshischa zy”a asked, “Why should this be? Don’t we learn in Tehillim that יין ישמח לבב אנוש? If Kohanim are supposed to be happy, why shouldn’t they drink wine? He explained that since the Torah



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commanded them to refrain from wine, the very fulfillment of that mitzva fills them with simcha, for פקודי השם ישרים משמחי לב. This was the same joy that Aharon Hakohen experienced in his prophecy, even while mourning the death of his sons.

When we approach an event of Simcha in our lives, we have to prepare ourselves for large or small incidents that may spoil the simcha. It's the way of the world that something will happen. When it does, we should settle our minds, and remind ourselves that this is a time of simcha. We must remember that even though something upsetting occurred, our hearts have the ability to rejoice, even while something is bothering us. The magnitude and extent of the simcha we experience is entirely dependent on our mindset. We are not speaking of something major like death chas v'sholom. We are talking about the myriad small causes of נפש, that disturb everyone's peace of mind, even at a simcha.

Similarly, at a time of pain and trouble, we must remember that despite our suffering, there is always reason to rejoice. We must learn from the halacha brought in Shulchan Aruch, (או"ח רכ"ג), "If someone's father died, he says the brocha דיין האמת. If he also inherited money, in the case that he has no brothers, he recites שהחיינו, if he has brothers, he recites הטוב והמטיב."

This halacha seems incomprehensible. How can a person recite both דיין האמת, and הטוב והמטיב, while his father's body lies before him awaiting burial? This illustrates the principle discussed previously. A person is capable of simultaneously experiencing true pain at the loss of his father, and true simcha as a result of inheriting money.

Even someone who feels that he has reached the lowest point in his life always has some reason for happiness. At the very least, he should be happy that he is fortunate enough to be a Jew. I remember how, when my brothers and I were young, my grandfather zy"va, occasionally came into our bedroom, woke us up in the middle of the night, brought us "Negel Vasser", and danced with us, singing, לא, שלא



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עשני גוי. (Yes, I am energetic and happy, for I was not created a goy). That is how he taught us the incomparable joy of our Jewish identity.

Just as, in times of adversity, we must identify and rejoice in our blessings, we must apply even more effort to finding the good in every Jew. Even a Jew who has descended to the lowest levels, and has no desire to change, bears an eternal spark that can never be extinguished. אם ירצה השם, if in times of trouble, we remember that our heart can also rejoice, and if we remember to seek out the good that exists in our fellow Jew, despite his negative behavior, Hashem will see our נקודת הטוב, and fulfill the posuk "כי בשמחה תצאו", by joyfully extracting us from this bitter golus בימינו אכי"ר במהרה.



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