

# “If you’re happy and you know it clap your hands!”

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Centuries before psychologists discovered the plights of depression, Rebbe Nachman spoke of the importance of avoiding them by seeking joy. When one finds joy, it is important to recognize and internalize it to enrich your life. He taught:

The sole reason that people are distant from God and do not draw closer to Him is that they lack *yishuv ha-daat*, that is, they fail to settle themselves. It is essential that a person attempt to consider the purpose of all the pleasures and concerns of this world, both the pleasures which are bound up with the body as well as the non-physical pleasures, such as honor. Then, he will surely return to God.

But know! depression makes it impossible to direct the mind the way one wants making it difficult for a person to attain *yishuv ha-daat*. Only through joy can he direct the mind as he pleases and attain *yishuv ha-daat*. This is because joy is the realm of freedom, as in “For through joy you will go out” (Isaiah 55:12). Through joy a person is liberated from his or her own exile.

Therefore, by binding the mind to joy, a person’s mind and *daat* are free and he or she is not conceptually in exile. As a result, a person can direct his or her mind as he or she pleases and attain *yishuv ha-daat* or the liberation of the mind and soul. For exile unsettles the mind, as our Sages, of blessed memory, taught regarding the Ammonites and Moabites. Their minds were settled because they were never exiled, as it is stated (Jeremiah 48:11): “Moab has been at ease from his youth on...and never gone into exile. Therefore, its fine flavor

has remained..." (*Megillah* 12b).

The way a person achieves joy by finding in himself some happiness, as in the explanation of the verse "I will sing to God with the little I have left" (Psalms 146:2; *Likutey Moharan* I, 282). See there.

No matter what, a person can rejoice that he is privileged to be from the seed of Israel, as we say: "Blessed is our God, Who created us for His glory, separated us...gave us the Torah of truth..." It is fitting that he take joy from all this and similar such things in order to gladden one's mind.

This lesson is found in *Likutey Moharan* II, Lesson #10 and will be available, God willing, around Chanukah 2009 in Volume 13 of the ongoing project of the English translation and annotation of *Likutey Moharan*.

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Reb Moshe Breslover was once accompanying Reb Noson on a trip to Uman, to Rebbe Nachman's gravesite. He told the following story of that trip.

Reb Noson began his prayers on the wagon. Unlike his usual demeanor, he prayed with a broken heart and sounded very depressed. He recited the passages of the sacrifices and began the section of the *Pesukei d'Zimra*, still with a very unfamiliar type of melancholy voice. When Reb Noson reached the verse, "*Zamru laHaShem chassidov*" (Psalms 30:5), he paused. After a few moments of silence, Reb Noson began singing the melody of *Eishes Chayil*, that is sung by Breslover Chassidim on Friday night before Kiddush. After humming the tune for a few minutes, Reb Noson began praying with his usual fervor, in a strong voice with much enthusiasm and hand clapping. After the prayers, he said to Reb Moshe Breslover. "You are probably wondering what happened to me this morning. I am on my way to Rebbe Nachman's gravesite, and I felt dejected, not feeling anything new to express or to make me

feel happy. When I began my prayers, I was depressed and could not find any reason to strengthen myself with joy. When I came to the verse, "*Zamru laHaShem chassidov,*" I paused, because I began to recall the times when I was privileged to spend Shabbos with the Rebbe and heard him and the other chassidim who gathered there sing the Shabbos zemiros (melodies). As I began to recall these tunes, especially the *Eishes Chayil* melody, I became energized and was able to pray with enthusiasm and great joy. It took some effort but after searching for it, I was able to find a reason for joy." Even the wagon driver was impressed. He said, "Today I traveled with a Jew and even the horses sang with him!"

Thus, "if you're happy, and you know it, [you will] clap your hands, for the joy you attain will bring vitality and zest into your life!" It will certainly ward off depression.

By Chaim Kramer

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