

# Happy All Year Round

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The anticipation has been growing for some time. The short, cold, dreary winter days, which reflect our deep spiritual slumber, are just about behind us. I recall traveling to Florida one January and being elated upon seeing some bugs and lizards crawling on the sidewalk. The vibrancy of life is so refreshing. Thankfully, the day Rebbe Nachman called “the beginning of all beginnings” – Purim – is about to begin.

What inhibits us from living a joyous life year-round? We all desire quality of life and set various goals to achieve it. But more often than not, we wind up struggling just to survive. As we are thrown various curveballs, we find that snoozing is just so much easier than remembering this great ideal that we deeply yearn for.

Just as the changing seasons give witness to the various

cycles of birth and death in nature, so too, our existence here is only temporary. The thrills and pleasures of this world exist only for the moment; they cannot give us true or lasting meaning. However, the Torah and the *mitzvot* are our elixir, our tree of life. The Hebrew word *mitzvah* is related to the Aramaic word *tzavta* (connection). Through performing *mitzvot*, our soul connects to God, to eternity. We transcend the limitations of physical pleasure and connect to the true Source. There can be no greater joy and no greater vitality.

Our Sages ask: Where in the Torah is Haman, the villain of the Purim story, alluded to? In God's words to Adam, "*HaMiN ha-eitz* – [Have you eaten] from the tree [of which I commanded you not to eat]?" (Genesis 3:11; *Chullin* 139b). On a deeper level, Haman represents the evil resulting from partaking of the fruit of the forbidden tree. Because Adam ate from the tree, he was cursed with "In sadness you shall eat" (Genesis 3:17). When Adam was exiled from the Garden of Eden and its Tree of Life, tremendous sadness descended into the world. Similarly, when the Jewish People were exiled from God's Presence, not only were they banished, but also the pure joy of the *mitzvot* and the subsequent connection to God fell into exile. The holy sparks of spiritual joy descended into the various vanities of our world.

The Hamans of this world misrepresent those sparks and mislead us into thinking that the "heres" and "nows" of temporal, worldly pleasures are our real joy. They sway us into thinking that the various quick-fixes being offered will make us happy, but ultimately, we remain completely disconnected from the True Source and we fail to redeem the sparks of joy. Consequently, we fall into meaningless routines and feel unfulfilled.

But once a year, we are blessed with the holiday of Purim. On this day, it is customary to act silly and goofy. Only through silliness can we descend into the seemingly deadeast parts of our lives and rescue those precious sparks of joy. If we act a

little crazy, while affirming our great faith in and connection with God and Torah, we become empowered to face depression and transform it to the greatest joy. Don't be afraid. This Purim is the time to let loose and experience how liberating true joy can be!

Purim is the start. It's the day that teaches us how to hone this great skill. And after Purim, Rebbe Nachman says, this skill is absolutely necessary for day-to-day living. Only by acting a little silly can we transcend the confounding barriers of sadness that Haman has erected and reach the redemptive state of happiness and joy every day of the year.

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Nefilat Apayim 4*