

In Memory of My Brother

written by Ozer Bergman

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In honor of my late brother, Yehoshua Moshe ben Akiva (18 Adar-2 5746), I would like to share a piece of Midrash (*Tanchuma, Shemini* #2).

We all know that Rebbe Nachman *zal* taught that it is a great-mitzvah to constantly be *b'simcha*, in a positive frame of mind. Many are unaware of its corollary, or perhaps the second-half of the great-mitzvah, namely, to make serious effort to keep sadness and despair at bay (*Likutey Moharan* II, Lesson #24).

The Midrash teaches us that *simcha* waits for no man, that *simcha* is tenuous and temporary. Happiness and joy come when they do, but do not stay forever. Whatever the cause—or even causes—of one's positiveness, one mishap is enough to ruin everything. (Haman, does that sound familiar? See Esther 5:11–12.) The Midrash backs up its assertion by bringing examples of people who had much going for them in life, but ultimately saw their happiness dissipate as a result of later events. The Patriarchs enjoyed wealth and prestige, salvation and received great spiritual favors. Yet none of that lasted forever and ultimately their turn to suffer bitterness came. Yehoshua, Moshe Rabbeinu's successor, enjoyed greater popular support than his predecessor, but passed away having suffered. (Eli, the High Priest, and Elisheva, wife of Aharon, the first High Priest, are named victims of *simcha's* fleetingness.)

The Midrash says that *even God*, whose joy and positiveness were so great as a result of the Creation He had made, saw His joy evaporate. "I

created everything only for the human being. Now that he will die [as a result of his sin], what enjoyment do I have?" So, the Midrash asks, if God's *simcha* is not permanent, certainly a person's!

So, don't expect to *automatically* to be always in a positive state of mind. You have to work at it. It *will* come. The Midrash says, "Not everyone in pain today will be in pain tomorrow."

May we soon see the coming of the Mashiach and the fulfillment of the verse (Psalms 97:1), "Once God reigns the world will rejoice." Amen.

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