

Seuda Shlishis, Parshas Toldos, 5766

At the third Shabbos meal, Mohorosh *Shlit"á* spoke inspiring words on the subject of joy and the nullification of sorrow, based on *Lekutei Mohoran*, Part II, Lesson 23.

Rebbe Nachman says: “Concerning the matter of joy, an analogy: sometimes when people are dancing in a state of joy, they will grab hold of someone standing on the side who is obviously sad and bitter, and pull him into their dance circle, and force him to rejoice with them. So too, regarding the matter of joy within the person himself. When a person is happy, then the bitterness and suffering stand off to the side. But it is an even greater level to specifically chase after the bitterness and bring it into the joy in a way that the bitterness will transform itself into joy just as when a person is pulled into a circle of joy. And then, the greatness of the joy and delight will transform all of his worries, sadness and bitterness into happiness. Grabbing hold of the bitterness and bringing it against its will into a place a joy, as in the above analogy, is all an aspect of the verse (Isaiah, Ch. 35): “Joy and happiness will overtake [catch] and sorrow and groaning have fled”, that is, the sorrow and groaning flee from happiness, for at the time of joy it is the way of sorrow and bitterness to stand on the sidelines. But, one must specifically go after them and grab them and bring them precisely *within* the joy. And this is the meaning of “Joy and happiness will overtake...” for joy and happiness will grab hold of the sorrow and bitterness which are trying to flee from the happiness, and bring them into the joy against their will. For there is a type of sorrow which is from the *sitra achara* (side of spiritual impurity), and it does not want to be associated with holiness. Therefore, it flees from joy. And this is why it is necessary to force it into holiness, i.e. into joy against its will, and transform it into happiness.” (These are the words of Rebbe Nachman.)

Mohorosh explained that the trait of *simcha* comes from being attached to Hashem, as it is written (*Divrei HaYamim* I, Ch. 16): “Might and joy are in His place” which means that whoever is close to Hashem’s place and feels His G-dliness resting in his midst, such a person will have joy and happiness, for Hashem is the source of *simcha*. And whoever is attached to Hashem is always happy. This is not the case when a person is suffering from feelings of

self-importance and arrogance. Such a person is far from Hashem's place. For Hashem says about such a person (*Talmud Sotah*, 5a): "He and I cannot dwell in the same world together." And as a result, bitterness and sadness enter him. But the main service is to reveal the light of Hashem to such an extent that the sadness and bitterness will be completely nullified. From the abundance of the revelation of the *Shechinah* and from much joy, the sadness and bitterness will flee completely. And not only will they flee and be nullified, but the *simcha* will pursue them and transform them into *simcha*. As a result of the great revelation of G-dliness it will be made known to them that even the sadness and bitterness were only due to the concealment of Hashem's presence. But in truth, even within the concealment, Hashem's G-dliness is treasured away. And now that he has come to a state of true joy, it has become known to him that there is no source or place for sadness and bitterness at all.

And this is the tremendous level and importance of one who merits to bring joy to others and to transform their sorrow and groaning into happiness and joy. This is the greatest *tzedaka* and *chesed* that we can do for another person. Greater than giving someone money is making him happy, to bring him out of his bitterness and sadness. For someone who falls into bitterness and despair and begins to have thoughts of suicide, G-d forbid, all of the silver and gold in the world mean nothing to him. His life means nothing to him. But when someone comes and makes him happy and brings him out of his depression, there is no *tzedaka* greater than this, as it is written (*Tehillim*, Ch. 32): "Praiseworthy is the one who deals intelligently with a poor person." And Rebbe Nachman explains this to mean (*Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 106): "Praiseworthy is the one who shines knowledge and wisdom into the poor who lack knowledge and wisdom", that is, to strengthen and gladden him. And with the power of this mitzvah alone, one merits the world to come, as Rabbi Baroka (*Talmud Taanis*, 22a) asked Eliyahu as they were walking through the marketplace together, "Who in this marketplace is destined for the world to come?" And Eliyahu pointed to two comedians who were bringing joy to people and making **shalom** between them. For this is the greatest mitzvah, and through it one fulfills the verse: "Joy and happiness will overtake – sorrow and groaning have fled" since he has chased after the sadness and bitterness and transformed them into *simcha*.

Therefore, an exceedingly important service is to strive to reach a state of total *simcha* in one's service of Hashem. And one merits this by recognizing Hashem's divine supervision over the smallest details of everything in

creation and by banishing all thoughts of “My strength and the might of *my* hands have made for me this wealth” which the Torah warns us about (*Devarim* 8:17). For the moment a person attributes his success to the work of his own hands, he falls into sadness and bitterness and he derives no vitality and happiness from all of his money, as it is written (*Tehillim*, Ch. 115): “Their idols (lit. ‘their sadness’) are silver and gold, the work of man’s hands.” When is there sadness from silver and gold? When it is the work of man’s hands, that is, when one thinks that the work of his hands was what produced the silver and gold for him and he forgets that Hashem is the One “Who gives him strength to make wealth (*Devarim* *ibid.*)” and without Him he would have absolutely nothing. And when a person forgets this and it seems to him that everything is just Nature, chance and *mazal*, he should know that his forgetfulness comes from feelings of haughtiness and arrogance which cause him to think that he is able to bring something into existence by himself. In this way, he pushes Hashem away from himself, G-d forbid. And then all of the curses and suffering come, G-d forbid, as it is written (*Yayikra*, Ch. 26): “And if you walk with me with *keri* (casualness/chance/happenstance)...I will break the pride of your strength.” For the moment a person walks with *keri*, that is, with chance, Nature and *mazal*, he should realize that this is only due to the arrogance within him. Therefore, measure for measure: “I will break the pride (or arrogance) of your strength” – Hashem will break his pride and arrogance.

And so we find that the main rebuke comes only from a lack of happiness in serving Hashem, as it is written (*Devarim*, Ch. 28): “Because you did not serve Hashem, your G-d, with *simcha* and goodness of heart despite an abundance of everything.” For if he would have been happy in serving Hashem and fulfilling His mitzvos, this would have guarded him from all harm, and he would have drawn down upon himself all the blessings in the world, for sadness and bitterness would have fled from him completely and joy and happiness would have pursued them until they would have been transformed into a mighty joy. Therefore, praiseworthy is the one who merits to always be happy and to know that all benefits come to him only from Hashem alone. And through this, he will be protected from the negative traits of self-importance and arrogance. The *Shechinah* will always rest upon him and all of the blessings, both spiritual and material, will be drawn upon him. Happy is he and fortunate is his lot.

Mohorosh connected the above ideas to our parsha in the following way. It is written (*Bereishis*, Ch. 26): “Avimelech said to Yitzchak, ‘Go away from us

for you have become much stronger than us.’ ” And after Yitzchak went away from there, he dug wells and built an altar as it is written: “And he built an altar there, and called out in the name of Hashem [i.e., he revealed and publicized the truth of Hashem’s existence], and pitched his tent there; and there Isaac's servants dug a well.” And then Avimelech returned to him and said: “We have surely seen that Hashem has been with you.” We need to understand why Avimelech returned to Yitzchak and made a covenant with him when he had originally driven Yitzchak away? Let’s try to answer this according to the above words of Rebbe Nachman.

Avimelech was a man filled with arrogance; and his name “Avi-Melech” means that “I want to rule and take the kingship for myself” and separate myself from the Kingship of Hashem. (“Ava” in Hebrew is to want and “Avi” denotes “I want” – see *Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 10).” Therefore, he was surely very far from the trait of *simcha*. For the moment a person separates himself from Hashem, the source of *simcha*, sadness and bitterness seize him. But Yitzchak was named for laughter (*tzchok*) and *simcha* in serving Hashem, as it is written (*Bereishis*, Ch. 21): “G-d has made *tzchok* for me [Sarah]; all who hear about it will laugh (*yitzchak*) for me.” Therefore, Avimelech was unable to bear Yitzchak’s presence, for light and darkness, holiness and defilement are unable to mix together. Therefore, “Avimelech” – the arrogant man – “said to Yitzchak” – the Tzaddik and man of joy – “go away from us” – for we cannot tolerate you at all. For the arrogant man is completely distant from *simcha* to the ultimate degree.

And the main reason for his hatred and jealousy of Yitzchak was due to Yitzchak’s great wealth and property which he used only for holy purposes and this prevented sadness and bitterness from seizing him. Therefore, Avimelech told Yitzchak “You have become much stronger than us” i.e. in wealth and possessions, as it is written (in verse 14): “And he had livestock, sheep, herds and many servants, and the Philistines envied him.” And Rashi comments: “People would say: ‘[Better] The dung of Yitzchak’s mules than the silver and gold of Avimelech.’ ” For the wealth and property of an arrogant man is absolutely worthless. In fact, it only serves to increase his sadness and bitterness. So Avimelech greatly envied the wealth and happiness of Yitzchak and was therefore completely unable to tolerate him. And so it is explained by the Ohr HaChaim (on verse 27) that hatred that stems from jealousy will never be nullified. But Yitzchak was not at all fazed by this – “And Yitzchak went away from there and encamped by the stream of Garar and he dwelled there.” And here is where he began to involve himself with

digging wells. And wells are a metaphor for the revelation of G-dliness and for drawing down explanations of the Torah (*Lekutei Mohoran*, Part I, Lesson 20). This was done specifically in the land of the Philistines which then caused the fulfillment of the verse: “Joy and happiness will overtake and sorrow and groaning will flee”. For *simcha* will grow so strong due to the revelation of G-dliness to the point that it will run after the sorrow and bitterness and transform them into *simcha*. This is the reason for Avimelech’s return to Yitzchak and his request that they should forge a covenant together as it is written: “We have surely seen that Hashem has been with you; and we said: ‘Let there now be an oath between us and we shall make a covenant with you.’ ” For the moment the light of Hashem is revealed – which is the source of *simcha* – then sorrow and bitterness make a covenant with and become transformed into the light of *simcha*. May Hashem help us to acquire the trait of true *simcha*, and may we merit to draw down upon ourselves all kinds of heavenly abundance both spiritually and materially, until we merit to see the *simcha* and salvation of Israel with the coming of our righteous redeemer swiftly in our days. *Amen v’amen*.