



## Sukkot

### Zman Simchatenu

#### *Simchah*

*Simchah*, happiness, is not just a positive emotion that we like to have. There are many instances in the *Torah* where we are instructed to rejoice and be happy. The *Torah* even tells us that punishments and suffering will be our lot if we do not serve *Hashem* with joy. The verse (*Devarim* 28:47) says, “*Tachat asher lo avadeta et Hashem Elokechah be’simchah u’ve’tuv leivav meirov kol,*” [“The dreadful punishments mentioned there will be meted out] ... because you did not perform the service of *Hashem*, your G-d, with happiness and good cheer, out of sheer abundance.”

#### Gratitude in All Situations

The *Mishnah* (*Berachot* 54a) writes, “An individual is required to bless over misfortune just as he blesses over good fortune.” The *Gemara* (*ibid.* 60b) explains that this does not mean that one recites the same *berachah* when hearing bad tidings as when hearing good tidings (*ha’tov ve’hametiv*). Rather, it means that one should accept the situation wholeheartedly. That is to say, that one should bless *Hashem* for the given situation with the same feeling of gratitude as if something positive had transpired. *Rashi* comments that when the *Gemara* says that one should accept misfortune with joy, it means to bless *Hashem* with a full heart. The *Tur* (*Orach Chayim siman* 222) and the *Bach* (*ibid.*) explain further, that the *Gemara* does not mean that one should be externally jubilant or radiant when something bad happens. Rather, it means that just like one who has good fortune blesses *Hashem* happily, with complete acceptance of what happened (*da’at shelema*) and does so willingly (*nefesh chafetzah*), so too, should one praise G-d even in difficult situations, with *da’at shelema*, completely accepting the situation, and *nefesh chafetzah*, feeling at ease with the given scenario. This mindset can be achieved in all situations, and is the essence of *simchah*. When a person is fully accepting and even at ease with any given scenario, he possesses the inner joy that we are commanded to utilize constantly in our service of *Hashem*.

#### Scenarios of *Simchah*

When are we obligated to have *simchah*?

In reality, there are two main scenarios in which we are commanded to fulfill the *avodah* of *simchah*. One is the general scenario of how a person views his lot. The *avodah* of *simchah* requires a person to be content with what he has, i.e. his family, health, etc., and feel that he has all that he needs. Additionally, he should be happy with his level of acquisitions and social standing. Our Sages tell us (*Avot* 4:1), “*Eizehu ashir? Ha’same’ach be’chelko,*” “Who is truly rich? One who is happy with his portion.” A feeling of contentedness with one’s physical assets and character traits will create a general feeling of happiness in a person. The second scenario is how a person performs his *avodat Hashem*, service of G-d. The *avodah* of *simchah* is to generate a sensational feeling of inner happiness when doing *avodat Hashem*, like learning *Torah* or performing *mitzvot*. (This is besides the feeling of true fulfillment, contentedness and completion that one experiences, due to his *neshamah* being nourished through his learning of *Torah* and performance of *mitzvot*. This feeling is a consequence of his actions, and is not within the area of *avodat Hashem* that a person needs to strive for.)

#### Contentment with One’s Lot

Let us begin by discussing the first scenario, the general feeling of satisfaction and contentment with all that one has. How does one go about attaining this happiness? Essentially, the contentment that a person feels is rooted in



*bitachon*. When a person has complete trust in *Hashem*, he believes fully that everything he needs – both his physical needs and even his spiritual ones – will be provided for him so that he can perform the service of *Hashem*. He knows that he will not lack anything, and if he does find that he is lacking something, he concludes that obviously he does not need it (at least at the present time). With the belief that G-d knows exactly what a person needs in any given situation and provides it for him, a person will never feel that he is lacking anything. Hence, a person's general lack of *simchah* is due to a deficiency in his *bitachon* that *Hashem* is "the provider," knows what he needs and makes it available to him. The verse (*Tehillim* 33:21) says, "*Ki Vo yismach libenu ki VeShem Kodsho batachnu*," "In Him our hearts will rejoice, for in His Holy Name we trust." Our heart's happiness is rooted in our *bitachon* in *Hashem*, and contentment that is rooted in *bitachon* will prevail even if we find ourselves in trying or troublesome situations, *chas ve'shalom*.

#### **Rabi Akiva's Bitachon**

The *Gemara* (*Berachot* 60b) relates how *Rabi Akiva* would constantly say, "All that G-d does is for the best." Once, he was on a journey. As evening approached, he arrived at a city, but wherever he requested lodgings for the night, he was turned down. He said to himself, "All that G-d does is for the best," and went to settle down for the night in a nearby field. Together with him were his donkey (to transport him), a rooster (to awaken him early in the morning) and a candle (to enable him to learn at night). He was in the middle of learning, when a sudden gust of wind came and blew out his candle. Then, a cat approached and killed his rooster, and a lion came and devoured his donkey. Clinging steadfastly to his belief in *Hashem*, he said to himself, "All that G-d does is for the best." In the middle of the night, the king's troops arrived at the city where he initially wanted to lodge, and took its entire inhabitants captive. He noted that if his candle had not been extinguished, or his rooster would have crowed or his donkey brayed, it would have drawn attention to him, and he would have been taken captive as well. *Rabi Akiva* saw this as a demonstration of his belief that all that G-d does is solely for his good, even if it may appear otherwise.

#### **Happiness is Contagious**

When a person develops his general *bitachon*, trust in G-d, he will be able to live a happier, healthier and more relaxed lifestyle. (This is achieved by applying one's *emunah*, belief in G-d, in his day-to-day living. The *Chazon Ish* writes (*Emunah U'Bitachon* 2:1) that trust is the practical application of belief in a situation that requires it.) Not only will he feel internal contentment, but his happiness, which is generated by his *bitachon* in *Hashem*, will spill over to others. The *Gemara* (*Ta'anit* 22a) relates how *Rav Beroka* was walking in the marketplace with *Eliyahu HaNavi*. He asked *Eliyahu HaNavi*, "Who in this marketplace is deserving of *Olam Habah*?" *Eliyahu* pointed out two comedians, who would go around cheering up miserable and dejected people, and help resolve quarrels. He said, "They will merit a portion in *Olam Habah*!" *Rashi* (*ibid.*) comments that these comedians were happy themselves and made others happy as well. It would seem that *Rashi* is teaching us that if one wishes to cheer up others and make them happy, first one's own internal tranquility and happiness must be spilling over. This, in turn, can create waves of good cheer that spill over to others.

#### **How to Radiate Happiness**

From where, though, did the comedians' happiness stem? And how was their "cheerful service" enough for them to merit *Olam Habah*, the eternal and most desired reward, and pinnacle of our achievements?

The *Shevet Mussar* (*perek* 14:17) explains that they were deserving of *Olam Habah*, not because of their happiness, but because of their *bitachon* in *Hashem* and passing it over to others. Due to their trust in *Hashem*, they never felt themselves to be lacking anything. They were completely content with their lot and their ability to serve *Hashem*, which meant that they were always happy. Their trait of *bitachon* is what they radiated to those who were upset. It was not some undefined or intangible happiness, but rather, it was their trust in *Hashem* which generated happiness in all situations, and which they were able to impart to others. Thus, the "dejected people" were now infused with



newfound *bitachon*, and became happier as a result. Having this quality of *bitachon* and radiating it to others is what gained these comedians *Olam Habah*.

#### **Our Spiritual Needs Provided**

Having explained that the trait of *bitachon* gives one peace of mind and happiness regarding one's physical needs, the same is true regarding the requisites that one needs to fulfill *Hashem's mitzvot*. Our *bitachon* in *Hashem* should include that He will provide us with all that is necessary to serve Him by learning *Torah* and performing *mitzvot*. We say in our daily *shacharit* prayer before the recital of the *Shema*, "*u'ba'avur Avotenu she'batchu Becha va'telamedemo chukei chaim la'asot retzoncha be'levav shalem*," "because of our Forefathers who trusted in You, You taught us the statutes of life, to do Your Will wholeheartedly." This does not mean that a person may sit back and rely that *Hashem* will help him completely perform His Will. Rather, together with one's own input and effort to fulfill G-d's Word, one should also have *bitachon* that *Hashem* will enable and facilitate him doing so, and even be successful in it. It also comes to teach us that just because one exerted himself fully to do a *mitzvah*, this does not entitle him to take full credit for his achievements. The verse (*Tehillim* 37:3) which states, "*Betach baHashem ve'aseh tov*," "Trust in G-d and do what is good," implies that one's success in performing *mitzvot* depends on the Divine help that he receives, and not just on his own input. It would be haughty for one to think so. Rather, we must trust that *Hashem* will provide us with all the physical, emotional, and spiritual means that we need to fulfill His *mitzvot*, and at the same time exert ourselves fully to perform them, so as to keep His word.

#### **Providing the Needs of Spiritual Endeavors**

Until now we said that we should rely that *Hashem* will provide all our personal requisites to do His Will. There is however, an even higher level of *bitachon* people who initiate the performance of good deeds for the sake of Heaven, without worrying about how they will finance the project. They have complete trust that G-d will provide all the necessary funds for them to completely fulfill His word (see *Rashi Sotah* 48a, when defining "*Anshei Amanah*"—"men of faith").

When a person has an unwavering *bitachon* in *Hashem*, it enables him to do His Will and also cultivate inner happiness. It will help him not to "be thrown" when the job at hand seems daunting. He will see that here is no need to feel nervous, pressure or a lack of tranquility. He feels reassured that his efforts will be rewarded, affording him contentment and the ability to enjoy his endeavors.

#### **Contentment With One's Role**

Until now we have explained that *bitachon* in *Hashem* is the realization that He provides a person with all his needs for his physical and spiritual existence. There is another branch of spiritual needs that is also worth mentioning in this context, i.e., being happy with one's individual portion in *Torah* that *Hashem* has granted him. In the *sefer Menucha U'Kedushah (Sha'ar HaTorah Chelek 2:23)* it states in the name of the *Vilna Gaon* that one must be happy with one's lot in spiritual issues as well. This does not mean that one should be complacent with his acquired *Torah* knowledge and level of Divine service. Most certainly, one should always aspire for more. However, when one is maximizing one's efforts in these areas, he should feel happy and content with his spiritual achievements, in that he has been granted a portion in *Torah* study and the observance of *mitzvot*. A person who tries to be "cleverer" than his Creator, and (instead of maximizing his own potential) attempts to emulate someone else's mind, heart, or character, is not helping himself in his service of *Hashem*. This will not only cause him to be unsuccessful in fulfilling his own given purpose in the world, but he will not fulfill his "competitor's" role in this world either. Such competition does not have desirable results, as each person is created with unique talents, ways of thinking, and other capabilities. We are not given free choice in this matter. The competition that is recommended by our Sages only applies within one's given, natural capabilities, and is the type that can enable a person to work harder and



grow. (See also *Rav Pe'alim, chelek 3 Sod Yesharim 13.*) (This is not to say that one should not be inspired by the exemplary actions and conduct of great people. However, regarding one's own area of development in *avodat Hashem*, trying to deploy talents he does not naturally possess will only cause a person to become disappointed, despondent, and eventually give up.) When a person utilizes his own given character, mind, and heart in the service of *Hashem*, and feels content about it, he will be able to reach great heights. Such a person will not be "working against the grain," but rather, within his capabilities, and will feel fulfillment and happiness in his heart. The verse (*Tehillim 105:3*) states, "*Yismach lev mevakshei Hashem*," "Those who seek out *Hashem* will be happy at heart." Hence, if one finds himself feeling unhappy about his service of G-d, maybe he is looking for something else and not *Hashem*!

### Enjoying the Service of *Hashem*

Now, to address the second scenario of *avodat ha'simchah* that we mentioned: the *simchah* that one should generate when doing *mitzvot*. (As mentioned previously, this is besides for the *simchah* that one feels due to the privilege of being able to do *mitzvot*.)

The *Mishnah* (*Avot 4:2*) states that "*Sechar mitzvah mitzvah u'sechar averah averah*," "The reward for a *mitzvah* is a *mitzvah*, and the reward for a sin is a sin." Understood literally, this means that the reward for doing a *mitzvah* is the opportunity to do another *mitzvah* (*Bartenura* *ibid.*). Since no physical commodity can substantiate the reward for doing a *mitzvah*, therefore, the only way to be rewarded is with another *mitzvah*, i.e. the opportunity to attain even more eternal reward. Thus, the reward for doing a *mitzvah* is not allotted in this world, since no physical commodity could reward what is due for having done a *mitzvah*.

However, the *Bartenura* (*ibid.*) enlightens us with another explanation as well. He explains that the word "*sechar*" in this context could mean "enjoyment," as opposed to "reward." That is to say, that the benefit and enjoyment of doing a *mitzvah*, "*sechar mitzvah*," is in itself a *mitzvah*. Besides the actual fulfillment of G-d's Word gaining one eternal reward, the enjoyment one has when performing a *mitzvah* is a separate *mitzvah*, enabling a person to gain additional eternal reward. For example, one can fulfill the *mitzvah* of donning *tefillin* solely because G-d instructed him to do so, but if one enjoys the experience, he gains another *mitzvah*. The same holds true conversely as well. If one rebels against the word of G-d (*chas ve'shalom*), he will be punished. However, if he transgresses joyfully, his punishment for transgressing G-d's Word will be more severe.

### *Simchah BeMitzvah*

What is the source for this newly-found *mitzvah* of *simchah be'mitzvah*? Does the *Torah* actually instruct us to do the *mitzvot* happily and thereby receive a separate reward for this?

*Rabbenu Bachaye* explains the aforementioned verse, "*Tachat asher lo avadta et Hashem Elokecha be'simchah*," "Due to you not performing G-d's service happily [dreadful punishments are meted out]" in the following manner: He writes that the *Torah* is blaming those who do not do *Hashem's* service happily, implying that we have a *mitzvah* of *simchah* in *avodat Hashem*. Thus, this *pasuk* is a source. Like the *Bartenura*, he writes that besides the actual performance of *Hashem's* commandments, separate reward is allotted for doing them joyfully.

### Reward in this World

Amongst the *Rishonim* who enumerate the 613 *mitzvot*, we do not find any who quote this aforementioned verse (*ibid.*) as being a separate *mitzvah* of *simchah*. Thus, we still need to find a source for the *Bartenura's* words. Furthermore, we need to explain the words of the *Pele Yoetz* (in his chapter on *simchah*) who says that although one is not rewarded in this world for doing *mitzvot* (as explained earlier), however, for the *mitzvah* of *simchah be'mitzvah* one is rewarded even in this world. Why is that so?



To answer these questions, let us first pose another two questions: The *Chanukat HaTorah* (*Parashat Yitro*) quotes a *Midrash* that says that *Bnei Yisrael* are rewarded even in this world for their faith in G-d. Why is this so? Furthermore, why does G-d not reward us for other *mitzvot* in this world? Surely, the *Torah* states that one must pay one's worker on the day that he finishes his work (*Devarim* 24:15), and if he doesn't do so, he transgresses the prohibition of *bal talin*, delaying payment (see *Vayikra* 19:13). Why, then, does *Hashem* not pay us on the day that we complete a *mitzvah*?

The *Chanukat HaTorah* gives the following reason: If one hired a worker through an intermediary, the *halachah* is that even if he does not pay him on the same day, he does not transgress the *mitzvah* to pay one's worker on time. This is because the employer can say, "I did not hire you," and the middleman can claim, "You did not work for me." Therefore, since the commandments were given by *Hashem* to *Klal Yisrael* via *Moshe Rabbenu*, who acted as an intermediary, thus, there is no requirement for G-d to pay the Jewish People on the same day. This is only true, however, concerning the rest of the *Torah*, which was instructed to the *Bnei Yisrael* via *Moshe Rabbenu*. But as regards the first two commandments, which we received directly from *Hashem*, the rule of paying one's worker on time holds true. Therefore, since the first commandment is to believe in G-d, it follows that one should be rewarded for one's faith and trust in G-d even in this world.

#### **Bitachon in the Reward for Mitzvot**

With this, we can understand how the *Arizal* (beginning of *Sha'ar HaMitzvot*) explains *simchah be'mitzvah* and why we are rewarded for it in this world: He elucidates the reason why a person may lack *simchah* when doing G-d's *mitzvot*, with the following parable: If a person was told that an envelope containing one million dollars cash was outside his front door, he would certainly run there excitedly to enjoy his good fortune. Why then, do we not run excitedly to do *mitzvot*, if *Hashem* has promised various rewards for doing them? The reason must be because we do not see their reward in front of our eyes. Rather, it is dependent upon our belief and faith in *Hashem* that He will reward us accordingly. Hence, our lack of enthusiasm to do *mitzvot* is due to our lack of *bitachon* in *Hashem*, that He will reward us from His "treasure houses."

The *Arizal* is telling us that the *simchah* we have in our service of *Hashem* is dependent upon our *bitachon* that we will be rewarded. If we have *bitachon*, then we will be *be'simchah*, joyful, when performing *mitzvot*, and if we are *be'simchah*, then that demonstrates our *bitachon*.

We asked, which independent *mitzvah* does one fulfill when doing a *mitzvah* happily? And why is one rewarded for *simchah* in this world? Now that we see that doing G-d's *mitzvot* *be'simchah* is dependent upon our *bitachon*, it follows that the *mitzvah* of *simchah* is an expression of our *bitachon* in G-d. A person is rewarded even in this world for his *bitachon*, his trust in G-d, and since *simcha be'mitzvah* is rooted in his *bitachon*, he will be rewarded for that as well.

#### **The Reward for Simchah**

We have described, so far, the importance of doing *mitzvot* happily and joyfully, and that since *simchah* is rooted in the *middah* of *bitachon*, one will be rewarded for this trait in this world, as well as in the next. However, we have not yet described what the reward is. Additionally, how can one be rewarded in this world, where no commodity is substantial enough to reward a *mitzvah*? The *Peleh Yo'etz* (*simchah*) tells us a great novelty. He explains that when the *Arizal* testified about himself that all his great achievements in *Torah* and depth of understanding that he merited, were due to his learning *Torah* and fulfilling the *mitzvot* happily, this was essentially the reward for his *simchah*. The reward for *simchah be'mitzvah* in this world is the ability to grasp more understanding of G-d's Divine Will. This being the case, since the reward is a spiritual one, one may receive it even in this world. Not only is "the deeper understanding" a reward in itself, but the extra *Torah* that one will learn as a result generates even more



reward. It comes out that not only is the reward for doing a *mitzvah* another *mitzvah*, but the reward for doing a *mitzvah* joyfully is also a *mitzvah*. Furthermore, the reward is not just any *mitzvah*, but the greatest of *mitzvot* – *Torah*, which is the *mitzvah* that generates the highest level of eternal reward. Hence, although one is rewarded in this world, because *simchah* is rooted in *bitachon*, the reward that one merits is the highest level of *mitzvot*—the understanding of *Torah* (which, in turn, will earn him the highest level of eternal reward).

### **The Avodah of Simchah**

Generating *simchah* when doing *mitzvot* is, by no means, an easy task. Although it is rooted in the *bitachon* that *Hashem* will ultimately reward him, much like the general feeling of *simchah* which is also rooted in *bitachon*, as stated above, however, it is more abstract and less tangible. The necessity to live constantly with *bitachon*, i.e. happiness and contentment that *Hashem* provides one with all his daily needs, is a day-to-day necessity in order to cope with life, and is more of a must. However, to perform G-d's *mitzvot* with *simchah*, because we trust in His ultimate reward, is much harder, since it is barely visible.

The *Rambam* (*Hilchot Lulav* 8:15) writes that the *simchah* that one demonstrates when doing G-d's *mitzvot* and His service is very great task. It is incumbent upon everyone, and no one should deprive themselves of it. The *Maggid Mishnah* (*ibid.*) explains that the *Rambam* derives this *halachah* from the *Gemara* in *Shabbat* (30b) that praises the person who does *Hashem's* service with *simchah*. When a person performs *Hashem's mitzvot* with *simchah*, it shows that they are not a burden to him, but on the contrary, *avodat Hashem* is the ambition and joy of his life (see *Tur, Orach Chayim, siman* 222). Instead of seeking pleasure from physical, transient activities which have no basis or continuity, one will find true and lasting happiness by pursuing the truth, i.e. *Torah* and *mitzvot*.

### **Expressing One's Simchah**

The expression of *simchah*, joy, in matters other than those explained above is not true happiness, but rather, unruliness and an expression of one's physical side. Hence the *Rambam* (*Hilchot Yom Tov* 6:20) states that one is only commanded to be *be'simchah* in regards to the service of *Hashem*, but not in other matters.

Additionally, even if a person is happy due to physical pleasures, for example, winning the lottery, he should direct his *simchah* towards the service of *Hashem*. The *Chinuch* (*mitzvah* 324) writes the following regarding the *simchah* of *Sukkot*: The *Torah* calls *Sukkot* "*chag ha'asif*"—"festival of the ingathering." This means that the *simchah* of *Sukkot* is due to the fact that an individual has brought his produce into his house. For this reason, the *Torah* commands us with the special *mitzvot* of *sukkah* and "taking the Four Species," to channel our naturally-generated *simchah* towards the service of *Hashem*. As with all *mitzvot*, when a person performs them joyfully, his *simchah* enables the Divine Presence to reside upon him (*Shabbat* 30b).

The *avodah* of *simchah* in the service of *Hashem* is so great, that the *Arizal* attributed the vast knowledge in *Torah* and *Ruach HaKodesh* that he attained, to the immense *simchah* that he had when fulfilling *mitzvot* (see *Sefer Charedim, Hakdamah LeMitzvot* 4).

By developing one's *emunah*, belief, that *Hashem* created the world, metes out reward and punishment, and directs the world with Divine Providence, and by internalizing this to the extent that one lives with it in one's day-to-day life, a person can transform his belief into *bitachon*, trust in *Hashem*. With this trait, one can merit living happily, and also, doing *Hashem's mitzvot* joyfully. Furthermore, he will be able to enjoy the taste of true fulfillment and happiness, when his spiritual side (his *neshamah*) is nourished through his learning of *Torah* and doing *Hashem's mitzvot*. He will also merit reaching great levels in *Torah* and its understanding, and experiencing a constant upward spiral effect of spiritual growth, gaining him an esteemed portion in the Next World.