# Depression - The Source Of Joy

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Ironically, depression prepares the way for the joy which the baal t'shuva discovers. To understand this deep concept, we have to understand that it is the sense of G-d's majestic perfection which causes sin to be so intolerable. When a person is aware that his sadness over his sins results from the Divine light working on his soul - this recognition brings unparalleled joy and satisfaction. He feels that G-d is with him! He senses G-d's presence! This is the spiritual happiness which accompanies the feeling of depression in the heart of the baal t'shuva. Thus the pain and melancholy which a person experiences because of his sins is, in fact, the wonderful sign that G-d has already turned toward him to bring him healing and joy (Ibid, 15:9).

Rabbi Kook discusses another source of the pain of t'shuva. When the light of t'shuva embraces a person, he is enveloped by a spirit of holiness and purity. His soul fills with a passionate love of G-d, and he longs for a life of honesty and moral upliftment. However, at the same time that this "born again" feeling radiates through his being, he is still trapped in the pathways of sin, and he doesn't know how to escape from his darkness and embark on a new way of life. This frustration causes pain. Yet, the very fact that a person experiences this anguish is itself the gateway to happiness.

"The will to be good, this, in itself, is a Divine wind from Gan Eden, which blows on the soul and fills it with infinite joy, to the extent that the hellish flames of deep anguish are transformed into rivers of delight" (Ibid, 16:3).

A Total Baal T'shuva

The appellation baal t'shuva, or master of t'shuva, suggests a person who has successfully reached the end of the process and mastered all of its facets. Rabbi Kook, however, tells us that this is not the case at all. If a person is broken and shattered with remorse because of his sins, he is a master of t'shuva already.

"If a person has such a low estimation of himself that the great bitterness in his soul, his fallen moral state, and his sins, prevent him from studying Torah and observing the commandments, from engaging in work, and interacting with people with a calm, healthy happiness, then he must believe in his heart that in feeling such depression over his sins, he is certainly, at that very moment, a total baal t'shuva. Accordingly, he has already elevated his being, and he can set his mind at rest and return to being happy and cheerful, occupying himself with goodness in a peaceful and joyous disposition, for G-d is good and just" (Ibid, 14:23).