Rebbe Nachman on Being Happy

Contributed by Tzvi Fishman
Monday, 11 February 2013
Last Updated Monday, 11 February 2013

When the month of Adar begins, a Jew is called upon to be especially happy. Joy is a fundamental ingredient in serving G-d. One of the things that brought about the exile of the Jewish People from the Land of Israel was because of sexual immorality. Rabbi Nachman of Breslov teaches that unhappiness is the principle source of sexual transgression. This helps us understand an additional teaching of our Sages that we were exiled from the Land was because we didn’t serve G-d with joy.

Today also, the root of sexual sin and depravity is the widespread unhappiness and depression which grips the modern materialistic world we live in. Unhappiness leads people to the fleeting and sordid high of pornography, to homosexuality, other sexually deviant behavior, and to masturbation.

So, to break bad habits and help everyone achieve an extra measure of happiness this month, and for all of our lives, here’s some advice from Rabbi Nachman, from his book, “Likutei Etzot – Advice.”

RABBI NACHMAN OF BRESLOV ON BEING HAPPY

*Depression is like a sediment which covers the heart of the Jew and stops it from burning with passion for G-d.

*Seeing the face of the Tzaddik can give you joy and enthusiasm.

*Depression is a form of idolatry. How joyous we are depends on our purity and how close we are to the true Tzaddikim, who are the joy of all Israel. If you are joyous, the light of G-d’s countenance will radiate upon you.

*The main reason for immorality is because of depression. The way to be pure is through joy. If you are happy, G-d will help you to keep yourself pure.

*Man’s imagination is the source of all temptations. It is one of man’s animal aspects. If it becomes dominant, it is because of depression which is an evil spirit. Forgetfulness gains a hold, and one forgets one’s true purpose of sanctifying oneself in order to merit the World to Come. We have to fight back and aim to be constantly happy in order to shatter the power of the imagination. Then we will be able to set the World to Come always in our minds.

*When a person is depressed, his intellect and mind go into exile.

*Don’t be depressed. The root of depression is in the husks (kelipot) which are at war with all that is holy. Whenever depression takes grip, the Shechinah, which is the joy of Israel, goes into exile. The destruction of the husks of unholiness depends on joy.

*Because the incense which was burned in the Holy Temple had the power to free the holy life force from the husks, you should recite the passages in the prayer book which deal with the daily incense offering with great concentration. This will help bring you to joy.

*You should feel so happy when you do a mitzvah that you don’t do it merely to receive a reward in the World to Come. Rather because you want G-d to send you another mitzvah, because your joy is the mitzvah itself. If you pray with intensity and great awe and love, you will be able to experience this joy.

*The way to come to joy is through Torah and prayer. You should always prayer to attain the level that I hidden from you. And when this is revealed you should pray to achieve the level that is still hidden. This is how to rise from level to level. It is the way to find joy, which is the source of spiritual strength.

*If you put so much effort into a holy task that you literally sweat, you will be able to experience true joy.

*It is a wonderful thing when people dance for joy for the sake of a mitzvah! There are times when it is a mitzvah to drink some wine – on Shabbat or Yom Tov, or at a wedding, or other religious celebrations. If you drink on such occasions, your intention should be for the sake of Heaven. Drink moderately, and not to excess, with the purpose of experiencing the true joy of Israel, which is to rejoice in G-d who chose us from all other nations. As your joy begins to radiate, it will spread to your legs and you will literally begin to dance for joy. This will banish the evil forces of the Other Side, which grips the legs. The fire with which we dance is “a fire offering, a sweet savor to the L-rd” (BaMidbar, 28:8). But when one dances in the heat of the evil inclination, it is a “strange fire” (Vayikra, 10:1), and the wine which he drinks is the “wine of drunkenness,” which gives a hold to the forces of the Other Side.

*The music of one who is truly G-d fearing can help you to be happy. It has the power to break the force of fantasy. You will be able to focus your thoughts on the World to Come and to understand the hints which G-d sends you constantly each day in order to draw you closer to Him.

*If you are joyous it will bring you to new horizons in Torah.

*The holiness of the Land of Israel has the power to break the force of depression.

*A person who examines and judges himself over everything he does thereby frees himself from the harsh judgments

that were weighing upon him. He will be so happy that he will literally dance for joy.

*Once a person decides to be pure and devote himself to serving G-d, it is a very big sin if he allows himself to be depressed. Because G-d hates depression.

*There are times when the only way to make yourself happy is by doing something silly or making jokes. There are so many troubles that people have to go through physically and spiritually – trying to make a living, etc. etc. – that the only way they can make themselves happy is by doing something silly and acting a bit crazy. The whole vitality of the body and the soul depend on being happy. And in the worlds above, great unifications are brought about through the joy of the spirit.

*It is a great mitzvah to always be happy. Be determined to keep away from depression, and aim to be happy constantly. Happiness is the remedy for all kinds of diseases, because many illnesses are caused by depression. You must be resourceful in order to make yourself happy. Often you must do something a little bit crazy in order to make yourself happy.

*To find true joy is the hardest thing of all. It is harder than all other spiritual tasks. You must literally force yourself to be happy at all times. Put all of your energy into it. Use every kind of ploy. Often the only way is by doing something foolish or childish.

*Most of all you must be happy while you are praying. Be sure to always pray with joy. The same applies with carrying out the mitzvoth. You should be especially joyous on Shabbat and Yom Tov. Even on weekdays it is a great mitzvah to be happy.

*It is a great thing to bring joy to the heart of your fellow Jews. Most people are full of pain or worry and all kinds of troubles, and they find it impossible to speak out what is in their hearts. Someone who comes with a smiling face can literally give them fresh life. This is a very great thing. When you make another person happy, you are literally giving new life to a Jewish soul.

Chodesh tov!