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Simcha and Sasson

The days of Purim are called days of *mishteh* (festivity) and *simcha* (happiness). What is a *mishteh*, and what is a *simcha*?

The Gemara (*Sukkah 56b*) says that *Sasson* and *Simcha* (two kinds of happiness) had an argument about who comes first. *Simcha* said that it came before *Sasson*, because it is written, “*To the Jews there was orah, simcha and sasson*”; by Purim, the possuk writes “*simcha*” before “*sasson*.”

Sasson is associated with water. On the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah*, they would celebrate the *nisuch hamayim*, the one time of the year in which they would pour water on the *Mizbeiach*. About this there is a possuk, “*And they draw water with sasson*.”

Simcha is associated with wine – “*And wine gladdens the heart of man*.”

What was created first – water or wine? We know that water was created first. This shows us that normally, *sasson* comes before *simcha*. But on Purim, *simcha* came before *sasson*.

What is *simcha*, and what is *sasson*?

Intrinsic Happiness Before The Increase Of Happiness

This has to do with the difference between *mishteh* and *simcha*. There is a *simcha* which comes before a *mishteh*, and there is a *simcha* which comes after a *mishteh*.

Sasson is a joy upon completion. *Sasson* comes from the word *sheish*, “six.” When the world was finished being created on the sixth day, there was a joy in creation – a *sasson*. When creation became complete, there was a happiness just with the very existence of creation.

Simcha is a happiness that comes after that. When one has joy from existence, he has *sasson*. When one adds onto that happiness, he has *simcha*. *Simcha* is when we add onto our intrinsic happiness – when we increase our already existing happiness.

Simcha adds onto *Sasson*. The entire idea of *Simcha* is to add onto the happiness of our existence, which is *Sasson*. Thus, there has to first be *Sasson* in order to have *Simcha*.

In order for a person to increase his happiness, he first needs to be happy with the fact that he exists. On top of your intrinsic happiness you are able to add onto that more happiness, but there has to be first be a happiness in yourself in order for you to increase it.

If a person attempts to have *simcha* by trying to increase his happiness, but he isn't yet happy with the fact that he exists, then he will not be able to have *simcha*. You can only add onto your happiness if there is a happiness already there to begin with! This is why *sasson* must come before *simcha*. First you have to be happy with the mere fact that you exist, and then you can increase your happiness.

When people just try to increase their happiness but they're not happy with themselves to begin with, it is a foolish and superficial kind of happiness.

Purim - Above Your Existence

But on Purim, it is the other way around: *simcha* comes before *sasson*. On Purim, *simcha* is mentioned in the possuk before it mentions *sasson*; this shows us that on Purim we need to have something that comes even before *sasson*. On Purim, we need to find a *simcha* which comes even before *sasson*.

If *sasson* is the happiness of one's very existence, what can come before this? What comes before your existence?

We know that there are certain creations which were created even before Hashem created the universe. One of them was the Torah. On Purim, when the Jewish people accepted the Torah again anew, it was really an acceptance of the Torah of before creation. This is an example of something that came before existence.

What is this power that is "before" your existence? How can anything else come before something exists?

One way we see this is in the future happiness, which is "*The righteous rejoice in Hashem*". The happiness in Hashem alone is a kind of happiness that is before I exist; such a happiness existed before I exist, and this will be again revealed in the future.

There is another way to arrive at the *simcha* which comes before *sasson*. Purim is about totally nullifying one's *Daas* - we can see this from the *halachah* that a person has to get drunk on Purim until he has no more *Daas*.

This is how one experiences a happiness that is above his existence - when one nullifies his very self to the Creator.