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## Getting to Know Your Simcha - 001 Adar: The Depth of Laughter

### **Sechok - Holy Laughter**

The *halachah* is that “when the month of Adar enters, we increase our happiness”.

Each month of the year has its own unique Avodah (way of serving the Creator) special for that month. The month of Adar is a time of *simcha* happiness, which the holy *sefarim* say is the type of *simcha* known as *sechok* -- “laughter”. Our Avodah in the month of Adar is to have *sechok* – “laughter.”

When a person laughs, what he is basically doing is revealing his happiness outward. When a person is happy inside but he doesn’t laugh, his happiness remains in his heart and it isn’t expressed outwardly. But when a person laughs, he has an outward expression of happiness – he brings up the happiness from inside his heart to his mouth, where he laughs from.

*Simcha* is of happiness which has more to do with the heart. We find *simcha* associated with song, which is a really an inner expression of happiness. “There is no song except over wine.” Wine is also associated with happiness, because it is written, “*And wine gladdens the heart of man.*” *Simcha* is an internal happiness, an inner song, which is not expressed outwardly.

But *sechok* is through the mouth. “It is prohibited for one to fill his mouth with *sechok* (laughter) on this world.”

The increase of happiness during the month of Adar is to reveal the happiness outward from within our heart. This is *sechok* – laughter, which is an open revelation of our happiness.

What exactly is our power of *sechok*? How do we serve the Creator using laughter? Usually it is only foolish and immature people who we can see laughing all the time. But laughter can also be used for holiness.

### **Making Fun of Idols and Heresy**

What is this holy kind of laughter? An example of this is what the Gemara says that is permissible to make fun of idol worship.

On a simple level, it appears that when we are supposed to make fun of something, such as scoffing

at idol worship and heresy, that we are using the same laughter we all know of, but that we are just using it for a holy purpose. But on a deeper understanding, the holy kind of laughter is a whole different kind of laughter than the one we know of.

There is holy laughter, and there is the laughter of fools. In the future, the non-Jews will want to keep the *mitzvah* of *sukkah*, but they will kick it over; Hashem will laugh at them. This is the root of the holy kind of laughter – Hashem Himself laughs.

### **Evil Laughter**

But the foolish kind of laughter is a base kind of laughter, in which a person just laughs in order to nullify someone else. This is because *sechok* comes from the word *soichek*, “grinding”. When a person grinds something, he is trying to nullify it and erase its existence.

People who laugh at others for the wrong reasons are laughing at them in order to nullify them. This is the evil kind of laughter, which is the laughter of fools. The Gemara also states that the “spleen laughs.” The base kind of laughter which is used to hurt other people is rooted in the spleen inside the body; the holy kind of laughter does not come from this.

### **Laughing Upon Seeing The Future In The Present**

What is the depth of holy laughter?

There is a story in the Gemara (*Makkos 24b*) that Rebbi Akiva and his colleagues were walking on the site of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. Every one cried – except for Rebbi Akiva, who was laughing! They asked him why he is laughing. He said that he is laughing because just as the prophecy of the destruction was fulfilled, so will the end of the prophecy be fulfilled – that the *Beis Hamikdash* will be rebuilt.

This is the holy kind of “*sechok*” – a holy kind of laughter. It is a laughter upon being content, specifically because a person sees the future in the present and thus has no reason to be sad.

Here we see what holy *sechok* is. Laughter\sechok can be identified with seeing the future in the present. This causes a reason to laugh – when one sees the future right now, he sees that there’s nothing to be sad about because it will turn out good anyway, so he just laughs.

Since Rebbi Akiva saw how the future was being fulfilled, he was able to be happy now even in the present moment – and thus he laughed. This is really the depth behind the laughter – it is to feel the future in the present, which makes a person content and laugh off the problems.

### **Purim Is Redemption Now**

This is also the happiness of Purim and the month of Adar – that the future Redemption is already taking place in the present. When the Jewish people thought it was their end, it was a really a continuation of their survival. This is the laughter of Adar and Purim – what we think is the worst thing possible is actually our salvation.

Haman tried to destroy us using the evil kind of *sechok* -- trying to nullify our existence. On Purim, we use the holy kind of *sechok* and laugh at this.

The depth behind the happiness in the month of Adar and Purim is that the future good which we will have is really happening right now. During the rest of the year, we are within the bounds of time – there is a past, present and future. But in the month of Adar, there is a unique revelation taking place: there is no time! It’s all happening now – the past, the present and future are all contained in right

now.

Thus, we have a reason to celebrate the future Redemption even now. Purim is a taste of the future Redemption, and thus Purim is to essentially experience the future Redemption even now -- causing reason for happiness.

Now, we can really understand the depth behind *sechok*, the power of holy "laughter" in our soul.

The Gemara (*Megillah 14a*) states that "we are still slaves of Achashveirosh." What is the whole redemption of Purim if we were still considered enslaved to Achashveirosh?!

The answer is the following deep point. On Purim, we experienced a whole different kind of redemption than the redemption we experienced from Egypt. On Pesach, we left Egypt. On Purim, we left the present moment - even though the redemption wasn't here yet. We experienced the redemption even in the present!

On Purim, there is a redemption taking place in the present moment. It is *sechok* - that even though it appears to us that we are not yet redeemed, we really are. There is a *netzach netzachim*, an eternity, that we can experience right now in the present moment - on Purim.

### **Drinking On Purim - Outwardly Showing the Happiness**

*Sechok* laughter is to be so elated that one wants to express the happiness outward. When a person laughs, he is so happy that he reveals it outward.

This is the happiness we reach on Purim -- *sechok*, an open kind of happiness which we express.

On Purim, we accepted the Torah again, and this time it was willingly. "They kept and accepted what they already accepted."

Purim is a time to make a new commitment to the Torah, to accept it out of love.

The answer is that because we are so happy, we want to express it outwardly, in the form of *sechok*. This is why Chazal commanded us to drink on Purim - so we should express openly our happiness and reveal it outward.

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