

**RAV'S QUESTION**

What is a person's natural mood – to be happy (*b'simchah*), or to be sad (*atzuv*)? Without considering other possible factors that take away a person's happiness - what is a person's natural state? What is the source of our sadness, and what is the source of our happiness?

RAV'S ANSWER

The source of sadness is clearly explained to us by our Sages. All sadness came onto the world as a result of the first sin of mankind. After the sin, Adam was cursed with the pain (*"etzev"*, which comes from the word *"atzvus"*, sadness) of hard work, and Chavah was also cursed with *"etzev"*, with the pains of child labor. If not for the first sin, it wouldn't be possible for people to become sad.

RAV'S QUESTION

Let's say a person has a child after waiting twenty years for a child. He is ecstatic, but why?

RAV'S ANSWER

It's not just because he has a child. It is because he waited so long. From here we can see that happiness depends on being aware of your journey toward whatever it is that you wanted to achieve. This is called a *tahalich* – a "journey". We must always see the *tahalich* we are on, if we ever wish to be happy.

RAV'S QUESTION

What does it mean that a person is happy when he achieves something?

RAV'S ANSWER

If you think about it, it's not really a happiness that comes from getting what he wanted. It is really because he breathes a sigh of relief: "It's finally over."

Happiness is really to be happy with whatever it was that brought me to my happiness. How do we know this? Happi-

ness is the opposite of sadness. Sadness is when a person puts in effort and doesn't see results; a person is very sad when he fails after trying so hard to get something. If that is sadness, then happiness, which is the opposite of this, is the other way around: when a person is happy with doing something that brought him to what he wanted.

So happiness is not experienced when I get what I wanted; it is more about getting to what I want. Sadness, by contrast is when I don't see results, and thus all my efforts are in vain – which makes me sad. (If I wouldn't base my happiness on results, I wouldn't be sad, because I could just appreciate my efforts.)

This is why it is not possible in this world to be totally happy, because all of us have some fruitless efforts; this makes us partially sad, even though we have other achievements. *Chazal* praise a person who "rejoices in his suffering". The depth of this is that a person rejoices in the path he is on, which is that he is on his way toward being healed. It's not that he has to enjoy his suffering for the sake of suffering; it is rather that he is happy because he recognizes that he is on a certain path (the road to his recovery, which may involve some suffering).

RAV'S QUESTION

Many times you can ask a person, "Why are you happy?" and he says, "I don't know..."

RAV'S ANSWER

Is such a person happy because he's such a 'happy go lucky' person that everything makes him so happy? That isn't the reason for his response. It is simply that he isn't aware to what makes him happy, and that's why he doesn't know if he's happy.

The only way to be happy on this world is, to be aware as you're doing something that will lead to your happiness. If you are aware what makes you happy (and you are involved in trying to achieve it), then you can be happy, but if you're not aware as to what makes you happy, then you won't achieve

happiness. If you are aware that you are on the way toward happiness (and you're doing something to get there) you will be able to be happy. But if you're not aware, then even when you get what you want and you're happy, your happiness goes away as soon as whatever you get is no longer here anymore.

You must be aware to what makes you happy, and what makes you sad. This awareness is part of our journey toward happiness, and it has a lot to do with how you are happy or sad.

RAV'S QUESTION

What does a person do when he is happy?

RAV'S ANSWER

He dances. He dances with his feet.

The depth behind this is that happiness is when we move. It's not like how we are used to thinking, that we can only be happy when we arrive at what we want. Really, happiness is when we are happy with the very steps, we are taking in order to get there. Thus, if we don't have this awareness, we won't be happy, because our whole happiness can only come from appreciating how we're moving towards it.

We are used to thinking that one can only be happy when he gets his results, and what he did to get there is meaningless; the main thing if he achieved or not. The usual mindset of people is to only value achievement, while efforts alone are regarded as meaningless. The truthful perspective, however, is that a person can only be happy with what he achieved only when he is aware with what he did to get there. Great achievements alone do bring one to have happiness.

Only when we realize our efforts – as we are trying to achieve - will we be able to appreciate our achievements are receive happiness from them.

RAV'S QUESTION

Why is it that people today can't deal with struggles?

RAV'S ANSWER

It is because people seek *menuchah* (serenity), and they erroneously think that *menuchah* means physical comfort. If people want their bodies to be physically comfortable, though, this contradicts happiness. Seeking to be comfort-

able is really inviting a lot of unhappiness – someone who's pampered and spoiled and has no interest in ever dealing with a challenge cannot ever be happy.

Seeking *menuchas hanefesh* – serenity of the soul – is something else, though. Seeking *menuchas hanefesh* doesn't contradict happiness, and it can only aid one in becoming happy.

Really what we need to do is have physical exertion, together with serenity in our soul. We need serenity, but we should only seek serenity in our soul – *menuchas hanefesh*. We shouldn't be seeking *menuchas haguf*, physical comfort; the Mesillas Yesharim writes that man was not created for comfort. It is really when we have physical exertion, together with a calm soul, that we can have happiness.

Most of the happiness that people look for today is based on results, and they never look back to see what they have done so far that was positive.

This is why we can see certain people who change their kolel or chavrusa every other *zman* (season) in yeshiva; they never reflected on what they had to begin with, so they never enjoy the work they put in, and thus they always end up seeking something else. If a person would begin learning in his Kolel or with his new chavrusa with an appreciation of the new challenge it represents, he would see himself entering a *tahalich* – and he would be able to find happiness, feeling content in what he has.

RAV'S QUESTION

All of us have to go through a certain amount of problems in our life; that is why we are all here. That is how life is. But the question is: what are the things that bother us?

RAV'S ANSWER

If our suffering is spiritual – “Praiseworthy is the man who suffers...and from Your Torah we are taught”, then our suffering revolves around our learning of the Torah, and such suffering comes from the element of wind, which is spirituality. Such problems are the problems we should be bothered about.

What really bothers us in our life? If soul matters are important to us and we have pain with our spiritual struggles, we can arrive at true happiness.

Happiness – after the sin of Adam – is rooted in the element of wind. In order to be happy, we need to give ourselves an increase of “wind” - in other words, we need to search for more “wind”, for more spiritual growth. Therefore, the more we will search to improve ourselves spiritually, the more happiness we give ourselves.

RAV'S QUESTION

Why do most people fear death?

RAV'S ANSWER

It is because most people think that they are a body, and that everything in life centers around what will happen to their body. For someone who lives for his body, it is indeed very scary to think about death: “What happens to me when I die? My body is no more....”

Everyone wants to live, but from where does this desire come from? It is usually because people think they are a body, and so there is a great fear of death. The “will to live” comes from the body.

Really, the will to live is a power rooted in the soul; the soul has a desire for life, but it desires a life of spirituality; it wants true *chiyus* (vitality). The body, which covers over our soul, misuses this power to have a will for physical interests.

RAV'S QUESTION

What is happiness of the body?

RAV'S ANSWER

Anything which comes from an external factor – and on a more subtle note, even if it is a spiritual kind of desire – is only happiness of our body. This is because if we don't consider it to be our will for vitality, then it is just happenstance to us, and it will not give us vitality (even if is spiritual pleasure). Happiness can only come from our will to sustain our soul.

Everyone wants to live, but the question is what kind of life do people want: to be physically healthy - or to have spiritual vitality?

The true happiness one can have is not the regular kind of happiness we know of. Most people are looking for all kinds of fun and entertainment, because they think that this is happiness. But it's really a form of sadness. In fact, most people never even once experienced true happiness.

RAV'S QUESTION

How can a person have this vitality every day?

RAV'S ANSWER

One way is through producing Chiddushei Torah (new Torah thoughts) every day. This enables one to feel this spiritual burst of vitality we are talking about. But what if a person is not on the level of coming up with Chiddushei Torah every day? How can he get spiritual vitality on a daily basis?

Here is something everyone can do, no matter what level you are on. Every person must at least seek a more spiritual kind of life, and to want to add onto his spirituality every day. In order to do this, one has to listen to what's going on in his soul - and he can then hear his soul's longing for spirituality. He should listen to the subtle voice in his soul which is longing for more spirituality, and become attuned to this inner longing.

With the more one becomes attuned to the soul's voice that is calling out to him, the more he will demand more *chiyus* for himself. This is something that is within reach to anyone, and the more a person is aware of it, the more he will demand from himself to add onto his spiritual vitality every day. This is a great key toward happiness: to constantly seek to add onto to your spiritual vitality, each day.

RAV'S QUESTION

A person comes to a joyous occasion, (such as a wedding), but he doesn't feel happy. What should he do?

RAV'S ANSWER

He needs to awaken his inner happiness through festivity, and that will bring out his inner happiness.

On Yom Tov, we know that we have an inner happiness, and besides for this there is also a time of happiness in the air; it is “*zman simchaseinu*”, a “time of our happiness”. The time of Yom Tov itself is a reality of happiness. But we usually don't feel this happiness – why not?

It is because our body covers over our soul, and this prevents us from feeling our inner happiness. What can we do about this? This is really why we have meat and wine on Yom Tov. We make the body happy – and through that, we get to our soul.

The whole purpose of meat and wine on Yom Tov is not a purpose of itself. It is there to awaken in us the inner happiness; when we loosen our body, by making it happy through the effects of the wine, we are enabled to penetrate past the body's hold and then tap into our happiness that is in the soul.

RAV'S QUESTION

When we feel happy, let us ask ourselves: "Why am I happy? Is my body happy – or is it my soul that is happy?"

How indeed can we know if our happiness is coming from our body or from our soul?

RAV'S ANSWER

Happiness of the body is when a person loosens up and acts silly (*holelus*), which is not real happiness. It might look like happiness, but let us explain why it isn't, and what it really means to be happy.

Most people [sadly], have not yet revealed their souls. People are usually more aware of their body than their soul, so the happiness that most people look for is happiness of the body. Since this is so, the actual search for happiness that people have comes from the body's hold!

This is because the body itself has a tendency toward sadness. We see that people get sadder more easily than they become happy, because since we have a body, the body has a natural pull toward sadness, and this makes us "search" for happiness.

Why is our body pulled toward sadness? It is because the body was made from the earth; the element of earth in a person is the source of sadness. We can see clearly that most people are searching for happiness, and that they are searching for physical happiness – comfort or indulgence.

Each person needs to clarify for himself: "From where does my happiness come from? Am I mainly getting happiness from physical pleasures - or from spirituality?"

You must know that if you are searching for happiness of the body, it will never bring you happiness – and it will only bring more destruction to your life.

RAV'S QUESTION

What is happiness of the soul?

RAV'S ANSWER

Happiness is not solely about what I gain and achieve, but it is about what I overcame in order to get there. (The gain is necessary for our happiness too, but when we achieve it, the happiness we have is coming from our efforts we put in to get there).

Our body, by contrast, is only interested in results. Our body's happiness thrives on results; it is not satisfied with effort alone. This resembles what is written, "Eat and drink today, for tomorrow we shall die."

RAV'S QUESTION

"Am I doing things that are 'me'? Or am I doing things that are not really 'me'?"

RAV'S ANSWER

If a person does something and it makes him sad afterwards, it is because he isn't connected to what he does, and therefore he is too caught up in the physical aspect of the action. This causes sadness, because all actions (without awareness) cause sadness, since they cause a person to become too involved in the physical aspect of their actions.

To illustrate, man was cursed with labor, which was in essence a curse of sadness upon the world, by the very fact that now he would have to be very involved with physical labor.

To try to work on becoming more aware of your actions and to feel more connected to what you do, when you walk to shul in the morning to *daven*, you can think for a few seconds: "Why am I walking to shul right now?" Become aware as you are walking that you are walking because you are going to daven.

Start becoming more aware of every action you do – why you are doing, and when you are doing it. This awareness will enable you to become connected to what you do, and when you become connected to the mitzvos, you will be able to receive happiness from doing the *mitzvah*.