

B”H

UNLEASH THE REDEMPTIVE POWER OF JOY

BEGIN WITH A GRIN

In Chelm the law was you were not allowed to tell jokes to people on Shabbos.

Why?

Because it's considered preparing for after Shabbos; they first would 'get' the jokes on Sunday ...

JOY IN ADVANCE

This week, we will focus more on the events of Shabbos than on the laws and story of the parsha. The way parshas Ki Seitzei comes out this year is on 14 Elul, the most auspicious day to serve Hashem ... with joy! You're probably wondering, how so exactly?

First of all, from this day and on we learn the halachos of Succos ("thirty days before the holiday"). Succos is also called "the Time of Our Rejoicing." It's a double-joy; the happiness of the Jewish people with G-d and G-d's happiness with us. If, from this day and on, we begin to study the laws of the holiday then, likewise, we are enjoined to rejoice and start to feel the upcoming days of joy. All the more so when the upcoming year is a year in which the Hakhel gathering is meant to take place on Succos, symbolizing the unity and wholeness of the Jewish people which only adds to and intensifies the joy.

We, as Chabad Chassidim, know that erev Shabbos, 13 Elul, is the anniversary of the Rebbe Rayatz in 5657. The significance of the day takes on greater force this year since it comes out the way it did originally (then too, 13 Elul was on Friday). A wedding of any individual Jew is one of the greatest joys (if not the greatest), and especially when we are talking about a Nasi b'Yisrael, "the Nasi is all," then this is the joy of the entire Jewish people as a nation and of every Jew as an individual.

This is true for every Nasi and mainly regarding the anniversary of the Rebbe Rayatz since, at his wedding, his father, the Rebbe Rashab, began saying a long series of maamarim (which extends in print over a hundred pages ...) known as "Samayach Tisamach." In it, he explains the importance of joy and its endless power in avodas Hashem. Actually, the famous Chassidic aphorism, "*simcha poretz geder*" is sourced in this hemshech.

At a remarkable farbrengen in 5748, which came out the same way as this Shabbos, the Rebbe devoted the entire farbrengen to the topic of simcha and the deep connection between simcha and bringing the Geula.

First of all, one of the highlights of the Geula is, without a doubt, joy! The prophet Yeshaya expresses this with these words (35:10), "And the redeemed of Zion shall return, and they shall come to Tziyon with song, with everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall achieve gladness and joy, and sadness and sighing shall flee." The return to Tziyon is the reason for joy. It's an everlasting joy the likes of which we don't have in this world. It's such an intense joy that the only thing we can compare it to in our frame of reference is a wedding!

In the sheva brachos we compare (as part of a request and prayer) the joy of marriage to the joy of Adam in Gan Eden before the sin, and to the joy of the Geula ("Grant abundant joy ... as You bestowed gladness upon Your created being in the Garden of Eden of old," "let there speedily ... the sound of joy and the sound of happiness ... the sound of exultation of grooms from under their chuppah"). With this, we want to emphasize and highlight the intense powers contained within the power of joy.

Joy gives a person freedom and emancipation; joy liberates us from tension and inner and/or outer pressure. Joy

causes us to feel like in “Gan Eden,” and joy is a taste of the Geula, personal and collective, from everything that confuses or disturbs.

BREAK OUT IN JOY

The comparison of joy and the Geula is intensified all the more when we notice that Moshiach (like simcha) is called “poretz,” for being a descendant of Peretz, son of Yehuda, who was the ancestor of Dovid HaMelech, and because of his main job, to break forth and do away with the limitations of exile. This is also what joy is about, as mentioned before.

The Rebbe made a new and interesting suggestion. He said that we have already tried everything, there have been numerous farbrengens, the wellsprings have been spread since the time of the Baal Shem Tov, Tehillim has been copiously said, and tzedaka has been given in abundance (though, it is always good to give more). So perhaps the time has come to try something new, something that wasn’t tried before ... What is that? Haven’t we done everything?

“The thing that still wasn’t done to bring Moshiach is the desired avoda of simcha specifically to bring Moshiach. This is not regular simcha as in “serve G-d with joy,” because when it’s “simcha shel mitzva,” the emphasis is on the mitzva, the service of G-d which derives from the feeling of joy. The joy itself becomes secondary, peripheral, as a tool to reach the goal, and a means to an end.

“What is demanded of us, starting from now, 14 Elul, is ‘pure joy,’ the avoda of joy for one reason only – to bring the Geula!”

If this connection between Moshiach, Geula and joy is so clear and so obvious, written in the prophets, referred to in the sheva brachos, etc. how is it that we did not pay attention to this sooner?

The simple answer, says the Rebbe, is that when you are in the dark, you don’t see the light, even if it is close ... And when you are sorrowful, you don’t feel the power of joy, even if it is around the corner. In the darkness and pain of exile, it is hard to demand, hard to understand, and hard to feel the vital power of joy. This is why Jews in earlier generations did not try this well paved road but in our generation, the Rebbe promises us, “try it and see!” If we increase “pure joy,” we will soon merit the coming of Moshiach and the Geula.

On another occasion, in connection with Simchas Beis HaShoeiva, the Rebbe said that if someone will come and ask, “Why are you so happy?” you should answer, “Didn’t you hear? It’s already in the newspapers that Moshiach is coming any minute!”

At the end of that uplifting farbrengen, the Rebbe began his father’s Hakafos Niggun, stood up, and began to dance with great joy.

TO CONCLUDE WITH A STORY (PLUS ONE)

We will end with a story that Rabbi Yekusiel Rapp a’h, director of the Matteh Shira v’Zimra, an organization he began in 5752 following another sicha about the power of simcha to nullify all negative things, would tell.

On 3 Av 5754, a month after Gimmel Tammuz, there was an event to express gratitude for the doctors in 770. Present were Dr. Feldman a’h and Dr. Eli Rosen, who was also asked to speak. On that occasion he said that once, the Rebbe called him over in the early days of the health crisis in 5752 and mumbled several sentences that he could not make out, but there were two words he heard clearly. Those two words were “shira v’zimra, shira v’zimra!”

This happened dozens of times in those years. He could not hear or understand the other words but the phrase “shira v’zimra” was clear. Based on this testimony, these were the last words we heard from the Rebbe and therefore

they are the call of the hour. It is interesting to note that on Thursday, 30 Adar 5752, a few days after the stroke on 27 Adar, there was a siyum of Rambam in 770. Rabbi Groner a'h, the Rebbe's secretary, could be heard from the Rebbe's room saying that he had just heard from the Rebbe, "*Tihiyeh refuah kerova b'rov shira v'zimra.*"

We will end with a terrible but uplifting story that I heard recently. It was Simchas Torah during the Holocaust and yeshiva bachurim along with simple Jews were taken to the gas chamber. One of the bachurim urged his friends to start dancing! After all, it was Simchas Torah and they hadn't yet done hakafos.

Without a Sefer Torah (because every Jew is a Sefer Torah), without a bima, without an aron, without a shul, he began to dance and even got some friends to join him. One of the cursed SS officers saw this and screamed, "Quiet!" But the bachur didn't stop. He courageously said to the officer, "We are rejoicing over being able to part from this world which has evil people like you and because in another moment we will be meeting our parents and families that you sent above, from here."

The officer was furious and he shouted at the group of boys, "Then I won't allow you to rejoice! Get out of here! I'll deal with you tomorrow!"

That evening, motzoei Simchas Torah, an order came from Wehrmacht command in Berlin for the officer to come right away. He was transferred to a distant camp and that is how, through joy, those bachurim were saved from death.

Good Shabbos!