

THE CHAFETZ CHAIM'S FEAR

I wanted to test-drive this article with a mother of children; at first, she said she didn't want to hear anything about it. But, in the end, she was happy she listened...

I started with the Rambam. השמחה שישמה אדם בעשיית המצוה ובאהבת הא-ל שצוה בהן עבודה גדולה היא וכל המונע עצמו משמחה זו ראוי להפרע ממנו שנאמר תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב The happiness with which a person performs a Mitzvah and his love of G-d Who commanded it, is a great "avoda", G-d's service. Anyone who refrains from this delight is to be punished! Our Parasha gives the reason for punishments; *Because you did not serve YHVH, your G-d, with happiness and a good heart* (Lulav 8;15). For getting the Mitzvah over with, and off our "to-do" list (see Maggid Mishna).

The Chafetz Chaim's grandson said that his grandfather was not as worried about punishment for his sins as he was about punishment for not having performed Mitzvoth with the love, joy and passion that they deserve.

"No! Stop! I learnt in seminary; but now my husband is learning full time. I am the breadwinner, nurse, wife, housecleaner, with another zillion roles, chores, and responsibilities! I don't have time to daven and learn as I did in sem. Punished for not doing mitzvoth with my whole heart? My husband and kids can learn and pray with a whole heart! I don't have the time or energy!"

I said to her, "Hashem will not punish you for not learning or praying with your whole heart, because that is not your Tafkaid- your spiritual mission at this stage in life. Your Tafkaid is to be the best mother you can be! Changing a diaper is no less service of G-d than the Kohen Gadol offering Ketoret on Yom Kippur! (This is something I was taught by R Yehuda Ades, Shlita). Do you feel joy when you change a diaper? Do you feel like a zillion dollars when you help your husband and your kids go out to learn? That is your Olam Haba!

I remember the time when a yeshiva boy came to me for help. Once, a kid offered him drugs. He got hooked, became a dealer. At the age 17, he was in yeshiva in Israel. He came to me after the yeshiva discovered his secret. He opened up to me. He hates himself. He hates his parents. He hates life. He feels that G-d is going to punish him for all he has done wrong. I listened and listened. Then I asked him, what do you think is the worst thing you ever did, that you will be punished for?

He said "A". I said, no. "B" - Nope. "C"? Nope. Still worse. He asked me what gets the biggest punishment. I said - you never enjoyed the life that G-d gives you. תחת אשר לא עבדת את ה' אלוקיך בשמחה ובטוב לבב מרב כל He was quiet. For a long time. He asked me, "G-d wants me to enjoy life? More than punishing me for sinning, He will punish me for not being happy, appreciative and serving Him?" I said, that's right. He was quiet. He decided to go to a yeshiva that deals with dealers, and he changed his life. Completely.

We all want to serve G-d with our whole heart, to be great men and women. Probably, for a frum Jew, the hardest question to answer today is, Are you happy to be frum? Yes or No. Frum is not just being part of a system of rules and regulations that you were brought up with. Are you happy to have to get up early enough to pray and say Shema with all your heart? Happy to spend fortunes on your kids' tuition? To be limited on the internet? To give tzeddaka, to say Birkat Hamazon, put on Tefillin, wear Tzitzit? To keep Shabbat? To stay away from the fun and luxury this world has to offer and learn Torah instead? Happy with all that? Yes, or no?

The truth is that this is not one time, yes or no question. It is what you face each time Judaism conflicts with your lifestyle. Each time it challenges your entire belief system. A man facing a very difficult dilemma asked me for advice. I do not wish such a problem on my worst enemy. "My 19-year-old son told me that he does not want to keep Shabbat." That is a rough one!! Many parents faced with that nightmare, bark back, "Shabbos!!!!??? Mechalel Shabbat!!!! Skilah, Karet! I will take you out of my will!!!!" I do not blame them; it's a scenario that can bring on a heart attack, and I do not wish it on my worst enemy.

Barking, of course, does not work. I believe the response should be, "It pains me greatly to hear that my child, who I love so much, is going to miss out on G-d's biggest gift!!! Shabbat is the greatest thing in my life!!!" What G-d cares most about is our love in serving Him, our love and joy for Shabbat, more than Shabbat, itself. And the kids see that in their parents. They feel it. They smell it. They hear it. And this is the make-it or break-it point. Lots of talking, convincing, manipulating, doesn't help. Kids don't learn from words. They are much more tuned in to the other five senses: what they see, feel, smell and taste. Do you give them the taste of Shabbat? Do they smell spirituality in your home, in the simchas you make? Do they feel your love for your religion, or only your sacrifice for it?

Love of the mitzvah is part of the Mitzvah. It is the key ingredient, and that is why the lack of it calls

for punishment. Excitement, enthusiasm are the sign that you want Hashem as your G-d. It's all about your happiness, doing the Mitzvah. The Arizal learnt from the end of this passuk, מרב כל, that the Mitzvah's worth in your eyes and how bad you feel on missing out when not able to do the Mitzvah is supposed to be of greater value than all the money in the world!

Close to when the Digital Age began, a new "Judaism" started to take a powerful form. It is The Zombie Jewish. The Army of the Dead. Look into their eye, when they have to keep the 613, and you see something dark and distant. Something is wrong. It's scary. Much is being said about hypocrisy in the frum world. Why is there so much hypocrisy? Why so much inconsistency? Why can't we enjoy the religion that we are giving up so much for? This is a question that bothers me to no end. Because it pains G-d to no end.

The Baal Shem Tov would say that the only way to get out of any problem you have in life is through simcha, כי בשמחה תצאון. Hidden in this passuk, are three secrets for how we can all tap into the love of the Mitzvah. פַּחַת אִשָּׁר לֹא-עֲבַדְתָּ אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה. לְפָנֶיךָ מֵרַב כָּל יְהוָה וּבְקִטּוֹב לְקַבֵּל מֵרַב כָּל פֶּה. The first is, *know who you are serving*. People forget to focus on Who they are serving, when serving G-d. As long as you are coming from a self-centered motive, you can never find serenity because you are not tapping into your spiritual purpose. Once, someone sent the Lubavitcher Rebbe a letter. "I have no parnassah. I have no shalom bayit. I have no motivation to learn, pray or do kindness. I can't seem to find my life's purpose. I would appreciate if the Rebbe would bless me and let me know what I am doing wrong." When he opened the reply, he saw that the Rebbe had sent him back the same letter, but he circled the first letter - I - of every sentence, in red. The problem is that "I" is the beginning of every statement in your life. So often, G-d offers us an opportunity to serve Him. We need to tap into our inner joy for being given that particular opportunity, even if it is not exactly what *we* want. We cannot compare our service to that of other people, because G-d gives each person something that is "tailor-made", just for him. Comparing our service to others is not serving G-d.

The next lesson in this passuk is, YHVH - G-d's Attribute of Mercy - is your G-d. Elokim is G-d's Attribute of Judgement. The only way you can learn to love G-d and serve Him with passion is if you recognize that all the hard things in life, all the Judgement, come from G-d's Mercy. This recognition is a "make-it or break-it", to be the Happy-to-Be-Frum Jew.

And the last lesson is, מרב כל. *A lot of everything.* To serve G-d with happiness, we need to believe

GO BIG OR GO HOME

We have a mitzvah to be happy with all the good that G-d gives us. ושמחת בכל הטוב אשר נתן לך ה' אלקיך. I always wondered why people who have more don't seem to be happier people.

My Rebbe taught me the following lesson. The world is split into two. People who are glad, and people who are sad. And the difference between the two is that the glad people focus on what they have. And the sad people are focusing on what they do not have. Half empty or half full.

This week's Parasha splits the world into another two. People who are frustrated and people who are satisfied. The difference between the two, is that the people who are frustrated, believe that their efforts decide what they will have, or what they won't have. As it says *עצביהם כסף וזהב מעשה ידי אדם*. The frustration (עצבים) is the result of the belief that gold and silver is the fruit of man's labor. (This is an original twist on the words.) And the people who are happy with what they have are those who realize that all the good they have is from G-d, ושמחת בכל הטוב אשר נתן לך ה' אלקיך, And you will rejoice with all the good. How? By realizing that G-d gave it to you (Roshei Besamim).

I met a close friend last week at the Waldorf Astoria in Jerusalem. I asked him what's doing. He said to me, You gotta hear what R' Loichter said in his schmooze last week.

that we have everything we need. Wanting more is endless. You will never have everything in this world. People who are able to serve G-d with love are those who say, if I do not have something, G-d does not want me to have it.

And, believe it or not, this is what Mashiach is waiting for. For us to learn to enjoy doing the Mitzvoth. The letters of משיח are the same letters as the word שמח! Just flipped around!

"חרטה, Regret, is not about feeling bad about the terrible things you've done. חרטה, Regret, is realizing how great you could have been."

In Elul, we could split the Yeshiva world into two: people who utilize Elul as a time to feel bad over all the sins done throughout the year, and people who utilize Elul as a time to think about the great Jew I could have been. The difference is how you look at yourself when you are about to start a New Year. Are you looking forward to realizing your potential, or are you looking at yourself as an object of contempt? This may be why it is inappropriate to mention sins on Rosh Hashana. Because we are in the making of the new you for the new year. We don't need objects of contempt for the new year. We need people who realize their potential.

Napoleon Hill, in his classic book, *Think and Grow Rich*, first published in 1937 and the forefather of most American self-help thought, gives us a concept that the way you think decides your fate. That rich people think like rich people, while poor people think like poor people. But Napoleon was preceded by our Talmud. *Rava told Rabah, son of Mari, From where is this wisdom of the adage, that riches go after the rich, and that poverty goes after the poor? He said to him that we see in our Mishnah, that when the rich brought their Bikurim fruits, their first fruits of the season, to the Kohen, they brought them in baskets of gold and silver, while the poor brought their Bikurim in*

woven baskets. After giving the basket and fruits to the Kohen, the rich would take their baskets back home, while the poor, who had to scrape together what little they had to purchase the woven baskets, needed to leave their baskets with the Kohen in Yerushalayim.

Napoleon writes that the first thing you need in order to become rich is to tap into your dreams and your desire. You need to think big to make it big. All self-made millionaires took that route. And it can't just be a desire. It's got to be a burning desire. You need to have your heart bleed for it.

I always teach my students that all the secrets of the self-made millionaire are the secrets of the self-made Talmid Chacham, or the self-made Tzaddik. There are only three books that are open on Rosh

Hashanah. Tzaddik, Rasha, and the undecided are suspended for judgement on Yom Kippur. If you want to be with the Tzaddikim, you need to think big. Like they say in business "Go big, or go home." Whatever you decide to do in life, do it par excellence. There is no place for the middle sized businesses. There is no book for the complacent Orthodox. A burning desire is the only way you can reach your potential next year, the only way you can make it into the book of Tzaddikim.

So, the first step in Elul is to realize who we really could be. To develop a desire for the "me of my dreams". And the next step is to focus on that desire long enough, until your desire becomes a burning desire. Because there are only two types of people in the world. Those who have a burning desire, and those whose desire burnt out.

SHABBAT SHALOM, YOSEF FARHI

To support this publication, or receive it by e-mail, please contact me.

rabbiyoseffarhi@gmail.com 0527679186

IN LOVING MEMORY OF SONNY AND IRENE GINDI A"H

Does learning or reading cause you fatigue?

Do you wish you could triple your learning speed, and cover 3 books in the time it presently takes you to finish one?

Is your time in the Beit Midrash important to you?

Do you wish you could remember your learning better?

Do you wish you could improve your listening in class, and improve your listening in conversations?

Does your mind wander too often while praying?

Do you hate tests?

Do you wish you were more focused while reading a book or sefer, especially Gemarra and text books?

If you said YES to any of these questions, Sign up NOW for a series of 4 one on one sessions with Rabbi Farhi for a subsidized fee!!

0527679186

JOIN FREE EFFECTIVE LEARNING WEBINAR THIS SUNDAY!!!!

SIGN UP AT YOSEFFARHI.COM TLC PAGE