

The Weekly Publication
for Every Jewish Person

גוסד תוך ימי השלושים

Dedicated to the memory of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson

"Unveil my eyes, that I may perceive the wonders of Your Torah." (Psalm 119:18)

L'Chaim



LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe
on the Torah portion

We are commanded to rejoice during the festivals. The rejoicing during the holiday of Sukkot reached its peak, in the times of the Holy Temple, in the unbounded joy of the water-drawing celebrations (*Simchat Beit HaShoeiva*).

During the year, many offerings on the altar were accompanied by a special pouring or libation of wine. On Sukkot, in addition to the regular wine-offering, there was also a unique pouring of water. At that time the assembled crowds broke into limitless, profound, ecstatic rejoicing which continued for three days, and of which the sages said, "Whoever has not seen the rejoicing of the water-drawing has never in his life seen true joy!"

The Sages chose their words with care. They are not merely telling a story, but giving a valuable lesson – that if one has not seen the rejoicing of the Water-drawing, although he may think he has at times participated in unbounded rejoicing, he is in error. His joyous experience was in fact a superficial one. For, since he has never witnessed the water-drawing, he is incapable of experiencing true joy. This is the full significance of the above statement.

What does true joy entail? It entails breaking one's own bounds and inhibitions, exceeding one's own limitations. At the wedding of an only child, a normally reticent and taciturn father may become a voluble and loquacious speaker. If a person has a rational, intelligent reason to be happy, then his happiness is limited by the extent of his understanding. But when he receives a reward or a gift that is "beyond his wildest dreams," that his intelligence could not possibly have foreseen, when he is moved by a cause that stems not merely from his understanding, but from his very essence and being... then the resultant joy is similarly boundless.

In Temple times, wine was used as a libation. It was water, though, which was the main ingredient of the water-drawing ceremony. Wine has a taste, a flavor; water has no intrinsic flavor. Wine and water have their equivalents in spiritual life. When one is motivated to serve G-d by intelligent reasoning and logic, such service is termed "wine"; one savors the "taste" or "reason" for doing the mitzva. Service impelled by a feeling of pure submissiveness to G-d, is called "water"; one cannot relish the "flavor" of rationality in such service.

Truly limitless joy cannot come as a result of one's understanding and intelligence – for they are limited. But when a person realizes that he himself is limited, finite, he nullifies himself, he neutralizes his ego. In a spirit of total submissiveness he becomes one with limitless G-d through the union of the mitzvah. Then he transcends his limitations and can serve G-d with truly boundless joy.

Whoever has not seen the rejoicing of the water-drawing, has never in his life seen true joy. Because the libation of water, as opposed to wine, symbolizes the quality of submissiveness as opposed to the intellect and rationality of wine.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Happy is as Happy Does

The holidays of Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah which, happily, are approaching, are referred to as, "the time of our rejoicing."

As such, let's take a look at some of the words of our Sages and Chasidic teachings about the importance of joy and happiness in our lives.

King David in Psalms advises us, "Serve G-d with joy, come before Him with jubilation."

The power of joy is unlimited, for, as stated in the Talmud, "Joy breaks all boundaries."

In addition, G-d attaches a great deal of importance to joy, for "The Divine Presence rests only upon one who performs a mitzva in a joyous spirit." (*Talmud*)

Simcha, joy, is one of the most essential elements of the Chasidic way of life.

In fact, in the early stages of the Chasidic movement, before the name "Chasidim" was coined, Chasidim were often referred to in Yiddish as "*di freilicha*," meaning, "the happy ones."

The Baal Shem Tov, founder of Chasidut, would say that sometimes, when the *Yetzer Hara* (the Evil impulse) tries to persuade a person to commit a sin, it does not care whether or not the person will actually sin. What it is looking for is that after sinning, the person will become depressed and overcome with sadness. In other words, the depression that follows the sin can cause more spiritual damage than the actual sin itself.

Rabbi Shlomo of Karlin taught that depression is considered the threshold of all evil. He said that although the 365 negative commandments do not include a commandment not to be depressed, the damage that sadness and depression can cause is worse than the damage that any sin can cause.

The Rebbe explained that if the Jewish people already begin now to rejoice in the Redemption, out of our absolute trust that G-d will speedily send us Moshiach, this joy in itself will (as it were), compel G-d to fulfill His children's wish and to redeem them from exile.

In Tanya, the basic work of Chabad Chasidic philosophy, Rabbi Shneur Zalman used the example of two wrestlers to describe the importance of joy:

"With a victory over a physical obstacle, such as in the case of two individuals who are wrestling with each other, each striving to throw the other – if one is lazy and sluggish he will easily be defeated and thrown, even though he be stronger than the other, exactly so it is in the conquest of one's evil nature; it is impossible to conquer it with laziness and heaviness, which originates in sadness and in a heart that is dulled like a stone, but rather with alacrity, which derives from joy and from a heart that is free and cleansed from any trace of worry and sadness. This is a cardinal principle."

A Chasid once wrote to the third Chabad Rebbe, the "Tzemach Tzedek," that he found it difficult to be happy. The Tzemach Tzedek advised him:

"Thought, speech and action are within one's control. A person must guard his thoughts and think only thoughts that bring joy; he should be cautious not to speak about sad or depressing matters; and he should behave as if he were very joyous, even if he doesn't feel especially happy. In the end, he will ultimately be joyous."

What can you do to help a friend out of a slump if he isn't too happy? Tell him some good news, as our Sages advised, for good news gladdens the heart and good tidings expand the mind. Happy holidays!

Part of this article excerpted from *The Chasidic Approach to Joy* by Rabbi Shloma Majeski.

SLICE OF LIFE

Samarkand

by Rabbi Hillel Zaltzman



Excerpted from Samarkand by Rabbi Hillel Zaltzman, the story of the Chabad Chassidic underground that operated in the Soviet Union.

On Sukkot, we were easily able to build sukkas in our yards. This was an accepted practice of all Bucharian Jews and the authorities didn't prevent it.

Sukkot presented us with but one major problem, and one which was quite severe – how to obtain an etrog. Of the Four Species customarily assembled and used for the festival – willow, myrtle, palm-frond and citron – finding the citron, or *etrog*, in that part of the world was always the greatest challenge. Some years were better, requiring less effort, and some years proved more difficult.

At times we had to suffice with just one etrog for the entire community, usually obtained at the last minute, with great difficulty, and at enormous cost.

I recall the days preceding Sukkot of the year 1949, during the frenzied years under Stalin. Sukkot was fast approaching and we lacked even a single etrog. Avrohom Borochoy, a wealthy man and a close acquaintance of the Chabad Chasidim in Samarkand, traveled to Moscow and purchased a single etrog for 10,000 rubles, a tremendous fortune at that time, paying for it entirely with his own money.

On the other hand, the palm leaves and myrtle sprigs were easy to come by, thanks to the devotion of young men who would travel to Georgia where these plants grew and return to Samarkand with a stash of

them. Willows, too, were not a problem, for they grew in abundance by the rivers near Samarkand.

At the end of the 1960s we were able to obtain etrogs more easily. The Rebbe would send a few of the precious fruits to Russia with tourists who would be traveling to Moscow and Tashkent during their trip. One can only imagine our great joy when one year we heard that the Rebbe had specified that a certain etrog be given to Samarkand.

Possessing only one etrog presented us with a dilemma. There were hundreds of Jews residing in towns around Samarkand who didn't own an etrog of their own, or even access to one. We therefore took turns on the Intermediate Days of Sukkot traveling with the etrog to enable these Jews to perform the *mitzva* (commandment) of the Four Species, despite the danger this entailed. When we would arrive at these towns a long line of the local Jews would have already formed, awaiting the etrog's arrival.

Immediately following the Sukkot festival comes Simchat Torah, a day dedicated to joyous celebration of the Torah. In Chabad circles, the celebration begins a day earlier, on the final, eighth day of Sukkot. In Samarkand, our tradition on that last day of Sukkot was to have a gathering with Yosef Schiff.

The gathering would begin once we had concluded the afternoon prayers. When the sky darkened, signaling the end of Sukkot and ushering in Simchat Torah, we would begin celebrating.

Yosef Schiff had studied in a Chabad Yeshiva until he was forcibly drafted into the army. After being wounded in battle, the authorities gently suggested that he join the Communist Party and enlisted him without his consent, as was customary in those days. He was forced to accept their "suggestion" and assume membership of the Party; refusing would have been dangerous. And that is how Yosef became a member of the Communist Party or as they used to say, "an owner of a red booklet."

Divine Providence had placed Yosef in a position where he was able to assist many Jews. As a Party member, he had special standing, and was appointed as the chairman of an enterprise under which numerous factories operated. Many Jews who observed Shabbat worked in factories under him.

Of course, holding a Jewish gathering in his house was a serious hazard. Organizing an illegal gathering was crime for an ordinary citizen, but it was an incomparably more severe crime for a member of the Communist Party. Especially considering that it wasn't just any kind of gathering, but a Chasidic one.

However, Yosef was a man of fortitude and

courage who found great pleasure in acting upon his convictions. Often, when one of his workers had *yartzeit* or when it was a special day on the Jewish calendar, he would close his office door and arrange a *minyan* for the afternoon prayers. He would tell his secretary that he was in an important meeting and under no circumstance should he be disturbed. If someone knocked on the door to enter, he would raise his voice and shout: "I told you already, don't bother me! I am meeting with my employees."

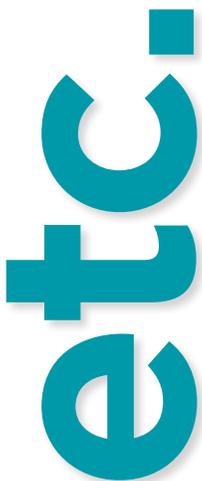
The fact that Yosef was a member of the Party placed extensive restrictions upon him. He was unable to publicly display his Jewishness. On account of this, he would often hold a *minyan* in his house, especially during the High Holidays. He said that were he to be discovered, he would excuse himself by claiming that he arranged the service for his elderly father-in-law, Yerachmiel Chadash, who had trouble walking to shul.

Once, in the midst of the Rosh Hashana prayers in his home, a messenger arrived from Yosef's office requesting that he come immediately to meet some senior officials from the municipality. Naturally, we were very frightened. Prayer shawls were instantly flung off, and in a panic, we tried searching for a place to hide. The only one who did not become anxious was Yosef. He calmed us, and then strode outside to greet the unexpected guests. In an authoritative voice, he explained that he could not leave since he was in the middle of a meeting with neighbors to convince them to join the cotton-picking. In those years, cotton was considered "white gold," and plucking it from the fields was very important to the government.

In the 1960s, we had the novel idea to convene for dancing at the main *shul* in the old city. Long after the prayers, once everyone had finished with their festive meal at home, we made our way to the shul. It was nearly midnight and the city streets were deserted.

A few of us hurried ahead and climbed over the fence that surrounded the yard of the shul, to unlatch the front gate. When the entire group had assembled, we entered and headed straight into the sanctuary, where we began to dance with unadulterated joy and song. The lights were all still on, leaving the sanctuary brightly illuminated. Finally we were able to revel in authentic *hakafot*, grasping Torah scrolls in our arms, with unrestrained singing and dancing. Our hearts soared with the rhythm of the Chasidic tunes, and our joy knew no bounds.

Rabbi Zaltzman was one of the original members of Chamah and is now its director. Chamah is an organization which works to share the beauty of Judaism with immigrants from the former USSR. His book Samarkand is available in Hebrew, Russian and English.



Public Sukkas

As in previous years, if you're in Manhattan, visit one of the Lubavitch Youth Organization's public Sukkas during the intermediate days of the holiday. They will be open: Monday, October 5 through Thursday, 8, 10:00 am - 6:00 pm, Friday, October 9, 10:00 am - 4:00. The Sukkas are: **The United Nations Sukka**, located in Ralph Bunch Park, near the Isaiah Wall across from the United Nations on First Avenue and 42nd Street; **Sukka at Foley Square**, near Worth Street; across the Federal Court House. **The Wall Street Sukka** located on the cobblestones in Bowling Green Park, in lower Manhattan. **The Garment Center Sukka** in Herald Square across from Macy's. For more information call (718) 778-6000. To find out about public Sukkot in your area call your local Chabad-Lubavitch Center.

Two Weeks in One

This current issue of *L'Chaim* is for the entire Sukkot holiday. Issue 1643 is for 28 Tishrei/October 16 for the Torah portion of *Bereshit*.

WHO'S WHO

Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel, a great scholar and exceedingly pious person, was the leader of the Sanhedrin during the times of the Second Holy Temple. The *Talmud* relates that during the nightly Sukkot celebrations in the Temple, he would juggle with eight flaming torches. He would also bring joy to bride and groom by entertaining them at their wedding. He supported the Jewish rebellion against the Roman government and was one of the ten martyrs slain by the Romans that we read about on Yom Kippur.

