

# MEASURING STICK

*by Rabbi Raymond Beyda*

What yardstick should one use to measure happiness is an age-old question that has puzzled Sages and philosophers for millennia. In Pirke Abot Ben Zoma says, "Who is wealthy? The one who is satisfied with his lot". He was certainly referring to the fact that if one could be happy with what one has then one is far richer than others who might have much more net worth yet always seek more of what they see others possess. When looking at others material status they usually see all the extra good that others own.

In the realm of the spiritual, the dictum of Ben Zoma, being satisfied with one's status, works against the achievement of true happiness. When one is satisfied even with a bad situation then one does nothing to change for the better. It was probably someone who was terribly unhappy with waiting on line at the bank who invented the automatic teller machine. I can't prove it but I can propose that someone who got pushed and shoved and was delayed arriving at his destination invented the revolving door to increase the traffic flow in a busy entranceway. In the world of business and in the realm of self-improvement dissatisfaction can make one wealthy. The trick is to resolve to face the problem and find a better way to deal with the annoying situation--one that will yield an improvement.

Should you fall into an emotional rut or perhaps something that always bothers you strikes again don't just accept it. Find a way to do what has to be done in a more efficient or more satisfying manner. It might take a while but the dissatisfaction, when looked at with a creative eye, will lead to innovation and success.

## **DID YOU KNOW THAT**

One should be careful not to eat food or drink after waking up in the morning before one does the ritual washing called Netillat Yadayim. Even small children should not touch foodstuffs before their hands have been washed. The Rabbis instituted the morning washing so as to avoid spiritually contaminating food or putting a "ruah ra-ah" bad spirit on the food. [SourceYalkut Yosef, Vol. 1, Siman1: 5]

## **CONSIDER THIS FOR A MINUTE**

During the weeks that follow the High Holy days, the time is ripe for fixing the sins related to immorality, promiscuity and perversions.. The Sefer Seder Hayom says," one who repeats sins that cause a flaw in the moral purity of the person carries a sin that is too large to bear. These sins bring Heaven's wrath down to earth in the form of disease and death. The punishments are more severe if the sinner was brazen enough to engage in immoral behavior in the view of others creating a desecration of G-d's name -- hillul Hashem. How can one who has engaged in these horrible deeds with such disastrous ramifications lift his head in front of others? How can he smile or Laugh?

*[Seder Hayom]*

**NOTE:** When the Jewish people live in exile amongst host nations who do not hold of the Torah's moral values many engage in behavior that our Torah considers abominable yet they do feel the shame or the guilt that the sins should evoke because society at large accepts promiscuity. It is important during these holy weeks following our Days of Awe to learn the great works of Mussar that teach one the seriousness of such anti-Torah behavior and teach one how to repent and atone for this type of transgression here in this world in order to avoid the serious punishments that these sins carry in the next world.

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