

CHAPTER SIXTY-ONE

by Rabbi Yitzchok Rubin

It's amazing how kids learn so much stuff, and even more fascinating, some of it actually remains in their heads. When I was a little tyke I was told a story that has remained with me ever since. Like so many children's stories, it depicted a world that was drawn in black and white, good and bad. There are no grays to a child; either you are okay or you are not. In any case, this story was about a land where two tribes lived side by side. One was called the happy tribe, and the other; you guessed it, the miserable tribe. I can still remember the pictures in the large storybook. The happy folk were all in white, and sure enough, the miserable ones were in black. (This was before political correctness.) The miserable lot would walk about all day grumbling. I especially recall one line. Misery one asks Misery two, "How are you?" Misery two replies, "Terrible!" At which point Misery one pipes up, "That's fine." And then they both agree, "I'm happy when I'm sad...Im never ever glad...."

The happy fellows from across the valley were always looking at the bright side. They would sing, "Sunshine, sunshine, good old glorious sunshine!"

These two groups were always at each other. The worrywarts sought to make the sunshine guys feel bad, and obviously our heroes the sunny bunch were always ready to spread cheerfulness. To do so they had a secret weapon: they would drop buckets of sunshine on the heads of the sad sacks, who when so attacked would break out in happy song. I told you there wasn't much to think about. Sunshine was good, darkness was bad - it was all neat and simple.

The reader may wonder, what kind of sad person would remember all this after some fifty years? Good question, but then that's me. In truth, everything we read and see as youngsters is stored away someplace in our brains, just waiting to float up into our conscious minds given the right circumstances. Why I am reminded of this little vignette is that as time has passed I have become aware that there are moments in every life when one feels the darkness and wishes that somehow it would be bombarded with light. It happens to all of us. You wake up in the middle of the night with a feeling of uneasiness. Something is wrong but you don't know what. You feel anxious without any apparent cause, and it worries you. Life often seems as if it's the "happy place" against the "miserable" one, and sometimes you feel that the guys with the frowns are winning. The Piaceszna Rebbe, zt"l, called upon us to take advantage of any occasion of emotional arousal regardless of its source, in order to turn it in a holy direction. He points out that when feeling depressed one should attend to the feeling and see what it is. He asks us to look within and consider that perhaps this uneasiness stems from a wrong that one did. Not every time does one feel immediately sorry for his

misdeeds; however, later an apprehension may slip in as a sort of delayed reaction.

The Rebbe tells us, "Any mood that a Jew experiences, even when connected with business or other mundane matters, whether of sadness or of happiness, is an aspect of a revelation of the soul, except that it is clothed in the needs of this world. It is up to you to take advantage of the moment. So when you feel some depression, even in something related to material needs, turn aside, stand by a wall and say a number of psalms that fit what has happened to you and that reflect your anxiety."

He then goes on to say, "Whatever psalms you recite, do not say them as if they were a report of what King David said thousands of years ago. Rather, say them as if this is what David purposefully arranged just for you." Our kapitel speaks to just such a need. Shema Elokim rinasi, hakshiva tefillasi....."Hear, G-d, my singing, hearken to my prayer. From the end of the earth to You I will call out, when my heart is exhausted; to a Rock that is higher than I, lead me." No matter how far I have fallen, I know I can call to Hashem. My heart may be weakened by pain; it may be weary with depression. I may well feel that I teeter at the edge of my world, but I know there are higher places and better views, and Hashem can lead me to them.

Ki hayisa machseh li..., "For You have been a refuge for me, a tower of strength in the face of the enemy." Most of our weaknesses are caused by enemies within our own hearts. We cower in the face of our urges and feel incompetent in overcoming them. We therefore cry out that our refuge is Hashem; thus we always have a tower of strength to turn to. Agura be'ohalcha olamim..., "I will dwell in Your Tent forever, I will take refuge in the shelter of Your wings, sela." I may be weak and stumble, but if I admit that my pain comes from losing my way, then I can at least accept that I must return to Hashem's tent. Such refuge is forever, and Hashem's wings can lift us in every given circumstance.

As the holy Piaseczna tells us, every mood swing has its core reasons. When we channel our feelings toward Hashem, then even our lapses can find salvation. There is nothing as dark as the darkness that is self-inflicted, and there is no greater light than that which can be found at the end of such a tunnel. By using David's words we bind our souls with the millions of Yidden who came before us. They too fought the darkness; they too sought the "happy tribe." When one is caught up in feelings of darkness, he can reach out and find David's hand waiting for him. Sharing those anxious moments with the holiness that has come before us will give strength and ultimately light.

Yes, we stumble, and certainly we feel a sense of loss, but we have such sweet words, words given with care and love, and through them we can truly become people who dwell in Hashem's light.

Text Copyright © 2008 by [Torah.org](https://torah.org).