

I'LL BE HAPPY WHEN...

by Rabbi Ben Tzion Shafier

Like a mantra, people utter the words, "I will be happy when..." Each person has his own fill-in for the blank, but whatever it is, his happiness depends on it. It might be the newest car, the fanciest house, the corner office, or the wardrobe worth dying for. It could be the right spouse, acceptance into medical school, that great job, or people who understand me... Each person has his own value system and his own criteria, but he clearly knows, "Once I get it, I will finally be happy."

Yet an amazing thing happens. He does finally get it! And lo and behold, he still isn't happy. What happened? It was all that he needed. It was all that he wanted. He finally has it. Why isn't he satisfied? What is the problem?

The problem is that he isn't living the way his life was planned. If you use a fine surgical instrument to pry open a window — it does a lousy job, and it ruins the blade. When you live in a way other than your Creator intended, life just doesn't work well. And slowly, after a lifetime wasted, you learn that money doesn't fill your soul. Pleasure and honor just don't satisfy your inner needs. Oh, they look so alluring. They exert this almost magical pull, but they never work. At the core of your essence, you remain empty. And like drinking when you are hungry, as soon as the excitement of finally getting it passes, you find yourself more unsatisfied than before. Unfortunately, most people discover this way too late in the game to do anything about it.

The Most Enjoyable Activity Is Growing

Hashem created the human to grow. It is in his very nature. Growth is the activity that brings him the most joy. Hashem put man into this world with many challenges and much to accomplish. When man uses his life appropriately, he achieves inner balance and harmony; he is at peace with himself. The sun is shining bright. The birds are chirping. The colors are so vibrant — he is so alive. He is happy. When he uses his life for any other purpose, he finds himself empty and unsatisfied, listless, with a constant need to fill a void within.

This is one of the great ironies of life. The more a person focuses on purpose and meaning, the more bountiful is his life. The more he focuses on taking in all of the pleasures this world has to offer, the less he enjoys them. Eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we may die is a formula for finding less pleasure and less enjoyment in life. The hedonist is bound to fail because his existence becomes just an endless race to fill an ever widening gulf within. This isn't a quirk in the system, and it isn't by accident. It is part of the design.

Make no mistake, pleasures have their place — they are tools to be used. When a person is content, he is better able to serve his Creator. By properly using the luxuries and comforts of this world, man elevates himself. He transforms the mundane into the holy and is better suited for his mission. By doing this, he also elevates the world itself because he is using it for its intended purpose. He enjoys this world and gains the World to Come.


The Five-Star Hotel Called Life

We are in this hotel called life for but a few short years. Nevertheless, Hashem designed it as a five-star accommodation with many luxuries and amenities. Hashem created a custom-made world with flowers and trees, sunrises, and mountain tops for our use. All of the extraordinary beauty was put here for us. The orange, the apple, the pear, and the banana were created for us to enjoy. The flavors, textures, and aromas in food didn't have to be there. Nor did color. Hashem invested great wisdom into creation for our pleasure. It isn't the reason we are here. But it is part of the design. The difficult part is not losing our way, not mistaking the passing for the permanent, the hotel for our home.

The reason man can't find happiness is that he isn't focused on why he was created. Assuming that this world is the end all and be all of Creation, man pursues everything but what he was put here for, and so he lives out of sync with his very nature. Then, for some "strange reason," nothing seems to satisfy him. So he begins that elusive search for happiness — in all the wrong places.

If a person wants to live a meaningful, satisfying life, he needs to understand himself. He must relate to the needs of his soul. The only way that he can do this is by finding his mission in life, finding out why Hashem created him, and why Hashem put him into this thing we call life.

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 This is an excerpt from the new Shmuz on Life book: [Stop Surviving, Start Living](#). It is powerful, thought provoking, and life changing. The book is available for purchase at Judaica stores, Feldheim.com and [TheShmuz.com](#).