

CLASS 63 - CHODESH ADAR

by Rabbi Heshy Grossman

"Just as we reduce Simcha at the onset of Av, so too, we increase Simcha at the onset of Adar."
(Taanis 29a)

This well known statement indicates that Simcha is a permanent state. Sometimes more, and sometimes less, but the sense of joy is ever-present. As the moon waxes and wanes, similarly, the month of Adar is the high point of a yearlong cycle of ups and downs. What is the basis of this constant state of Simcha, and why does it reach its pinnacle now?

1 Why do people laugh? Why are people are so happy at the birth of a child, or the wedding of a daughter? And why do they have the need to invite so many of their friends?

Laughter is the result of an overflowing happiness. When the Simcha that a person feels within can no longer be contained, his laughter flows forth from inside and breaks through its normal bounds. All moments of true Simcha, most notably the life cycle events that expand his horizons, share this element: a look beyond man's own limited existence, and the need to share this joy with others.

Every human character trait is a reflection of Divine attributes. Man's laughter is rooted in the fulfillment of heavenly decrees, and, at times, G-d, as well, laughs and rejoices.

"...in the last fourth of the day, [Hashem] sits and laughs with the Livyasan." (Avodah Zarah 3b)

Who is the Livyasan, and why is Hashem amused?

A true 'Mischak' - one that is enjoyed for its own sake, is a game with no winner or loser, and no external goal other than the pleasure of the contest itself.

Similarly, with the act of creation, Hashem expresses His will, and in the actualization of His command, He sees this objective realized. In a sense, this is true enjoyment - a perfect state of being.

The Livyasan is a manifestation of 'Liveeyah' - as in 'Levi', accompaniment and togetherness. G-d is together with His creation, and this is His sole enjoyment, an unadorned goal with no external objective.

For this reason, the Livyasan is also referred to as the benefit that the righteous in Olam HaBa. For those who understand the purpose of creation, it is their just reward.

2 The Livyasan is understood by many to be a great fish. This is erroneous. It is a spiritual creation, an element of water whose place is the sea.

Let us explain.

The word Yam equals fifty B'Gimmatriya, indicating that the sea embodies a level that lies beyond the forty nine characteristics of the physical world.

How is this so?

The sea is the source of all G-d given life. The Torah's first mention of life is related to the sea - "...Yishretzu HaMayim Sheretz Nefesh Chayah."

The sea has a unique quality, the desire and ability to flood all the world. This trait is the primal force of creation, and until G-d held back the sea with the words: "Let the waters gather in one place", the entire earth was covered with water. A small bar of sand holds back the power of the sea, preventing it from covering the earth once more. This small entity of sand allows life to thrive, and it highlights the dual nature of the sea - unbridled and unlimited power, harnessed into a limited boundary.

This is the origin of life, and this is man's beginning.

On the surface, man's existence is defined by boundaries and limitations, but deep within himself, he can discover a dimension of immeasurable proportions. Indeed, man is defined by his ability to choose between these two traits - either the roaring, endless crash of the sea, as each wave insistently threatens to drown the earth, or to heed instead the Torah's call: "Will you not fear Me, said the Lord, before I will you not tremble, I have placed sand as a boundary to the sea, an eternal law that will never be crossed, they will roar, but they are unable, the waves will thunder, but they will not pass." (Yirmiah 5:22)

In fact, all of existence is divided into these two elements. One, a material form of undefined dimensions, with no shape or purpose of its own. Second, a clear pattern of limits and boundaries, rules and regulations; a plan and purpose for the material world that gives direction to an amorphous and non-descript entity. Both of these traits define our reality, the sea and the sand. Together, they form the foundation of life.

This bar of sand represents the deeds of the righteous. They choose to set the boundaries that give their lives form, substance and commitment, and they are able to transfer and utilize the power of the sea for the lofty purpose that was G-d's intent. Their strength provides them with an eternal reward, and hence, the Livyasan, man's portion in the world to come, is a creature of the sea. Even more - the sea is the basis of life itself, for it is here that choice begins. It is Bechirah - man's ability to decide between right and wrong, that sets him apart from the materialistic world, and this quality grants him a place in existence, a portion of his own.

This is his life and this is his reward. "Sof Ma'aseh B'Machshava Techila" - the beginning and the end together as one. Life is an end unto itself, and this defines the happiness of G-d - "Yismach Hashem B'Maasav."

The man of depth and sincerity lives with this duality always. Aware of his origin and confident in his destination, he is always B'Simchah. Despite the limitations and restrictions he may endure, he is conscious always of the endless horizon of his own spiritual existence.

3 Each of the months are symbolized by one of the constellations. Chodesh Adar is marked by the sign of Dagim - fish, the creatures of the sea.

The sea is referred to as a source of strength, and its pinnacle is - "MiKolos Mayim Rabim Adirim Mishberei Yam..... more than the roar of the most powerful waters" (Tehillim 93:4) - a fortitude known as Adir.

True strength is measured by the ability to overcome all obstacles, and the patience to withstand any opposition. For this reason, the Pasuk continues: "....Adir BaMarom Hashem" - the sea reveals the power of Hashem, whose word cannot be denied.

If the oceans are the source of happiness, Chodesh Adar brings this joy to fruition.

The secret of the ocean's power is highlighted by the small strip of sand that keeps the waters at bay. Through the tiny bar of sand, and its ability to endure endless rounds of pounding, one sees the strength of creation itself.

The Jewish people are themselves likened to this line of sand. They cannot be counted, for despite their limited numbers, they have succeeded at repelling the forces of evil, revealing the world's true source of strength - the eternal and unlimited power of the One Above.

In Chodesh Adar the decree was signed, but on Chodesh Adar the salvation came. The very manifestation of evil is cause for their redemption, because it is the dark veil of suffering that proves the strength that lies within.

MiSheNichnas Adar Marbim B'Simcha.

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