

לעילוי נשמת
מרת עקא עדנה
צפורה ע"ה וסרטל
בת משה מנחם הלוי ז"ל



על דשא

AL E I DESHE

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit"a of Gur

Spreading Simchah

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 30b) says that the Chachamim considered concealing Sefer Koheles because some of its statements appear to contradict one another. For example, one pasuk says: **ושבחתני אני את**—*I have praised joy* (8:15), while another says: **ולשמחה מה זה עושה**—*And of joy [I have said], "What does it accomplish?"* (2:2). Ultimately, the Chachamim chose not to conceal Sefer Koheles, because it begins and ends with words of Torah. It begins, *What profit does man have from all his labor that he toils under the sun?* As the Yeshiva of Yannai

because the middah of simchah needs strengthening in our generation.

explained this pasuk: the only worthwhile toil is in Torah, which was created before the sun. And the sefer ends, **סוף דבר הכל נשמע, את אלקים ירא ואת מצותיו שמור, כי זה כל האדם**—*The sum of the matter, when all has been considered: fear G-d and keep His mitzvos, for this is all of man* (12:13).

Clearly, the Chachamim did not question the wisdom contained in Shlomo Hamelech's sefer. Rather, because they found apparent contradictions they could not explain, they felt it should not be publicized. If so, why

did the fact that "it begins and ends with words of Torah" change their view?

The truth is that each of the seemingly contradictory statements has validity. There is a proper place for joy, and there is also a situation in which joy is not useful. The same is true of many *middos* and behaviors. The Chachamim's concern was that the sefer does not clearly indicate when each value applies, leaving the reader confused about how to resolve the tension between them.

However, once the Chachamim saw that all the guidance in Sefer Koheles is framed by calls to toil in Torah and fear Heaven, they concluded that the reader could absorb its apparent contradictions without confusion. Through toil in Torah and *yiras Shamayim*, one gains the wisdom and clarity to know when and where to apply each instruction. This is the essence of toiling in Torah: questions and answers, contradictions and resolutions. This process trains a Yid to think carefully and distinguish between different situations.

We must therefore consider carefully when *simchah* is praiseworthy and when it serves no purpose.

The Gemara (*Taanis* 22a) relates that Rav Beroka of Chozai once met Eliyahu Hanavi in the marketplace. Eliyahu pointed out two individuals whom he said were destined for Olam Haba. Rav Beroka approached them and asked what they did. They replied: "We are **אינשי בדוחי**, and when we see someone who is downcast, we cheer him up."

Rashi explains that *inshei beduchei* means they were happy people who made others

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The Time for Commitment

The Sefas Emes explains that we *lein* Megillas Koheles on Sukkos because it is *zman simchaseinu*. When a Yid is in a state of joy, he is able to make strong, lasting commitments to improve. We find this idea in the Gemara (*Shabbos* 130a), "Any mitzvah that Yisrael accepted with joy, they continue to perform with joy." This principle applies throughout the generations. Commitments made with joy endure because they are genuine.

What commitment is worth our while? To address this question, we *lein* Megillas Koheles. Its message impresses upon us the emptiness of material pursuits and the value of spiritual ones. With that clarity, a Yid can commit to focusing on Torah and mitzvos and to distancing himself from whatever distracts him. Commitments made during a *zman* of *simchah* will last.

There is a story about the Avnei Nezer. In a period of poor health, he was ordered by his doctors to avoid the mental exertion of studying difficult topics, so he spent time reading *Bechinas Olam*, a mussar sefer written in a simple, flowing style that describes the emptiness and vanity of worldly pleasures.

His father-in-law, the Kotzker Rebbe, saw him reading it and said: "The sefer portrays the worthlessness of Olam Hazeh very well, and the *seichel* understands this clearly. But what can we do about the *guf*, the physical body, which still demands its portion? The only way to purify the *guf* is through toil in Gemara, Rashi, and Tosafos, *b'iyun*." This trains the entire person to recognize that only *ruchniyus* has true value. Knowing it intellectually is not enough.

This raises a question on the Sefas Emes's insight: what is gained by reading Koheles? Its

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Spreading Simchah

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happy. Why is their own happiness relevant? They merited Olam Haba for cheering others, not for being happy themselves.

A well-known story tells of a man who went to a doctor complaining of depression. The doctor advised him to attend the performance of a very funny comedian in town. The man replied, "I am that comedian!" The lesson is that it is not enough to cheer others; one must be cheerful oneself.

Lifting people's spirits and bringing them joy is a true *chesed*, especially in our generation. Many

1 2, 3.

people today suffer from anxiety because of life's fast pace. When I was young, people had less *gashmiyus*, but they were calmer and had a peace of mind that is often missing today. For this reason, strengthening *simchah* in our generation serves an important purpose.

The Kuzari¹ writes that if one's excitement in mitzvot brings him to song and dance, this too is *avodas Hashem*, and through it he can cling to G-dliness.

It is said in the name of Rav Ahron Leib Steinman *zt"l* that he encouraged yeshivos to include

activities that increase *simchah*, such as singing and music, because the *middah* of *simchah* needs strengthening in our generation. Of course, this must be done in an elevated way that does not lead to wildness.

We must also remember that those who bring *simchah* to others must themselves be wholesome, happy people. Only those who are truly *inshei beduche*, who experience inner joy, can awaken that joy in others.

שיחה בענין שמחה של מצוה ו' תמוז תשפ"ב

The Secret of Satisfaction

ולנפתלי אמר נפתלי שבע רצון ומלא ברכת ד'. And to Naftali he said: Naftali, 'satisfied of desire' and filled with Hashem's blessing (Devarim 33:23).

Rashi explains that 'satisfied of desire' means that Naftali's land fulfilled the wishes of all its inhabitants.

This is remarkable. Every community has people who are dissatisfied or have complaints. How could one land satisfy everyone?

The answer lies in Yaakov's words about Naftali: Naftali is

a deer let loose, who delivers beautiful sayings (Bereishis 49:21). The Targum renders the end of the pasuk: ירון יהון מודן—his inheritance will produce fruit, and they will thank and bless over it.

This was the secret of Naftali's satisfaction: they gave thanks and blessings for their portion. We all recite *berachos*, but too often the words leave our mouths mechanically. *Shevet Naftali* did not merely say a *berachah*; they expressed real gratitude and praise. They took nothing

for granted, recognizing that everything they had was a gift from Hashem and feeling true appreciation for it.

The key to happiness and satisfaction is appreciation. When we are grateful for what we have, then even if others have more, or even if someone treats us poorly, our inner satisfaction remains undisturbed.

שמיני עצרת ושמחת תורה תשפ"א מאמר א

Sifting the Havalim

Kohleles opens with the words הבל הבלים אמר. קהלת הבל הבלים. The Rebbe R' Bunim offered a novel reading of this pasuk that is quite sharp: There is the *hevel peh*, the pure breath of Torah and tefillah, and there are the *havalim*, the mere vapor of Olam Hazehe. If one mixes the *hevel* of his Torah and tefillah with the *havalim*

of Olam Hazehe, then הכל הבל—everything becomes *hevel*.

What, then, is the remedy for someone who has allowed Olam Hazehe to enter his learning and davening? How can he separate the two?

When impurities are mixed into flour, we place the mixture in a sifter and shake it up and down until the flour separates from the waste.

This is how we remove impurities from our *avodas Hashem*: we dance on Simchas Torah. As we leap up and down in honor of the Torah, we shake the impurities from our hearts and minds, leaving ourselves with the clarity to learn and daven without foreign thoughts.

הקפות שניות תשפ"ו

Kivinu Lo

ואמר ביום ההוא הנה אלקינו זה קוינו לו ויושיענו זה ד'. קוינו לו נגילה ונשמחה בישועתו.

On that day they will say: This is our G-d; we hoped to Him, and He saved us; this is Hashem to whom we hoped; let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation (Yeshayah 25:9).

This is one of the *pesukim* we recite aloud before *hakafos*, calling us to rejoice with Hashem. The pasuk repeats קוינו לו—we hoped to Him. What is the meaning of this repetition?

The Targum translates the first *kivinu lo* as די—we hoped to Him, and the second as ליה—

דהוינא למברין—*we hoped for His word*, meaning that we longed for His Torah.

Every Yid is connected to Hashem, as the pasuk says: לבני ישראל עם קרובו—*Bnei Yisrael [are] the nation close to Him*. Yet we still seek to deepen that bond. Chazal² teach that when a person sits and learns Torah, Hakadosh Baruch Hu sits opposite him and learns with him. Through *limud haTorah*, a Yid strengthens his connection to Hashem and feels greater closeness to Him.

These are the two levels of *kivinu lo*: the basic connection every Yid has with Hashem, and the deeper connection attained through His word.

The *Tosefos Yom Tov*³ writes in the name of the *Sefer Chasidim*⁴ that *masechta* means something woven. A tractate of Gemara is called a *masechta* because it weaves many different topics together. We can suggest, furthermore, that one who learns Gemara attaches himself to Hashem, as though the learner and Hashem become woven together. As Chazal⁵ say, the Torah, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, and Yisrael are one.

הקפות שניות תשפ"ו

2 Tanna D'vei Eliyahu Rabbah 18.

3 In his introduction.

4 Siman 928.

5 Zohar, Acharei 73.

The Time for Commitment

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lessons may convince the *seichel*, but they do not necessarily reach the *guf*.

The answer is that, at the culmination of *zman simchaseinu*, we dance with the Torah in order to impress upon our entire being that true joy comes from toiling in Torah. There is no

simchah like the joy and satisfaction that come from dedicating one's time and energy to *limud HaTorah*.

By reading Koheles and then dancing with the Torah, we come to both know and feel that only *ruchniyus* has real value. This is the time

for each of us to make a lasting commitment to devote the coming year to *ruchniyus* and to reject the empty distractions that pull us away from that goal.

ס"ג ונעילת החג שמחת תורה תשפ"ד מאמר א

The Perspective of Joy

דור הלך ודור בא והארץ לעולם עמדת.

A generation goes and a generation comes, but the earth endures forever (Koheles 1:4).

My father, the Pnei Menachem, once told me that as a young man he endured difficult times, including the illness of a child and financial hardship. When he needed encouragement, he would strengthen himself by learning *Megillas Koheles*.

At first, this puzzled me. Koheles seems to carry a somber message, emphasizing the emptiness of worldly pursuits and suggesting that even accomplishment can feel meaningless. It even questions joy: וְלִשְׂמֹחָהּ מָה זֶה עָשָׂה—*And of joy [I have said], "What does it accomplish?"* (2:2).

The truth is that happiness depends on perspective. To rise above unhappiness, we must change the way we view life. As long as a person remains absorbed in himself and seeks only his own satisfaction, genuine happiness will remain difficult to attain.

Koheles teaches that personal honor and pleasure are fleeting and ultimately

insignificant. A person is here today and gone tomorrow, while the world continues without him. His true significance lies in being part of something greater than himself: serving Hashem, Who is eternal.

When a person internalizes this perspective, his response to personal hardship changes. Once he stops centering life on his own honor and pleasure, and sees himself as part of a greater purpose, he can attain true joy.

This mindset does not come easily. By nature, a person focuses on himself. But with effort, he can train himself to look beyond material concerns and appreciate the lasting value of his Torah and mitzvos.

When people make a *chasunah* for a child or grandchild, I encourage them to appreciate the event's deeper significance. By raising a child and helping establish a new home, they have contributed to the continuity of Klal Yisrael. This is an eternal accomplishment. When our children get married and start their own families, the *chinuch*, Torah, mitzvos, and good

middos which we implanted in the child will live on in the next generation: *A generation goes and a generation comes*, but the fruit of our efforts now live for eternity.

It is common to experience frustrations and difficulties when making a *chasunah*. Focusing on the significance of the event smooths over the temporary struggles.

Our lives are filled with meaningful, lasting accomplishments. As part of Klal Yisrael, we help and strengthen one another and contribute to the success of Hashem's holy people. Klal Yisrael carries Hashem's Torah through the generations, and our share in that mission is enduring and significant.

In truth, every person is born with an inclination toward joy, so a joyous life is within everyone's reach. The key is to stop focusing on our material concerns, and instead recognize the opportunities we have for accomplishments of lasting value.

שיחה בעניין שמחה של מצוה ו' תמוז תשפ"ב

Restoring the Nefesh

תורת ד' תמימה משיבת נפש עדות ד' נאמנה מחכימת פתי.

The Torah of Hashem is perfect, restoring the 'nefesh'; the testimony of Hashem is faithful, making wise the simple (Tehillim 19:8).

The word *nefesh* in the phrase *restoring the nefesh* refers to a person's will, as in the pasuk אם יש את נפשכם, which Rashi explains to mean, "if it is your will" (Bereishis 23:8). One might develop desires for all kinds of harmful things,

but Torah *restores his will*. It inspires him to leave those interests behind and desire what is right and good.

Throughout the year, we are drawn toward interests that are useless or even harmful. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we do teshuvah for the *aveiros* those interests caused. But how do we regain our desire for what is truly good? On Simchas Torah, we take hold of the Torah and rejoice with it. The Torah

restores our will and inspires us to desire what is genuinely beneficial.

The Torah is also *machkimas pesi*—it makes the simple wise. A *pesi* is gullible, drawn after whatever appears attractive or enticing. Torah guides us to want what is good and gives us the wisdom to reject foolish, worthless distractions that waste our time and lead us astray.

הקפות ליל שמחת תורה תשפ"ד מאמר א



Every Drop

Shmini Atzeres Simchas Torah Motzei Y"T

Brooklyn	6:18	7:17	7:15
Lakewood	6:19	7:18	7:16
Baltimore	6:29	7:27	7:26
Chicago	6:10	7:12	7:10
North Miami	6:48	7:41	7:40
Los Angeles	6:17	7:13	7:12

On Shmini Atzeres, we daven for rain. First, we must recognize simply that we need to beseech Hashem for rain. Despite all our modern technology, we remain dependent on it; without rain, we lack water. Rain is not predictable or guaranteed. It is given by Hashem in response to our *tefillos*, and we must daven that the coming year be blessed with sufficient rain.

Second, we must understand that rain carries a deeper message. The Gemara (*Taanis* 8b) says: *Great is the day of rain, for even the perutah in one's purse is blessed through it.*

This statement teaches a profound concept. The Baal Shem Tov explained that "the *perutah* in one's purse" alludes to *hashgachah pratis*. The Gemara (*Arachin* 16b) says: *How far does the definition of suffering extend? Even to someone who reaches into his purse for three coins and comes up with only two.* Even such a small annoyance is decreed by Heaven as a measure of suffering.

This shows that even the smallest details of each person's life are directed by *hashgachah pratis*. This is one of the foundations of the path of *Chassidus* established by the Baal Shem Tov: every detail of every creation is guided by Hashem.

This is the deeper meaning of the teaching that on the day of rain *even the perutah in*

one's purse is blessed: when we experience the *hashgachah* expressed through rain, we can recognize that everything—even the number of coins drawn from a purse—is guided by Hashem.

The Gemara (*Berachos* 59b) says that when it rains, we recite the *berachah*, מודים אנחנו לך—על כל טפה וטפה שהורדת לנו—*We thank You for every single drop that You have brought down for us.*

Hashem does not provide rain only in a general sense; every individual drop is guided by *hashgachah pratis*.

This idea is reflected in the Gemara (*Bava Basra* 16a). Iyov, trying to understand his suffering, said to Hashem: "Master of the universe, perhaps a whirlwind passed before You and caused You to confuse my name, Iyov, with אויב, enemy."

Hashem answered: "I created many drops of rain in the clouds, and for each drop I created its own channel. I do not confuse one drop with another. Would I confuse Iyov with *oyev*?" Because every drop of rain is directed by Hashem, we thank Him *for every single drop.*

נעילת החג שמיני עצרת תשפ"ו מאמר א

From the Desk of the Rosh Yeshivah

Lichvod Rabbeinu shlita:

I request a blessing that my worries be lifted and my spirits raised; that I merit a steady flow of joy and calm.

The Rosh Yeshiva replied:

When a person gains clarity that the entire world is guided by His plan, and succeeds in submitting himself, with all his plans and desires, to the Divine will, with the faith that this is the proper path—as it says, "I recall for you... that you followed Me"—he will, with Hashem's help, be surrounded with *yeshuos*.

Shaul

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