



Any text in BLUE is intended as a guide for the teacher

This lesson plan was originally created as a standalone lesson in preparation for the holiday of Purim. It can also be used as part of a curriculum on Megillat Esther.

1. Peanuts Comic Strips

There are multiple things that can lead to happiness. And that happiness is not easily defined.



Peanuts by Charles Schulz



Peanuts by Charles Schulz



Peanuts by Charles Schulz

What is happiness? How do YOU define happiness?

2. Megillat Esther 9:22

כַּיְמַיִם אֲשֶׁר-נָחוּ בָהֶם הַיְהוּדִים מֵאֲבֵיבֵיהֶם וְהֵחֵדְשׁ אֶשֶׁר נִהְפָּךְ לָהֶם מִיָּגוֹן לְשִׂמְחָה וּמֵאֲבֵל לְיוֹם טוֹב לְעֻשׂוֹת אוֹתָם יְמֵי מְשִׁתָּה וְשִׂמְחָה וּמְשָׁלַח מִנּוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ וּמִתְּנוּת לְאֲבִינָיִם:

As the days when the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month that was reversed for them from grief to joy and from mourning to a festive day-to make them days of feasting and joy, and sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.

Review the Purim story. Why is Purim a joyous day?

The word "simcha" is used twice in this verse. What is the context for each?

3. Rabbi Chaim Eliezer Shapira, Nimukei Orach Chaim 686

The mourning period of the month of Av is often associated with the joyous period of the month Adar, as the Gemara says, "Mishenichnat Adar Marbim B'Simcha, Mishenichnat Av Mimaatim B'Simcha." The month of Av should be greeted with lessened happiness because it is a month of mourning since that month includes the fast days of 17th of Tammuz and 9th of Av. The Rambam only includes half the statement of lessening happiness during the month of Av and does not include increasing happiness in the month of Adar. The reason for this is that we have a constant obligation to be happy ALL THE TIME. Even in the month of Av, there is an obligation to be happy, but to a lesser degree. And for this reason, Chazal had to give us specific guidelines so that we would minimize our happiness in an appropriate way, like not listening to music, having weddings, etc. However, regarding the month of Adar, there is no specific formula to increase our simcha and each person can use his own method. Happiness is personal.

אִסְתָּמִּים חֲשַׁנְתִּי צְנוּף הַדְּבַר, לֵנוּחַ הַסְּעִיף הַרְנוּבִים זֵיל הַךְ דּוּסְסִכְנִיק
אָדָר וּנְרַבִּין בְּסִמְחָה עֲפִינְוִס'כּ בְּסַעַר יִסְסָכָר (בְּנוֹאֲנֵר חֲדָס אָדָר)
לְחַנוּוֹה עִיר הַסִּיק סָס דַּהֲרִי וּסְסִכְנִיק אֲב וּנְוִעֲטִין בְּסִמְחָה וּסְפִרָס סָס
בְּגוּי וּסְוִסְקִיס צִלְמִה דְבַר וּנְוִעֲטִין כְּגוֹן עוּרִי וְלֹא יִבְנֵה נִבִּין סָל סִמְחָה
(עִי אֲרִיחַ סִי הַקְּבִילָה סְעִי צִי וְעוֹד סָס) אֲבֵל וּסְסִכְנִיק אָדָר וּנְרַבִּין
בְּסִמְחָה לֹא וּסְפִרָס צוּנָה וּנְרַבִּין בְּסִמְחָה וּנְקִטִין רַק צְדִירָךְ אֲבֵל סָס
סְסִכְנִיק אֲב וְכִי וְהִי לֹא לְסִרָס צוּנָה וּנְרַבִּין בְּסִמְחָה וְאֲנוּרְתִי סָס דִּלְדִרְבָּה
יֵל דְּזֵהוּ מְכֻנָּה חֲבוּלָה כִּי וּסְסִכְנִיק אֲב וּנְוִעֲטִין בְּסִמְחָה וּנְסִרָס צוּנָה
וּנְוִעֲטִין כְּדִי סֵלֵל כְּסִדּוֹר ח'וֹ (כִּי מוֹלָה לְקִיִּים דְּחִזִּיל) לְהִיִּת צַעֲלֻבוֹת
גְּמוּר וּנְוִרָה סְחֻרָה רִיל. וְנִלְמַנָּה לֹא וְ סִדְרִךְ מִחֲלֻמִּיִּדִי רְבִיבֵי הַנְּעִס'ט
זֵיל וְהַבְּאִיס אַחֲרֵיהֶם (וּסְלִירִךְ לְהִיִּת גַּם אֲזוּ צִלְמַת בְּלֵב כְּסַעַר וּבְכֻיִת
עַל הַגְּלוּת וְחֻרְבָן צִיְהוּרִיק אֲבֵל לֹא נַעֲלָב לְגִמְרִי כּוּנְחִיִּילָס חִיז וּנְן
הַגְּלוּלָה וּכְסוּדַע בְּסִיִּיק) וְהַסְּמָחָה הוּא חִיב מְהִיִּת וְכִתִּיב מִחַת אֲסָר
לֹא עֲבַדָּה חִיל בְּסִמְחָה וְגו' ע"כ צוּדֵלִי אֲסוּר לְהִיִּת נַעֲלָב לְגִמְרִי
צַחֲבֻלִיתוֹ עִיב נִקַּט רַק צִלְמִה דְּבָרִיס וּנְוִעֲטִין בְּסִמְחָה וּסְסִכְנִיק אֲב
כְּדִי לְוַעֲטֵי סְנַעֲלֵר דְּבָרִיס יַחֲזוּק בְּסִמְחָה וּנְסִחֻן בְּלֵבֵנו הַנִּלְמָן לְהִי
וּנְלַמְּסָה לְיִסְוִעַת הַגְּלוּלָה. אֲבֵל וּסְסִכְנִיק אָדָר וּנְרַבִּין בְּסִמְחָה נִקַּט קָהִס
כִּי מוֹדָה עוֹנָה מְרוּנָה וְצִלְמִה דְּבַר סְנוּכָל אֲזוּ לְהַרְבּוֹת בְּסִמְחָה מוֹלָה
חִיבֵל וְכֵל אִי יִסְעַר בְּלֵבֵנו וּנְסִחוֹ וְלֹא נִקַּט פְּרַטִי הַדְּבָרִיס לְסִמְחָה
סֵלֵל חִי וּנְוִעֲטֵי אַחֲרֵיִי חִיזו דְּבָרִיס וְסִי וּנְסִמַּע רַק נִלְלו הַדְּבָרִיס
יִרְבָּה אֲזוּ בְּסִמְחָה וְנִלְמָנָה מוֹלָה צִבֵּל מַה דֹּאסְסָר לְהַרְבּוֹת בְּלֵבֵנו וְנַעֲטִינוּ
בְּסִמְחָה סָל מוֹלָה וְלְקִיִּים דְּבָרִי חֲבוּסִים עִיב נִקַּטוּ קָהִס כְּגוֹי פְּכִיד
בְּסַעַר יִסְסָכָר.

According to Rabbi Shapira, why does the Rambam not include part of the phrase “*Mishenichnas Adar Marbim B'Simcha*” in his writings?

What does this source teach you about happiness?

4. Rabbi Menachem ben Solomon Meiri, Beis HaBechira, Taanit 29a

Happiness stems from gratitude. The statement of “*Mishenichnas Adar Marbim B'Simcha*” is a call to recognize all of the good that happened during Adar. We often turn to G-d during times that are difficult, but fail to thank HaShem during the good times.

ובגמרא¹

קירשו שכמו שמשנכנס אב טמא בשמחה כך משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה. הכל הערה שראוי להתפלל ולהודות לאל בכל עת ובכל זמן כפי הנאות למה שאירע באותו זמן וכן שצריך לברך על הטובה ועל הרעה כמו שהתבאר.¹⁰

According to the Meiri, what is the source of happiness?

How does gratitude lead to happiness?

5. Rambam Hilchot Megilla 2:17

We should spend more on *matanot l'evyonim* over the other festivities of the day like *mishloach manot* and *seudah*, because rather true happiness comes by increasing the joy of the downtrodden through *matanos l'evyonim*.

מוטב לאדם להרבות במתנות אביונים, מלהרבות בסעודתו ובשלוח לריעיו—שאין שם שמחה גדולה ומפוארה, אלא לשמח לב עניים ויתומים ואלמנות וגרים, שהמשמח לב האמיללים האלו מידמה בשכינה, שנאמר “להחיות רוח שפלים, ולהחיות לב נדכאים

The greatest simcha comes from helping the poor, orphans and widows, the downtrodden in our community. When we take care of others and give to others it allows us to appreciate and be grateful for what we have. And that leads to true simcha.

What are the 3 *mitzvot* related to Purim?

According to the Rambam which is the most important one, and why?

6. Rabbi Lord Jonthan Sacks, Studies in Spirituality, p.12

Happiness is largely a matter of satisfying needs and wants. Meaning, by contrast, is about a sense of purpose in life, especially by making positive contributions to the lives of others. Happiness is largely about how you feel in the present. Meaning is about how you judge your life as a whole: past, present, and future.

How does the statement of Rabbi Sacks further develop the statement of the Rambam from source #5?

7. Megillat Esther 9:21-23

וַיִּכְתֹּב מֵרֹדְכַי אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּשְׁלַח סְפָרִים אֶל־כָּל־הַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הַקְּרוּבִים וְהָרְחוֹקִים:

לְקַיֵּם עֲלֵיהֶם לְהַיּוֹת עֲשִׂים אֶת־יוֹם אַרְבַּעָה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ אָדָר וְאֶת־יוֹם־חֲמִשָּׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ בְּכָל־שָׁנָה וְשָׁנָה: כִּי־מִיָּמִים אֲשֶׁר־נָחַו בָּהֶם הַיְהוּדִים מֵאֲבִיבֵיהֶם וְהַחֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר נִהְפָּךְ לָהֶם מִיָּגוֹן לְשִׂמְחָה וּמֵאֲבֵל לְיּוֹם טוֹב לְעִשׂוֹת אוֹתָם יְמֵי מְשֻׁתָּה וְשִׂמְחָה וּמְשָׁלַח מְנוּחַ אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ וּמִתְּנוּת לְאֲבִיבָיִם:

Mordecai recorded these events. And he sent dispatches to all the Jews throughout the provinces of King Achashverosh, near and far, charging them to observe the fourteenth and fifteenth days of Adar, every year—the same days on which the Jews enjoyed relief from their foes and the same month which had been transformed for them from one of grief and mourning to one of festive joy. They were to observe them as days of feasting and merrymaking and as an occasion for sending gifts to one another and presents to the poor.

Purim is called a “Yomtov”/holiday. How is Purim similar other holidays and how is it different?

8. Megillah 5b

Historically the intention for Purim was to be called “Yom Tov” and observed as we have other holidays where we do not work, but this wasn’t how the holiday of Purim was developed into practice. This is what makes Purim so unique.

מִלְמַד שְׂאֵסוּרִים בְּהֶסְפֵּד מְשֻׁתָּה מִלְמַד שְׂאֵסוּר בְּתַעֲנִית יוֹם טוֹב מִלְמַד שְׂאֵסוּר בְּעִשְׂיֵית מְלָאכָה
This is because they [the Jewish People] accepted upon themselves the prohibitions against eulogizing and fasting on Purim, but they did not accept upon themselves the prohibition against performing labor. This can be proven from the fact that initially, when Mordecai and Esther proposed the celebration of Purim, it is written: “A day of gladness and feasting and a good day [yom tov]” (Esther 9:19), and at the end, when it the celebration of Purim was accepted by the Jewish people, it is written: “That they should

make them days of feasting and gladness” (Esther 9:22), whereas the term good day [*yom tov*], which alludes to a day when it is prohibited to perform labor, is not written. The people never accepted upon themselves the prohibition against performing labor on Purim as if it were a Festival, and therefore the prohibition never took effect.

Historically, how was Purim intended to be observed? How do we observe Purim nowadays?

Without “*issur melacha*” do you think Purim still a “YomTov?”

It is a yomtov because of the other mitzvot which are about giving.

9. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, ‘Collective Joy,’ *Re’eh*, Covenant & Conversations, 5779

Simcha is usually translated as joy, rejoicing, gladness, happiness, pleasure, or delight. In fact, *simcha* has a nuance untranslatable into English. Joy, happiness, pleasure, and the like are all states of mind, emotions. They belong to the individual. We can feel them alone. *Simcha*, by contrast, is not a private emotion. It means happiness shared. It is a social state, a predicate of “we,” not “I.” There is no such thing as feeling *simcha* alone.”

How does Rabbi Sack’s definition of *simcha* fit into the story of Purim?

How can YOU feel happiness as an individual and as part of a community?