

Andrew Sicklick

Happiness and Loneliness

“Being joyful is not a mitzva per se, but it has the ability to facilitate the fulfillment of all mitzvot. Joy and a positive mindset give a person energy and allow him to overcome obstacles. Joy enables one to actualize his potential. Performing mitzvot with joy opens up to the gates of wisdom and divine inspiration. The Divine Presence rests with Israel only through joy.

What can one do to achieve joy? First of all, it is important to understand that the more difficult it is to be joyful, the greater the reward for being joyful. In addition, we should internalize the fact that serving God is such a great privilege that all the troubles in the world are insignificant in comparison. It is always possible to see the positive, and one should rejoice over whatever positive exists in a particular situation. Finally, even going through the motions and acting the way happy people act can bring on actual heartfelt joy.”

A Concise Guide to Mahshava, R' Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz, p.263

מצוה גדולה להיות בשמחה תמיד, ולהתגבר להרחיק העצבות והמרה שחורה בכל כחו.

It is a great mitzva to constantly be in a happy state, and to overcome and distance oneself from sadness and black bitterness with all of one's strength.

ליקוטי מוהר"ן תניינא תורה כד

According to both of these sources, what is required to achieve שמחה?

By flipping two words in Rebbe Nachman's iconic phrase, can you make a phrase that expresses R' Steinsaltz's important recommendation for achieving joy?

“Happiness is about a lifetime, but joy lives in the moment. Happiness tends to be a cool emotion, but joy makes you want to dance and sing. It’s hard to feel happy in the midst of uncertainty. But you can still feel joy.”

Studies in Spirituality, (Koren, 2021), p.258

“*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.”

‘Collective Joy,’ *Re’eh*, Covenant & Conversation, 5779

Does Rabbi Sacks agree or argue with Rabbi Steinsaltz and Rebbe Nachman? Explain your answer (Do you translate these words differently into Hebrew?)

“Rav Kook, when he arrived in Israel, wrote, “There is no one, young or old, with whom I can share my thoughts, who is able to comprehend my viewpoint, and this wearies me greatly.”

Even more candid was the late Rabbi Joseph Dov Soloveitchik. Near the beginning of his famous essay *The Lonely Man of Faith*, he writes, starkly: “I am lonely.” He continues, “I am lonely because at times I feel rejected and thrust away by everybody, not excluding my most intimate friends, and the words of the psalmist, ‘My father and my mother have forsaken me,’ ring quite often in my ears like the plaintive cooing of the turtledove.” This is extraordinary language.

At times of loneliness, I have found great solace in these passages. They told me I was not alone in feeling alone. Other people had been here before me.

“Loneliness and Faith,” *Covenant and Conversation, Beha’alotecha*, 5780

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Merqaxl1ZqU>

Last scene of Shtisel Season 2 (better if can start from beginning of scene through Netflix)

Akiva, the main character, feels lost and misunderstood. Alone. Where does he turn?

“The Rabbis tell us that each person is unique; there are no two people in the world who are the same, either in body or soul. As much as I celebrate my uniqueness, there is also a part of me that is sometimes lonely, when my inner essence makes me feel like I am so different from anyone else that there is no one else who truly understands me, no one else who knows my innermost thoughts, feelings, fears. The only One who truly can is God, since my uniqueness comes from Him. Prayer enables me to connect and overcome my loneliness.”

The Koren Ani Tefilla Weekday Siddur, p. 811

Is loneliness good or bad? Why?

וְשִׂמְחָתָ לְפָנָיו יִקְוֶה אֱלֹקֵיךָ אֵתָהּ וּבְנֶךָ וּבִתְךָ וְעַבְדְּךָ וְאִמְתְּךָ וְהַלְוֵי אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעְרֵיךָ וְהַגֵּר וְהַיְתוּם וְהָאֱלֻמִּנָּה
אֲשֶׁר בְּקִרְבְּךָ

דברים (פרשת ראה) פרק טז פסוק יא

והלוי והגר והיתום והאלמנה - ארבעה שלי כנגד ארבעה שלך, בן ובתך ועבדך ואמתך, אם אתה משמח את שלי, אני משמח את שלך:

רש"י דברים (פרשת ראה) פרק טז פסוק יא

“And Yom Tov should bring *simchah*, joy – that pure and true joy of living before God and through God – the only mood which widens our human sympathies, makes us capable of fusing our own individual feelings with those of **כלל ישראל**, the community of Israel, and of calling strangers, and orphans, widows and the poor to join in our gladness.”

Horeb, R' Samson Raphael Hirsch, ¶ 183

Does Rabbi Sacks' agree or argue with R' Hirsch? Explain your answer.

Do you see a relationship between happiness and loneliness?
