

# ENCOUNTERS

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The mere mention of this mitzvah, to be marbim b'simchah stirs a joy, and is sung all over. Yet actually fulfilling this timely mitzvah is another story completely. Its practical applications are somewhat unclear. What are we to do, and how exactly are we marbim b'simchah?

In today's world, happiness is hard won and easily lost, and almost always fades away too quickly. For most, it is but a dream. But here is a mitzvah, for every single one of us, every single year, to be marbeh b'simchah, and to increase the joy each day from Rosh Chodesh Adar until Purim.<sup>1</sup> How can we all be marbim b'simchah? And why must we begin at the start of Adar?

## OUR SIMCHAH

In truth, our *simchah* has nothing in common with what the world around us considers to be happiness. Our *simchah* does not come from acquisitions and such which many don't have, but from the realization of our many *berachos* which we do have. *Simchah* can

be found everywhere. We all have tremendous *berachos*, in both *ruchniyus* and *gashmiyus*. As a *klal*, we have sustained over two thousand years of *galus*, and continue to cling to the *Torah*. We have incredible *mekomos haTorah* and many resources for all of *Yiddishkeit*, for *Torah*, and *chessed*, *be"h*. Much of the physical amenities we enjoy and

the plenty we are accustomed to today didn't even exist a few generations ago.

Only from appreciating how enriched we truly are – how numerous our *berachos* are – and that Hashem is the One giving us, can we start to live with the joys of life. With the joys of *Klal Yisroel*.

And even more so, when we realize how privileged we are to be able to perform *mitzvos* before HaKadosh Baruch Hu. *Sefer Chassidim*<sup>2</sup> writes that every *mitzvah* that comes our way is a gift presented to us personally by Hashem. If we could only grasp the greatness of each of our *mitzvos*, we would be filled with the greatest *simchah*. It is our chance to serve Hashem. The reward as well is too large to be paid out in this world – it's never ending.<sup>3</sup>

Our *simchah* is not a goal or pursuit

– it’s an attitude. And it’s life-changing. *Mitzvos* done *b’simchah* are infinitely greater. *Bentching* with *simchah* and an *ayin tovah* is reciprocated by Hashem – with *simchah* and with an *ayin tovah*.<sup>4</sup> *Simchah* elevates a person, and it can uplift the people around us like nothing else can.<sup>5</sup>

### SIMCHAS ADAR

While this is all true year-round, in Adar we have an extra *mitzvah* of *simchah*, to rejoice in the miracles of Purim. To rejoice in Hashem’s love and *hashgachah* which was revealed to us through His miraculous salvation. R’ Moshe Schwab *zt”l*,<sup>6</sup> writes that although we gladden ourselves on Purim, we mustn’t forget that the essence of all the joy is our connection to our Father, Hashem. He illustrates this with a *maschal*. A father is coming home after an extended trip overseas. He eagerly anticipates his return, as do his children, who go all-out preparing for his arrival. His oldest is happy to once again enjoy the company of his father, his guiding hand. His younger child is excited about the presents his father brings. And the very youngest stands and cries, “Abba! Abba!” All their happiness has one thing in common: their father. It’s a shared *simchah*, enjoyed by each child on his own level. But the child who doesn’t even notice his father can’t share in the *simchah* at all.

Such is the case with *simchas Adar* – every person must prepare to “see” and to rejoice with our Father, Hashem, each on their level. We must “see” that in our lives too, Hashem is always close,

extending to us His guiding hand.

### LIKE ZERESH, LIKE HAMAN

Although Haman had three hundred and sixty-five advisers, none compared to his wife Zeresh. She alone perceived that Mordechai and his G-d cannot be beaten: not with a fiery furnace, as proven by Chananya, Mishael, and Azaryah; not with a lion’s den, as seen by Daniel’s survival, and not with dungeons, as demonstrated by Yosef. But a pole fifty cubits high, she foolishly believed, surely that won’t fail, and that would definitely be Mordechai’s end.<sup>7</sup>

Unbelievable! With all her wisdom and knowledge, she still couldn’t believe in Hashem’s all-encompassing power. Haman too was fully aware of all the happenings of *Klal Yisroel*, and all the miracles.<sup>8</sup> He chose Adar to battle Hashem, a month in which he saw no happiness, no hand of Hashem. Both Zeresh and Haman knew of *hashgachas Hashem*. Yet they both failed to believe and realize the ever present closeness of Hashem and His protection – at all times and in all situations.

### NOW, LIKE THEN

Let’s not repeat their folly. This is **our** *simchah* too. Now like then, Hashem is always guiding our lives, and on Adar we too share a special closeness to Hashem. In *halachah* as well, we see that Adar is forever an auspicious time, and in our days too, our *mazal* becomes stronger.<sup>9</sup>

### TO BE B’SIMCHAH

Starting in Adar, we are *marbim*

*b’simchah*, we increase our joy and our gratitude to Hashem for all our *maalos*, for all He gives us and for our special closeness to Him.

Year-round, we focus more on what we have still to accomplish, on who we can yet become; in Adar, we rejoice in what we have already become, on every *kavanah* we had, and on every struggle that we’ve overcome.

R’ Schwab *zt”l*<sup>10</sup> writes that just like saving a single Jewish life is considered like saving a whole world, because every Yid is an entire world; so too with every *madreigah* of a Yid, with every test of a Yid, **it is an entire world**. Every one of us are like complete worlds on so many levels. If we would only know this, he writes, we would be overflowing with *simchah*.

### MARBIM B’SIMCHAH

This is what it means to be *marbim b’simchah*: to rejoice evermore with our *berachos*; to rejoice in the One who gives us, and to rejoice in our everlasting closeness to Hashem. To know that our own connection is never lacking, and will never be undermined – it’s forever. This is our ultimate joy, and our *mitzvah*, to live the joy and constantly increase it.

*Sefer HaMechtam*<sup>11</sup> adds another dimension. Spread the joy. Share your *berachah*. Give happiness to the the poor; don’t keep it for yourself. Indeed, there is no better way to realize our *simchah* than by bringing *simchah* to others.

*Rabbi Ausband is a full-time member of Chicago Community Kollel.*

1) Imrei Ovadyah 2) Hakdamah 3) Toras Avigdor 4) Rabbeinu Bechayei (Otzar HaShulchan: sha’ar alef 76) 5) Bad Kodesh, Ma’archei Lev 2 6) Ma’archei Lev 2 7) Yalkut 1057 8) Esther Rabah 7, 13 9) Taanis 29a 10) Ma’archei Lev 2 11) Taanis 29b