

## Emotional Judaism, Part 1: Is it a mitzvah to always be happy?

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### 1. Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, Likutei Moharan II:24:1 (Breslov Research Inst. translation)

מצוה גדולה להיות בשמחה תמיד, ולהתגבר להרחיק העצבות והמרה שחרה בכל פה.

It is a great mitzvah to always be happy, and to make every effort to determinedly keep sadness and gloom at bay.

### 2. Merriam-Webster Dictionary, “Happiness”

a: a state of well-being and contentment

b: a pleasurable or satisfying experience.

### 3. Tehillim 100:2 (Judaica Press translation)

עבדו את־ה' בשמחה באו לפניו ברננה.

Serve the Hashem with joy, come before Him with praise.

### 4. Devarim 28:45, 47 (Judaica Press translation)

ובאו עליך כל־הקללות האלה ורדפוה וְהשיגוּךָ עד השמידוך...תחת אשר לא־עבדת את־ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בשמחה ובטוב לִבְּב מְרֵב כָּל.

All these curses will befall you, pursuing you and overtaking you to destroy you...because you did not serve the Lord, your G-d, with happiness and with gladness of heart, when [you had an] abundance of everything.

### 5. Kohelet 8:15 (Judaica Press translation)

וְשִׁבַּחְתִּי אֲנִי אֶת־הַשְּׂמִיחָה אֲשֶׁר אֵין־טוֹב לְאָדָם תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ כִּי אִם־לֶאֱכֹל וְלִשְׁתּוֹת וְלִשְׂמֹחַ וְהוּא יִלְוֶנוּ בְּעֵמְלֹו יָמֵי חַיָּו אֲשֶׁר־נָתַן־לֹו הָאֱלֹהִים תַּחַת הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ.

And I praised joy, for there is nothing better for man under the sun than to eat and to drink and to be merry, and that will accompany him in his toil the days of his life that G-d gave him under the sun.

### 6. Kohelet 2:2 (Judaica Press translation)

לִשְׂחֹק אָמַרְתִּי מְהֻלָּל וְלִשְׂמִיחָה מִהֲזֵה עֲשֵׂה.

Of laughter, I said, "[It is] mingled"; and concerning joy, "What does this accomplish?"

### 7. Mishnah, Taanit 4:6

מִשְׁנֻכָּסִים אֵב, מִמַּעֲטִין בְּשִׂמְחָה.

When Av enters, they decrease their rejoicing.

### 8. Talmud, Shabbat 30b (Koren translation)

"וְשִׁבַּחְתִּי אֲנִי אֶת הַשְּׂמִיחָה" — שְׂמִיחָה שֶׁל מִצְוָה. "וְלִשְׂמִיחָה מִהֲזֵה עֲשֵׂה" — זוֹ שְׂמִיחָה שְׂאִינָה שֶׁל מִצְוָה. לְלַמֶּדְךָ שְׂאִין שְׂכִינָה שׁוֹרָה לֹא מִתּוֹךְ עֲצָבוֹת וְלֹא מִתּוֹךְ עֲצָלוּת וְלֹא מִתּוֹךְ שְׂחֹק וְלֹא מִתּוֹךְ קְלוּת רֹאשׁ וְלֹא מִתּוֹךְ שִׂיחָה וְלֹא מִתּוֹךְ דְּבָרִים בְּטָלִים, אֲלֵא מִתּוֹךְ דְּבַר שְׂמִיחָה שֶׁל מִצְוָה, שְׂנַמְרָ: "וְעַתָּה קָחוּ לִי מִנְגֵן וְהִנֵּה כְּנָגֵן הַמִּנְגֵּן וְנִתְּחִי עָלָיו זֶה ה'". אָמַר רַב יְהוּדָה: וְכֵן לְדַבֵּר הִלְכָה.

**“So I commended jot,” that is the joy of a mitzva. “And of joy: What does it accomplish?” that is joy that is not the joy of a mitzva.** The praise of joy mentioned here is **to teach you that the Divine Presence rests upon an individual neither from an atmosphere of sadness, nor from an atmosphere of laziness, nor from an atmosphere of laughter, nor from an atmosphere of frivolity, nor from an atmosphere of idle conversation, nor from an atmosphere of idle chatter, but rather from an atmosphere imbued with the joy of a mitzva. As it was stated** with regard to Elisha that after he became angry at the king of Israel, his prophetic spirit left him until he requested: **“But now bring me a minstrel; and it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him”** (II Kings 3:15). **Rav Yehuda said: And, so too, one should be joyful before stating a matter of halakha.**

## 9. Rabbi Chaim Kanievsky, Orchot Yosher (Artscroll translation, pp. 365-366)

*Sefer Chareidim* explains the concept of joy of a mitzvah as follows: Each mitzvah that one has the opportunity to do should be perceived as a gift sent from Hashem, and therefore, the degree of happiness that one exhibits shows how much he appreciates and values the gift and that it is beloved in his eyes as a present of Hashem. If he exults in the opportunity, then this will cause him to love mitzvos and pursue them, and, accordingly, his reward will be doubled.

## 10. Talmud, Shabbat 130a (Koren translation)

רבן שמעון בן גמליאל אומר: כל מצוה שקיבלו עליהם בשמחה, כגון מילה, דכתיב: "שש אנכי על אמרתך כמוצא שלל רב" — עדיין עושין אותה בשמחה. וכל מצוה שקבלו עליהם בקטטה, כגון צריכות, דכתיב: "וישמע משה את העם בוכה למשפחותיו", על עסקי משפחותיו — עדיין עושין אותה בקטטה, דליכא כתיובה דלא רמו בה תיגרא.

**Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says: Every mitzva that the Jews initially accepted upon themselves with joy, such as circumcision, as it is written: "I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great spoil" (Psalms 119:162), and as the Sages explained, this "word" refers to the mitzva of circumcision, over which they rejoiced, they still perform it with joy. And every mitzva that the Jews initially accepted upon themselves with contentiousness and regret, such as the prohibition against forbidden relations, as it is written: "And Moses heard the people weeping, family by family" (Numbers 11:10), and as the Sages interpreted homilectically: They wept over matters pertaining to their families, as they were prohibited at that time from marrying family members, they still perform with contentiousness. The fact is that there is no marriage contract and wedding in which contentiousness does not arise, as there is inevitably some conflict between the parties. The *baraita* asserts that this is because, initially, the Jews did not accept the laws governing marriage and family relationships willingly.**

## 11. Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, Likutei Moharan II:24:2 (Breslov Research Inst. translation)

אף שגם לב נשבר הוא טוב מאד, עם כל זה הוא רק באיזו שעה, וראוי לקבץ לו איזה שעה ביום לשבר לבו ולפרש שיחתו לפניו יתברך, כמו בא אצלנו, אבל כל היום כלו צריך להיות בשמחה. כי מלב נשבר בקל יכולין לבוא למרה שחרה, יותר מאשר יכולין לפשל על-ידי שמחה, חס ושלום, לבוא לאיזה הוללות, חס ושלום, כי זה קרוב יותר לבוא מלב נשבר למרה שחרה.

And though contrition, too, is very good, nevertheless, that is only for a brief period. It is right to set aside for oneself some time in the day for feeling remorse and speaking one's piece in the presence of the Blessed One, as is brought in our works. But the entire [rest] of the day one needs to be happy. For contrition more easily leads to depression, than erring through joy, G-d forbid, leads to some sort of frivolity, G-d forbid. For this is the more likely: that contrition will lead to gloom.

על-כן צריך שיהיה בשמחה תמיד, רק בשעה מיוחדת יהיה לו לב נשבר.

One should therefore always be happy, and only at the designated time have a broken heart.

## 12. Orchot Tzadikim, Gate 9 (Ktav translation)

השמחה. המידה הזאת באה לאדם מחמת רוב שלווה בלבו בלי פגע רע. ואדם המשיג תאוותו, ולא יארע לו דבר המעציב אותו — בזה יהיה לו שמחה תדיר. ומי שיש בו שמחה תדיר — יאירו פניו, וזיוו מבהיק, וגופו בריא, ואין זקנה ממהרת לבוא עליו, כמו שנאמר (משלי יז כב): "לב שלם ייטב גֵּהָה". ומן השמחה יבוא שחוק לאדם. ואין ראוי לאיש משכיל להרבות בשחוק, כי עם השחוק משתתף דעה קלה, כמו שנאמר (קהלת ז ו): "כי כָּהֹל הַסִּירִים תַּחַת הַסִּיר - כֵּן שִׁחֻק הַכִּסִּיל". וכבר נאמר: מאותות השוטה ששחוק במקום שאין בו השחוק.

The quality of Joy comes to a man out of the peace and security in his heart without an evil happening clouding it. And a man who achieves his desire without a sad event to mar it will be happy always, and his face will glow and his radiance will gleam, and his body will be healthy and old age will not quickly come upon him, as it is said: "A merry heart is good (healing) medicine" (Prov. 17:22). From joy will come laughter, but it is not fitting for an intelligent man to laugh too much, for with too much laughter goes a frivolous mind, as it is said: "For as the crackling of thorns under a pot so is the laughter of the fool" (Eccl. 7:6). And it has already been said that one of the signs of a fool is that he laughs when and where laughter is not proper.

### 13. Rambam, Hilchot Yom Tov 6:18 (Moznaim translation)

פִּיצוּד. הַקְטָנִים נוֹתֵן לָהֶם קִלְיוֹת וְאַגָּזִים וּמִגְדָּנוֹת. וְהַנָּשִׁים קוֹנֶה לָהֶן בְּגָדִים וְתַכְשִׁיטִין נְאֻמִּים כָּפִי מְמוֹנֵו. וְהָאֲנָשִׁים אוֹכְלִין בָּשָׂר וְשׁוֹתִין יַיִן שְׂאִין שְׂמֵחָה אֶלָּא בְּבָשָׂר וְאִין שְׂמֵחָה אֶלָּא בְּיַיִן...

How [should one rejoice of Yom Tov]? Children should be given roasted seeds, nuts, and sweets. For women, one should buy attractive clothes and jewelry according to one's financial capacity. Men should eat meat and drink wine, for there is no happiness without partaking of meat, nor is there happiness without partaking of wine...

### 14. Orchot Tzadikim, Gate 9 (Ktav translation)

מכל אלה נדע שבח היין, כשהוא כמשפט החכמים והשותים כשיעור, שיגבר השכל על היין ולא יגבר היין על השכל; והשותים בזמן הקבוע עם אוהבים ורעים ועם חסידים וצדיקים, ולא עם ערשילאים וריקים. כי היין יוסיף חכמת עמוקים, ועץ החיים למחזיקים בה. ועוד: היין יוסיף חכמת המשכיל, ויכפיל שטות האוויל; ויחדש אהבת אוהב, ויעורר איבת האויב; ויפתח יד הנדיב, ויחזק לב הכילי. From all of these citations we can know the praise of wine when it is drunk according to the measure of the wise who drink a specified amount — so that the intelligence may be stronger than the wine and not the wine be stronger than the intelligence, and who drink at a set time, together, and not with those barren of knowledge, vain and empty. For wine adds deep wisdom, a tree of life for those that hold it. And wine adds wisdom to the intelligent person, but doubles the folly of the fool. It revives the love of a friend but stirs up the enmity of a foe. It opens the hand of the generous and hardens the heart of a miser.

גם כשאדם שרוי בצער, מי שמדבר אליו או מי שמבקש ממנו לעשות עמו חסד – אין לו כוח לעשות בקשתו, וכתוב (ישעיהו מט ח): "בְּצַעַת רְצוֹן עֲנִיתִיד".

Also, when a man is plunged in pain or grief, he has not the strength to fulfill the request of someone who is speaking to him or is asking him for a favor. And it is written: "In an acceptable time have I answered you" (Is. 49:8).

### 15. Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, Likutei Moharan II:24:2 (Mykoff translation)

וְהַכֵּלֶל, שְׂצָרִיד לְהַתְגַּבֵּר מְאֹד בְּכָל הַפְּחוֹת, לְהִיּוֹת אִיד שְׂמֵחַ תָּמִיד. כִּי טָבַע הָאָדָם – לְמַשֹּׁךְ עַצְמוֹ לְמֶרֶה שְׂחִירָה וְעַצְבוֹת מְחֻמָּת פִּגְעֵי וּמִקְרֵי הַזָּמָן, וְכָל אָדָם מְלֹא יְסוּרִים, עַל־כֵּן צָרִיד לְהַכְרִיחַ אֶת עַצְמוֹ בְּכֹחַ גְּדוֹל לְהִיּוֹת בְּשִׂמְחָה תָּמִיד וּלְשַׂמֵּחַ אֶת עַצְמוֹ בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר יוֹכֵל, וְאֶפְלוּ בְּמִלִּי דְשִׁטוּתָא.

The rule is that a person has to be very determined and put all his strength into being nothing but happy at all times. For human nature is to draw itself to gloom and depression on account of life's vicissitudes and misfortunes. And every human being is filled with suffering. Therefore, a person has to exercise great effort in forcing himself to be happy at all times, and to bring himself to joy in any way he can—even with silliness.

### 16. Rambam, Hilchot Yom Tov 6:18 (cont.)

...וְכִשְׁהוּא אוֹכֵל וְשׁוֹתֵה חַיִּב לְהַאֲכִיל לַגֵּר לִיתוֹם וְלְאַלְמָנָה עִם שְׂאֵר הָעֲנִיִּים הָאֲמָלִלִּים. אֲכָל מִי שְׂנוּעֵל דְּלִתוֹת תְּחַצְרוּ וְאוֹכֵל וְשׁוֹתֵה הוּא וּבְנָיו וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וְאִינוֹ מְאָכִיל וּמִשְׁקָה לְעֲנִיִּים וּלְמִרְי נֶפֶשׁ אִין זֶה שְׂמִיחָה מִצְוָה אֶלָּא שְׂמִיחָה בְּרָסוּ. וְעַל אֵלּוּ נֶאֱמַר (הושע ט ד) "וְכִסִּיָּהֶם בְּלֶחֶם אוֹנִים לָהֶם כֹּל אֲכָלְיוֹ וְשִׂמְאֹ כִי לְחֶמֶם לְנִפְשָׁם". וְשְׂמִיחָה כְּזֶה קָלוֹן הִיא לָהֶם שְׂנֹאֲמַר (מלאכי ב ג) "וְזִרְתִּי פָּרֶשׁ עַל פְּנֵיכֶם פָּרֶשׁ חֲגִיכֶם".

When a person eats and drinks [in celebration of a holiday], he is obligated to feed converts, orphans, widows, and others who are destitute and poor. In contrast, a person who locks the gates of his courtyard and eats and drinks with his children and his wife, without feeding the poor and the embittered, is [not indulging in] rejoicing associated with a mitzvah, but rather the rejoicing of his gut.

And with regard to such a person [the verse, Hoshea 9:4] is applied: "Their sacrifices will be like the bread of mourners, all that partake thereof shall become impure, for they [kept] their bread for themselves alone." This happiness is a disgrace for them, as [implied by Malachi 2:3]: "I will spread dung on your faces, the dung of your festival celebrations."

### 17. Talmud, Taanit 26b (Koren translation)

משנכנס אב ממעטין בשמחה. שבת שחל תשעה באב להיות בתוכה, אסור מלספר ומלכבס...ערב תשעה באב לא יאכל אדם שני תבשילין לא יאכל בשר ולא ישתה יין.

From when the month of Av begins, one decreases acts of rejoicing. During the week in which the Ninth of Av occurs, it is prohibited to cut one's hair and to launder clothes...On the eve of the Ninth of Av, a person may not eat two cooked dishes in one meal. Furthermore, one may neither eat meat nor drink wine.

### 18. Taanit 30a (Koren translation)

ת"ר כל מצות הנוהגות בבל נוהגות בט' באב אסור באכילה ובשתיה ובסיכה ובנעילת הסנדל ובתשמיש המטה ואסור לקרות בתורה בנביאים ובכתובים ולשנות במשנה בתלמוד ובמדרש ובהלכות ובאגדות...שנאמר (תהלים יט, ט) פקודי ה' ישרים משמחי לב.

The Sages taught: All mitzvot practiced by a mourner are likewise practiced on the Ninth of Av: It is prohibited to engage in eating, and in drinking, and in smearing oil on one's body, and in wearing shoes, and in conjugal relations. It is prohibited to read from the Torah, from the Prophets, and from the Writings, or to study from the Mishna, from the Gemara, and from midrash, and from collections of *halakhot*, and from collections of *aggadot*...because it is stated: “The precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart” (Psalms 19:9).

### 19. Prof. Chaim Saiman, *How Halakhah Changes: From Nahem to the “Tisha be-Av Kumzitz”*, The Lehrhaus

In any event, by swaying, hugging, and soulfully chanting with Jews of different stripes, the intensity and slight deliriousness that attends the end of 25-hour fast, becomes a moving, ecstatic, and in many ways optimistically joyful expression of religious fervor and unity. This effect is reinforced when these videos are proudly shared across social media, symbolizing the triumph of the Jewish soul and national and spirit. By contrast, can you imagine Jews in eleventh century Worms or nineteenth century Vilna sharing images of their Tisha be-Av as a triumph of Jewish peoplehood?...

The afternoon videos and lectures, the extended kinnot and Torah-study sessions in the morning, and the kumzitz at the Kotel plaza are all in tension with the spirit, if not the letter, of what until quite recently were accepted halakhic norms of Tisha be-Av. The first two aim to create a more relevant and spiritually “productive” Tisha be-Av. These draw on the modern preference for more affirming and engaging religious experiences, though what they yield is somewhat at odds with the halakhic vision of mourning. The third shift ties the quest for ritual relevance to the process of making Tisha be-Av more congruent with the national state of mind...

Despite their apparent novelty, these practices range throughout Orthodoxy, and none is associated with liberal or reformist groups seeking to reinterpret or change the character of the day. To take it a step further, those participating in these events tend to be of the most serious and committed Jews who aspire to spend Tisha be-Av engaging its central themes. People who observe Tisha be-Av in a more perfunctory manner are not interested in learned lectures or soulful chants, opting instead to pass the time at home, watching TV or fiddling with electronic devices; to say nothing of the great number of Jews who do not observe Tisha be-Av at all.

### 20. Orchot Tzadikim, Gate 9 (Ktav translation)

ומהו גדר האמונה, ואיזה דבר מביא אדם לידי אמונה שלמה? הוא שלא יתנועע מדבר רע, שיקבל כל הבא עליו בשמחה. וזה דומה לעבד שמכיר אדוניו שהוא נדיב ורחמן, ומשלם לעושי רצונו ושליחותו שכר גדול; ובעד שיכביד על משרתיו עבודה קשה הוא מטיב להם טובות גדולות, מגדלם ומנשא אותם, ויהיו אנשי עצתו ואוכלים על שולחנו, ומרכיבם במרכבת המשנה אשר לו, ומפקידם על ארצו. אין ספק שזה העבד היודע ומכיר זאת באדוניו, שיעזוב כל מה שבעולם ויעשה רצון אדוניו בשמחה, ואף אם העבודה קשה עליו מאוד, בזוכרו הטובה אשר תגיע אליו בגלל העבודה הזאת.

And what is the fence of faith? What thing brings a man to complete faith? It is that he should not sway or tremble before a bad happening but receive all that happens to him with joy. And this is like the case of a servant who knows his master well, — knows that his master is generous, merciful and pays a large reward to those who do his will and carry out his bidding. And though he sometimes assigns hard work to his servants, he rewards them with great rewards, and makes them great and important. They become the men with whom he counsels, and they eat at his table and he causes them to ride in a carriage second only to his own and sets them up as administrators over his land. There is no doubt that a servant who knows this about his master, would leave any other interest he has in the world and do the will of his master with joy, even though the work is very difficult for him, when he has in mind the good which will be his because of this work.