

# The Five Ways of Joy

written by Meir Elkabas  
August 3, 2023



This week we have the festive day of Tu B'Av in the week of Parshat Eikev. These occasions carry a remarkable message of joy. The Gemara highlights the exceptional significance of Tu B'Av and Yom Kippur as days of unparalleled happiness for the Jewish people.

Tu B'Av falls just five days after the 10th of Av, not counting from the 9th, as the Temple continued to burn on the

10th, and certain mourning laws extend to this day. These five days leading into Tu B'Av correspond to the five kolot (sounds) mentioned in Isaiah's prophecy about the happiness that will come with the arrival of Mashiach. These kolot represent five distinct types of joy that we can experience.

Reb Noson outlines five ways to cultivate happiness:

1. Acting Silly and Telling Jokes: Humor and light-heartedness can lift people out of their sadness and lead to genuine joy.
2. Dancing, Singing, and Rejoicing: Engaging in song and dance with melody and rhythm can stir inner happiness.
3. Finding Your Good Points: Recognizing and acknowledging our positive traits and actions can bring a sense of contentment.
4. Giving Thanks for the Good Points: Expressing gratitude for our blessings further amplifies our joy.
5. Looking at the Ultimate End: Gaining perspective by focusing on the ultimate future, where everything will be rectified, can alleviate present distress and bring in joy.

*In the days following Tu B'Av, we are encouraged to embrace simcha wholeheartedly!*

Tu B'Av, occurring after a period of mourning, allows time for the accumulation of these five types of joy, making it a day of ultimate happiness.

Parashat Eikev begins with the blessings that follow from faithfully listening to the Torah. Moreover, the Parashah uses the term "V'hayah" (it will be) – "And it will be, following that you listen to these precepts...". The Sages teach that V'hayah is a joyous term. In contrast, "Vayehi" denotes sorrow. This connection underscores the significance of joy in serving Hashem.

Rebbe Nachman emphasizes that joy itself is a “big” mitzvah, greater than other mitzvot. To serve Hashem with joy is the ultimate goal. And in these 45 days following Tu B’Av leading up to Rosh Hashanah, we are encouraged to embrace simcha (joy) wholeheartedly.

As we approach this auspicious period, we should strive to incorporate the “fabulous five” into our lives. By adopting a joyous attitude, singing and dancing, acknowledging our good points, giving thanks to Hashem for our good points, and trusting in a brighter future that in the end everything will work out for the good, we can serve Hashem with genuine joy. This will lead us to a meaningful and uplifting connection with Hashem, paving the way for a joyous and prosperous new year.

May we merit to use these 45 days to cultivate true happiness and embrace the joy that awaits us.

Shabbat Shalom!

Meir Elkabas

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## Meir Elkabas – Parshat Eikev

written by Meir Elkabas

August 3, 2023





Meir Elkabas discusses this week's Torah portion, Parshat Va'etchanan, with insights from Rebbe Nachman of Breslov. This beautiful lesson is about the Treasury of Unearned Gifts. Reb Meir explains.

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# Pray Like a Child

written by Yehudis Golshevsky

August 3, 2023



Rebbe Nachman's deep yet completely simple and straightforward immersion in prayer was a wonder to those who were close to him. He prayed in a brokenhearted way, begging for mercy with total self-effacement, like a young child pleading with his father.

Once, when a young man came to the Rebbe to ask for guidance in his private prayers, Rebbe Nachman demonstrated: "Master of the universe! Please have mercy on me! What will become of me in the end? Is this how I'm going to spend my life? Is this the life that I was created for?"

This was how Rebbe Nachman prayed—simply, directly, feelingly—and this is how he taught his students to do *hitbodedut*. To speak one's innermost heart and yearning out before God just as one would with his most trusted friend.

During the final Rosh HaShanah of his life, Rebbe Nachman was already in residence in Uman. He was deathly ill with the tuberculosis that would take his life. He was so debilitated that he could barely leave his bed. His family and students were in constant attendance, trying to alleviate his suffering and hoping to hear his words, and to see him take a turn for the better.

At the time, the Rebbe's grandson Yisrael was with him in the house. The four-year-old was known to be especially clever.

Once, as little Yisrael walked by his bed, Rebbe Nachman called out, "Yisrael! Please pray that I'll have relief!"

"Of course!" answered the child. "But first, give me your gold watch!"

Rebbe Nachman smiled and said to his disciples at the bedside, "See – the child already speaks like the tzaddikim do! He knows to ask for an object from the petitioner, so that he can perform a *pidyon* (soul-redemption) when he prays!"

Rebbe Nachman dutifully removed his watch and handed it to little Yisrael.

The boy solemnly accepted the item. Then he turned aside and said, "HaShem! HaShem! Please make my grandfather well!"

Everyone laughed at his childish simplicity in prayer. But Rebbe Nachman didn't even smile.

He gestured toward his little grandson and said emphatically, "Do you see? To pray, one must speak with the utmost innocence and simplicity, just like a little child who asks something of his father!"

*Based on Or HaArot I, pp. 113-115*

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# The Greatest Revelation

written by breslov.org

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Do you ever find yourself saying, “I really messed up! I blew it! What a missed opportunity!” Those negative emotions plant themselves in our brains and nag at us constantly, especially at this time of year.

We have finished observing another Pesach and rediscovering that we are a Godly people. We realized that we’re not really enslaved to our lusts and deficiencies, and that we can achieve true freedom from everything that weighs us down. In order to actualize these revelations, God gave us a 49-day period during which, by counting each day and taking advantage of its special spiritual potential, we receive the necessary “soul correction.” We rise one level each day, moving from the

49th level of impurity to the 49th level of holiness and beyond.

You may wonder if this process is just a fairy tale; after all, you've never felt yourself either physically or spiritually leave the servitude of Egypt or advance towards the towering spiritual heights achieved at Sinai. Because of the physical nature of our identities, it's extremely difficult to perceive the levels we achieve in our souls. Most of what we attain comes through having faith in the processes prescribed by our great Rabbis. Only after we've left this physical world do we truly experience and appreciate how much every single good action or thought is worth! But sometimes, if we're very sensitive to our growth and can identify the small, positive changes, we can glimpse the very real changes that take place in our souls.

But what if I messed up? What if I didn't take advantage of Pesach, the Counting of the Omer, or any other opportunity for connection with God?

This past week we celebrated *Pesach Sheini*, the Second Pesach, perhaps the most unique holiday on the Jewish calendar. For most people, it just meant eating more matzah on a regular weekday. But for those of us seeking a second chance, it's an eye-opener.

The Torah recounts that when it was time to bring the first Pesach offering in the desert, some Jews weren't able to participate because their "souls were impure" (Numbers 9:6). Simply understood, they had come in contact with a corpse. But these Jews were not satisfied with being exempt. They complained to Moses, "Why should we be left out?" (ibid. 9:7). Moses relayed their request to God and, shockingly, God agreed. A new mitzvah was added to the Torah! From then on, "any man whose soul is impure or who is on a distant path" (ibid. 9:10) could bring the offering on the Second Pesach.



This proves that there's no such thing as despair! As Rebbe Nachman taught, if you believe that you can damage, believe that you can fix. Even if someone missed out on Pesach because he was sunken in impurity or imperfection, he can still eat matzah on a regular day! A Jew should never feel that he is too distant; his negative feelings should only prompt him to cry out to God, "Where are You? I don't want to be left out!"

Furthermore, our descent actually becomes the means to reveal God's presence. By finding God even when we feel total spiritual disconnect, we reveal that God is right there with us! This revelation is a new Torah insight of the highest caliber.

This week also marked the holiday of Lag BaOmer, the *yahrtzeit* of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, when more than half a million people journey to his gravesite in Meron for prayer and celebration.

Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai was once overheard criticizing the Roman governors of Israel. The Romans decided to punish him with death, so he fled and lived in a cave for twelve years with his son, Rabbi Elazar. During this period, the two did nothing but study Torah day and night. Finally, the Caesar died and the decree was cancelled. But after being secluded with the Torah for so many years, Rabbi Shimon and his son viewed the mundane world that they encountered upon their re-emergence from the cave as incredibly vain.

When they saw men tending the earth, they asked, "Are these people crazy? They are trading Torah, which is eternal, for something of fleeting importance." Anger blazed from their eyes and consumed the vanities of this world. A Heavenly voice called out, "Have you come to destroy My world? Go back to your cave!" They were forced to spend another twelve months in the cave before coming out again.

Now, emerging as the sun was setting at the onset of Shabbat,

they saw an old man running with two bundles of *hadassim* (myrtles). They asked him why he needed them. He replied that he wanted their fragrance for the honor of Shabbat. Why two bundles? they wondered. He explained that one was for the positive commandment of *Zakhor* (remember the Shabbat) and the other for the negative commandment of *Shamor* (guard the Shabbat). The simple actions of the old man taught Rabbi Shimon and his son the essence of a Jew and his eternal love and connection to God and Torah.

The story of Rabbi Shimon alludes to his great mission. While he was able to probe the depths of the Torah and its secrets, he also learned not to judge the world negatively from his elevated level. His mission was to reveal that the most hidden and elevated Torah teaching demonstrates that a Jew is always connected to God, no matter who he is and what he may have done.

Rabbi Akiva also mastered the secrets of the Torah, so much so that even Moses couldn't understand why the Torah wasn't given through him (see *Menachot* 29b). But Rabbi Akiva's Torah remained in its lofty, remote state. It was for this reason that Rabbi Akiva's students did not treat each other with the necessary degree of respect. Rabbi Shimon was the *tikkun* for this. He was able to reveal that the essence and source of Torah is the unity and bond between God and each Jew. The greatest secrets teach us that we can always connect and discover the Godliness within every place and every Jew. This is the essence of the *Zohar* and the life of Rabbi Shimon.

And this is why Jews travel from around the world to be with Rabbi Shimon on his *yahrtzeit*, Lag BaOmer. On a *yahrtzeit*, the tzaddik ascends to an even higher place in Heaven – and, as Rabbi Shimon teaches, the tzaddik is now able to reveal more than ever that God is with us always, no matter where we may be.

*Based on Likutey Halakhot, Geviyat Chov MeHaYesomim 3*

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# Waiting for Change

written by Yehudis Golshevsky  
August 3, 2023



Rebbe Nachman taught his followers that they shouldn't offer rebuke or criticism, no matter how well-intentioned, unless it was clear that it would really help. Often, a mistimed or poorly-executed attempt to get another person back on the straight and narrow causes far more harm than good. Knowing when to leave a person space to develop at his own pace can sometimes be the greatest means of drawing him closer to God.

In Uman there was a man known as Aharon the Butcher, who rented the local bakery. For a time, this man would attend the Breslov synagogue in Uman, but his decorum there left something to be desired. He often conversed loudly during the services, disturbing everyone around him.



Naturally, many of the chassidim objected; they figured that the man would only change if he was thrown out of the shul as a warning, and be allowed to return only if he changed his ways. When they asked Reb Avraham b'Rav Nachman, one of the Breslov leaders at that time, what he thought of their plan, he voiced clear opposition.

"Listen, you can see yourselves that he is not, strictly speaking, a Breslover," he said. "Why, then, does he bother coming to pray with us? What draws him? Since he chooses to pray with us, it's clear that our responsibility is to welcome him so that he can absorb the unique atmosphere of our *tefillah* (prayer). Clearly, he comes here because he senses the joy and focus that infuse our prayers. If we are patient with him, we can hope that he will eventually improve greatly."

Aharon the Butcher eventually moved to America. Although in those years most Jews who immigrated fell away from Judaism, this man did not. His daughter wrote letters to their family in Uman saying how proud she was of her father's growing *yirat Shamayim* (fear of Heaven) despite – or perhaps because of – the new challenges.

"Father even railed in the synagogue about their inattention to the prayers," she reported. "He said, 'You call this a proper prayer? I'll have you know that I used to pray with the Breslovers in Uman. *They* know what *tefillah* is!'"

*Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh VII, 182*

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# Steer Clear!

written by Yehudis Golshevsky  
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When Breslover chassidim would find one of their number on the margins of a conflict or controversy, they would offer gentle rebuke to discourage the friend from getting involved. “Rebbe Nachman once said, ‘In the ultimate future, there will be kings and leaders of nations who will want to avoid fighting any wars. All they wish for is peace and tranquility. They will not be able to do this, however. They will be grabbed by the hairs of their head and forced to fight against their will!’”

The same holds true for every conflict. Even though many people prefer peace, each side feels the need to convince others to join the fray, arguing endlessly until they feel they have convinced the wretched person to endorse their side. They desperately want to rope even the most passive person into their disagreement. We all need to keep this in mind and

avoid taking sides in any argument, ignoring whatever pressures we may have to bear.

The chassidim would continue, “You might wonder how to steer clear of dispute. The answer is to simply flee the scene of the conflict! If you can’t run away, be careful to never express an opinion that seems to take one side over the other. Doing so can cause endless, unnecessary slander and heartache. It is so easy to take sides and become part of a dispute which really has nothing to do with you!”

Breslover chassidim were no strangers to opposition, so it seems difficult to understand how they managed against their opponents without arguing. Earlier chassidim laid out a general plan for dealing with those times when one’s commitment to the Rebbe’s path is under attack: “Unless you are certain that your words will make a positive impression, it is better to remain silent in the face of adversity. Better to swallow your words and silently bear insult than to amplify your negative traits by engaging in a fight.”

Reb Aharon Kiblitcher said about an elderly man who had passed away, “Although he was persecuted by others, he never fought against anyone his entire life.” This is high praise for a human being: to have lived without conflict in a world that is fraught with fighting and hatred.

*Based on Siach Sarfey Kodesh IV:92, VII:147, VIII:117*

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## A Gift from God

written by Chaim Kramer  
August 3, 2023





**We are required to work to rectify Adam's sin and all subsequent sins. Our sustenance is a gift from God...**

We all work hard for a living, putting in the hours, seeking new customers, making sure we get paid. But in reality, God provides the sustenance, through the particular work that a person does. Rebbe Nachman once said, "When we work, we work because of our sins. Eating [i.e. our sustenance] is given to us for nothing!" In other words, we are required to work to rectify Adam's sin and all subsequent sins. Our sustenance is a gift from God, given to us through Divine providence.

The Rebbe offers a parable to illustrate this idea:

There once was a poor man who traveled around collecting money for his family. The travel and the effort to collect was very difficult and lent itself to much sadness and grief.

He heard of a place where anyone who came was welcomed and given a complimentary meal and lodgings. He traveled to that city, which took some time, and asked a passerby, "Where can I

find the free kitchen?" He was directed to a certain house and knocked on the door. A man opened the door to him and he asked about getting a meal.

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The man told him, "First you must chop firewood, then do other work, and then you'll get your meal." The poor man was taken aback, but he realized he had no choice, so he did all the work assigned to him. At the end of the day, he asked for his meal. The homeowner said, "Go across the street, you'll get your meal there."

The poor man went to the house across the street, where he was warmly welcomed and given a place at the table. Seeing others sitting there, he began haranguing them about how hard he had to work for this meal. When asked what his problem was, he told them that when he arrived in the city, tired and hungry, he went to the house across the street and was told to do hard labor. Afterward, he was sent to this house for the meal. The others told him, "In this house, there are no requests to work. Everything is given for free. Your problem is that you went to the wrong house!"

That's when the Rebbe said, "We work because of our sins. Eating is for free!"

**From the upcoming book ["Earning a Living, Earning a Life"](#)**

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# Pathways – Parshat Bereishit

written by Yossi Katz

August 3, 2023



*“Pathways” is a weekly Torah publication exploring the festivals and parsha, published by BRI. To receive “Pathways” delivered straight to your email box, simply use the sign-up form on the right column of breslov.org.*

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## Pathways – Special Rosh HaShanah Edition

written by breslov.org

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King David said, “Unless God builds a house, its builders have toiled on it in vain” (Psalms 127:1). This verse is difficult to understand. It seems to state that if it were not for God building the house, the workers could never succeed. But if



God is, in fact, building the house, who needs workers at all? “Building the house” alludes to man completing his mission in life. Since the time of Adam’s sin, sparks of goodness have been scattered and hidden throughout the world. Each person must discover and redeem the sparks associated with his or her soul. But this effort cannot be done by man alone, for there are two methods of refinement necessary in order to retrieve the sparks.....

**Read the rest of the above article and more in this week’s Pathway’s below.**

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## **Pathways – Parashat Nitzavim-Vayeilekh**

written by breslov.org

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The summer is quickly fading away. Days are getting shorter, nights are a lot cooler and the leaves have begun their beautiful transformation. Indeed, it’s that time of year again – the “head” of the year is around the corner.

On Rosh HaShanah, not only is our annual income predetermined, but our very lives hang in the balance. We say in the stirring prayer U’Netaneh Tokef: “On Rosh Hashanah will be inscribed and on Yom Kippur will be sealed – how many will pass from the earth and how many will be created, who will live and who will die...”

**Read the rest of the above article and more in this week’s Pathway’s below.**