

## Yehoshua heard the sound of the people in its shouting. (32:17)

*Targum Yonasan* makes an intriguing statement: “Yehoshua heard the sounds of the nation as they wept amid joy before the (Golden) Calf.” Apparently, *Targum Yonasan* translates *b’reio* as being derived from *teruah*, which is the most broken sound of the *shofar*, like a *yevavah*, whimper/wailing, but definitely not a joyful expression. How does one weep joyfully? The two are opposites. How were they filled with joy, yet cry at the same time? *Horav Moshe Shternbuch, Shlita*, cites an incident that occurred with the *Alter, zl, m’Novardok*, *Horav Yosef Yoizel Horowitz*, which is illuminating. The *Alter* visited a town which was home to a former student who had gone rogue and turned his back completely on religious practice. Not only was he personally a *chotei*, sinner, he was also a *machati es harabim*, caused others to sin. The members of the community asked that the *Alter* speak with his ex-student; perhaps he could convince him to change the ignominious trajectory of his religious life.

The *Alter* agreed and met with the fellow for an hour – which, for the *Alter*, was a precious amount of time. Sadly, his pleas fell on deaf ears; the student refused to change. The *Alter’s* students felt bad and asked their revered *Rebbe* if he regretted spending so much time with that fellow. The *Alter* replied that, indeed, it had not been a waste of time, because he did have a measured amount of success. How successful could he have been if the fellow continued with his sinful behavior? The *Alter* explained that after his conversation, the sinner would no longer have a good taste/enjoy his sins. The *Alter* showed him how his sins were affecting his spiritual dimension. Despite his claim that he did not care, his base desires had to be satiated; he really did care! He would continue to sin, but he would feel a profound sense of failure and bitterness concerning his actions.

*Rav Shternbuch* extrapolates this idea to explain the term “joy amid tears,” which is how *Targum Yonasan* refers to the manner in which *Klal Yisrael* celebrated the Golden Calf. On the one hand, they danced and sang, for all intents and purposes expressing and presenting a joyful demeanor. On the other hand, internally, they were in pain, knowing full-well that what they were doing was iniquitous and disgraceful. In their hearts, they were well aware of the truth. True *simchah*, joy, is to be found only when one celebrates a *mitzvah*. This is an inner experience which is outwardly expressed. What we often see is *hollelus*, perverse joy, founded more in libertinism than in intellect. The people’s celebration of the Golden Calf was profligate – no positive direction, no sense of purpose, fun for the purpose of base enjoyment. They knew this; thus, they wept at how quickly they had plummeted to such a nadir of depravity.