

## "Because you did not serve Hashem your G-d, amid gladness and goodness of heart." (28:47)

We may infer from the text of the *pasuk* that the curses to which *Klal Yisrael* will be subjected are a result of serving Hashem without joy. In other words, regardless of one's actual performance of a *mitzvah*, if it is not carried out joyfully it is not considered to be a *mitzvah*. To the contrary, it is a source of curse. The commentators explore the importance of inherent joy in *mitzvah* performance. The *Baal Ha'Tanya* offers a profound explanation for this. Unhappiness indicates a total breakdown of personality. A true Jew must be happy! He is blessed -- either physically or spiritually -- and should have faith in the Almighty, the Source of all blessing. Such a person, who is content with his lot in life, radiates the joy that permeates his essence. Something is wrong with the spiritual constitution of a Jew who does not serve Hashem with joy and excitement. Happiness is a critical component of the Jewish psyche.

Let us expand on this idea. Joy is central to living a *Torah* life. In fact, it is the essence of spirituality. Spiritual joy is dependent upon one's feelings of self-worth and contentment that his life has a purpose which gives significance to his existence. One who has low self-esteem perceives no purpose in life and there is no significance to his existence. This is *kefirah*, apostasy! To denigrate oneself is to allow oneself to become vulnerable to idol worship. Indeed, missionaries for every worthless creed are able to prey upon people with low self-esteem.

*Mitzvos*, G-d given commandments, reflect the premise that Hashem wants us to conduct ourselves in a specific manner. What greater source of joy can there be than the awareness that the Supreme Ruler of the world seeks a relationship with us ? What greater purpose can there be in life than the realization that every action we make, every endeavor we undertake, has the goal of generating *nachas ruach*, satisfaction and pleasure, for Hashem ?

As we become increasingly aware of our relationship to Hashem, we should be imbued with an increased feeling of self-worth and a heightened sense of joy. This feeling should inspire everything we do and refresh our spirits with the knowledge that we are engaged in fulfilling Hashem's mandate.