



Adapted from the sefer חמין במוצאי שבת and חדוותא דדעיר אנפין collections of maamarim given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Seuda Shlishis and Melave Malka

Melave Malka Parshas Balak 5764

My father-in-law Harav Yaakov Yitzchak Weissblum zt”l told me a story that he heard from a survivor of the Jewish community of Cracow. Since the story is about the איש האלוקים Harav Shem Kleinberg of Zoloshitz zy”a hy”d, the grandson of the Rebbe of Komarna zy”a, I will first share something that I heard about Rav Shem from the Pnei Menachem zy”a.

The Pnei Menachem’s father, the Imrei Emes zy”a once travelled to Cracow for the wedding of his grandson R’ Aharon Noach Yoskowitz z”l, who was marrying the daughter of Rav Shem of Zoloshitz. While in Cracow, the Imrei Emes went to visit his *mechutan* and they were sequestered in a room for a long time.

When the Imrei Emes emerged, he told one of those who accompanied him, “He looks like a *malach*, and he spoke like the *navi* Yirmiyahu”. Apparently, he spoke about his sense of the terrible, imminent danger to the Jews of Europe. He did all that he could to cancel the decree, but he didn’t succeed. He himself was killed by the murderers *yimach shemam*. He refused to let them take his *tallis katan* and was killed in an exceptionally cruel manner *al kidush Hashem*.

The survivor from Cracow told my father-in-law that a few years before the war, there were terrible decrees that resulted in many Jews becoming impoverished to the extent that many died of starvation. At that time, Rav Shem entered his *beis medrash* and told the *tzibur* that it was revealed to him that a terrible decree unlike anything that Am Yisrael had suffered in the *galus* was going to take place. It would be so



[1]

© כל הזכויות שמורות למכון 'המאור שבתורה' שע"י מוסדות טאלנא עיה"ק ירושלים תובב"א

The editor is solely responsible for any mistakes and omissions

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, or for any comments, please email us at

hamaortolna@gmail.com

horrible that the current poverty and starvation would be viewed as an “introduction” to the suffering that would follow.

He said that it was also revealed to him that if they wished to be saved from that *gezeirah* they needed to invest all their strength into developing the *midah* of *simcha*. If they would truly reach a state of *simcha*, it would be possible to annul the terrible *gezeira*.

He delivered this message a few days before Lag Ba’omer, and immediately asked his followers to arrange for musicians to play outside the *kever* of the Rema (Rav Moshe Isserles zt”l) on Lag B’omer. Since Lag Ba’omer was the *yahrtzeit* of the Rema, thousands of people came to his *kever*.

Rav Shem wanted the musicians to play music that would bring those thousands of Jews to sing, dance and rejoice. He hoped that if their hearts would feel true *simcha* it would be possible to annul the terrible decree which hovered over the Jewish people.

When news of his plan spread throughout Cracow, some of the Rabbanim voiced their opposition. They said that according to *halacha*, there should not be music and dancing in a cemetery. They also pointed out that Lag Ba’omer fell in the middle of *sefiras ha’omer*, a period when Jews keep customs of mourning. They felt that it would be inappropriate to display such *simcha* during those days. They had other objections as well.

Some of Rav Shem’s family members told him about the opposition but added that since most of the community were *chassidim* who revered Rav Shem, they would have the support needed to defeat the opponents.

The Rebbe refused to fight. He said, “Even though it is clear to me that with this *simcha* we could bring salvation and relief to Am Yisrael, I don’t want it to come at the cost of *machlokes*. He cancelled the plan, and those close to him said that for days afterwards, he cried bitterly and



[2]

© כל הזכויות שמורות למכון 'המאור שבתורה' שע"י מוסדות טאלנא ע"ה"ק ירושלים תובב"א

The editor is solely responsible for any mistakes and omissions

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, or for any comments, please email us at

hamaortolna@gmail.com

said that he hoped he wouldn't have to witness the death of those Rabbanim in the terrible *gezeira*.

This story teaches us that when Am Yisrael find themselves in difficult, dangerous times, they should do everything possible to increase *simcha*, beginning with the basic joy of being Jewish. Rav Bunim of Pshischa explained that the *pasuk* (ישעיהו נ"ה:י"ב) *כי בשמחה תצאו* means that with *simcha*, it is possible to escape all *tzaros*.

My grandfather zy" a used to tell a story that he received through the *mesorah* of his forefathers, about his ancestor, Rav Yisrael of Ruzhin zy" a.

"In the days of the Ruzhiner Rebbe, there was a man who abandoned Yiddishkeit and threw himself into a life of the most degrading *aveiros*. He was a very talented comedian, and large crowds attended his performances. His reputation spread, and his jokes were repeated and enjoyed throughout Russia.

One day, the Rebbe heard that this Jew had died. He put his head down on the table, and after a few minutes, raised his head and said, "ווייזט" "אויס אז משמח זיין יודען האט פארט וואס צו זאגען" (It goes to show that making Jews happy, has what to say). The Rebbe wanted people to understand that the fact that he made Jews happy has value in the heavens. They understood from the Rebbe's words that this sinner's judgment was lightened in the merit of the *simcha* that he brought into people's lives.

We find a source for this in Maseches Taanis (כ"ב), which tells us that about Rav Broka who would regularly see Eliyahu Hanavi. He asked Eliyahu Hanavi if anyone currently in the marketplace were בני עלמא דאתי (people of the next world), and Eliyahu replied in the negative. After some time two brothers arrived and Eliyahu told Rav Broka that they were בני עלמא דאתי. When Rav Broka asked them what they did, they explained that they knew how to make people laugh, and that they



[3]

© כל הזכויות שמורות למכון 'המאור שבתורה' שע"י מוסדות טאלנא ע"ה"ק ירושלים תובב"א

The editor is solely responsible for any mistakes and omissions

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, or for any comments, please email us at

hamaortolna@gmail.com

would use their sense of humor to bring up people's spirits, or to end arguments.

It is known that *chassidishe* communities focused on increasing love and friendship during these days (when we mourn the *Churban*), by gathering together in *sheves achim*. This was especially true in the court of my ancestor, Rav Dovid of Tolna zy" a. It was known that they made many *seudos mitzva* during these days, to the extent that people would say, "whoever didn't see the nine days in Tolna has never seen *simcha* in his days".

My grandfather liked telling a story that he heard from old *chassidim* who had merited to spend time with Rav Dovid zy" a. They said that there was a *meshulach* who came from Eretz Yisrael to collect *tzedaka* in Russia for the poor of Eretz Yisrael. His custom was to spend the nine days in Tolna, and to celebrate Simchas Torah in Skver. He used to say that the *simcha in Skver* on Simchas Torah simply couldn't compare to the *simcha* that was prevalent in Tolna during the Nine Days. (In Skver, the *middah* of *yirah* was emphasized, whereas in Tolna, they emphasized *simcha* throughout the entire year).

The court of Rav Dovid in Tolna was full of *chassidim* who were *bnei aliya* and *talmidei chachamim*, including many *rabbanim* and *poskim*. They certainly did not *chas v'shalom* treat any *halacha* in the Shulchan Aruch lightly. Nonetheless, *chassidim* maintained the approach of *simcha* because they didn't want to abandon *avodas Hashem b'simcha* for even one moment. They even performed the *halachos* of *aveilus* which require us to minimize *simcha*, with *simcha*!

This is why we have to work on increasing our *simcha* and serve Hashem with *simchah* each moment. In the merit of that *avodah* we will escape every aspect of *galus* and see before our eyes, the *simcha* described in Yeshayahu (ל"ה:י")

וּפְדִינִי יְהוָה יְשׁוּבוּן וּבָאוּ צִיּוֹן בְּרִנָּה וּשְׂמִינַח עוֹלָם עַל רִאשָׁם שְׂשׂוֹן וּשְׂמִינַח יְשִׁיגוּן נָסוּ
יָגוֹן וַאֲנָחָה. אֲכִיר



[4]

© כל הזכויות שמורות למכון 'המאור שבתורה' שע"י מוסדות טאלנא ע"ה"ק ירושלים תובב"א

The editor is solely responsible for any mistakes and omissions

If you would like to be added to our mailing list, or for any comments, please email us at

hamaortolna@gmail.com