



Adapted from the sefer **חמין במוצאי שבת** a collection of maamarim on
תנא דבי אליהו given by the Tolner Rebbe shlita at Melave Malka

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Among Yaakov Avinu's brachos to Yehuda we find **מחלב** שניניים **מחלב**,
(His eyes will be red from wine, and his teeth, white from milk).

In Masseches Kesuvos (ק"א:), the gemara asks **פשטיה דקרא במאי כתיב?** (what is the
pshat explanation of these words?). The gemara brings the explanation of Rav Dimi,
which Rashi explains as follows:

ישראל said to **הקב"ה**, "The smiles and laughter expressed by your eyes are
more precious to us than wine, and the smiles and laughter expressed by your
teeth are more precious to us than milk."

The commentaries wonder why the gemara classifies Rav Dimi's explanation as
"pshat". The simplest reading of the pasuk describes Yaakov Avinu blessing Yehuda
with an abundance of wine and milk.

Clearly, chazal understood that Yaakov Avinu never intended to bless the shevatim
with limited, material brachos. The primary intention of each bracha was the
spiritual benefit that would develop from the physical bounty. In the case of Yehuda,
Hashem will express his delight with them, through bountiful wine and milk. **כנסת**
ישראל respond to this gift by declaring that the delight that Hashem expresses,
through the physical bracha, is sweeter than the physical wine and milk.

The gemara cites Rav Dimi's pshat as the source of the lesson that R. Yochanan draws
from the pasuk.

"It is better to smile at your friend than to give him a drink of milk, as the pasuk says
מחלב. Read the word **מחלב** as **ליבון**, showing your white teeth, by
smiling, **מחלב**, is greater than milk.

Clearly one who encounters someone about to die of starvation, and saves his life by
providing food and drink, has performed a mitzva which Chazal equate to saving an



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עולם מלא, an entire world. That remains true whether the donor smiled or not. R. Yochanan was not telling us that if we encounter a man dying of starvation, we should smile at him, rather than feed him. That would be the act of a רשע.

R. Yochanan spoke about someone who is needy, not someone at death's door. For that person, the emotional support of a smile and a kind word, is more important than the milk.

R. Yochanan lived the lesson that he taught. Ten of his sons died during his lifetime. Even though he was the Rosh Yeshiva, and Gadol Hador, he took the time to visit others who had lost children, comforting and encouraging them.

We must raise people's awareness of what a smile can accomplish. Every Jewish community maintains a tzedakah fund that provides the needy with food, drink, clothing, and housing. However, has anyone ever heard of a community that established a גמ"ח with the specific goal of bringing simcha to the needy? Even after we provide a poor person with his physical needs, the Torah obligates us to meet his emotional needs with a smile.

The Rambam writes, "It is forbidden to speak harshly to a poor person, or to yell at him, for his heart is broken and downtrodden." The pasuk teaches us לב נשבר ונדכה (תהילים נ"א:י"ט) Hashem never scorns a broken, downtrodden heart.

In (נ"ז:ט"ו) ישעיהו, we are taught לב נדכאים ולהחיות רוח שפלים ולהחיות לב נדכאים, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the downtrodden. Woe to someone who embarrasses the poor, woe to him! Instead, he should speak kindly with the poor man and have mercy on him as a father would have mercy on his son, following the path of Hashem who describes himself as אב, אנכי לאביונים, the father of the destitute (איוב כ"ט:י"ז).

Based on this Rambam, it seems clear that we should establish a גמ"ח of שיניים מלביני, dedicated to providing smiles and comfort.

Some may contend that since it's impossible to know people's emotional state, Hashem certainly doesn't expect us to fulfill an impossible mission. I would respond by asking those people how they react when someone close to them is clearly sad. Do they at least help those people with smiles and kind words or do they ignore them?



[2]

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Unfortunately, we don't even notice the suffering of our friends. We are capable of ignoring their pain, even when it continues for years! R. Yochanan demanded that those in his generation smile and lift people's spirits. Can't we, at the very least, commit ourselves to noticing the feelings of those in our own home. Are they happy or sad? So often, for one reason or another, a family member suffers emotional pain. They hope that someone will at least notice. Deep inside, they yearn for someone who will speak with them, and raise their spirits, not just once, but continuously.

Often, they encounter a lonely world where no one even notices. The same people who admirably take care of someone's physical and religious needs, can ignore the same person's emotional pain, not realizing how badly he needs a smile. Rav Dimi and R. Yochanan taught us that emotional needs are often more critical than the thirst for milk and wine.

A few months ago, I attended a conference for parents of children with special needs. So many brokenhearted parents shared the pain they and their children experience when no one smiles at them. Even worse, they realize that many people intentionally ignore them. Too often, they suffer from thoughtless people who make hurtful comments.

Askanim who help widows and orphans, describe the contrast between the first month after the tragedy, when communities rally with help and attention, and the following month when those families are already forgotten. Even if a campaign raised funds for their financial needs, it cannot fulfill their ongoing need for a smile and a kind word.

I was zoche to hear the Pnei Menachem, זי"ע א, describe his interaction with a group of Roshei Yeshiva, who met with him before the weeks of שובבי"ם. Since those weeks are an auspicious time for teshuva, they wanted their talmidim to take on sederim of חמש שעות רצופות, five hours of consecutive, uninterrupted learning. The Pnei Menachem asked the Roshei Yeshiva if they really anticipated that most of the talmidim could successfully fulfill the goal. He reminded them that Chazal instruct us "תפסת מרובה לא תפסת", if you try to acquire too much, you end up acquiring nothing. He recommended that they reduce the seder to three and a half hours.



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The Rebbe explained his reasoning to me. A bochur who learns for a significant number of hours, "קריגט עהר א באכיל", his belly starts to swell, i.e. he becomes full of himself. If the bochur next to him fails to learn as much as he did, that swollen belly becomes "א גאנצע בויך", a very full and large stomach! The unique power of לא חמאין enables us to repair damage described in the Zohar Hakadosh as שכינה שכינתא, the inability to receive the שכינה. However, Chazal also teach us in Maseches Sota (ה.) that Hashem says "I cannot dwell in the same place as an arrogant person". Instituting a learning program for שובבי"ם that will result in arrogance, defeats its very purpose.

The Torah's guidance is clear. Each of us has to brighten the lives of those around us. In Maseches Taanis (כ"ב), Rav Broka Chozaah asked Eliyahu Hanavi to identify people who were בני עולם הבא. Eliyahu Hanavi pointed to two men in the marketplace. When Rav Broka Chozaah asked them what they did, they explained that they have a good sense of humor, and when they see people who are sad, they help them laugh. Eliyahu Hanavi teaches us that smiling, and helping others smile, can enable us to acquire our portion in עולם הבא even more than other mitzvos.

When our eyes, and our smiles, bring joy to others, we will be zoche to receive the corresponding light and smile of Hashem, sweeter to us than milk and wine, במהרה בימינו אכ"ר.



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