



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

Melave Malka Parshas Vayeira 5762

In our Parsha, the *malachim* ask Avraham Avinu where his wife Sarah is to be found, and he responded that she is in the tent. The Gemara (Bava Metzia 87a) wonders why they needed to summon Sarah Imeinu and provides a variety of answers. The Seforno, provides a wonderful explanation *al derech Ha'pshat*.

“Their intention in sending for Sarah was to inform her (that she would give birth to a son) prompting her to rejoice and thank Hashem, which in turn would ensure that the embryo would develop more completely...”

The words of Rishonim, who are like *malachim*, contain precious pearls of wisdom that we should notice and understand. Rabeinu Ovadia Seforno is teaching us a wonderful *chidush*. The influence of *simcha* and *hodaah*, is so powerful that it even influences the development of the child in the womb. Simcha transforms nature, imbuing the mother's body with strength that was not naturally available.

This is a vital lesson for anyone suffering from physical illness, and certainly from psychological illness. *Simcha* has the power to overcome and cancel evil decrees, and to transform and heal the human body.

The power of *simcha* appears later in the Parsha. ותאמר שרה צחוק עשה לי. (And Sarah said, Hashem has made laughter for me, all who hear will laugh for me). Rashi, commenting on this *pasuk*, quotes the Midrash. “Many barren women became pregnant together with her, many sick people were healed on that day, many *tefillos* were answered together with her, and there was much laughter in the world.”



[1]

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The Sfas Emes (תרמ"ג ד"ה בענין), provides a wonderful explanation of how Yitzchak Avinu's *middah* - *Yirah*, connects to his name, which expresses laughter.

"It seems correct to say that even though Yitzchak had the *midah* of *Yirah* and *Pachad*, it could very well be that his face displayed only *simcha* and *chedva*. For in truth, the only person who can rejoice in this world is someone who is truly a *yirei Hashem* and fears nothing else. This is especially true if he has freed himself from the *yetzer hara* like Yitzchak who was prepared to be an *olah* before Hashem, had Hashem not decreed, *Al tishlach yadcha el ha'naar*. But he was prepared for it, and this is a greater *simchah* to the *tzadik* than any *simcha* that a *rasha* experiences in meaningless pleasures of this world...and they (Avraham and Sarah) knew that their *Yoreish* would be prepared to be full of *simchah* for that is why he was called Yitzchak."

The Sfas Emes teaches us that *davka* in someone who fears Hashem with all of his being, like Yitzchak Avinu, do we find true, total *simchah*, to the extent that his face shines with *simcha* and *chedva*. This is the type of *simcha* that can transform someone's physical state and heal a weakened body.

This brings me to a powerful story that I heard from the Rebbe, the Pnei Menachem zy" a. He told me that as a child, he needed to spend a few days in the house of his grandmother Rebbetzin Esther Biderman a" h, who was the oldest daughter of the Sfas Emes zy" a, and the Wife of R. Yaakov Meir Biderman, one of the greatest *Geonim* among the *rabbanim* of Poland.

The young Pinchas Menachem had heard that his grandmother owned a portrait of the Sfas Emes. He repeatedly asked her to let him see the portrait. Eventually, she explained that she didn't like to show people the portrait, because her father's eyes always sparkled with *simcha*, and in this portrait, his eyes expressed pain and sorrow. She proceeded to tell her grandson the story behind the painting.



[2]

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The chasidim always wanted someone to paint a portrait of the Sfas Emes, but there was never an opportunity for an artist to do so. The Sfas Emes was very *zariz* in all of his actions, and hardly ever left his house, for he was constantly learning Torah.

However, there was one time that he sat outdoors for an extended period of time. It was the day that his dear brother *Harav Hakadosh R. Shimon Alter zt"l* passed away suddenly, leaving his widow and young orphans. It was a time of tremendous *tzaar*, to the extent that when the Sfas Emes came to be *menachem* the family, he said that only the *Baal Harachamim* could do such a thing.

The Sfas Emes went to the *levaya* and remained in the cemetery until the completion of the *kevurah*. Some of the chasidim saw this as a unique opportunity that would enable an artist to have enough time to paint a portrait of their Rebbe. There was a very talented, non-Jewish painter who was able to paint portraits very quickly. The chasidim brought him to a place that enabled him to see the Rebbe clearly, and he drew a very accurate likeness of the Rebbe's face, which at that moment, expressed pain and sorrow.

Rebbetzin Biderman felt that image did not portray her father in the way that she saw him day in and day out. His face always expressed his great *simcha* in *avodas Hashem*. That is why she kept the portrait hidden away.

Now is the time to develop and strengthen true *simcha*, the type of *simcha* that strengthens, heals, and transforms. May the strength of that *simcha*, lead us to the great *simcha* of the future, **ושמחת עולם על ראשם** **אכי"ר**.



[3]

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