Jewish Tribune – Succos

**The Pursuit of Happiness**

Sam loved his boss’ stretch limo and although he couldn’t really afford it, he decided he was going to save up and buy one too.

Months and years of saving passed and eventually he fulfilled his dream. Sam was now the proud owner of a stretch limo. The first thing he did was to show his new car to his boss. He eventually tracked him down and found his boss sitting in his stretch limo. Sam parked behind his boss’ car and excitedly knocked on the boss’s car window, proudly exclaiming: “Boss! Boss! I’ve got one too! Take a look at my stretch limo!”

The boss got out of his car, took a careful look and eventually said “You call that a stretch limo?! My one has a mini bar, 42-inch plasma screen and a pool table?”

Sam was crushed. But not one to throw in the towel, he saved up some more and installed these features in his car and drove to show his boss his upgraded stretch limo. The boss was again in his own stretch limo and Sam excitedly knocked on the car window.

But there was no answer. Sam knocked again. And again. After 5 minutes, the boss eventually wound down the window. Same couldn’t hold himself back: “Boss! Boss! My stretch limo also now has a mini bar, a 42-inch plasma screen and a pool table!”

The Boss was not impressed. “And for this you got me out of the shower?”

There is always something else. The pursuit of happiness is just that. An elusive pursuit. Like the mechanical rabbit at the greyhound races, it is something people chase but rarely find.

Succos is **זמן שמחתינו** – a time of simcha. But what is simcha and how do we attain it?

Rabbi Tatz puts it quite simply: “Real happiness is what you experience when you are doing what you should be doing. When you are moving clearly along your own road, your unique path to your destination, you experience real happiness.”

The trouble is many people confuse happiness with pleasure. Pleasure is ok, but if it becomes our life’s goal, or if we become dependent on it, we’re in trouble.

The succah must be a *diras arai* – a temporary dwelling. Its walls may not be higher than twenty amos as this is deemed too permanent, but the Gemora (Succah 2a) permits *mechitzos shel barzel* – walls of iron. What is the difference between an overly high succah and a metal succah?

The Gemora explains that a height of less than twenty amos is suitable for a temporary dwelling and therefore, even if he made his succah with a permanent metal structure, it is permitted. But higher than twenty amos is suitable *only* for a permanent building and is therefore invalid.

Rav Yisroel Miller explains the message of this Gemorah. There is nothing wrong enjoying life’s pleasures so long as they do not become our passion and control us. The succah can indeed be made of walls of iron, or gold and silver, but it must be low enough that the structure *could* be temporary, made of more basic materials. We can enjoy our material possessions so long as we don’t need them or rely on them to bring us happiness.

Real happiness is when external circumstances cease to control us and we see the world as a temporary dwelling. It is what we experience when we do what we should be doing.

That is why, in parshas Ha’azinu, Moshe Rabbeinu compares the Torah to rain that waters the ground and brings forth its produce. We all have different abilities, talents and life circumstances but we can all find happiness. It is not based on external factors. We simply have to develop these talents and do what we should be doing.

The Sifrei (Ha’azinu 306) explains Moshe Rabbeinu’s message as follows: just as the rain is one thing, yet it falls on produce enabling each to deliver its own unique fruit, the vine in its way, the olive tree in its way and so too the date palm.

There is only one Torah, yet it nurtures us all. Torah is compared to rain precisely to emphasise that its most important effect is to make each of us grow into what we could become – and that is key to a happy life and real simcha.

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