

Happiness, Fun, Joy...and Money

Happiness, fun, joy

I like happy people, and I like making people happy whenever I can. It takes very little to make some people happy.

I like fun. I like fun in all its variations: goofiness, clowning around, silliness, good, clean jokes that make people laugh from their bellies to their soul. Who doesn't like to have fun and to watch others having fun as well? There is a certain exuberance to it, a positively thrilling, bursting energy. Just picture a 10-year-old going down a waterslide shouting, "Look, Eema! Look! Look!" It warms your heart.

"Joy" is harder to get a grip on. It is somewhere "higher up there". It's easy to think of and list joyous occasions. Watching the birth of your child. Stepping off the 777's ramp onto the Holy Ground of Ben Gurion Airport. Living long enough to see a student who came to you incredibly self-centered and wild grow into a real Mensch. Sitting in synagogue and hearing an adult read Torah — someone *you* taught to read Torah who never learned as a child.

Those are surely joyous occasions. But the abstract concept "joy" — it's difficult to get a handle on it. It's up there with words and concepts like "soul", "awe", and "life". I feel a need to make it more substantive and less ethereal.

Wouldn't it be a fine thing if...?

Wouldn't it be nice if you could spend your days letting people who need it have fun?

Wouldn't it be grand if you could use every resource you have to make unhappy people happy?

Wouldn't it be wonderful if you could take all the people in the world who are living in despair and give them joy — *whatever* "joy" means?

Happiness, Fun, Joy...and Money

You can.

And, just imagine! Money — of all things — is the awesome instrument that can make it happen. *Tzedakah* money.

Getting a handle on "joy"

Perhaps that's the way to get a grip on "joy" and to bring it down to earth. You do it with — of all things — money. You handle money all the time. Even with your eyes closed, you can feel what a coin is. It feels different than a button or CD, paper clip, or door knob. Even in the darkest of rooms, you know that those are dollar bills in your hand, and you would never confuse their "feel" with a page from a newspaper, a maple leaf, or sandpaper.

All that Mitzvah-potential is in your hands, all the possibilities in the world to bring happiness, fun, and joy to so many people. *That's* real joy. *That's* שמחה של מצוה Simcha Shel Mitzvah, The Joy of Doing this Mitzvah of Tzedakah.

Are you looking to put a little (more) joy in your life?

Maimonides teaches something most astonishing about joy:

שׂאִין שֵׁם שְׂמֵחָה גְדוּלָה וּמְפֹאֲרָה
אֵלֶּא לְשֵׂמֵחַ לֵב עֲנִיִּים וְיְתוּמִים וְאַלְמָנוֹת וְגֵרִים

There is no greater or more glorious joy than to bring joy to the hearts of poor people, orphans, widows, and strangers.

Laws of the Megillah and Channukah 2:17

So, there is “joy” in human existence, and there is “great joy”. And there is “the greatest and most glorious joy” a person can experience in life.

No scale of 1-10 adequately defines the joy of providing for the needs of individuals living in deprived circumstances, widows, orphans, and strangers.

The joy of Tzedakah is somewhere “up there” in the millions.