

## HAPPINESS - A PARADIGM SHIFT

As we approach the New Year we find ourselves drifting towards a more reflective state of mind. Throughout the year most of us are forced to maintain a much focused mindset, especially during these highly volatile and uncertain times. However, it is both healthy and natural to periodically switch gears which will enable us to take a step back and make an evaluation of our personal performance as human beings.

One of the first areas about which we tend to think is the health of the relationships with the people with whom we are closest. For whilst we fully appreciate the vital importance of a healthy relationship, we nevertheless neglect to dedicate sufficient time and effort which is needed in order to achieve this. A friend of mine told me this week something very profound; the most powerful truths are often the most simple ones. And it is a simple truth derived from this week's Torah portion that I would like to share with you.

The verse records three words that comprise the obligation of a man towards his wife. In Hebrew the words read; *V'semach et Ishto*. However the translation is somewhat ambiguous and it is in the clarification of this ambiguity that a most profound lesson in all human relationships can be derived.

You see, we are all human beings, which in more crude terms means, we are all naturally selfish. The good news is that because we possess a soul, we also have the capacity to be selfless. The problem however is that because the gravitational pull towards being selfish is so powerful the line between selfish and selfless becomes blurred. To the degree that even when we think we are being selfless we are still subconsciously thinking about ourselves.

It is with this in mind that we can come back to the verse we mentioned above. The word *V'semach*, Rashi explains, is a causative verb which means that the obligation of the husband is to focus exclusively on making his wife happy. In other words, the husband should not do what "he thinks" makes his wife happy, he should only do what "his wife thinks" would make her happy.

Sometimes in life we become so self centred that we have lost any genuine sense of other people true feelings. Yes, we are committed to our friends and family, our spouses and children, but we see their feelings and desires through our own selfish lenses. We never truly satisfy their needs as individuals with their own independent desires and dreams, we only think about them as they exist within our own paradigm, with ourselves at the epicentre.

So if we really want to make someone else happy we have to move beyond our own paradigms and begin to truly empathise with them and to discover their true feelings. And when we make those around us genuinely happy by only thinking about them, they will in turn make us truly happy by only thinking about us.

*By Yosef Vogel*

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Fri 16<sup>th</sup> August

Ki Tetzei

Shabbat Begins: 8:07 pm

Shabbat Ends: 9.11 pm