

CHABAD OF SOUTHERN NEVADA
 "Thoughts and Events"
 by Rabbi Shea Harlig



The Month Of Adar

It's the month of Adar (which began on Feb. 21), be happy! This is the basic theme of the Jewish month in which we find ourselves. "When Adar begins, we increase in joy," our sages teach.

But why should we be so happy just because it is Adar? In Adar we celebrate the joyous holiday of Purim (Mar. 5), commemorating the time when the unity and prayers of the Jewish people brought about the nullification of Haman's wicked plan to annihilate the Jews.

Our sages declared Purim a day of festivity and rejoicing; of sharing our joy with our fellow Jews. As Purim is the central holiday of Adar and the "theme" of the month, the entire month is permeated with our pursuit of joy and happiness.

The Talmud describes Adar as having "a healthy mazal." It is a month which brings the Jewish people strength and true health. In the month of Adar, G-d's blessings for a good and sweet year are renewed, intensified and increased. These provide more good reasons to rejoice.

In our day and age we have another reason to rejoice when Adar begins. Jewish

teachings explain that "Joy breaks all boundaries." As we stand literally on the threshold of the long-awaited Redemption of the Jewish people and the entire world, the Rebbe has suggested that our every action be permeated with joy in the hope that this will break through the last boundaries of exile.

So what's a Jew to do when we're told that the standard "Serve G-d with joy" and "It is a great mitzva to be continually joyous" is supposed to be intensified? Fake it! Yes, you read correctly, pretend as if you are really happy. You'll be amazed at the results.

A Chasid wrote to the Tzemach Tzedak (the third Rebbe of Chabad) and told him that it was difficult for him to attain a level of "joy." The Rebbe answered: "Thought, speech and action (the three "garments of the soul") are the three main parts of a person's behavior, and he was given control over what he thinks, speaks and does according to his desire.

"A person must guard what he thinks, thinking only thoughts that cause joy; he must keep away from speaking about matters that are sad and depressing and he must act as if he has a full and joyous heart, to show joyous mannerisms even if that is not how he feels at the moment. Ultimately, it will be this way in actuality."

In a similar vein, a Chasid came to the Alter Rebbe asking how he could help a fellow Jew who made out as if he were pious but was actually quite a sinner. The Alter Rebbe declared: "May what the *Talmud* says happens to a person who pretends to be a person who pretends to be a pauper but is not really poor, happen to him."

The Chasid was taken aback. He had hopes for some practical and pleasant advice.

Not what seemed to be a curse. Then the Alter Rebbe explained: "The person who pretends to be a pauper but is not will ultimately become a pauper. So, too, this man who pretends to be pious but is not should ultimately become pious."

As indicated in both of these stories, the initial step to being happy is even to go so far as to pretend we are happy even if we are not.

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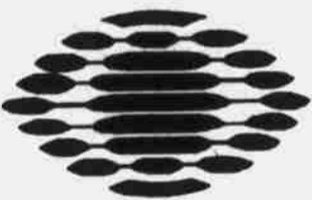
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