

HAPPY IS THE MAN

“HAPPY IS THE MAN WHO PLACES HIS TRUST IN GOD”

☞ PSALMS 4:4

Sometimes we think of trusting in G-d as a religious obligation or a “pious” thing to do. The truth is though, that trusting in G-d is the *healthy* thing to do. When we trust in G-d, we are happier, and like we said before, when we are happy, G-d tends to reciprocate in kind by giving us more reasons to be happy.

It’s a positive and self-perpetuating cycle.

Unfortunately, as we know, the opposite can be true as well. That’s why when we feel down about a situation, it’s important not to get into a mental “loop” of fear and disappointment. That kind of thinking can really be a “self-fulfilling prophecy.”

Instead, we know that no matter what we are facing, G-d wants us to find a way to take it all in stride. G-d does not promise us a pain-free life or that we will never have to face challenges. But He does give us the strength to be happy and even at peace no matter what happens.



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THE POWER OF POSITIVE THOUGHT

BY RABBI SHAI TAUB

There’s an old Jewish proverb – “*Think good, and it will be good.*”

Does this just mean that positive thinking makes us feel better about our situation? Or does it mean something more – that by thinking good thoughts, we are actually helping to bring about a positive result?

Jewish tradition teaches that we affect the world in three ways – with action, with speech, and with thought.

The results of an action are obvious and plain to see. If, for instance, a mother picks up and holds her child, this physical expression of warmth and affection has an undeniable effect on the child. But what if the same mother *also* speaks words of comfort to her child? Does not speech – although we cannot touch it or feel it – *also* have an effect?

Of course, we know that it does.

And so does thought.

Just like what we do and what we say wield their influence on the world, so do the things we think affect the person or situation that we think about.

“THINK GOOD, AND IT WILL BE GOOD.”

☞ RABBI MENACHEM MENDEL OF LUBAVITCH
(1789-1866)



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A RECIPROCAL REACTION

King David used to sing, “The Lord is your shadow” (Psalm 121:5). The founder of the Hasidic movement, Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, taught a deeper meaning of this verse. Just as a man’s shadow mimics his movements precisely, so does G-d’s attitude toward our situation mirror our own. That means, when we choose an optimistic frame of mind, G-d follows our lead and justifies our optimism by giving us things to be happy about!

In this sense, the way we choose to think about our situation can be the most powerful and effective means of bringing about positive change. Of course, we do all that we can do. We are not passive. But once we have taken action, we trustingly place the results in G-d’s hands feeling confident that He will certainly take care of our situation in the best possible way.

If we are joyful, G-d gives us something to be joyful about.

“THAT WHICH
COMES FROM
ABOVE MIRRORS
THE ATTITUDE
OF THE PERSON
BELOW. IF THE
PERSON IS HAPPY
AND CHEERFUL,
HAPPINESS AND
CHEER SHINES
DOWN UPON
HIM FROM
ABOVE.”

◆ THE ZOHAR

THINKING OR WORRYING?

Sometimes we think quite a lot about a situation we are going through and we can feel in our gut that all our thinking is not helping – or maybe even making things worse. That’s when we get the sense that we are just “spinning our wheels” or overthinking a situation. In a word, we call that “worry.”

The great Jewish philosopher, Maimonides, taught that the verse “When you go to war... do not fear” (Deuteronomy 20:1) actually applies to *all* challenges in life. When we face adversity, we are *commanded* not to fear.

And we know that whatever G-d commands us, He also gives us the strength to fulfill.

What an amazing thought! G-d has commanded us – and thus *empowered* us – to cast aside our fear even in the face of crisis.

“YOU HAVE
FORGOTTEN
GOD WHO MADE
YOU
AND YOU ARE
THEREFORE
FRIGHTENED
ALL DAY LONG.”

◆ ISAIAH 51:13

FAST FORWARD

What kind of thoughts actually constitute “positive thinking”?

A rabbi once advised a man who was overwhelmed with his challenges in life that the most effective way to get through his situation was by trusting thoroughly in G-d.

“And how does one know that he is actually trusting in G-d?” asked the rabbi. “Can you imagine that feeling of relief you will have when your present difficulties are finally behind you? *Trusting in G-d means having that same feeling now.*”

In other words, the simplest formula for positive thinking is to mentally and emotionally “fast forward” to the end. See your problems as if they are already behind you by trusting in G-d who is above the limits of time.

This does not mean to live in denial. We can accept the present for what it is while also trusting that G-d, who is all-powerful, can always do however He sees fit. Just because our situation is beyond any natural power or human aide does not mean that G-d cannot still do as he pleases. If G-d wants things to turn at a certain way, then there is nothing at all to stop Him.

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