MORE JOY, LESS OY
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The Talmud and other Codes of Jewish law declare: "Mi SheNichnas Adar, Marbim b'Simcha" meaning, "Whoever enters the month of Adar will increase in joy." While we often translate simcha as happiness, it is not happiness that our tradition promises. Happiness is fleeting, while joy is lasting and enduring.

Consider the two words, happiness and joy. When things are going well we feel happy. On the other hand, when things don't go our way, happiness leaves us in an instant. It's like looking at your reflection in the mirror, when you see it, it is there, but when you leave the mirror, so does your reflection.

Joy, on the other hand, is something entirely different from happiness. Joy, in the Jewish context, is not an emotion, it's not fleeting. Joy is an attitude of the heart, the comportment of the spirit. Happiness is found on your face; joy rests deep in your soul and is not necessarily based on something positive happening. Joy is something that lasts; happiness is temporary. Happiness is a sugar rush from a chocolate bar, joy is the satiation that comes from a good, well-balanced meal. When happiness fades away, joy remains to nourish and sustain us.

The reason joy increases in the month of Adar is because this is the time of miracles for our people. Adar is the month that contains Purim, the most joyous of holidays when we celebrate the salvation of our people from the hand of the evil Haman. After Purim follows the holiday of Passover, another celebration of our freedom and salvation from an evil tyrant, in this case Pharaoh. Passover happens in the month of Nissan, a month whose name literally means "miracles." So, through some interpretive linguistics, the Rabbis make the point that joy begins with Adar and increases up through Purim, then Passover, ultimately culminating with Shavuot when we celebrate the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.

Put more succinctly, our tradition reminds us that from this time forward until June, we should feel a daily increase of joy as we look forward to and are reminded of the miracles that God did for us in our times of greatest need and distress. We are sustained in our joy, which grows stronger as the days and months roll on toward Shavuot. Can you feel it? Look ahead, look what's coming–you'll find it–it's inside you.