**THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN JOY AND HAPPINESS – PURIM A TIME FOR JOY.**
**RABBI DAN MOSKOVITZ**
**MARCH 25, 2016**

This has been an incredibly difficult and sad week in our community. Our congregation lost three heroic, courageous and inspiring women.

**Anneliese Robens**, the mother of Melody and David was a leading Educational Psychologist, she co-founded the Jewish Feminist Therapist Group of Vancouver and helped shape the future of Camp Miriam.

**Hedy Balin**, Jeff Balin's mother escaped Hungary for Palestine on the boat, The Exodus. She served as a nurse in the Haganah, went on to run a 300 bed hospital and fight in the Israel War for Independence.

**Susana Cogan**, Mark's wife and Tanya's mother was the first Executive Director of the Tikva Housing, the Jewish community's leading organization to provide affordable housing to those who lack it. She grew the agency from an idea to an essential cord in the social safety net for the most vulnerable among us.

The JCC receive an email bomb threat, one among nearly 200 hundred such hoaxes that are sweeping across the US and now part of Canada. The building was evacuated during a concert, nerve were frazzled and for a time being far too much attention was being paid to those who seek us harm.

All of these have made these first weeks of the Hebrew month of Adar an unfitting start to what

our tradition says is supposed to be a month of increasing joy and rejoicing.

In the Talmud, and also in the Code of Jewish Law, it says: "*Mi SheNichnas Adar, Marbim b'Simcha*" meaning – "whoever enters the month of Adar, will increase in joy". Now I should mention, that I am being particular in how I translate the Hebrew word *simcha*. We often translate *simcha* as happiness, but happiness is not what our tradition promises, for happiness is an emotion usually directly related to circumstances that are currently happening, not those that are projected and on the horizon as with the month of Adar. Happiness is fleeting, while joy is lasting and enduring.

Consider the two words happiness and joy, and their meaning for a moment. When circumstances are good and going our way, we

feel happy. On the other hand, when things break, get old, disappoint, when we do not get what we want, or when things do not go our way, we feel sad and are not happy.

Joy on the other hand is something entirely different from happiness. Joy, in the Jewish context, is not an emotion. Joy is an attitude of the heart, the comportment of the spirit. Happiness is found on your face; Joy rests deep in your soul; it is not necessarily based on something positive happening.

Joy is something that lasts; happiness is something that is temporary. When happiness fades away joy remains, it nourishes and sustains us. Happiness is a sugar rush from a chocolate bar, joy is the satiation that comes from a good, well balanced meal.

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 Haman.

After Purim follows the holiday of Passover another celebration of our freedom and salvation from an evil tyrant, in this case Pharoah. Passover happens in the month of Nissan, a month whose name literally means miracles, and so the Rabbis through a bit of exegetical linguistics make the point that joy begins with Adar and increases up through Purim, then Passover, culminating with Sha'voth when we celebrate the giving of the Torah on Mount Sinai.

Put more succinctly our tradition makes the point, that from this time forward till 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.

Why do I find this helpful, so much so that I share it with you tonight? Because, when I feel low and removed from God, as I do right now, when I feel the burden and deep sorrow that comes with losing ones you love, and the pain you feel for your loved ones. When it seems that the mounting difficulty, struggle, physical, emotional, economic, social, political has no end.

When it seems all hope is lost I am reminded that we have been this low before and we have endured. Our people, our nation, our community, our families – we've known sorrow and suffering, and so too we know that it doesn't stay that way.

Hamen is defeated, his name is blotted out; Pharoah and Egypt are left behind for a promised land that is once again our home land this very day; God greets us in the desert on Mount Sinai and gives us Torah which has added profound meaning to our existence.

Why were all of these things possible? Because even in our greatest despair our faith, our tradition, our belief in a power greater than ourselves did not abandon us. The key word for me is not the promise of *simcha*, be it joy or happiness but the word that proceeds it, *marbim* / increase. Our tradition doesn't try to argue that when the calendar page flips to Adar that suddenly we all become happy, it doesn't promise a quick fix, a band-aid on our emotions. It is not Bobby McFarin, don't worry be happy Judaism. A 'happiness band-aid' won't salve our pain, despair,

or sorrow. No rather Judaism promises us a gradual increase in joy, a growing sense of wholeness, contentment, hope and satisfaction, *marbeh torah, marbeh hayim* / increase Torah, increase life!

Joy is something that is bigger than you and me and our current circumstances. Joy brings us peace in the middle of a storm. Joy is something that God deposits into us, when we lift up our eyes and our hearts and believe in the possibility that things will get better, because things do get better. Time does heal wounds, painful memories do fade and are replaced with colorful and joyful ones; even tragic deaths are juxtaposed with birth, b'nai Mitzvah and weddings.

This week we learned that the first of our two Syrian Refugee families, the Mustafa family, a

father, mother and their three children will arrive in Vancouver from their refugee camp in Jordan at the end of next week. A small delegation from our Resettlement Committee will meet them at the airport – so as not overwhelm them with all of us.

For the Mustafa Family - *Mi SheNichnas Adar, Marbim b'Simcha*

Last weekend we honoured Cornelia Hahn Oberlander one of the founding members of our congregation and a true national treasure. For Cornelia – *Mi SheNichnas Adar, Marbim b'Simcha*

And for those paying attention the Israeli Baseball Team – yes Israel has a baseball team is 3-0 and in first place in the World Baseball Classic and international baseball tournament. For them it is already Nissan, a month of miracles.

*Mi SheNichnas Adar, Marbim b'Simcha,* we have entered the month of Adar, perhaps slowly, perhaps with fits and starts, but joy will increase, hopefulness will return, things will get better. That has been the history of our people through all that our people have endured. If we the Jewish people, a people so beaten down and assaulted by history can still find joy and hopefulness to look forward to in the weeks and months ahead, then certainly we can do the same as individuals. Joy endures. The scroll of Esther proclaims it clearly, Layehudim hayetah orah Vesimkhah vesason vikar. The Jews of old had light, and happiness and joy and love — may it be so for us!