

POP QUIZ!

So, here it is, the middle of Winter and I am going to give you a quiz . . . not the most comforting sounding message from your Rabbi, but hold your anxiety for a moment. The quiz is one where you grade your answers! In and of itself, that should make you happy, right?!

With the start of the month of Adar just around the corner (and our being commanded to be happy upon its arrival), I think it's time to take this mid-Winter "Happiness Quiz:"

1. Do you think more about what you're not doing than what you are doing?
2. Do you miss something you used to love doing but don't know why you've stopped?
3. Who else do you include in your life . . . all of your life?
4. When do you set aside time for NOT doing/completing the daily tasks on your plate?
5. How do you make yourself happy?

So much of your life, of all our lives, is programmed – formally and informally. Most of us would agree that, whether working or retired or some combination thereof, it is hard to find the time to find the time for doing nothing!

So, I am wondering if you are spending enough time on one of the most central tasks for us as Jews: living well/with meaning. The wisdom passed down to us from our ancestors teaches us that this is how we may find true happiness, not just fleeting moments of vain fulfillment. We must find, create, or cultivate purpose – not necessarily deeply meaningful purpose, but purpose nonetheless.

In the end, it may be a trite axiom, but it is true as true can be: We all need to feel needed, to feel of use to ourselves and to the world around us. So, when you're thinking about how you're going to be happy in an uncertain world, think about how you can make your world more certain. When you're thinking about what you don't have, focus yourself on creating what you want. When you feel that your life is out of your control, break up what is before you and assess your priorities. Essentially, we all need to be aware of what makes our lives meaningful and brings us happiness.

And that's my big message – that's what the coming of the month of Adar (and soon after its arrival, Purim) can bring for us . . . a simple message of taking a "happiness inventory."

So, the question is, then, what happiness are you storing up this Winter?!

May you and all of yours find the happiness and meaning you seek in life, and may you be blessed to share that happiness with each other, with your fellow congregants, and with the broader community. And may the whole world be enriched, enlightened, and enlivened by your example.

Happy Adar!

Rabbi Gerald R. Fox