

## CyberTorah: A Good New Year

When my son was first born, Carol and I had an argument (which I won) about good versus happy. Carol maintained that the primary goal of us as parents was to help our children be happy. I maintained, by contrast, that our primary goal is to help our children be good. It's a subtle difference, but meaningful. I would rather my children put aside a moment of happiness in the service of helping a person in need. I would hope that my children would first dedicate themselves to making their communities better places and allow happiness to be an outcome.

Put another way, if happiness is a goal, I worry that it becomes self-serving. My own private pursuit of happiness leaves me self-absorbed and always looking over my shoulder for how I could be happier. Therefore, I perversely end up unhappy. By contrast, when I am dedicated to bringing goodness into the world, happiness becomes an outcome. This is why the Mishnah teaches, "Who is rich? Someone happy with their portion."

Victor Frankl, the father of Logotherapy and a Holocaust survivor, points out that the one effective way of helping people deal with their neuroses is to find a meaningful purpose in their lives. That is, when they are worried about their fulfillment they may find themselves victim to neurotic behaviors and depression. Often dedicating themselves to a higher pursuit of good helps eliminate those troubling symptoms and behaviors.

A few days ago, we were wishing one another a Happy New Year. But a few months ago, we wished one another a Shana Tova, a Good New Year. So I will say, I certainly hope you have a year of happiness. I too want to be happy and content with my lot in life. More significantly, though, I wish you a year of goodness, filled with the opportunity both to share goodness with others and to experience goodness yourself.

For then we are partners with God, who does good and is good.

A good year to all & Shabbat Shalom,

Rabbi David Booth