

Parsha Story

Stories and Parables from
the famed Maggid of Dubno
by Rabbi Chanan Morrison

The Dancing Duo

SHABBAT

Simcha on Shabbat & Yom Tov

Hershel lost the use of his legs as a boy. It wasn't easy, not walking, not running, not even wandering where he pleased. But he managed. Hershel was the sort who managed. And he had Zalman.

Zalman was strong as an ox and, not incidentally, built like one. He could hoist a barrel with one hand. Only trouble was, he was deaf as a stone.

One afternoon, Hershel had an idea. Alone, they were stuck. Together, they could move mountains, or at least get across town. Zalman would carry Hershel on his shoulders, and Hershel would be his eyes and ears. A perfect partnership.

The plan worked brilliantly – most of the time.

One evening, strolling through town, they passed a house filled with music, laughter, and stomping feet. Hershel caught it at once: the fiddle, the singing. Zalman, of course, heard nothing. He saw only a house. He

shifted his shoulders, ready to move on.

Hershel, thinking fast, reached into his pocket and pulled out a slim flask of gin. He poured a small cup and handed it to Zalman. Zalman drank. Encouraged by his friend's good spirits, so to speak, Hershel poured another. And another.

Before long, Zalman, now pleasantly tipsy, began to sway. Then he started to dance. Soon he was spinning and twirling, a one-man celebration, with Hershel perched on his shoulders, bouncing along to the rhythm.

And so, thanks to a little well-placed encouragement, they had the time of their lives. One heard the music. The other felt the gin. Each, in his own way, danced with all his heart.

Celebration of Body and Soul

The Torah commands us to rejoice on the three festivals of the year. Fine. But how exactly?

The Sages answered: good food, nice clothes, a cup or two of wine. Not exactly what you'd expect for spiritual uplift, but there it is. Also Shabbat, Yishayahu tells us, should be celebrated as “a delight” (58:13).

But shouldn't holy days be about higher things – prayer, Torah, spiritual meditations? Why all the emphasis on brisket and Bordeaux?

Because our soul and body are like Hershel and Zalman. The soul hears the music of Shabbat and Yom Tov. It feels the holiness in the air. The body, however, is deaf to all that. It needs something it can hold in the hand, smell in the glass, taste on the tongue.

And so, just as Hershel did for his deaf friend, we give the body something to celebrate. A fine meal, a glass of wine, the joy of nice clothing. And in return, the body lifts the soul on its shoulders. The body rejoices, the soul soars, and together, each in its own way, they dance.

*The Wit and Wisdom of the Dubno Maggid.
Adapted from The Maggid and his Parables,
pp. 41-42*