

Writing Deeply Felt Emotions: Simcha - Happiness

Introduction

A wedding is, on the surface, a joyous celebration. Yet anyone who has attended or been part of one knows that beneath the dancing, blessings, and laughter, a wide range of emotions may be present. Joy may be joined by longing, worry, gratitude or even sorrow—felt by different people in different moments—or even in the same person in the same moment. For a writer, this complexity offers a rich canvas. How might you capture the fullness of a wedding or any emotional experience that is sure to be layered with complexity.

To bring such moments alive on the page, writers must help readers feel the experience, not simply know that it happened. The following three sessions (90 minutes each) will support you in exploring essential tools for evoking deeply felt emotion(s) in writing:

1. Juxtaposition
2. Showing and Telling
3. Rhythm and Repetition

These writing practices are illustrated in three texts written by our ancestor-authors who wrote about *simcha*—happiness. The texts have survived through time, in part, because they enable readers to deeply feel the emotion of happiness. You'll see how Jewish wisdom, from ancient texts to contemporary voices, reveals a distinctive understanding of happiness—one that embraces its complexity and interweaving with other emotions.

Across these three sessions, you will explore *simcha*, a word familiar to many, almost viewed as part of the English language. “We are going to a *simcha*”—defined as a celebration. *Simcha* is also a deeply felt emotion that is hard to define in English. The closest word to approximate meaning that we will use throughout the sessions is happiness. Judaism, you'll discover, has a unique understanding of *simcha*. We invite you to look for how it may be similar or different than our English word happiness.

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The setting of a wedding is a ritual that seems to be about joy alone but in fact holds a much wider range of human experience. By reflecting on how others have effectively written about *simcha* you will discover how to capture both the expected and the surprising dimensions of happiness—or any emotion—in your work.

The three sessions are designed to stand alone. You can select the one(s) that best meets the needs and interests of your JWC. However, we do see a richness emerge by doing all three. This chart below highlights the big ideas in each session: writing tool, a core concept of *simcha*/happiness, and the Jewish wisdom text (all associated with a wedding).

Writing Deeply Felt Emotions: Simcha	Writing Tool	Jewish Wisdom
Session One	Juxtaposition: Placing two opposing emotions side by side	The duality of happiness: Rebbe Nachman's parable
Session Two	Showing and telling: Immersing readers in experience and describing it well	Many dimensions of happiness: The seventh blessing from the <i>Sheva Brachot</i>
Session Three	Rhythm and repetition: Length of sentences, use of punctuation, and repeated words and phrases	<i>Simcha</i> , the Divine and Gratitude: Psalm 118:24 & <i>Hava Nagila</i>