The traditional greeting of Chag Kasher v’Sameach, is usually translated as a wish to enjoy “A Kosher and Joyous Holiday.” Appreciating this age-old greeting should indicate that, at least this year, more than a wish it is a charge: We must do everything we can to make sure this Pesach is not only kosher but sameach.

Generally, much effort before Pesach focuses on ensuring that one’s Pesach is kosher. Yet, beyond all the unique kashrut challenges this year, the greeting also calls for effort ensuring this Pesach will also be sameach.

As the pandemic reminds us that our power is limited, as our Pesach plans change to new venues, often much smaller than we hoped, one might think that it is not within our power for this Pesach to be sameach. Yet by answering two questions, we might find simcha really all about, and what does it have to do with Pesach?

At first glance, Pesach really has nothing to do with simcha. It is the only one of the three festivals for which the Torah doesn’t explicitly command simcha. The fact that there is an actual mitzvah to be joyous on Pesach is only because the Three Festivals share certain requirements. This mitzvah calls for festive meals, including wine and possibly meat, ensuring that those who enjoy it and are capable have new clothes, children have treats and nuts to keep them awake and interested at the Seder etc. While these halachot might seem to indicate that simcha requires external actions, the truth is that simcha is much more in the heart and soul than in the body.

Rav Soloveitchik noted that the exterior acts of simcha that we perform are really only there to provide an external framework so we can experience simcha as a meditative, internal experience. He notes that the Torah always speaks of simcha being Lifnei Hashem, experienced in the presence of G-d. One who sees oneself as living in a world where G-d is ever-present can actually achieve simcha not only on the holidays, but every day of one’s life.

So what is the ticket to simcha being this internal feeling of joy?

Two aspects of simcha which are often overlooked are its connection to Emunah (unwavering faith in G-d) and its call for making others happy. One who is sameach is one who recognizes that G-d is in control and even the darkest moments are somehow all part of a divine plan. Knowing the One Above is “worrying” about the world and our situation allows us to put our worries aside and rejoice.

Secondly, true simcha requires that we make our joy contagious: just as G-d provides joy for humanity, we truly experience simcha when we provide it for others.

With this in mind, we can understand simcha’s connection to Pesach, where no specific mitzvah is necessary as it should be obvious. The Pesach Seder is specifically celebrated in the darkness of the night, where the pasuk describes V’Emunatcha Ba’leilot, night is a time for emunah. Much like the Jewish people who celebrated the initial Pesach when locked in their homes, they partook of the Paschal Lamb with the understanding that they were in G-d’s hands, and He would protect them from all the dangers outside. On the seventh day of Pesach, the nation burst forth in joyous song after witnessing the Egyptians meeting a miraculous demise. At that point, there was true emunah, Vayaaminu BaHashem uv’Moshe Avdo, and there was truly room for joy.

Every year we relive the Pesach experience no matter what one’s situation, we reconnect to the emunah. Pesach was celebrated in the concentration camps to the best of one’s ability, even though one might have wondered maybe Egypt would have been better. Pesach reminds us that difficulty is temporary, somehow part of a master plan we don’t understand, but bechipazon, with haste, we will experience redemption.

This year not only can we witness a Chag Kasher V’Sameach, but we must! Let this Pesach be filled with emunah that a crisis can be hastily turned around, and as we make others sameach we will truly feel what it means to be connected to G-d.