

BILVAVI

BUILDING A SANCTUARY IN THE HEART

BEING IN THE PRESENT

Purim is a day in which there is no "time" – it is a day in which all of the past, present and future is contained in one day. What is meant by this?

There are many people who always wonder, "What I am supposed to do today?" When people do this, they are really mixing tomorrow with today. They don't know what to do today, since they are busy thinking about tomorrow.

Such a life is a life spent in imagination. When people act like this, they are always living the "tomorrow" in the today, and they never experience the "today". People who only live for the future, and not for today, never live the present moment; they don't live in the present – they always live in the morrow.

Generally speaking, we have to live in the present moment and never think about the past or future. [excerpt from 006 שמחתך]

This weekly parsha sheet is based on translations from the divrei Torah of HaRav Isamar Schwartz, Shlit"a the author of the Bilvavi & DaEs series. The Rav attended the Pachad Yitzhak Yeshiva of Rav Yonasan David, Shlit"a and graduated from the Ponovitch Yeshiva of Rav Gershon Edelstein, Shlit"a. The earliest of more than 50 sefarim of the Rav where enthusiastically endorsed by Rav Gamliel Rabinovitch, Shlit"a, Rav Moshe Sternbuch, Shlit"a, Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlit"a, the Tolna Rebbe, Shlit"a, Rav Moshe Mordechai Karp, Shlit"a, Rav Sherayah Deblitzki, z"l, Rav Chizkiyahu Erlanger, z"l, amongst others. Using an eclectic approach, the Rav's teachings speak to the hearts of Jews from all walks of life.

PURIM ELEVATION

At Har Sinai, there were two revelations. There was the giving of the Torah, which began with the Ten Commandments, the roots of the entire Torah. There was also another revelation: Hashem opened up all of the heavens and showed them "Ain Od Milvado", that there is nothing else besides Him. How are these two revelations interconnected?

There are two ways of how a person can connect these two revelations together.

One way is to connect to the Ten Commandments. Through deeply connecting to the Torah, a person can reveal Hashem, Who is contained and hidden within the Ten Commandments, which are called His ten "garments." Using this path, the beginning of one's avodah starts with the Ten Commandments as the roots, and after that, from the rest of 613 mitzvos which branch out from there; and after that, to go further into the details of all of the mitzvos, until a person covers all of the details of the Torah which is currently in our hands.

Through gathering together all of these details, a person enters into the depth of the Torah, and this enables a person to have an intimate connection with Hashem, as in the verse, "Kiss me with the kisses of Your mouth." In this path, the Creator is revealed through beginning from the Ten Commandments.

But there is also an opposite path than this, where a person first connects himself to Hashem, and as a result, he connects to the Ten Commandments. Hashem is all-inclusive, and since everything is integrated with Him, a person connects to the Ten Commandments by way of connecting himself to Hashem. We find this path used by Avraham Avinu, who "learned Torah from himself", because he recognized that there must be an Owner to all of Creation. He figured out the entire Torah by connecting himself to Hashem which was the path found by our holy Avos.

After the giving of the Torah, a change took place. We can no longer connect to Hashem without Torah. The Ramban says that the Avos didn't keep certain mitzvos sometimes, because it was before the Torah was given, but after the Torah was given, it is impossible to bypass any of the Torah's laws.

However, there is a point even in our times today where we can access both of these paths at once - both the path of first connecting to Hashem, as well as the path of first connecting to Torah. (We stress "both" here and "at once", because a person is not allowed, chas v'shalom, to adapt the exact path of the Avos today and bypass some laws of the Torah). One needs to "advance and retreat" (ratzu v'shov) in between these two points: On one hand, to connect to the "Ain Od Milvado" aspect, and at the same time, to connect to the Ten Commandments which were given by Hashem.

For a few moments, in one's own soul, one can connect to either of these two revelations, and to keep "advancing, and retreating" between these two points.

Our Soul's Inner Redemption

When Avraham Avinu was told by Hashem "It will be surely be known to you", this usage of "knowledge", daas, was an allusion to how the exile of Egypt would rectify the sin of Adam HaRishon with the Eitz HaDaas. The way of daas is that a person takes his natural desire for knowledge and he uses his mental powers for HaKadosh Baruch Hu, by making his own intellect subservient to Him, until he eventually comes to nullify his sense of self, which enables him to achieve a full bond with the Creator. But this is a long and difficult path, and only a few individuals can get far with it. Is there an alternate route to take than this?

That is the secret of Purim! The secret of this day is to show us that there is an entirely different path to take in our avodah. Consider the following. When a person gets up in the morning, he must



say Modeh Ani. Why is this the first thing a person must do every day? Shouldn't he instead think about Torah (according to the opinions that thinking about Torah doesn't require a blessing over the Torah)?

It is because there is a whole different source where our soul derives spiritual vitality from. Modeh Ani implies that the very first thought of a person's day should be about the Creator. It is permissible to think about Hashem before a person has made the blessing over Torah? We know without a doubt that it is permissible. Why? It is because a thought about Hashem is part of our essence. Something which is a part of our intrinsic existence doesn't need a blessing beforehand in order for us to access it.

One should examine himself deeply and see what he is mainly searching for. Does he mainly seek understanding and clarification of things? Or does he mainly seek emunah peshutah in Hashem?

This matter is the core that lies at the secret of the "redemption of the soul." It is clear that all of the "exile" which our soul experiences, is only possible when there is a lack of a simple connection to Hashem; when the soul of a person hasn't been trained to remember Hashem throughout the day. Just as we remember our hands and feet throughout the day, because they are a simple reality, so do we need to remember Hashem throughout the day, Whose reality is no less than these simple realities.

Without remembering Hashem throughout the day, one's Torah learning is only within his daas, and he can only begin his avodah from Pesach and Shavuot, which was the beginning of receiving the Torah - but it was an acceptance of Torah that didn't involve our own will....

The Torah which we accepted again on Purim, which was done willingly, is "the end that is contained in the beginning." Therefore, our avodah needs to begin with Purim - and not to end there. That is how the cycle is really supposed to look like [from the inner perspective]. (The Hebrew word for "cycle" is "maagal", from the word "igul", "circle" - because in a circle, the end is the beginning.)

The Torah is so vast, and it is simple to anyone that we are all very limited in covering all of its depth. How, then, can a person truly connect to Hashem's Torah? How can a limited human being, with the limitations of the human intellect, connect himself to the Torah that is Hashem's wisdom?

It is because we need to nurse forth the Torah from Hashem, and not from our own minds. What does it mean to nurse

the Torah from Hashem? It is by realizing what Chazal say of one who sits and learns Torah: Hashem sits next to a person and learns with him !!

When you learn with a chavrusa, you don't forget easily that someone is learning with you. Hashem is also called the "chavrusa" of a person (so to speak!)

Nursing Torah Directly From Hashem

These are not words of mussar or inspiration. Rather, it is describing reality as it is. All people endure suffering. There is no one who doesn't suffer. What is the root of all suffering? It all stems from confusion. This world is called olam, from the word he'elam, "confusion". Even the Torah that we mainly have today is not a clearly understood Torah to us. The Gemara which we learn is called "Talmud Bavli", it was composed in Bavel (Babylonia), which is from the word bilbul, "confusion." This is explained in our sefarim.

But when a person connects himself to the Creator, in spite of the fact that he is walking in a world of darkness, "For as I sit in the dark, Hashem is a light to me". One will then have a light of clarity, amidst of all the darkness and confusion of this world. By the miracle of Purim, there was orah v'simchah, "light and joy" to the Jews, and the Sages say that the "light" here refers to the Torah. In other words, because they had a willing acceptance of the Torah at this time, they accessed the true light of the Torah. Without the "light" of Torah, a person is missing this "light" in his Torah learning and he gropes around in the darkness.

One must make an inner clarification in himself, and there is no other clarification like it: We must access the source in which we can nurse forth a spiritual vitality directly from Hashem. When a person is connected with HaKadosh Baruch Hu, he will be able to comprehend areas of Torah in one moment, which would take another person seventy years to work on understanding! This is because he is not trying to nurse forth understanding in Torah from his own limited human intellect, and instead, he is deriving his understanding from an unlimited Source - from the Creator.

There is no other secret to life, than this. The one and only secret in our life is: learning the Torah can be a path to get to the Creator.

That is all true when we work with the lower path, where we work our way upwards ("m'tata le'ila" - "from the bottom up"), but we have explained here that there is an alternative path, where we work our way downwards ("m'leila l'tata" - "from the top towards the bottom), which is when we arrive at understanding in Torah

from directly connecting to the Creator. In actuality, we need to integrate these two paths together, by moving from the Creator to the Torah, and from the Torah to the Creator, and back and forth between these two points. This must become the ongoing cycle of our life, and in this way, we integrate the exile and the redemption at once. This is the meaning of "My soul is close to her redemption".

The prophet says that in the era after the redemption, the world will become filled with knowledge of Hashem, and there will not even be a need for people to teach anyone. This is because it will be a time in which a person will not derive his knowledge from his own human intellect, and not either from the intellect of others - only from the source, Hashem.

Making This Concept Practical

Practically speaking, everyone should take with him this inner point to live with. This inner point is to train our souls to think about the Creator of the world, and from there, we can derive the power to have good middos, to have a good davening, and to understand Torah. In every part of our life, we need to bring Hashem into it. This is how we attain the direct connection to Hashem.

At first, this will be difficult. But we all await the complete redemption, and we ask for it daily in Shemoneh Esrei. Therefore, we need to prepare for the time of the redemption, when the Beis HaMikdash will be built and Mashiach ben Dovid will come. Through preparing for it properly, that itself will be the redemption!

We must know clearly the outcome of all these words. If we walk away with just this one simple point - the fact that everything needs to be derived directly from Hashem - this perspective will create an overhaul in our lives. When a person is about to learn Torah, he can try to devote at least two minutes for HaKadosh Baruch Hu -- we're not talking about an hour, we're talking about just two minutes - and just think about HaKadosh Baruch Hu! Think that the Torah comes from Him, and that He sits and learns with a person as he's learning.

Transforming Your Purim & Your Life

We need to bring this knowledge into our day-to-day living: to live with the Creator. Without this, a person will remain the same just as he was before Purim, whether it is Purim or whether it's after Purim.

We have all gone through many Purims, and Mashiach isn't here yet. Why hasn't he come yet? Is it only because others are at fault...? What is the truth? What will bring the general redemption, and what will bring a private redemption?



Every person here Baruch Hashem has the three pillars in his life upon which the world stands on: Torah, avodah [prayer] and gemilus chassadim (kindness). But one must know of Whom is supporting all of these pillars in his life: it is the Creator of the world. It is not enough to know about this subconsciously. We need to reveal this point into our conscious awareness.

Without a shadow of a doubt, there is no way to arrive at the redemption without the light that Purim reveals. This is the light of Purim! All we need to do is to clarify within ourselves if we are truly turning our minds to think about Hashem.

We are approaching the day of Purim. Everyone wants to outstretch his hand and receive from Hashem, reflecting the halachah on Purim that "Anyone who stretches forth his hand, must be given to." But what is it that we are seeking? If a person does not prepare himself as he should, in order to receive the light of this day of Purim, how will he receive it? If he does prepare himself to receive the light of the day of Purim, it means that he has resolved on Purim, from this day onward, to change the entire way he has been living.

There is a well-known teaching that "Yom HaKippurim" is called so because it is ki'purim, Yom Kippur is "like Purim", implying that there is a resemblance between Yom Kippur and Purim. Just as Yom Kippur is a day of teshuvah, to "return" - and to "return" means to accept a new kind of "movement" which the person hadn't been taking until now. When a person is going in one direction and then he turns back, he is forging a new movement and a new direction for himself.

The secret of doing "teshuvah on Purim" is to reveal that our avodas Hashem does not go from "Pesach" until "Purim" [from Torah to Hashem], but from "Purim" to "Pesach" [from Hashem to Torah]. This is the secret of teshuvah: to "return" the movements which we are familiar with and which we are used to from the rest of the year, and to instead receive a new kind of movement. Then we can soar higher and higher, and connect to the plane that is beyond all movement.

If a person makes sure to clarify, within himself, of what the light of the day of Purim is, what the essence of this day is, and as a result, he makes a firm decision to completely "turn around" his life and to live differently - he has truly "outstretched" his hand on Purim, and he will receive an entirely new hand from Hashem that can receive new things. But if a person doesn't try to clarify to himself what Purim should mean for him, then he can be compared chas v'shalom to a person who turns over his hand when someone tries to give him tzedakah...

In Conclusion

May Hashem help us prepare ourselves to become a proper vessel that can contain the light of the day of Purim, and may the light of the Creator shine completely in the heart of each Jew, and may we merit speedily the general redemption as well to all of Klal Yisrael and the entire world.

[excerpt from פורים 005 ראש לכל המועדים תשסו]

All of the Yomim Tovim (Jewish holidays) are within our realm of human comprehension (yeda). However, Purim is not within our comprehension; it is above our regular knowledge, and it is called "lo yeda". Therefore, the way we prepare for Purim is not in the same way that we prepare for other Yomim Tovim.

When it comes to the Yomim Tovim, we can prepare ourselves for Yom Tov by learning about the concept of each Yom Tov; we can attempt to understand the meaning of each Yom Tov, on an intellectual level, and then we are able to gain from the Yom Tov.

But Purim doesn't work like that. It is not something we can really "know" about intellectually. It is about lo yeda - it involves "no daas", because we cannot understand Purim if we try to use our daas (human comprehension or understanding). The way to prepare for Purim is not through our daas, but through accessing our higher power, lo yeda. In other words, we can't learn about Purim on an intellectual level and try to understand what it is about. The way we prepare for Purim is by simply being prepared to accept whatever it has to offer!

There is a deep point contained here. When we prepare ourselves to accept something, although we are enabling ourselves to receive, we are also limiting ourselves in the process, because when we prepare for what we will receive, we are setting the limit to how much we will gain. Therefore, preparing for Yom Tov, while commendable, has a drawback to it, because since we need to prepare for the spiritual gains we will receive from Yom Tov, we will be limited in how much we receive.

Purim, though, enables us to receive from it in unlimited way, due to the fact that we don't intellectually prepare ourselves for it.

When it comes to the concept of time, there are times of yeda/daas/comprehension, and there are times of lo yeda/no daas/above comprehension. Yom Tov is an example of yeda, while Purim is an example of lo yeda. But it is not only time in which we find yeda and lo yeda. Our soul as well can access lo yeda, and therefore, it's possible to live with a Purim-like attitude the whole year round. When we access our power of lo yeda throughout the year, we will be able to receive an unlimited amount of understanding, and nothing will be holding us back.

Therefore, practically speaking, don't prepare for Purim thinking about what you want to take out of it. Instead, act with temimus (simplicity): trust in Hashem that He can give you anything He wishes to give you.

This is a point that should become a basic fundamental to live by: always do everything with temimus (earnest simplicity). Don't ever expect to feel spiritual elation; don't expect to acquire major spiritual attainments. Instead, just be simple - place your trust and hope in Hashem, that He will send You whatever He will send you...

Editor's Note: It appears that the author is referring to using our "temimus" - to believe earnestly in Hashem and to carry out His mitzvos without asking any questions. The author often explains that "lo yeda", our power of higher knowledge that is above the regular comprehension, can be accessed when we use our temimus; our ability to walk "simply" with Hashem and never question His ways. This theme runs commonly throughout sefer Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh, Part IX, which is an entire sefer devoted to the topic of lo yeda/temimus.

[excerpt from עמי שלו ה. לבבני חלק]



Chazal say that on Purim, all of the past, present, and future are contained in this day. The other festivals we have are about remembering the past in the present (remembering the exodus), while Purim is about putting the future into the present.

This is what lies behind the seudah of Purim: it is about revealing the state of how we are 'already' prepared for the state of the Next World: mezuman, as opposed to memuchan/hachanah.

How can this be true, though, if it's not here yet? The answer is that the essence of the celebration of Purim is not time-bound, and therefore it does not need hachanah. Purim is rather about a state of Olam HaBa that's already here on this world, the higher dimension waiting for Adam had he not sinned. Thus, it is a state that doesn't require hachanah (preparation), because we are already "there" (in a very deep sense). It reveals the future state in the present that man doesn't need hachanah for holiness, because man is already "prepared" - since he is intrinsically pure, at his very essence.

The sin of Adam not only caused mankind to fall from the level of being mezuman for holiness, but to also become mezuman for bad things, for death, for evil. The miracle of Purim revealed to us, though, that we can return once again to the state of not being memuchan for a bad end; instead, we can reach the level in which we are mezuman for good and for holiness, intrinsically.

The 'memuchan' aspect in Haman is what prepared to destroy us. On Purim, we were saved from his aspect of memuchan, and instead we went back to being "memuchan" for Olam HaBa, already on this world - which is the level of "mezuman", where we are "already" prepared for good, for the Next World. Thus, Purim is the point in our current time which can connect a person to the future, to Olam HaBa - even as one is amidst this world.

Purim: The State of Hashem's Oneness

Purim also reveals that there are no 'two sides', and that there is really only one 'side' to Creation. In the current state we live in we deal with two 'sides' - the 'side of good' (holiness) vs. the 'side of evil' (impurity). In the future, there will be only 'one' side nothing but Hashem. Purim is a resemblance of that level of the future.

Amalek comes to fight Hashem "in every generation". The other nations can convert to the Jewish people, except for Amalek, who may never be allowed to convert, according to the Rambam and most Rishonim. With other nations, we can come to 'appease' them, by converting them. But Amalek cannot be converted, so it cannot be 'appeased' in any way. Amalek can only be defeated by one thing alone: we must go to war with them. There is a mitzvah in the Torah of milchemes Amalek,

to go to war against Amalek, which we will be obligated in until the end of time. We cannot be victorious against them with giving them gifts, or even with prayer - we can only win when we wage war against them.

To explain it with a more subtle approach, it is well-known Amalek represents the power of safek, doubt [Amalek has the same gematria in Hebrew as the word 'safek' (240)]. When there is a doubt, there are two sides. Amalek fights Hashem by creating safek\doubt in the world.

[We find that Amalek gets its power from the number 'three'.] We have three sides to time: past, present and future. That entire perspective is all due to Amalek, for it is always Amalek that creates three possibilities - two extremes (past and future), and the point in the middle (the present). Man is also comprised of three points: himself, his wife, and the Shechinah between them. Thus, man is always existing in 'three' planes. The world stands on 'three' things [Torah, tefillah and gemilus chassadim], etc. There were also 'three' forefathers. There is always this recurring theme of the number 'three' when we are within This World.

Haman thought that in the month of Adar he can destroy us, because the mazal of Adar is fish. The fish give birth in schools, which will always number at least three. Thus, Haman/Amalek wanted to use the power of 'three' to destroy us. What is the connection between Amalek and the number three? It is because 'three' enables the concept of safek/doubt, since all doubts have three possibilities: Option A, Option B, and the point in between them. (The rule is, that whenever there are two endpoints, there is always a third point in between that connects them). Amalek's power is safek/doubt, which always involves three different possibilities.

For this reason, there is no human being who can fight Amalek, since all people have safek/doubt, and it is safek which empowers Amalek. So the power to win Amalek cannot be wrought by any human being. The only "One" who can defeat Amalek is Hashem, because only Hashem is called "One", and His "oneness" will overpower the power of "three" which fuels Amalek.

Esther realized she was facing the power of Amalek, whom Haman descends from and represents. She knew that Amalek's power lies in using the power of "three", thus she wanted to counter the "three" of Amalek by fasting for "three" days. [In doing so, she was able to defeat Haman/Amalek, and thus she revealed a degree of Hashem's oneness within creation, which obliterates Amalek]. Ever since then, Purim has become a point in time in which it is revealed that there are no doubts, no "three" possibilities; that there is only "one" possibility: Hashem.

The Sages said that "Yom Kippur is like Purim". The connection between Yom Kippur

and Purim is that they are both "one" day alone. Purim is all about the state of "oneness". On Purim, past and future are all in the present in "one" moment. This is the state of man being mezuman for Olam HaBa. It reveals how all is "one" - the past, present, and future, are all in one.

Depth of The Four Mitzvos of Purim

Now we can understand the greater depth behind the mitzvos of Purim: (1) Mikra megillah - Reading the megillah, (2) Matanos l'evyonim (gifts to the poor), and (3) Mishloach manos (sending packages of food to fellow Jews).

All of these "three" mitzvos require daas (intention) to fulfill. We must intend to fulfill the mitzvah of mikra megillah when we hear the megillah; we must knowingly give matanos l'evyonim and we must knowingly give mishloach manos, or else we have not fulfilled these mitzvos.

But there is also a fourth mitzvah on Purim, which is above the other "three" - and it requires no daas, for it is beyond daas. It is the seudah of Purim, in which we have a mitzvah of "ad d'lo yoda", to reach the point where we do not "know". In the seudah of Purim, we can reveal the meaning of how Purim are days of "mishteh v'simcha" (joy and festivity).

We need both of these sets of mitzvos on Purim in order to erase Amalek. The first three mitzvos of Purim are here to erase Amalek, which fights us through the number 'three' (i.e. doubts), parallel to the 'three' ways of how Esther prepared to fight Haman.

But those three mitzvos alone are not enough to erase Amalek, for Amalek is equally powerful in its force of using "three." Only "one" can defeat it: the mitzvah of seudas Purim, which contains the state of ad d'lo yoda. That is what contains the final blow to Amalek, for it is all about the level beyond daas, the level of "oneness", the level of Hashem revealing His oneness upon the world and obliterating Amalek forever.

Thus, there are two parts of our avodah throughout Purim: The first part of our avodah is on the level of "three": the three mitzvos of mikra megillah, matanos l'evyonim, and mishloach manos. The second part of our avodah on Purim, ad d'lo yoda, is the higher level - the level of "one".

The first three mitzvos are how we fight Amalek in the three different ways (that Esther fought Haman with, and how Yaakov fought Esav with). The "one" mitzvah of the seudas Purim reflects the awesome concept of how Hashem will fight and erase Amalek with His complete oneness.

The Secret Revealed On Purim

Hashem said, "ki macho Emcheh", "For I will surely erase [Amalek]." The word 'Emcheh' begins with the letter aleph, a hint to the letter aleph of the commandment of



“Anochi Hashem” (“I am Hashem”), which represents the time of the future in which Hashem’s oneness will be revealed, when His Name will be “one.”

Chazal say that secrets of the Torah should only be taught to one who is “chocham maivin m’daato”, “one who understands on his own.” Such a person is worthy that a sod (an inner secret) should become revealed to him. One needs three requirements for this: to possess chochmah [li. wisdom], binah [li. contemplation] and daas [lit. understanding].

The true definition of a sod, a “secret”, is when the secret is constant, where it always remains a secret. An example of a constant secret is a fetus, which is always hidden. A sod, a secret, is what begins to reveal the havayah (essence) of something. The root of a matter is always its sod/secret. The root of “chochmah” (wisdom) is called “ayin” (nothingness), as it is written, “Wisdom, where is it (m’ayin) found?” Thus, ayin (the nothingness) is the sod (secret) of chochmah (wisdom).

The Gemara says that man has three “partners” in his creation: his father, mother, and the Shechinah. The Shechinah which connects his parents together is really the “sod” (secret) in the creation each person. Thus, a “sod” is only told to one who is “chacham maivin m’daato”.

Chazal say that when “Wine enters, the sod (secret) comes out” – this is not referring to a sod\secret of “three”, but to the sod\secret of oneness, the sod\secret of Creation, which is not a oneness in the sense of connecting things together (that would be the level of ‘three’). Rather, it is a oneness in the sense where there is only Hashem in Creation. A hint to this is that the word “Charvonah” is from the word charuv, to destroy, alluding to how “Hashem destroys worlds and creates them” : a revelation of a point in time in which there is no world, and there is nothing but His Shechinah, where man has no mother and no father, and only the Shechinah. This is the depth of the verse, “For my father and my mother have abandoned me.”

Chazal state that Esther had no parents. The word “Esther” is from the word seiser, hidden. The inner meaning of this is that Esther represents the “seiser (the concealment) of the Aleph” – the concept of the “oneness of Hashem which manifests in the hidden”. Chazal asked, “Where is Esther alluded to in the Torah?”, and on a deeper level, this is also referring to a revelation of the hidden, inner point. The Megillah says that “Esther would not tell of her birth” - on a deeper level, this is because Esther represents the “seiser (the concealment) of the Aleph” in Hashem’s Name, the letter aleph in the words “Anochi Hashem” (I am G-d): the state of Hashem’s oneness before Creation.

The sod (secret) of Purim which we reveal is not the sod/secret of how “There are three partners in man: his father, his mother, and the Shechinah”, for that would be the sod/secret of Yom Kippur, which is about being cleansed from sin, which is compared to a mother cleansing her soiled child. There is deeper level than this, which is revealed on Purim: the oneness of Hashem, where one has no father and no mother, only the Shechinah, as in the verse, “For my father and my mother have abandoned me.”

Purim is thus all about the letter “Aleph” in Hashem’s name, the “oneness” of Hashem as it was before creation, the level that is above daas (human comprehension). It is about the concept of revealing Ain Od Milvado, “There is nothing besides for Hashem”.

[excerpt from פורים 032 ביאור ארבע מצוות פורים תשעג]

To make this concept simpler, in relevance to our personal soul, there is an inner point in our soul which has the ability to feel that there are no doubts. It is only the outer and unrefined parts of our soul which allow us to experience any doubts. The essence of our soul is aware of the deep point that there are really “no doubts.”

Hashem is called the “rock of our heart”. In our heart, we all have doubts. But the revelation of G-d, which is deep in all of our hearts (as is it written, “And I will dwell amongst them” – expounded to mean “in all of them”), is the point in our soul which has no doubts.

Our human nature is that we have doubts: we have the power of free will, to choose between good and evil. All of us live with two options – good and evil. We live with doubts all the time. But Hashem cannot be doubted, and there is a deep place in our soul which has no doubts at this, because that is the place in our soul which contains revelation of G-d - when a person merits uncovering it and revealing it outward, that is.

The Torah records that when Amalek came to attack us, whenever Moshe’s hands fell, Amalek got stronger, and when his hands were raised, Amalek fell. The possuk says that his hands were raised in “emunah”. What this means for us personally is that the power of emunah in our soul is essentially the revelation of G-d within man.

When one really merits to reveal it - not just because he knows about Hashem and he can say it, but because he has palpable emunah - he lives the inner point in which there are no doubts. But if one is not complete in his emunah, he will have indeed have doubts, and he will be filled with them all the time.

Erasing Amalek

Amalek fights Hashem in every generation. It is a mitzvah to fight them, but only Hashem can erase them. It is because Amalek is all about safek, and man cannot defeat the force of safek. Only Hashem can get rid of safek.

The only way for one to overcome safek is to integrate himself with Hashem. There are no doubts about the reality of Hashem’s presence. When one connects himself to that reality in the depths of his soul, he erases Amalek/safek. When a person reveals the total emunah in Hashem from within himself, when he reveals outward that revelation of G-dliness that is deep in the soul - that is what can defeat Amalek. As long as a person has doubts, he cannot break Amalek. When one erases his own doubts, he can erase Amalek.

In our times, we aren’t able to identify Amalek, because the wicked king Sancheriv mixed up all the nations. He created another safek, and the safek is now within another safek, which makes it an even more powerful safek. It’s all due to the state of concealment that is currently upon creation.

But when Moshe “raised his hands with emunah”, the emunah was clear and complete, and then no safek could take hold.

Fighting Amalek is not a regular kind of war. When we reveal how Hashem is the “Vadai Shemo” (His Name is absolute), then Amalek will lose its source of survival.

Safek is what fuels Amalek! It can be either external doubts or more inner doubts; either way, doubts fuel Amalek and don’t allow a person to erase Amalek, and then Amalek takes hold of him.

[excerpt from פורים 019 - יום הכיפורים כפורים]



TO DRINK OR NOT TO DRINK

Every year Purim, I am not sure how I am supposed to act, with regards to becoming intoxicated on Purim. I have never gotten completely drunk, I just drink a little more than the usual and afterwards I rest, as stated in the Rema (Orach Chaim 696:1). But every year when Purim is over, I feel that I didn't experience true simchah on Purim. I feel instead like a "mourner" who can't rejoice, and that everyone around me is happy while I remain "outside the camp", in solitude, while I remain stuck in my element of "earth."

ANSWER It is written, "To the Jews there was orah (light) and simchah (joy)." We should understand that simchah (joy) comes from "orah", from "light". There [are two levels of spiritual "light"]: the illumination itself, and the "sparks" of this illumination [a "partial" level of spiritual illumination].

For most people, the joy and laughter that they have [through getting drunk] on Purim is on the "animal" level of the soul (the nefesh habehaimis). In some cases, people will sin on Purim by engaging in improper jest of others (leitzanus), by insulting others, etc. Their joy is being manifest within the three impure "husks" (kelipos) and these people become attached to these kelipos.

In other cases, people will not sin on Purim, but their simchah on Purim still does not go beyond the "animal" level of the soul: they get joy from things that make the "animal soul" happy, such as meat, wine, and humorous things. There can sometimes be "sparks" of true joy that are contained in this, but they are merely "sparks" of joy. So their joy is a mixture of superficial joy with some sparks of true joy. When people have this kind of joy on Purim, they will express what's in their heart, and they will speak about what they aspire for and what they really want, amidst their state of intoxication. However, in almost all cases, there is still a joy on the level of the "animal" soul, the nefesh habehaimis, and at best, they have merely "sparks" of true joy.

However, of Purim it is said "To the Jews, there was light and joy", and this means that simchah (joy) comes from orah (spiritual light). So even though you say that "Everyone around me is happy", that doesn't mean anything! Because their simchah is only on a superficial level, as described above.

Regarding the fact that you feel as if you are stuck in your element of "earth", this can be coming from any one of the following two reasons: (A) It can come from a strong leaning towards the element of earth, (B) It can be a subtle, inner recognition that the simchah which you are witnessing on Purim is not genuine, and deep down, you soul isn't interested in it – it only wants "orah v'simchah", the joy that comes from spiritual light. Your soul merely connects to the serenity which they are having [but not to their joy].

For most people, it is appropriate to drink a little more than what they are used to, and in a way that will not cause them to lose their daas (objective thinking). Rather, they need to get to the point where they feel an inner "expansion" [of the mind], and where their heart become gladdened. This opens the heart, and it then becomes possible for a person to express things which he normally doesn't express during the rest of the year. However,

as mentioned, this should not happen from [becoming intoxicated to the point that one has] loss of daas, nor should it come from a desire to unleash one's pent-up feelings that are stored in his heart. Rather, it should be a result of expanded daas, from an expansion of the heart. This is the depth of the verse, "For the heart of the king is good, with wine." It is a subtle boundary to tread, and this is what is appropriate for many people.

There is also a subtler approach to take: One can [become intoxicated to the point of] "lose" his normal daas, and instead become attached with a more expansive kind of daas, which is in the category of "surrounding light" (ohr makif)... This is the depth behind the difference between the regular cities with the walled cities from the times of Yehoshua. The 14th of Adar, which is for the regular cities, represents the level of nullifying one's daas. The 15th of Adar, which was for the walled cities since the times of Yehoshua, represents the "surrounding light", the ohr makif, the expanded level of daas.

In truth, "the question of a wise person is half the answer." One needs to clarify the definitions of halachah of the subject at hand, by studying all of the opinions of the Poskim, and then one should clarify his current spiritual level. He should think about what the gains are, and what the disadvantages are. Therefore it is appropriate for each person to clarify all of the views of the Poskim about the halachah of becoming intoxicated on Purim, and then one should clarify what his personal level is, and if he will gain or lose by becoming intoxicated on Purim. If he feels that he will gain from it, he needs to clarify exactly what he will gain, as well as any detrimental results that may come because of it. This is the proper, clear approach to take, and it is halachah l'maaseh.

One should not draw any conclusions from great tzaddikim who became intoxicated on Purim. Nor should one conclude that he needs to be like most people on Purim who aren't careful with halachah when they become drunk. (Of this it is not said that "If they are not prophets, they are still the sons of prophets", since we are dealing here with the "animal" level of the soul which seeks laughter, frivolity, lawlessness, and all other undesirable elements. The "animal" level of one's soul will seek to learn about happiness from observing animalistic behavior, either by observing animals, or by observing gentiles, who become very intoxicated - on their holidays specifically, and during the rest of their lives in general.) So it is upon each person to act according to his current level, as mentioned above, by first clarifying the halachah and then clarifying all of the details of his current spiritual level.

The avodah of every person on this day [Purim] is to reach the innermost point of the soul, from his current perception, which is his current level of "orah" (spiritual light) that he has so far reached. From that point, one can draw forth simchah. There is no greater evil on Purim than one who copies others' behavior, for this is totally ignoring the "individuality" of oneself. And although there is a custom to dress up in costumes on Purim, that is really because we are showing that the way we appear during the rest of the year is actually a "costume" [for during the rest of the year we are not revealing our true self]. That is how we reveal our true self. How pitiful is it when a person has to completely imitate the behavior of others

around him, on Purim [because he doesn't get to be "himself"].

The day of Purim is the day to reach one's very core, which is above one's daas. From that inner place, one will be able to sense the reality of the Creator, Whom there is nothing else besides. It is a day where "the King" is totally revealed, where the "King of kings" can be revealed even in the most mundane aspects. It is the revelation that the true "king" is really the King of all kings. On the day of Purim, the King is revealed in every place.

So the avodah on the day of Purim is for one to "divest" himself from all "garments". This is the deeper implication of the word "Megillah", which means "reveal". Through this, one can touch upon the very essence of his neshamah, and from reaching that place, one can unify with others: to send mishloach manos to others in order to increase love and friendship with others, and to give matanos l'evyonim to others out of a deep, inner simchah that one reaches within. One finds the joy within himself and then he can make others happy. From there, one can find a Torah of revelation, a level of Torah that is called "megillah", where all is revealed and there is no concealment. This is the meaning of what the Sages taught that the "light" revealed on Purim, the orah, is referring to Torah. It is a "Torah" of revelation, which brings one to have genuine, deep, inner simchah.

That is the true simchah on this day, and nothing else compares to it. During the rest of the year, the Torah is called "closed, and revealed", but on this day, the Torah is entirely about revelation. This is the depth of the concept that the "Megillah is read": from the spiritual light of the Megillah, one is able to "read" the entire Torah: the words of Torah will be "read" on their own, for it is entirely in the category of revelation. This is the complete simchah, joy at its root, a joy in the Creator: "The righteous will rejoice in Hashem."

WOMAN ON PURIM

What is a woman's avodah on Purim? What specific points should women focus on Purim?

ANSWER There are a lot of aspects to Purim. The halachah of intoxication applies only to men, and the parameters of this halachah is explained by the Poskim. But there are many other aspects of Purim as well which apply to both men and women. Here are some of those points to think about, and each person should try to do them on his or her own level, according to his or her personal capabilities – and not based on any reasons influenced by factors that are either social, or emotional, or family-based, because there are many times where people act based solely on "what's normal", and this uproots any serenity and joy that they could have on Purim.

1) Consider the aspect of reading the Megillah on Purim. Both men and women are obligated to hear the Megillah on Purim. And on a more inner level, both men and women can reflect on the events in the Megillah and see how there was Divine Providence laced throughout this story, because the word "Megillas Esther" means to "reveal" the "hidden", to turn the concealment (hester) into giluy (revelation) of Hashem's Divine Providence. A person can go through all of the details in the Purim story, from beginning until end, and he can see how it was all an unfolding process of Hashem's Divine Providence - as opposed to a bunch of



random details that have no connection to each other.

On an even deeper level, each person, whether man or woman, on his or her own level, can see Hashem's inner mode of conduct hidden in the Creation, as explained in sefer Daas Tevunos, and how every event in the world can be seen through the lens of Hashem's carefully planned Divine Providence, His goodness, and the revelation of His Oneness.

2) Consider the mitzvah of sending Mishloach Manos on Purim. The purpose of this mitzvah is to increase love and friendship. On the obligatory level, everyone is obligated to send two portions of food to someone. On an inner level, one should also think about whom he will make happy by giving Mishloach Manos to. Then one should think, "What can I put into this Mishloach Manos package which will make the other person happy? What would that person really enjoy?" One should put thought into how much Mishloach Manos to send, what the quality of it should be like, how nice it should look, and what kind of nice messages he can send with it. Everyone should do this only according to her personal capabilities, and not to over-do it.

Even more so, when giving the Mishloach Manos, it should not just be an act of giving motivated by logic alone, but it should be given from the depth of one's heart, with love and joy, to make the other person happy.

Included in this aspect (gladdening other people on Purim) is to make the children happy, with costumes and the like. But again, one should do this only within her actual capabilities, and only if she can do it with joy.

3) Consider also the mitzvah to give Matanos L'Evyonim (gifts to the poor) on Purim. One should look for a person who needs it the most, and who would be the happiest to receive it – and one should strive to give Matanos L'Evyonim specifically to this kind of person. A woman usually needs to ask her husband about whom she may give Matanos L'Evyonim to, mainly so that her husband should agree with her decision.

4) Regarding the seudah of Purim, try to serve good food to each person who is dining by you, fitted to each person's particular tastes. The main point of the seudah on Purim is to think about and discuss Purim-related matters and what Purim is all about, and to stay away from words that disparage people, which only awaken the most impure forces in one's soul.

5) The purpose of the day of Purim is to reach a deep place in one's soul that is above one's daas (logical reasoning and understanding). For men, whose main mitzvah is to learn Torah, their main work on this world is to develop the power of their logic throughout the year, by studying Torah. That is why men need the intoxicating effects of wine (or the dulling effect of sleep) in order to "nullify" their logical understanding and reach a place that goes beyond logical understanding. However, women, who are exempt from Torah study, are therefore closer to the concept of nullifying their understanding and to more easily reach a place that goes beyond logical understanding. This is the point known as temimus (non-intellectual simplicity or earnestness).

Thus the main avodah of the day of Purim is, "Be wholesome with Hashem your G-d", to walk with Him in temimus (simplicity), without

any intellectual thinking. It is about sensing His unlimited love for us, just as the people in the time of Achashveirosh re-accepted the Torah out of their great love of Hashem that they saw through the miracles of Purim. It is about feeling how He always give to us, out of His great love for us, by saving us from trouble, and by bestowing good upon us. From this understanding, we can come to feel the sweetness and pleasantness of being close to Him. This is the root of true simchah on Purim, because by feeling close to Hashem a person feels physically lighter, in the body in general and specifically in the feet, and that is why one can easily sing and dance on Purim – just as by the song of Miriam.

And that is why the miracles on Purim happened precisely through women [Esther]. It is because women are closer to this temimus (simplicity and earnestness). Men need to drink as a means to reach this place of temimus, whereas women are closer to reaching it, without the means of drinking. It only requires a little bit of reflecting and calm silence, and to enter into the deepest place of one's soul – each person on her own level.

DEPTH OF EATING HAMANTASCHEN

How can we eat "hamantaschen"? How can we eat something that remembers Haman, and how is it that we take this remembrance of Haman and absorb it into our own flesh??

ANSWER Chazal (Talmud Bavli Chullin 139b) teach, "Where is Haman in the Torah? "From the tree (Hamin ha-eitz) which I said to you not to eat from." This hints to a connection between Haman and evil "eating". Therefore, the way to repair the evil "eating" from the Eitz HaDaas (represented by Haman) is to counter this [with a holy kind of] eating.

Eating hamantaschen is also a hint to "eating the manna" in desert, which fell in the merit of Moshe, and so too in the times of Mordechai (who was like Moshe) did we merit, in a sense, to "eat" the manna [by prevailing over Haman, which was like devouring him].

Even more so, it is known from the Arizal that if Adam HaRishon would have waited until Shabbos before eating from the Eitz HaDaas, he would have been allowed to eat from the Eitz HaDaas. The spiritual illumination available on Purim is that a person can have some access to this unrealized reality where it is permissible to eat from the Eitz HaDaas after waiting for Shabbos. Thus, before Purim we first need to have Taanis Esther, where we don't eat any food, and after the fast we have Purim, which is like eating from the Eitz HaDaas after waiting for Shabbos.

This is like the concept of "The purpose of knowing is to know that we do not know" (Bechinas Olam 13:45). That is why on Purim, we can "eat" from the Eitz HaDaas, we can have the "knowledge" of eating from the Eitz HaDaas, but we also touch upon the purpose of knowledge, which is to know that we do not know – ad d'lo yoda, the point where there is no knowledge.

This is also why on Purim, the main aspect of the day is not the seudah (meal), but mishteh (drinking), and even the Purim seudah itself is called mishteh yayin, a party of wine, where the purpose is to become inebriated to the point of ad d'lo yoda. At that point of ad d'lo yoda, the word "Amalek", which is equal to the word mar (bitter),

becomes transformed into sweetness. The difference between the words mar (bitter) and matok (sweet) is the equal to the value of the word "Moshe".

For this reason, Mordechai is compared to Moshe, because Mordechai possessed unique G-dly traits that resembled Moshe's. The Sages (Esther Rabbah 6:2) teach that "Mordechai in his generation was equal to Moshe in his generation". Refer to sefer Shem M'Shmuel (Purim 5674). Moshe represents daas (knowledge) and the purpose of daas is to reach the point above daas, which is ad d'lo yoda, and this is also the depth behind why no man "knows" where his burial place is.

The Zohar (Beraishis 169a) states that there will be three redemptions, which are through Moshe [the redeemer of the Egyptian exile], Mordechai [the redeemer of the Persian exile], and Mashiach [the redeemer of the final exile]. Moshe's role was daas, Mordechai's role was to actualize daas (as hinted in the verse, "And Mordechai knew"), and Mashiach's role is to reveal the point of "no daas", the point of temimus (earnestness), as hinted by the words masiach l'fi tumo, "conversing casually."

FISH ON PURIM

Can the Rav quote some sources for the minhag of eating fish at the Purim seudah?

ANSWER The mazal dagim of Adar is particularly applicable to the day of Purim. (See sefer Moed L'Kol Chaim, 31.)

It is well-known in the name of the Gra that Purim is the other half of Yom Kippur: the day of Yom Kippur is the "half of the Yom Tov that is devoted to Hashem" (chatzi laHashem), whereas Purim is the other half of the Yom Tov that is devoted to you (chatzi lachem). Whatever we couldn't eat on Yom Kippur [due to fasting on Yom Kippur] is therefore eaten on Purim. It is also well-known that since we can't eat on Yom Kippur, we eat twice our normal amount on Erev Yom Kippur, as if we are eating the meal for Yom Kippur on Erev Yom Kippur.

The Rambam (commentary to Yoma 1:4) says that a person should not eat any food on Erev Yom Kippur which increases zera (seed), such as fish. Thus, since we cannot eat fish on Yom Kippur or even on Erev Yom Kippur, we eat in on Purim. (See Tosafos to Kesubos 5a and the Bach on Orach Chaim 208, and the other Poskim (ibid).

Furthermore, in the end of the Megillah the possuk says that the mitzvah of observing Purim was given to the Jews for all generations to come, all of their offspring (zera), which hints to an increase of zera/seed, being like the fish which bear a lot of offspring. The word Purim is also from the word pur, a hint to pru u'revu, to procreate and bear offspring.

Also, there is a custom to eat an eye of a fish on Purim, because Haman said that the G-d of the Jewish people is asleep, and to counter Haman's accusation we eat the eye of a fish, because a fish is always awake and its eyes are always open and awake. For this reason, the Ben Ish Chai (Shanah Rishonah, Vayeilech) says to eat fish on Erev Yom Kippur, and the same applies to Purim.

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