

● בלובי

# PURIM TALKS

Adapted from the hebrew shiurim of Purim  
by the author of Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh

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## Editor's Preface

This compilation is a collection of the Rav's talks about the month of Adar, Purim, and the unique "*simchah*" (happiness) contained during these days. The aim of this compilation is to help people have a deeper and richer experience of Purim, which is a mysterious day for many. It is a day where we can become tremendously close to Hashem (or a day that can go to waste on superficiality). The Rav in these *derashos* is helping us become closer to the vast holiness that is inherent in our souls, and how we can reap the most of the potency that lies in Adar and its climax, Purim.

**Part One, "The Month of Adar"**, are chapters that are geared towards the beginning of the month of Adar, before Purim. These *derashos* of the Rav explain the depth of the happiness and "laughter" in the "month" of Adar.

**Part Two, "Preparing For Purim"** is meant to be learned as Purim draws closer, culminating in the foreboding *derasha* of "*Taanis Esther – Avoiding The Decree*", which is meant to be learned as our "introduction *avodah*" to Purim.

**Part Three, "Purim"**, are *derashos* that focus on our *avodah* of the day of Purim itself. These chapters may be studied directly before Purim or on Purim itself, to enhance your deeper Purim experience. These *derashos* cover all of the important aspects of Purim, including many insights into the story of the Megillah, the depth of the *mitzvos* of Purim which include *megillah* reading, *mishloach manos*, *matanos l'evyonim*, and of course, the Purim *seudah* itself, which is all about the mysteries of *ad d'lo yoda* – explained here as never before.

**Part Four, After Purim**, includes *derashos* that help us have *simchah* during the rest of the year as well. Refer also to the Rav's series *Da Es Simchasecha* (adapted in English as ***Repairing Your Simcha***).

Purim contains a unique, deep, and esoteric kind of *simchah* which we have access to for this one special day of the year, where everything gets turned around. For that reason, it is our hope that the study of this compilation of *derashos* of the Rav will help you make the most of your Purim – to become closer to yourself, and to Hashem.

**Part Five, Q & A**, a selection of questions and answer on Purim from the archive.

1  
THE MONTH OF ADAR

## 1.1 | Adar Aleph – Increasing Our Happiness

### *The Month of Adar – A Time of Happiness*

With the help of Hashem, we are in the month of Adar. (In a leap year, we merit to have two months of Adar). It is well-known what power is revealed during the month of Adar: it is the month where there is more *simchah* (happiness). The Sages state, “When Adar enters, we increase happiness.”<sup>1</sup> To be more specific, the power which describes the month of Adar is known as “*sechok*” (laughter)<sup>2</sup>.

Let us reflect, with *seyata d’shmaya*, into what the roots of sadness are, so that we can learn how to remove sadness and reveal happiness in our life.

### *Reflecting On the Roots of Sadness*

In whatever we think about, we can always discover details and roots. Either we can see the details involved in a matter, or we can see the roots of the matter. So when it comes to analyzing sadness, either we can think into the many different details that can cause sadness, or we can look into the roots of sadness, and see what the roots are that bring a person to sadness.

Here we will try to analyze the roots that cause sadness, as opposed to studying the many ‘branches’ that can bring on sadness. There are several “root” causes for sadness.

### *Two Sources of Sadness – In the Body and In the Soul*

Man is comprised of four elements: fire, wind, water, and earth. These four elements are in all of Creation, and they are in man as well. Earth is the heaviest of the elements, and when it was left unbalanced by the other elements, the element of earth will weigh a person down with its heaviness, which ultimately causes a person to feel sadness.

Thus, sadness can stem from the heaviness that is found in our physical body, in our body’s element of earth. Our body was fashioned from the earth. Man comes from dirt, and the heaviness in this dirt that is part of his physical makeup can breed sadness, when his earth is imbalanced and it is weighing him down. This is the first source for sadness: the element of earth, which is contained in the physical body.

When a person commits a sin (Heaven forbid), and certainly if he commits more sins, his soul becomes sad from this, because it does not want to be in a situation of sin. When a person sins and

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<sup>1</sup> Taanis 29a

<sup>2</sup> Sefer Yetzirah 5:5 [see next month’s shiur, Rosh Chodesh Avodah\_013\_The Power of Laughter, for how to use the power of “*sechok*”/laughter in the month of Adar].

he does not immediately do *teshuvah*<sup>3</sup> for it, the soul becomes sad at this, and when this is the case, the sadness that a person feels is stemming from the soul.

### *Solving Sadness Due To Heaviness*

Generally speaking, a person needs to get used to eating a lighter diet, as we spoke about in the previous month. Our body becomes heavy from the “earth” in us, so we need to be careful with what we eat. When we overeat, this makes us feel heavy, and heaviness causes us to be sad, since heaviness is a trait of earth, the root element for sadness. So we should get accustomed to eat light foods that won’t make us heavy.<sup>4</sup>

In addition, when someone is drawn very much towards lethargy, he needs to get used to doing things enthusiastically, which will combat the nature of the ‘heaviness’ within him that is causing him to be sad. He should mainly work on this by practicing doing things energetically. For example, he should resolve upon himself that for 3 times a day, he will do something quickly and with enthusiasm.<sup>5</sup>

This is the two-part solution that solves sadness that comes from feeling physically lethargic and sluggish. The first part of the solution is, to get used to a lighter diet. The second part of the solution is, to try to do 3 things a day with enthusiasm. This will enable a person to acquire the trait that described in the *Mishnah* in *Avos*, “as light as an eagle”, and to avoid the lethargy and sadness that is produced from the ‘heaviness’ in the body.

### *Solving Sadness of the Soul*

The second source for sadness that we mentioned is, when sadness comes from the soul. The soul becomes sad when a person commits sins. The solution for this kind of sadness is to do earnest *teshuvah* from the depths of the heart.

Our Sages wrote that there are four main times to do *teshuvah*: before going to sleep at night, on Erev Shabbos, on Erev Rosh Chodesh, and on Erev Yom Kippur (which is the most important time to do *teshuvah*). These are the “general” times to do *teshuvah*, but if a person lives a more inner kind of life, he does *teshuvah* whenever he feels inner sadness coming from his soul, and he does so from the depths of his heart.

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<sup>3</sup> repentance

<sup>4</sup> This was discussed in the shiur of Rosh Chodesh Avodah\_011\_Elevated Eating; see also Fixing Your Earth\_010\_Counteracting Laziness

<sup>5</sup> Editor’s Note: It is said about Reb Yeruchem Levovitz zt”l that he would practice doing things against his will for 5 times a day, in order to counter the nature of laziness (and another note, the Rav explained this in terms of getting used to bittul haratzon (nullifying one’s will). Perhaps the reason for the Rav’s recommendation of doing this 3 times a day, as opposed to 5 times a day as Reb Yeruchem did, is so that even simpler people (like us), who are not the level of Reb Yeruchem Levovitz, can also practice it, on our own level.

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The *teshuvah* should not be done monotonously, but truthfully and earnestly, until a person feels that his *teshuvah* was genuine, to the point that “The One who knows all secrets (Hashem) can testify on him that his *teshuvah* is truthful.”<sup>6</sup>

This is an internal way of living, in which a person trains himself to react to any time that he feels inner sadness, by concentrating deeply and resolving to live like a more truthful kind of Jew; to resolve that he will truly submit himself to the *Ribono Shel Olam*<sup>7</sup>.

If the *teshuvah* was done earnestly, he will find that his sadness will subside, either totally or at least to a very large extent.

### *Identifying Your Sadness*

From the two above possible reasons for sadness (feeling heaviness of the body, or feeling sad due to sins), a person should be able to identify which kind of sadness it is when he's feeling it.

If a person feels a sense of 'heaviness' in his body, if he is feeling somewhat sluggish and lethargic, then this stems from the body's element of earth, and the solution for this kind of sadness as we said is, to get used to a lighter diet and to do things enthusiastically. But many times a person will feel that the reason for his sadness is deeper than just a general sense of feeling lethargic. Such sadness is not stemming from heaviness of the body, but from a deep inside himself. It is coming from the depths of the *neshamah* (the soul), due to sins, which feels painful to the soul. When that is the case, the solution is to do earnest *teshuvah*.

If a person reflects a little and he has become a more internal kind of person, he will be able to keenly identify if the sadness he's feeling is coming from heaviness of the body (the element of earth in the body), or if it's coming from sins; and he should use the solutions above that we explained, accordingly. We have so far mentioned two root causes for sadness, and how they can each be rectified, and how a person should go about identifying them.

### *A Third Cause for Sadness - Lacking a Sense of Purpose in Life*

Until we explained, with *siyata d'shmaya*, about two kinds of sadness - a sadness that comes a feeling of 'heaviness' in the body, which is rooted in the body's element of earth; and sadness that comes from the soul, due to sins and improper actions. Now we will speak about a third kind of sadness, which is very common: when a person is living without any sense of direction in his life, when he doesn't know what he wants from himself, what his purpose is, and to where he is heading in his life.

Many times, when people have various kinds of failures in the external aspects of their life, or when they have time to think quietly about their situation, a person will discover that he has no clear-cut direction to take in life. When a person is living without a sense of clear direction in his life, he is filled with all kinds of doubts about what to do and what not to do, and in a broader sense,

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<sup>6</sup> A quote from the Ramban

<sup>7</sup> Master of the world

he is filled with doubt about his entire life in general. This is the main kind of sadness which we see by most people, and the world is full of much of this kind of sadness in people.

We have so far given a general description of it, and now let's explore this deeper so that we can have a clearer understanding of it.

There is a well-known statement, written by the Rema, who says, "There is no happiness like the clarification of doubts."<sup>8</sup> These words imply that when there are no doubts, there is happiness, so if there are doubts, there cannot be happiness present, thus there will be sadness whenever a person has doubts. When a person is trying to make a decision but he is filled with doubt about how he should decide, his soul becomes sad, from this very state of being in doubt.

(A hint to this is that the Hebrew word for sadness, which is *atzvus* (עצבות) is from the word **עצב** (*etzev*), which is from the words **עץ ב'**, which hints to the term "two options of advice (because the word **עץ** is also from the word **עצה**, advice) – in other words, when a person faces two conflicting paths of advice to take, he has *atzvus*/sadness.)

Sometimes a person is sad due to a particular doubt about something that he is going through, like if he isn't sure about whom to marry, if he doesn't know which house to buy and where to live, or if he's not sure about what kind of job he needs to work in. In these cases, a person can know clearly of the doubt that is plaguing his happiness. But in many cases, a person cannot name exactly a particular doubt is bothering him. He is just feeling doubtful about his entire life in general and which direction it is taking, and he feels a general lack of clarity towards his life. These are the kinds of doubts that fill the lives of many people, and therefore the world is full of this kind of sadness.

If we ask any believing Jew, "What are you living for?" he will surely answer that he is living in order to do the will of Hashem and fulfill the *mitzvos*. But if we look deeper into what's going on inside many people, we would discover that most people - while certainly saying that they this is what they live for, and that they know in their minds what they must do - their souls are not directed towards any one point that they are striving for. Their souls are scattered over many different points that they are involved with. When the soul is so spread out like this, and it is not aiming towards any one point in particular, this lack of direction towards anything clear results in a deep kind of sadness to the soul.

We can see that there are many people who are working towards a goal. Sometimes they have materialistic goals, and sometimes they have spiritual goals, but in either case, they are heading towards one point that they strive for. They are centered and focused on attaining a particular goal that they have, and this keeps them largely from falling into the pit of sadness.

Based upon this observation, we can uncover the solution for the deep sadness that fills most of the world – sadness that stems from lack of clarity and direction in life – by learning how to stay focused on a particular goal in life that each person can strive for. Our goal we want to develop, however, will be of a spiritual nature, and not of a materialistic concern. Yet, we can still learn a

lesson from the goal-oriented people of the world and use their method of success, when it comes to our own spiritual potential. With the help of Hashem, we will explain this.

### *Having a Spiritual Goal*

There are many observant Jews who go to learn a profession today, whether it is to become a doctor, lawyer, or whatever profession they choose. They are juggling many different aspects in their life, yet they are focused on attaining a certain goal, by going to school to learn about the profession that they are trying to attain, and this helps them stay centered as they aim for that goal. The fact that they are working towards a goal gives them a sense of happiness, from the mere fact that they know that they are heading towards a goal – whether the goal is a worthy one, or not.

Just as actively striving towards a particular goal can work for success in the material world, so can it work when we have a spiritual goal to strive for. There are some people who have spiritual goals, and they gain satisfaction and happiness from it whenever they are actively pursuing it.

For example, there are some people who feel that doing *chessed* for others is their spiritual goal in life. They open up a *gemach* or an organization that helps people, they are focused on what they are doing, as opposed to being not spread out over many different goals they want; they are involved solely in one goal that they are aiming for. Some people help others with money, some people help others with their advice, some people help others by lending their possessions to others, and there are many other ways as well how people help others. In all of these scenarios, the person is focused on a spiritual goal of *chessed* that he is aiming for.

Whether the goal is materialistic or spiritual, as long as person can stay focused and concentrated on pursuing his goal, his soul feels connected to something. He will be less prone to sadness, and he will find it easier to be happy.

Most people are usually doing many good and wonderful things, but they are not aiming for any one goal in particular that they are striving for. For example, if a woman is a housewife, she does many good things every day; she takes care of the house, she is constantly nourishing her husband and children with meals, and each of these acts involves countless achievements. In addition, a woman does many constructive acts each day besides for this. Yet, this doesn't necessarily make her happy, even though she is doing all of these good things.

Why? It is because she doesn't see how it all connects. She may feel very 'spread out' all over the place with all of these things that she does, and she does not feel that she is aiming towards anything in particular that she is living for. She would be very happy if she would just consider how all of these acts really connect into one piece. She could focus on the fact that all of these things are *chessed*, and then she would derive happiness from this – that is, if she considers *chessed* to be her goal. But when a woman doesn't consider all of what she does as part of a general goal that she is striving for, then in spite of all her many actual achievements, she will not be happy.

Every Jew, man and woman alike, needs to have a spiritual goal in his life to aim for. No matter how much countless wonderful acts a person is doing each day, a person will not actually be happy from all of this unless there is a particular spiritual goal that he/she is striving for.

Each person can have a different unique goal to strive for; it is not the same for all people.

### *Figuring Out Your Personal Spiritual Goal in Life*

In the secular values of the material world, people are seeking wealth, status, and nice houses to live in, and that is what drives them to stay focused on their goals. But when we speak about the inner, spiritual world, the focus must be on a spiritual goal, on a certain inner point which we would want to aim towards, as we go about our day-to-day living.

Every person will have to sit with himself in a quiet place and try to figure out, as best as he can, of a spiritual goal that will speak to him and which he feels is closely attainable. A person needs to wonder: "What is a worthy, spiritual goal that I would want to aim towards and direct my whole life towards?" The point is to be focused on you can utilize your own potential, which lays dormant within you.

Once again, let us emphasize that there is a difference between how the secular world pursues their goals, with how a Torah Jew needs to pursue his goals. When a gentile speaks of having goals in life and on being focused and concentrated on working towards a goal, the attitude is to lay down the desire that you really want and how to get to what you want the most; how to attain that which you want badly. But when we speak of spiritual goals, the goals that a Torah Jew needs to have, which utilize the potential of our *neshamah* (Divine soul), the way of knowing our goals is a different process.

It is about how to actualize my actual potential that is within me, as opposed to getting what I want out of life. It is about figuring out which point speaks to me and is close to home by me, as opposed to something that my *nefesh habehaimis* (external, animalistic layer of the soul) wants, which are expressed in the gentile world. It is a clarification about the innermost point that I currently identify, which speaks to me. It is that point which a Jew needs to strive for, and to figure out how to actualize this potential.

If a person succeeds at uncovering the spiritual point that speaks to him the most right now at his current level, he is engaged in utilizing his potential, and he will succeed at removing the deep sadness of the soul, the pain of the soul when there is a lack of clarity and direction in life.

However, in order to figure out what the goal will be, it is not an easy thing to figure out so quickly, and it will not take a few minutes. A person needs to sit with himself quietly and try to go deeper into himself and recognize himself better and better, until he can get to know what his deepest spiritual ambition is. Often a person will need to speak to someone else for help with this.

A person will also need to *daven* to Hashem for help with this, that he should merit to discover a spiritual goal that he wants to aim for. If he can get himself to cry to Hashem for this, he should do so. But even more so, we must understand that we will not get to it so fast. We don't immediately see what our deepest spiritual desire is. But at one's own current level, one can try to figure out a spiritual goal that speaks very much to him, and to aim towards it in his day-to-day life.

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Slowly as time goes on, a person will gradually be able to uncover an even deeper spiritual goal that he will want, and then direct himself accordingly to actualize that goal.

### *The Prerequisite to Happiness – Being Happy With Yourself*

We need to understand the following point, which is a prerequisite to *simchah* (happiness). It is a very root and essential point to be aware of: *simchah* is not just based on that which I want to attain but haven't yet attained. It is mainly based on whatever I have attained thus far.

If a person is not focused on any one goal in particular, he will not be clear of what he wants to reach, and he will not either be clear of what he has already reached thus far.

These two points are unclear to a person when he doesn't have a goal. Upon having a goal, a person first needs to clarify what he wants to reach, but at the same time, he must also be aware of what he has already attained thus far. He needs to always remind himself of this: to be clear in what he wants to reach, and to be clear in what he has gained so far. That which you have already attained is actually the root of your *simchah*, and that which you are aiming for, which you haven't yet gotten, is the factor that takes away sadness.

Thus, *simchah* is comprised of two factors: the removal of our sadness, and the revelation of happiness itself. Anything you have attained thus far is included in your aspect of "*someach b'chelko*", "being happy with one's lot" (which is the revelation of happiness), and anything which you haven't gotten but which you are aiming to get, is what takes away sadness, when you are involving yourself in trying to get there.

Let's review this again so that we are clear about it: there are two parts to *simchah* – the removal of sadness, and the revelation of happiness. When I am focused on attaining a certain goal, this removes my current sadness [because the soul will feel like it is moving towards a certain direction]; to be more specific, it removes the doubts that create sadness. And where do I derive *simchah* from in the present? From that which I have attained thus far; this is the "*someiach b'chelko*" that reveals happiness in one's present state.

Now we can understand the following. We mentioned earlier the difference between the gentile and Torah approaches of being goal-oriented. The way of the gentiles, which is especially the case in our current generation, focuses on what you should want out of life, and how to get it. It is about "getting what you want". When you get it, you are happy, because that was what you wanted, you aimed for it, and you got it. That is Western mentality. By contrast, the Torah has a different approach to being goal-oriented: it is about actualizing the "I". For we need to wonder: What is the "I" in us that wants things?

If "being happy with my lot" means that I got what I wanted, that would mean that I partially have what I want and I partially don't have what I want. There is a rule, "He who wants a hundred, will want two hundred." We are never completely satisfied when we attain what we want, because the next day we will want something else, and then we are back to where we started. There is no "lot" to be happy with here.

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But if I tried to reach something which my “I” wanted – if it came from a very deep inner drive – then when I do attain that which I want, it is not simply that I have gotten what I wanted, but it is a part of my very “I.” If I wanted something that was a part of my “I” and I reach it, then I have attained a revelation of my “I”, something that is part of me. The happiness that results from that is coming from the actualization of the “I” – the happiness that comes when one utilizes his potential. When the “I” is brought out from its potential state and it is actualized, there is resulting happiness.

We need to understand this deep point, which is very clear. When a person wants something, and he attained it either partially or even completely, the happiness that results from this is just superficial; it is an incomplete happiness. The happiness will be fleeting, and sadness will soon follow.

The only genuine happiness which exists is not when I simply attain what I want, but when I reveal my “I”; when I actualize the potential of my “I”. That is *simchah*. For if something is not a part of me and it is only on my outside, reaching it will not give me true and inner *simchah*, even it is a wonderful thing to attain; whether it is a physical attainment, or even if it is a spiritual attainment. By contrast, if I achieve something that is small but it actualized my “I” in the process in getting there, then the happiness I will experience is coming from my “I” when I get it. You can only have real *simchah* in something that is a part of your “I.”

The meaning of “*someiach b’chelko*” (being happy with one’s lot) means that even if my “lot” is small - like when I compare myself with others and I see that others have more than me - I can still be *someiach b’chelko*.

How indeed can one be happy if he sees that others have reached more than him? The depth of this is because *simchah* does not come from what I acquire. If it would come from what I acquire, then I can never be happy, because in comparison to others, I may have acquired very little. *Simchah* rather comes from actualizing the potential of my “I.” When my “I” is actualized, when I have reached something which is “me”, there is resulting *simchah*.

For this reason, if a person does not have true self-recognition, he is not aware of any actualization of his potential, and he finds nothing to be happy about. If he hears the words here that have been explained until now, he will not be satisfied, and he will feel, “In the end of the day, I don’t have much to be happy about. Even the things I do have in my life are minimal compared to what others have. Others have much more than me to be happy about. So how can I be happy with what I have, when I see that everyone else around has more than me [both physically and spiritually]...?”

When a person finds it impossible to be happy with what he has, it can only be because he is out of touch with his “I”. He is unaware that the only thing which truly gives us happiness is when one utilizes his personal potential. If he would be aware of his “I” and he would be aware that only actualizing his potential is what provides happiness, he would have a whole different perspective towards life, and he wouldn’t need answers to his question, for he would be above this question.

When a person lives only superficially, he will remain with the question, and it pains him. He will not be able to be happy with what he has. But when a person comes out of superficiality and he

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realizes that happiness does not come from acquiring things, but from actualizing the “I”, he will feel that everything he attains is a part of his “I”, and the *simchah* that he experiences will be a happiness in his very “I” as it is.

We are speaking about a totally different perspective of *simchah* here! It is not a *simchah* that comes from getting what you want, where you remain unsatisfied by the things you haven’t yet gotten to. It is a *simchah* that one has in his very “I”.

It is difficult to explain it any more than how it has been explained here, but herein lays an entirely different and deeper perspective of *simchah* - for anyone who understands what we mean here.

### *Summary*

In summary, we have explained three main underlying reasons for sadness.

The first source of sadness comes from our body, when we have a feeling of ‘heaviness’ that dominates us and makes us lethargic. This can be counteracted with watching what we eat, together with doing things enthusiastically each day.

A second source of sadness comes from our soul, when there are sins that we haven’t done *teshuvah* about yet. The solution for this is to train oneself to doing *teshuvah* on a regular basis, from the depths of the heart. A person should awaken himself to *teshuvah* for every time that he feels a deep and inner sadness.

The third cause of sadness, which is the most common kind of sadness that people have, is when people don’t feel fulfilled in their life, and they lack a sense of direction in life. The solution for this is two-fold: to realize what we have already gained so far in our life, as well as to be focused on a certain spiritual goal that speaks to us. Unfortunately, most people in the world are suffering in their souls from this kind of sadness – they feel like they are not aiming for any particular goal in life.

### *In Conclusion*

All that we have explained here until now, understandably, is but the introduction for one to get to the complete and true *simchah*, which is described in the verse, 'שמחו צדיקים בה' - “*The righteous rejoice in Hashem.*” We did not speak here about this kind of *simchah*, but that is the desired goal of all that has been explained here.

May we merit from Hashem to feel true happiness in our life - by being happy even with even the parts of ourselves that we haven’t yet actualized, as well as by being happy with the parts of ourselves that we have actualized; and that all of us together should rejoice, in the Creator – as it is written, “*The righteous rejoice in Hashem.*”

## *Questions & Answers with the Rav*

**Q1: Does this idea (of being focused and connected to one spiritual goal in our life) also apply to other areas in life, such as marital peace, children, and livelihood, and other areas of our life?**

**A:** This question stems from living a superficial kind of life, where a person is experiencing life from outside of himself/herself, and not from the inside. When a person lives inwardly, all of these aspects mentioned (marital peace, children, livelihood) are placed in secondary focus to the main point that he is directed towards. When one is not directed towards any one inner point in his life, he will go through the motions, and sometimes his focus will be on his marriage, sometimes on his source of livelihood, and sometimes on his children. But when there is one inner point that he is directing himself towards, none of these things will take over his focus, because he is heading towards a larger picture than any of these aspects.

**Q2: Can the Rav give me specific questions that I can ask myself in order to get clarity in what my main point is that I should be focused on in life?**

**A:** This is a very fundamental question to ask, which is hard to answer in a brief amount of time. To put it forth in general terms, every person needs to know: (1) The strongest positive quality that he possesses, (2) and after that, he should know what the “deepest” thing is that he experiences in his soul. (3) After a person knows both of these factors and he has the combined knowledge of both of these factors together, he should then reach a third stage: the deepest part of himself that he currently recognizes. (4) After that, he can slowly reach deeper experiences.

However, this is really a very big question, and it is like the request of the person in the *Mishnah* [in the times of Hilel and Shamai] who asked, “Teach me the entire Torah on one foot.”

**Q3: How does this idea of ‘figuring out our main point’ fit into our general goal of life, which is to learn Torah and do mitzvos? Are there really two goals in life – our personal goals, and then our general goal in life (which is Torah and mitzvos)? How do we integrate the goal of keeping Torah and mitzvos with having my own personal spiritual goal?**

**A:** Torah and mitzvos are the purpose and goal that applies to all of *Klal Yisrael*, and in that aspect, all of our goals are equal. But within our general goal of Torah and mitzvos, there is also the individual and private goal that each Jew must strive for. The Sages say that everyone is different and that everyone thinks differently (Berachos 57a). Each person contains a point which no one else has. The private goal of each Jew is not meant, *chas v’shalom*, to take away from the general goal, which is keeping Torah and mitzvos. Rather, each of us needs to bring out our individual point and fulfill our own private and unique mission.

Our personal goals in life are not to be viewed as a ‘separate’ goal that we have other than Torah and mitzvos; rather, our personal goals in life are a goal within our general goal, which is Torah and

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mitzvos, which enables us to have a connection with Hashem. The individual mission of a Jew is within the general goal of keeping all of the Torah and *mitzvos*, and it can be a particular *mitzvah* or *middah* (character trait) that he is meant to perfect; so it is all within the general goal of Torah and mitzvos.

Each person has a point where his stronger in than others; within Torah and mitzvos, there is also a person's individuality. The purpose of one's individuality and unique strong point is a path for him to get to the goal of Torah and mitzvos, and not as a purpose unto itself. Rather, utilizing our unique potential and individuality is our own way of how we can connect ourselves with Hashem, which is our general goal in which we are all the same in.

***Q4: Isn't the fact that we are all created with a "tzelem elokim" ("in the image of G-d") also a point in which all Jews are the same in?***

**A:** When Hashem created people, did He create them all with the same height, looks, natures and personality? Are we all the same, or are we different? We are all created different from each other. We each look differently, we each have different *middos*, we each have different ways of thinking, and we are different from each other in many ways. Why did Hashem make us differently? It is to show us that we each have a unique aspect – within the path of Torah and mitzvos - in how we can each come to recognize the Creator. Our individuality is a detail contained with a larger whole. It is not excluded from the whole, rather, it is within it. Each person needs to reveal his individual, unique point – and each person's unique point is different from anyone else's. Although Torah and mitzvos are the general goal of *Klal Yisrael*, within Torah and mitzvos there is also each person's individuality.

***Q5: Would learning about the "Ten Sefiros" help a person reach his/her particular strong point in life?***

**A:** How did you hear about the *Sefiros*? There are two ways how this knowledge is learned – either in a holy manner, or in a manner which creates confusion.

***Q6: Assuming that we learn this information from a Rav who is knowledgeable in these things....?***

**A:** If you find a person who is far removed from materialism of this world and he is a reliable and trustworthy person who can teach Kaballah to women, then yes. But this has to be researched well. Usually when people start studying Kaballah, they become very confused. If you go to learn Kaballah, you are entering into something where there is a possibility of becoming very confused.

**Q7: Is there a particular sefer the Rav can suggest that one can learn which will help him understand himself?**

**A:** There is no one way to take; there are many *sefarim* like this. I can't say which particular *sefer* to learn. If you are used to listening to our *shiurim*, then you can try learning sefer "*Da Es Nafshecha*" ("*Getting To Know Your Soul*", of this author). But there are other *sefarim* too which can help you understand yourself.

**Q8: Are there are other sefarim that the Rav can suggest we should learn, in order to understand ourselves?**

**A:** Let me explain what the difficulty with this is. Most of the *sefarim*/books which are being written today are taking ideas from gentile authors, and people are attempting to convert these ideas into *kedushah*/holiness. There is no *sefer* [about self-knowledge] being produced today that is entirely based on Torah and with no traces of non-Jewish ideas. Therefore, it is hard to know which parts of new *sefarim* are appropriate for us and which parts are not appropriate, because we don't know if it's taken from secular knowledge or not. That is why I can't recommend any on *sefer* [about self-knowledge] to learn - I do not know if everything that is written there is appropriate for a Jew to look at. Some of the *sefarim* being written today are borrowed from gentile thinking and the authors are trying to bring it into Judaism, and that is why I can't say to learn them or not to learn them; for this reason, it is a complicated matter to address.

**Q9: Are there no sefarim written by our Rishonim (earlier sages) and Acharonim (later sages) which can help us understand ourselves? Aren't those sefarim entirely sourced in kedushah?**

**A:** The *sefarim* written by the *Rishonim* were not written in an orderly style that speaks to our own language, so they are not that accessible to our generation. There are only a few parts in these *sefarim* which are written clearly, and they are hard for someone in our generation to go learn and come out with anything concrete from it.

As for the *sefarim* written by our later *gedolim*, such as the *sefarim* of the Alter of Kelm ["*Chochmah U'Mussar*"], the *sefarim* of Reb Yeruchem Levovitz *zt"l* ["*Daas Torah*" and "*Daas Chochmah U'Mussar*"] and the *sefarim* of Reb Chatzkel Levenstein *zt"l* ["*Ohr Yechezkel*"] – in order to know how to learn these *sefarim* properly, one needs to be a great *bar daas* (a very knowledgeable, wise, and sensible person) to learn these *sefarim* in a clear manner, to know when and where to apply the lessons.

There are those in our generation who do try to learn these *sefarim* in a clear manner, but at the same time, they are also learning non-Jewish books along with it. But when learning gentile ideas, one would have to be an even greater *bar daas* to know which parts of it are appropriate for a Jew and which parts should be discarded. And it indeed hard to know which ideas are taken from Torah and *Chazal* and which parts are being taken from gentiles, in the books and *sefarim* that are being learned today. Therefore, it is difficult for me to answer this question.

**Q10: *If I am into my health or I am a healer who makes others healthy, is this considered to be using my strongest point for a spiritual goal, or is it just an external factor in my life which is not part of goal in life as an individual?***

**A:** If a person identifies his field of practice as being the strongest innermost point that he is focused on – in this particular case, health - what will happen one day when he eventually takes leave of the world, where the soul leaves the body? What does a person remain with? We all leave the world one day, and our health isn't here anymore. Health is not part of who we are. But if you are concerned about health because you like to help others, that could be a very big lead to part of who you are, because then it is a spiritual goal. Meaning, if you are a healer because you want to do *chessed* to others – and you consider this your goal in life – then this is a spiritual goal, and this will make you happy. But if you're not doing it for a spiritual reason, and it's just because you are "into health" and you 'also' happen to do *chessed* with it, then it's not a spiritual goal in your life, and it won't give you happiness.

## 1.2 | Adar Beis – The Power of Laughter

### *Adar – The Month of Laughter*

With the help of Hashem, we are now in the month of *Adar Beis*. Here we will continue what we began to discuss last month in *Adar Aleph*, where we spoke about the power of *simchah* (happiness). Now we will speak about another power found in the month of Adar, “*sechok*” (laughter)<sup>9</sup>, and how we can use this power with our soul.

### *Holy Laughter and Evil Laughter*

The power of laughter, as with every other power in the soul, can be used for either good or evil.

On one hand, we find that Sarah Imeinu named her son “*Yitzchok*” because she had *t’zchok* (laughter) when she first heard that she would have a child; she was laughing that she had a child in her old age. This was a holy kind of laughter. On the other hand, there is also an evil kind of laughter, as one of the prophets lamented about: “*I have been made into laughter all along, and of what is this festivity about?*”

Thus, we find *sechok* (or *tzechok*) *d’kedushah* (holy laughter) by Yitzchok Avinu, and there is also evil *sechok*. What is holy laughter, and what is evil laughter?

First of all, before we explain when laughter is holy and when it is evil, it is hard to understand in the first place of how laughter can be holy. Laughter is usually associated with lightheadedness, which causes us to stop being serious; it is something that cools us off from being focused on our inner, spiritual world. It prevents us from the levelheadedness that is required for having *yiras shomayim* (fear of Heaven). How can laughter be holy, then? And how can it be that Yitzchok Avinu’s name comes from the term *tzechok*, laughter?

Let us therefore see what the role of laughter is.

### *An Antidote for Anger and Sadness*

There are two positive ways to use laughter.

(1) Laughter can take away a person’s sadness. Sadness can also be solved through the power of *simcha*/happiness, which we spoke about last month; but another power which can counter sadness is through *sechok*/laughter, which is the other aspect that is contained in the month of Adar. (We will soon explain what the difference between *simchah* and *sechok* is.)

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<sup>9</sup> *Sefer Yetzirah* (5:5) lists “*sechok*” (laughter) as the defining characteristic of the month of Adar.

(2) Another positive use of laughter is that it can counter anger. When a person is angry and we get him to laugh, we can see that his anger immediately cools down and he is calmed. There is something about laughter that dissipates anger.

### *Using Laughter to Calm Down Our Anger*

We will explore here the second positive use of laughter: its power to calm us down when we are angry.

Rav Yitzchok Kaduri *zt"l* was an elderly *Gadol* in *Eretz Yisrael* who was *nifrar* recently. He lived to be over 100 years. When he was asked how he merited to live so long, he answered that it was because every time he was about to get angry, he laughed instead, which made his anger subside.

When a person is angry, his heart is filled with what the *Gemara* calls “boiling of the blood” (*resichas damim*). Through laughter, a person cools off the “boiling of the blood” which fuels anger. Let’s explain how, indeed, laughter can calm anger.

### *The External Use of Laughter: Remembering Something Funny*

First of all, we should know that this is not the only technique we can use against anger. There is an external way to use laughter and an internal way to use laughter, in order to deal with anger. The external way to use laughter, which we are about to explain, is one of the solutions brought in the works of our Rabbis.

How can a person use the external method of laughter to calm his anger? The advice is that when a person is about to get angry, he should imagine a situation which gets him to laugh. Remember something funny you once saw, heard, or read about, which made you laugh; and imagine it strongly as you find yourself about to get angry about something. You will find that this calms the soul.

### *The Internal Use of Laughter: Awakening Your Emunah*

The internal way to use laughter to counter anger is to remind ourselves of *emunah*, when we remind ourselves that everything that happens is from Hashem. When we realize that we were wrong in how we originally thought, and we realize that we were incorrect for thinking that we had it all right, we are able to laugh about it.

This is the inner way to use the power of laughter. You thought it was supposed to be a certain way, and now you realize that it’s not how you thought, because Hashem planned otherwise. “*My thoughts are not their thoughts.*” Anytime that a person wanted something and he thought that this was the logical course to take, and it didn’t end up happening as he thought it would - he can remind himself of *emunah* that Hashem is in charge and that Hashem knows better than him, and this can get a person to laugh.

Such laughter will be stemming from *emunah*. One can laugh at the very fact that he had thought that things should be a certain way, and then he realized that Hashem had other thoughts in mind

for him. He realizes, “Hashem is running the world, not me!” It can actually bring you to laughter – a holy and deep laughter that stems from a realization of *emunah*.

We will give a parable that illustrates this idea. If a lion and a cat get into a fight [and the cat got away alive], should the cat feel bad that the lion defeated it, and cry about this? Instead of crying, it should laugh, because it is laughable for the cat to want to win a fight with a lion. Why is this laughable? Because when things don’t go our way, this was how it was supposed to happen, so there is no reason to cry; instead, it can awaken us to laugh. The lesson we can take out from the parable of the cat and lion is: Why should we cry when things don’t go our way? Whatever happened to us was supposed to happen, because Hashem runs the world. Instead of being angry that something didn’t go our way, we should laugh. This laughter can calm down our anger.

However, in order to use laughter in an inner way to calm down our anger, one needs clear *emunah* and to feel *bittul* (self-nullification), to Hashem. If one does not have clear *emunah*, he will only get angrier when he reminds himself that things didn’t go his way. Thus, the clearer one’s *emunah* is and the more one agrees to submit his will to Hashem’s will, the better he will be able to laugh at himself when things don’t go his way. This is a very deep way to use the power of holy laughter.

### *Holy Mockery: Making Fun of Your Anger*

*Chazal* say that “all *leitzaanus* (mockery) is forbidden, except for mocking *avodah zarah* (idol worship).” Besides for the simple meaning of this, which is also true, a person can also mock the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination) which is present inside his heart - for the *yetzer hora* is called the “strange god that resides in a person”, it is called “a spark of idol worship” inside the person, and a person can make fun of the *yetzer hora* inside himself, the “internal *avodah zarah*” - when he reminds himself of *emunah*. It is permissible to “make fun” of one’s own *yetzer hora* – i.e. his anger - when his will doesn’t happen; and one should indeed do so. This is the concept of *leitzaanus d’kedushah* (holy mockery), which can remove anger.

### *Using Both Kinds of Laughter At Once*

To summarize thus far, there are two ways to calm ourselves down when we are about to get upset – an external way to use laughter, and an inner way to use laughter. The external way is to remind ourselves of something funny. The second way to is to summon forth our *emunah* and laugh at ourselves that Hashem had different thoughts and plans than we did.

We must emphasize that the external method (remembering something funny) should be used only in tandem with the inner part of the solution (reminding ourselves of *emunah*). Every matter has an external layer and an internal layer to it, and we need both of these aspects; therefore, we need to make use of both the external and internal aspects, when we use the power of laughter. If one just uses the external part and he doesn’t use *emunah*, this is like a body without a soul, and it is the way of the gentile nations of the world, not the way of the nation of Yisrael. The balanced approach is to use both of these methods together in our laughter. Through that, we can merit with Hashem’s help

to weaken anger, by using this *leitzanus d'kedushah* (holy mockery) and *sechok d'kedushah* (holy laughter).

### *What Is Simcha, and What Is Sechok?*

Let us continue to discuss now how we remove sadness, which is through *simchah* (happiness) and *sechok* (laughter/mockery). Firstly, let us understand the difference between *simchah* (happiness) and *sechok* (laughter).

*Simchah* means that I have a genuine reason to be happy. We can find *simchah* both in the spiritual as well as in the physical areas of life. A Jew can feel happy when he thinks about the fact that he is a Jew, or when he merits helping others and being kind to others, etc. Even physical accomplishments make us happy: we are happy when we buy a house, or when we get married, or when we find something that was missing, etc. Thus, *simchah* is when I am happy with something that's here, and it's tangible.

*Sechok* (laughter), though, comes from something that *isn't* – not about what is. The word “*sechok*” is from the word “*shechok*”, which means to “grind” (from the term ‘*shechikas samimanim*’, “grinding of herbs”), and when you grind, you are making something that “is” into something that “isn't”. This is also the root behind *leitzanus* (mockery) – when a person mocks something, he is nullifying its important and to make it into something that “isn't”.

Thus, *simchah* is when I am happy with what is, and *sechok* is when I am happy with something I have nullified, not with something that is here.

With *sechok*, a person is happy with something that is non-existent, because the very concept of *sechok* is that it attaches a person to a non-existent world. *Simchah* connects me to that which exists, while *sechok* brings a person into the non-existent (even when it is holy). *Sechok* (laughter) is the synonymous with *leitzanus* (mockery and joking), which is rooted in the word “*tzeil*”, “shadow” - a lack of light - an absence of something that is, and instead something that isn't.

Therefore, when we laugh or when we hear laughter, we are connecting ourselves to a nonexistent world. We don't think about what we are laughing about, we just laugh. That itself is an attachment to the nonexistent. Now let us learn about how this power is used in the side of evil and how it can also be used in the side of holiness. Whether it is used for holiness or for evil, however, *sechok* is always about becoming attached to that which doesn't exist.

### *Holy Laughter: Using Humor to Loosen the Body's Hold*

We find in the *Gemara* that some of the Sages would begin their lessons with a *milsa d'bedichusa* – with something humorous. What was the purpose of this? It is because every person has a body and a soul. Our body covers our soul, and therefore there are many physical aspects of our being which prevents us from getting into the inner, spiritual light that is our soul. One of the ways to shed our physical layers is to use the power of *sechok/leitzanus* (laughter/mockery) for holiness.

How does it work? Laughter connects us to the nonexistent, which in turn sheds our physical layers. We can then immediately return to our inner world afterwards, the world of our *neshamah* (Divine soul), which is our inner reality. This is the purpose of holy laughter: it can help us free ourselves, to have “*purkan*” (freedom) from our normal physical restraints, and connect us better to our inner world.

Soon we will see how this is also used for evil and how it is used for holiness; but this is the concept of how laughter works. It loosens up our physicality, and when used for holiness, it enables us to go free from our physical restraints and to enter into our inner world of the soul.

Based upon this, let us understand the following. If someone is already connected to his inner world and he is solidly anchored there, using laughter can help him get past his physicality, and to enter into his inner world more. But if a person is not yet in touch with his inner world, or if he has a very minimal revelation of it, laughter will disconnect him from physicality, and where does he return to afterwards? He returns to the materialism where he is found in. Laughter doesn't help him at all, and it even damages him internally, because he gets used to lightheadedness and it leads him towards sin, and he gets used to connecting to the nonexistent.

This is the depth of the difference between holy laughter and evil laughter. Holy laughter was used by the Sages when they began their lesson, and it is used by a person who is already connected to his inner world, where he can use laughter in order to enter more inward into their souls; after laughter, this kind of person can maintain his connection to his inner world. But those who have no inner world to connect to are not using laughter to enter into their inner world. They are using laughter simply to escape sadness, and when they are done laughing, they return to where they were before – and their laughter did nothing for them.

Take sleeping, for example. There are two general reasons why people sleep. A person who has no connection to his inner world sleeps because he loves to sleep. An inner person sleeps to energize his body so that he will be able to get up the next day refreshed to serve the Creator. There are some people who sleep because they want to feel the lethargy of it, which further attaches them to the heaviness of materialism and physicality. On this it is said, “*Lazy one, until when will you sleep?*” But a person who cares about his spiritual state will go to sleep because he needs to refresh his body, so that he can serve Hashem properly. He enters into sleep so that he can return to his inner world afterwards.

The same is true for laughter and mockery. Most people enjoy mockery because they enjoy the humor for its own sake and they get a kind of vitality from it. This is the evil use of laughter and mockery. But if a person uses mockery in order to free himself from the body's hold, through using humor, such humor is “holy laughter”, because it is calming the body and helping him reveal his inner world of the soul. Thus, if a person is connected to his inner world and he uses humor to loosen up his body, this is “holy laughter”.

How indeed can we know if we used laughter for the right reasons or not? He should see what happens afterwards. What was he like before the laughter, and what is he like afterwards? If a person finds that he is more frivolous about his *ruchniyus* after he is finished with his fit of laughter, it is a

sign that he didn't laugh for the right reasons. But if a person is able to return to being serious about his *ruchniyus* even after laughing, it is a sign that he has laughed for the right reasons, and then his laughter was holy.

### *A Dose of Humor in the Home*

There is another important point to mention about this. The Chazon Ish wrote that there must be a pleasant atmosphere in the home, and that a little bit of humor is necessary for this. We need to create a calm atmosphere in our homes, because there are many stressful situations that arise in the home with our spouse and our children. With a good dose of humor, these stressful situations become easier to deal with – both for ourselves and for the rest of the family. This is a more basic level which can be worked upon, whether one has reached holy laughter or whether he hasn't.

It takes wisdom to know exactly how much humor is needed in the house – what to joke about, and what not to joke about. This requires some thinking. But the point is that we need to induce some amount of humor into our home, and we need to figure out how much humor we need in the home, as well as where to draw the line.

### *The Laughter of Purim*

Now that we are approaching the day of Purim, we need to reflect: what kind of laughter should we have on Purim, and what kind of laughter should we avoid?

The holy laughter that is contained on Purim represents the second kind of holy laughter we described here, which is when we use laughter to ward off anger when things don't go our way. Through the story of *Megillas Esther*, we keep seeing how everyone's plans were foiled. Achashveirosh wanted to have his way, Vashti wanted to have her way, and Haman had all his grand plans of destroying all of us. But in the end, Hashem's plan prevailed over all of their plotting. This is the deep laughter we can laugh about on Purim.

We should draw forth our holy laughter on Purim from the story of the *Megillah*, and after that, we can access this power of laughter in our own souls. When one reaches this deep place of laughter in his soul after studying the events of Divine Providence in the Purim story, this is the holy laughter of Purim, where we use external characters as a way to enter inward.

But if a person does not draw his laughter on Purim from this source, and he just laughs on Purim like everybody else found in our streets on Purim, who are laughing an evil kind of laughter – such laughter is rooted in the terrible *kelipah*<sup>10</sup> that is Amalek, because it is nothing but evil *leitzanus*. Amalek's defining trait is *leitzanus*, as the verse describes about Amalek: "וְדַּיְהִיר, לִץ שְׂמוֹ" – "A rebellious, arrogant one; a scoffer is his name."

To our chagrin, most of the laughter on Purim that takes place is not "erasing" Amalek – it is instead the very laughter of Amalek, who laughs an evil, mirthless laughter. Only after revealing deep *emunah* can a person laugh on Purim in a way that erases Amalek. But if a person is 'connected with

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<sup>10</sup> *kelipah* - impure spiritual "husk" or "shell" which conceals holiness

Haman' [through frivolous laughter that doesn't emanate from *emunah*] on Purim, his laughter on Purim is not being "*moche*" (erasing) Amalek, and he is rather being *mechayeh* (sustaining) Amalek, *chas v'shalom*. Therefore, as Purim draws closer, we should reflect into what kind of laughter we want to have on Purim. Do we want inner laughter or do we want superficial and evil laughter?

The holy kind of laughter which brings a person to have more *emunah* is the laughter that brings a person to the true *simchah*. It is when one laughs at himself, by nullifying his own will to Hashem's will, where he makes *leitzanus* out of his own "inner *avodah zarah*" – and then he comes to experience *simchah* in *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, as it is written, 'שמחו צדיקים בה', "*The righteous rejoice in Hashem.*"

### *In Conclusion*

May we merit from Hashem to avoid the evil kind of laughter, all of us together, and to instead reach the holy kind of laughter, which erases our anger and sadness - and through this, we should be *zoche* to connect ourselves to Hashem Himself, in these times of celebration and *simchah*. *Amen*, and *Amen*.

### *Questions & Answers with the Rav*

**Q1: How can Yitzchok Avinu have both the middos of "gevurah" (restraint) and "sechok" (laughter)? Why isn't this a contradiction?**

**A:** Excellent question. *Chazal* say that "Who is strong? The one who overcomes his inclination." When a person overcomes an aspect of his character, any emotion or thought, he gets rid of the inner "*avodah zarah*" within him – the spark of idol worship which is the antithesis to *emunah* in Hashem, the "other gods" which a person serves within himself: the drives of his *yetzer hora*. Thus, Yitzchok Avinu overcame these "other gods", and this was his *gevurah*, which revealed the depth of *sechok*.

**Q2: Does it start with gevurah (restraint), or with sechok (laughter)?**

**A:** Without *gevurah* a person wouldn't be able to have *sechok*. But it is *sechok* which enables a person to have *gevurah*. Without *gevurah*, a person cannot persevere. Through *gevurah*, a person is able to have *bittul* (self-nullification), which is also known as *yiras shomayim* (fear of Heaven). The depth of *gevurah* is for one to be prepared to nullify his will, which brings a person to have *sechok*, and *sechok* brings a person to *simchah*. So *gevurah* brings a person to *sechok*, and when *sechok* is actualized, this is the depth of *gevurah*, and this brings a person to complete *simchah*. The *sechok* is the completion of the *gevurah*.

**Q3: Can the Rov explain what the “*sechok*” will be in the future when Moshiach comes, which is what we say in the *possuk*, אז ימלא שחוק פינו (“Then our mouths will be filled with laughter”)?**

**A:** The *sechok* of the future will be that there will be no more free will, and then we will realize that all the things that ever happened in history the world are all a joke, because we will see that it was Hashem who made it all happen. This will be the complete, ultimate laughter which will emanate from our *emunah*.

**Q4: How do we balance seriousness (working hard on ourselves) and laughter (based on *emunah* that everything is in the hands of Hashem) in our life?**

**A:** That is a very good question. It is complicated. To give a brief answer to this, there is a verse, לאדם מערכי לב ומה' מענה לשון (“To a man belongs the arrangements of his heart”); the depth of our power of *bechirah* (free will) comes from the heart’s search for the truth and from the will for holiness. The rest is up to Hashem. Our entire *avodah*, from a deeper understanding, is to perform deeds that purify our heart which brings us to the greatest possible purity of heart we can reach. All that we can do is to choose to act correctly when we access the depth of our heart, and that is our role in *bechirah*. When a person truly purifies his heart, his actions will surely be the will of Hashem. But the actions we then do are not really from our own free will; they are done by Hashem, for Hashem “does” everything.

If so, being that Hashem does everything, what is the depth of our *bechirah* and our *avodah* on this world? The depth of our *avodah* is to purify our heart as much as we can, and to perform deeds from a purified heart. But our actual *avodah* is always “מערכי לב” – it is only that part which is “*to man*”, in our hands to do. That is entire role on this world, and it is only this aspect which we can get reward for. Although it is ultimately Hashem Who does all actions, it is still a result of our free will, therefore, we will get reward for it. Therefore, a person has to try his best, and the rest is up to Hashem.

**Q5: How can a person know if his motivations are pure or not?**

**A:** This is a complicated matter, and there are two factors involved with this. Part of our motivations we can clearly identify as holy, and we can clearly identify other motivations that are not holy. All of that is found within our conscious (*muda*, or *hakarah*). However, we also have subconscious motivations (*tat-muda*, or *tat-hakarah*), and even deeper than that layer is the area of above our conscious (*al-hakarah*, or *al-muda*).

The areas of subconscious and above-conscious are hidden from our consciousness and it is subtle *avodah* to get to know them, and there are several methods explained of how to access it. Firstly, though, we need to begin with identifying our conscious motivations. We can know clearly what we want and what we don’t want, what we like and what we don’t like. Using this area of our consciousness, we can feel if we are having a pure motivation for something or not.

Now, in order to tap into our subconscious and above-conscious, this is a very deep and complicated matter to know, and our greatest leaders worked their entire lives at uncovering their subconscious and above-conscious. In general terms, Rav Dessler *zt"l* explained that we are able to know what our subconscious motives are by paying attention to our quickly passing thoughts. These include thoughts that we like to push away sometimes because we are uncomfortable with such thoughts. Those thoughts make their appearance sometimes and we tend to quickly push them away, and all of this takes place very quickly and we often don't register it. But if we pay attention to those quickly passing thoughts, we are able to discover the thoughts that are coming from deeper in our soul – the area of our subconscious. These are thoughts which we usually think have nothing to do with us. They can be either be positive and holy thoughts, or they can be more shameful and evil kinds of thoughts. When we discover those thoughts, we gain an entirely different awareness towards what's going on inside ourselves.

Most people only recognize themselves from the most superficial area of their conscious. There is almost no one who completely recognizes his true self. However, the more a person goes deeper into himself, the better he can recognize himself. There are many other ways as well (besides for the one we mentioned here), that are explained by our Rabbis of how a person can get deeper into his subconscious.

There is another way brought by our Rabbis of how one can know his deeper motivations: through our dreams at night<sup>11</sup>, which show a person his deepest desires that he had during the day. This is based on the verse, "*On my bed at nights, I sought that which I loved.*" Dreams show us what we thought about during the day, as *Chazal* state, that a person only dreams about at night that which he fantasized about during the day; and in addition, they show us what our deeper subconscious desires are. Even when we dream at night of total fantasies, those fantasies are like the 'waste products' that are produced from our thoughts and desires, so even the fantasies tell us a lot about ourselves. However, getting to know ourselves through dreams requires much specific guidance. There were other ways as well which our leaders used in order to know their subconscious. Reb Yisrael Salanter writes about several different ways of how to know it. But these are very subtle matters.

***Q6: If someone is down or depressed, is there anything wrong with trying to get him to laugh?***

**A:** This is a very general kind of question, and generally speaking, the answer is, yes. However, usually when people do this, they end up falling too far into the laughter and then they end up back in depression afterwards.

There is a kind of therapy where people use laughter as a way to heal people from their problems, but the problem with this kind of therapy is that the therapist himself will become too caught up in his own laughter, and in the end he will also need therapy. Only a person who is solidly anchored to his inner world can know how to use laughter to heal others. This is what we find in the *Gemara*,

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<sup>11</sup> See *Rosh Chodesh Avodah\_009\_Kislev\_The Meaning Of Our Dreams*

that there were people who used *badchanus* (Jewish humor and entertainment) to cheer others up, and Eliyahu HaNavi said that these people merit *Olam HaBa*. But with most people, as soon as they use *leitzanus* to cheer up others and make them happy, they fall too much into the laughter, and they have a spiritual downfall from it.

There is a well-known story that once a distraught person came to his Rav to seek advice from him, and his Rav told him that he should go to a *badchan* to get himself cheered up. The person then said to the Rav, “That *badchan* is me.”

**Q7: *Can laughter be used to heal people from [emotional] illnesses?***

**A:** I will explain this briefly; this question is really leading to something else. We should understand that there are some people who are very much ‘down in the dumps’, and laughter can help such people. But, everything needs to be used properly and be given its proper boundaries. When people overdo laughter and joking, firstly, they fall too far into their laughter and joking, and in addition, they are getting others to think that laughter and joking should be a basic part of life. They don’t know how to place boundaries on the power of laughter and joking.

If laughter is just being used as a form of therapy to heal someone, that is one thing; but what usually happens? Laughter is made into a part of life itself. When laughter is used within its proper boundaries, it is holy. As soon as it is overdone, though, not only does laughter not help, it is damaging. In a case where someone needs laughter as part of his therapy, if this is the only thing that can help him, then by all means, the person helping him should use laughter to help him, without question. If someone is in a little bit of a better situation than this and he is only minimally depressed, there are two abilities he can use to be helped: to awaken inner *simchah*, and to also use external *leitzanus* (joking and humor). But when people get used to *leitzanus* as a way to heal themselves from pain, they come to view it as a part of life, and he is brought down from a higher spiritual level into a lower level of living.

Another example is when people rejoice with the *chosson*<sup>12</sup> and *kallah*<sup>13</sup> at weddings. Most of the time, by *simchas chosson v’kallah*, people think that gladdening the *chosson* and *kallah* means to make *leitzanus* in front of the *chosson* and *kallah*. This is not using *leitzanus* as a way to heal people; it is simply an example of how people use *leitzanus* as a basic part of their life, where they bring down people from a higher spiritual level that they could have remained on. When people think that *simchah* (happiness) means *sechok* (laughter) and *leitzanus* (joking), it is because they don’t know when and where the power of *sechok* should be used. Once people engage in *leitzanus*, there are “no strings attached” anymore, and then people think that *simchah* means *leitzanus*.

The common denominator between the scenarios of laughter therapy, gladdening a groom and bride, and *simchas Purim*, is that many people erroneously think that “*simchah*” means to act with *leitzanus*.

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<sup>12</sup> groom

<sup>13</sup> bride

## 1.3 | Adar – Tribe of Zevulun

### *Adar Corresponds To The Tribe of Zevulun*

The month of Adar is a time of joy (*simchah*) and laughter. Each of the months in the Jewish calendar corresponds to one of the 12 tribes. The month of Adar, according to the *Gra*, corresponds to the tribe of Zevulun.

### *“Rejoice, Zevulun, When You Go Out”*

Of Zevulun, the Torah says, “Rejoice, Zevulun, when you go out, and Yissocher in your tents”.<sup>14</sup> Thus, Zevulun is associated with *simchah*, with rejoicing. Let us try here to understand what the concept of *simchah* is, to arrive at a deeper and true understanding of it.

The month of Adar, which is the month of *simchah*, corresponds to Zevulun. What is the *simchah* that we find in connection with Zevulun?

The Sages explain that Zevulun goes out in commerce in order to support his brother Yissocher, who bears the yoke of Torah<sup>15</sup>. Simply speaking, the joy of the tribe of Zevulun is because his tribe supports the Torah learning of Yissocher. However, who is happier, Yissocher or Zevulun? It would seem that Yissocher is happier, because he is the one who learns Torah. Yet the Torah says that it is Zevulun who rejoices! What is the *simchah* of Zevulun? And how does it apply to the *simchah* we have in the month of Adar?

Making the question stronger, the curse given to Adam after he sinned, was “By the sweat of your brow, you shall eat bread.”<sup>16</sup> Working for a livelihood is a curse, and it is part of the great sadness that came upon man as a result of the sin. Yet, the Torah associates the term *simchah* with Zevulun, even though Zevulun goes to work in order to support Yissocher. If anything, Zevulun should be sad that he has to engage in commerce and work, which is the curse that came as a result of the sin. How, then, is the business efforts of Zevulun specifically the cause of his *simchah*, when it is the curse of work which brought sadness to mankind?

### *The Techeiles In Zevulun’s Portion: A Reminder of Man’s Tachlis/Purpose*

The Gemara says that Zevulun complained that his share in Eretz Yisrael does not include any cities or fields. Instead, he was given the seas, where there is no civilization. Hashem responded to Zevulun by saying, “There is something I have given in your portion which none of the other tribes have: the *chilazon* fish, from which *techeiles* comes from.”<sup>17</sup> The *chilazon* fish is found in the sea,

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<sup>14</sup> Devarim 33:18

<sup>15</sup> Midrash Tanchuma, cited by Rashi in Beraishis 49:13

<sup>16</sup> Beraishis 3:19

<sup>17</sup> Talmud Bavli: Megillah 6a

which is only in Zevulun's portion. Hence, the special portion given to Zevulun includes the *chilazon*, from which the turquoise wool of the *techeiles* is made from.

The Gemara says that when a person looks at *tzitzis* [when they are together with *techeiles*], the blue color of the *techeiles* reminds him of the sea, the sea reminds him of the sky, and the sky reminds him of the Throne of Glory.<sup>18</sup> The word *techeiles* is from the word *tachlis*. The depth of this is because looking at *techeiles* reminds a person of his "*tachlis*" – his ultimate purpose. The "*tachlis*", the purpose and endpoint of the year, is the month of Adar. Thus, the deeper implication of Zevulun's possession of the *techeiles* is that his tribe is more connected with the spiritual *tachlis*, the purpose, of man. That is the "*tachlis*" revealed in the month of Adar, which corresponds to Zevulun – and that is the *simchah* of Zevulun's portion.

Hence, the month of Adar corresponds to *simchah* of Zevulun, the *simchah* of looking at *techeiles*, which reminds a person of his *tachlis*.

### *Haman's Decree: The "End" Which Awakened The Jewish People To Their Tachlis/Purpose*

When Haman decreed destruction on all of the Jewish people, this was a decree that could have caused them either to totally despair, or to become awakened to their higher purpose. By realizing that their end was imminent, instead of sinking into lowly despair, they could now reflect about their end and reveal their *tachlis*, their true end, their true purpose.

The decree of death upon them, which was a threat of total annihilation of man – for the Jewish people represent all of Creation – was essentially a part of the process of rectifying the sin of Adam which had brought death upon the world. The entire Jewish people were now in a situation of total annihilation hovering above them, yet it was this very situation which spurred them on to repent and ultimately realize their higher purpose (*tachlis*). Through this situation where they faced annihilation and absolute destruction, they revealed their ultimate *tachlis*, their purpose.

### *Converts Come To Eretz Yisrael By Way of Zevulun*

Moshe's blessing to Zevulun is that merchants would do business with Zevulun because he owned all of the ports at sea, which the merchants would first encounter when coming to do business in Israel. The businessmen of the tribe of Zevulun were all sailors, who did business at sea, and the Gemara says that all sailors are called *tzaddikim*, for they are always praying to Hashem to be saved from danger at sea.<sup>19</sup>

The gentiles who threw Yonah into the sea, when the ship was in danger from the storm, were all sailors. It was these sailors who ultimately caused him to do *teshuvah*. A gentile is able to donate *korbonos* to the *Beis HaMikdash*, and the Gemara says that in the future, gentiles will come to donate *korbonos* to the *Beis HaMikdash* and then they will be inspired to convert to the Jewish people. The gentiles will travel to Eretz Yisrael by sea, so they will first need to pass through Zevulun's portion,

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<sup>18</sup> Talmud Bavli: Menachos 43a

<sup>19</sup> Talmud Bavli: Kiddushin 81a

the sea, in order to get to Eretz Yisrael. Thus, the gentiles who convert to Judaism are only able to do so by way of Zevulun.

As explained before, Zevulun's portion, the sea, contains the *techeiles*, which reminds man of his *tachlis* (purpose). Thus, Zevulun's role is to rectify the sin of Adam (for the sin caused man to veer from his ultimate purpose). However, besides for this, Zevulun also accomplishes another role. By way of the sea, gentiles are able to come to Eretz Yisrael and donate *korbonos*, and are thereby inspired to convert to the Jewish people. Since Zevulun enables converts – which is the “purpose” of our exile, for the Gemara says that the Jewish people were exiled so that we can gain converts - Zevulun therefore represents the concept that it is precisely the end which reveals the root of all rectification.

### *Zevulun Represents The Concept of “Zevul” – Dung/Lowliness/Sin Can Ultimately Be Used For Fertilizer/Growth/Rectification*

The word “Zevulun” is from the word *zevel*, animal dung that is used to fertilize fields. Fertilizer comes from the lowliest possible element on this world - the dung of animals. Yet, it is precisely this lowly material which fosters growth, for the animal dung is used to fertilize the fields, producing all of the crops. Hence, Zevulun represents the idea that even the lowest element in the world can ultimately bring about growth.

Adam's sin brought about the curse of work upon mankind, and the sin also made it possible for unworthy seed<sup>20</sup> to come from him. Had Adam eaten only from the *Eitz HaChaim* and not from the *Eitz HaDaas*, there would be no concept of any unworthy seed coming from him. Through the sin of eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*, there was now a “*zevel*”, a lowly element of “animal dung” which came to the world, as a result of the defilement caused by sin. But through “Zevulun”, the impaired “*zevel*” which was brought to the world through sin can be elevated and thereby bring about rectification to the world. Zevulun represents the concept of revealing growth and elevation in the very place of *zevel*/dung/lowliness.

### *The Simchah of the Month of Adar/Zevulun: Transforming An “End” Into Joy*

The great *simchah* (joy) that the Jewish people had in the month of Adar was that we were all facing annihilation at the hands of Haman, we were sad and we were mourning, we truly felt that it our “end” was near, and ultimately this terrible situation became transformed into joy, when we were saved from the decree<sup>21</sup>. We turned our “end” and transformed it from sadness and despair into great cause for celebration and joy. This very concept, of using the idea of an “end” to reveal joy, is represented by Zevulun.

### *Zevulun's Joy – The Heavenly Beis HaMikdash*

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<sup>20</sup> (i.e. Kayin, as well as the wasted sperm which came from Adam's body as a result of the 130 years in which he separated from Chavah. See Talmud Bavli: Eruvin 18b)

<sup>21</sup> through fasting, prayer, and repentance

The Gemara<sup>22</sup> says that one of the seven heavens is called “*Zevul*”, and that in this part of Heaven, the Heavenly *Beis HaMikdash* resides, with a Heavenly *Mizbeiach*, and the angel Michael offers up the souls of the Jewish people on this *Mizbeiach*.

This word “*zevul*” can also mean “*mador*”, which means a “special chamber”, alluding to the special chamber in Heaven. This is a hint that the part of Heaven which is called “*zevul*”, which corresponds to Zevulun, is the “special chamber” in Heaven which houses the *Beis HaMikdash* of Heaven.

Hence, the *Beis HaMikdash* of Heaven belongs to Zevulun. There is a “lower” *Beis HaMikdash* and a “higher” *Beis HaMikdash*. On This World, which is the lower world, the *Beis HaMikdash* is shared by the portions of Yehudah and Binyamin. But in the higher world, in Heaven, the *Beis HaMikdash* is in Zevulun’s portion.<sup>23</sup>

That is a deeper understanding of *simchah* that Zevulun is blessed with.

### *Zevulun’s Commerce At Sea Rectifies The Curse of Work Given To Man*

Earlier it was explained that Zevulun’s engagement in commerce rectifies the curse of work that has been placed on mankind ever since the sin of Adam. How does Zevulun’s commerce rectify the curse of work?

One reason is because Zevulun engages in commerce at sea, and by working in “water”, man is raised above the level of working with the “earth”. The element of “earth” became cursed with sadness ever since the sin of Adam, but through Zevulun’s commerce at sea, man is able to work joyously, on a level of “water”, which is more spiritual than the element of earth.

### *Zevulun: Turning End/Ruin Into Joy*

Let us reflect on another way of understanding, however, which will also have practical ramifications in our own lives.

There is a beginning and end of the year. [The beginning of the year is the month of Nissan, thus the end of the year is the month which precedes it, Adar]. Ever since Adam sinned, the concept of “end” always implies destruction. As an example, the Torah says that Amalek’s end will be destruction. The end usually implies the ruination of something. That is the result of the sin. Through the concept of Zevulun, the concept of “end” is repaired, for Zevulun shows us the idea that any end or situation of ruination is actually a cause for joy. [This will be soon be explained].

Let us think about the times we live in. We do not know when the Redemption will come. But anyone can see that we are very close to the end. The world today is not as it should be. The spiritual level today has deteriorated to an abysmally low level. We don’t have the *Beis HaMikdash*, the *avodah*, the *korbonos*, and because the ideal state is absent from our midst, we are missing so much. The Jewish people today are at the lowest level they have ever been in. What do we need to think, now that we are approaching the “end”?

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22 Talmud Bavli Tractate Chagigah 13b

23 See sefer Kometz Minchah (of Reb Tzadok HaKohen) II:76

The Gemara says that the final redemption will take place in stages. First the Redemption will come to the Mediterranean Sea, and then it will come to the sea of Teveria<sup>24</sup>. From there, the Redemption will continue in stages. Thus, Teveria is the beginning point of the Redemption, but first the Redemption will come to the sea, which is Zevulun's portion. From here we can learn a deep insight, that before the Redemption can arrive, we first need to pass through "Zevulun" – in other words, we first need to access the "joy" of Zevulun.

This is the depth of the verse, "*For with joy they go out.*"<sup>25</sup> It is because we will "go out" from exile into the redemption amidst joy, which represents Zevulun. Thus, the final step before the Redemption will be that we will need to first go through the perspective of "Zevulun", which is *simchah*/joy.

After the month of Adar is the month of Nissan, which is the month of the Redemption. The month of Adar corresponds to Zevulun. Hence, in order to arrive at the Redemption, we must first go through the "end" - the month of Adar - which is "Zevulun". Practically speaking, we need to first reach joy, represented by Adar/Zevulun, in order to arrive at the "Redemption", which is represented by the month of Nissan.

### *The Joy of Clarifying Our Tachlis/Purpose*

But the question is: How will we traverse the month of Adar? Will we go through the month of Adar with sadness, or will we go through it with joy? How can we truly traverse the month of Adar in the sense of the verse, "*For with joy they go out*"? What is the depth of our *avodah* in the month of Adar to have true *simchah*?

The *simchah*/joy of Zevulun applies on a general level to mankind, as well as on a more individual level, with each person. On a general level, it is the joy of turning end/ruination into growth and rectification [as explained earlier]. But it also manifests on a more specific level. In anything a person does, one must clarify what the *tachlis* (purpose) of it is.

Our general *tachlis* is that we are all here to bask in the pleasure of becoming attached with Hashem, as explained in the beginning of *Mesillas Yesarim*. But besides for this general *tachlis* we all have, we each encounter a specific purpose to each thing. One needs to clarify what the *tachlis* is, of each thing that he encounters.

Zevulun's portion is the sea. The purpose of the sea is to act as a border for the land. The sea is the end of the land. But the concept of Zevulun is that the "end" is the very cause for joy.

### *Death – The "End" That Can Be Turned Into Joy*

Of the month of Adar, and of the day of Purim especially, the Sages said that "Wine enters, the secret comes out."<sup>26</sup> The *gematria* (numerical value) of the Hebrew word for "wine", *yayin*, is equal

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<sup>24</sup> Tosefta Succah 3:9

<sup>25</sup> Yeshayahu 55:12

<sup>26</sup> Talmud Bavli: Sanhedrin 70a

to the number 70. The Sages said that once every 70 years, the *chilazon* appears in the sea.<sup>27</sup> On a deeper level, this corresponds to the “70” of the wine of Purim, which reveals secrets.

Had Adam never sinned, he would have lived forever. After the sin, he could only live for 1,000 years, and he gave up 70 years of his life [for Dovid HaMelech]. Thus, ever since the sin, the number 70 corresponds to the average lifespan of man, and as implied by the verse, “*The years of a man are seventy*”<sup>28</sup>.

When one thinks that he will live for 70 years, does this cause him to feel sad or joyous? Naturally, a person will be sad when he contemplates the fact that man is destined to live for an average of 70 years. When a person considers that he will eventually give an accounting before Hashem after he dies (as the Sages state, “Know that in the future, you will have to give an accounting”), the natural reaction is sadness. People are naturally sad when they contemplate the end of their life on this world. But when a person gains the perspective of “Wine enters and the secret comes out”, the “wine”, corresponding to the “70” years of a person’s life, reveals *simchah*. It is like the *chilazon* which comes out once every 70 years – the “secret” that comes out which reveals joy.

The *chilazon* appears in the sea, in Zevulun’s portion, corresponding to the heaven that is called *zevul*, where the souls of the Jewish people are offered on the Heavenly Altar. “*Zevul*” is a place of great joy on High, for it corresponds to Zevulun, who is blessed with *simchah*. What is the *simchah* that takes place in the heaven of *Zevul*? As the Sages explained, it is the happiness of the souls who willingly offer their souls to Hashem.

When one contemplates his time of death, and certainly when he is actually facing it, one will usually become saddened and mournful. A person naturally does not want to die. But a person is also able to die amidst a joyous state. One can choose to happily give away his soul to Hashem, when the time of his death comes. He can “offer his soul on the Altar” to Hashem, amidst joy.

Who merits a joyous kind of death, and who doesn’t? The *halachah* is that when one brings a *korbon*, he can only offer it of his own will. One cannot be forced to bring a *korbon* – he must have the will to give it. So too, when one is giving away his soul to Hashem as a “*korbon*”, when the time of his death arrives, if he does so willingly and out of joy, his soul is offered by the angel Michael on the Heavenly Altar, to Hashem. But if the time of one’s death comes and he feels forced to give his soul back to Hashem, he is not going to Hashem willingly. His death will be truly sad, for he has not been willing to give his soul to Hashem, and he is not offered on the Heavenly Altar to Hashem.

The month of Adar shows us that an “end” can be joyous, and it doesn’t have to be sad! This will only be true, however, when one is always searching to reveal his *tachlis* (purpose). One who always lives with a sense of the ultimate *tachlis*/purpose – which is that we are here to become closer to Hashem – will live a vastly different life, and he will die an entirely different kind of death, in contrast to one who is sad on his day of death, who is sad to die because he did not spend his life trying to become closer to Hashem.

How can the day of one’s death be a happy day for a person? It should be viewed as the great *simchah* of leaving the physical existence of the body, and becoming entirely a *neshamah* (Divine

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<sup>27</sup> Talmud Bavli: Menachos 43a

<sup>28</sup> Tebillim 90:10

soul), which can be offered on the Heavenly Altar to Hashem. If one is prepared for this and he wants it, not only will he die amidst a state of joy, but his life will also be spent in a state of joy. If one doesn't want to give away his soul to Hashem, though, and he would rather stay in his body on This World, then not only will death be the saddest thing for him, but he will feel somewhat "dead" even while he is living.

### *Clarifying Our Joy In The Month of Adar*

When the month of Adar arrives, the month of *simchah*/joy, we need to know what *simchah* is, and we need to ask ourselves if we really have true, pure *simchah* in our life. Otherwise, any joy that we have is only superficial. It is not a joy which is inner and genuine. If our joy is only superficial, of this it can be said, "*And of what purpose is this rejoicing?*"<sup>29</sup>

One first needs to know what the root of *simchah* is, what true joy is. Then, on a personal level, one needs to clarify: "Am I personally connected to true *simchah*?"

The first part is to clarify what real *simchah* is. It has been explained here that the concept of *simchah* is whenever we reach the end of something. The end either brings sadness and mourning, or, it can offer us joy, a new beginning, an elevation to a new state. After the month of Adar comes the "head" of all the months of the year, which is Nissan, so Adar is the end of the year. The joy that we can attain in the month of Adar is when we complete the year and rise to a year of more elevated growth than the previous year. In that way, we take the "end" and reveal joy in it – we are using the "end" as a way to reveal a new, elevated beginning. That is the depth of the joy that is in this month.

Now we can better understand what the joy of Zevulun is. What comes from all of Zevulun's business efforts? What does he have from all of his hard work? Since Zevulun's joy is because he is earning livelihood in order to support Yissocher's Torah learning, whenever he engages in commerce, he is aware of the *tachlis*/purpose of it all. He is only interested in what *results* from his work, not in the actual work itself: his work will enable Yissocher's Torah learning.

True joy is when one reaches the "end", the goal, the purpose/*tachlis*, of what he has done. When one does not clarify the purpose of what he is doing, he is living without a purpose and his life will be a sad one. But when one is aware of the purpose of all that he is doing, there is joy throughout all that he does.

### *The Depth of The Sadness In Our World*

Let us reflect. Why is the world full of so much sadness? Simply speaking, it is because ever since Adam sinned, there has been a curse of sadness placed on mankind. Man was cursed with "*By the sweat of your brow shall you eat bread*", the curse of working hard in order earn livelihood and to support himself and his family, and woman was cursed with the pains of pregnancy, childbirth, and childbearing. But there is also a deeper reason why there is so much sadness that fills the world. It is because people do not clarify the *tachlis*/purpose of what they are doing, whether it is before they start or whether they are already at the end of what they do.

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<sup>29</sup> *Koheles 2:2*

## *Accessing Joy On Shabbos – Only When We Are Living With Spiritual Goals*

[The following insight can give us a clearer understanding of the idea.] Zevulun was the sixth child of Leah. The number 6 corresponds to the 6 days of the week (also called the “6 days of action”) which is for work [action], as the Torah says “*For six days you shall labor*”<sup>30</sup>. The purpose, the *tachlis*, of the 6 days of the week is the seventh day, Shabbos. The connection between Zevulun and the number 6 is that they lead to a greater purpose, a goal, which enables one to start a new beginning.

Shabbos is the purpose, the goal, the *tachlis*, of the 6 days of the week. It has been explained here that *simchah*/joy comes when one reaches the *tachlis* of something. Since Shabbos is the *tachlis* of the week, what is the *simchah* on Shabbos? Is it a joyous day because that a person rests from the work that he has during the six days of the week...? On Shabbos, there is a concept of *oneg*, pleasure. Besides for *oneg Shabbos*, however, there is also *simchah* on Shabbos. What is the *simchah* on Shabbos?

The *simchah* of Shabbos is, that now that the six days of the week has ended, one has completed his work, as the Sages say of Shabbos, that it is “As if all your work is done”<sup>31</sup>, and now one can be raised to a higher spiritual level than the previous week. That is the *simchah* of Shabbos! It is so that we can become raised to a higher spiritual level than the previous week!

The *simchah* of Shabbos can only be experienced by one who realizes that Shabbos is the purpose, the goal, the *tachlis*, of the six days of the week. That is the depth of why Shabbos is a day of *menuchah* (serenity), epitomized by the fact that one should view Shabbos as if “all your work is done.”

If Shabbos comes and a person is simply thinking about what he did this past week and what he will do next week, he doesn’t utilize the day of Shabbos properly, because he is not connecting to the *menuchah* of Shabbos. He doesn’t view Shabbos “as if all your work is done”, because he doesn’t have spiritual goals, and he doesn’t see Shabbos as the goal of the week, and he certainly isn’t trying to get to a higher spiritual goal for the following week. So he cannot experience the *simchah* on Shabbos, and he goes into the following week with a sense of sadness.

Why is it that people don’t connect to Shabbos when it is here? It is really because they are not connected to a *tachlis* (goal/purpose) in all that they do, during the rest of the week. When people aren’t trying to aim for any spiritual goals, they cannot live a life of joy, and they are left with sadness. It is the same sadness felt by a person when he realizes he is soon going to die, when he realizes how much he has wasted his life, for he spent his entire life without trying to get to any spiritual *tachlis*/purpose.

Hashem said about Shabbos, “I have a good present in My hidden treasury, and Shabbos is its name.”<sup>32</sup> It is called a “good present” due to the joy that is available on Shabbos. The joy on Shabbos is the same “joy” that is described by the verse, “*For with joy they go out*” - it is the joy of “going out” of the previous spiritual goals of the past week, for the goals have been completed, and he is now

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<sup>30</sup> Beraishis 20:9

<sup>31</sup> Mechilta (ibid)

<sup>32</sup> Talmud Bavli: Shabbos 10a

onto another spiritual goal for the coming week. For joy/*simchah* is accessed when we reach an end, a purpose, a goal – a *tachlis*.

When Shabbos arrives, certainly one's work is still incomplete in the physical world, but in the depths of the soul, one can feel on Shabbos that he has reached the spiritual purpose of all of his work of the past week. Then, one is empowered to enter into the new week with joy.

### *The Depth of Zevulun's Joy: Living With a Sense of Spiritual Purpose*

Zevulun's joy when he goes out to engage in commerce is because he is constantly bringing himself closer to his *tachlis* (spiritual purpose), throughout all of his business efforts. He is engaging in the pursuit of livelihood with a goal in mind: because he is concerned for the Torah study of Yissocher, who represents the Torah scholars. A "Torah scholar is called Shabbos"<sup>33</sup>, so when Zevulun engages in commerce in order to support the Torah learning of Yissocher, on a deeper level, he is thinking about "Shabbos", for the ultimate spiritual goal of all six days of the week.

The Sages said that "*Today is for doing, and tomorrow is for reward*"<sup>34</sup> – and the "reward" for a person's work is when one reaches the *tachlis* of all of his work. Zevulun sees the *tachlis* of all his work, and with that perspective, he sets out to engage in his business efforts.

### *Beginning and Ending The Year With Joy*

*Simchah* comes when one reaches the goal, the end, of what he does. What about when a person begins what he does? Can a person have *simchah* when he begins any undertaking? A person can certainly begin with an attitude of joy, but he will only be able to remain with the joy if he is consistently aiming for a goal. When one is always aiming to begin another goal after he completes the previous goal, he will have a constant joy throughout all that he does, and not only when he arrives at his goal.

When the month of Adar ends, one needs to ask himself: "Do I feel a *simchah* in my soul? Do I feel that I have completed my "work" of this past year, and that I am now moving on to another spiritual goal for the coming year?"

If one can answer "Yes" to this question, then he will be able to access true joy in the month of Adar and he will also be able to take the joy with him into the next year. By contrast, if one does not feel that he has completed any goals this year – since he wasn't aiming for it - he will be sad in the month of Adar! And he will also enter into the coming month of Nissan with sadness...

### *Illuminating The Entire World With The Light of Joy: When A Jew Lives With A Sense of Spiritual Purpose*

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<sup>33</sup> Zohar III 29a

<sup>34</sup> Talmud Bavli: Eruvin 22a

In the future, the gentiles will convert and come to the *Beis HaMikdash* to bring *korbonos*, and this will be due to the true *simchah* of Zevulun, which will be revealed fully in the Jewish people and which will subsequently spread to rest of the world.

Shabbos is only for the Jewish people, for the *halachah* is that a gentile is not allowed to keep Shabbos.<sup>35</sup> But in the future times, when the Jewish people will keep a genuine and inner kind of Shabbos - meaning, when they access the spiritual light of *tachlis*, of revealing the purpose that they were created for – this spiritual light will illuminate the entire world, where it will influence even the gentiles, to convert to the Jewish people. If a Jew isn't living for any spiritual goals - if we do not clarify our own *tachlis*, then we don't reveal the true *simchah* in the world, and then the spiritual light of the *tachlis* cannot illuminate the world.

On Purim, there was a great revelation of spiritual light. The *Megillah* says that many gentiles converted to Judaism at that time, because they became afraid of the Jewish people. On a deeper level, these gentiles converted due to the spiritual light of the “joy” of “Zevulun”, which the month of Adar corresponds to [and the events of Purim took place in the month of Adar]. Since it wasn't yet the time for the future Redemption, this joy was still incomplete, and that is why the gentiles only converted out of fear, and not out of true joy. But in the future, there will be a great joy which will illuminate the entire world, which will cause the gentiles to convert to the Jewish people out of joy [as opposed to fear], because by that time, we will have all reached our *tachlis*.

### *Practically Speaking: Living A Life of Tachlis*

Making this concept practical, the more we set spiritual goals in what we do, and we keep making new goals for ourselves after we reach our previous goals, the more we will live a life of genuine, inner *simchah*/joy, creating a spiritual light of *simchah* that will also influence the entire world for the better.

By contrast, if we are not trying to reach any spiritual goals in what we do and we do not try to formulate any new spiritual goals for ourselves, then we will not be reaching our *tachlis*. We will not be able to start new spiritual beginnings either, if we aren't trying to complete any previous spiritual goals. Whenever we begin something new, it may either be due to a previous failure - or because we have completed a previous worthy goal, and now we are onto another worthy goal.

So, if each person on his/her own level, at whatever spiritual level he/she is currently at, is willing to accept upon oneself to aim for some spiritual goal and then aim for another, higher spiritual goal, of this it can be said, “*They advance from strength to strength*”.<sup>36</sup> But, if we are not aiming for any spiritual goals, then we will not reach them, and then we cannot reach the true *simchah* that is available in the month of Adar.

When the Sages said that “Wine enters and the secret comes out”, this is only true for one who lives all the time with a sense of *tachlis*/purpose in all that he does, which brings one to true *simchah*/joy. It is reminiscent of what the Torah says about Avraham Avinu in his old age, that “*he*

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<sup>35</sup> Talmud Bavli: Sanhedrin 58b

<sup>36</sup> Tehillim 84:8

*was old and becoming of his years*<sup>37</sup>, meaning that he constantly lived with a sense of *tachlis*/purpose to his life, who truly utilized the very opportunity of living.

### *In Conclusion*

May we all merit, with *siyata d'shmaya*, together, that each Jew should reach his own goals, and that we should all reach our ultimate *tachlis*, and through this we will merit “*A new light on Zion will shine*”<sup>38</sup>, which will renew all of the Creation. May it come speedily in our days. Amen.

דע אט שמחתך 001

## 1.4 | The Depth of Laughter In Adar

### *Sechok – Holy Laughter*

The *halachah* is that “when the month of Adar enters, we increase our happiness”.

Each month of the year has its own unique *avodah* (way of serving the Creator) which is the special spiritual power of that month. The month of Adar is a time of *simchah*/happiness; the holy *sefarim* say that it is the type of *simchah* known as “*sechok*” - “laughter”. Thus, our *avodah* in the month of Adar is to have “*sechok*” – “laughter.”

*Sechok* is not the regular kind of happiness which we identify as simply “*simcha*”; we will explain the difference between them.

The meaning of *simchah* is: “happiness that comes from heart”. We find *simchah* associated with song (*shirah*), which is a really an inner expression of happiness, as *Chazal* say that “There is no song except over wine.” Wine is also associated with happiness, because it is written, “*And wine gladdens the heart of man.*”<sup>39</sup> Thus, *simchah* is an internal kind of happiness, an inner “song”, which is not expressed outwardly.

When a person laughs, though, he is revealing his happiness outward. When a person is happy inside but he doesn't laugh, he has *simchah*; his happiness remains in his heart, and it isn't expressed outwardly. When a person laughs, he has an outward expression of happiness – he brings up the happiness from inside his heart to his mouth, where he laughs from. This is “*sechok*” - when our happiness is revealed outward.

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<sup>37</sup> Beraishis 24:1

<sup>38</sup> a recited in the morning blessings before the Shema

<sup>39</sup> Tehillim 104:15

*Sechok* is when the happiness is revealed outward, through the mouth. We find this in the statement of *Chazal*, “It is prohibited for one to fill his mouth with *sechok* (laughter) on this world.”<sup>40</sup>

The increase of happiness during the month of Adar is meant for us to reveal the happiness outward from our heart. This is the meaning behind *sechok*/laughter, which is to have an open revelation of our happiness.

What exactly is our power of *sechok*? How do we serve the Creator using laughter? Usually it is only foolish and immature people who we can see laughing all the time. But laughter can also be used for holiness, as we will see.

### *Making Fun of Idols and Heresy*

What is the holy kind of laughter? An example of this is what the *Gemara* says that it is permissible to make fun of idol worship.

On a simple level, it appears that when we are supposed to make fun of something, such as scoffing at idol worship and heresy, we are using the same laughter we all know of, but that we are just using it for a holy purpose. But on a deeper understanding, the holy kind of laughter is a whole different kind of laughter than the one we know of.

There is holy laughter, and there is the laughter of fools. In the future, the non-Jews will want to keep the *mitzvah* of *sukkah*, but they will kick it over; Hashem will laugh at them. This is the root of the holy kind of laughter – Hashem Himself laughs.

### *Evil Laughter*

The foolish kind of laughter is a base kind of laughter, in which a person just laughs in order to nullify someone else. This is because “*sechok*” comes from the word *soichek*, “grinding”. When a person grinds something, he is trying to nullify it and erase its existence.

People who laugh at others for the wrong reasons are laughing at them in order to nullify them. This is the evil kind of laughter, which is the laughter of fools. The *Gemara* also states that the “spleen laughs.” The base kind of laughter which is used to hurt other people is rooted in the spleen inside the body; the holy kind of laughter does not come from this.

### *Laughing Upon Seeing The Future In The Present*

What is the depth of holy laughter, *sechok d'kedushah*? There is a story in the *Gemara*<sup>41</sup> that Rebbi Akiva and his colleagues were walking on the site of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. Every one cried – except for Rebbi Akiva, who was laughing! They asked him why he is laughing. He said

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<sup>40</sup> *Talmud Bavli Berachos 30a*

<sup>41</sup> *Makkos 24a*

that he is laughing because just as the prophecy of the destruction was fulfilled, so will the end of the prophecy be fulfilled – that the *Beis Hamikdash* will be rebuilt.

This is the holy kind of “*sechok*” – a holy kind of laughter. It is laughter upon being content, specifically because a person sees the future good already in the present moment, and he thus has no reason to be sad. Here we see what holy *sechok* is. Laughter/*sechok* can be identified with seeing the future in the present. This causes a reason to laugh – when one sees the future right now, he sees that there’s nothing to be sad about because it will turn out good anyway, so he just laughs.

Since Rebbi Akiva saw the how the future was being fulfilled, he was able to be happy now even in the present moment – and thus he laughed. This is really the depth behind the laughter – it is to feel the future in the present, which makes a person content and laugh off the problems.

### *Purim: Redemption Now*

This is also the happiness of Purim and the month of Adar: it is recognize that the future Redemption is already taking place in the present. When the Jewish people thought it was their end, it was a really a continuation of their survival. This is the holy “laughter” of the month of Adar and the celebration of Purim: What we think is the worst thing possible, can actually be our very salvation. Haman tried to destroy us using the evil kind of *sechok*, because he was trying to nullify our existence. On Purim, we use the holy kind of *sechok*, and we laugh at this, at his ruined plans; at how the tables turned on him instead.

The depth behind the happiness in the month of Adar, and on Purim, is that the future good which we will have in the future is really happening *right now*. During the rest of the year, we are within the bounds of time – there is a past, present and future. But in the month of Adar, there is a unique revelation taking place: there is no time! It’s all happening now – the past, the present and future are all contained in the moment of right now.

Purim is essentially a reason to celebrate the future Redemption even now, before the Redemption has actually come. Purim is a taste of the future Redemption, and thus Purim is to essentially experience the future Redemption even now, causing reason for happiness. Now, we can really understand the depth behind *sechok*, the power of holy “laughter” in our soul.

The *Gemara*<sup>42</sup> states that “we are still slaves of Achashveirosh.” What, then, is the whole redemption of Purim, if we were still considered enslaved to Achashveirosh?! The answer to this is the following deep point. On Purim, we experienced a whole different kind of redemption than the redemption we experienced from Egypt. On Pesach, we left Egypt. On Purim, though we left the present moment – even though the redemption wasn’t here yet. We experienced the redemption even in the present. On Purim, there is a redemption taking place in the present moment. Therefore, we have *sechok* on Purim - that even though it appears to us that we are not yet redeemed, we really are. There is a *netzach netzachim*, an eternity, which we can experience right now, in the present moment – on Purim.

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<sup>42</sup> Megillah 14a

## *Drinking On Purim – Outwardly Showing the Happiness*

*Sechok*/laughter is for a person to become so elated that he wants to express the happiness outward. When a person laughs, he is so happy to the point that he reveals it outward. This is the happiness we reach on Purim – *sechok*, an open kind of happiness, which we express.

On Purim, we accepted the Torah again, and this time it was willingly. As the Sages say, “They kept and accepted what they already accepted.” Purim is a time to make a new commitment to the Torah, to accept it out of love – which is an example of an outward expression of our happiness.

A very famous aspect of Purim is that we are commanded to get drunk on Purim, until the point of “*ad d’lo yoda*” – until one does not have any *da’as* anymore. The question that is asked on this is: How do we come to a new acceptance of Torah on Purim, if we are drunk and we have no *da’as*? The answer is that because we are so happy, we want to express it outwardly, in the form of *sechok*. This is why *Chazal* commanded us to drink on Purim – so we should openly express our happiness and reveal it outward. And in this way, by revealing outwardly our happiness, we can reach a new acceptance of the Torah on Purim.

דע אַט שמחתך 002

## 1.5 | Simcha & Sechok

### *Naftali – “Seva Ratzon”*

In the month of Adar, we increase our *simchah*, our happiness. *Chazal* do not clearly spell out what exactly this *simchah* is, though. We know that we have a power in our soul to be happy, but what exactly is the kind of *simchah* we must have during Adar?

There are twelve months of the year, and each month of the year represents one of the twelve *shevatim* (tribes, the sons of Yaakov Avinu). There are different opinions about the month of Adar; according to the Vilna Gaon, Adar represents the tribe of Zevulun, but according to the Arizal’s approach, Adar represents Naftali. Here we will go according to the Arizal’s approach, which is that Adar represents the tribe of Naftali.

Concerning the tribe of Naftali, the Torah writes: “*Naftali, seva ratzon*” (satisfied with his desire). Naftali represents the trait of “*seva ratzon*”; therefore, it must be that there is a connection between “*seva ratzon*” and “*sechok*”, because *sechok* is the power of Adar, and Adar is represented by the tribe of Naftali. To know what the connection is, we will need to understand something else.

### *The Difference Between Simcha (Happiness) and Sechok (Laughter)*

There are two terms for happiness we find in *Chazal* – “*simchah*” and “*sechok*”. What is essentially the difference between *simchah* (happiness) and *sechok* (laughter)?

It is incorrect to say that *sechok* is fake happiness, while *simchah* is real happiness. This cannot be, because we know that there is such a thing as holy *sechok*; concerning the future it is written, “*Then*

*our mouths will be filled with laughter.*” Rather, there is holy *simchah*, and there is holy *sechok*. Let us try to understand what they are.

We find the term *simchah* in the Torah when it comes to the blessing given to Zevulun: “*Rejoice (s’mach), Zevulun, when you go out.*” But by the blessing of Naftali, the Torah does not use the word *simchah*. By Naftali, the Torah instead uses the term “*seva ratzon*,” to be “satisfied from desire.” “*Seva ratzon*” - being satisfied with what one wants - doesn’t bring *simchah*. Rather, it brings *sechok*.

When does a person have what is called “*simchah*”? *Simcha* is the joy of completion, such as “*Simchas*” Torah, when we finish the Torah. We also find that the festival mainly identified with “*simchah*” is *Sukkos*, which is the completion of the Three Festivals. *Simchah* is thus defined as joy upon completion. It is indeed a *simchah* when we complete the Torah.

This is why the tribe of Zevulun epitomizes *simchah* – when Zevulun “goes out” on his travels, he reaches his portion, and he is thus happy, because he is blessed with seeing completion to his tasks.

But *sechok* is something else. This is when a person has *seva ratzon* – when he is satisfied with his very desire, even before he gets what he wants. When a person has *sechok* – when he laughs – it is because he realizes that there is nothing to be scared about, and therefore he laughs, because he is content.

Usually, only foolish people make use of *sechok*, and they laugh for evil reasons. How can we make use of the holy kind of *sechok*? We need to have “*seva ratzon*” – to be content from our very desire.

### *What A Person Truly Wants*

Let us explain more about “*seva ratzon*”.

By the party of Achashveirosh, everything was according “to each person’s wish”. What Achashveirosh wanted to do was to get everybody to realize what he truly wanted. He was doing this for evil purposes – he wanted to get everyone to want the opposite of Hashem’s will.

This evil was corrected later on with the loving acceptance of the Torah by the Jewish people. By accepting the Torah with love, we showed what we truly wanted, and this fixed the sin of partying by Achashveirosh.

What we learn from this is that the *ratzon* (will) of a person to do Hashem’s will has to become revealed outward; it is not enough if our *ratzon* for good remains only dormant. Why is this necessary? Why isn’t it enough to just want the right thing, and why we must we reveal outwardly our *ratzon* to do Hashem’s will?

The reason for this is because usually, what we really want is very hidden from us. These are our innermost desires. We don’t know what we really want, so in order to know what we want, we need to reveal it.

*Chazal*<sup>43</sup> say that “the *yetzer hora* (the evil inclination) is called *matzpun*, ‘hidden one’, because he hides in the heart of a person.” The depth of this is that the *yetzer hora* hides from a person what he truly wants.

But when a person reaches the trait of “*seva ratzon*” - the trait that is represented by Naftali - he reveals what he truly wants. The person clarifies to himself what he really wants in life.

This is not the same thing as *simchah*. *Simchah* is to be happy with what one already has in the present, while *seva ratzon* is to be satisfied with one’s very desire – with his very *ratzon*! It is to be content, whether one has reached his goal or not.

This is the depth of *sechok* – a person laughs, because he is content, even if he hasn’t gotten yet what he truly wants.

### *Knowing What You Really Want*

This is the special kind of *avodah* that we have in the month of Adar: to reveal our true, innermost desire [and to derive happiness from there]. Most of the time, we don’t know what we want. The *avodah* of this month of Adar, and especially Purim, is meant for us to clarify for ourselves what we really want.

When a person wants to do a *mitzvah* but he wasn’t able to, *Chazal* say that it is considered as if he did it. The depth behind this is because if a person truly wanted to do the *mitzvah*, he has “*seva ratzon*” – he really has it, because he is happy with his very desire to do it.

When a person gets what he wanted, that is one kind of happiness; it is *simchah*, the trait we find by Zevulun. But even if a person didn’t get what he wanted, he can still be happy – he is content with this. This is “*seva ratzon*” – the kind of happiness that is called “*sechok*”, the trait of Naftali.

The whole Purim story is a kind of *sechok*. Haman didn’t get what he wanted – which made us happy and laugh at him. This was the holy manifestation of *sechok*.

### *The Higher Kind of Sechok – Wanting What Hashem Wants*

We also find higher kinds of *sechok* and *simchah* which are higher than what we have just spoken about.

When a person feels content with things that are a certain way, that everything that happens is according to Hashem’s will, and he knows that this is what Hashem wants – he has a higher kind of *sechok*.

“Lower” *sechok* is to be happy just with one’s desire; to be content even before the desire has been actualized. “Higher” *sechok*, though, is when a person is happy with the fact that it is the will of Hashem that things should be this way.

On Purim, the Jewish people willingly accepted the Torah. They had “*seva ratzon*” from a deeper kind of will – from the will to do Hashem’s will; from “*Retzoinenu laasos retzoncha*”, “It is our will to do Your will.” This was an example of the higher kind of *sechok*.

The higher kind of *simchah*, however, is when a person is happy because the will of Hashem has become fulfilled. For example, *simchah* is epitomized by *Simchas Torah*, which is the completion of the Torah reading. There is happiness here because the will of Hashem is being fulfilled.

But with *sechok*, there is happiness even when the will of Hashem isn’t fulfilled. It is happiness which comes the very fact that Hashem has a certain will – even though I have not fulfilled my will, I am happy with whatever Hashem wants.

This is the depth behind why it is prohibited for one “to fill our mouths with laughter (too much) on this world.” We must suspect that our laughter is not coming from being on a level of being content with Hashem’s will.

In the future – when our mouths will be “filled with laughter” – a perfect kind of *simchah* and *sechok* will be revealed. But in our times, although we cannot reach the perfect happiness of the future, we can still reach some resemblance of this kind of *simcha* and *sechok*.

On Purim, we have a requirement to drink wine. There is no requirement to have a *reviis* of wine, nor is there a requirement to dilute it (unlike Yom Tov). This is because the joy of Purim is a whole different of joy than on Yom Tov. It is all about “*sechok*” – we are content with our very will, even if it’s not fulfilled.

### *When Things Don't Go Our Way*

To make this concept practical in our lives, we can give the following example. Let’s say a person has a true and earnest desire to *daven* well, but he couldn’t get himself to *daven* well. He tried, but he still couldn’t get himself to do it. How should he react to this? Should he be sad?

He must not let this disappointment ruin his happiness. This is because a person can say to himself, “Although my *ratzon* didn’t get fulfilled, I am happy with the very fact that I at least have such a *ratzon*.” This is “*seva ratzon*” – to be happy just from your very *ratzon* for holiness, even though it wasn’t actualized.

There are many spiritual accomplishments which we want in our life, and they don’t get fulfilled. This makes us very frustrated. But really, we should just laugh it off; we can have *sechok*. Be happy with the fact that you had a *ratzon*; not everything has to work out your way, even when it comes to your desires for spirituality. This is the deep way to utilize the power of *sechok*.

The month of Adar, and the day of Purim, is what helps us become aware of what we truly want. We thus need to clarify for ourselves: What do we really want? If we are clear about what we truly want in life, we will be able to be content, the trait of *seva ratzon*.

## 1.6 | Discovering Your Happiness

### *Introduction*

ושים חלקנו עמהם – We ask Hashem that our portion be with those who truly trust in Hashem. Then we ask בטחנו לא נבוש כי כך בטחנו – that we not be eternally shamed.

Here in *Shemoneh Esrei* we state that if we achieve *bitachon* (trust in Hashem) that we will not be shamed; clearly, though, we are not yet on the level of *bitachon*, for we just mentioned that only the *tzaddikim* attain true *bitachon*. Why are we requesting this, if we are clearly not yet on the level of having true *bitachon* in Hashem?

The answer lies in the following.

### *Focusing On What You Have Already*

Everything is inside man. All good *middos*<sup>44</sup> – as well as all bad *middos* – are inside us, being that we contain in ourselves a mixture of good and evil.

When a person wants to acquire *bitachon*, or any other good quality, the superficial attitude is, to try to ‘acquire’ the good trait. A person wants *bitachon*, so he feels “I need to acquire *bitachon*.” A person wants *simcha* (happiness), so his attitude is “I need to acquire *simcha*.”

But there is a more inner perspective to have. In whatever we want to acquire, we need to first see how much of it we have already acquired and how much we still have to acquire, and upon that, we can then seek to fill whatever we are missing.

For example, if a person wants to have *bitachon*, he shouldn’t think “I don’t have *bitachon*, so I must get *bitachon*.” Rather, he needs to see how much *bitachon* he already has revealed in his life, and then he should seek to acquire the remaining amount of *bitachon* that you still haven’t acquired yet.

Why? It is because since all of the good *middos* are really found inside us – for man is all-inclusive – therefore, you already have some of it already revealed in you.

You need to have that perspective. Even if you only have a small revelation of the good quality you’re trying to acquire, it is still something.

*Chazal* say that one should first give gratitude over the past before he cries to Hashem about what he needs. So first see what you already have, then ask Hashem for things. For example, if you need *parnassah*, but you are healthy, first thank Hashem for your health, and then ask for *parnassah*.

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<sup>44</sup> Character traits

There is also a deeper understanding of this. When we thank Hashem, it can only happen as a result of recognizing what we already have. In order to thank Hashem, we first need to see what we have and admit to it. If we just say it with our mouth but we don't admit to it in our heart, then it's just a lip service.

### *Having A 'Good Eye'*

This concept is also called “*ayin tovah*” – having a “good eye.” It is also called “*someach b'chelko*”, being happy with one's lot. A person has to first focus on the positive and only after that ask Hashem for what he needs. If a person is always focusing on what he's missing – “I'm missing this *middah* and that *middah*, etc.” – then all he is concerned about is how to fill his void. He never stops to consider what he does have.

The correct mentality is to first focus on what you already have. This gets you used to being positive - on what you **do** have - not on what you *don't* have.

Whether we need something physical or something spiritual, first we need to realize what we do have. We should not focus on what we don't have and what we need. And actually, the more we grow in spirituality, the more we see how much we are missing, and we will grow more and more negative towards ourselves.

Therefore, the real mindset to have is to first reflect on what you do have until now, and then, by thanking Hashem over these things, your gratitude will then connect you to all those things and help you realize them.

If a person can't thank Hashem for what he does have, he doesn't really recognize what he have, and he will be negative towards himself, because all he thinks about is how much he doesn't have. He places his soul in a place that always feels lacking, and this is damaging.

The Vilna Gaon said that we need to be *someach b'chelko* (happy with our lot) even when it comes to our *ruchniyus*.<sup>45</sup> So the basis is to realize what we already have gained in our *ruchniyus*. This is a major fundamental we must know in our Avodas Hashem! It is especially relevant to those who are drawn towards sadness and negativity. When we apply this concept of being focused on the positive to our *Avodas Hashem*, we will leave our pull towards negativity and instead feel more drawn after *simcha* (happiness).

### *Spiritual Growth: Expanding The Good Within*

There is also a deeper point to be aware of with regards to this.

In any matter of *Avodas Hashem*, we do not acquire a matter from “outside” ourselves. Rather, everything is really drawn from **within** ourselves. Everything we need to acquire is already inside us. All we have to do is **expand** what we already have.

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<sup>45</sup> Editor's Note: For an explanation of this concept, see *Sefer Ohr Yechezkel Vol. 7*, in the section called “למה חרה לך ולמה נפלו פניך”

If someone is only focused on what he doesn't have in his *ruchniyus* - he is always thinking about the *middos* and spiritual qualities he needs to acquire - he has never thought about all the good that is really inside him up until this point.

All you need to do is to expand the good points that are already revealed to a certain extent inside you. To illustrate, Rav Shimon Shkop said that in order to love others like yourself, you can't do it by simply trying to love another person. Rather, you expand your own love which you have for yourself, and you let it extend to others.<sup>46</sup>

In whatever good point we are trying to acquire, some of it is already revealed in you! You just need to keep expanding it. But it's already revealed in you somewhat, and you should not think that you need to "get" some quality or some good *middah* from outside of yourself. It is already within you, and you just need to keep opening it up more and more from within yourself.

This is a perspective to have towards Torah learning, towards holiness, towards *Avodas Hashem*<sup>47</sup>: you don't acquire growth from "outside" of yourself. Rather, you get it by expanding upon the good points that are already in you - and all of the good points really are found in you.

### *Genuine Avodas Hashem*

These words are describing a subtle concept. Usually, when a person wants to acquire a certain quality, he will learn the words of *Chazal* about them. But the inner method is to realize that all's inside you, and you just need to expand the good that's already in you; there is nothing "new" you need to acquire from the outside!

This will change your entire perspective towards *avodas Hashem*, the more you clarify this point and the more you actualize it.

There are people who enter into *avodas Hashem* but they become more and more disconnected from actual self-recognition, even as they are involved with becoming more serious and devoted to better serving Hashem; they become more superficial! There are also people who immerse themselves in Torah study and they lose their self in the process. They become disconnected from their own self-recognition even as they are involved with spiritual pursuit. But this is not the proper way of Torah.

When it comes to *avodas Hashem*, a person might think that he's trying to acquire matters that are beyond himself, and as he is involved in trying to grow, he loses his own self in the process. But if a person uses the inner approach here, he truly experiences the inner world contained in *avodas Hashem*.

### *The Innermost Point*

An even deeper point is to know the following.

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<sup>46</sup> *Shaarei Yosher, hakdamah*

<sup>47</sup> *servicing the Creator*

In our soul, there are parts that are revealed to us and parts that are concealed to us. Our good *middos* are partially revealed and partially *concealed*. If we want acquire good *middos*, we need to expand what has already been revealed, and that is how we will bring out the rest that is concealed. This is what we explained so far.

But the concealed good in our soul is not just our good *middos* that we haven't revealed. In the very depths of our soul, there is nothing but the actual purity of our soul. All perfection is contained there! We have a *Nefesh*, *Ruach*, and *Neshamah* which are all found inside us. Therefore, all qualities are already in us. (The *Nefesh HaChaim* writes part of the *neshamah* is present in the thoughts of the brain).

So the first point of all this is that a person needs to realize, that all good *middos* are already in him. Practically speaking, one has to be thankful for whatever good he already has. Then, he has to realize that whatever else he needs to acquire, it is also inside him, and he just needs to expand the good that is already there.

We have discussed these two points until now; now we will explain the third point we need to know, which is to realize **the innermost point of the soul**. In the very inner depths of the soul, all perfection is contained! There, there is absolute perfection in our Torah and *middos*. But, it is dormant, and we need to reveal it from its potential state and activate it.<sup>48</sup>

We feel 'poor' on the outside, but we really have a million dollars inside our "bank." If only the "pauper" would be informed that there are millions of dollars stored somewhere in his house. It's not just money that you can't access. It can be accessed – you just have to recognize it by getting in touch with it.

We have good *middos* and bad *middos* in ourselves - all of them. From the perspective of our *nefesh hebeheimis*<sup>49</sup>, we feel lowly towards ourselves because we see how more we need to improve and acquire. Our *avodah* in this is that we must thank Hashem for the good we have revealed and seek to expand the good that is already in us.

But the higher aspect is to utilize the perspective coming from our very essence of the soul, which is the point of perfection in us.

We thank Hashem every day for returning to us our pure soul, when we say *Elokai Neshamah*. A person might say this for 70 years but he doesn't reflect on this concept. Why do we keep thanking Hashem every day for returning to us our soul? It is not just to say thanks to Hashem. It is because it is so fundamental to realize that we are a pure soul in our essence. It's unbelievable – a person might go his whole life and say *Elokai Neshamah* every day, yet the life he lives does not reflect this at all. A person might live his whole life and never realize he is really a pure *Neshamah*, even though he says *Elokai Neshamah* every day.

All perfection is contained in our soul's essence. This gives you a whole new perspective towards your self-awareness. Of course, we still have a body and an animalistic level of the soul, and we still

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<sup>48</sup> For more on this concept, see Tefillah #0126 – *The Sprouting of the Redemption*

<sup>49</sup> animalistic layer of the soul

have bad *middos* in us. All the bad *middos* are indeed in us. But that's only one way of looking at it. If we focus on the fact that we are a body with base desires and bad *middos*, we view ourselves with a lowly perspective. The real "*Modeh Ani*" is to realize that we have a *neshamah*.

We still have an *avodah* to work on ourselves and improve ourselves, of course, but we need to do our *avodah* from the perspective of our *neshamah* – to realize how wealthy we are! It is called being '*someiach b'chelko*'. It is to recognize oneself with the understanding that one is a perfect *neshamah*!

### *Three Ways To Acquire Happiness*

We are in the month of Adar, days of *simchah* (joy). We have three ways of how to reach *simchah*, as we have so far explained.

- (1) The first perspective we explained is to expand upon the good that is already in ourselves. For example, if you want to acquire a good *middah* of a good quality (i.e. *bitachon*), realize that you already have some of the level that you want. When you think into this, it can provide you with a degree of *simchah*.
- (2) Another way to derive *simchah* is to focus on your good points and qualities.
- (3) The highest perspective you can have is to realize you are a *neshamah* (a Divine soul), which contains all inner wealth possible.

When you reveal this joy in yourself, you will feel like a convert born anew, like a new being. With this deep perspective, you will also stop comparing yourself with others and instead just realize that you are a *neshamah*. When you dwell in it, you live in a world of light. A life of *neshamah* means to connect yourself with the spiritual world, and on a deeper level, to connect yourself with the Creator.

These words are not inspirational ideas. It is a perspective to view life with; it is a certain self-awareness. It is not intellectual, nor is it meant to be inspirational. It is about recognizing reality as it is.

### *In Conclusion*

When a person lives with this attitude, he enters into what is written, "*The righteous rejoice in Hashem.*"

Now we return to the question we started out with. On one hand, one must aspire for *bitachon* in Hashem and ask Hashem that he be among those who truly trust in Hashem – ask we ask in Shemoneh Esrei, **וְשִׁים חִלְקֵנוּ עִמָּהֶם**. At the same time, recognize that you are a *neshamah* – therefore, all good and all perfection is really contained deep down in your essence.

Becoming aware to these three aspects can cause a major overhaul in your life and it can help you enter the spiritual world. There will always be ups and downs, there are always times when we fail, but generally, this is the perspective you can carry with you that will lead you to a truly spiritual life, and you can keep going with it until you reach the complete bond with Hashem.



2  
PREPARING FOR PURIM

## 2.1 | The Happiness of Purim

### *Happiness Comes From The Element of Fire*

There are many facets to “*simchah*”, happiness.

Rav Chaim Vital writes that the trait of sadness, the opposite of happiness, is rooted in our element of earth in the soul. Happiness, in contrast, comes from our element of fire in the soul.

*Chazal* say that “the words of Torah should be as illuminating and as joyous as they were given at Har Sinai”, so we find that happiness is associated with fire. We also find in the *Megillah* that “to the Jews there was *orah* (light) and *simcha* (happiness).” Light, which comes from fire, is associated with happiness in the *Megillah*.

There is a well-known concept called “*Olam, Shanah, Nefesh*” – “world, time and soul”.<sup>50</sup> This means that everything which takes place in a place in the world also takes place in the plane of time, and everything that takes place on the plane of time also takes place in our own soul. Let’s take the concept of happiness, for example. There is happiness which we can find in place, in time, and in the realm of our personal soul.

Where can we find happiness in a place in the world? This was found in the *Beis HaMikdash*. Of there, it is written, “*And you shall rejoice in front of Hashem*”. The *Beis HaMikdash* was the place in the world in which *simcha* was manifested.

Where is there happiness in time? This is found on Yom Tov, when there is a *mitzvah* to have *Simchas Yom Tov* [simply speaking].

And where can we find happiness in our own soul?

### *The Natural State of Happiness Before Sin*

After Adam sinned by eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*, he was cursed with “*etzev*” – pain and hardship of labor, which is a kind of sadness. Sadness only came onto the world as a result of the sin. Before the first sin, the natural state of a person was to be happy. The entire concept of being sad is a novel concept that occurred through sin; the natural state of a person, before this became corrupted, was happiness.

After the sin, Adam was told, “*Earth you are, and to earth you shall return.*” The sin lowered man’s state to the level of earth, the lowest of all the elements. But before the sin, man’s natural state was of the highest of the elements – the element of fire. Happiness, which comes from the element of fire, was the natural state that existed before sin.

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<sup>50</sup> *Sefer Yetzirah, perek III*

In the *Beis Hamikdash*, one was able to return to that natural state of happiness since there was only holiness and purity, and no sin in the *Beis Hamikdash*. When there is no room for sin - that is where happiness comes. Sadness only became possible because of sin; this shows us that where there is no sin, there is happiness.

### *Searching For Happiness*

When a person is looking to be happy, there can be two possible reasons why he searches for it. One of them is not coming from a good place from within himself, while the other kind of search is the right kind of search. It depends why he's searching for happiness.

When a person is looking to be happy because he is simply thinking, "I want to be happy," then it shows that he is still entrenched in his element of earth. Even if he's happy over the fact that he is a Jew, if he's looking for any reason to be happy, he still remains at his element of earth, because his whole search for happiness is just for the sake of "being happy."

The real happiness a person needs to have is to be happy with the mere fact that he exists. A person needs to be happy simply because, "I'm so happy that I even exist." The natural state of a person is to be happy, and this is simply because a person exists. That is the real happiness.

When a person looks for any reason to be happy (fill in whatever reason you want), it is a superficial kind of happiness that is bound to the limits of the world after the sin. Such happiness comes from the element of earth, which man was lowered to after the sin. But the real happiness comes from our element of fire in us. It is happiness simply "because I exist."

In the *Beis HaMikdash*, there was great happiness. It seems simply that this was because there, the *Shechinah* was revealed. But there is a more inner reason. The reason why there was such a great happiness there was because it resembled the kind of world that existed before Adam's sin. There was no sin yet in that state, and this allowed a person to be happy with the simple realization that he exists. That feeling was revealed in its full impact in the place where there was no sin, the *Beis Hamikdash*.

### *The Difference Between Simchas Yom Tov and Simchas Purim*

On Yom Tov, there is a *mitzvah* of *simchas Yom Tov*. Men rejoice by having meat and wine. Women rejoice with getting new clothing and jewelry<sup>51</sup>. This is a physical kind of happiness. But Purim does not have these requirements. This is because Purim is not like Yom Tov. On Purim, the very *time* itself of Purim is a time that contains happiness. What is the happiness of Purim?

To know what it is, first we need to understand how time itself is able to give happiness. Time is not just "time" per se; Hashem created a certain reality known as "time" (*zman*). When Adam sinned, not only did the human soul get damaged from this, but time itself became corrupted.

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<sup>51</sup> *Pesachim* 109a

With *simchas Yom Tov*, although it is a time factor, it is mainly a happiness that has to do with the person. The Torah commands, “*And you shall rejoice in your festival.*” It is more personal. Time is a factor here, but the actual happiness has more to do with the person.

But the happiness of the month of Adar is a happiness that comes from the *time* itself. (Likewise, the month of Av is a time of sadness). The *halachah* that a person must increase his happiness during the month of Adar is not personal; it is a happiness that comes from the time itself during this month, that Adar by its very essence is a time of happiness.

What is the depth to this? We can explain it by examining the following concept: every day contains in it a thousand years; the six days of the week add up for a total of six thousand years, which is how long the physical world will last<sup>52</sup>. Based on this, we can understand that Adar, which is a time of happiness, has in it the time of day which was before Adam sinned – the most perfected kind of existence.

Since time also exists in our soul, there is a “time” to rejoice in our soul. Where do we find this happiness in our soul?

It is written, “*Those who seek Hashem have a joyful heart.*” The happiness that is contained in one’s heart is able to return a person back to the *nekudas ha’emtzza*, the “middle point” – an inner place where a person strives to bring himself to. The place where we can find happiness is in the heart.

The happiness which is found in time is found in the time of Purim. The happiness which is found in the soul is found in Yom Tov – “*And you shall rejoice in your festival.*” The “you” which rejoices in Yom Tov is your soul.

What is the happiness in the time of Purim? Purim is a time in which we return to the state that existed before Adam’s sin. On Purim, we access a different kind of existence: that there is no “time”. Purim is a time which shows us that there is only one day – a day of a thousand years, the desired state of Creation. What we really mean by this is that on Purim, we connect to a point that is *above* time.

It is only after the sin of Adam that our nature was altered and we became naturally sad. This is true – when we are in time. But when we are above time, like on Purim, we are in the state that was before the sin – and then, our natural state is happiness.

On Yom Tov, we need a reason to be happy, and this is reflected in the *halachah* that *simchas Yom Tov* is fulfilled through meat, wine and clothing. But on Purim, we access a state in which we don’t need anything to be happy, and that our natural state is to be happy.

### *Why It Is Permissible To Get Married On Purim*

There is a *halachah* that on Purim, one may get married, but on Yom Tov, one is not allowed to get married; the reason for this is because “we do not mix one happiness with another happiness”. Why then can we get married on Purim? Why isn’t this considered mixing two kinds of happiness?

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<sup>52</sup> Zohar, brought in Ramban in the beginning of Parshas Beraishis

It is because we are only not allowed to mix two of the **same** kinds of happiness. When a person gets married, he is happy based on a reason, and so he cannot mix this happiness with Yom Tov, which is also a happiness that comes from a reason. But the happiness of Purim is a happiness that comes from no reason; it is not the same happiness of getting married. Thus, on Purim there is no problem of mixing happiness.

### *Adar and Purim – Happiness With No Reason*

The happiness of Purim is to feel a happiness that has no reason to it. A person can feel happy simply because he feels “I’m happy!” – and for no particular reason!

During the month of Adar, we increase our happiness. This is not that a person simply keeps adding onto his happiness more and more as the month goes on. It is really a whole new kind of happiness! It is a happiness of, “I’m happy, simply because I’m happy.”

The great happiness of the month of Adar is to be happy simply because the nature of the soul is to be happy (before creation became altered through the sin). It is a happiness that comes from one’s intrinsic existence.

On Yom Tov, we are happy because we have arrived at a certain *shleimus* (perfection). This inevitably involves some reason that brings us to have *shleimus*. But on Purim, there is no reason for our happiness. We are happy on Purim, simply, without any reason.

May Hashem merit us that we shouldn’t need to have a reason why we shouldn’t be sad, and that we shouldn’t need any reason to be happy; that we should instead realize that we can be happy based on the fact that we merely *exist*.

## 2.2 | Fighting The Sadness Caused By Amalek & Erev Rav

### *The Roots of Happiness and Sadness*

Hashem created the power of happiness in Creation, and for every force in Creation, there is something else with equal force to oppose it. Whatever is holy has something else that is unholy to oppose it, equal in strength. Happiness is opposed by sadness.

The *Gemara* says that in today's times, there is no happiness except in wine; in the Temple era, there was no happiness except in meat.<sup>53</sup> Where can we find the root of this? Before the sin of Adam, the angels were roasting meat for him and straining wine for him. Here we can see the roots of happiness: before the sin, which was the perfect kind of happiness, we can find meat and wine.

The root of happiness is found before the sin, in Gan Eden. When a couple gets married, we bless them that they rejoice “just as Your creator gladdened you in Gan Eden of old.” The state of Adam in Gan Eden was the root of happiness. In the future, we will once again have this happiness. The power of sadness will receive its rectification, for *Chazal* say that Tisha B'av will be transformed into a Yom Tov.

We have explained what the root of happiness is. What is the root of sadness? Sadness is enabled by Amalek; for as long as Amalek is in the world, the Name of Hashem is incomplete,<sup>54</sup> and therefore our happiness will never be complete until Amalek is destroyed.

Amalek is called “the first” of the nations, and they are also the heads of the *Erev Rav* (the “Mixed Multitude” of Egyptians who left Egypt together with the Jewish people). The *Erev Rav* consists of five groups: *Amalekim* (Amalek), *Refidim* (“pursuers”), *Giborim* (“warriors”), *Anakim* (“giants”) and *Nefilim* (“fallen ones”).

### *Two Kinds of Sadness In Creation*

Amalek thus causes sadness in the world because they are the first of the nations, and also, because they are the heads of the *Erev Rav*. Each of these two aspects in Amalek creates a different kind of sadness in Creation, which we will explain.

There are two root kinds of sadness in Creation. One kind of sadness comes to us because of our element of earth in the soul. This is a materialistic kind of sadness that stems from the body's desires<sup>55</sup>.

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<sup>53</sup> *Pesachim* 109a

<sup>54</sup> *Rashi Shemos* 17:16

<sup>55</sup> *Shaarei Kedushah*.

There is another kind of sadness, which stems from our mind. This is the sadness caused by our doubts. “There is no happiness like the clarification of doubts<sup>56</sup>”, which implies that when there is doubt, there cannot be happiness.

Both of these kinds of sadness came about through Adam’s sin. There were two curses of sadness that came because of this sin – “*With pain shall you eat,*” and “*With pain shall you bear children.*” The sin of eating from the *Eitz HaDaas* damaged our *daas* and created a sadness that can come from our mind; this is the sadness that results from the pain of childbirth, which Chava was cursed with. The other kind of sadness comes from materialism – this is the pain of having to work hard in order to make a living; this was the curse given to Adam.

Amalek induces “coldness” (*kerirus*) into Creation. Of Amalek it is written, “*And they met you on the way.*” The word “met”, *korcha*, is rooted in *kor*, “cold.” This shows us that sadness also causes a person to feel certain coldness toward spiritual matters. When a person feels indifferent to spirituality, he’s affected by the sadness of Amalek.

When we gain the perfect happiness of the future, it will destroy the damage caused by Amalek, and it will also fix the damage caused by the *Erev Rav*. The five “sounds” by a wedding (*kol sasson, kol simcha, kol chosson, kol kallah, and kol mitzhalos chassanim m’chupasam*) are really meant to counter the five evil groups of the *Erev Rav*.

## *Chochmah and Daas*

In our mind, there are two distinct powers – *chochmah* (wisdom) and *daas* (understanding).

Had Adam and Chavah not eaten from the *Eitz HaDaas*, they would have remained with their *chochmah*. The whole temptation to eat from the *Eitz HaDaas* was because they wanted to exchange their *chochmah* for the knowledge of *daas*, which is a higher kind of knowledge that they wanted to have. But when they ate from the tree, not only did they not receive this *daas*, but they received an evil kind of *daas*.

What is the difference between *chochmah* and *daas*?

*Chochmah* is the knowledge that one receives from his teachers. In our *chochmah*, we sometimes make use of our power of imagination, by comparing facts. But *daas* is a kind of knowledge we use which does not involve our imagination. It is above the imagination.

When Hashem created man, He said, “*Let us make man in Our image and in Our likeness.*” The aspect of “in Our image”, “*betzalmeinu*”, is the root of our *daas*. The aspect of “In our likeness”, “*kedemuseinu*”, is the root of *chochmah*. Thus, *chochmah* and *dimayon* (imagination, which is the power of “*kedemuseinu*”) have some relation, while *daas* is a power that is above the imagination.

When a person has doubts, his *daas* has been impaired and lowered to the level of imagination. Doubts are essentially a mind that has been taken over by imagination.

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<sup>56</sup> *Toras HaOlah*.

We have so far mentioned the two roots of sadness – sadness rooted in materialism, and a deeper kind of sadness, which is the sadness of doubts. Both kinds of sadness can be fixed through happiness.

### *Fighting Amalek Through Dancing*

Channah said, "עליץ לבי בקרבי", "My heart rejoices in me". The word עליץ/*olatz* has the same letters as the words לץ ע', "*leitz eiyin*", to "scoff with the eyes." There is an evil kind of scoffing, *leitzanus*, which is the power represented by Amalek.

To counter this, we "scoff" back at them. How do we do this? This is when we have our own *leitzanus*, which is our power of "*olatz*."

What is *olatz*? The term *olatz* is associated with dancing. When we use our feet to dance, we lift our feet off the ground, and in this act we are able to make "light" of the evil of Amalek. With *olatz* – dancing – we are able to ward off the evil of the other nations, represented by Amalek.

### *Fighting The Erev Rav Through Inner Happiness*

But in order to fight off the *Erev Rav*, we need a higher kind of happiness. Dancing is only happiness that manifests itself in our feet. But the *Erev Rav* can only be defeated by a higher kind of happiness – the true happiness, which is found only in the heart – as it is written, "And to the upright of heart (*yishrei lev*) He has implanted happiness." We need to have *yashrus lev* – an uprightness of heart – which gives us the real happiness, and though that, we can defeat the sadness caused by *Erev Rav*.

The happiness we have on Purim is a "happiness of the heart". "And the city of Shushan was full of *tzahalalah* (rejoicing) and *simcha* (happiness)." The joy that is called "*tzahalalah*" is precisely the kind of happiness which can fight off the evil of the *Erev Rav*.

What is the happiness of *tzahalalah*? *Tzahalalah* is a happiness of the heart. It is not the same thing as *olatz* - it is a more internal kind of happiness. *Olatz* is symbolized by dancing, which is not the deep happiness of the heart; it's only a happiness of the feet. *Olatz*/dancing is enough of a level of happiness to ward off the evil of Amalek and the other seventy nations, but it's not enough to fight the evil of the *Erev Rav*, which is a deeper kind of evil. To fight off the evil of the *Erev Rav*, we need a deeper happiness – a happiness of the heart.

What exactly is this happiness? "There is no happiness like the clarification of doubt<sup>57</sup>." When we are free of doubts, there can be happiness. The whole idea of Purim is to remove our doubts, to repair our damaged *daas*.

To attain this, we must remove our "*cheshbonos rabim*" – the various "many calculations" we have, our *retzonos* which do not involve serving the Creator – and then we can come to *yashrus lev*

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(uprightness of the heart). Only through *yashrus* can we have happiness – like it is written, “*And to the upright of heart, happiness.*”

### *Two Ways To Fix Sadness*

To summarize, there are two different ways to fix our sadness. It depends on what the root of the sadness is.

If we are sad because of our materialism, such sadness comes from the element of earth in us. Earth is heavy; the way to oppose our inner heaviness is by being “light”. We use the power to be “light” by dancing, which is the happiness that is called *olatz/alitzah*.

But if one is sad because of his doubts, his sadness is deeper. It is rooted in his *daas*, which has been affected by the doubts (and as a result, his mind has become lowered to the level of imagination). The way to fix this kind of sadness is through *yashrus halev* (uprightness of the heart).

How does a person attain *yashrus halev*? The way to have *yashrus* is to remove the “*cheshbonos rabim*” – the various “many calculations” that a person has, desires which have nothing to do with serving the Creator. When a person removes the *cheshbonos rabim*, he comes to reveal his inner *yashrus* – like it is written, וְלִישְׂרֵי לֵב שִׂמְחָה, “*And to the upright of heart, there is happiness.*”

### *The Perfect Happiness of the Future*

In the future, a third kind of happiness will be revealed, which will be the perfect happiness. This is a happiness that will be derived from the Creator – as it is written, נְגִילָה וְנִשְׂמַחָה בְּךָ, “*We will rejoice and be happy in You.*”

The happiness of Yom Tov comes to counteract the sadness caused by the seventy nations of the world, headed by Amalek. Yom Tov is called *shalosh regalim*, which hints to the term “*regel*” – “foot”. The happiness of Yom Tov is manifested through our feet – when we dance out of happiness.

Purim comes to counteract the sadness caused by the *Erev Rav*. The happiness of Purim is happiness in one’s heart, which is when one reaches his *yashrus halev*, by removing his *cheshbonos rabim*.

The most perfect kind of happiness will only be attained in the future. This is even deeper than the happiness of the heart. This will be a happiness in Hashem alone; נְגִילָה וְנִשְׂמַחָה בְּךָ - “*In You.*”

The whole world today is full of so much sadness! The deep reason for this is because really, there is no real *chiyus*/vitality to be found on this world. It is written, וְהַחֲכָמָה תַּחֲיֵ' אֶת בְּעָלָהּ, “*Wisdom sustains its owner*”, thus, it is *chochmah*/wisdom which sustains people. *Chochmah* is the source of *chiyus*. But in the world today, there is not much *chochmah* being pursued, and thus the world today is devoid of any real life.

There is no real life to be found on this world. We live in a death-like kind of world, with no real life taking place, because *chochmah* has become nonexistent.

But there will be a perfect happiness which will be revealed in the future, when Hashem's full presence will be openly revealed on the world. *Chazal* say that in the future, Hashem will rule over every single part of the body. This is the most perfect happiness – happiness from just living with Hashem.....

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## 2.3 | A Life of Happiness<sup>58</sup>

### *Different Kinds of Happiness*

On Yom Tov, there is a *mitzvah* of *Simchas Yom Tov* – to be happy.

Perfect happiness will only be revealed in the future. Although today we have the redemptions of Purim and Pesach, these redemptions are an incomplete happiness.

The *Gemara*<sup>59</sup> states that in the times of the *Beis Hamikdash*, there was no happiness except in meat (of the *korbon shelamim*), and thus the *mitzvah* of *Simchas Yom Tov* was fulfilled only with meat. What does this mean? If a person lived in the time of the *Beis Hamikdash*, does that mean that he can only be happy when he eats meat?

This is clearly not what it means. It must mean that the holiness that one received from eating the *korbon shelamim* gave a person a tremendous happiness. The holiness of its meat was absorbed in the person's flesh, and this made him happy; “*My heart and flesh shall sing to the living G-d.*”

The *Gemara* continues that in our times when there is no *Beis Hamikdash*, there is no happiness except in wine, for it is written, “*And wine gladdens the heart of man.*”<sup>60</sup> What does it mean that “*wine gladdens the heart of man*”? It can only be referring to an inner happiness that comes from the depths of the soul. “*When wine enters, secrets come out.*”<sup>61</sup> There is a secret happiness that is in the soul, which wine can bring out.

On Purim, there is a *halachah* that “One must become inebriated until he cannot tell the difference between “Blessed is Mordechai” and “Cursed is Haman.”<sup>62</sup> This is because on Purim, we must reach a very kind of inner happiness, the “secret” deep in our soul, which is revealed through the intoxication caused by the wine. The *mitzvah* to become intoxicated on Purim through wine is so that the wine can reveal the “secret” in our soul, which is the secret, inner happiness that is hidden deep in our soul.

### *Inner Happiness and Outward Happiness*

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<sup>58</sup> This derasha was adapted from a derasha that the Rav gave at his son's bar mitzvah.

<sup>59</sup> Talmud Bavli Pesachim 109a

<sup>60</sup> Tehillim 104:15

<sup>61</sup> Talmud Bavli Eruvin 65a

<sup>62</sup> Talmud Bavli Megillah 7b, Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 695:1

On Shabbos, there is a *mitzvah* to have *oneg*, pleasure and on Yom Tov, there is a *mitzvah* to have *simchah*, happiness. What is the difference between *oneg* (pleasure) and *simchah* (happiness)?

*Oneg Shabbos* is an inner happiness that remains deep down in us. It is not revealed out in the open. It is a happiness that comes from a deep source of pleasure in our soul.

*Simchas Yom Tov*, though, is a revealed kind of happiness. On the Yom Tov of Sukkos, they would dance in the *Beis Hamikdash*, by the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah*. This was an open, revealed kind of happiness. When a person lives a life of inner pleasure from his soul, he lives a life of happiness. Such happiness is rooted in *oneg*, which is the power of Shabbos. But even if a person is happy from his inner pleasure of the soul, this isn't enough, and his happiness must still be revealed outward. For this, we have wine, which can reveal our inner happiness outward. That is why *Chazal* say that "There is no *shirah* (song) except over wine"<sup>63</sup>, because wine brings out our inner song, our inner happiness.

### *How To Come To The Inner Happiness*

How can we come to arrive at the inner happiness – our *oneg*?

It is not a superficial kind of happiness. Even though there is a *mitzvah* to eat meat nowadays on Yom Tov and this fulfills the *mitzvah* of *Simchas Yom Tov* – according to *Halachah* – just to eat meat is an external action, which does not bring an internal happiness.

In order to reach the inner happiness, we need to be ready to accept the levels that Purim can bring us to. We can only get the happiness of Purim when we prepare for it. For this, we must prepare at least fourteen days in advance before Purim! That is why the *halacha* is that "When Adar comes, we increase our happiness." It is because in order to receive the great happiness of Purim, we must start preparing for Purim as soon as Adar arrives – fourteen days of preparation.<sup>64</sup>

There are many kinds of superficial actions that people do today to try to get happiness. But the real, deep happiness can only be achieved when a person finds happiness just in feeling *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* – as it is written, "*Nagilah V'nismicha boch*", "We will revel and rejoice in You."<sup>65</sup> This happiness is rarely found in today's times. The happiness attainable on Purim can only be reached if we prepare well in advance before. We must prepare for Purim from the beginning of the month of Adar. It is impossible to gain such a deep happiness without preparing for it beforehand.

### *Preparing For Purim*

How do we prepare for Purim? We need to clean out our heart [from its extraneous desires other than doing the will of Hashem]! It is written, "*Ul'yishrei lev simcha*", "To the upright of heart, happiness."<sup>66</sup> When we have *yashrus halev* – an "upright heart" – when our heart is clean from

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<sup>63</sup> Talmud Bavli *Succha* 51a

<sup>64</sup> On another note, the author explained that preparing for Purim is by being simply ready to accept what Purim can give to us, without intellectualizing about this, as opposed to trying to understand Purim on an intellectual level.

<sup>65</sup> Shir HaShirim 1:4

<sup>66</sup> Tebillim 97:11

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various desires, *simcha* can enter it. True happiness comes from the depths of our soul. It is a constant happiness, and it is not like the kinds of happiness that don't last. This inner happiness is something we ask Hashem for every day. But in order to get it, we need to prepare for it properly.

May the *bar mitzvah* boy here be *zoche* to only strive for the truth in his life, and not be affected by his surroundings – he should be *zoche* to arrive at the true happiness.

## 2.4 | Happiness In The Past, Present & Future

### *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 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.

### *Yom Tov and Purim – The Past and Future In The Present*

The *avodah* of Purim, though, is the opposite of the regular mindset: on Purim, we are supposed to reveal the future in the present. This means that on Purim, a person has to actually live the future redemption, even though the redemption hasn’t come yet.

Yom Tov personifies the opposite *avodah* of Purim. Yom Tov is always about “*zecher l’yetzias mitzrayim*”, to remember the exodus from Egypt; on Yom Tov, one must see the past in the present; Yom Tov is about experiencing the past in the present moment. But Purim is the opposite. On Purim, we live the future in the present moment.

Purim is how we clarify our happiness – when we realize how the future is contained in the present.

## 2.5 | Happiness In Spite of Suffering

### *Simple Happiness: Fulfilling What You Lack*

The month of Adar is called “days of *simchah*”. Let us think about what this means.

If we want to be happy, what is the first thing to do? We know that when a person feels like he is missing something and then he gets out of his lacking situation, he is happy. This is a simple kind of happiness which we can all see. The needier a person is, the happier he is when he gets what he needs.

When a person feels, “Everything I have is worthless to me, since I don’t have what I want,” he is actually suffering from Haman’s problem. Haman had everything he wanted – fabulous wealth, undisputable honor and limitless power – but he didn’t have just one thing: Mordechai, an old man, wouldn’t bow down to him. Because of this, he felt that everything else he had was worthless to him. Because he felt that was so missing so much in his life, he was very happy when he was given permission to destroy the Jews.

According to the degree that a person is missing in his life, that is how much happiness the person has when he fulfills what he lacks. This is a simple definition of happiness: a person previously lacked something, and then he fills his lacking, thus he becomes happy.

If so, it seems to us that it is impossible to be happy when a person is lacking. How can we be happy, even though we are in exile - which is a very lacking situation? Are we doomed to unhappiness as we live in this exile, a situation in which we are indeed missing so much?

In the future redemption, we will all be very happy; as it is written, “*For with happiness, they go out.*”<sup>67</sup> On Purim, we access this happiness of the future [as explained in the previous chapter]. But how can we be happy *now*, when it is not the future, and it is not Purim – when we are in exile?

### *We Can Always Be Happy*

It seems that the happiness of Purim only came about after Haman’s decree was nullified. During the time of the decree, it appears from the Purim story that we were not happy; the city of Shushan was full of rejoicing only at the end of the story, but not before it.

However, the deeper understanding of this is that this doesn’t show that there was no happiness before our salvation came. Yes, there was definitely *more* happiness when the Jews were saved, but even before that, there was happiness!

It is written, “*Serve Hashem with happiness.*”<sup>68</sup> In every situation, one must serve Hashem with happiness! We need to know how to come to this happiness in any situation.

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<sup>67</sup> *Yeshayah 55:12*

## *Happiness Upon Being Defeated*

Did Haman, on his own, really have the power to kill the Jews? No. Hashem is in charge, not Haman. Pharaoh also couldn't do anything without Hashem letting him. So first, we must realize that everything comes from Hashem.

*Chazal* state, "Hashem is not like human kings. Human kings, when they are defeated, are sad. Hashem, when He is defeated (so to speak) is happy."

This shows us that there is a kind of happiness a person can have even when he is defeated. We can understand that a person is happy when he is victorious about something, whether it's a physical victory or a spiritual victory. But how can a person be happy when he's defeated?

Simply speaking, this is because a person can say, "*Gam zu l'tovah*" – "This, too, is for the best." Someone on an even higher level can be happy even when he's defeated because he awakens his *emunah*. But both of these definitions still don't bring out the concept. Accepting that everything is the will of Hashem, as well as having *emunah* in Hashem, are both *reflecting* Hashem's happiness, but it still doesn't yet show that the person himself is happy. How can a person be happy even when he's defeated?

In other words, how can we be happy, even when things don't go our way?

## *Nullifying Your Will*

There is an *avodah* known as *bittul haratzon*, nullifying our will. The Mishnah in *Avos* states, "*Nullify your will for the sake of His will.*"<sup>69</sup> What does it mean to nullify our will?

To nullify your will doesn't simply mean for a person to think, "Really, I want this certain thing, but since I know that I'm not supposed to have a *ratzon* for anything else other than to do the *ratzon Hashem*, I'll give it up for Hashem." It is even more than that. A person has to realize, "My whole **existence** is for Hashem."

Many people do not feel how Hashem is always with them in their life. People think that this is either because they have sins which prevent them from feeling Hashem's closeness to them, or for other reasons.

But the real, inner reason why people don't feel Hashem in their life is because they do not realize *the simple fact that Hashem exists!* Why aren't people aware of such a simple fact?

It is because a person cannot feel Hashem's existence unless he nullifies his own existence to Hashem. After a person nullifies his self to Hashem, recognition of Hashem's existence will come as an automatic result of this. The focus of the "I" in a person separates between the person and Hashem<sup>70</sup>; when a person stops focusing on his "I" so much, the barrier between him and Hashem is

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<sup>68</sup> *Tehillim* 100:2

<sup>69</sup> *Avos* 2:4

<sup>70</sup> To learn more about the *avodah* of nullifying the will, see *Bilvavi Vol. VI, Chapters 3-8*.

essentially broken, and he will feel the true meaning of his existence; he will feel Hashem as an utter reality.

### *Accepting Suffering*

*Chazal* say that a person should accept suffering.<sup>71</sup> What does it mean to rejoice in suffering? It's not simply because people need their sins to be atoned, and that is why we must accept suffering. The whole concept of accepting suffering is for a person to arrive at *bittul* – to nullify oneself. Only when a person nullifies his “I” can he truly grow and become close to Hashem through the suffering.

This is a way how one can be happy even as he's suffering or when he's going through any painful circumstance – by nullifying one's “I” to Hashem.

### *Growing Through Purim*

Purim might very well remain to a person as just a day to fulfill the *mitzvos* and *halachos* - such as listening to the *Megillah* with all the *chumros* (stringencies) involved, and being very scrupulous about how to fulfill the mitzvos of *matanos l'evyonim* or *mishlaoch manos*. If this is a person's entire focus on Purim, he only knows of a superficial Purim, and he misses the essence of Purim.

We do not mean, *chas v'shalom* (G-d forbid) to make fun of people who are very exacting to fulfill all of *Hilchos Purim*, as this is clearly our obligation according to *halachah*. But we must each ask ourselves the following introspection: “Am I growing from Purim?”

On Purim, we rejoice because the Jewish people were saved from Haman's decree. But is that all we are rejoicing about each year? Every year you are just reviewing history?!

What we really need to ask ourselves on Purim is: “Has my soul changed at all since last year's Purim?” You can have a person who sings after hearing the *Megillah* the entire liturgy of the *Shoshanas Yaakov* song, which describes in great song of how the Jews were saved from Haman; but deep down, the person singing really feels like the possuk: “*And the city of Shushan was in mourning.*” He's just singing a song, but his soul isn't experiencing the happiness...

### *Ad D'lo Yoda*

The *halachah* on Purim is that one must get drunk until *ad d'lo yeda* - when he doesn't know the difference between “Blessed is Mordechai” and “Cursed is Haman.”<sup>72</sup> What is the meaning behind this?

It is really because, on Purim, a person is supposed to arrive at *bittul* (self-nullification). Through becoming intoxicated on Purim, a person loses his initial understanding, his *daas* becomes nullified, and this brings him to a state of *bittul* (self-nullification). This is the whole purpose of Purim – to come to nullify your “I” to Hashem.

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<sup>71</sup> *Talmud Bavli Shabbos 88b*

<sup>72</sup> *Talmud Bavli Megillah 7b, Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 695:1*

The Purim that we see in today's world is very far from the truth that it should be. In fact, there is no day further from the truth than modern-day Purim. We must turn it around – as we sing on Purim, “*V'nahafoch hu!*”

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## 2.6 | The Joys of Simchah and Sasson

The days of Purim are called “days of *mishteh* (festivity) and *simcha* (happiness)”. What is the difference between *mishteh* (festivity) and what is *simchah* (happiness)?

The *Gemara*<sup>73</sup> says that there was an argument between *sasson* and *simchah*, two different kinds of happiness. *Simchah* argued that it came before *sasson*, because it is written, “*To the Jews there was orah, simchah and sasson*”. This is a verse in the Megillah regarding the joy Purim. On Purim, the joy known as *simchah* precedes the joy known as *sasson*.

The concept of *sasson* is associated with water. On the *Simchas Beis HaShoeivah*, they would celebrate the *nisuch hamayim* (water libation), and it was the time of the year in which they would pour water on the *Mizbeiach* (Altar). About this there is a possuk, “*And they draw water with sasson (joy)*.”

Whereas the joy of *sasson* is associated with water, the joy known as *simchah* is associated with wine, for it says, “*And wine gladdens the heart of man*.”<sup>74</sup>

Which was created first, water or wine? We know that water was created first. This shows us that normally, *sasson* comes before *simchah*. But on Purim, *simchah* came before *sasson*.

What is *simchah*, and what is *sasson*? Why should it make a difference which of them comes first? And what was this ‘argument’ between *simchah* and *sasson*?

### *Intrinsic Happiness Before The Increase Of Happiness*

To know the difference between the different joys of *sasson* and *simchah*, we have to know the difference between *mishteh* and *simchah*. There is a *simchah* which comes before a *mishteh*, and there is a *simchah* which comes after a *mishteh*.

*Sasson* comes from the word *sheish*, “six.” When the world was finished being created on the sixth day, there was a joy in creation – a *sasson*. When Creation became complete, there was happiness just with the very existence of Creation. Thus, *sasson* is a happiness drawn from existence. There was *sasson* in Creation when it came into existence, and therefore, *sasson* connotes a joy we can derive from our own existence.

*Simchah*, however, is a happiness we can gain even after we draw happiness from our existence. When one has joy from existence, he has *sasson*. When one furthers that happiness, he has *simchah*.

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<sup>73</sup> Talmud Bavli Succah 56b

<sup>74</sup> Tebillim 104:15

*Simchah* is when we add onto our intrinsic happiness – when we increase our already existing happiness.

*Simchah* thus is a degree of happiness that we add onto our initial happiness of *sasson*. The entire idea of *simchah* is to add onto the happiness of our existence, which is called *sasson*.

Thus, there has to first be *sasson* in order for us to have *simchah*. In order for a person to increase his happiness, he first needs to be happy with the fact that he exists. On top of your intrinsic happiness you are able to add onto that more happiness, but there has to first be happiness present in the first place in order for you to increase it. That initial happiness we are supposed to have, our *sasson*, is to be happy because of the mere fact that we exist; after we draw forth our happiness like this, we can then gain *simchah*.

If a person attempts to have *simchah* when he tries to increase his happiness, but he isn't yet happy with the fact that he exists, then he will not be able to have *simchah*. You can only add onto your happiness if there is happiness already there to begin with. This is why *sasson* must come before *simchah*. First, you have to be happy with the mere fact that you exist, and then you can increase your happiness.

When people just try to become happier, but they're not happy with themselves to begin with, then whatever 'happiness' they gain will only be a foolish and superficial kind of happiness.

### *Purim: Going Above Your Existence*

During the rest of the year, we need *sasson* before *simchah* - we first need to draw happiness from the mere fact that we exist, and after we feel happy from this, we can then add onto our happiness and attain the happiness called *simcha*.

But on Purim, it is the other way around: *simchah* comes before *sasson*! On Purim, *simchah* is mentioned in the possuk before *sasson*. This shows us that on Purim we need to have something that comes even before *sasson*. On Purim, we need to find a *simchah* which comes even before *sasson*.

If *sasson* is the happiness of one's very existence, what can come before this? What comes before your existence?

We know that there are certain creations which were created even before Hashem created the universe. One of them was the Torah. On Purim, when the Jewish people accepted the Torah again anew, it was really an acceptance of the Torah as it was like before creation. This is an example of something that came before our existence: the Torah that was around before we existed, before the existence of all Creations.

What is this power that is "before" your existence? How can anything come before something exists?

One way we see this is in the future happiness, which is described in the possuk, “*The righteous rejoice in Hashem*”.<sup>75</sup> The happiness which we will find with just being close to Hashem is a kind of happiness that existed even before we came into existence. Such happiness existed before “I” exist: the happiness of being close to Hashem. This deep happiness is drawn from before our creation, and it will once again be revealed in the future.

There is another way to arrive at the *simchah* which comes before *sasson*, and it is through utilizing Purim. The *avodah* of Purim is essentially about totally nullifying one’s *daas* (understanding). We can see this from the *halachah* that a person must become intoxicated on Purim until he has no more *daas*. The purpose of losing our *daas* on Purim is because this can bring us to arrive at *bittul* of our *daas* – to nullify our mind, which in turn makes us forget about our ego and instead be completely nullified to Hashem.

This is how one experiences the happiness that is above his existence, above his “I” – it is reached when one nullifies his very self to the Creator...

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<sup>75</sup> *Tebillim* 97:12

## 2.7 | Taanis Esther: Avoiding The Decree

### *The History of Genocide On The Jewish People*

Haman wanted to destroy all of the Jewish people – men, women, and children. We have had many decrees, but there was never a decree like this before: a decree of total genocide on our entire people.

There is a similar occurrence in our history, but it was not quite the same thing: when the people sinned with the Golden Calf, Hashem wished to destroy the entire nation and leave only Moshe Rabbeinu alive, and continue the Jewish people with him. Although Hashem had made a promise that the Jewish people will never be destroyed, the promise was not made to the people as a whole, but only to Moshe. Hashem was ready to continue everything through Moshe alone. Moshe entreated Hashem and said to Him that he would rather be erased from existence. Hashem listened to his prayers and the decree was nullified.

But it wasn't the same thing as Haman's decree. When Hashem wanted to destroy the people after the sin with the Calf, He wanted the Jewish people to continue, through Moshe. But Haman's decree was to wipe out every single Jew, so that there should be no remainder of the Jewish people left. Thus, only Haman's decree was a decree of total genocide. This decree of Haman was given credibility by Achashveirosh, who ruled the entire world then, which gave even more power to the decree. It was a decree that could have destroyed the entire Jewish people.

### *Redemption: Worthy Vs. Not Being Worthy*

According to one opinion in the Sages, we are redeemed from exile if we do *teshuvah*, but if we don't do *teshuvah*, we cannot be redeemed, and we will be given "a king as harsh as Haman" which will spur us on to do *teshuvah*. According to the other opinion of our Sages, we are redeemed whether we do *teshuvah* or not, because there is a promise from Hashem that we will be redeemed.<sup>76</sup>

Purim is the time when the decree of Haman was sealed, and the time when it was nullified. However, although Haman was destroyed and his decree was nullified, the decree still remains in Creation on a conceptual level. It returns every year during this time, where it is once again nullified, due to the special power of the time of Purim. Haman's decree was nullified, but it can always come back again one day.

This is the meaning behind the opinion in the Sages that in order to be redeemed from this exile, we will be given "a king as harsh as Haman", which will prompt us to do *teshuvah*. The decree of Haman can always come back. The meaning of this opinion of the Sages is that Haman's decree of genocide will return in the End of Days, which will force all of the Jewish people to do *teshuvah*.

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<sup>76</sup> Sanhedrin 97b-98a

According to the first opinion in the Sages, it will be “a generation that is entirely deserving” of redemption. According to the other opinion, we will be entirely undeserving, and then genocide will have to be decreed on us, until we all do *teshuvah*. If we are deserving of redemption, there is no need for genocide, because then the entire generation would be worthy. Only if we are entirely undeserving, decrees are necessary. Thus, the “decree” of Haman which he made for the day of Purim is still in existence, and it can come back in the End of Days (according to one opinion in our Sages).

### *Two Different Ways To View Purim*

Thus, there are two ways to view Purim.

One view is that it is a time of miracles, just as it was a time of miracles then. On Purim, there wasn't just a nullification of the decree; it was a symbol of the future, that we will be saved in the future as well, from decrees. The Sages said that Mordechai knew of the decree, and he knew it would be nullified. The meaning of this is that he knew it would be nullified both in his own time and in the future.

But the other way to view Purim is that the decree of Haman returns every year. It was nullified on Purim, but it can return in the End of Days, if the generation is undeserving of redemption, where we will be given a king as harsh as Haman.

### *Taanis Esther: Remembering The Decree*

Purim is different than all other festivals, which begin on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Adar. Remembering the events of Purim doesn't begin with the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> of Adar. It starts with *Taanis Esther*, which is the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar. Although the *halachos* of Purim do not begin until the 14<sup>th</sup>, we begin to remember Purim already on the 13<sup>th</sup>, which is *Taanis Esther*.

This is in contrast with the other Yomim Tovim. Pesach begins on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, and we have no remembrance of the prayers that we davened then to be redeemed. We remember the exodus, but not more than that. On Succos, we remember the day of Succos, which is the 15<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei. But Purim is a remembrance not only for the day of Purim itself, but even for the prayers and fasting which preceded it: *Taanis Esther*.

A regular Yom Tov begins with the Yom Tov itself, but Purim begins with fasting and prayer. The deep reason behind this is because the decree of Haman really returns every year! Although we have no Haman today, his decree is still here in time. Our *avodah* before Purim every year is to feel the decree, before Purim begins.

Thus, *Taanis Esther* wasn't just a historical remembrance of the decree. It was to remember the *avodah* we had then, when there was a decree. If Purim was just about the remembering the past, it would suffice to only remember the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of Adar. The fact that we remember also the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar shows us that there is more to Purim than just remembering the time we were saved: it is because we are supposed to also remember what came before our salvation, when there was a decree hanging upon us, and we had to fast, pray and do *teshuvah*.

## *When The Generation Is Not Worthy: The End of Days*

In the recent generations, as we get further and further away from “a generation that is deserving” of redemption, we are instead closer and closer to being undeserving. As we get further into the End of Days, we are further from purity, and we are becoming less and less deserving of the redemption. We are instead heading into the other alternative – that since we are undeserving, the only way we will be redeemed is through getting “a king as harsh as Haman”, which will make us all do *teshuvah*.

Thus, Purim begins from our fasting on *Taanis Esther*, when we did *teshuvah* to nullify the decree. Before Purim, we have an avodah of *Taanis Esther*: to feel the decree in the air - that it is still around.

This doesn't mean, of course, that the decree will happen. But what it means for us is that the decree should be in front of one's eyes and move us to *teshuvah*, just as it did then.

In the times we live in, one must realize that he is in a situation of a ‘generation that is entirely undeserving’ of the redemption. This has been true already for many years, but now it is even more relevant than ever.

## *Even The Tzaddik Cannot Be Saved In An Unworthy Generation*

When one lives in a generation that is entirely undeserving of redemption, even if he is a *tzaddik*, he is in danger. Mordechai was the *tzaddik* of the generation, but he was included in the decree. That means that the decree of genocide was on Mordechai as well!

How are we to understand this? Why should *Mordechai* be included in the decree?? We can understand why the rest of the generation was deserving of death, as the *Gemara* says: either because they enjoyed Achashveirosh's party, or because they bowed to the idol. Mordechai was the only one who didn't bow to the idol. He did not bow to Haman either. He was totally apart from the evil acts of that generation. So why was he included in the decree??

It is because if the rest of the generation is undeserving, he was in danger too. Although he knew it would be nullified, that was all from the perspective of his level: he did not deserve to be part of the decree. But in totality, the rest of the generation was undeserving, so that made him was included with them. The *Maharal* says that in an undeserving generation, even the *tzaddikim* are included in the decree. These are mysterious words to understand. But it can be understood as follows: even a *tzaddik*, who is fighting evil, is not spared from the decree on the generation he is in.

There is an ongoing war between the forces of good and evil in Creation. Sometimes good wins, and sometimes evil wins, but there is always a war. *Chazal* say that the *yetzer tov* rules *tzaddikim*, and the *yetzer hora* rules the wicked, and with *beinonim*, both inclinations rule<sup>77</sup>. A ‘generation that is entirely undeserving’, simply speaking, means that the generation, as a whole, is leaning towards being undeserving of redemption. Of course, one can still avoid the evil of the generation, but he is still part of a generation which is entirely undeserving.

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<sup>77</sup> *Berachos 61b*

In deeper terms, the *avodah* for a person, when he is in an undeserving generation - if he is a *tzaddik* - is not an *avodah* for the generation. The generation is entirely undeserving, so there is no *avodah* for the generation. The generation, in such a situation, will need “a king as harsh as Haman”, who will decree genocide on all Jews, so that everyone will be moved to *teshuvah*. Being part of the generation means that a person is part of the decree of genocide.

### *What Should The Tzaddik Do?*

What should one do if he wants to live, when he lives in a generation which is entirely undeserving of being saved??

If one is part of a generation that is undeserving, the generation deserved to be wiped out, and even a *tzaddik* like Moshe Rabbeinu and Mordechai HaTzaddik are included in the decree! By the sin with the Golden Calf, Hashem said to Moshe Rabbeinu that He will destroy the nation, and that instead he will be made into a great nation. Moshe prayed for the people and saved them, and so did Mordechai in his time. But in either case, the generation was undeserving.

On one hand, the *tzaddik* who prays for the generation, such as Avraham in his time and Moshe in his time, who prayed for others to be saved, can be considered the ‘*teshuvah*’ that redeems the generation. But the question is: What should the *tzaddik* himself do? What should he do if he wants to be of those who are like the “36 *tzaddikim* who greet the *Shechinah*” each day, when his generation is undeserving?

### *Separating From the Generation*

The *avodah* for the *tzaddik* is: Don’t be of the members of the generation! One has to separate from the generation and not consider himself to be a part of it! In this way, he won’t be a part of the generation, and then the decree won’t affect him.

“Once the Angel of Death is given permission, he doesn’t differentiate between the righteous and the wicked”<sup>78</sup>. Once there is a decree of death on the Jewish people, the Angel of Death is given permission to kill anyone, even *tzaddikim*. That is true, but there is a deeper way which can avoid this: don’t be a part of this generation in the first place, so that you’re not part of the decree!

In the past, we had a Haman, and we had a *Mordechai*, the *tzaddik* who would not bow to the idols. The *Gemara* tells us that the other Sages in the generation did not agree with Mordechai, and in fact, they were upset with him, because his refusal to bow to Haman angered him to make the decree. What, indeed, was Mordechai thinking? It was because he knew that the decree was coming anyway, and that it was not because of him. He knew that the generation deserved to be destroyed, so he didn’t consider himself to be a part of the generation.

If even the *tzaddik* considers himself to be a part of the generation, he is included with the rest of the generation’s situation. If he doesn’t consider himself to be part of the generation, that is how he can be saved.

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78 *Bava Kamma 60a*

We can see this from Moshe Rabbeinu. Hashem wanted to destroy the people and instead continue the Jewish people through Moshe. Why wasn't Moshe Rabbeinu part of the decree? If the generation was entirely undeserving, why should Moshe be any different? Is it because he didn't sin with the Calf? That can't be the reason, because *Chazal* say that the women didn't sin with the Calf, yet they were part of the decree as well. Hashem wanted to destroy the entire people, including the women, who did not sin with the Calf. So why was Moshe spared? The answer is: when the sin with the Calf took place, where was Moshe? He was in Heaven - he wasn't on this earth. He wasn't part of the generation anymore.<sup>79</sup>

If most of the people in the generation are wicked, even if there are a few *tzaddikim*, it is considered that the generation is entirely undeserving of redemption, and then even the *tzaddikim* are not saved. But Moshe was above in Heaven during the time of the sin with the Calf, so he wasn't part of the generation, and that was why he wasn't part of the decree. In contrast, Mordechai, although he didn't bow to the idols - for "he knew of the decree and he knew it would be nullified" in the sense that he knew he was undeserving of the decree on the generation - in spite of this, he was still on this earth, thus he was still part of the generation. That was why he was included in the decree.

### *Our Avodah on Taanis Esther*

*Taanis Esther* is the point in time in which the decree returns, where each of us must summon the power of free choice, to use our power of the 'Moshe Rabbeinu' within. In every generation, a person can attain a "spark" of Moshe Rabbeinu's soul and shine that light onto the generation. (This is the meaning of the matter discussed in our *sefarim hakedoshim* that there is an extension of "Moshe Rabbeinu" in every generation<sup>80</sup>).

A person has the power to rise above even the most depraved depths of evil, such as the impurity created by the sin with the Golden Calf (the root of all sins thereafter), and separate himself from all that is going on in the generation; he can step outside of it.

The power to be saved from the decree of destruction upon the Jewish people - which is decreed due to the sins of the generation - is the power which returns to us in the End of Days. In the End of Days, we can be saved from a generation that is entirely undeserving, through the lesson we learn from Purim.

The people as a whole can be saved through getting "a king as harsh as Haman", which cause us to do *teshuvah*; but there are individuals in the generation who can be spared from this harsh king in the first place, by separating themselves from this generation.

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<sup>79</sup> *The Rav added, "This was the depth behind how the Satan confused them with showing an image of Moshe's coffin in the sky. For the time being, Moshe was "dead" in the sense that he was totally separated from the generation at that time. They thought he was dead, they though he was separated from them, and that was why they were led to sin.*

<sup>80</sup> *Tikkunei HaZohar 131a*

On one hand, a person has an *avodah* of Moshe Rabbeinu: to have *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice) for the Jewish people, just as Moshe was willing to be erased for the Jewish people. This means that one's *avodah* is to have increased *ahavas Yisrael*.

But the other side to our *avodah* is that each person needs to separate himself from the generation. This is the deeper meaning of "Therefore, man was created individual."<sup>81</sup> Moshe was told that he would remain alone and be made into a great nation; he was being told that he would become an 'individual'. Mordechai was the only 'individual' who didn't bow to the idol; he resembles Avraham Avinu, the only one in the world who would not bow to idols.

The depth of our *avodah* on Purim, on one hand, is to increase our love towards other, as it says in the *Megillah*, that there was "*divrei shalom v'emes*", "words of truth and peace"<sup>82</sup>. This is achieved through giving *mishloach manos*, which increases love and friendship with others. On the other hand, there is also the decree that comes back each year, and in order to counter it, each person must become like an individual and separate himself from the rest of the generation.

### *The Prerequisite To Purim*

Therefore, if Purim to a person is only about our *avodah* on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of Adar, which is about love and friendship with others - and he forgets about the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar, *Taanis Esther*, which is about remembering Haman's decree - he has not realized the prerequisite to Purim, which is to first separate himself from the generation. He only connects to the *avodah* on Purim, but he has skipped the *avodah* that must become before Purim.

Such a person has not learned how to separate from the generation, and if the generation is undeserving of being saved, *chas v'shalom*, he will fall down together with them! And if *chas v'shalom* there would be a decree of genocide on the Jewish people, he will be part of it....

Therefore, practically speaking, our *avodah* for Purim begins the day before Purim: with *Taanis Esther*. It is not only the time to remember history, that there was a decree many years ago at this time. It is to realize, in our very soul, that we need to avoid the decree upon us [which is still present in Creation and looming above us]: by becoming the individual *tzaddik* who is apart from the generation. At the same time, we also need to realize that Purim is about increasing our love and friendship with others.

Through these two forms of *avodah* on *Taanis Esther*, we can then be able to "know of the decree and its nullification", like Mordechai. We can then be confident in knowing that the decree will be nullified, and that will enable us to reach true and deep *ahavas Yisrael* with other Jews, on Purim.

### *"Words of Truth and Peace"*

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81 *Sanhedrin 37a*

82 *Esther 9:30*

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In the time of Purim, after the Jewish people won the war with Amalek, there was a fear that descended on the nations, in awe of Mordechai and the Jewish people, and there were many gentiles who converted to the Jewish people because of this.

In our times as well, there are many gentiles converting, but they are insincere, and they stem from the *Erev Rav*, who are the fake “converts” to the Jewish people. The *Erev Rav* converted because they were scared of what was happening to the Egyptians, but they had no intention of joining the Jewish people. “*Divrei shalom v’emes*” (words of truth and peace) is only applicable towards members of the Jewish people.

So the *avodah* is two-fold: on one hand, one needs to have *mesirus nefesh* in his love for other Jews, and there also needs to be a development of one’s holy sense of individuality: to be apart from the generation.

This is the true way to enter into Purim, and then one can connect with the Jewish people: “*divrei shalom v’emes*”.

פורים 045 אדר א וב פורים קטן [From 56:20 min. until end of shiur]

## 2.8 | Depth of Festivity On Purim Katan

### *The Depth of the Custom to Rejoice On Purim Katan*

The month of Adar contains two different aspects. On the one hand, it is connected with its previous month, Shevat, which is one of the difficult months for the Jewish people. On the other hand, it is also connected with its following month, Nissan, which is a month of redemption for the Jewish people.

Haman thought he would destroy the Jewish people in Adar, because he thought that Adar has a bad mazal for the Jewish people, since it was the month that Moshe died in. The Sages said that what Haman didn't realize was that it was also the month when Moshe was born.<sup>83</sup>

The depth behind this is because Adar really contains two opposite aspects. Adar is connected with its previous month, Shevat, which is a difficult month for the Jewish people. This was to Haman's advantage, and that was why Haman thought Adar would be a good month to destroy the Jews. Adar's connection to the month of Shevat represents the idea of Moshe's death in Adar, which symbolized a bad time for the Jews. But Haman failed to realize that Adar is also the month that is immediately followed by Nissan, a month of redemption for the Jewish people. Adar's connection to the month of Nissan represents the birth of Moshe in Adar.

In a normal year, Adar is connected with both of these aspects, Shevat and Nissan. In a leap year, however, where we observe two months of Adar, the first month of Adar is more strongly connected with the month of Shevat, while the second month of Adar is more strongly connected with the month of Nissan. (That is the depth of why the main *halachos* of Purim are observed in the second month of Adar during a leap year.) However, during a leap year, there is also a *minhag* to observe a "Purim Katan", according to some views, in the first month of Adar. The *Rema*<sup>84</sup> brings a custom for people to rejoice with a festive meal on *Purim Katan*, based on an argument in the Rishonim.

The *Shaarei Teshuvah*<sup>85</sup> says that a hint to this is because the words "Adar Rishon" are equal in *gematria* to the words "mishteh tov" [implying that there is a *mishteh tov*, a festive celebration, which is observed in *Adar Rishon*]. The depth of this is as follows.

The first month of Adar in a leap year, *Adar Rishon*, is closer to its previous month, Shevat, which contains the concept of *le'itah*, eating.<sup>86</sup> The act of eating became impaired ever since Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*. According to one opinion in the Sages, the *Eitz HaDaas* was a grapevine.<sup>87</sup> Thus, the acts of eating and drinking became impaired from the sin. Drinking (*mishteh*) is therefore included in *le'itah*, and since *le'itah* needed to be rectified ever since the first sin, so did *mishteh* need to be rectified.

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<sup>83</sup> Megillah 13b

<sup>84</sup> Rema Orach Chaim 697:1

<sup>85</sup> Shaarei Teshuvah ibid

<sup>86</sup> Sefer Yetzirah 5:3

<sup>87</sup> Sanhedrin 70a

Esav's act of eating was also termed as *le'itah*. Haman thought he would "swallow" the Jewish people in Adar, because Esav's power is "eating", for the act of eating has been tainted by the Other Side ever since Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*. Haman and Achashveirosh also had a *mishteh* together, which was a clear example of an evil, impaired *mishteh*. Hence, the concepts of *le'itah* (eating) and *mishteh* (celebration, through intoxication) became impaired and are in need of spiritual rectification.

*Adar Rishon* has the same *gematria* as "*mishteh tov*" because, in depth, it rectifies the evil "*mishteh*" of Haman and Achashveirosh. And, on a deeper level, it also rectifies the original, impaired *mishteh* of Adam, when Adam ate from the grapevine of the evil *Eitz HaDaas*. Thus, the "*mishteh tov*" observed in *Adar Rishon* [on *Purim Katan*] rectifies the aspect of Adar's connection to the month of Shevat, the month of impaired *le'itah*/eating, the *le'itah*/eating of Esav and the *le'itah*/eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*.

The "*mishteh tov*" (the "good festive party") observed on *Purim Katan* – that is, according to the view that there is a *mishteh* observed on *Purim Katan* - is therefore the holy kind of "*mishteh*" that rectifies the impaired, evil "*mishteh*" [of eating and drinking from the *Eitz HaDaas*, Esav's act of eating, Haman's intent to 'eat'/swallow the Jewish people, the party of Haman and Achashveirosh when they drank wine to celebrate the plan to destroy the Jewish people, and the impaired "eating" in the month of Shevat which represents the power of the Other Side to counter the holiness of the Jewish people.]

In this way, the "*mishteh*" (festive party) in *Adar Rishon* transforms the evil "*mishteh*" of eating from the *Eitz HaDaas*, the grapes of the *Eitz HaDaas*, into a "*mishteh tov*", a "good" party. Through this, we are able to fulfill the meaning of the verse that the *Rema* brings in the end of the Shulchan Aruch: "*And good is the heart that is constantly festive*". That is the depth behind the words of the *Shaarei Teshuvah* that the *gematria* of "*mishteh tov*" is equal to the words "*Adar Rishon*".

3  
PURIM

## 3.1 | The Unique Aspects of Purim

On one hand, Purim is the last of the festivals, and on the other hand, it is a new beginning (as it is with all “ends”, where the end is always a beginning to something else). The Sages state all of the festivals in the future will cease, except for Purim. This is because it is the end of the festivals of the current time period - and it is a beginning of the future.

Therefore, Purim is intrinsically different than all the other festivals. Purim contains both the light of the current festivals, as well as an additional light – the light that is beginning of the future times.

This additional light contained in Purim stands out in all of the events of Purim and in its unique *mitzvos*. There are many examples of how we can see it – here is a list of a few of them.

1) The system of the “festivals” begin with Pesach, the exodus from Egypt, where we were told, למען תדע, “*So that you shall know*”; and on Sukkos as well, with the *mitzvah* of *sukkah*, the Torah says that it is למען ידעו דורותיכם, “*So that the generations will know*.” But Purim is not for the purpose of knowing – it is about ידע דלא ידע, “*ad d’lo yoda*” - it is about “not” knowing [its concept is “above” the normal *daas*/knowledge].

2) Regarding all *mitzvos* of the Torah, there is a rule, “the Torah is not in heaven” (*Bava Metziah 59b*). But Purim was ‘agreed upon’ in Heaven (*Yerushalmi Berachos 67b*).

3) When we stood at Har Sinai, there was *yirah* (awe), for Hashem gave the Torah so that “*they will learn to fear Me for all days*”. But on Purim, where we re-accepted the Torah, we did so with *ratzon* (will), which came from *ahavah*/love [for Hashem], because of the miracles experienced [as *Rashi* in *Tractate Megillah* states]. This was *ahavah* (love), as opposed to just having *yirah* (awe).

4) In all other festivals, we are obligated in them due to standing at Har Sinai and receiving the Torah. But on Purim we had a different kind of receiving of the Torah, by re-accepting the Torah. Clearly it was not the same acceptance again; it was a much deeper kind of acceptance. It resembled, “*A new Torah shall come forth from Me*” [the Torah of the future].

All other festivals are rooted in Moshe, who received the Torah from Hashem at Har Sinai. But Purim applied to walled cities from the times of Yehoshua, so it is rooted in Yehoshua.

5) When it comes to the rest of the *mitzvos* of the Torah, either we give to the poor or to the Kohen. But when it comes to Purim, we give *Mishloach Manos* to friends, out of love for everyone.

6) The Torah is a ‘masculine’ term, for it is called “*Toras Moshe*”, who was a man. But the Torah which we received on Purim was wrought through a woman, Esther, and the “Torah” that we received on Purim is collected in “*Megillas Esther*”.

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7) All the other festivals were open miracles, but Purim was entirely hidden miracles. This is because the purpose of Purim was to reveal the hidden, resembling the statement, “Wine enters, secrets come out.”

8) All other festivals have a specific time of the calendar, whereas Purim can fall out either on the 11<sup>th</sup>, the 12<sup>th</sup>, the 13<sup>th</sup>, the 14<sup>th</sup>, or the 15<sup>th</sup>. The *mitzvos* of Purim can be performed on an earlier date than the 14<sup>th</sup>, resembling the possibility of the redemption being earlier than its time.

9) In all other festivals, there is only one performance of the *mitzvos* of the festival (and even when it comes to shaking *lulav*, there is only one *mitzvah* per 7 days of Sukkos to shake *lulav*), but the *mitzvos* of Purim can be performed over a period of two days, which are the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of Adar. This is because the spiritual light of Purim is a “double” light. The 14<sup>th</sup> of Purim is equal to the number 7"ב in Hebrew, which has the same *gematria* as 717, symbolizing the end of the festivals, and the 15<sup>th</sup> of Purim corresponds to the days of Mashiach, whose kingdom will be completed on the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month.

10) Just as Shabbos is a resemblance of the World To Come and it contains doubles (see *Yalkut Shimeoni Shemos 16: 261*), so is Purim a beginning of the light of the future, thus it is a “double” day.

## 3.2 | Preparing For Purim

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*”.<sup>88</sup> 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!*<sup>89</sup>

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.

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<sup>88</sup> In order to understand this section, refer to Chapter Fourteen of this book, “*Ad D'Lo Yoda – Going Above Your Daas.*”

<sup>89</sup> 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*.

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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...

## 3.3 | Guidelines For Getting Drunk on Purim

### *Who Can Get Drunk On Purim?*

“When wine enters, secrets come out.”<sup>90</sup>

There are two kinds of secrets. There is a kind of secret that one should not ever reveal to others, and there is the kind of the secret that we are supposed to reveal through the wine we drink [on Purim].

If a person has an idea that will make him profit him a lot in business, and, while intoxicated, he tells his friend about it, then his friend might go and use his idea to profit for himself. That’s one kind of secret that a person shouldn’t tell another.

But there is another kind of secret which should not be told to others. There are people who, deep down, are seething at some people they know, and they keep all their negative emotions inside of them during the year. When they get intoxicated, and they encounter their friends whom they’re upset at, how do they act?

If a person’s Torah learning has been internalized into his being, he will be able to silence his negative emotions toward others, because he will be able to succeed in using the wine to knock down all the internal barriers he erected during the year towards others. This is ideal way to utilize the *mitzvah* of getting drunk on Purim, and this is the intended way to go about the *mitzvah*.

But if someone’s Torah learning hasn’t been internalized into his inner being, then when he gets drunk, he will let out all his rage and fury at others that he’s upset at. He will let all those people know about all the grievances he really has against them. Such a person is actually not allowed to get drunk on Purim. He is not doing a *mitzvah*, and to the contrary, he’s making an embarrassment out of himself. His intoxication does not foster any sense of brotherliness and friendship with others. Of him, it cannot be said “*And to the Jews there was orah, simcha, sasson and yakar*”.

If a person’s Torah’s learning has become a part of his inner self, then when he gets intoxicated and his mind is loose, words of Torah will spring forth from him, and he fulfills the *mitzvah* of Purim. The secrets that come out of his mouth are essentially secrets that still remain with him even after he releases them, and thus he is permitted to reveal those secrets.

But when a person’s Torah learning isn’t infused into his being, than when he reveals his secrets to others, those secrets don’t remain inside him, because he revealed them only in order to release these feelings outwards. These secrets were not supposed to be revealed. Only a secret that can remain inside the person even after they have been revealed – such as in the case of who has internalized his Torah learning – can come out of one’s mouth on Purim.

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<sup>90</sup> *Talmud Bavli Eruvin 65a*

## *Being Drunk: The Revelation of One's True Essence*

We have already mentioned that when a person becomes intoxicated from wine, either one of two things will happen. Either he will fall into its trap and lower his worth, or he will connect to a higher source. In order to understand how this works, let us explain the depth behind the view in our Sages that the *Eitz HaDaas* was a grapevine.

Originally, in Gan Eden, there was the *Eitz HaChaim* and the *Eitz HaDaas*. The *Eitz HaChaim* was meant to provide vitality (*chiyus*), while the *Eitz HaDaas* served to provide knowledge (*daas*). However, on a deeper note, our own heart can provide us with both of these abilities (that is, if it is truly coming from our heart).

There are two kinds of knowledge. There is information we acquire from outside ourselves, like when we learn a *sefer* or when we hear something from our teachers. But there is another kind of information which we learn from ourselves; it's a knowledge coming from within. The knowledge that comes from within ourselves will be much clearer and accurate to the extent that we have worked to purify our heart.

In *Shemoneh Esrei*, in the fourth blessing (*Attah Chonen*), we ask Hashem for *daas*. We are basically asking Hashem for life, because just as Hashem can bestow *daas* upon us, so is He the source of our life. When someone draws his vitality from the Creator, not only will he have true vitality, but he will have the true source of knowledge as well. The vitality of the Creator, so to speak, can garment itself in a person, as it is written, "*And He blew into his nostrils a breath of life*,"<sup>91</sup> and this means that Hashem blew of His own essence into a person, to provide him with life-sustaining energy.<sup>92</sup> Our whole life is being sustained entirely by the life-giving energy that Hashem provides us with.

We need to nurture all our *daas*/knowledge from an inner source of vitality – from the vitality of the Creator. "*For the source of life is with You, in Your light there appears light; for Hashem gives wisdom from His mouth, knowledge and understanding.*"<sup>93</sup> The source of all our *daas* can only come from Hashem.

When a person becomes intoxicated, his *daas* leaves him. This is the exact definition of being drunk – when a person's *daas* exits. What happens to a person when his *daas* has temporarily left him? If he is connected to the Source of all vitality – the Creator – then he is uplifted to that Higher Source. But if he is only connected to a lower source, he will descend to the abysses of that lower source.

There is a story told over of Apter Rov *zt"l*, that once he had to travel through a path that was known to be treacherous for its ice and snow. He traversed the path safely, without even falling or tripping once. The students asked him: "Teach us what miracle you performed." He answered, "When a person is attached to Heaven with a string, there is Someone above controlling the strings

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<sup>91</sup> *Beraishis* 2:7

<sup>92</sup> *Sefer Tanya*, chapter 2

<sup>93</sup> *Tehillim* 36:10

so that the person won't fall. If someone is attached by a string to the earth, then he will be pulled lower toward the earth, which will make him fall. I am attached with a string to Heaven, and that is why I don't fall."

In the same vein, when a person is intoxicated and his *daas* has left him, if he is connected to his Higher Source, then He will be prevented from having a fall. He has connected himself to the Source of all life. This is the intended kind of intoxication that *Chazal* wanted us to achieve, and it is holy; if a person can remain connected to his Higher Source even as his *daas* leaves him, such a person is eligible to fulfill the *mitzvah* of drinking on Purim. But if, *chas v'shalom*, a person isn't connected to his Higher Source, then as soon as his *daas* leaves him, he will have a great fall and lower himself.

Thus, the only thing that can protect a person throughout his life from falling from his level is *daas*. When a person is connected to Hashem, his inner essence will never leave him, even as his innermost depths are being released outward. The true "I" of a person that is deep within a person is always connected to its Heavenly source.

## 3.4 | The Wine of Purim

### *The First Simchah Was Between Adam and Chava In Gan Eden*

The month of Adar, as is well-known, contains the special power of *simcha* (happiness). The happiness already starts from the beginning of the month – “When Adar enters, we increase our happiness”<sup>94</sup> – and it continues until it reaches its climax, on Purim. The joy of Purim is described in many verses in Megillas Esther<sup>95</sup>: “*And the city of Shushan was joyous and glad*”; as well as in the verse, “*To the Jews, there was light, gladness, joy, and honor.*” There was “*happiness and gladness to the Jews, festivity and a day of celebration.*”

Let us delve into the root understanding behind the joy of Purim, so that we can arrive at true happiness in our souls, with the help of Hashem.

Where do we find the first mention of *simchah* in the Torah? Who was the first person to rejoice? When we bless the *chosson* and *kallah* during *Sheva Berachos*, one of the blessings is: “Rejoice, beloved friends, as your Creator gladdened you in Gan Eden of old.” We are blessing the *chosson* and *kallah* that just as Hashem rejoiced Adam and Chava in Gan Eden when they got married, so should they reach this level of *simchah*. The first *simchah* mentioned in the Torah was by Adam and Chava as they rejoiced in Gan Eden, and Hashem Himself, in all His honor and glory, was the One who gladdened them.

### *Different Expressions of Simchah*

The Sages<sup>96</sup> list ten different expressions of happiness: *sasson*, *simcha*, *gilah*, *rinah*, *ditzah*, *tzahalah*, *alizah*, *chedvah*, *tiferes*, and *alitzah*. Six of these are mentioned in the blessings we give to the *chosson* and *kallah*: *sasson*, *simcha*, *gilah*, *rinah*, *ditzah* and *chedvah*.

We have already explained at earlier about *sasson* (which is internal happiness) and *simcha* (joy upon completion). Now we will reflect on the other four expressions which we bless the *chosson* and *kallah* with: *gilah*, *rinah*, *ditzah*, and *chedvah*. The words *rinah* and *ditzah* contain the letters *yud* and *hey*, which spells a name of Hashem, while the word *chedvah* has the letters *vuv* and *hey*.

What is the difference between the different expressions of *simchah*?

The word for “man” is Hebrew is *ish*, while woman is *ishah*. The word *ish* contains the letter *yud* and *hey*, while the word *ishah* contains the letters *aleph*, *shin* and *hey*, which spells the words “*ais Hashem*”, the “fire of Hashem.” When man and woman are unified through marriage, the happiness of *gilah*, *rinah* and *ditzah* are created. The letter *yud* of *ish*/man and the letter *hey* of the *ishah*/woman

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<sup>94</sup> *Taanis* 29a

<sup>95</sup> *Esther* 8: 15-17.

<sup>96</sup> *Avos D'Rebbi Nosson* 34

come together and form these three kinds of happiness - *gilah*, *rinah*, and *ditzah*, which all contain both the letters *yud* and *hey*.

If we reflect in the words of *Megillas Esther*, we see that the joy of the Purim miracle was actually brought on by Haman's plan to annihilate the Jewish people. Haman was the descendant of Amalek – whom the Jewish people have endured much suffering from.

The Sages said that from the time Amalek attacked the Jewish people, the Name of Hashem is incomplete; the letters *yud* and *hey* have been split apart from the other two letters, *vov* and *hey*, in Hashem's Name – ever since Amalek attacked. The Name of Hashem will be incomplete until Amalek is erased.<sup>97</sup>

As long as Amalek exists, our *simchos* (happy celebrations) are not complete, although it appears that we are making *simchos*. Some *simchos* are like *chedvah*, and some *simchos* are like *gilah*, *rinah* and *ditzah* [but each of these is incomplete, for they each represent only half of Hashem's Name].

In order to see how *gilah*, *rinah* and *ditzah* differs from *chedvah*, we need to see the contrast between these different kinds of happiness.

### *Chedvah – Joy Based On Unifying With Others*

The word of “one” in Hebrew is *echad*. In Aramaic, one is “*chad*.” The letter *aleph* is taken away from the word *echad*, which spells the Aramaic word for one – “*chad*”. The first two letters of the word *chedvah* – the letters *ches* and *daled* – are related to the word *yachad*, “together”, which connotes unity. When we add on the last two letters of the word *chedvah* – the letters *vov* and *hey* – we have essentially unified the letters *vov* and *hey*.

*Chedvah* is thus a concept of unifying that which was used to be apart. It is thus fitting that *chedvah* should be one of the expressions of joy found in the blessing given to the *chosson* and *kallah*, because man and woman, who were previously separated, are now being united through marriage. *Chedvah* takes two separate parts and unifies them into one unit.

We also find by *chedvah* by Yisro, who rejoiced when he heard about all the miracles of the Jewish people, and he was thus drawn to the Torah; it is written, “*Vayichad Yisro*”<sup>98</sup>, “And Yisro rejoiced” – “*Vayichad*”, from the word “*chedvah*.”

This is the joy of *chedvah* – when one succeeds in unifying with something that used to be apart from him. Unity causes joy; there is thus joy between newlyweds, for the man and woman used to be apart, and now they have unified.

### *Gilah, Rinah and Ditzah – Joy Based On Unity Within*

But the other kinds of happiness – *gilah*, *rinah* and *ditzah* – are a different concept. These are kinds of joy that one attains when he connects to his own self.

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<sup>97</sup> *Rashi Shemos 17:16*

<sup>98</sup> *Shemos 18:9*

Most people are not always happy. Why? It because most of us are in a situation of “half a body” – we are split apart inside our own self, and this is due to our many doubts that plague us; our doubts give us no rest, and this makes us disconnected from our own inner self.

Our *sefarim hakedoshim* state, “There is no happiness like the clarification of doubts.”<sup>99</sup> When a person succeeds in removing his doubts, he attains somewhat of a connection to his inner self, and he feels a certain joyous satisfaction from this. This is called the joy of *gilah*, *rinah* and *ditzah*.

We have thus seen two kinds of happiness: joy upon connecting with others – such as marriage between man and woman – and the joy of connecting to oneself.

### *Joy From The Outside Is Superficial*

The joy of *chedva* is thus when we unify with something that was apart from us, while the joys of *gilah*, *rinah* and *ditzah* are when we attain unity within our own soul. Let us reflect: Is most of our happiness coming from within us, or is it coming from something outside of ourselves? Upon a little thinking, we will discover that most of our happiness is coming from externalities, such as: buying a new house, buying a new car, buying a new suit, getting married. Most of our *simcha* is coming to us when we “get” something from the outside.

For this reason, most of our happiness is not complete, because as long as our happiness is coming from something external, it is only temporary. The happiness we are often experiencing is often temporary; the things that are making us happy come and go.

How can we reach complete happiness? It can be reached if we succeed in unifying the parts of our soul together; this will cause us to have an inner joy, and it will lead us to attaining a complete kind of happiness. We will explain what this is.

Most of us have disparity in our soul, constantly filled with different contradicting desires. A person has many things he would like to do each day, and the day simply isn't long enough to fulfill all of these desires. He is left with no choice but to prioritize what he wants the most and give up pursuing some of his desires. We are all full of many *retzonos* (desires), and these *retzonos* are all contradicting each other! We are sensible people who possess *daas* (mature thinking) and therefore we are able to choose what our priorities are. But we are still left with many contradicting desires within us, and this prevents us from attaining any complete happiness.

### *“When Wine Enters, The Secret Come Out”*

If a person succeeds in attaining his inner happiness, he reveals a whole new depth to his soul, as we are about to explain. The words of the Sages are well-known: “When wine enters, the secret come out.”<sup>100</sup> Wine bears a connection with revealing our innermost secrets. It is also written, “*Wine gladdens the heart of man.*”<sup>101</sup> Wine bears a connection with happiness. Wine reveals our secrets, and

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<sup>99</sup> *Toras HaOlah*

<sup>100</sup> *Talmud Bavli Eruvin 65a*

<sup>101</sup> *Tehillim 104: 15*

this somehow brings out our happiness. What is the connection between our secrets and our happiness?

We first need to reflect on what this means. When the Sages said that wine reveals secrets, what kind of secrets were they referring to? Were they referring to a secret that our mother told us when we were children, which we never told anyone before, and then on Purim we get intoxicated and then reveal those secrets...? Any sensible person knows that such secrets have nothing to do with the wine of Purim. So what kind of secrets were *Chazal* talking about, that wine can come and reveal?

*Chazal* were telling us that wine reveals our innermost secrets. They were revealing to us that through wine, we can reveal our innermost secrets – the depths of our soul. What is a secret? If Reuven tells a secret to Shimon and he tells him not to tell anyone, even this isn't considered a total secret. Theoretically, Reuven can give permission to Shimon to reveal the secret, so the secret isn't considered to be a total secret. If someone is sitting in his house and daydreaming, nobody else knows what he is thinking. But is that called a secret? If it is, then the whole world is full of secrets...! So this can't either be the meaning of "secret."

What is a true kind of secret? A true secret is something that is concealed from a person. A secret is when a person isn't aware of himself, when he's not aware of what's going on deep down inside himself. This is a secret, because the person is living with himself all the time and he thinks that he knows himself, while he really doesn't know himself at all. *That's* a secret.

Is there any person who can say that he understands what is going on in the depths of his heart?! Anyone who thinks that he knows himself well is someone who really doesn't know himself at all! Anyone who has a little bit of self-awareness is well-aware that the soul is full of so much depth, layer within layer – and that more depth to our soul is being revealed with the more and more we live our life. Nobody can say that he really knows what's going on deep down inside himself.

"When wine enters, secrets come out" – it means that wine can reveal an additional depth to a person about his own soul, things that he was previously unaware of.

### *The Secret Which the Wine Reveals*

We can now reach a new understanding in this statement of *Chazal*, "When wine enters, the secret comes out." From where are the secrets coming out of from? A superficial understanding is that our secrets are coming out of our mouth; that when a person gets intoxicated, secrets come forth from his mouth. It's clear to all that this is not what *Chazal* mean. According to what we explained above, wine can get our consciousness to become aware of what's going on in our sub-conscious. Wine can serve to reveal our innermost depths of the soul – a depth which we had been previously been unaware of.

"When wine enters, the secret comes out." Our subconscious desires, which used to be a secret to us, can be revealed to us through the wine, and thus, the wine reveals our "secrets." When our soul becomes revealed to us, this causes us to have an inner happiness.

This is a kind of happiness which is totally different than the regular kind of happiness we are familiar with, which is when we get new things. It is a happiness that takes place internally – inside ourselves – and it is called the joy of *chedvah*: when our soul unifies with itself.

What takes place when our soul becomes unified within ourselves? Let us reflect about this.

When a person has doubts, these doubts are found within a certain layer of his soul. How can a person solve his doubts? The superficial way to solve doubts is to calmly weigh the options and then decide what to do. If a person can't decide alone, he'll ask someone else for advice.

But there is an inner method a person can use to solve his doubts, and that is when a person reveals a greater depth to his soul. The doubts are then removed automatically. This is the meaning behind how “Wine enters, secrets come out.” The whole reason why we could ever have a “doubt” is because a certain layer of our soul was hidden from us. Through drinking the wine on Purim, we can reveal a deeper layer in our soul which we previously were unaware of – and this removes the source of the doubt.

Understandably, this does not mean that wine creates new depth to our soul. The wine isn't creating anything in us. It is just that through drinking the wine, the resulting intoxication can make us become aware of the more hidden parts of our soul – and this in turn reveals to us new depth about ourselves.

As a simple example, let's say a person is beginning to learn Torah, and he's not sure about which area in Torah he should learn. He narrows it down to two options, but he can't decide. Later on in his life he can gain more understanding about himself, and then he will discover that one of the options isn't the path that is meant for his soul to take.

Another example: as long as a person doesn't know himself well – the nature of his personality – if he's looking for a certain job, he's not sure about what kind of job will work for him. When he gets to know himself better, the doubts become non-existent.

There is a huge difference between these two different solutions to our doubts. The first method is superficial, because when a person decides between two options, he's still bothered by the second option; it is just that he has decided to go with the first option. But with the deeper method – which is when a person discovers new depth to his soul, through attaining greater self-awareness – he has no doubt whatsoever. He sees clearly what the truth is, and he feels inner happiness at this. “There is no happiness like the clarification of doubts.”

### *The Conscious and the Sub-Conscious*

Now that we have explained that wine serves to reveal the innermost depths of the soul to a person, we need to understand: How does this work? How exactly does wine reveal to us what's going on in our soul?

As is well-known, we all have in us abilities that are revealed to us, and we also have abilities which we aren't yet aware of. In more modern language, we have in us a conscious and a sub-conscious. Our Rabbis knew about this before modern psychology discovered this. Reb Yisrael

Salanter described our consciousness as our revealed abilities (“*kochos giluyim*”), while our subconscious is described as our unrevealed abilities (“*kochos keihim*”). What is our subconscious – our unrevealed abilities? Reb Yisrael Salanter gave us an example which illustrates the concept. Once there was a *Rosh Yeshiva* who had a son and a student, and to his great pain, his son went astray from being religious. The student, however, remained powerfully connected to his beloved teacher, and was utterly loyal to him. As time went on, the father grew more attached in love with his student than with his son, while he grew more and more estranged from his son, to the point of hatred.

Then, in middle of the night, a fire suddenly broke out in the building where both his son and student slept. The father was woken up in middle of the night and was told that he can save one of them: either his beloved student - or his rebellious son, who has caused him so much grief. Which one of them will he save?

Reb Yisrael Salanter answered: He will instinctively run to save his *son!* All of his anger toward his son gets pushed aside, now that he has to choose between his son and his student. Now, if he would have had time to think about this, he would choose to save his student, who is more precious to him than his son. But when he gets woken up in the middle of the night and there is no time to think, he’s acting upon his subconscious. What’s going on in his subconscious? Deep down, he loves his son more than the student; it has just been pushed under all this time. When push comes to shove, the inner love for his son gets awakened, and it overpowers the love he has for his student.

Once a student of Rav Dessler *zt”l* came to him and told him that he had a nightmare: he had a dream in which he killed his son. He was terrified at the meaning of the dream and asked how was it possible that he could have such thoughts in his head, when he loved his son very much; did it mean that he really wanted to kill his son?! Rav Dessler told him, “Sometimes, you son cries at night and wakes you up at night. For a few seconds, you are so annoyed at him at waking you up, that you wish he wouldn’t exist. That is why you were able to have such a nightmare.”

Would the father ever consciously wish he could kill his son? *Chas v’shalom*; of course not. But in a dream, a person is shown what’s going on in his subconscious, and he is shown that he has such quickly passing thoughts.

How can a person discover what’s going on in his subconscious? It is written, “*On my bed at nights, I sought that which my soul loved.*”<sup>102</sup> If a person wants to find out what he truly desires deep down in his soul, it is revealed to him “on my bed at nights” – when he’s asleep and dreaming. Sometimes a person is shown his subconscious when he’s partially asleep, when he’s still a bit conscious; and sometimes he is shown his subconscious when he’s totally asleep, which is when he’s dreaming.

### *Bringing Our Subconscious Into Our Conscious*

It is now upon us to think about the following. If a person is having negative kinds of thoughts that are passing through him quickly throughout the day – subconsciously – what can he do about

this? Most people aren't bothered by these negative thoughts. When people get these strange thoughts, they quickly push them aside, and they do not try to figure out what factor triggered those thoughts.

But when a person wants to understand himself well, he is bothered by negative thoughts even if they pass by in his mind very quickly. He begins to learn about what his thoughts are<sup>103</sup>, and he realizes that his thoughts are showing him what's going on in his subconscious.

The solution is not to try and push aside the unwanted thoughts; to the contrary, let the thoughts stay, so you can see what's going in your subconscious [unless they are forbidden thoughts]. After this comes the next step: a person should not be focused on the actual thoughts themselves, but on the information that the thoughts are revealing.

If a person only tries to work on awareness of his thoughts, he will attempt to push aside his negative thoughts, and he won't be able to truly grow and better himself. He's running away from the root of the problem.

The problem is not his negative thoughts; the negative thoughts he's experiencing are merely branches of the problem. The root of the problem is the sub-conscious in him which hasn't yet been purified. So just dismissing the thoughts will not really be solving the problem at its root, but rather avoiding the problem.

The real solution is not to push aside the negative thoughts, but rather, to let them be. See what they are revealing.

This will be a double gain. First of all, one will be able to realize what his weaknesses are, and this will help him more become self-aware to fix them. Secondly, he will be able to notice his qualities which he was previously unaware of, and thus come to utilize his potential.

### *The Way to Recognize Your Subconscious Thoughts*

Our subconscious is contained in every one of our souls, but they aren't accessed simply through our mind. Like lightning the thoughts coming from our subconscious come to us in quick flashes. Lightning comes where it's dark and cloudy, and then it is gone in a flash; it's gone as quickly as it came. It's impossible to calculate the exact moment that lightning strikes.

This can give us some idea about the thoughts contained in our subconscious. These inner thoughts are called "birds that fly in the sky"; they pass quickly, flying away very fast, like birds. They pass in our head so quickly that often we are unaware of them at all. But the more a person elevates himself spiritually, the more he enters inward, the more he can become aware of his deeds, words and his thoughts.

The way to become aware of our thoughts is by listening within ourselves, which is a subtle kind of listening. When we notice the suddenly passing thoughts, we can then better recognize what's going on in our subconscious.

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<sup>103</sup> See the author's series *Getting To Know Your Thoughts*

Our subconscious cannot be reached through trying to think about it; we cannot reach our subconscious, which is hidden, through our conscious mind, which is revealed to us. This is like trying to water a plant from the top of the earth, without taking care of the roots underneath.

### *Revealing Our Subconscious – Through Getting Intoxicated On Purim*

There is another way to reveal our subconscious, and that is through drinking the wine on Purim and thereby becoming intoxicated [in the proper way, as we will soon explain]. The Hebrew words *shechor* (black) and *sheichar* (intoxicating beverage) have the same root letters; the only difference between them is that their letters *ches* and *chof* get switched around. This hints to us that the nighttime, which is blackness, reveals to us the same things which intoxication can reveal to us.

The Sages explain that *Achashveirosh* contains the letters of the word *shechor* (black), because he blackened the eyes of the Jewish people with his decrees. To counter his darkness which he brought upon the Jewish people, we intoxicate ourselves with the holy kind of darkness – the *sheichar*, the intoxicating beverages.

This is the purpose of getting intoxicated on Purim: by getting intoxicated, we are able to become aware of what's going on in the depths of our soul.

### *How Much Should We Drink On Purim?*

In the words of our holy Rabbis, there are differing opinions concerning how intoxicated one should become on Purim. The *halachah* is that “One is obligated to become intoxicated on Purim until he does not know the difference between Blessed is Mordechai and Cursed Is Haman”<sup>104</sup>; one of the Rabbis wrote that it was revealed to him in a dream that one has to get intoxicated only until that point, but not beyond that. In other words, one should drink on Purim more than he usually does (which is the view of the *Rema*<sup>105</sup>), but he should not get to the point in which he is so drunk that he doesn't know the difference between Mordechai and Haman.

There is a differing opinion of our Rabbis, which is to get drunk in the simple sense – that one should get so drunk to the point where he does not know the difference between Mordechai and Haman.

This is the argument, but for every argument of our Sages, there is always a rule that “Their words, and their words, are the words of the living G-d.”<sup>106</sup> Therefore, both opinions are correct; let us understand how they both can be true.

As is well-known, most people get to know themselves a lot better when they become intoxicated. The truth is that the whole intention of why we should get intoxicated on Purim is for this very reason: to reveal our inner essence - our pure soul. Since most people are not in touch with their

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104 *Talmud Bavli Megillah 7b, Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 695:1*

105 *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 695:2*

106 *Gittin 7b*

pure essence, we are commanded to intoxicate ourselves on Purim so that our inner purity can burst forth.

The more a person works to purify himself inwardly, the more his intoxication is coming from deep within. Of him, the mitzvah to become intoxicated on Purim is only until he does not know the difference between Mordechai and Haman, for the whole purpose is to reveal outward the beauty and purity of his soul hidden deep within him.

But if a person hasn't worked to purify himself internally, then when he gets intoxicated, much of the garbage that has piled up inside him throughout the year will come pouring out. We often see people on Purim who are rolling around in the street in their drunkenness, spewing forth all their inner emptiness. Of these kinds of people, getting drunk on Purim should only have been **until** *ad d'lo yoda*, but not beyond that point. They should have gotten drunk only **up until** the point of *ad d'lo yoda* and they should not have gone beyond that.

How can a person know if he should only get intoxicated until the point of *ad d'lo yoda*, but not beyond that – or if he is meant to go beyond *lo yoda*? The way to know this is hinted to in the concept we brought before: that *shechor*/blackness and *sheichar*/intoxication have the same root.

Most people, if they would be walking alone at night, in a forest, would be very scared. Darkness, *shechor*, is a power in Creation that causes us to have fear. Since *shechor* is reflected in *sheichar*/intoxication, this kind of person, when he gets intoxicated, will reveal the level he's really on if he were to walk alone through a forest at night...

There are a few exceptional individuals of whom it can be applied the possuk, "*To tell over in the morning of Your kindness, and of Your faith at nights.*"<sup>107</sup> When someone walks alone through a forest at night, and he still has *emunah* – he is the kind of person who can become completely intoxicated on Purim yet elevate himself through it. His intoxication will only serve to reveal forth his inner essence, which has become purified through *emunah* – for he completely trusts in Hashem.

Thus, becoming intoxicated reveals what's going in the depths of each person's soul. If someone has worked to purify his soul, getting intoxicated will revealed forth the beauty and holiness of his soul. Such a person reaches the intended purpose of *Chazal* when they enacted that we should become drunk on Purim.

Most people, however, do not reach the intended purpose of getting intoxicated on Purim. When they get drunk, the worst in them is brought out. Getting drunk thus causes most people to lower their self-image in the eyes of others. This resembles a person who places a big sign on himself that advertises all his worst shortcomings, and then he walks all over town with it.

Each person needs to figure out if it's worth it for him to get drunk on Purim. A person has to ask himself: "If I get drunk on Purim, will I behave in the way that *Chazal* intended me to?"

If a person knows himself well and he knows that he has worked more to purify himself internally during the year, then he is able to fulfill *ad d'lo yoda* on Purim. But if a person knows that he will

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<sup>107</sup> *Tehillim* 92:3

come to improper behavior when he gets to the point of *ad d'lo yoda*, then he must know that for him, getting on Purim totally defeats the purpose of Purim.

### *The Purpose of Getting Drunk On Purim*

Now that we have clarified who should be getting drunk on Purim, we can now explain what indeed we are trying to gain from getting drunk on Purim.

When a person has worked to purify himself internally, there is still more depth to himself that he doesn't know about. When he gets intoxicated, he can discover new depth in himself which he never knew about until now.

*Chazal* said that "When wine enters, the secret comes out."<sup>108</sup> To the degree that one has revealed his soul, greater secrets will be revealed from within, through the wine on Purim. Thus, to someone who has purified himself internally, getting intoxicated through the wine of Purim will bring him a kind of joy that is inner and G-dly. The wine of Purim, for such a person, acts to reveal his inner purity, which he was previously unaware of. The wine of Purim allows such a person to identify with greater and deeper spiritual attainments that he didn't reach until now. Of this we can apply the *posuk*, "*Wine gladdens the heart of man.*"<sup>109</sup> There is no greater happiness than this, and only an internal kind of person merits it.

When the wine on Purim serves to achieve this holy goal - revealing greater depths to the person about his pure soul - after Purim, the person will feel that he has been elevated spiritually. The ensuing inner happiness he will feel after Purim will burst out of him.

But most people have not worked to purify themselves inwardly. One might look like a very happy person on Purim to those who observe him, but this is only because wine temporarily puts a person in a good mood. We can see clearly that people start out happy on Purim when they're drunk, but then they become depressed; a sort of melancholy comes upon them from getting drunk. There are a lot of people on Purim who cry bitterly when they're drunk.

Where is this sadness coming from? It is really coming from the bitter truth that is being revealed to the person on Purim: he has not yet purified himself internally, and the wine reveals forth all of his deep sadness. He is terribly and profoundly sad deep down, and all of this comes out when he's drunk. He will become sad from this revelation, and so of course, he cries.

*Chazal* say, "One who sees a *sotah*<sup>110</sup> in her ruination should abstain himself from wine."<sup>111</sup> The deep explanation of this matter is that from the case of *sotah*, we can see how low a level a person can sink to when he's drunk [and to take a lesson from this, one should avoid getting drunk].

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108 *Talmud Bavli Eruvin 65a*

109 *Tehillim 104:15*

110 *Sotah* is a married woman who is convicted of having marital relations with another man; if she has been properly warned by her husband and she is found guilty by two witnesses, she is brought to the *Beis HaMikdash*, where she must either drink the "Bitter Waters", or confess her crime [whereupon she must get divorced]. If she drinks the water and she had been falsely accused, she is deemed innocent, and she merits blessing and long life. If she was indeed guilty, she dies from the water, in a most

## *Facing Our Fears*

According to the above, we can now understand well what the connection that getting drunk on Purim has with the Purim miracle.

When a person is going through a distressful time, how does he react? One kind of person will fall into despair and completely lose hope. As it is written in the Megillah, “*K’asher avadti, avadti*” – “*For I am surely lost.*”<sup>112</sup> But an internal kind of person, when he goes through a time of distress, uses it as an opportunity to summon forth inner strengths which he never knew about before.

If we ask anyone who persevered through an intensely troublesome time in their life: “Did you think you had the strength to survive such an ordeal, before you went through this?” they will often answer in the negative. They were unaware that they possessed such stamina to undergo the hardships they went through, but really, they had the strength all along. It was just hidden deep within. When a person goes through a *tzarah* (a time of distress), he is able to reveal forth his hidden strengths of his soul, which he never knew he possessed.

Every person should reflect and think about the following. If you would know for sure that in two weeks, a decree would go out in your country that all Jews should become annihilated – just as in the times of Haman, who decrees genocide upon the Jewish people – how would we react? Understandably, there would be people who would right away fall into despair, and their first reaction would be to flee to another country. Their reaction would resemble how the Jews in the desert wished to return to Egypt...

But an internal kind of person would face the fear in the right way. He would be able to summon forth new fortification from within himself that he was previously unaware of, and instead of having thoughts of running away from the danger, he would “run away” into a place in his own soul in which no one can harm him. Instead of falling into despair from the danger, he becomes elevated from the situation, revealing forth from within himself great spiritual stamina.

This was what the Jewish people revealed on Purim. Haman decreed that all Jews be annihilated, and *Achashveirosh*, who was the most powerful king in the world then, was ready to carry it out. According to nature, he should have succeeded. It was a situation of utter and palpable fear; each person felt it totally.

But they did not despair, in spite of their predicament. They escaped from the danger into an inner place in their souls, and revealed forth new depth to themselves. They had never known beforehand that they possessed such stamina. When the decree was nullified, they merited to receive the Torah in a whole new way.

## *The Essence of Our Avodah on Purim*

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*horrible fashion. The Sages say that one who observes this must become a Nazirite and abstain from wine. See Tractate Sotah of Talmud Bavli.*

*111 Talmud Bavli Berachos 63a*

*112 Esther 4:16, see Talmud Bavli Megillah 16a*

The big secret of Purim is that [through the desired effects of the wine of Purim, we are shown how] during the rest of the year, we really do have the strength to uncover new depth about our soul. Most of us do not face physical danger to our lives nowadays. (Of course, sometimes there are anti-Semitic events that take place in our times today which awakens us to feel what it felt like during the times of Haman's decrees.) On Purim, we are able to return to the inner depth of our souls, which was what the Jewish people revealed during the era of the Purim story. We must try on Purim to reach the level which the Jewish people attained on Purim.

When a person never matures in his spiritual situation, then even when he is seventy years old, he remains at the level he was like when he was seven. He continues to enjoy his childish antics even as he supposedly "matures" through life. Something that truly illustrates what we mean is the following example: We can find people who sincerely believe that Purim is about acting like a little child! Their entire Purim consists of costumes and decorative makeup, in a way most fitting for a child's playgroup.

But someone who has matured at least a bit about his life – and we do not mean just physically, but that his heart has become more developed to sensing the inwardness in reality – if he is someone who at least searches a little for the truth, he understands clearly that Purim is something deep and profound. He understands that Purim is about revealing new depth to our soul, to reveal from ourselves abilities that we never knew about beforehand.

Every *mitzvah* we have on Purim contains depth to it. There is depth to the *mitzvah* of *mishloach manos* [and *matanos l'evyonim*]. There is depth to our *mitzvah* of reading the *megillah*. There is depth to eating the meal of Purim. And there is depth to getting drunk on Purim – a great depth.

If a person wants to really know if he has grown spiritually from Purim, he should discern if he has revealed new depth to his soul as a result of drinking on Purim. He should ask himself: "Am I more self-aware now? Do I know things about myself now which I never knew about before? Or was just in another Purim that came and went, with nothing special about it...?"

One of the ways how we become more self-aware of our soul is through drinking on Purim. But as we cautioned before, getting drunk can backfire. If he is the kind of person who should not be getting drunk, then he will only exude negativity. Understandably, this is not the purpose of Purim.

If *Chazal* would have intended that people should get drunk on Purim in order to release all their negativity outward, then getting drunk on Purim would mean that we have to simply let loose, and then perhaps the person would have to write down how he behaved when he was drunk. But, we know clearly that *Chazal's* intention that we should get drunk on Purim was not so that should a person should release his negativity. It is about being more aware of the more inner layers in our soul. That is why *ad d'lo yoda* is only meant for one who has worked to purify and cleanse himself internally

*Higher Than The Subconscious: "Above" The Conscious*

Now that we have explained at length about our conscious (*kochos giluyim*/revealed abilities) and our sub-conscious (*kochos keihim*/hidden abilities) we can now explain another layer in our soul: the layer of the soul that is *above* our conscious. We will also explain how we reveal it on Purim.

Our conscious is what we are aware of, while our subconscious is the part of our self that we aren't aware of. We also are not aware of what lays *above* our conscious. This sounds like the same thing as our subconscious, but we will explain how they are different. What we also need to understand is, if the area above our conscious is clearly above our conscious thoughts, then how can we incorporate anything that's above our consciousness into how we act, since action is on a lower plane than thought?

There is a fundamental difference between the sub-conscious and the above-conscious. Our sub-conscious is the desires in us which we are unaware of. These are things we want, but we aren't aware that we want them; our deeper desires are hidden from us. By contrast, our above-conscious refers to the **higher will** that is implanted in us, which is leading us in how we act.

When we are aware of what we want, these desires are called our conscious. When we want something but we are unaware that we want it, this kind of desire is called a sub-conscious desire. Even if these sub-conscious desires are more powerful than our clearly revealed conscious desires, the deep desires are still considered to be only in our sub-conscious, since we are unaware of these deeper desires. But if we have deep desires which are actively affecting how we act in our life – and these are desires which we are unaware of – these desires are called our “above-conscious” desires.

The “above-conscious” desires are above a person, but they are desires that are actively affecting how a person acts, in spite of the fact that the person is unaware of these desires. We can compare this to a plane that is on auto-pilot. It seems to the onlooker as if the pilot sitting in the cockpit is the one who is controlling the plane, but the plane is really being controlled by a different person, who is sitting far away in a control station.

### *Bechirah vs. Emunah*

We will now sharpen the ramifications of this concept. Whenever a person does anything, two forces are active in his soul. One of them is called the power of *bechirah* (free will). The other force is called *emunah* (faith). When a person is acting upon his *bechirah*, his will to act is coming from within himself – whether he is aware of this consciously, or only subconsciously. By contrast, someone acting upon *emunah* is acting from above his conscious – he is being led by his *emunah*, which essentially means that he is being led by the Creator.

Our *bechirah* tells us that we are in charge, for we decide how we will act. We are either aware of this consciously or sub-consciously, but either way, when we use our *bechirah*, we think that we are in charge. By contrast, our above-conscious, our *emunah*, tells us that we are not in control, because there is a Higher Power in charge of us – the Creator.

The above-conscious is called so not just because we are unaware of it, but because it shows us that there are matters which are beyond our control that are guiding us; and their source is the Creator. So our sub-conscious and our above-conscious are the deep parts to our self which are

controlling us. Most of our *bechirah* is not being utilized through our conscious state, but through our sub-conscious. When we consciously use our *bechirah*, it is about getting something done, but when it comes to choosing what we want, this *bechirah* is taking place in our sub-conscious. The sub-conscious is the source which is writing our desires into action. Higher than our point of subconscious *bechirah* is our point of above-conscious. This is the higher power in a person which controls and directs a person's life, and it is being provided by the Creator.

### *Intoxication on Purim Can Reveal Our Emunah*

Now we can understand that the concept of “When wine enters, the secret comes out” is not just referring to how wine reveals our subconscious into our conscious. Rather, the main purpose of the wine is to reveal the deeper force in us than our subconscious: our point of *above*-consciousness.

In other words, revealing the subconscious is not yet the ultimate level that can be reached on Purim. If a person merits to uncover more depth to his soul, the secret that the wine will reveal forth from him will be his innermost desire of the soul, the deepest *ratzon* (will) of his being – the will to do Hashem's will.

This revelation that can take place does not just come as an additional piece of knowledge to the person, but as a soul experience. Let us explain this.

If anyone asked whom they believe is running the world, the answer is: “The Creator, Hashem.” But if someone is asked, “But is that how you feel?” then we will get different answers. Not everyone will answer in the affirmative.

The wine of Purim can help a person bring his knowledge about belief in the Creator to become an actual feeling. Through being intoxicated, the wine can transfer the above-conscious into our conscious state – through the means of our sub-conscious. A person will then be able to sense, in a palpable way, Only Hashem runs the world.

### *Megillas Esther: Revealing The Hidden*

As is well-known, “*Megillas Esther*” can mean “the revelation of the hidden” (the word “*Megillas*” is from the word *giluyl*/revelation, and *Esther* is from the word *hester*, concealed or hidden). *Megillas Esther* reveals the hidden – it revealed matters which had previously been hidden. The word *Megillah* seems to be the total opposite concept of the word *Esther*, because *Megillah* refers to the revealed, while *Esther* refers to the hidden. But *Megillas Esther* shows us that it's not a contradiction; it reveals what used to be hidden: that whatever was considered hidden until now has now become revealed.

It can be said, as a borrowed terminology, that every person contains in his soul a kind of “*Megillas Esther*.” The hidden parts to our self are our sub-conscious and our above-conscious, and *Megillas Esther* represents our ability to reveal the realm of the sub-conscious and the above-conscious into the realm of our consciousness. Our *bechirah*, which is present in our sub-conscious, is hidden from us; and our *emunah*, which is present above our conscious, is also hidden from us. *Megillas Esther* can show us how we can reveal these hidden parts of our self and bring them into our conscious awareness.

As we go throughout the day living our life, we are experiencing life through our conscious awareness, while we experience our subconscious only sometimes. Most people are not experiencing their above-conscious – their *emunah*. Even though most people will say that they believe in Hashem and that He's running everything, there are very few people who are living and experiencing their *emunah*.

*Megillas Esther* is the *megillah*, the revelation, of the hidden. It shows us the hidden parts to our soul – our subconscious and our above-conscious. In the words of our Rabbis, the *Megillas Esther* can reveal to us our subconscious *bechirah*, and it can also reveal to us our *emunah* – our higher will, which is deep down guiding us.

### *The Meaning Behind Mishloach Manos*

Another *mitzvah* that *Chazal* instituted on Purim is *mishloach manos*, to send gifts of food to our friends. What does sending gifts to our friends have to do with the miracle of Purim, which is that we were saved from genocide?

As is well-known, the purpose of the *mitzvah* of *mishloach manos* is to increase love and friendship between our fellow Jews. Simply, we understand that this is accomplished in the best way by finding someone who we don't like, and by giving him *mishloach manos*, and we hope that our enemy will open up the door for us when we show up at his house.

But the depth behind the *mitzvah* is that since our inner essence can become revealed on Purim, our inner love for other Jews will hopefully come with this – and that is why we are commanded to give *mishloach manos* on Purim.

*Mishloach Manos* must be sent from “man to his friend,” as the *Megillah* states, which implies that if you think there's someone who you didn't think was your friend yesterday, he's really your friend. This is what Purim reveals – our inherent love with each other. *Mishloach Manos* is not just about giving to our friends; the main point of it is to give to those whom we aren't friendly with, and to discover that they, too, are our friends. Through Purim, we can discover our subconscious which tells us that we have *bechirah* and choose if we will hate others or not. Therefore, if we hate any Jew, it's only because we are *choosing* to, and it's the wrong decision to choose.

If we reach even deeper into ourselves on Purim, we reach our above-conscious, which is deeper than the sub-conscious. Our above-conscious reveals to us a deeper understanding than what we discover in our sub-conscious: that even if someone has hurt you in the past, it's not him who hurt you. He was only a messenger of Hashem, because ultimately, it is Hashem who is in charge. If someone was supposed to get insulted and hurt by someone else, this was decreed on him by Hashem. When someone realizes this, his hatred toward his abuser will melt and eventually disappear.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> For more on how one can work on this perspective of *emunah*, see *Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh*, Part 3, Section VI: *Emunah/Faith*.

This is the meaning of *mishloach manos*, gift-baskets that a “man sends to his friend.” Purim serves to reveal to a person a whole new inner depth, and upon reaching that deep perception, a person can send *mishloach manos* to others.

### *Purim Is Holier Than Yom Kippur*

Understanding this, we can now come to appreciate the great spiritual benefit of the day of Purim. The *sefarim hakedoshim* explain that Purim is a holier day than even Yom Kippur, because the word “*Yom Kippur*” implies that it is a day “like” Purim, meaning that Yom Kippur is almost as holy as Purim, because Purim is even holier than Yom Kippur.<sup>114</sup>

What is the connection between Yom Kippur and Purim? They are both special opportunities to attain unity with other Jews. Our sins are not for atoned for on Yom Kippur unless he has been forgiven from any wrongdoing he did to others.<sup>115</sup>

But why is Purim even holier than Yom Kippur? Purim is an opportunity to gain even an even higher degree of unity than the good terms with others that we must have on Yom Kippur. When we ask forgiveness from others, even if we are forgiven, there are still some hard feelings. The person who was hurt still feels that he was hurt, just that he has forgiven the one who hurt him. But on Purim, the message of *Mishloach Manos* reveals to us a greater sense of bonding with others: that we are able to feel that no one did any harm to us at all. From that understanding, we strive to give *Mishloach Manos*.

Thus, the mitzvah of reading the Megillas Esther hints to us that on Purim, we can reveal the hidden. The mitzvah of *Mishloach Manos* and the mitzvah of *ad d'lo yoda*, as we explained, are also about revealing the hidden depth in ourselves.

### *Pre-Packaged Mishloach Manos*

Something that has become popular in our times is that people go to the store and buy pre-packaged *Mishloach Manos*; some of them are more expensive than others. For someone's close friends, he buys them an expensive package, and for those who he's not as close with, he buys a cheaper one. There is already a greeting written on the *Mishloach Manos* that comes with the package, and the buyer simply fills in the name and address of where it has to go to, and whom it's from. It is then sent through a delivery man! (What they haven't figured out yet is how to get the deliverer to give it with his heart to the recipient...). In this way, people think that they have fulfilled the mitzvah of *Mishloach Manos* in the most beautiful fashion.

Any sensible person understands that this is not the intended kind of *Mishloach Manos*. When we give *Mishloach Manos* to others, it has to come from an inner place in ourselves, and not in the usual way that we give gifts to our friends during the rest of the year.

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114 *Tikkunei HaZohar* 57b

115 *Yoma* 85b

Every person should ask himself: “What is motivating me to give *Mishloach Manos*?” Of course, the main reason we are giving is because *Chazal* commanded us to. But if we perform this *mitzvah* mechanically and not from an inner place in ourselves, it’s like “a body without a soul”. The soul of *Mishloach Manos* is that we need to use it as a tool to reveal a sense of inner unity with other Jews.

If we reflect on what we said before, we can see that Purim is totally different than all other auspicious times of the year. Each Yom Tov serves to reveal a special power of our soul. Purim is not like any other Yom Tov; Purim reveals the very root of our soul, a point that is way above our conscious state.

### *Revealing The Inner Essence of Purim*

What is the root of Purim’s essence? Why indeed is Purim such a special time? It is because the Purim miracle that took place during the times of Mordechai and Esther occurred only due to their *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice). The main *mesirus nefesh* was exercised by Queen Esther.

Besides the fact that a Jew gets eternally rewarded for his *mesirus nefesh* in the Next World, there is much more that he gains. Through *mesirus nefesh* for Hashem, a person reveals the depth of his soul – his true, inner self.

It is said in the name of the *Arizal* that the *tzaddikim* throughout the generations who were killed *al kiddush Hashem* (in sanctification of Hashem’s Name) did not actually experience any pain when they were being killed! This applies as well to Rabbi Akiva, who was killed by the Roman with iron combs; because he died *al kiddush Hashem*, **he did not feel pain at all, even as he was being killed**. How could such a thing be?? How could they not have felt pain? It is because when a person reaches *mesirus nefesh*, he reaches the inner essence of his soul, and his soul has an entirely different perspective on things. The soul of a person is able to view this situation with such loftiness that the person experiences no physical pain whatsoever.

The *mesirus nefesh* which Mordechai and Esther had enabled them to reach the depth of their own souls. This power is available as well as an accessible spiritual light that shines on every Purim. When a person merits access this spiritual opportunity of Purim, he merits as well to reach the deep revelation his own soul.

### *When One Cannot Differentiate Between Mordechai and Haman*

Concerning our *mitzvah* to become intoxicated on Purim through wine, *Chazal* said: “One is obligated to become intoxicated on Purim *ad d’lo yoda bein arur Haman l’baruch Mordechai* (until he does not know the difference between ‘Cursed is Haman’ and ‘Blessed is Mordechai’).<sup>116</sup> How does a person reach such a level, in which he does not know the difference between how Haman is cursed and Mordechai is blessed? The simple understanding is that a person has to become so drunk that he is totally confused, and then he can’t tell the difference between Mordechai and Haman. But what still needs to be understood is: Why do *Chazal* want a person to become so drunk?

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116 *Megillah 7b*

As is well-known, the words “*Arur Haman*” and “*Baruch Mordechai*” have the same *gematria* (numerical value in Hebrew); they both equal to be 502. This shows us that when a person becomes so intoxicated that he reaches the innermost point of his soul – **the** place in himself where he feels complete *emunah* in the Creator – he can then reach the understanding that just as Mordechai helped the generation see how everything is in the hands of Hashem, so did *Haman* also serve to accomplish this!

This is the depth to the statement of *Chazal*, “The removal of the ring of *Achashveirosh* [to allow Haman’s decree] was greater than all the [accomplishments] of all 48 prophets and 7 prophetesses who prophesized for the Jewish people. All of the prophecies did not cause them to repent, while *Achashveirosh* caused them to repent.”<sup>117</sup>

Of course, this does not mean to imply that the wickedness of Haman is to be equated with the pure goodness of Mordechai. Haman was able to move us to do *teshuvah*, even more than our leaders and *tzaddikim* tried to do. (Our enemy Pharaoh is praised in a similar way.)<sup>118</sup>

When a person understands simply that Mordechai and Haman are different, because Haman is cursed and Mordechai is blessed, then it shows that he’s only in his conscious state. When a person becomes intoxicated and he reaches *lo yoda bein Arur Haman L’Baruch Mordechai*, he has reached his subconscious. He realizes that Hashem is in charge of everything, and therefore he is able to realize how even Haman’s decree of genocide was constructive for the Jewish people. Ultimately, the decree is what moved us to *teshuvah* and thus be saved.

### *Balancing Effort With Emunah*

*Chazal* state that when Haman argued with *Achashveirosh* to issue the decree against the Jewish people, Hashem swore and said: “Because of you, two days of celebration will come to the Jewish people.”<sup>119</sup> What is the depth behind this matter that Purim came to us in Haman’s ‘merit’?

On Pesach, we drink four cups of wine; there is a specific amount of how much we drink. But on Purim, there is no set amount to drink – the amount is *ad d’lo yoda*. We drink more on Purim than in any other time of the year. The purpose of drinking on Purim, as we said, is to reveal our **above**-consciousness. If we go over to a person when he’s completely drunk – he’s above his consciousness – and we ask him if he is grateful to Haman, he might answer “Yes”. (Now, if he would say that he is grateful to Haman when he’s not drunk and he’s totally conscious, *then* we would assume he is drunk...)

So although we can reach very high levels through getting intoxicated on Purim, reaching our *emunah* in Hashem, still, we cannot live on this plateau during the rest of the year. If someone tries to live on this level all the time, he will become disillusioned, thinking that it is wrong to go to work for a living. He won’t be able to lead his life properly.

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<sup>117</sup> *Talmud Bavli Megillah 14a*

<sup>118</sup> *Shemos Rabbah 21*

<sup>119</sup> *Yalkut Shimeoni Esther 1054*

The point of the above-consciousness must only be accessed at times, and one cannot live in it all the time. It is like our general *avodah* of *rotzoh v'shov* (“running and returning” in our spirituality); our inner and external worlds need to always be integrated. When we use our inner world, we have the perspective of *emunah*, which shows us that Hashem is running everything; and from the viewpoint of external reality, we choose how we will act and we take responsibility. We are aware of ourselves and we worry for ourselves.

We need to balance these two views – the viewpoint of our inner reality, *emunah*, and the viewpoint from our external reality, our various efforts, choices, and responsibilities that we have. The balance between these two viewpoints is a very subtle thing to accomplish. We have to keep balancing between two opposing viewpoints – our *emunah*, and our *hishtadlus*/efforts.

Understandably, it is impossible to say how exactly we balance our life with both *emunah* and *hishtadlus*. Balance requires inner understanding from our part. There are some people who take *emunah* to an extreme, and they don't make *hishtadlus* enough. Others are too drawn after *hishtadlus* and they are seriously lacking in their *emunah*. Both of these people are imbalanced. We all need to be balanced. There are certain times in which we need to use *emunah*, and there are times in which we need to focus on *hishtadlus*, and it also depends on each person's unique situation.

### *Summary of Our Goal on Purim*

To make these matters practical, we will now provide a brief summary of what we've explained. The purpose of Purim is to reveal clearly our consciousness, our sub-conscious, and our above-conscious. To be clearer, on Purim we can become aware of how we want to act, as well as what we really want deep down – and ultimately, of Who is leading us [the Creator].

If a person reveals these aspects in himself over Purim, besides for the external joy of *chedvah* that he reaches, he also merits to express the inner joys known as *gilah*, *rinah* and *ditzah*.

In order to reach true *Simchas Purim*, it is not enough to have superficial joy. We need to reveal inner happiness in ourselves, the happiness which was there along – just that we never about it before.

After Purim, if a person feels that he now knows himself better than how he did before Purim, then he has truly merited the “*days of celebrations, joy and festivity*” of Purim. If he did not merit this, then his Purim has gone by like any other regular day of the year.

May Hashem merit all of us to rejoice together with true and complete happiness; that our consciousness (revealed aspects of our self) subconscious (hidden aspects of our self), and above-consciousness (our inner *emunah*) should all be perfected. And then, all of the Jewish people will merit to rejoice, together, with a complete heart.

## 3.5 | "Ad D'Lo Yoda" – Going Beyond Your Da'as

### *Two Kinds of Perception – "Knowing" and "Not Knowing"*

There are five levels of understanding. First, we will say what they are briefly, and then we will try to explain them. This is the order: *lo yeda* (to not know), *yeda* (to know), *yeda* (to know in a deeper way), *lo yeda* (to once again not know), and *yeda* (to completely know).

1. First, a person lacks the knowledge about something. This is called *lo yeda* (to not know).
2. Then, he knows about something on a basic level. This is called *yeda* (to know).
3. After this, a person reaches a higher kind of understanding, and this is a higher kind of *yeda*.
4. After this, a person is able to reach an even higher kind of understanding, in which he feels that he doesn't know anything, because he realizes that there is so much he doesn't know. This is called the higher kind of *lo yeda*.
5. Finally, a person comes to the ultimate level of knowledge, which is the uppermost level of *yeda*.

#### 1.

At first, a person starts out in life not knowing anything. This is simply *lo yeda* – he doesn't know a thing. A person's perception at this level resembles a drunken person, who has temporarily lost his mind; or a retarded person, who does not have an able thinking mind. Or, he might also resemble a child, who has an immature level of understanding.

#### 2.

A person then develops and gains *daas*, understanding. This is the first, basic kind of "*yeda*." It is a person's simple *daas*, and the Sages say (Sukkah 42b) that even a child can reach this kind of *daas*. A child can reach this *daas* once he is able to tell the difference between certain objects. Pharaoh wanted to see if Moshe was a smart child, by placing a plate of gold and a plate of fire in front of him, to see which one he would choose. That is also an example of the basic *daas* which even a child can get.

This basic level of *daas* is what accompanies a person throughout his life. This basic kind of *daas* is needed for any human being to survive, Jew and non-Jew alike. A person has to be a *bar daas*.

#### 3.

A person is able to reach a higher kind of understanding, a higher *daas*. This is also called *daas d'kedushah* – holy understanding. Such *daas* is used when a person differentiates between what is materialistic, and what is spiritual. There are two stages in this kind of *daas*.

The first part is called *havdalah*, differentiating information. The second stage is called *chibbur*, connecting information together. In the initial stage, a person can use his *daas* to differentiate simply between materialism and spirituality, as we said above. After that comes a second stage: connecting to the spirituality that one finds.

A person can discover that not all spirituality is the same, and there are differing spiritual concepts. We need to know and recognize the different spiritual concepts that exist, and then, we need to know which concepts to connect to, because there is a time and place for everything.

Such *daas* is exercised by those who serve Hashem, who have a very structured daily schedule. Those who truly serve Hashem realize that there are three main pillars in serving Hashem – Torah, *Tefillah*, and *Chessed* – and that there is a time of the day for Torah, a time of the day for *Tefillah*, and a time for *Chessed*. They know how to use their *daas* and see how much time is necessary to spend on learning Torah, for *davening*, and for bestowing good upon others; as well as to discern what to learn in Torah, what to *daven* about, and what kind of *chessed* to do.

#### 4.

Higher than this kind of *daas* is *lo yeda*, which means to “not know” – in other words, a kind of knowledge that is above the regular kind of knowledge. This level, *lo yeda*, is revealed especially on Purim. *Chazal*<sup>120</sup> state that on Purim, one has to get intoxicated until he reaches “*lo yeda*” – until he cannot tell the difference between “Cursed is Haman” and “Blessed is Mordechai.” This does not mean that one should simply become like a drunken person who has lost his *daas*; that would just be returning to the immature level of understanding, which is the first stage of *lo yeda*. Rather, on Purim, *Chazal* revealed that we have to elevate ourselves to a higher kind of *lo yeda* – a kind of understanding that is above even our mature kind of *daas*.

What is the higher kind of *lo yeda*? We will explain this.

The Baal Shem Tov established a great fundamental: everything, in essence, is G-dliness. It only appears to us superficially that there isn't G-dliness in something; but in essence, the inner layer of anything is G-dliness. Therefore, everything contains G-dliness – whether it is good, or whether it is *evil*.

If there is G-dliness contained somehow in everything, even evil, if so, what is “good” and “evil”, if nothing is really evil?!

The answer to this is that what we call “good” is anything in which the good in it has become revealed out in the open, and that you can tell clearly that it's good, even just by examining its superficial layer. (And the more that the good is revealed in something, the more it gains holiness; this is a separate discussion, and let this brief explanation suffice for now, as it is a vast topic). By contrast, we call something “evil” when its external aspect is concealing the G-dliness within it.

Thus, we only see “evil” when we look at the external layer of something. When we look at the inner layer of something, its essence, then all we will see is good – total and complete G-dliness.

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<sup>120</sup> *Megillah 7b*

## 5.

This is the secret behind our avodah on Purim. The avodah of the day of Purim is to realize that we shouldn't look at the superficial, external layer of something, and that instead we should see the inner layer of something and connect to it. The inner layer of everything is totally G-dly, and that is what we need to see.

Let's take, for example, Haman and Amalek – what we would consider classic evil. The root of Haman is good, and the root of Amalek is good!

On Purim, our inner mission is to arrive at our innermost depths. If a person merits on Purim to uncover this very deep perspective – which is the awesome spiritual light that is available to acquire on this holy day – then even after Purim ends, the inner perspective has been imprinted onto his soul. It is a perspective which goes straight to the root of all roots in Creation. Throughout the rest of the year, a person will then be able to see how everything is good at its root, and he will not just see “evil” in something he thinks is evil. He will be able to tell that something evil only appears to be evil on its outside, but on the inside, it too is good.

This was essentially the level that Rabbi Akiva reached, when he saw the site of the destruction.<sup>121</sup> He laughed, because even though he saw the destruction, he was aware that in essence, even the destruction contained good.

## 6.

If a person merits well to absorb this perspective in his soul, there will be a total overhaul in his whole life. He will transform into a person who lives inwardly, in G-dliness – and not someone who just lives superficially. This internal shift in his soul will change his whole view on life – as well as in the way he learns Torah.

Although a person even at this understanding will still feel that there are things that are evil, he will be able to realize that evil only appears on the outer layer of something, because the inner essence of something is always good, and that it is complete G-dliness.

On Purim, the Jews accepted the Torah again, willingly.<sup>122</sup> The depth behind this is that the generation reached the innermost understanding of Torah. When the nation stood at Har Sinai, we were forced to accept the Torah. We were afraid of being buried under the mountain, so our acceptance of the Torah did not show that deep down we loved the Torah. But on Purim, we accepted the Torah out of love this time, because the nation came to love Hashem out of the miracles He performed for us.<sup>123</sup> It was revealed then a new acceptance of Torah – an acceptance of love; to unify with the Torah. Since they accepted the Torah now in this way, they reached an inner understanding of Torah – and they then perceived the total G-dliness that is found in everything.

## 7.

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<sup>121</sup> *Makkos 24b*

<sup>122</sup> *Shabbos 88a*

<sup>123</sup> *Rashi, ibid.*

On Purim, everything got turned upside down – “*V'nahafoch hu*”. Our enemy was plotting to destroy us, and the day that we would have been massacred ending up becoming a day of salvation, in which we all rejoiced.

What is the depth behind the matter of “*V'nahafoch hu*”?

Everything in Creation consists of two layers to it: an outer layer, and an inner layer. The outer layer in Creation is the nations of the world, while the Jewish nation is at the inner layer of Creation. “Hashem, the Torah, and the Jewish people are one.” In other words: it is exclusively the Jewish nation which is capable of revealing G-dliness in everything. By contrast, the other nations of the world cannot reveal the inner, G-dly essence of things. Although they are good too at their root – because everything is rooted in good – they do not even reveal the goodness.

At the time of Purim, the enemies of the Jewish people were seeking to massacre us. What was their real intention? They didn't just want to kill our physical existence. They wanted to destroy the Jewish people because the Jewish people represent the inner layer of Creation, which is G-dliness. They wanted to destroy G-dliness, and instead leave everything at its external shell, in which there is no revelation of G-dliness. Trying to destroy the Jewish people was thus their way of trying to destroy the inner layer of Creation: the G-dliness inherent in everything.

And what did Hashem do? He turned everything around. The Jews ended up defeating their enemies – in other words, not only do the Jewish people serve to reveal the inner layer of everything, but even their enemies can reveal the inner layer, because when the enemies of the Jews are defeated, their very failure served to reveal how even evil can be good, because it brought the Jewish people's inner power of revealing G-dliness to the fore.

## 8.

After the higher kind of *lo yeda* comes the highest kind of understanding: *yeda*.

This final level of knowledge is that after a person reaches the perspective of *lo yeda*, in which he has seen how there is G-dliness at the root of everything, he connects totally to Hashem. Upon meriting this utter connection of ultimate *d'veykus*, the person receives a whole new *daas*. It is a *daas* that comes from the Creator. It is a *daas* of total G-dliness, which cannot be understood through human comprehension.

## 9.

This highest level was found by Betzalel, who was able to figure out how to make the Mishkan without having been told to make it. He was called Betzalel, which comes from the words “*B'tzail keil hayisa*” – “You are in the shadow of G-d.”<sup>124</sup> In other words, because he was so close to Hashem, he merited to receive *daas* from the Creator, and therefore he knew what to do in making the Mishkan.

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<sup>124</sup> See Rashi to Shemos 37:22

Of Betzalel, it is written that he possessed *chochmah*, *binah* and *daas*. The understandings of *chochmah* and *binah* are the third level of *daas* we described, which is called *daas d'kedushah*. This is within the bounds of human comprehension. Betzalel reached a higher kind of comprehension, the higher kind of *yeda/daas*, the *daas* that comes directly from the Creator, out of his great closeness to Hashem.

10.

The Ramchal, in *sefer Derech Hashem* (III:3) describes this as *ruach hakodesh*.

11.

If we wish to have any inkling of understanding about this kind of *daas*, we will quote a letter written by the *Sfas Emes*<sup>125</sup> (which is really describing a lower kind of *daas*, but it still a higher kind of *daas* than the regular kind of *daas* we are used to):

“There is a higher kind of understanding that exists, which is not the external kind of understanding that we identify with simply. It is a kind of knowledge that is connected to the person, and it is no less powerful of an awareness to a person than the awareness of protecting one’s life – which, although a person doesn’t think about this all the time, it is also something that one never forgets, because it is a subconscious knowledge that has become attached to his very essence.”

There is an even higher level than what the *Sfas Emes* is describing, and that is when the awareness is coming from one’s very essence (which is deeper than when the awareness becomes connected and absorbed internally in the person).

Meaning, it’s not just that this awareness has become internalized into my being – it is even more than that: just like the awareness that I exist is not some other knowledge, but a whole different kind of knowledge – an awareness that comes from my very existence – so can I be aware of certain truths, with the same conviction.

Understand this point well.

A Jew has to aspire throughout his life to reach this kind of understanding, and he must strive to reach it especially on Purim. At first a person should strive to reach *lo yeda*<sup>126</sup>, and then he should strive to reach the higher *yeda*.

12.

What we have been describing here is the path towards fixing the primal sin of Creation – the sin of Adam. At first, Adam was in Gan Eden, and he had the highest kind of attachment with Hashem – the highest kind of *yeda/daas*. After the sin, man fell from this exalted kind of *daas*, to the level of

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<sup>125</sup> *Sfas Emes, Avos p.56*

<sup>126</sup> *As explained before, the higher lo yeda is to realize that everything is good in its essence, even evil. The higher yeda, which comes after the higher lo yeda, is to be aware of Hashem’s goodness not just as another fact of life, but in the same way that one realizes that he exists.*

### III Purim Talks

intermediate kind of *daas*, which is *daas d'kedushah*. Chazal describe this demotion to our *daas* as “Yesterday (before sin), there was my *daas* (the *daas* of Hashem), and today (after the sin), I have the *daas* of the Serpent.”

Now that we are after the sin, our natural *daas* is the *daas* we gained from the evil *eitz hadaas*. In addition to what we lost after Adam’s sin, the generations have fallen to an even lower kind of *daas*, which is a mundane kind of understanding; and after that, the generations fell into the lowest level, which is the first kind of *lo yeda*, in which there is basically no *daas* at all.

If we want to return to the way things were supposed to be – to the *daas* we had from the *Eitz HaChaim* (the Tree of Life), which was actually the true “*daas* of the Creator”<sup>127</sup> – then we need to come out of the *Eitz HaDaas* (Tree of Knowledge). In order to exit the *Eitz HaDaas*, which is the initial level that we all start out with, we need to enter “*lo yeda*”. After reaching “*lo yeda*”, we can then advance to the highest *daas*, which is to gain the *daas* of the Creator.

#### 13.

Let us explain this matter more.

The *Eitz HaChaim* contained the true *daas* of the Creator, and it is the *daas* of our holy *neshamah* (soul). Man is currently at the level of the *Eitz HaDaas*, the lower kind of understanding – even since Adam ate from it. If a person attempts to gain the *daas* of the Creator while he is still at the level of *Eitz HaDaas*, this is impossible, because he will not be able to contain such spiritual illumination. He only has human understanding, which cannot comprehend the higher *daas*. Therefore, it is impossible for a person to use his regular kind of comprehension to try to understand what higher *daas* is.

This is the meaning of the “fiery, churning sword” that Hashem placed at the entrance of Gan Eden, after He drove out Adam and Chavah. It was to show that we cannot receive the higher *daas* using our human comprehension, which is really the lower *daas* – the knowledge that entered us after the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas*. The “fiery, churning sword” alludes to how we will only get confused if we attempt to gain higher *daas* while we are still at the lower understanding, just like something that churns takes things and turns them over and over, mixing everything up.

It’s actually a very good thing that Hashem placed the “fiery, churning sword” to guard the higher *daas*. If not for this, people would think that they understand perspectives from the higher *daas* by using their regular comprehension, and in reality, they wouldn’t be understanding anything. They would only be fooling themselves. It would be a degrading to the great spiritual light as a person attempts to lower it to his human understanding.

However, at the same time, it shows us how our lower understanding of the *Eitz HaDaas* can become fixed. How? When a person tries to understand things, he realizes that he doesn’t really understand, and that he’s very mixed up. The “fiery, churning sword” which guards the *Eitz HaDaas* in Gan Eden is stopping him from knowing what the knowledge of the *Eitz HaDaas* is, and it

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127 Talmud Bavli Eruvin 65a

confuses the person as the person attempts to understand it. This itself makes a person realize that his *daas* is not the true *daas* – and through that, he is able to actually come to “*lo yeda*”. He realizes that he does not know anything; “*lo yeda*.”

Thus, one of the ways how we can fix our impaired *daas* which we received from the *Eitz HaDaas* is by learning about things that are way above our comprehension, and by realizing that we do not understand these things, our soul will realize that it does not have true *daas*. What will then happen? Our soul will lose value for the current *daas* we have, because it has now become aware that our current comprehension is not yet the true comprehension.

(A person must be very careful with this, however, that he should not make the mistake of thinking that he indeed understands the perspective of *lo yeda*; he must be aware always that he does not understand anything. If he doesn't have this mindset, he will only fall lower, *chas v'shalom*.)

This is actually the secret behind why on Purim, “one is obligated to become intoxicated until he does not know (“*ad d'lo yoda*”) the difference between “Cursed Is Haman” and “Blessed Is Haman”. The *halachah* is that one has to become drunk on Purim specifically with wine, because wine reveals the secrets – the secrets of Torah. Through learning the secrets of Torah – matters that are really above our human comprehension – we can realize that we indeed do not understand it, and then we will be able to humble ourselves before the Creator and nullify our understanding. That is precisely what will bring a person to “*lo yeda*.”

#### 14.

The climax of *lo yeda* is reached when a person comes to the level of that “*no man knows of his burial (Moshe's) until today*.” Let us explain this.

There are two perspectives of understanding that a person has: the understanding from our *neshamah*/soul, and the understanding of our *seichell*/intellect, which is our physical human comprehension, present in our body.

Our *neshamah*'s understanding has the higher perspective of *lo yeda*. Our *neshamah*'s understanding is not regular human comprehension, so it cannot be comprehended with our intellect. Therefore, it is only our *neshamah* which can gain the *daas* of the Creator.

Our *avodah* is to nullify our regular intellectual understanding (by realizing that we indeed do not comprehend anything). When we do this, our intellect itself will then be able to gain the perspective of *lo yeda*, and our *neshamah* will shine its understanding upon our *seichell*/intellect.

(This is the secret behind *ruach hakodesh*. There is an even deeper understanding than this, and that is the ultimate kind of *lo yeda*: when our *neshamah* reaches an even higher understanding, in which it becomes aware that even a *neshamah* does not truly comprehend the Creator, because Hashem is really endless. It will suffice just to mention this briefly, and we will not delve into this subject).

If a person merits to reach *lo yeda*, there is still a higher level to reach, and that is to get even his very physical body to sense the understanding of *lo yeda*. It is written (Tehillim 35:10), “*All my bones*

*will speak of this.*” The *possuk* is hinting to us that there is a level in which even our very body is aware of Hashem.

The only person to ever reach this was Moshe Rabbeinu, as he was leaving his body; his body became so sanctified that it reached the level of *lo yeda*. Since his physical body had reached *lo yeda*, for this reason, “*no man knows of his burial*” – in other words, no human being, who is only at the level of *yeda*, can know of Moshe’s burial place, where his body lies; because Moshe’s body reached *lo yeda*, and our perspective of *yeda* cannot comprehend the perspective of *lo yeda*.

### 15.

The *Gemara* (Bava Basra 12b) states that ever since the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, prophecy has been removed from the prophets, and it has instead been given to the mentally ill and to children. What is the meaning behind this?

It is because both a mentally ill person and a child do not have *daas*. Since they are each simple-minded kind of people, they do not possess *daas* of their own – and therefore, they are actually in the state of *lo yeda*.

They are therefore able to reach the “*daas of the Creator*”. Although their level of *lo yeda* is not due to having worked upon themselves to nullify their *daas*, still, they have a certain simplicity in them. This is written by the Maharal in many places, in all different kinds of phrases.

One of the Sages also said<sup>128</sup> that if a person wakes up and a *possuk* suddenly comes out of his mouth, it is a small prophecy. This is because right when a person wakes up, he has no *daas*, because his *daas* hasn’t started working yet properly. A person who has just woken up resembles in some way the state of *lo yeda*, and therefore it is possible that a *possuk* will fall into his mouth – something rooted in the “*daas of the Creator*”, it resembles *ruach hakodesh* and prophecy.

### 16.

Even after a person merits to nullify his *daas* and thereby come to enter the understanding of *lo yeda*, it doesn’t end there. The Ramchal writes in *Derech Hashem* that no matter how much a person merits to comprehend even through *ruach hakodesh*, he can keep understanding more, the more he realizes that he still does not understand things.

No matter what level a person is on, he has to always keep davening to Hashem that he be drawn closer to a truer understanding.

As long as a person lives on this world, *davening* for this should not stop. (To bring out the concept, we mentioned before that “*lo yeda*” implies that we never truly understand, and even if we reach *lo yeda*, the understanding of our *neshamah*, we can still realize that we do not understand things.)

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128 *Talmud Bavli Berachos 57a*

## 17.

This is the meaning behind the famous statement, “The purpose of knowledge is for us to know that we do not know.”<sup>129</sup> Simply, it means that the purpose of our human comprehension is to come to understand *lo yeda*, and after reaching *lo yeda*, a person receives *daas* from the Creator as a gift. But there is a deeper meaning behind this statement. The deeper explanation of it is that the purpose of knowledge – even the higher knowledge, which is a *daas* poured down from the Creator – is not yet the goal, because even our higher *daas* has to become nullified.

When we keep nullifying our *daas* more and more – even our higher *daas* – we reach higher understandings, and it’s endless to how much we can do this.

Understand this well.

## 18.

In more recent generations, and especially in our own generation, many people are desiring to learn *Chochmas HaEmes* (Inner Torah), to taste the true *daas*, the *daas* of the *Eitz HaChaim*. After Adam sinned, he was sent out of Gan Eden, away from the *Eitz HaChaim*. Hashem placed a “fiery, churning sword” to guard it ever since, as the *possuk* in *Beraishis* states clearly.

What is the lesson of this? It is to show us that even when we desire to taste the true *daas*, which is Inner Torah/*Chochmas HaEmes*/the *daas* of the *Eitz HaChaim*, we cannot remain connected to the lower knowledge we got from the *Eitz HaDaas*. It has to be this way; why should a lowly human being, who often sins and rebels against the Creator, be allowed to cross into Gan Eden and taste of the true *daas*? Only after a person purifies himself – by separating himself from the knowledge of the *Eitz HaDaas* – can he be permitted to return to man’s original source, Gan Eden, and taste of the *Eitz HaChaim*.

## 19.

How, indeed, can a person remove himself from his current level of *eitz hadaas*?

Hashem has really revealed it to us in the Torah: the *Eitz HaChaim* is guarded by the “fiery, churning sword.” In addition, He placed there *keruvim* (angels) that hold the sword. This shows us that there are two aspects to the fiery, churning sword: the sword itself, as well as the angels who wield it.

We explained how we “guard” the *Eitz HaChaim* through the “fiery, churning sword”, before: by returning ourselves to *lo yeda*, which can enable us to receive *daas* of the Creator. In addition, we also need the “*keruvim*” who guard it – let us explain what this is.

Between the Aron, there were two *Keruvim* placed; when the Jewish people does the will of Hashem, they face each other, and when the Jewish people does not do the will of Hashem, the *keruvim* turn away.

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<sup>129</sup> Sefer “*Bechinas Olam*”, 13:45.

The *keruvim* that Hashem placed to guard Gan Eden are similar to the state of the *keruvim* when they turn away from each other. The *keruvim* placed at the entrance to Gan Eden are serving to turn away, which resembles the *keruvim* when they are turned away from each other. The *keruvim* turn away whenever there is a lack of a relationship between the Jewish people and Hashem. So if someone wants to enter Gan Eden and taste of the *Eitz HaChaim*, he first needs to turn them around to face each other. In other words, he has to truly love Hashem – the state of the *keruvim* when they faced each other.

Therefore, besides for reaching *lo yeda*, a person also needs to have a tremendous love for Hashem, if he wants to taste true *daas*. The love of Hashem has to be burning within his heart. Without a great love for Hashem, a person will never properly understand Inner Torah, and any attempts to do have only proven to be a failure.

20.

Therefore, those who seek to learn Inner Torah, the true *daas*, must make sure that they have these two prerequisites: 1) to have a very strong, burning love for Hashem. 2) To nullify one's *daas*, which enables one to reach *lo yeda*; from thereon, Hashem can merit the person to taste of the *Eitz HaChaim* – the *daas* of our *neshamah*, the “*daas* of the Creator”.

We can reach both of these prerequisite to the *Eitz HaChaim*, on Purim. On Purim, the Jewish people reached a great love for Hashem, by accepting the Torah again. We also can reach *lo yeda* on Purim – through the wine of Purim, in which a person has to reach the point of “*ad d'lo yoda*”, the point where he cannot tell the difference between Haman and Mordechai.<sup>130</sup>

For this reason, the Sage say that “in the future, all of the festivals will disappear – except for Purim”. It is because Purim enables a person to reach the understanding of the *Eitz HaChaim*, which is eternal.

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<sup>130</sup> In the series *Getting To Know Your Happiness (Da Es Simchasecha)*, the Rov explains that through the wine of Purim, one can reach a level in which he does not differentiate between good and evil, because he realizes that even evil can turn out to be good; this is the meaning between not knowing the difference between Haman and Mordechai.

## 3.6 | Understanding the Mitzvos of Purim

### *Esther's Plan*

Esther sent a letter to Mordechai, “Fast for me three days, day and night.” The Sages explain that Esther knew that Hashem does not cause pain to *tzaddikim* for more than three days, thus she enacted the fast for three days, so that Hashem would take them out of their suffering.<sup>131</sup>

The Sages state that one of the ways we see this is that the prophet Yonah was swallowed by the fish for three days [so that he should do *teshuvah*], and then he was spit out, because Hashem did not want this *tzaddik* to suffer for more than three days. So too, Esther knew that Hashem would not cause any *tzaddikim* to suffer for more than three days.<sup>132</sup>

### *Haman's Agenda*

The Sages state that Haman was excited because he knew that the *mazal* (the astrological sign of the month) of the month of Adar is fish, and fish swallow each other, so he thought that it would be the month when he could ‘swallow’ the Jewish people.<sup>133</sup>

To understand this deeper, Haman descends from Amalek, who is compared by our Sages to a dog.<sup>134</sup> Elsewhere, the *Gemara* says that a dog does not excrete its food until three days. Thus, the “dog” – Amalek - is connected with the number “three.” Elsewhere, the *Gemara* where it says that there are three creatures which do not see the sun: a fetus in its mother, a fish, and a dog. From here we see that there is a connection between a dog, a fetus, and fish. [The connection is as follows]. Haman, the “dog”, thought that he could have the same power of a “fish” which can swallow other “fish.” This was why Haman thought that he would be able to swallow us and destroy us in the month of “fish” (Adar). What Haman didn’t realize was that fish are blessed with *pru u’rvu*, they can give birth and multiply in quick succession, thus the month of the “fish”, Adar, was ultimately for our good *mazal*. The fetus of a dog takes 50 days to be born. Haman is compared to a ‘dog’, thus he was hung on a pole that was 50 *amos* high.

### *The Depth Behind Hachanah/Preparing*

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131 *Esther Rabbah* 9:2

132 *Yalkut Shimeoni: Yehoshua*: 12

133 *Esther Rabbah* 7:11

134 *Midrash Tanchuma: Ki Seitzei* 9

Hashem had told Yonah to ‘prepare’ to go to Ninveh: “*Vayohmen es Yonah*,” “And He prepared Yonah.” The word “*vayohmen*” is rooted in the word “*Haman*”. Thus, “preparing” is associated with “Haman”, a hint to how Haman ‘prepared’ to destroy us.

We find in several places that ‘preparing’, *hachanah*, is the power that our enemies use to fight us with, as well as having other connotations of evil. For example, Esav, Amalek, and Haman all ‘prepared’ themselves to fight the Jewish people.

These forces of evil (Esav/Amalek/Haman) use the power of ‘preparation’, to prepare to destroy the Jewish people. Thus, they are all countered through ‘preparation’ as well. We find that Yaakov *Avinu* ‘prepared’ to fight with Esav through three things: gifts, prayer, and preparing for war. There were three aspects involved in his preparation for war with Esav: 1) He drew close to him (gifts); 2) He made sure to also keep a distance at the same time (prayer); and 3) He also made a compromise between these two levels, by preparing for war.

We find that this holy kind of ‘preparation’ which fights evil ‘preparation’ is also associated with the number “three”. Esther wanted ‘three’ days of fasting and ‘preparation’, as the *Megillah* says, which was needed to counter Haman – Amalek - who fights through means of preparation to destroy us. We also find that Esther did ‘three’ things to prepare to fight Haman, just as Yaakov *Avinu* did: She ‘drew him close’ through inviting Haman to the meal, she prayed and fasted at the same time, and she was also prepared to fight a war with him.

Was it these three methods of preparation that saved us, though? It seems, from a superficial understanding, that it did. But there was more to it. [As the *Megillah* records, Achashveirosh left the room when he was angry and confused at Esther for acting favorable to Haman, and when he came back, he saw Haman with Esther on the couch, and he grew enraged at Haman, for he suspected that he was trying to attack her. Achashveirosh’s servant, who was called] “Memuchan” was told to hang Haman for this crime. So it was really Memuchan who erased Haman from our midst. It was Charvonah who suggested hanging Haman, but it was *Memuchan* who had already prepared the gallows. This is hinted to by the fact that the gallows were already ‘*memuchan*’, ‘prepared’, from beforehand. (There is an argument in the *Gemara* if Charvonah is the same person as Memuchan or not, but either way, the interpretation here can be understood.)

The concept of preparation (*hachanah*) is when two dissimilar things are prepared. If you prepare two things that are similar to each other, they are already “prepared”, since they are similar. This would not be called *hachanah*. You only do *hachanah* (preparation) when you are preparing two things that are not similar to each other and you have to get them ready.

From the time that Adam sinned from the *Eitz HaDaas* (the Tree of Knowledge), man is no longer “*muchan*” (prepared) for good that he would have enjoyed in the *Olam Haba* (the Next World). Instead, mankind is now *muchan* (prepared) for punishment [unless he turns himself in the

other direction and he heads toward the good]. Hence, the term '*hachanah*' (preparation) is a connotation for evil and punishment.

Before the sin, mankind would have gone into the "*seudah* of *Olam HaBa*" (the meal in the Next World), which has been prepared for Adam; [all he had to do was pass the test of the *Eitz HaDaas*, and then he would have gone straight into the *seudah* that was waiting for him].

This concept of the "*seudah* in *Olam HaBa*" is also called '*mezuman l'chayei olam haba*' (designated for eternal life in the Next World) by *Chazal*. On a more specific and personal level, it is referring to someone who lives his life as if he is "*mezuman*" (already prepared) for *Olam HaBa*, so he does not need *hachanah* to prepare for the Next World [for he has the deep perspective of knowing that *Olam HaBa* is his real place, this he is above the level of 'preparation', because he *already* feels 'prepared'].

Thus, the higher level is called *mezuman*, to *already* be prepared, whereas the lower level is *hachanah*, to prepare. *Mezuman* represents the level of *Olam HaBa*, which was already prepared for man and waiting for him, if only he wouldn't have sinned. In contrast, the concept of *hachanah/muchan*, preparation, connotes a lack of already being prepared from beforehand.

The word *memuchan* (prepared) is also from the term, "*muchan u'muzan l'pirayon*" (prepared and designated for punishment), which is currently the state of mankind, ever since the sin of Adam. This was what Haman wanted to do to us - he was preparing to destroy us, to prepare and designate us for punishment. In the end, his own downfall came about through the very concept of '*hachanah*', through *Memuchan* (whose name is from the word *hachanah*), who 'prepared' the gallows for him.

*Chazal* say that the fish that swallowed Yonah was "already prepared," it was *mezuman*, "from the six days of creation".<sup>135</sup> We find that in the first six days of Creation, there were two stages – before the sin, and after the sin. Before the sin, man was "already prepared for *Olam HaBa*"; he was "*mezuman*" for the Next World. He would have gone into the *seudah* in *Olam HaBa* right away. After he ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*, the state of being *mezuman l'Olam HaBa* (designated for the Next World) was removed from him, and instead man is in a state where he is initially "*memuchan*" ("prepared") for bad.

That is the concept behind "Haman": to be *memuchan* (prepared) for a bad end. Haman represents the level of after the sin of Adam - to be *muchan* for bad, for *pirayon*/punishment. He 'prepared' to do bad to us, and in the end, he himself was *muchan l'pirayon* – he became "prepared" for his own end.

## *Deeper Understanding of Ad D'Lo Yoda*

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135 *Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer* 9

Based upon the above, we can now have a better understanding of what is contained in the spiritual light that is present, on the festival of Purim.

We have a *mitzvah* on Purim of “*ad d’lo yoda*”, to reach the level beyond our *daas* (human understanding). We find that the concept of *daas* is associated with *hachanah*/preparing, as we see from the verse, “*And you shall know today, and settle it in your heart*”<sup>136</sup> – we need to “prepare” our *daas* to settle in our heart, in order for our knowledge to internalize. It is also written, “*For the inclination is evil from youth.*”<sup>137</sup> One needs to prepare his *daas* to internalize his knowledge of the truth into his heart, because ever since the sin of Adam, we need some kind of *hachanah* (preparation) in order to become holy.

On Purim, when “Haman” is destroyed, there was revealed a level in which we don’t need *hachanah*. We can reach the level of before the original sin, when we were already “*memuchan u’mezuman l’chayei olam haba*”, without even needing to make *hachanah* for it; because it was already *mezuman*/prepared for us.

Thus, the *seudah* we have on Purim is like the eternal *seudah* which we had been *mezuman* for, had Adam not sinned. Purim is called “*yemei mishteh v’simcha*”, “days of festivity and joy”, the time in which we access the state of *ad d’lo yoda* – it is about leaving the state of post-sin and accessing our pre-sin state. It is not merely because the sin has been removed; it is more subtle - we are going back to our inner point we originate from, the level in which we do not need *hachanah* – because in essence, we are already “*mezuman*” for *Olam HaBa*.

### *Purim: Tasting The Future (The Next World)*

All of our *Yomim Tovim* (festivals) are times to remember the exodus (*zecher l’yetzias mitzraim*). Purim, however, is beyond that level. It is something from another dimension entirely: it is a light of the future, shining onto the present.

*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**

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<sup>136</sup> *Devarim* 4:39

<sup>137</sup> *Beraishis* 8:21

**already “there”** (in a very deep sense). It reveals the future state in the present that man doesn't need *bachanah* 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 chasadim*], 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”<sup>138</sup>. 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].”<sup>139</sup> 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.”<sup>140</sup> 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?*”<sup>141</sup> Thus, *ayin* (the nothingness) is the *sod* (secret) of *chochmah* (wisdom).

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<sup>139</sup> *Shemos* 17:14

<sup>140</sup> *Chagigah* 12b

<sup>141</sup> *Iyov* 28:12

The Gemara says that man has three “partners” in his creation: his father, mother, and the *Shechinah*.<sup>142</sup> 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”<sup>143</sup> – 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”<sup>144</sup>: 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.*”<sup>145</sup>

*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*”<sup>146</sup> – the concept of the “oneness of Hashem which manifests in the hidden”. *Chazal* asked, “Where is Esther alluded to in the Torah?”<sup>147</sup>, 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*”<sup>148</sup> - 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”.

## *Purim: Above Daas*

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142 Niddah 31a

143 Sanhedrin 70a

144 Beraishis Rabbah 3:7

145 Tehillim 27:10

146 Bnei Yissocher

147 Chullin 139b

148 Esther 2:20

The lot of Purim which Haman casted fell out on the 7<sup>th</sup> of Adar, the *yahrtzeit* of Moshe Rabbeinu. Haman was thrilled, because he took it as a sign that it will be the day of the demise of the Jewish people. Why was Haman wrong? The deeper understanding is as follows.

It is written about Moshe Rabbeinu, “*No man knows of his burial place.*”<sup>149</sup> Moshe received all of the “49 gates of understanding”, the greatest level of *daas* (human comprehension), but the “50<sup>th</sup> gate of understanding” was not revealed to him, as the Ramban states. When Moshe took leave of the world, the “49 gates of understanding” left with him, and then the “50<sup>th</sup> gate” was revealed. Moshe is on the level of *daas*, therefore he didn’t receive the 50<sup>th</sup> gate, which is above the understanding of *daas*.

Purim represents the level which was not given to Moshe. When we received the Torah from Moshe, we were forced to accept the Torah, but on Purim, we accepted the Torah again, out of love, because of the miracles that took place.<sup>150</sup> On Purim, we reached the “50<sup>th</sup> gate of understanding”, which was not revealed to Moshe.

### *“On That Night, The Sleep of the King Was Disturbed”*

Amalek is compared to a dog. *Chazal* state that a dog is pregnant for 50 days. Amalek, the “dog”, is therefore connected with the number “50.” This refers to the “50<sup>th</sup> gate of defilement” (the “*shaar hanun d’tumah*”), the most depraved depths of evil possible - which is the very power of Amalek. Haman’s agenda was to make us fall into this “50<sup>th</sup> gate of defilement”, from which we cannot be saved.

Haman thought that in the month of Adar he can destroy the Jewish people. But, “*On that night, the sleep of the king was disturbed*”<sup>151</sup> - Achashveirosh could not fall asleep at night. The Gemara says that the “king” here is Hashem, who was disturbed on that night, as it were.<sup>152</sup> The deeper meaning of this is that on “*that night*”, Hashem “remembered” that we possess the “50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Holiness”, the higher dimension deep inside us which is above any possibility of sin. This is what ultimately saved us from destruction.

On “*that night*”, there was a revelation of the perspective that a fetus does not merely begin with the “rotten droplet” that it comes from, as it would seem – rather, we have a beginning that precedes this, a holy beginning that is above all possibility of sin. It is written, “*In the iniquity of my father I was born, and in the sin of my mother I was conceived*”<sup>153</sup>, which means that all people receive sinful desires due to the conception of the parents, which contains desire. But in addition to this beginning, we have a deeper beginning, which is our place of “*ayin*” (nothingness), which begins

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149 Devarim 34:6

150 Rashi Shabbos 88a

151 Esther 6:1

152 Megillah 15b

153 Tehillim 51:7

with the letter “*aleph*”, alluding to the “*Aleph*” of Hashem’s name. Our deeper beginning which we are rooted in is the “50<sup>th</sup> gate of holiness”, known as *ayin*.

### *The 50th Gate of Holiness: The Point (Within Us) That Is Above Sin*

*Chazal* say that the fish do not see the sun. The inner meaning of this is tied with how “the face of Moshe is like the sun.”<sup>154</sup> The fish represent the level that is “above” Moshe/*daas*. So the “fish” of the month of Adar represent the power to be above *daas*, the “50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Holiness”, which saved us from Amalek.

The verse “*For my father and mother have abandoned me*” is reflected in the fact that Esther had no parents. It represents the inner point that is above the possibility of sin, in which there are no sinful desires inherited from the parents. The reason why people sin is due to the desire contained in conception, as the verse says, “*In iniquity of my father I was born, and in the sin of my mother I was conceived*”, and this is also why “*the inclination of man is evil from his youth*”. But there is a higher point in us, which is beyond all possibility of sin.

### *Purim: Connecting To the Original (and Future) Purity*

Wine can have opposite effects: either it brings sadness to a person<sup>155</sup>, or it can bring upon gladness<sup>156</sup>. When does wine cause sadness, and when does it bring on gladness? When wine is used for its higher, intended use, it reveals the level that is above sin, the level above conception from the parents, a higher beginning point - the “50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Holiness”, which saves us.

The light of Purim is essentially the light emanating from Hashem Himself, so to speak, in which there is no darkness, and no concealment (*hester*).

*Chazal* said, “When wine enters, the secret comes out”<sup>157</sup>. The “secret” revealed on Purim is the revelation of the inner point, in which there is no possibility of sin of the world, as it was before the sin of Adam.

Purim connects the present with the state of existence before the sin, and with the state of *Olam HaBa*, in which we will partake of the “*seudah* of the Leviathan”.<sup>158</sup> In the present time, we live in a world of sin. In the past, before the sin for of Adam, our souls lived in a world that did not have any sin yet. And in the future, we will again live in a world in which there will be no sin. **Purim is the point in the present where we can become connected to the holy past (before the sin of Adam) and the holy future (the state after the Redemption), where is no possibility of sin.**

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154 *Talmud Bavli Eruvin 13b*

155 *Talmud Bavli Yoma 76b*: “*Wine brings sadness to the world*”

156 “*Wine gladdens the heart of man*” (*Tehillim 104:15*)

157 *Talmud Bavli Eruvin 65a*

158 see *Talmud Bavli Bava Basra 74b*, and see the commentary of *Derech Chaim (Mahral)* on *Avos 3:16*

## *Wine During the Year Vs. The Wine of Purim*

Wine reveals the “*sod*”, the secret, of Purim, as follows.

“Wine”, *yayin*, is equal in *gematria* to the number 70. Beside Purim, during the rest of the year, we can only be at the level of “three partners in man (father, mother, and *Shechinah*)” since we are normally tied to our human constraints. During the rest of the year, the wine has an effect of “70” on us, which is at a lower level, because it is parallel to the 70 nations of the world that are headed by Amalek. “70” also represents the concept of “preparation” because the word *hachanah* (preparation) contains the letters *chof* (equal to 20) and the letter *nun* (equal to 50), which add up to 70. As explained earlier, *hachanah*/preparation is a lower level.

But on Purim, the wine we drink is about revealing “70”, as it is normally. Rather, Purim is all about oneness. It is the revelation of the “*Aleph*” of Hashem, the oneness of Hashem. It is a level of *yayin*/wine which reveals the *sod*, the secret, of the “*Aleph*” (as mentioned earlier, that “Esther” stands for “*seiser aleph*”, the “concealment” of the *Aleph*/Hashem – the fact that Hashem’s oneness is revealed in the hidden). In other words, it is about **the recognition of the absolute oneness of the Creator. That is the true revelation that lies behind the wine on Purim.**

## *The True Essence of Purim*

Thus, the *mitzvah* on Purim of *ad d’lo yoda* is not just about becoming intoxicated so that we can come to reveal more *divrei Torah* (as it simply seems). **When one is intoxicated with wine on Purim, he can come to reveal a perception of the inner recognition that there is a Creator, the Alupho shel Olam (the “Chief of the world”).** Revealing more Torah on Purim is therefore not the ultimate and innermost goal of the wine on Purim.

*Chazal* state<sup>159</sup>: “The Blessed One, the Torah, and Yisrael are three ties that are bound to one another.” If drinking wine on Purim only causes a person to reveal more Torah - without a perception of recognizing Hashem – then his intoxication through the wine is still within the perspective of “Amalek”, who thrives on the power of the number “three” (as explained earlier). For when one thinks that the “three” concepts of Hashem, Torah, and Yisrael are all three ‘separate’ concepts, as if they are not interconnected with each other, he does not realize how the three concepts are really all interconnected under the “oneness” of Hashem. Therefore, he is subtly affected by the perspective of Amalek, which does not see oneness.

A person with this perspective might merit more revelations of Torah on Purim, but he hasn’t reached the true depth of Purim yet, for he did not reveal a deeper recognition of Hashem on Purim. To him, the Torah and Hashem are separate matters [*chas v’shalom*] from each other.

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159 *Zohar parshas Achrei Mos 73a*

The inner point of Purim is: *ad d'lo yoda* – to come to the point where “No thought grasp [comprehend] Him at all.”<sup>160</sup>

This is not the *sod*/secret) known as “The Blessed One, Torah, and Yisrael are three ties that are bound to each other”, which is within the perception of “three”, the lower perspective, which is not strong enough to withstand the *safek*/doubts of Amalek. Rather, the inner point of Purim, which is “*ad d'lo yoda*”, is a deeper secret, known as “the *sod* of *echad*” (the “secret of oneness”).

Of the first day in Creation, it is written, “*And it was night and it was day, and it was one day*”. On that “one day” of Creation, the first day, there was *ohr*, light. The *Megillah* says that on Purim, there was a revelation of *orah*, “light” – it was like the light of the first day of Creation. It was the *ohr chadash*, the “new light which will shine forth on Zion”, in the future. It is the same *ohr*/light which Adam *HaRishon* was able to see with from one end of the world to the other. It was the *ohr*/light which reveals *echad*, oneness.

### *Purim: Reaching the Source of the Torah*

This is the inner meaning behind the interpretation of *Chazal* that “*orah, zu Torah*”, the “light” revealed on Purim refers to [the acceptance of the] “Torah”. It is this “*ohra*”, this revelation of spiritual light, which reveals the *Yachid* (the Individual) of the world, Hashem, Whom all understanding in Torah is derived from. We must realize that the source of all revelations in Torah is coming from the very “light of Hashem”, which empowers it.

Thus, Purim is not just a time in which there is more revelation of *chochmah* (wisdom) of Torah. It is rather to connect to the source that is above the *chochmah*, which is called “*ayin*” (nothingness) – the place of oneness (*echad*), the place of utter attachment (*d'veykus*) to Hashem. And from there, *chochmah* is drawn – for it is there that the very source of the *chochmah* is reached.<sup>161</sup>

The inner point of all *avodah* is to reach the understanding of the verse, “*The rock of my heart and my portion, is G-d.*”<sup>162</sup> It is the inner point which is hidden in the depths of the soul. There, a person can reach the inner recognition of the reality - of the Creator.

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<sup>160</sup> *Tikkunei HaZohar* 17a

<sup>161</sup> Editor's Note: *The Rav* explains more about “*ayin*” in “*Bilvavi*” Parts 7, 8, and 9.

<sup>162</sup> *Tehillim* 73:26

## 3.7 | Yom Kippur Is Like Purim

### *The Relationship Between Yom Kippur and Purim*

We are nearing the holy day of Purim. The words of our Sages are famous: “*Yom HaKippurim* is like Purim” – Yom Kippur is *k’purim*, “like Purim”, implying that Purim is even holier than Yom Kippur.<sup>163</sup> We will try here to understand a little what our avodah of Purim is, and what it has to do with Yom Kippur.

### *The Difference Between Purim and The Other Festivals*

Purim is two days – the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of Adar. It was enacted for walled cities and for unwalled cities during the time of Shushan. The un-walled cities *lein Megillah* on the 14<sup>th</sup> and the walled cities *lein Megillah* on the 15<sup>th</sup>. The interesting thing about this is that the time of Purim is split up into two different days - depending on where you live.

We also find this in the concept of *sefeika d’yoma* (in doubt about the Jewish calendar). We have *Rosh HaShanah* for 2 days because we are in doubt of which day it is. According to the Torah, it is enough to have 1 day. But we are not sure if the month is sanctified or not, so we have 2 days of *Rosh HaShanah* to cover both possibilities. We also find that Shavuos has two days for the same reason, and we also add onto the three festivals one day out of *sefeika d’yoma*.

*Chazal* say that two pairs of each non-kosher animal came to Noach’s ark, and seven of each of the kosher animals came to the Ark. Our *sefarim hakedoshim* write that the kosher animals, who were seven, represent the seven days of Sukkos and Pesach, and the two pairs of non-kosher animals represent Rosh HaShanah and Shavuos, as well as the two days of Purim.

What is the concept of the Yom Tov being two days? With Purim we understand, as the *Gemara* says. But why is there two days of *Yom Tov* on the other *Yomim Tovim*, due to *sefeika d’yoma*? On Purim we don’t add another day out of *safek* (doubt), while on the other *Yomim Tovim*, a second day is added on due to *safek*. What is the reason for this?

### *Amalek Has No Power During Adar and Purim*

Purim was a war with Amalek, and Amalek represents the power of *safek* (doubt), as is well-known. Adar stands for “*aleph dar*”, “The *Aleph* (The One) will dwell”, alluding to how Hashem Himself fights Amalek, during the month of Adar. It is a month of war with Amalek, and the success over Amalek – through Hashem. During Adar, Moshe was born, which alludes to Amalek’s downfall. Adar, and especially Purim, is the war with Amalek.

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<sup>163</sup> Said in the name of the Arizal

What is the concept of Amalek? Amalek comes when we have doubts about *emunah* (faith) in Hashem. The generation who left Egypt surely believed in Hashem, but they were in doubt about what Hashem would do to save them. On their level, there was some doubt, which enabled Amalek to come, for Amalek comes whenever there is *safek*.

When people have a *safek* if Hashem is with us or not, Amalek surely comes. But even when one has any small degree of *safek*, Amalek can also come. Amalek has the same *gematria* (numerical value in Hebrew) as the word “*safek*” (both are equal to 240).

Whenever there is holiness, Amalek comes to fight it. When we left Egypt, the “*Erev Rav*”<sup>164</sup> came with us, and they are part of Amalek. The festivals of Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot all contain *sefeika d’yoma*, which is a product of *safek*, thus Amalek is somewhat involved with the festivals and it can therefore attack us then. Outside *Eretz Yisrael*, there is 2 days of Yom Tov, because the redemption from Egypt was not complete, and we see this from the fact that Amalek came to fight us. Amalek fought us and enabled others to fight with us afterwards – they “cooled down the bath” for others, as Rashi states<sup>165</sup>.

Thus, our festivals are not complete, because they are not the complete redemption from Egypt. Amalek can therefore come fight us during the three festivals.

Even on *Rosh HaShanah*, which remembers the beginning of Creation, Amalek can have power over us. *Rosh HaShanah* is not “a remembrance of leaving Egypt” – it is to remember the beginning of Creation. Yet Amalek can still come on *Rosh HaShanah* and fight us. This is because Amalek is called “*raishis*”, the beginning of the nations, and *Rosh HaShanah* is also called *raishis* (beginning) of the world; and the nation of Yisrael is called the “*raishis*” of the world. So Amalek can still counter the *raishis* of *Rosh HaShanah*.

We have one day of the year in which *safek* does not take hold: Yom Kippur. Although there should really be *sefeika d’yoma* on Yom Kippur too, the Sages decreed that we should not have two days of Yom Kippur, because it is dangerous to fast for two days. But there is a deeper meaning to this as well: it is because *safek* cannot affect Yom Kippur.

*Chazal* call Yom Kippur the “*yomo shel HaKadosh Baruch Hu*”, the “day of Hashem.” In reality, it is impossible to doubt Hashem. One may have doubts in himself, but the reality of Hashem’s existence is the one reality which cannot be doubted.

The festivals were given to us out of His love for us and because He chose us as His nation (as we say in “*Attah Bechartanu*”) – thus, they are “ours”, therefore, it is possible for us to have doubts even as we are within the festivals. But Yom Kippur is called “the day of Hashem”. It reflects what the Sages say, “*Mi ika safek klapei shmaya?*,” (“Is there such thing as doubts in Heaven?”) This is because with Hashem, there are no doubts.

On a deeper note, the festivals were given to man to sanctify, and man can doubt things, thus, all of the festivals are still within the possibility of doubt. For this reason, the festivals are not strong

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<sup>164</sup> *The Mixed Multitude*

<sup>165</sup> *In Parshas Beshalach*

enough to protect us from Amalek. But Yom Kippur has no possibility of *safek* in it; it is intrinsic. Thus, it is “one” day, and not two days, above all “doubt.” Amalek cannot affect us on Yom Kippur, and that is why Yom Kippur is called “day of Hashem.”

### *The Inner Point of the Soul Where There Are No Doubts*

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.

### *Purim and Yom Kippur - The Days of No Doubts*

Thus, Yom Kippur is called "day of Hashem" – it is the one day of the year in which there is no *safek*, because it is entirely Hashem's day. The other festivals are given to us and thus they are affected by our human weaknesses of doubt, in contrast to Yom Kippur, which is Hashem's day; no doubt can take hold of it.

Purim is 2 days – the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of Adar. But this is not a *safek*. It is because the war was fought on the 14<sup>th</sup> and they rested on the 15<sup>th</sup>.

Purim is here to help us erase Amalek. Of course, we cannot erase Amalek completely in our times, because they fight Hashem in every generation, and only Hashem will erase them completely in the future. (If Amalek would be completely erased, Hashem's Name would be complete, and then our redemption would be complete.)

We find that certain places of Yerushalayim are a *safek* if Megillah is read on the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup>, because it is unclear if they were walled in the times of Yehoshua or not. Amalek has gotten us to doubt Purim as well...but that's only because Amalek hasn't been destroyed. In concept, Purim is a day of no doubt.

Today though we live in times in which we always face two options. It's all an 'Amalek' in the soul!

On Yom Kippur we are like angels, and it's clearer to us that it is the day of Hashem. There are no sins; we are forgiven; there are no doubts taking place. It is clearly the day in which Hashem reigns supreme and there are no doubts going on.

Of Purim, *Chazal* say that "Esther is the end of all miracles" – it shows us how two things are needed, that two options are not necessarily two different choices to choose from, rather, both options are needed. On Purim, we bless Mordechai as well as Haman. The depth of this is because even Haman is needed...

### *The Essence of Purim*

The words here are not simply an intellectual matter. We know that it's not enough to just 'know' about reading *Megillah* and to learn how to fulfill *Hilchos Purim* – you have to actually fulfill them. So too, it's not enough if we know about these concepts intellectually. Purim is a day in which it is revealed an inner perspective: that there is no *safek*!

This concept must first be contemplated by your mind, and then it needs to affect your heart, so that it becomes actualized in your life.

### *Amalek Comes To Erase Havayah/Reality*

In the future, Hashem will be one. The *Gemara* asks, "Is He not one in our times?" The *Gemara* answers that the future it will be the name of *havayah*, while now He is called by His name of *adnus*, and they are not the same perception. Hashem's name is not complete in our times, due to the present of Amalek, as *Chazal* say.

We live in times in which people have a sort of "identity crisis". There is a statement in *Chazal* that the "heart cannot be revealed by the mouth" – the depth of this is that what's in our heart is not expressed. When a person reads the name of *havayah* of Hashem, we can apply the statement, "his mouth and heart are not in line with each other" - the person's heart sees the meaning of *havayah*, but the mouth cannot express it.

Amalek causes one to doubt even the name of *havayah*; *Chazal* say that Amalek divided the four letters of the word *havayah*. It made a division in between the letters *yud* and *hey* with the letters *hey* and *vov*. The meaning of this is that Amalek's purpose is to induce doubt into reality; it wants to destroy all *havayah* (the essence of reality). All of the Torah is made from names of Hashem, but Amalek causes one to doubt all of it...

### *Facing Our Doubts*

A person gets married, and he's in doubt if this is the right wife for him. He buys a house, and he's not sure if he made the right purchase. All of these doubts come from Amalek! People are full of doubts inside themselves and then they end up by a psychologist.

We are always found in doubts. But a person can penetrate into a place in his soul in which there are no doubts!

The redemption will be a clear realization that there are no doubts. The exile we are in always presents us with options and doubts. "There is no *simcha* (happiness) like the clarification of doubts".<sup>166</sup> *Simcha* is reached when we erase our doubts; as long as a person has *safek*, he does not have *simcha*.

The opposite of *simcha* (joy) is *atzvus* (sadness). How does a person become sad? It comes from the body, which was created from the earth. We have a body and a soul, which already creates a *safek*. Our soul yearns for G-d, and our body wants materialism. *Simcha* is only achieved when the

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soul and body are harmonized. When Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*, the body was cursed with death. Ever since then, there have been doubts. The soul wants to go to Heaven, while our body wants to be here on earth.

We are always full of doubts in our life about where to go. But when a person erases Amalek within himself, he can connect both body and soul together, and then he reaches *simcha* - the “clarification of doubts.”

### *Purim: Transcending the Current Life*

On Purim we are commanded to get intoxicated until we reach *ad d'lo yoda*. When you lose the *daas* that entered us since Adam ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*, the separation between the body and the soul cease, and they are harmonized, there, a person leaves all *safeik* behind.

On Purim, when genocide was declared on us, the decree was on our bodies. Our body was going to one place and our soul was going to another. It was not simply a decree of destruction. It was that we were split into two. Purim revealed to us that we are “one nation,” as Haman said about us (begrudgingly), but on a deeper note, within our own self, we also can be “one.”

Purim is a time in which we can discover an inner life that is above the current life we see. In the future, *Chazal* say that all festivals will cease except for Purim. What does it make a difference to us to know about this? Do we need to know what will happen when Moshiach comes?! But it’s because *Chazal* are telling us that we can connect even now to the light of the future. They were not coming to tell us what will be in the future. They were revealing to us that even now, we can be connected to the light of the future.

When one has a life full of doubts, he cannot be connected to the spiritual dimension. A *ben olam haba* (one destined to live in the World To Come) is essentially one who reveals the inner point of his soul that is oneness, the revelation of G-dliness within himself, the place of no doubts. A *ben olam haba* refers to the place in the soul where there are no doubts.

There is only one reality which cannot be doubted. All realities on this world can be doubted, for they will all cease one day. But only Hashem will be forever. He is the one reality that never ceases. One can connect to that reality.

One way to get rid of doubts is to “have a *rav*”, as *Chazal* say; “Make for yourself a *rav* (teacher) and remove yourself from doubt.” However, the soul will still have doubts even after asking a *rav*. How do we get the soul to get rid of doubts? Only through erasing the Amalek within, by connecting to the inner dimension in which there is no doubt – the reality of Hashem’s presence.

Purim is the time that shows us that there can be no doubts. Although we are found within a world of doubt, we can tell ourselves that there are no doubts; two options do not have to create a doubt in us. We will soon explain why and how.

### *Practically Applying This Concept*

Let’s try to explain what this means, now on a more practical level.

When a person has a doubt, how does he remove it? One way is, to ask a Rav. That is true, but there is a way for a person to avoid the ‘doubt’ altogether. The inner method of removing doubt is to look at the *safek* in your mind and tell yourself that “This is not me”. Rather, they were thoughts placed into you from Hashem.

Let’s say that a person’s son is sick, *chas v’shalom*, and he’s not sure if he should do surgery or not. It seems to be a doubt of what reality should be. But in reality, who did it? Hashem. Even when you’re doubtful about reality, it is Hashem who made that reality. When you have doubtful thoughts about following A or B, tell yourself that Hashem made those two options.

When a person knows that Hashem does everything, his entire *avodah* is just to find Hashem in everything. If one really wants to do the will of Hashem in every situation, he will find how Hashem is clothed in every situation.

The *simcha* of Purim is that one can internally feel, that Hashem does everything. Anything I do is to choose what the will of Hashem is, (it’s not a choice of what I should do. It’s a choice of doing Hashem’s will).

When you nullify your will, all you want is to do Hashem’s will, and your will doesn’t come from you. If “I” am doing everything, then I have doubts. But if I know that Hashem is doing everything, I have no doubts. That’s how we erase Amalek.

When it comes to the *mitzvah* to erase Amalek, am I fighting Amalek, or is it Hashem? Hashem is fighting Amalek, not me. If I fight Amalek myself, I will not erase him. Only when I recognize that Amalek fights Hashem, am I helped in fighting Amalek.

When you really choose to do Hashem’s will, you see what path to go in. Purim is the time to see that Hashem is behind all decrees, everything. Even Haman’s decree ended up being good. Hashem makes the decrees, and He can nullify them. Purim shows us that man always has doubts, but Hashem has no doubts, thus the way to leave all doubts is to see how Hashem is behind every action.

### *In Conclusion*

The words here are to be practiced every day. When one really lets this idea penetrate - that Hashem is the One behind everything – he will find that it manifests itself in situations where he normally would have been in turmoil over doubts.

For example, right before if he’s about to decide on a certain *shidduch*, he should tell himself that it is not his decision - it is *Hashem’s* decision. When he internalizes this and truly believes this, he will find that his doubts leave him.

One should try an exercise of *emunah* every day to erase Amalek, and in this way, he will merit to erase Amalek from his heart, and to merit the *simcha* of leaving his doubts. Through that, with the help of Hashem, may the light of that discovery lead to illuminating all of Creation - when Hashem will completely erase Amalek, and then His Name will once again be “One”.

## 3.8 | Achashveirosh and Haman – Then & Now

### *Achashveirosh Was Worse Than Haman*

On Purim, the forces of holiness, represented by Mordechai and Esther, won against the forces of impurity: Achashveirosh and Haman.

It was not only Haman who was evil. *Chazal* say that when Esther raised her finger at Haman and said, “*This oppressive man, this enemy!*” she was actually referring to Achashveirosh; an angel came before she got the chance and instead made her say “Haman”. But she was really referring to Achashveirosh. Thus, Achashveirosh is also our enemy. Even more so, *Chazal* say that Achashveirosh was worse in his wickedness than Haman.<sup>167</sup>

So on Purim, we were faced with two enemies: Haman, and Achashveirosh. And *Chazal* state that Achashveirosh was even worse than Haman!

Let us try to understand these two different evils we faced: Haman, and Achashveirosh. They are not to be understood as the same kind of evil, which would imply that Achashveirosh was simply worse than Haman in his evil. Rather, Achashveirosh and Haman each represent two very distinct kinds of evil.

### *The War Against ‘Echad’*

What did Haman want to do to us, and what did Achashveirosh want to do to us? They didn’t just hate the Jewish people. According to our deeper teachings, they were really at war with Hashem and His Torah. There are “three ties that are bound together – Hashem, the Torah, and the *Yisrael* (the Jewish people)”.<sup>168</sup> Hashem, the Torah, and the Jewish people are inextricably bound with each other. The enemies who fight to destroy the Jewish people are essentially attempting to rebel against Hashem, and His Torah, being that Hashem, Torah, and *Yisrael* are all intertwined.

Hashem is called *echad*, “One”. Hashem is called the “*Echad, yachid, u’meyuchad* (One, Individual, and Unique).<sup>169</sup> Our Torah is also called ‘one’: “*Torah achas tiyheh lachem*”, “One Torah it shall be, to you”.<sup>170</sup> Although there are specifically two levels of the Torah – the Written Torah, and the Oral Torah – in spite of the two interpretations of the Torah, the Torah is still called *Torah achas*, one Torah. It is also called “*Toras Hashem Temimah*” (The Torah of Hashem is complete)<sup>171</sup>, implying that it is all one. The Jewish people are called *am echad*, “one nation.”

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<sup>167</sup> *Midrash Rabbah*

<sup>168</sup> *Zohar, parshas Achrei Mos 73a*

<sup>169</sup> *Rambam Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah 2:10*

<sup>170</sup> *Bamidbar 15:31*

<sup>171</sup> *Tehillim 19:8*

Thus, Hashem, the Torah, and the Jewish people are all called *echad* (one). [Being that there is an ongoing war between holiness and evil in Creation], these three kinds of *echad* on the side of holiness can be opposed by the side of evil. There are two ways how *echad* is opposed by the forces of evil. *Echad* (the oneness of Hashem) is either countered through the evil force of ‘*echad d’kilkul*’, the evil oneness,<sup>172</sup> or, alternatively, *echad* is countered through the evil force known as ‘*pirud*’, disparity.

### *Achashveirosh: The Evil Kind of ‘Oneness’*

Achashveirosh represents the side of evil that fights Hashem, the Torah, and the Jewish people through *echad d’kilkul*, evil oneness. He possessed a kind of “oneness” that was evil. The *Gemara* says that he was one of the kings who ruled the entire world, from Hodu until Kush<sup>173</sup>. This is not a coincidence. The depth of this is that he represents an evil kind of *echad*: to unify the entire world, under his dominion.

Just as Hashem is One in the side of holiness, and He rules over all, and unifies the entire Creation, so did He allow this power to exist in the side of evil: Achashveirosh ruled the entire world. Thus, Achashveirosh represents the evil kind of *echad*. The festive meal that he made which spanned 180 days included all of the nations of the world, which elucidates this concept. So Achashveirosh is the “one king” in the side of evil, who fights the holy “One”.

### *Haman/Amalek: Evil Disparity*

Haman, though, is an entirely different kind of evil. Haman did not possess oneness; he is all about causing *pirud* (disparity). Haman said that the Jewish people are “one nation, scattered and apart between the nations.” His words represent his entire agenda: to cause disparity amongst the Jewish people, who are “one” nation” that he’s trying to bring disparity into.

Haman descended from Amalek, the root of evil which is responsible for causing us to have ‘*rifyon yadayim*’ (weak hands) in our Torah learning; this in turn causes *pirur* (crumbling) and *pizur* (spreading). The *Maharal* therefore says that the word ‘Purim’ is from the word *pirur*, to spread. The *pur* (lot) that he cast on Purim represents his agenda to cause *pirur* (spreading) and *pirud* (disparity), and in that way, Haman/Amalek fights the *echad* of Hashem, Torah, and the Jewish people.

### *Why Achashveirosh Is Worse Than Haman*

Thus, *echad* on the side of holiness is fought through *echad d’klipah* and through *pirud* (disparity).

We can now understand how Achashveirosh is worse than Haman. Which of these forces of evil represent a greater threat— *echad* (one) against *echad* (one), or *pirud* (disparity) against *echad* (one)? The force of *pirud*/disparity is entirely nursed from the side of impurity, so it doesn’t stand a chance against the holy force of *echad*. But *echad* on the side of evil gets its strength from *echad* on the side of holiness, which makes it a stronger force to contend with than *pirud*.

<sup>172</sup> For more on the concept of *echad d’kilkul* (evil oneness), see *Tefillah* #019 – *Revealing Oneness*

<sup>173</sup> *Megillah* 11a

Thus, Achashveirosh, who had the power of *echad* on the side of evil, is a worse threat to the Jewish people than Haman.

### *Haman's Agenda In Connecting With 'Achashveirosh*

Taking this further, Purim wasn't just a war of either Haman alone or Achashveirosh alone, against Hashem, the Torah, and the Jewish people. It was Haman and Achashveirosh banding together! It was two powerful kinds of evil together: *pirud* (disparity, represented by Haman), together with *echad d'klipah* (evil oneness, represented by Achashveirosh), fighting the *echad d'kedushah* of Hashem, Torah, and *Yisrael*.

In clearer terms, Haman said about us that we are “one nation, scattered and apart between the nations”. This is a contradiction; how are we ‘one’, if we are spread out? The answer is, we are one, but Haman is the force of Amalek, which tries to cause disparity within us and break our oneness. Our oneness was being fought through the oneness of Achashveirosh, and furthermore, our oneness was being fought through the disparity of Haman/Amalek.

The *Gemara* says that the *pur* (lost) cast by Haman fell out on the month of Adar, and therefore he rejoiced, for it was the month that Moshe was *niftar*, so he thought that it will be a month of good *mazal* for him to destroy the Jewish people. What is the deeper understanding of this? It is because Moshe's soul is equal to all 600,000 souls of the Jewish people; Moshe represents the ‘root’, while the rest of us are the ‘branches’. Moshe's soul is the root which unifies all souls together. He is thus the *manhig* (leader) of the Jewish people. In that sense, Moshe represents *echad*, the “one” root, which presides over all the other branches and details of the Jewish people.

We find that Haman, descendant of Amalek, cannot attack Moshe. Haman/Amalek can only attack the ‘branches’ of the Jewish people, not the ‘root’. Amalek can attack us from the fact that we are 600,000 souls, which gives power to disparity, enabling Amalek to fight us. Moshe, though, can single-handedly fight Amalek, as the Torah records (“*And his hands were raised in faith*” – as long as Moshe's hands were raised, Amalek had no power).

So Amalek cannot fight Moshe himself. But Amalek can fight the rest of the Jewish people, who are 600,000 souls, because the disparity created by the divisions can give power to Amalek.

Taking this further, when Haman bonded with Achashveirosh, he wasn't just fighting us from the fact that we are 600,000 souls. He was trying to fight even our oneness! Haman/Amalek himself does not have the power to win over our oneness, as we explained (because Moshe Rabbeniu's power of oneness overpowers their power of disparity), but it still wants to fight our oneness, and looks for ways of how it can do so. How? Through bonding with Achashveirosh. By bonding with Achashveirosh, now Haman gained the evil power of *echad* with which he could be armed with to defeat *Yisrael*.

This is the depth behind the war fought on Purim.

Now we can also understand why Haman was so happy that the *pur* fell out on Adar: he thought that he will have power through connecting to Achashveirosh (the evil force of '*echad*') to fight us. So Haman wasn't just trying to fight our 'branches'; he was trying to fight even our 'root'.

### *How Holiness Prevailed*

Ultimately, *echad d'kedushah* prevailed, though - through the power of Moshe Rabbeinu. How do we see this? *Chazal* state that "Mordechai, in his generation, is compared to Moshe in his generation".<sup>174</sup> Therefore, Mordechai's soul had the power of Moshe Rabbeinu: the root soul of *Klal Yisrael*, the 'root' which presides over all the 'branches'<sup>175</sup>. Moshe Rabbeinu, via the soul of Mordechai, is what won against Haman.

However, Mordechai himself could not defeat the threat against the Jewish people. Mordechai himself might have been able to overpower the threat of Haman alone, but he could not defeat Haman and Achashveirosh together. The union of those two forces of evil could only be fought through combining the power of Moshe, the force of *echad*/oneness, together with all our other 600,000 divisions in the Jewish people.

Thus, Achashveirosh's power is countered only through Moshe. Haman's power is fought through the Jewish people. And when Achashveirosh and Haman are together, they can only be fought when the powers of Moshe Rabbeinu and the Jewish people are combined.

We can see this from how the 'war' was silently fought by Mordechai and Esther against Achashveirosh and Haman. Esther told Mordechai to go and gather all the Jews, to engage in prayer and fasting. Why was it necessary to make a gathering of all Jews, and why did it have to be done specifically through Mordechai? It was to counter the rise of Amalek's power. It had to be Mordechai to gather all the Jews together, so that the 'root' could unify all of the disparate parts together; the mass gathering represented how all branches must join with their root – the soul of Moshe Rabbeinu – via the soul of Mordechai – in order to counter Amalek.

Haman/Amalek has power when there is disparity, when the Jewish people are all separate souls that are not unified under any one root; and Haman can connect himself to Achashveirosh, to evil oneness, and together, these two forces become supercharged in their evil, a truly terrifying threat to our holiness. But when Haman or Achashveirosh together are countered by our own holy forces (Moshe/holy oneness, and *Yisrael*/holy divisions), the bond between Haman and Achashveirosh is then weakened - and then we are saved.

Thus, gathering all the Jews together needed to be done precisely through Mordechai, to reveal that the Jewish people are not simply disparate from each other and spread out among the nations, as Haman said. In reality, the Jewish people are unified. This is what we needed to reveal, in order to counter Haman's claim and weaken his power of causing *pirud*/disparity.

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<sup>174</sup> *Esther Rabbah* 6:2

<sup>175</sup> Editor's Note: According to others, Mordechai is a *gilgul* (soul reincarnation) of Moshe Rabbeinu.

## *Haman Was Defeated, Achashveirosh Was Not*

After Haman was defeated, though, Achashveirosh still remained. He still ruled the entire world, so although we had won against Haman/Amalek/*pirud*, we did not yet win over *echad d'klipah*.

Haman was gone, because his entire power was nursed from *pirud*, from disparity, and now we had united together [through fasting, prayer, and repentance]. In fact, the downfall of Haman was even through Achashveirosh himself, when Haman lost his power. When our own disparity was removed, our state of *echad* returned to us, thus there was no more power to Haman. When Haman was weakened, he essentially lost his power to connect himself with Achashveirosh.

This is the depth of how the decree was nullified. Disparity in the Jewish people fuels Haman's decree, and when our disparity was erased and we became unified, Amalek lost its power.

Amalek fights the Jewish people through the aspect of *pirud/pirur/pizur* – the fact that we are disparate and spread out, and this is the deep reason of we have *a mitzvah* to erase them. But Amalek also fights Hashem, and in this aspect, only Hashem can defeat them.

Amalek fights through *pirur/pirud* and can therefore fight the Jewish people, whenever there is *pirur/pirud* in the Jewish people. But worse than this threat is the fact that Amalek can also connect with Achashveirosh, with the evil force of *echad d'klipah*, and in this regard, only the oneness of Hashem can defeat Amalek. For this reason, Hashem says in the Torah, “*I will surely erase Amalek*” – only Hashem Himself can destroy Amalek totally.

## *Haman and Achashveirosh Will Return In The End of Days*

Purim will not cease in the future, as *Chazal* say. The other festivals will cease, because they are in remembrance of the exodus, which will no longer be relevant, whereas Purim is remembered for a different reason entirely, and its reason for existing will never cease. The deeper meaning of this is that when Achashveirosh and Haman banded together, this was not just a one-time occurrence that took place on Purim many years ago; it will return in the End of Days.

Just as the future redemption will last forever, so will Purim never cease – meaning, the union of ‘Achashveirosh’ and ‘Haman’ will come back in the End of Days, for their union created an evil that continues until this day. It will emerge in its full power again in the End of Days. But from that very situation, we will be redeemed.

In the *Gemara*, there is an argument if we will be deserving of the redemption, depending on if we do *teshuvah* or not.<sup>176</sup> According to one opinion in the *Gemara*, we will get ‘a king as harsh as Haman’ which will spur us on to do *teshuvah*. Haman was not a king, though, so what does this mean? It means that since Achashveirosh and Haman will unite again in the future, in that sense, Haman will be like a “king”. In the End of Days, the war fought on Purim will return - but the redemption will come from there.

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<sup>176</sup> *Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 97a*

## *Modern-Day 'Achashveirosh' and 'Haman'*

When we reflect on these matters, any *bar daas* (mature, thinking person) can actually see it taking place now. We are very close to the end of the 6,000 year era we are in, and the evil forces of Achashveirosh and Haman have returned.

Nowadays, we are a very scattered nation; there is disparity amongst us. We are scattered within our own nation. We are not simply apart from the other nations – nowadays, we are apart *within* our own nation. In the times we live in, there is no sect of Judaism which is free from strife.<sup>177</sup>

The Sages said that idol worship was so rampant in the era of the First Temple to the point that it was in every corner. In a similar vein, it can be said that in our times, there is no corner which does not contain strife. This is all the evil force of Haman/*pirud*(disparity)/Amalek – when we become “a scattered nation”, as Haman said. There was never as much disparity within the ranks of the Jewish people as there is today!

But there is also ‘Achashveirosh’ present – an evil kind of “*echad*”. In our generation, a person has ‘one’ [modern electronic] gadget<sup>178</sup> which connects him to the entire world, all at once – all of the 49 levels of *tum'ah* (spiritual impurity)!

Anyone with [spiritual] eyes can see it, and it is clear: ‘Achashveirosh’ and ‘Haman’ are here. Of course, it looks different than how Haman and Achashveirosh looked. But it’s the same forces of impurity which they embodied. Haman manifests in all forms of *pirud* (disparity), and Achashveirosh is manifest in evil *echad* (oneness). These two evils together are coming to uproot the foundation of the Jewish people.

## *In Conclusion*

If we merit it, the Jewish people will be gathered together again, just as in the time of Mordechai, so that we can reveal our holy power of *echad* – from Hashem, His Torah, and from the *tzaddikim* of the generation who possess it.

But the Jewish people will have to be gathered together again in order for *echad* to be revealed. Although there are all kinds of justified reasons for strife towards other Jews, even if it’s not baseless hatred and it’s considered rational, it is still rooted in disparity. It is ‘Haman’.

When we will be unified together again, when all of our ‘branches’ unite under its ‘root’ (*echad*), it will then happen that Haman will be erased. Not only will Haman be erased; in the future redemption, even Achashveirosh will be destroyed. “We are still slaves of Achashveirosh”, the *Gemara*<sup>179</sup> says. Purim only erased Haman; it didn’t erase Achashveirosh. ‘Achashveirosh’ is just as strong now as he was then. But in the future redemption, both Haman and Achashveirosh will be erased.

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<sup>177</sup> See also *Fixing Your Water* #020 – *The Desire For Strife*; see also *Tefillah* #061 – *Asking Hashem For Forgiveness*; and *Tefillah* #0133 - *Sanctuary*

<sup>178</sup> [i.e. smartphones, laptops, tablets, and other devices].

<sup>179</sup> *Talmud Bavli Megillah* 14a

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It will then be revealed the complete understanding of “To the Jews, there was light” – the light of the Blessed One, in its completion.

## 3.9 | Talking To Hashem

### *We Are Always In Hashem's Presence*

The Sages say that every time it says the word “*melech*” (king) in the *Megillah*, it is referring to Hashem.<sup>180</sup> Every time Esther stood in front of Achashveirosh and said the word “king”, she realized that she was still standing in front of the King of all kings – Hashem. Even when she said the words “*HaMelech, V'Haman*” (“the king, and Haman”), when she mentioned Haman’s name in the same as she said the word “*Melech*”, she was referring to Hashem. Meaning, she was mentally speaking with Hashem, even as she stood before Achashveirosh.

When a person stands in the Silent Prayer (*Shemoneh Esrei*), there is a *halachah* that he must feel like he is “standing in front of the King of all Kings”; Hashem. During the rest of *davening*, [and during the rest of the day as well], there is no actual obligation according to *halachah* for one to feel like he is standing in front of Hashem.

Yet, although it is not an obligation according to *halachah*, there is still an inner kind of life we can have, in which we always feel Hashem’s presence. We see this from the words of the *Rema* in the beginning of Shulchan Aruch: “*Shivisi Hashem l'negdi tamid*” (“Hashem is beside me always”), one has to always be aware wherever he is that Hashem is watching him. The *Rema* says that when a person is in front of a king, he should realize that he is in front of Hashem.

When one is in front of the king, not only should he feel Hashem’s presence, but when he talks, he also needs to realize that he is *talking to Hashem*, as he talks. We see this from Esther. Whenever she said “*HaMelech*” to Achashveirosh, she was really thinking about Hashem the whole time and talking to Him.

The *Gemara*<sup>181</sup> says, “If only a person would pray a whole day.” How is this possible? And when is he supposed to learn Torah? The answer to this is because a person can always talk to Hashem throughout the day. In this way, a person can stand in prayer all day, in front of Hashem.

### *Feeling Hashem's Presence and Talking to Him*

There are two levels. One level is called “*nochach p'nei Hashem*”, where a person feels Hashem’s presence and that he is front of Him. And there is another level, where a person speaks with the Creator of the world, and throughout the day.

It’s possible that a person talks to Hashem, yet he doesn’t feel that he is *in front of* Hashem. On the other hand, it is also possible that a person feels Hashem’s presence, but he doesn’t *talk* with Him. He is in front of Hashem’s presence, but he is only speaking with others.

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<sup>180</sup> *Esther Rabbah* 3:10

<sup>181</sup> *Talmud Bavli Berachos* 30a

What does it mean to talk to Hashem? Each of us has 24 hours in the day. Let us examine our schedule and see: How much time of the day does one spend talking *with* Hashem?

When a person *davens pesukei d'zimrah*, which are words of praise to Hashem, he has certainly spoken the praises of Hashem, but he did not actually speak *with* Hashem. When *davening Shemoneh Esrei*, it is also possible that a person hasn't spoken with Hashem. Praising Hashem is not the same thing as talking to Him.

Examine your schedule you have throughout the 24 hours of the day, and see: How much time of the day do I speak with the *Ribono shel Olam*? One might discover that it's only a few minutes!

And sometimes, even when a person is talking to Hashem in first-person, like when is saying "*Attah Choinen*" and "*Attah Kadosh*" in *Shemoneh Esrei*, what is he thinking about then? Even if he's concentrating on the meaning of the words, that doesn't always mean he is feeling indeed the "*Attah*". A person can write a letter to a friend and write the word "You" that doesn't mean he feels like he is actually talking to him. Saying "You" doesn't automatically cause a person to feel like he's talking to the one whom he is addressing.

What is the way that a true life is supposed to look like? We learn it from what we find with Queen Esther [who was really speaking with Hashem every time that she was speaking to Achashveirosh], which shows us that the true kind of life for a Jew is to speak constantly with the Creator.

### *The Abundance of Speech In Our Generation*

In our generation, people are talking all the time, whether they are at home or on the go – there's a lot of speech taking place. What is the inner reason for all of this speech in the world today?

We are all awaiting Mashiach, and one of the roots of the word "*Mashiach*" is the word "*masiach*"- conversation. In other words, the power of conversation is linked with the times of *Mashiach*. The world is preparing itself for the time when there will be much speech in the world, but it will not just be about a world in which we will speak more words of Torah or to speak about the Creator. It will be a changed world, where we will speak *with* the Creator all the time!

The *Gemara* says that there were ten measurements of speech which descended to the world, and the women took ninety percent of it, which left men with the other ten percent. The abundance of talking that takes place in our times is like the ninety percent of speech that was taken by women, a speech of *kalus hadaas* (lightheaded). The amount of speech in our times, which has increased so much in the last couple of years, is enormous. Until recently, a person spoke much less. There was a lot less time to speak so much as there is today. Hashem changed the nature of the world recently: people don't stop talking. But it's not words of Torah that are being talked about so much.

From where did all of this abundance of speech come from? Superficially, we can answer that this is a "*nisayon*"<sup>182</sup> that we have when it comes to speaking *lashon hora*<sup>183</sup> and *rechilus*<sup>184</sup>. But there is

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<sup>182</sup> test

<sup>183</sup> gossip

another way to look at it. All of the speech that has come to the world recently is to show us that we need to speak all the time [with Hashem]. A very large part of our time needs to be spent talking. But we can compare the situation of today to a person dialing the phone all day and calling the wrong numbers. Our phones should only have one number that they dial! All of our speech was given to us so that we can use it to talk to Hashem!

The increase of speech that has come to our times is a spiritual light of *Mashiach* that has become stolen by the *Sitra Achara* (the “Other Side”). Every day there is a lot of speech taking place, but what kind of speech? Conversations that are empty, or forbidden, or worse. The world today is full of gadgets that enable a person to talk so much, but all of this speech is being misdirected.

### *Verbal and Mental Communication With Hashem*

An inner kind of person speaks all the time, but he speaks with Hashem. There are two parts to speaking with Hashem, and we learn this as well from the *Megillas Esther*. Firstly, a person needs to get used to talk *verbally* to Hashem.

But we also find that “*Haman spoke in his heart*”. The Sages learn from this in *Koheles Rabbah* that “the heart speaks.” Shlomo HaMelech also said, “*I spoke with my heart.*” This is not thought, but a kind of speech. There is a speech we speak with our mouth, and there is also a speech from our heart. “Speaking with our heart” means when we have a conversation with ourselves and we are thinking about what to do. There are times where we speak verbally, and there are times where we speak mentally. But we need to direct this speech towards speaking with the Creator.

The *Shemoneh Esrei* is not the only time we have in the day to talk to Hashem. *Shemoneh Esrei* serves as the gateway, and the example, of how to live life: to talk to Hashem. There are some people who set aside an hour a day to talk to Hashem, but this is not yet a truthful and complete kind of life. The true kind of life is to speak with Hashem all the time!

### *How To Talk To Hashem*

A person might ask, “What am I supposed to speak about with Hashem all the time? Am I supposed to tell him over the last bank statement? Should I speak to Him about my wife and children? What is there to speak about with Him?” But if you go on a bus from Yerushalayim to Bnei Brak, you will hear that there is a lot that people have to say. People have so much to talk about with others. Why is it that when it comes to talking to Hashem, they don’t have that much to say? Is it because they are careful to observe the statement of *Chazal*, “He is in Heaven and you are on earth, therefore, let your words be few”?

To speak with Hashem means to tell Him everything going on in your life, just as you include others in your life when you speak to them. Everyone likes to include others in his life and tell others about what’s going on in their life. A husband comes home and his wife talks to him about what went on that day. A father likes to talk to his children and tell them stories. People love to talk.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt"l* was known as a very quiet person. Once he told someone, “Don’t think that I don’t like to talk. Of course I like to talk to other people. Every person is born with a natural desire to talk to others and include them in his life. Even if a person is like Moshe Rabbeinu and he goes up to heaven for 40 days where he doesn’t eat and drink, he will want to talk to others. The only question is to whom we will choose to talk to.”

To whom does a person talk to all the time? Does a person only speak with his wife? A person talks to others whom he is close with, to someone who is included in his life, to someone whom he feels will listen to him and who cares about him. Since most people do not usually feel that Hashem truly listens to them and cares about them, they will only talk Hashem about their problems, when they need His help....

When a person lives a true kind of life, a soul kind of life and not a bodily kind of life, he feels Hashem next to him. He feels the Creator, he feels a love to Him, and he feels Hashem’s love for him. There is no deeper love than the love that Hashem for a person.

### *The Search For Love*

People on this world are searching for will anyone who will love them. And usually, when a person does find someone who loves him, it is only imaginary, and soon afterwards, they part ways. The tremendous search for love that takes place on this world can be compared to drinking salty water. When a person finds salty water and he drinks it, and he is unaware that it is salty, he thinks it is quenching his thirst, and soon afterwards he discovers that he is even thirstier than before.

If a person is searching for true love, he will only find it when he feels the Creator of the world deep in his own heart. When he removes the “blockage of the heart”, he will feel his love for the Creator, and he will feel the Creator’s love for him. Then he will find it pleasant to speak with Him and to converse with Him.

When one doesn’t feel Hashem’s presence in his life, these words seem too lofty and esoteric to him: “What does it mean to speak with the Creator and to feel that He’s listening to me? What am I, a prophet? Do I hear the Heavenly *bas kol*?”

All of that skepticism stem from feeling far from the Creator. But a person can live and feel the Creator in his heart, and feel the true love that *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* has for him. The *Mesillas Yesharim* says, that a person can feel that Hashem is actually in front of him when he *davens*, and that he can talk to Him as if he’s talking to a friend. Esther knew that she was always in front of Hashem and talking to Him, even as she stood before Achashveirosh. When she fell before Achashveirosh and cried and begged for her life, she was addressing Hashem. She was able to do so because she lived an inner kind of life, where a person spends life talking with Hashem.

This is the depth of why man is called “*medaber*” – a social creature. It is because the essence of a person is that he can talk, and talk, and talk. But with whom should all of this talking be channeled to? With the One who created the world.

### *Find A Private Place and Talk to Hashem*

Getting used to this perspective will cause a big change in a person's life; but it is really an easy change to make, relatively speaking, for one who gets used to it.

When a person is on the go and he's in a private place where there are no people around, it's much easier to get used to talking to Hashem. If there are people around, it's harder for a person to concentrate, so he should stick his fingers in his ears so that he doesn't hear anything, and lean up against a wall and talk to Hashem there, and he can talk to Him for hours like this. Channah did this, and she was praying for so many hours that Eli thought she was drunk. [Therefore it's not always feasible to talk to Hashem when you're around people]. But we don't always have to talk verbally to Hashem; we can also talk to Him through our heart, mentally.

One needs to get used to talking to Hashem. If a person talks to Hashem but he doesn't feel Hashem, eventually, he will begin to feel. This is because there is a verse, "*I believed, for I spoke.*" By getting used to speaking to Hashem, eventually the speech makes you "believe" - gradually. Understandably, one needs to slowly get there, in steps, and he should not try to grab too many levels at once, because that doesn't work. But the point is clear: one must get used to talking to Hashem all the time.

### *What Should A Person Talk To Hashem About?*

And what should a person talk about to Hashem? Talk to Him about everything you normally talk about with people. He is the only one who he is really and truly listening.

This is a kind of life where a person realizes the meaning of, "*It is not good for man to be alone.*" Getting married doesn't really solve the problem of being alone. When a person gets married, *Baruch Hashem*, he is no longer living alone, but this does not yet mean that he is living an inner kind of life. The inner way to live life is that you know you are never alone only because you know and feel that Hashem is next to you.

A person who lives an inner kind life is a person who sets aside time every day where he will be alone and feel alone, and upon feeling the loneliness, he immediately turns to Hashem and speaks to Him.

### *Talking To Hashem Throughout The Day*

But it is not enough to merely set aside time every day to talk to Hashem; one needs to talk to Hashem throughout the day as well. Compare this to a person who only talks to his wife, his children and his friends only at certain designated times, is this called having a real closeness with them? In order to have a relationship with others, one needs to be able to talk freely and naturally with those whom he is close with, and not only during specific times. The same goes for talking to Hashem – it is not enough to talk to Him at set times during the day. We need to be able to talk to Him all the time.

This is an inner point to know about. One who gets used to this perspective will see a complete overhaul in his life. Just be being in solitude for a few minutes a day and talking to Hashem, where

one is away from people, he begins to live a life where he feels Hashem's presence, where he lives with Him and it is He Whom he talks with. Hashem is the true companion that we have in our life.

At first, it will probably feel hard for a person to begin talking to Hashem; it might feel uncomfortable. So a person should get used to it slowly and in steps. The first time he does it, he should try it for half a minute. The next day, he should try it for a full minute, and so forth.

But as mentioned earlier, it's not enough to set aside designated times each day to talk to Hashem. One needs to train himself throughout the day to be able to talk to Hashem.

There is a very big difference between one who talks to Hashem only at set times of the day with one who can talk to Him on a more continuous basis throughout the day. We all have Shemoneh Esrei each day where we talk to Hashem, but a true and inner kind of life is to talk to Hashem constantly, throughout the day, every day.

If you're sitting in a private place and talking to Hashem, and then someone walks in and asks you who you're talking to, what will you say? Say to him, "I'm talking to Hashem." He might say, "Ah, I understand." But this is really what a simple kind of life for a Jew is supposed to look like.

### *Leaving Concealment and Entering Into Revelation*

Who did Adam speak to in Gan Eden? When Adam wanted a helpmate, whom did he ask? He spoke to Hashem. Our first speech was with Hashem. And who was the first person that Chavah spoke with? With the Serpent! Ever since then, all speech has fallen into the Serpent's hold, who is called "the master of evil speech". All of our speech today is negatively affected by the Serpent, and that is why a person doesn't always feel that his speech was meant for him to talk to Hashem.

*Megillas Esther* is called so because it is a *giluy* (revelation) of the *hester* (concealment) – it reveals the secrets, it removes the concealments so that there should be revelation. The power of speech connects us to Hashem and it is the power that removes all of the concealment of this world, which enables us to connect to Hashem through the depths of our heart.

One who gets used to speaking with Hashem – and not as a superficial lip service, but from the depths of the heart, and he pours out his heart to Him, whether it is something painful or something joyous – this is the way that an inner kind of life looks like: to keep talking to Hashem throughout the day. One who gets used to this leaves the *hester* (concealment) and enters *giluy* (revelation).

### *The Way To Prepare For Mashiach*

This is the true way to prepare for the coming of Mashiach, whose name comes from the term *masiach*, to "converse." This is a hint that when our main conversations are taking place with Hashem, Mashiach comes.

The abundance of speech that takes place in our times, the final generation, is a total *hester*/concealment upon the coming of Mashiach. Even if all of this speech is not in the category of forbidden speech, the mere fact that people talk excessively with other people and not with Hashem,

is something that shows how this great spiritual light is being stolen by the *Sitra Achara* (the Other Side), away from holiness.

### *In Conclusion*

May Hashem merit all of us, that there should be a revelation upon all of our *neshamos*, to feel the presence of the Creator of the world, to talk with Him; not only to praise the wonders that He does, but to actually converse with Him. This will lead towards the complete revelation of the coming of Mashiach, speedily in our days. Amen.

### *Questions & Answers With The Rav*

**Q1:** *What is the point of talking to Hashem if I don't need something from Him and if I'm not going through a particularly hard time? When talking to a spouse or to a friend, it makes sense to speak to them about all our worries, but why should I speak to Hashem if it's not a request for something I need?*

**A:** Why do you speak to your wife – is it only when you need her help?

**Q2:** *If she needs me then I understand why I should talk to her, otherwise –*

**A:** Do you only speak to her in the house when you need her to help you with something? Why do you to speak with your spouse in the home?

**Q3:** *Because that's the nature of people, but -*

**A:** It is a Jew's nature to speak with the Creator.

**Q4:** *But why should I speak to Hashem if there's nothing on my mind that I'm interested in speaking about?*

**A:** The reason why we talk to Hashem is to attain a bond with Him. That this the whole point; that is the whole interest. The Sages say that “the mitzvos were given to us only so that there should be ‘tziruf’ [connection] of the creations.” The term ‘tziruf’ implies *chibbur*/connection. All of the speech which we were given is so that we can use it to connect to Hashem with it. There is no other purpose for why our speech was given to us.

**Q5:** *I understand that when talking to a spouse or to a friend, there is what to talk about, there is a conversation taking place. But when talking to Hashem....*

**A:** You are saying that only if a person has attained a level of prophecy where he can hear the Heavenly *bas kol* answering him, only then it's worth it to talk to Hashem? A person only thinks this way because he doesn't feel the presence of the Creator, so he thinks that he's talking to the wall when he *davens*. Because he doesn't believe that it is really our Hashem Who surrounds us. If a person would really feel Hashem's presence with him and next to him and that Hashem is hugging him with His arms, he would talk to Him.

Compare this to a child who comes home from school and tells his mother about something troubling that happened to him that day. Either she can tell him what to do about it, or, she gives him a hug. When a person really feels toward Hashem as “*an infant on its mother's lap*” [as Dovid HaMelech says in *Tehillim*], that is how Hashem will treat him – with a hug. You are talking to Hashem about what's on your mind because you want someone who will really listen and who can give you a hug afterwards – and that is what you can have with Hashem. But you just have to first feel that Hashem is really next to you, to feel how He is in close proximity to you, and then bond with Him.

**Q6: *Why do I need to verbally communicate with Hashem? Why can't I just have a mental conversation with Him in my heart?***

**A:** There is such a level of “mental conversation” with Hashem (this is called “*du siach*”), but this is a more subtle matter. Here we have described a concept that is clearer which people can better relate to. When a person has a problem, he usually is not seeking just answers. He wants someone else to feel him, to listen to him, and to give him a hug afterwards. When one feels Hashem’s love for him, he talks to Him. If he doesn’t feel that love, then indeed, he will not feel anything special when talking to Hashem and he will feel like he is just talking.

**Q7: *How can a person practically work on this concept throughout the day? Shouldn't a person just set aside time for this every day to work to talk to Hashem? Why should it also be done throughout the day as well?***

**A:** Anything which you want to work on acquiring, will need time set aside every day, so that you can train your soul to get used to it in the first place. But if a person remains with just those designated times and he doesn’t talk to Hashem throughout the day, he is missing the main part. Of course, it’s not pointless. It is definitely better than nothing. But the purpose is not so that a person should set aside 30 minutes a day or an hour a day to talk to Hashem and to remain at that level. That’s just an opener of what it means to enter into a truer kind of life.

**Q8: *If I'm in a public place and I'm uncomfortable talking to Hashem in front of other people, should I just talk to Hashem mentally, in my heart?***

**A:** It is definitely something you should do, but it should not be the only way you talk to Hashem. Sometimes there is a plus in talking to Hashem mentally (through your heart) because it enables you to convey your deeper feelings to Hashem; the advantage to verbal speech with Hashem is that it takes up more permanence in your life.

Mental speech with Hashem is not something tangible that you can feel, so it makes less of an impression. For example, there is a rule in the *Gemara* that “words of the heart are not words”, when it comes to monetary laws of the Torah, because it lacks a real decision of the *daas* (mind) of a person, and also because a person doesn’t always know what his “heart” decided. So there is an advantage to verbal communication in that it shows that the person’s *daas* is active. There is an advantage to either verbal communication with Hashem or non-verbal communication with Hashem; sometimes we speak to Him verbally and sometimes we speak to Him in our heart. It is a cycle.

**Q9: *What exactly is the purpose of talking to Hashem each day?***

**A:** The point I spoke about here is for a totally different purpose. It is about *talking to Hashem for the sake of talking to Him*. It is not about *Viduy* (confession of sins) or about asking for things about the future. And it is not enough to talk to Hashem for an hour a day; one needs to talk to Hashem throughout the day. I spoke here only about a point which people can understand. I did not say here anything except which is not stated explicitly in the words of our earlier sages, who were around for many years before Bresslev; the *Rishonim* (the sages who lived in the era spanning the tenth and

fifteenth centuries) have been around much longer, and “the *Rishonim* are like *malachim* (angels)”. We spoke here about a way to live life which connects a person to Hashem.

What should a person speak about with Hashem? It’s not so much about *what* to say. Compare this to a person who comes home and he only talks to his spouse about what he planned on saying to her, and nothing else. If a person makes up with himself that he will only speak with Hashem about his specific words of praise to Hashem, his confessions, his self-accounting, and his resolutions for the future. A relationship with Hashem cannot be based on what we plan on speaking with Him. Hashem is called our “*Dodi*”, our Beloved friend.

*What* to talk about with Hashem is certainly an important question to wonder about, but it is an entirely different matter. One speaks to someone whom he is close with, and this is the purpose of our speech. There are other purposes in talking to Hashem, which are all holy and necessary, but the main point is to talk to Hashem in order to simply have a bond with Him. A relationship is built through communication.

**Q10: *If a person learns Torah, does he need to speak less with Hashem?***

**A:** The question is not really about *how much* Torah he is really learning, but *how* he is learning Torah. A person might be learning Torah as a purpose unto itself, or he is learning Torah with Hashem. It is indeed a very high level for one to learn Torah “with” Hashem as he’s learning, because when one is using his *seichell*/intellect to learn Torah, it is very difficult for him to have even the simple recognition that he is standing before the King [which is a sense of the heart]. But if a person anyways isn’t learning Torah right now, and he is in any case having many conversations with others during the day – and indeed, most people spend many hours of the day talking to others... [he should use that time to speak with Hashem instead].

**Q11: *Is a person allowed to talk about his negative feelings with Hashem, like if he’s not feeling right now that he’s in a good mood? Can he talk about this with Hashem, since he is supposed to feel that really everything is good?***

**A:** He should say to Hashem, “I know in my *seichel* (intellect) that everything is good, but I don’t feel in my heart that everything is good. I am asking of you, Hashem, that You purify my heart, so that I can indeed feel that everything is good.”

Hashem is not an address to come fight with. A person has knowledge that everything is good, but he also feels pain, and he can ask Hashem that his heart be purified so that his feelings will feel how it is good, even though there is pain. But you must talk to Hashem about your pain, and you know that it stems from a lack of emunah and that you don’t believe right now that everything is good; and precisely in this situation you are asking Hashem for help, that your heart should become purified so that you will feel the truth how it is all good.

It is not because you need to deny your feelings; if you deny your feelings then that doesn’t do anything for you. You need to allow yourself to feel your feelings, and upon feeling the negative feelings, you become aware that your heart needs to be purified right now. Your negative feelings

aren't coming from your actual heart itself, but from the "blockage of the heart" that resides on top of the heart, and one needs to remove it.

**Q12: *If I'm teaching about this concept to other people, should I say to them that they should allow themselves to feel their negative feelings?***

**A:** Yes, but you need to emphasize to them that they shouldn't begin talking to Hashem by venting their feelings to Him. It is a step that can help a person come out of depression, but it should not be the entire process.

**Q13: *The Rav has many sefarim – which sefer of the Rav does the Rav recommend I should start with? Should I start from the Rav's original sefarim [Bilvavi Mishkan Evneh], or should I start with the Rav's peirush (commentary) on Mesillas Yesharim...?***

**A:** I do not understand, at all, the question. From the time of the giving of the Torah until today, the shelf is full of so many *sefarim*. How did you deal with that until now, of which *sefarim* to learn? There are many *sefarim* on the shelf...

**Q14: *What I mean to ask is, should I start with "aleph" [the first volume of Bilvavi] or should I start with "beis" [the second volume of Bilvavi]?***

**A:** If you're starting from "Aleph", start from "Anochi Hashem Elokecha" ("I am Hashem your G-d"). If you're starting from "Beis", start from "Beraishis Bara Elokim." ("In the beginning, G-d created").<sup>185</sup>

**Q15: *I do not understand – what "Beraishis" is the Rav referring to...?***

**A:** The *raishis* (beginning) does not begin with me. That is exactly the point. There is a long journey to take way before these *sefarim*. There are some things to take from the earlier *sefarim* and there are some things you can take from the *sefarim* of our times. But you cannot begin from that point; you must begin from the words of our earlier Sages, and to build everything from there.

**Q16: *But their words are too closed (inaccessible) to us.***

**A:** And how do you start learning the works of the earlier sages? Do you start from *Rabbeinu Yonah*, or *Ramban*, or the *Chovos HaLevovos*?

**Q17: *I am not talking about those sefarim – I am talking about your sefarim.***

**A:** The question is: from where are you coming, before you got there? After you figure out what comes before [these *sefarim*], you can then know from where you should continue.

ספר בלבבי משכן אבנה פורים - עמ' פג - צד, וספר בלבבי משכן אבנה ח"ו פרק יז

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185 Editor's Note: The Rav's humorous answer (which also contains his humility, for he did not impose upon the person asking the question that he specifically learn his *sefarim*), contains much depth to it, and perhaps it can be explained as follows. The Rav has oft-quoted the concept mentioned in our *sefarim hakedoshim* that there are "two beginnings to Creation" – a beginning that starts from "Beraishis", which starts with the letter ב, and a beginning that starts from the Ten Commandments, "Anochi Hashem Elokecha", which starts with the letter א. The א represents *emunah*, and the ב represents the wisdom of the Creator, which is contained in the Torah. There are two paths one may "start" from – either from *emunah*/directly bonding with Hashem, or from *wisdom*/Torah.

## 3.10 | What Purim Reveals

### *Intoxication on Purim – Removing the “Garments” of the Soul*

The first time in the Torah where intoxication is discussed is in the end of Parshas Noach: “*And Noach, man of the field, planted a vineyard, and drank from the wine, and he became drunk, and he was exposed amidst his tent.*”<sup>186</sup> The Torah uses the word “exposure” (וִיתַגֵּל) when garments are removed.

When a person is wearing several articles of clothing and he removes one of them, he is a bit more revealed, and [the same can be applied to the soul: the more that the garments atop the soul are removed] the closer one is to revealing his essence. That is one kind of removal of garments. But there is another kind of removal of garments: where the garments are removed totally. This is the implication of the word וִיתַגֵּל [that the Torah writes concerning Noach; its inner meaning is that it is referring to this concept of removing the soul’s garments.]

Thus, it is said that “When wine enters, secrets come out” – through intoxication, a person’s essence comes forth; his inner essence is revealed outward.

It is upon us to think: What are the inner “garments” [that are atop our soul]? Why is there a need to remove those garments? And what is to be gained from it?

It is explained in the *sefarim hakedoshim* that “garments” serves as a protection. When it comes to our physical “garments” - the clothing that we wear - we are protected from harm, so that we feel less of an impact if something strikes against our body. The same is true for the inner “garments” that are atop our soul. Those garments of the soul serve to protect the inner point of our souls.

To illustrate, Reb Pinchos of Koritz was careful that his clothing shouldn’t get a tear, because he felt that a tear in the garment would manifest itself as an inward breach as well. He brought proof to this from the fact that we merited redemption from Egypt due to not changing our style of dress. A change in how we appear, even a little tear in the fabric, could be a danger to the soul – because the “garments” have taken a hit.

In the laws of mourning, we must tear our clothing. In other words, mourning is a time to “remove garments”. Thus, we find that both intoxication and mourning are times where there is a concept of “removal of garments”. We need to understand: why is there a concept of “removal of garments”, both when it comes to mourning and the time of joy, Purim?

### *Purim – The Revelation of the Point Where There Is No ‘Avodah’*

It is well-known that the Hebrew word for “garment”, *levush* (לבוש) has the same letters as the word *shvil* (שביל), “path.” Normally when we receive Divine sustenance from Hashem during the rest of the year, we are receiving it through *levushim*, through “garments”, but there is another way

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<sup>186</sup> Beraishis 9:20

to receive from Hashem: when a person nurses forth a life-giving energy directly from the Source, with no intermediary.

From a deeper understanding, we can only begin “nursing” after birth, but before birth there is no nursing. Before birth, we are a fetus in the mother’s womb, receiving life directly from the source without having to nurse. The concept of the fetus shows us that there is a point where we can be above the need to “nurse” forth sustenance from Hashem through various intermediate means, and instead, to directly receive it from Him.

This can also help us understand the difference between a soul with garments, and a soul with removed garments. It can be understood when we consider the difference between a fetus and a newborn – the fetus does not have to nurse, because it is getting its energy directly from the source, whereas a newborn has to nurse, now that it is outside the mother.

The ways of serving Hashem which we are normally familiar with [from the rest of the year] are based upon the 12 unique paths of the sons of Yaakov Avinu, the *shevatim* (the tribes), and an all-inclusive path that contains all of them, which adds up for a total of 13 paths. This is written about by the *Arizal*. After that division comes a further subdivision of 70 paths, parallel to the “70 souls” who descended from Yaakov Avinu that went down to Egypt. This further divides into the 600,000 souls of the Jewish people [adding up for a total of 600,000 unique paths of serving the Creator].

But that is all within the “garments” of the soul. The garments of the soul are but “paths” of how to serve the Creator. But when we remove the “garments”, we remove all of these varying paths, and we reveal in its place one thing alone: "לעשות רצונך אלוקי הפצתי", “*To do the Your will, my God, is what I desire*”.<sup>187</sup> This is referring to the deepest point in the soul, which searches only for the King of all Kings. There, all of the disparate parts of the soul are nullified to this one point. There are no divisions there, only unity; there is a true unity of all creations with their Creator there. This revelation can be accessed through Purim.

Of the rest of the year, it is said, “Today is for action, and tomorrow is for reward.”<sup>188</sup> During this current world, which lasts for 6,000 years, it is said, “*You shall always work*.”<sup>189</sup> This current world is for “work”: spiritually speaking, this means that there is *avodah* here to be done, and as the Sages said, “Today is for action.” But in the future, there will be no more work. The future will be “*days of which I will have no desire*”<sup>190</sup>, there will be no more *bechirah* (free will), no more “work” to do.

The Sages state that in the future, all of the festivals will cease except for Purim.<sup>191</sup> In the future, there will be no more *avodah* and no more free will. Thus, Purim is a revelation of this point where there is no more *avodah* to be done.

In the normal dimension of time that we are familiar with [before the future, or whenever it is not Purim], there is *avodah*, and there are various ways of how one serves the Creator: “They were all

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187 *Tehillim* 40:9

188 *Eruvin* 22a

189 *Vayikra* 25:46

190 *Koheles* 12:1

191 *Vayikra Rabbah* 13

given from one shepherd.”<sup>192</sup> When it comes to all of these paths, one must clarify what his own *avodah* is and what the particular suitable path for him is to act. But when it comes to the inner point [that can be revealed on Purim], **where one is searching only for Hashem alone**, all of the “garments” are removed.

The search there is very clear: it is entirely a search to “see our King”<sup>193</sup>. In that point, there can be no divisions. There, all of the paths in serving the Creator are unified under one point.

### *The Point in the Soul Where There Are No Doubts in Our Avodah*

To where will this concept apply?

Clearly, this point can only be revealed for the day of Purim, and not beyond that. However, every year there are always two days of Purim (in *Eretz Yisrael*), due to the cities in Jerusalem that have a status of a “walled city” since the times of Yehoshua. And in some years, there is *Purim Hameshulash*, a “three-day Purim”, with laws of Purim spanning the course of three days. The concept of a “three-day Purim” gives more permanence to Purim, because the number “three” establishes a regular status, as we find in the laws of *chazakah*. The fact that there can be a three-day shows us that Purim doesn’t have to go away – it can be made permanent.

Every one of us knows that the day of Purim comes and goes each year. We go through regular routine of the year, where we have *avodah*, and then it is Purim where we transcend all that *avodah*, and then we are back to routine of this world, which is called “*olam*”, from the word *he’elam* (concealment). So what is the point of Purim? What does it reveal to us?

This shall lead us to discover a very inner point, which is actually the entire root of all our *avodah* – as follows. One of the Four Questions we ask on the night of Pesach is, “What is this *avodah*?” In Egypt, we were the slaves of Pharaoh, and when we were redeemed, we became the servants of Hashem. The exodus from Egypt, which we celebrate on Pesach, was a redemption from our status of slavery, where we became the servants of Hashem instead. But on Purim, we did not leave the servitude of the exile. The *Gemara* says, “We are still the servants of Achashveirosh.”<sup>194</sup> We were not redeemed from slavery on Purim. What, then, did Purim reveal to us? What redemption did we experience on Purim?

It was a deeper revelation than what the exodus from Egypt revealed. It was a revelation that even as we are enslaved in exile, at the same time, we can be “above” the slavery. That is exactly the secret of the redemption: when we reveal the point that is “above” slavery, even as we are amidst it. This is the redemption we had on Purim: we discovered the deep point in the soul where there is no “*avodah*”.

The root of all evil is Amalek, whom we erase each year on Purim. Amalek’s role is to induce evil doubts into people. Our personal *avodah* of erasing Amalek within ourselves is to transcend the

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<sup>192</sup> *Chagigah 3b*

<sup>193</sup> רצונו לראות את מלכינו, “It is our desire to see our King”

<sup>194</sup> *Megillah 14a*

doubts. When we are involved with *avodah*, we have doubts. All of our *avodah* is filled with doubts. But when we go above the point of *avodah*, there are no doubts there. When one connects himself to the King of all Kings, *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* – it is a revelation of His absoluteness, “*HaVadai Shemo*” (His Name is absolute), where there can be no room for doubt. There is absoluteness, and there can only be One is absolute – Hashem.

### *Purim – An End, and a Beginning, of the Festivals*

We can see that the festivals begin in the month of Nissan, with Pesach, and they end in the month of Adar, with Purim. Pesach is from the words “*peh sach*”, a “mouth that talks”, which refers to telling over the story of the exodus on Pesach. This is also related to the word Sichon, who was king of “Cheshbon.” This hints to our *avodah* on Pesach to have *cheshbon*, to reflect, into the events of the exodus. “One must see himself as if he is leaving Egypt.”

At the end of the festivals, an entirely new point is revealed. The festivals end with Purim, where “we are still the slaves of Achashveirosh”; we are still within the slavery. Where is our redemption? Here it is revealed that even as we enslaved in exile, we can be “above” the slavery, for we can be “above” all *avodah*. And from there, we can derive our deepest source of vitality (*chiyus*).

Haman wanted to destroy all of the Jews. Simply speaking, his wish was not fulfilled, and instead we were saved from the decree. But there is a concept that if something is written down in any of the books of the Torah, it still continues to exist. How does it still exist? We see this from the obligation on Purim to become intoxicated until one does not know the difference between Haman and Mordechai. It is explained in our holy *sefarim* that the *gematria*<sup>195</sup> of Haman and Mordechai is the same (502), because when we go above our *daas* on Purim, we are in a perspective where all are equal; where we are above the “chosen nation” status.

When one begins his *avodah*, he starts from Nissan, from Pesach. It takes him 12 months (and in a leap year, 13 months) until he can come to the point of Purim. One begins from the point of “*avodah*” until he reaches the end of the festivals, where he reveals the point where there is “no *avodah*”: he reaches the total *d'veykus* in Hashem, where he is pulled after his root.

But there is also an opposite approach to begin one’s *avodah* with, where the “end is contained in the beginning.” After Purim, the cycle of the year repeats, where it continues until the next year’s Pesach. From this perspective, Pesach/*avodah* is after the revelation of Purim.

These two different approaches represent two fundamental points in one’s *avodas Hashem*. There is a path of beginning from the month of Nissan, from the festival of Pesach, and ending in the month of Adar, with Purim. This path is to begin from “the world of exchanges”, where there is *avodah*, where there are difficulties to traverse; and it ends at a point that is above thought and *daas* – the point of “*ad d’lo yoda*”, of no *daas*, which is Purim. There is also another path in one’s *avodas Hashem*: for one to begin from Purim, and from there, to enter into *avodah*, which involves *daas*. In

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<sup>195</sup> numerical value in Hebrew

this path, where one begins from Purim, he has a gain in that he can now enter into *daas* [during the rest of the year] after having achieved a bond with the Creator [from Purim].

### *Drawing The Light From Above Onto Our Physical World*

Essentially, these two paths represent the exile and the redemption.

In the perspective of our exile, of which Avraham Avinu was told by Hashem that “*it will be surely known to you that your offspring will be strangers in a land that is not theirs...and after this, they will leave with great possessions.*”<sup>196</sup> The Jewish people, which began with Avraham Avinu, begin with servitude. When the exile of Egypt ended, we left the slavery of Pharoah and instead we became servants with Hashem; we began with servitude and we ended with servitude.

But on Purim, when we accepted the Torah again anew, willingly and out of love for the miracles, the exile of Egypt which led to the giving of the Torah had now reached a higher conclusion. Since the “end is contained in the beginning”, the end of the redemption, which took place on Purim, was a new beginning, which would now lead into “it will surely be known to you that your offspring will be strangers in a land that is not theirs.” The revelation of Purim created an internal overhaul in the souls and in our entire *avodas Hashem*.

In this point lays the secret of the true redemption. Although “we are still slaves of Achashveirosh”, this is a servitude amidst *d’veykus* to Hashem, and not a servitude to the impure forces. In spite of the fact that we were still under the servitude of Achashveirosh, we experienced a new receiving of the Torah, where we willingly had a reacceptance the Torah.

At Har Sinai, the Jewish people were afraid to hear the Torah from Hashem directly, so they requested instead that Moshe tell it to them. The original acceptance of the Torah was thus through Moshe. But on Purim, when we willingly re-accepted the Torah, it was a higher level. The *gematria* of “*Moshe*” is 345, and the *gematria* of “*ratzon*” is 346, which shows us that the acceptance of Torah we had on *Purim*, through our own *ratzon*, was a higher level than the acceptance of the Torah we had through Moshe. Purim was a revelation of a point that was higher than the original acceptance of Torah, and it revealed a deeper point in our *avodah*.

“All of the festivals will cease in the future, except Purim.”<sup>197</sup> Purim is a light of the future. The deeper understanding of the difference between the festivals and Purim is that the festivals are within our exile, of this 6,000 year era, and that is why they will cease; whereas Purim was a connection to the light of the World To Come that illuminates This World.

From the simpler perspective, the World To Come is the reward for all of our toil in this current era – as it is implied by the statement of the Sages, “Today is for action, and tomorrow is for receiving their reward”<sup>198</sup>, and the statement of *Chazal*, “One who toils on Erev Shabbos [a reference

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<sup>196</sup> *Beraishis* 15:14

<sup>197</sup> *Yalkut Shimeoni* 944

<sup>198</sup> *Erwin* 22a

to This World] will eat on Shabbos [a reference to the World To Come].”<sup>199</sup> From this perspective, the Next World continues from the actions of this current world. But from the inner perspective contained in our *avodah*, it is all turned around – “*V’nahafoch Hu*” - which creates an entire overhaul in all of our inner work: that one needs to become connected to the light of the future, when all “garments” will be removed, and from there, one will derive all of his vitality.

### *Two Paths of Beginning to Connect To The Creator*

Let us try to explain this in simpler terms.

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*”<sup>200</sup>, 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.*”<sup>201</sup> 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”<sup>202</sup>, because he recognized that there must be an Owner to all of Creation. He figured out the entire Torah by connecting himself to Hashem. This 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.

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199 *Avodah Zarah 23a*

200 *Rashi Devarim 4:35*

201 *Shir HaShirim 1:2*

202 *Beraishis Rabbah: Vayigash: 95:3*

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.

### *The Secret of Purim and 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<sup>203</sup>!!**

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 Forth The 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*”.<sup>204</sup> 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.<sup>205</sup> 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

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203 *Tanna D'vei Eliyahu* 18

204 *Michah* 7:8

205 *Megillah* 16b

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 l’eila*” – “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*”.<sup>206</sup>

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: Bringing Hashem Into Our Day-To-Day Life*

**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 forth 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!**

(On the day that the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, Mashiach is born<sup>207</sup>. Thus, even at the very time of destruction, when Hashem is “tearing His garments”, there is also revelation taking place. This shows us how opposite concepts can unite: mourning/destruction and Purim are one at their root, for both of them reveal Mashiach.)

We must know clearly the outcome of all these words here. 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

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<sup>206</sup> *Tehillim 69:19*

<sup>207</sup> *Yerushalmi Berachos 2:4*

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 – And 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.

These are not words of *mussar* - this is reality! This is the very reality of a human being.

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.”<sup>208</sup> 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”<sup>209</sup>, implying that there is a resemblance between Yom Kippur and Purim. The connection between Yom Kippur and Purim is that 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.

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208 *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 693:3

209 *Tikkunei HaZohar* 421

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.

## 3.11 | Two Ways To Reach Simchah

### *Increasing Our Joy in Adar: Where Do We Get Simchah From?*

*Baruch Hashem*, we are in the month of Adar, where we “increase joy”. We need to understand where does this *simchah* come from?

If someone isn't happy during the rest of the year, it cannot be said of him that he must “increase” his joy, because he doesn't have the joy to begin with. Rather, he would have to acquire joy in the first place. The mitzvah to “increase joy” in Adar implies that one needs the joy from beforehand, and in Adar he has an *avodah* to increase it.

### *Mordechai Raised Esther With Emunah*

In the *Megillah*, it is written, "ויהי מרדכי אומן את הדסה, ותהי לו לבת" – “*And Mordechai knew Hadassah (Esther), and she was to him a daughter.*” Mordechai raised Esther/Hadassah in his home, and the *possuk* say that he “knew” her, אומן, which means that he raised her. But אומן can also come from the word אמונה – *emunah*/faith – meaning that he raised her with *emunah*. The second part of the *possuk* says that she was to him “a daughter”, and the Sages teach that this really means that he married her.

Is there a connection between the beginning of the *Megillah*, and the end of the *Megillah*, which ends with how there was “days of celebration and joy”? Or is the *Megillah* just telling us a story, that Mordechai raised Esther and married her, and eventually there was a miracle, and these days became days of celebration?

### *The Root of Sadness – The Element of Earth*

Let us reflect.

Everything in Creation has an opposite force to it. What is the opposite of joy? Sadness. What is the natural state of a person – to be happy, or to be sad? Does a person need a reason to be happy, because naturally he is sad? Or is a person naturally happy and he would need a reason to make him sad? What is the root of sadness?

The root of sadness is explicitly stated in the Torah. When Adam and Chavah ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*, there was a curse of “*etzev*” (pain and hardship) placed upon mankind. Woman was cursed with the pains of childbirth, and man has to endure the curse of hard labor, which is called *etzev*.

This *etzev* was not the intended plan which Hashem had in mind in creating man. When Hashem first created man, there was nothing but joy in Gan Eden, between Adam and Chavah, and Hashem Himself gladdened them there. After they had to leave Gan Eden because of the sin, both man and woman were cursed with sadness, and all of Creation as well was plunged into a natural

sadness. If not for the sin, had man and woman remained in their initial pure state, the world would never know what sadness is.

As is well-known, there are four elements in Creation: fire, wind, water, and earth. Sadness is rooted in the element of earth. When man was cursed with “*from earth you come, and to the earth you shall return*”, this brought sadness to the world, and from this we learn that sadness comes from earth. The fact that man is now connected to the element of earth is the reason for sadness.

How, then, do we leave that “earth” which has become embedded into our makeup? How do we elevate ourselves above it and “shake off the dust”? How do we shake off the dust of the earth upon us which causes sadness, and how do we reveal an inner and deep kind of *simchah*?

Ever since man sinned, he is cursed with hard labor, in order to be able to survive. He must work in order to be able to eat. This was not just a curse of exertion. It meant that all of our life contains an ‘earthiness’ to it. Even when a person is riding on a bus and he’s 20 kilometers above the ground, his perspective is still attached to the “earth” of this world.

Ever since the sin, man has an attitude of living within the earthiness of this world, and our nature is that we are pulled after sadness, rather than happiness. Before the sin, the nature of man was to be happy, because man was in Gan Eden then. After the sin, when man is no longer in Gan Eden, he was cursed with having to return to “earth”, with death, and he entered into an “earthy” kind of existence. Now man is naturally sad, unless he has a reason to make him happy.

We can see that as soon as a baby is born, what is the first thing he does? He cries. He has come into a world in which “*from earth you come, and to the earth you shall return.*” He comes into this world, and he leaves the world accompanied with crying. It is all a result of the element of earth which man has become attached to ever since the first sin.

Now that we live after the sin, we are naturally drawn towards sadness. The question is: How do we leave this natural sadness, and to come to have *simchah*? How do we have *simchah* during the rest of the year, and in the month of Adar especially, where we are supposed to have more *simchah*, and especially Purim, the apex of our *simchah*? How do we arrive at *simchah* when it is currently not in our nature?

There are levels within levels to *simchah*. We will start with explaining the first level of it.

### *Emunah Raises a Person*

As mentioned earlier, the possuk of **וַיְהִי אִמּוֹן אֶת הַדָּסָה** hints to us that Mordechai raised her, which is also interpreted to mean that he instilled *emunah* in her. How do we reconcile these two interpretations of the possuk? Is there a connection between these two meanings of the possuk, or are they separate and apart from each other?

There are always “seventy interpretations to the Torah”, and they are all given from “One shepherd”, which teaches us that even when there are differing explanations of a verse in the Torah, there is always one inner point that unifies them together. So when the possuk says that Mordechai

raised Esther, and it also uses a term of *emunah*, there must be a connection between these two matters.

The connection is that when Mordechai raised her, he raised her with *emunah*. We can learn from here that it is *emunah* which “raises” a person.

### *Planting Emunah and Reaping the Benefits Later*

The earth is an element which does not grow. The only things that grow in earth are things which we put into it, which can emerge later from the earth, after it has been nurtured. But the earth itself does not grow. The *Gemara* says that “*Emunos*” is referring to “*Seder Zeraim*” of the *Mishnayos*, the agricultural laws of the Torah, and the *Talmud Yerushalmi* explains because “when a person plants his crops in the ground, he believes in the Eternally Living One”, and then he plants. Hence, the laws of *zeraim* are connected with *emunah*.

Why does a person need *emunah* in order to plant things? Why doesn't he just go by the statistics, and assume that by all means of probability, his crops will grow safely? True, sometimes there is flooding or drought, or other natural disasters, which might harm the crops. But during most years, the crops will grow normally, and everything will turn out fine. Why does he need *emunah* in order to plant things? The Sages teach us that a person really needs *emunah* in order to plant. How are we to understand this?

And doesn't a person always need *emunah*, not only when it comes to planting? When a person leaves his house to go to shul, does he not need *emunah* that he will arrive safely at shul? Maybe something might happen to him along the way, *chas v'shalom*. Does a person not need *emunah* whenever he's on the go? Does he not need *emunah* when he goes to sleep that he will wake up the next day? Not everyone wakes up the next day, so a person needs *emunah* before he goes to sleep, that he will wake up. What then is the special *emunah* that a person needs in Hashem when he is about to plant?

When a person plants something, he is placing a sprout into the earth. The sprout is a living creation, while the earth is a dead organism. So he is really lowering the level of the sprout, which is alive, by lowering it into the dead earth.

We place a man in the ground only when he is dead; we do not place him in the ground when he is alive, G-d forbid. We bury an animal in the ground only when it is dead, not when it is alive. Why does a person place a plant in the ground, then? Of course, it's because this is how it grows. But how does it work? Why is it that when we place plants into the ground, they grow, but when we place people and animals into the ground, they remain dead? Planting is thus a novel concept. It shows us that a non-living creation, the earth, can bring forth life.

The earth does not keep alive people and animals. But with plants, it nurtures them, keeps them alive, and makes them grow. When a person believes with *emunah* in Hashem before he plants things, the depth of this is because he knows how things can come out of the earth. It is not just to believe that the crops will grow. It is a power to take something alive, plant it into the ground, placing it into a place of death – inside the ground it is a place of death, not a place of life – and even

though the plant “dies” in the ground, it “dies” in order to be nurtured by the earth, where it can sprout and grow.

What is the secret behind planting, where something is placed into the ground, a place of death, and something alive emerges from it and grows from it? This is the secret of the words of the Sages that before one plants anything, first “he believes in the Eternally living One”, and then only does he plant anything.

One believes that Mashiach will come and he awaits for him. If one does not believe in his arrival, he will not see his arrival; he doesn’t get up by the resurrection of the dead. The simple way to understand this is because if he didn’t believe, he is missing *zechusim* (merits) and so he doesn’t merit to be revived. But the deeper way to understand it is because it is only the *emunah* in Mashiach’s arrival which resurrects him. If he didn’t have the *emunah*, he was missing the ingredient that resurrects people from the dead.

If a person plants a wheat kernel, he can later enjoy the wheat when it grows from the earth. When he places seeds of a fruit in the ground, eventually there will be fruit that grows. *Emunah* is also something we “plant”. If one plants *emunah*, he gets up from the ground by the resurrection of the dead. If one doesn’t have *emunah*, he never planted anything, so he cannot get out of the ground.

When does our *emunah* emerge ripe from the ground? It will be when Mashiach comes, where we will see all that we have planted. Then “*they will awaken and rejoice, those who dwelled in the earth.*” Just as a seed is planted in the ground and eventually it emerges as a ripe crop from the ground, so will those who had *emunah* in their lifetimes emerge out of the ground, renewed. (The more *emunah* one had, the more he will be renewed.)

So *emunah* is what we “plant” ourselves with, and *emunah* is what makes us emerge from the “ground” one day. We “plant with tears, and with joy we reap”. When a person is buried, there are tears – “we plant with tears”. But when a person rises from the ground, there will be joy; “with joy we reap.” Awakening from death, where people will rise from the ground, is enabled by a person’s *emunah* that he had in his lifetime.

That will be in the future, and Hashem should help us reach that time even now. But even before Mashiach arrives, before the resurrection of the dead, we have an opportunity every day to experience this on some level. Every day a person goes to sleep, which is considered to be “a sixtieth of death”. When a person rises in the morning, he is renewed. Just as a person will get up in the future from the ground, according to the level of *emunah* that he had, so does a person getting up in the morning resemble a degree of the resurrection of the dead. Every day in *Shemoneh Esrei*, in the blessing of *מחיי המתים*, we thank Hashem for reviving the dead, in the present tense, which implies that Hashem is reviving people every day. This refers to the resurrection which we experience every day when we get up in the morning.

If a person wasn’t sure if Hashem will wake him tomorrow, would he go to sleep? (Some people, unfortunately, would). Most people will not go to sleep if there is even a slight chance that they

won't wake up the next day. What is the reason, then, that a person goes to sleep at night? It is because deep down, he believes that he is entrusting his soul to Hashem at night.

This shows us about a deep point in our soul. Even if a person says that he doesn't have any belief in Hashem (Heaven forbid), and even if he doesn't say it openly and he just denies it in his own thoughts, there is still an *emunah* which every person is making use of each day. A person deep down believes that today can continue into the next day. He believes that today is not the last day of his life, and that it is not the last day of the world or the last day of the universe. If a person would have even the slightest suspicion that perhaps today is the last day of life, he would behave totally differently. He would feel differently, he would think differently, and he would do different things. But our nature is that we naturally believe that today is not the last day on earth.

When you eat a fruit, is there a continuation to the fruit you are eating? The particular fruit you are eating will not continue anymore. But if you plant that fruit in the ground, there will be a continuation to it. Planting shows us that everything has a continuation to it. A person who has no children is considered to be dead. When a person has children, he is considered alive, because his children continue his existence.

When one has *emunah* in Hashem before he plants, the depth of this is because he believes that there will be continuation. Things which grow, things which are alive, and people, are all creations that have a continuation to them. Anything which has a continuation to it is called *emunah*.

### *Emunah vs. Despair*

What is the opposite of *emunah*? Let's take, for example, the belief that Mashiach will come. Why would a person stop believing (G-d forbid) in the coming of Mashiach? One reason is if he would become a heretic. A second reason would be because he simply gives up. The opposite of *emunah* is not only *kefirah* (heresy), but *yeiush* (despair). When a person sees that something isn't happening, he is apt to have *yeiush*, despair.

If a person is imprisoned, G-d forbid, and he's sitting in jail for a year, two years, twenty years or more – G-d forbid – he is very likely to feel despair in such a situation. But we have been waiting for Mashiach for much more than twenty years. We have been waiting for this since the beginning of time. Our wait for him didn't begin with the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*. It began many years before, ever since the day that Adam sinned and was sent out of Gan Eden, where we have been awaiting Mashiach. The only way for us to go back to our original state in Gan Eden will only happen in the era of Mashiach, and at this point, 5771 years have passed since then, where we have been awaiting Mashiach for all of this time. The force which dampens our belief in Mashiach's arrival is *yeiush*, despair.

What is despair? Despair says that there will be no continuation. To illustrate, the *Gemara* says that if one finds a lost item, he is only allowed to keep it if there are no markings on it, and if the owner despaired. When the owner despairs, the person who finds it may keep it. The person who despairs says, "Woe to me, upon this monetary loss." In other words, he is saying, "I had it, and now

I don't; it's over". But if the owner has some slimmer of hope that he might find it, he believes that there is continuation here, and that it's not all over.

Despair kills all hope for continuation. *Emunah* says that there can be continuation.

The Sages state, "One must say, "When will my actions reach the actions of my forefathers?" What does this mean? It means to believe in the continuation of the Avos, of all that they had reached, and therefore, I can link myself to them and continue the link. Did the forefathers exist one time in history and now they are longer here? Or can their lives be continued?

If a person says that he will never touch upon the actions of the Avos, it means he has really "despaired" over the actions of the Avos. In his perspective, they are not his Avos! A son is a continuation of his father. Do we believe that there is a continuation to the path that began with the Avos? To wish that our actions can reach the actions of our forefathers means that we did not despair from the path which they began. Rather, their path continues.

That is what is called *emunah*. *Emunah* at its root did not begin with the actions of the Avos. Hashem created His own handiwork, Adam, in Gan Eden, and Adam was sent out of Gan Eden. Do we have any *emunah* that we can return to there? That is *emunah*. *Emunah* says that if something exists, it will continue. True, right now there has been a schism in the grand plan of things, and it is currently not revealed. But it began, and it will continue.

When a person doesn't have *emunah* and he has *yeiush*, he becomes sad. When a person has *emunah* that something will definitely come back, whether it comes back in a month, or in two months, a year or two years or more, but he believes totally that it shall come back – he is eternally connected to that which he believes in.

If a person G-d forbid loses a child in his lifetime, and he does not have *emunah* in *techiyas hameisim*, then he has totally disconnected himself from his own child. But if he believes in *techiyas hameisim*, and he believes that after 120 years he will be able to meet his child again in Heaven, then the absence of his child will feel only temporary. It will still feel painful for him, it will feel very painful, but it doesn't mean he has become totally disconnected from his child. The connection will still be there.

This is what *emunah* is. *Emunah* is to believe, with conviction, that whatever has begun, shall continue. It will return someday. We await Mashiach "even though he tarries." He will definitely come, and we don't know when. But he will definitely come. That is our *emunah* in the coming of Mashiach. When we believe with absolute conviction that something will return to us, we are never disconnected from it.

### *The Emunah of Queen Esther*

The depth of *emunah* is contained in the verse of **וַיְהִי אִמּוֹן אֶת הַדָּסָה**, the fact that Mordechai raised Esther in his home. What does it mean that he raised her? Does it mean he gave her breakfast every day? It means that he brought her up through *emunah*. He taught her that if something grows, it always continues. If it can grow bigger, it never stops. Something which does not get bigger gets

smaller, until it turns to nothing. Mordechai raised Esther with the attitude that there is always continuation.

When Esther realized that there was a decree of genocide upon the entire Jewish people, her *emunah* that she was raised with quickly jumped in and she knew that such a thing cannot happen. Her *emunah* told her that the Jewish people will always continue, so she knew that the decree cannot come to action. The Jewish people, who upkeep the existence of the world, can never go missing. There is always a continuation of the Jewish people. This is what is called *emunas Yisrael* – the faith that a Jew has. The *Gemara* says that none of the 12 tribes will ever be destroyed, and this shows us that there is always a continuation to the Jewish people.

### *Happiness Within Sadness*

This power of *emunah* is the root of how a person can leave the element of earth, and reveal *simchah*. When a person dies, there is sadness. His body returns to the earth, and he is accompanied to the grave with crying. But if a person has the attitude that returning to the earth means eventual growth from the earth, herein lays a root of *simchah*.

When a person plants, he may be sad that he is losing these seeds, but he knows that ultimately it will emerge as a ripe and complete crop from the ground; there is happiness within the sadness as he plants it. When a person plants a wheat kernel, is he upset that he has lost it now? No, because he knows that eventually there will emerge many more wheat kernels from it. One can “plant with tears”, yet be aware at the same time that there will be a harvest, and in that way, he can have happiness amidst his current sadness; he will still feel pain, but it will be mitigated, from his hope in the future.

In order to leave behind sadness, and enter into *simchah*, one of the ways is, to see hope amidst death; to view death and darkness as a “planting” of *emunah*, where eventually, something will emerge from that darkness.

### *The Deeper Way of Handling Difficult Periods of Life*

All of us in our life go through various difficult situations. Sometimes we go through pleasant times, and sometimes, we go through rougher times. What happens when a person goes through unpleasant situations?

There are different reactions. Some people become angry. Some people choose to suffer in silence, just as Aharon was silent upon hearing about the death of his children. Some people are on the level of saying, “Everything that Hashem does is for the good.” That is a wonderful level to be on. Others are on an even higher level and they simply believe that everything is from Hashem, and that is enough for them. Yet, this is still not the depth of our life.

When we face difficulty in our life, we are really going through a situation of “death”. The *Gemara* says, “What difference does it make if it’s killed entirely or halfway?” A person is either killed entirely or partially, so there is a partial kind of death that a person may go through. Any

difficulty that a person goes through is really “a sixtieth of death”. And the reason why these situations are given to us is so that it can lead us to “plant” *emunah* from them.

All of the “deaths” that we go through – not the death which comes at the end of life, but the deaths we experience on a partial level in our own lifetime, which feels like a degree of death – are meant for us to plant *emunah* from them. We “plant with tears”, and what are we planting? We are planting *emunah*. All that we go through, without exception, whether it seems good or bad, is always an opportunity to plant more *emunah*. If one lives with awareness of this perspective, he leaves behind sadness and despair, and he enters into the place that is called *simchah*.

Esther declared Purim as *y'mei mishteh v'simchah*, “days of celebration and joy.” She reaped forth the *emunah* that emerged from this grim situation, because Mordechai had raised her with the *emunah* attitude, that whatever happens will always lead to something good. He didn't just teach her to accept suffering with love and with *emunah*. Rather, all that we go through is an opportunity to plant *emunah*. Then there can be growth from the ground, and eventually, there can be a “revival of the dead” that emerges from the ground.

The words here are not just words and definitions. They are life, to anyone who searches for real vitality in life.

### *Our Entire Reward Is Emunah*

Every person who goes to work gets paid a salary at the end. A person has “work” on this world and he has to work hard. What kind of salary is he awaiting in return from all of this work? What kind of *s'char* (reward) are we looking forward to? Is a person awaiting gardens and lush lands in Gan Eden? Is he waiting for marble tiling in a palace? What does a person want Gan Eden to look like?

“There is no *s'char* (reward) for *mitzvos* on This World.” Why is there no reward for *mitzvos* on this world? It is because the reward of a *mitzvah* is our own *emunah*. It is written, “*All of Your mitzvos, are emunah.*” But this reward is only available to one who searches for *emunah*. If one isn't looking for *emunah*, he doesn't consider this to be a reward.

What is the reward which Hashem will give to His creations one day? Hashem will pay us back with one thing alone. Everything else will be on the side. The one thing we will get back for all that we have done, is *emunah*. That will be our reward!

Some people hear this and they say, “So what I am working so hard for on this world?! It's not worth it! That's what all my hard work is for? That's my reward in the end for everything that I have ever done?! *Emunah*? In that case, I'm not interested in working so hard!” But this is the absolute truth.

When you take an orange and you squeeze out the juice, that juice is all you have from it. What is all the ‘juice’ that we can squeeze out of this world? One thing alone: whatever *emunah* we have gained.

Our souls have been returning to this world in *gilgulim* (reincarnations) over the last 6,000 years, and what do we have from all of our lifetimes? One thing alone: our *emunah* that we have gained in

*Hashem Yisborach*. It is this that we are working hard for. “The job is not upon you to complete, but you are not exempt from it.” The *Mesillas Yescharim* says that our task on this world begins with hard work, and it ends with a gift. What is the gift we walk away with at the end of everything? To merit true *emunah*. That is all that we have from our existence in Creation.

There is nothing else we are living for! All that we see in front of us are nothing but “tools” to help us get to that recognition, nothing more. Besides for *emunah*, there is nothing else in Creation.

One who tastes *emunah* and he feels a vitality in it, is one who can begin to understand how this will be our entire reward that we walk away with: to recognize the reality of *Ain Od Milvado*, “There is nothing besides for Him.” One who doesn’t feel this and doesn’t live this is left in wonder of how it could be that our entire reward from all our hard work is the *emunah*.

### *The Difference Between Purim and The Other Festivals*

Mordechai raised Esther with *emunah*, to believe that there is always a continuation, and from this came the salvation to the Jewish people. The festivals will all disappear in the future, except for Purim. This is because everything we walked away with from Purim is about one thing alone: the *emunah* in Hashem, and nothing more. That is the one thing which will never disappear.

On Pesach, we have *matzah* and *maror*, and the *korbon pesach*. These things are all physical and they will eventually disappear. On Sukkos, we dwelled in the Clouds of Glory, which were also tangible. On Purim, though, we did not gain any physical mitzvos from it. We walked away with one thing alone from it: *emunah* in Hashem. This is the one thing that will never go away, and it is also all that we will have in the future.

The other festivals also reveal *emunah*, but they are all “garments” of the *emunah*. But Purim revealed to us how every situation is really *emunah* in Hashem. That is the whole purpose of recounting the miracle of Purim. It is a hidden miracle which is openly revealed to anyone who has *emunah*. The events of the world happen, the world runs its course, and the question is - how each person sees it.

### *Connecting To Purim vs. Superficially Fulfilling The Mitzvos of Purim*

A person who sees the *emunah* throughout the story of the *Megillas Esther* and when it comes Purim he lives that *emunah* - he is a “*ben olam haba*” (destined for the World To Come).

But if it comes Purim and a person merely fulfills the *mitzvos* of *mishloach manos* and *matanos l'evyonim*, and he also has the Purim *seudah*, but he doesn’t live the story of the *Megillas Esther* and he doesn’t gain a vitality from the *emunah* that was clearly revealed by this story – then he has no connection to Purim! He definitely fulfills the *mitzvos* and he will certainly get reward for it, Hashem doesn’t withhold reward from anyone, but he is not connected to the actual day that is Purim.

The days of “celebration and joy” of Purim is not merely a *simchah* where we celebrate our survival. Surely that is also part of it, but it’s not everything. There was a decree that all of us should

get killed and we were saved, and we celebrate this, but that's not the depth of the *simchah* of Purim. The depth of the *simchah* on Purim is when a person believes that there is Hashem, there are His creations and there is a holy Torah, and the Jewish people are the root creations, and they are eternal. "The eternity of Yisrael does not lie" – it cannot ever be discontinued.

A person can feel this on Purim and see the *emunah* in its full force, of the Divine Plan. When a person realizes the Divine Providence of the Purim story, that itself is the miracle. The miracle is not simply that we were saved. Even if we would have died, it would only have been physically, because our souls would still exist in Heaven, for the Jewish people are eternal. Purim means to see the Divine plan, through *emunah* - and to derive a *simchah* from it.

### *The Purpose of Intoxication on Purim*

What does it mean that the days of Purim are called "days of celebration and joy"? When a person drinks on Purim, it should be like the *Gemara* says, "Whoever becomes convinced through his wine, he has *daas* of the Creator."<sup>210</sup> When one drinks the wine on Purim, he can lose his *daas* – meaning, he can lose his natural *daas*, which is currently the "*daas* of the Serpent" that entered mankind ever since the first sin – and then he can see a clear perspective on things, through the perspective of *emunah*.

People think that drinking wine on Purim means to make yourself happy through the wine, and they take literally the verse, "*Wine gladdens the heart of man*"<sup>211</sup>, and people think that this is the meaning of the "*mitzvah*" of the day. This is not the "*mitzvah*" of the day – it is basically "the sin" of the day! It has nothing to do with Purim! Gentiles also get drunk in the bar with this same thinking. It clearly cannot be the *mitzvah* of the day to simply get drunk.

The *mitzvah* of Purim day is *mishteh v'simchah*, "celebration and joy", which means a drinking that causes a person to lose his crooked and impaired *daas*, his incorrect perspectives, where he does not see the truth. When he loses his false *daas* - the *daas* that entered into our psyche ever since man ate from the *Eitz HaDaas* that contained evil *daas* - now he is left with only holy and good *daas*. He sees from then on that **כי טוב ה'**, "Hashem is good." He sees how the entire story of the *Megillah*, from beginning until end, is nothing but revelation of Hashem's *malchus* upon the world. And from there, a person reaches what is called *simchah*.

When one truly reaches this *simchah*, it doesn't make a difference to him how much he drank that day or not. The entire essence of the day of Purim, which is about *simchah*, begins with *emunah*. It begins with **ויהי אומן את הדסה**, the fact that Mordechai raised Esther with *emunah* - and that is what led to the "days of celebration and joy" that is Purim.

That is all one path of how a person can reach *simchah*.

### *A Second Path Towards Simchah: Disconnecting From This World*

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<sup>210</sup> Talmud Bavli Eruvin 65a

<sup>211</sup> Tehillim 104:15

There is a second path as well, based upon the next half of the above *possuk*: **וַתְּהִי לוֹ לְבַת**, Esther was like a daughter to him, which *Chazal* expound to mean that he married her. What is the depth behind why Mordechai married her?

Man in Gan Eden had joy with Hashem in Gan Eden. Ever since the sin when man and woman had to leave Gan Eden, there was sadness. When Mordechai married Esther, after having raised her with *emunah*, what was he really doing? He was returning to Gan Eden, to the original joy that was in Gan Eden, which was between the first man and woman, Adam and Chavah. There was no sadness then, no element of earth that took over man yet. Mordechai married Esther to resemble the original marriage between Adam and Chavah.

Mordechai didn't bow to Haman even though it was permissible for him to do so - it is permissible to flatter the wicked if they are powerful and dangerous, and even so, Mordechai did not bow to Haman. Why? The depth of this is because Mordechai lived in a Gan Eden-like state! In Gan Eden, there are no wicked people, so there is no one there to flatter!

Mordechai lived in a different world entirely! He didn't 'live' in a world that everyone else lived in, where there was an Achashveirosh, a Haman, where there was strife, where there was war. Mordechai lived somewhere else. He was living in a generation where there was nothing in front of him! It was like Adam before the sin, where he lived only with Hashem in Gan Eden, along with Chavah his wife. That is what kind of existence Mordechai lived.

And how did he accomplish the return to Gan Eden? Adam was sent out of it and entered into sadness, into despair. But Mordechai rectified this, by raising Esther with *emunah*. He returned to the original state of Adam in Gan Eden before the sin.

Adam was sent out of Gan Eden and in the future all of us those who merit it will return to that state. What is an example we have today of the future? Purim. All festivals will disappear in the future. Purim is a resemblance of the future, so it is also the resemblance of the state of Adam before the sin. Just as Adam before the sin had only joy and no sadness, so did Mordechai have no sadness.

That is the depth of why he didn't bow to Haman, who had an idol hanging from his neck, because idols are called "*atzavim*", from the word *atzvus*, sadness. Idol worship is connected with sadness. But Mordechai lived in a dimension where there is no sadness, he lived in a Gan Eden like state, so he had no connection to sadness. That is why he could not bow to Haman.

The miracle that was wrought by Mordechai and Esther was therefore taking place in a state of "before sin" which they were living in, and that is why it is forever, because anything that existed before the sin is eternal. When sin is removed from the world, it removes anything that was connected with sin. Something that was done in a world of Gan Eden, is eternal, because it is not connected with sin.

If a person removes from himself sadness and he lives in complete *simchah*, he is not found in this world! This world is called "the lowly world", it is a world which is connected to the element of earth, the lowest of the elements. When a person leaves sadness and enters into *simchah*, he is not found on this tangible world which we recognize.

If a person will ask, “Do you mean that Mordechai wasn’t here on this world? Did he not wear *tefillin*?” He surely was on the world, but he wasn’t on This World which we recognize, which is connected to the element of earth. He was part of *Klal Yisrael*, he lived in Shushan and with the Jews of Shushan, but he lived a “*tefach* higher” than the ground which everyone else lived on. When a person walks on the ground of this world alone and that is where he identifies his existence, he is connected to the earth; his feet touch the ground and they become dirtied from the earth. In the olden days, people worshipped the dirt on their feet. But Mordechai was above the ground - and not within it.

The Sages say that the day of Purim will never cease, because it is from an otherworldly dimension, a different world than this one, which can never cease. It is from a world of revelation, which always continues and never stops. This is because the concept of *emunah* says that there is always continuation.

It is written in the Megillah, “**וּמֹרְדֵכַי יָדַע אֶת הַגְּזִירָה וְאֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה**”, “*Mordechai knew about the decree and all that had happened*” - and the *Sfas Emes* explains this to mean that he knew that the decree will cease. How did he know it would cease? Simply speaking, he had *ruach hakodesh*, but the deeper reason is because he knew there could never be such a decree. When everyone else heard the decree, they were saddened, because they were not aware of the *emunah* that Mordechai had. But Mordechai had the *emunah* that it would not happen, and so he was able to live all the time with *simchah*. Only when someone has this *emunah* can he leave the element of earth and its sadness.

### *What Do We Take From Purim?*

In simpler and clearer language, to what can we compare Purim to? When a person wades into the sea, he leaves dry land and enters into water. When a person enters Purim, he goes through one door and exits through another door. How does he enter it? With just *leitzanus* (jest)? And what does he walk away with, from Purim? The day of Purim is a day that continues; it does not stop. If Purim has stopped for a person, if “it’s over” the day after it ends, such a Purim is not a Purim. Purim is all about the *emunah* in continuation. If it stops at the 15<sup>th</sup> of Adar for a person, it is not Purim. Not only has it ended on the 15<sup>th</sup> for such a person – even on the 14<sup>th</sup> it wasn’t a Purim. The Purim that “ends” for a person after it’s over is not a Purim!

With what does a person go into Purim with, and with what does he leave it with? We all have *emunah* in the principles of our faith. Some of us have clearer *emunah* and some have less clearer *emunah*, and some have it less on even an intellectual level. But the question is how much *chiyus* (vitality) a person has from his *emunah*. That is the yardstick which measures a person’s true level.

One kind of measuring stick is how well a person accepts suffering with love, another measuring stick is how happy a person can be in difficult times, but there is an entirely different way that shows a person’s true level. Chavakuk said the “one” thing in the final generations which all rests on is, “*A righteous person shall live by his faith.*” This means that what sustains a person is his *emunah*.

## *From Where Are We Getting Our Chiyus (Spiritual Vitality)?*

When a person is thirsty and he gets water, he feels that it revitalizes him. He feels it tangibly. What sustains our soul? What makes us feel alive?

If a person eats and he feels that it has nourished him well, from where does this food come? All food comes from the ground, from the element of earth. If so, if a person feels that eating good food makes him happy, he is getting his feeling of vitality from the element of earth, which will not be enough to invigorate his spiritual vitality.

The same goes for bread, fruit, and vegetables which all come from the ground. Can any of these things give us *chiyus*? The Sages say that the more a person enjoys this world, he is drinking “salty water” – it seems that it is satisfying him but really it’s making him thirstier. When a person wants more and more things of this world, all of these things come from earth, so he is becoming more and more dependent on all of this earth.

If a person has a source of vitality in his life along with all of the “earth” that he is consuming, he will be able to nurse forth vitality which brings *simchah*. This doesn’t mean to learn Torah every day for an hour, or to do more mitzvos. It is about living from the *mitzvah* that you do.

There are people who do all the mitzvos but only because they have to, as if they are forced, or because they know it’s important, or because they know that it’s the purpose of living. But do they get *chiyus* from it? Avraham Avinu was against the whole world in his times, when the whole world didn’t believe in Hashem, and Avraham was the only one who believed. He didn’t just believe in Hashem, he lived from it.

The Sages say that righteous are called alive even after death, whereas the wicked are called dead even they are while alive. The depth of this because when the wicked live, they live off their element of earth, which is a deathlike vitality, a life of sadness. But the *tzaddikim* get their vitality from the G-dly light within the soul, from the Torah which that reveals, and from the *mitzvos* which are the garments of this light. At death, when a *tzaddik* returns his body to the earth, it is only his external body which goes back to the earth, but his soul remains alive and full of life.

We cannot get *chiyus* from anything that is connected to the element of earth. Anything connected to earth is connected with death; by contrast, anything not connected with earth does not die. Thus, the *tzaddikim* live on after they die.

What does it mean to live and be alive? It means to live a life in which there is always continuation. This is what it means to live a life of *emunah*. When a person derives vitality from solely from food, or from his family life, or from the events of the world, he does not have real vitality, because all of these things have an end to them. But when a person lives from his bond with Hashem, and from the Torah he learns, which is “the Torah that is never exchanged”, and from true *ahavas Yisrael* – of whom it said “The eternity of Yisrael does not lie” – he lives from the things which have no end to them. This is what it means to have *chiyus*!

In order to reach this *chiyus* - this inner place - one needs to remove himself from all of the dirty, blackened “garments” of This World.

### *Mishteh V'Simchah – Celebration and Then Joy*

In order to reach *simchah* in Purim, there must be “*mishteh*” (celebration) beforehand, for Purim is called “*mishteh v'simchah*” – hence, there must be first be “*mishteh*” (celebration/drinking) that precedes the *simchah* (joy) and *simchah* (joy) can only come after *mishteh* (celebration). We explained above that *mishteh* does not mean *chas v'shalom* for a person to simply get drunk and lose his *daas*, and to become like an insane person who is exempt from keeping the *mitzvos*. Rather, it means that one needs to lose his false *daas*, and to reveal the *daas* Torah, *daas* of the Creator, higher *daas* – not the *daas* of Bilaam, who “knows” his donkey, to “know” of the materialism of This World. The Jewish people possess a higher *daas*, not a *daas* that knows materialism. If one knows of materialism and he is connected to it, he's already ‘dead’ as he lives on this world.

### *Three Days of Preparation Before Purim*

There were three days of fasting which preceded the miracle of Purim, where Haman met his downfall by the *seudah* which Esther made. In simpler words, before we can celebrate, there must first be a disconnection from This World.

Every year, in order to enter Purim, we first need *Taanis Esther*. Why is it that before Pesach there is no *taanis* for everyone? Why is it that before Shavuot there is no *taanis*? And why is it that in the days preceding Sukkos, there is no fasting? It is because in order to have the *mishteh v'simchah* of Purim, there must be *taanis*.

If one doesn't have a *taanis* before Purim, for him, Purim will not be a *mishteh* and it will not be a *simchah*. It will be a *mishteh* Haman, or a *mishteh* Achashveirosh; it is not like the *mishteh* of Esther.

This *taanis* essentially means that there should be a disconnection from This World. In the time of Purim, the fast was three days long. We also find that in order to prepare for receiving the Torah, they prepared for three days. This is because it is necessary to prepare for three days, in order to disconnect from the world.

When a person has disconnected from the world, he is able to drink in the right way on Purim and lose his *daas* and reveal the true *simchah*, which is to have *chiyus* from *emunah*. But if a person enters into Purim from the life outside which we see, which looks like life but is really death, he doesn't enter into Purim with Mordechai's perspective, who disconnected from the world by refusing to bow to the idols. Remember that Mordechai was the one who enabled the salvation of the Jewish people.

### *Modern-Day “Party of Achashveirosh”*

One needs to disconnect, totally, from the surroundings. We must not join “the *seudah* of that wicked one” (Achashveirosh). Although the Midrash says that the party of Achashveirosh was entirely kosher, Mordechai was the *mashgiach* there, it was the best kind of *Badatz*, yet it was still

called the “*seudah* of that wicked one” – and that is what is happening today. The vanities which people of the world are chasing today are like enjoying the “*seudah* of that wicked one.”

What is not ‘kosher’ about it? In many cases it’s not even kosher to begin with. But even when it’s technically kosher, it is the antithesis to disconnecting from the world. It enables a person to connect to an unholy world.

From where do we get *chiyus*? That is the question of all questions. *Chiyus* from an inner place, from a holy place, from a place where there is no evil – that is the *chiyus* of Purim.

Even Mordechai, who wouldn’t bow to Haman, who enabled the salvation, was not respected by all of the people. He was admired by “most” of the Jewish people, but not all of them. Why not all of them? The Sages explain that members of the *Sanhedrin* distanced themselves from him because they did not agree with him for becoming connected with the government. We are talking about the *tzaddik* Mordechai, who did not bow to Haman, and the only reason why he was connected with the Persian government then was all for the sake of saving *Klal Yisrael!* Yet, even so, the *Sanhedrin* kept their distance from him. How much more so does this apply to people who choose, *l’chatchilah*, to become connected with the government. It is a deliberate choice to connect to an impure place.

When a person ate from *seudah* of Achashveirosh, from he did he get his *chiyus* from? He got his *chiyus* from Achashveirosh, and that is why he was part of the decree of Achashveirosh. If a person takes money from the government, from is he getting his *chiyus* from? From the “50<sup>th</sup> gate of impurity.” He will be stuck in it until Mashiach comes, and he will not return to *teshuvah* before then.

This is not a joke. People think it is an extreme view. People in the time of Purim also thought that Mordechai was being extreme, for not bowing to Haman. Not only were the wicked saying he was extreme; everyone was saying that he was acting extreme, and that he should acquiesce.

*Baruch Hashem* in our *kolel* here, with *siyata d’shmaya*, we have the *zechus* **not** to take money from the government. I give all of you a *berachah* that you should never give money to the government, even once. And if you’ve already given, I give you a *berachah* that you should not take from them. It is impossible to live from the “*seudah* of that wicked one.” The truth is one truth, it is simple, and it is pure.

But it’s more comfortable for people to do otherwise and to keep taking money from the government. People are scared that if they don’t take money from the government, the *beis midrash* will slowly empty out because everyone will have to go to work in order to support themselves. So they feel like they have no choice but to take money from the government – although this will end up compromising on the values of *chinuch* of their children. The true alternative to the situation, though, is *emunah* - to “believe in the Eternally Living one, and plant.”

Does anyone here think for even a second that a person can live from taking money from the government? It is a connection to a place that is not pure. He will then become part of the ‘decree of Achashveirosh’, because he has benefitted from the “*seudah* of that wicked one”.

The *Gemara* says that there are children who go astray because they have dishonest money. The money which is supporting them is coming from falsity, and sometimes it is even outright stealing. When people eat the food bought with such money, the food damages them spiritually and causes the children to go astray. The question is where a person is getting his *chiyus* from. If we wake a person in middle of the night, or if we stop a person in the street, and we ask him what he is thinking about and what he is connected to, and what he does, and where his heart is, where his thoughts are, and from where does he feel alive – that is the question.

May Hashem merit all of us to draw forth our vitality in life from an inner source, to help those who are too connected to the outside, superficial, and external world we see – and to search for a *chiyus* that comes only from a bond with Hashem and His Torah, and not from any other strange place. *Purim someiach*, to all of you.

## 3.12 | Making Your Family Happy on Purim

### *Superficial Joy vs. Inner Joy*

When we are getting closer to Purim, and you want to teach your children what Purim is about, you can ask them the following: “What are people doing in Gan Eden on this day?” Think about what they are doing on Purim, in Gan Eden!

(Now, if a person doesn't care about what's going on in Gan Eden, that shows how far he is from a true life, because the way of life in Gan Eden is a symbole of how a true life should look like.)

What's going on in Gan Eden on Purim? Are they are sending *mishloach manos* to each other...? Are they are reading *Megillah*...?

*Chazal* state that there are ten expression of *simcha* (joy). So in Gan Eden, new depth to *simchah* is constantly revealed. So if one isn't revealing it, it is as if he is in *Gehinnom*!

In Gan Eden, there are always new revelations. So the Purim of the year 5773 is a different Purim than the Purim of the year 5772. But with most people, Purim of 5773 is the same Purim as it was in 5772, and the year before it...

We are comprised of a body and soul, as we live here on this world. Our body's view misleads us on this world, and fools us from seeing the true reality. In Gan Eden, there is only the view of the soul. The body cannot mislead us there. In Gan Eden, when the month of Adar arrives, the souls are receiving new depth, to the understanding of the month of Adar and the festivity of Purim. That is the perspective we need to have to.

What happens by us when the month of Adar comes? People are trying all kinds of new ideas, gimmicks, and tricks. Where does this come from? Does it come from Judaism...?

Our *simchah* must not be superficial. When people live superficially, they think they have to do all kinds of funny things during the month of Adar, and they will even think that this is the will of Hashem and the way of the Torah!

Let's talk very practically now. How would you like to have a real *simchah* this year, when the month of Adar comes? How can you make your family happier, in the month of Adar?

People react to this by saying, “What do you want from me? I don't know how to be happy myself, in the first place. How am I supposed to become happier during the month of Adar?” Instead of becoming happier in Adar, people are worrying about the monetary expenses that are involved with the upcoming Purim (*mishloach manos* expenses, etc.)

What is the *simchah* you need to have in the month Adar? How do you plan to elevate your family? You learn Torah, *Baruch Hashem*, but how does your family look? How is the atmosphere in the home during the month of Adar? Is it happier? Did anything change since last Adar? When the husband does not have *simchah*, how will his wife be happy? From drawing pictures of Haman? And how will the children be happy? If both the father and mother are not happy in Adar, neither will the children be. They are both busy with various ideas for Purim, such as whom they will send

*mishloach manos* to, and they are both caught up in the preparations. The father does not have *simchah*, and the wife doesn't either, because she has time to herself to develop it. She is busy enabling her husband to learn Torah, *Baruch Hashem*, and raising the children, but she has no time for herself, so she has no time to develop her *simchah*. What does she remain with, after Purim? Nothing but gifts. When Purim comes, the parents are usually getting all of their *simchah* from seeing how the children are dressed up....

Anyone who lives a more internal kind of life is actually pained from the Purim that we see today. The Purim we see in our times is devoid of inner happiness, and it has become a day of superficial entertainment. It is painful to watch it take place, for anyone who lives a more internal kind of life.

What do people do to attain more *simchah* in Adar? Are people trying to make their homes happier during Adar? How can we call this a true Jewish home? If a wife wonders how there is more *simchah* in Adar, and she asks her husband, what should he answer? Ask yourself this question: What should you answer your wife, when she asks you this question? One should know what to answer her, just as much as when she asks him what the *halachah* is about something in the kitchen.

How can it be that so many people do not know how to practically carry out the words of *Chazal*, who said that there is more *simchah* in Adar? What is the difference between how a *Chareidi* Jew acts on Purim with how a secular person acts? Is it because we send *matanos l'evyonim* and we eat a *seudah*? Can we tell any difference....? Sadly, there isn't that much of a difference we can recognize, in today's times.

People are asking about how they can make their children feel the happiness of Purim, while the parents themselves don't know how to get to the real, inner happiness of Purim. This is all a result of living superficially.

## *The Solution*

Now we will focus on a positive point.

If a person wants to live a true kind of life, he needs to know how to infuse spirituality and the meaning of Judaism into the home. One firsts need to uncover depth to matters of Judaism within himself - and then he can then impart that knowledge to your children.

For example, what kind of *Dvar Torah* should you say to your children on Purim? Will you say a piece from *sefer Manos HaLevi*...? Say something to them that you relate to deeply in yourself, something profound which you connect with. That is what you should convey to them. Give over to your family a deep understanding of something that you have reached within yourself.

Here is an example. Last week was *Parashas Yisro*, which talks about the giving of the Torah. What kind of *Dvar Torah* should one say to his family? To say over a question about what the order of the Ten Commandments was, and just say an answer? Question, answer?

It's more important to give over the essence of the *parsha*. You can instead say to them, "How did standing at Har Sinai look like? How did everyone prepare? How did they feel?"

I asked this question to my children. My youngest child said: "They went to get new, white clothing." An older child said, "They went to the *mikveh*." My oldest child, who is already a *bar daas*, said, "They did earnest *teshuvah*."

An example of a real *dvar Torah* is when you say something that presents the “life” of the Torah. Surely every *dvar Torah* you say is true and makes sense, but what is the kind of *dvar Torah* that you really should you say to your children? The child often reads off the *divrei Torah* from his papers he comes home with, like a *baal korei*. Is this the Torah that is alive, or is it just nice ideas? Is it just about ‘saying a *dvar Torah* at the Shabbos table’? A *dvar Torah* we say at the Shabbos table has to be alive!

Here is another example. You can simply ask questions that train your children to think. This week is *Parashas Mishpatim*, which speaks about the laws of slavery. If a man owes money and he has no money and no items to sell, he may sell his daughter up until a certain age, in order to pay back a loan. Here is what you can ask your children: “If such a thing would happen to you, what would be the first thing you would sell?”

A *dvar Torah* must not be about just saying nice “ideas”. People are often used to saying a *dvar Torah* for the sake of just saying “nice ideas”. But when you say a *dvar Torah*, it needs to be something you live by and which others can live by. Similarly, the words of *sefer Derech Hashem* and the *Maharal* are not “ideas.” Their words are concepts to live by, in the practical sense – at least for those who care about their souls and don’t live just with their body.

### *Depth Vs. Simplicity*

However, another point to mention here is that one cannot either say deep ideas to his wife and children. You can’t even tell her the main lessons you understood from a *shiur*; it cannot be understood. Instead, you have to take the words of what you heard and just say something that can be experienced by another. Take a simple question that makes people think about life in a practical way.

For example, Haman decreed genocide on the generation. Ask your family: “What would you do if you were there? How would you react?”

Hopefully the answer will be “*teshuvah*.” But there are different understandings to *teshuvah*. The wife will have her own understanding, and each of the children will have their own understanding.

That is how Judaism must be given over to your family! **First** make sure you understand something you are saying and you relate to it deeply and in a real way. **Then**, explain it to your wife in a way she will understand. **Then**, think of how you will explain it to your children.

Without doing this, the home will not gain *ruchniyus*. It will be filled with nice ideas, but it won’t actually affect the family members.

Here is a simple question to ask your family this week: “How do we have more *simcha* during Adar?” There are all kinds of answers. Each person has his own way of how to increase *simcha*. If we take a twelve-year old kid today and we ask him this question, does his answer come close to the words of *Chazal* at all...? A more mature child will answer that it means to have more *ruchniyus*, but he still won’t know what that means, because he only knows about this intellectually – he doesn’t act upon that knowledge.

These are practical words for anyone who wants to live differently than the superficial life today. One who wants to live in a true way needs to feel how real the words of Torah and *Chazal* are, and that the words of Torah and *Chazal* build our life.

We can see that everyone else around us does not live this way. But, individually speaking, in our own homes, we can have a different kind of life than the way life is on the outside world.

## 3.13 | What To Do With Our Fears and Doubts

### *Holy Fear Vs. Unholy Fear*

Amalek has the same *gematria* (numerical value in Hebrew) as the word “*safek*”, doubt, as is well-known. Amalek represents an evil force in Creation that can induce doubts into the Jewish people. But for every force that is evil, there is something else equally powerful on the side of good that can oppose it. Therefore, we can find holy doubts as well.

There is a statement in the *sefarim hakedoshim*, “There is no happiness like the clarification of doubts.”<sup>212</sup> Doubts are the antithesis to being happy; it creates a situation of misery. When doubts cause us to be sad, then doubt is evil; such doubts are coming from the Other Side of Impurity, making a person confused and tangled up in his doubts, resulting in a state of misery.

However, there is holy doubt as well, and this is when a person realizes: “From where is the doubt coming from? Is the doubt simply coming from my own self – or maybe Hashem put the doubt in my heart, and He wants me to have this doubt?”

When this is our attitude toward our doubts, then we transform the doubt into an increase of our *emunah*. We realize that the doubt was really coming from our own *emunah* – to believe that the Creator placed the doubt in our mind and heart; that it is Hashem’s very will that I should have the doubt. And since it is Hashem’s will that I should be feeling this doubt, I’m happy to be in doubt! After all, it is Hashem’s will from me right now to be in doubt.

This is how our doubts become holy – when they cause us to be happier, as opposed to becoming sad, *chas v’shalom*.

What is holding back people from feeling happy when they are in doubt about something? It is because people usually think that doubts are always a bad thing. People think that nothing good can be said about a situation in which a person has no idea what to do.

But this is erroneous; when we feel ourselves in doubt, it is an opportunity for us to realize that the doubt came from Hashem. The ensuing happiness we will feel after realizing this is an obvious gain.

When people find themselves in doubt, it causes inner anxiety: “I can’t decide...” or “I don’t know enough...” , and this is usually viewed as a sign of weakness. This causes us to become frustrated when we have doubts. The proper attitude we are supposed to have is to change his perspective about this, realizing that Hashem placed the doubt in his mind.

However, even upon realizing this, a person has to also think the following: “Why indeed did Hashem place this doubt in me? Of what gain is it to me?”

The answer is as follows.

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<sup>212</sup> *Toras HaOlah*

The world was created from nothing - *yeish m'ayin*, “something from nothing.” The world will eventually return to the original *ayin*/nothingness, and this is the goal. It is the Jewish people who are able to bring the world to its goal, which is to return it to “nothingness” as it used to be. This “nothingness”, *ayin*, is essentially the future integration with Hashem, in which all Creations will return to their root, Hashem. *Ayin* (nothingness) is thus the holy root of Creation, and Creation will eventually return to this root – the holy *ayin*/nothingness.

However, everything good has something else equally evil to counter it. What is the evil kind of *ayin* in Creation? This is the evil force of Amalek. Amalek also wants to bring the world to *ayin*, but its plan is destruction – an unholy kind of “*ayin*”. For this very reason, Amalek’s whole desire is to destroy the Jewish people. It wants to turn us away from holy *ayin* (the path toward integrating with Hashem) and instead turn us towards unholy *ayin*: the Evil Side of Impurity, destruction.

Amalek is thus the evil kind of *ayin*. It seeks destruction. To bring out this concept more, the lowliest sin in Creation is the sin of homosexuality, which the city of Sodom was rampant with. Sodom was a city that earned its own self-destruction – and the depth behind this was because they were full of homosexuality. What is the depth behind homosexuality? It’s really a kind of self-destruction, because it is a union that does not produce children. This is reminiscent to Amalek – the evil force in Creation that seeks to cause a person a self-destruction.

On a deeper note, a person who is confident in something can bear results. It is written, “*The victory of Israel does not lie*” (Shmuel I: 15:29). The Jewish people have an ability to be victorious – to fight confidently. We also allude to this power when we say in the *piyut* (liturgy) of Rosh HaShanah, “*HaVadai Shemo*” – “He Who is Definite In His Name.”

But when a person is in doubt, he becomes too frozen to act, and his doubts hold him back from making any progress. When a person is confident, he will fight and do whatever it takes to get to his goal; but when a person is in doubt, he loses his power to fight. This is really the force of Amalek, an evil force in Creation that induces doubt into people, causing people to discontinue from their progress and to cause a person to have a self-destruction.

When Amalek attacked the Jewish people, the possuk says that the Jewish people questioned: “*Is Hashem among us?*” The depth behind this matter was that they were at the level of crossing over from material existence (*Yeish*) and enter the sublime existence – *Ayin*; that was precisely why Amalek came, for Amalek represents impurity, the unholy kind of *ayin*, and they wanted to prevent us from reaching holy *Ayin*.

Holy doubt is essentially when a person nullifies himself, when he comes to feel that he is nothing. In this way, a person can enter the holy kind of *Ayin*. When a person recognizes his human lowliness – but in a joyous way, from an understanding that it is Hashem’s will that he should feel like he is nothing and incapable – that itself nullifies a person to his Creator, and he essentially reaches *Ayin*. This is also known as *hiskalelus* – integrating with Hashem. It is accessed through nullifying ourselves, which is when we use our doubts for this holy purpose. In this way, our doubts become holy.

Just as Amalek, who induces evil doubts, is the root of all evil – so is it true about the converse side: using our doubts for holiness become a tool that enables a person to reach the absolute perfection and integrate with Hashem.

## *The Way To Deal With Our Doubts and Fears*

Amalek is the evil force of doubt in Creation. It has the evil power to get us to doubt anything. The only thing we cannot ever really doubt is Hashem, because Amalek can only get us to doubt everything within Creation, but Hashem is above the bounds of Creation, and therefore Amalek's doubt cannot reach there.

We explained before that the way to counter Amalek's evil is through being happy when we are in doubt, with the understanding that it is Hashem's will that we should be in doubt.

Since this is so, a person has to come to a point in which he really feels in doubt about everything – yet still be happy, in spite of all the doubts. If a person achieves this, he fixes the evil of Amalek in its entirety. As long as a person doesn't feel 100% doubtful about everything in Creation, he cannot come to totally fix the evil of Amalek. This is a very deep point.

It seems to us that we shouldn't be in doubt, and that we have to know everything and be sure of everything. But it's really the opposite. We are supposed to be in doubt – in fact, we should feel in doubt about everything we know of. And we are supposed to be happy with all of these doubts. That is the complete way of how we stop the entire evil of Amalek.

All of life is really full of doubts; we must always be afraid that maybe we aren't acting properly. How indeed can we solve all these fears? The way is realize that all doubts and all fears come from Hashem. That is exactly how we fix our doubts, and our fears: "It is Hashem's will that I should be in doubt or to be afraid." With this realization, our doubts and fears will actually cause us happiness.

This is a great fundamental: that as we become afraid, we should be happy at the same time. We are supposed to always be afraid that maybe we are not acting properly, but we must also be happy at the same time that Hashem wants us to have fear. This is a very deep power in our soul.

Before the Torah was given, there were no mitzvos yet. It was one big situation of doubt, because nothing was clear yet. Before the Torah was given, each Jew's avodah was simply to serve Hashem in his own way and give Him a *nachas ruach* (satisfaction), and each person had his own intellectual and soul understanding in how to serve Hashem. Except for the fact that everyone had to keep the 7 Noachide Laws, each person served Hashem in his own way; each person was in doubt about how to serve Hashem.

But after the Torah was given, this period of doubt came to an end, and now the 613 *mitzvos* told us how to act. (Although there are still doubts, as well as many arguments abound on what the Torah says, still, the giving of the Torah gave us all a definite guide for life). The Torah was actually a power that came from above the bounds of Creation. In Creation, there are doubts – the evil force of Amalek. But the Torah, with its mitzvos, revealed a wisdom that came from above Creation, above all doubts – that is the great power of Torah. It comes from above. Understand this well....

## *Fear and Faith At Once*

Everything in Creation is made up of an outer layer and an inner layer. The inner layer of each thing is the power of *ahavah*/love, (or *chessed*/kindness). The outer layer of each thing is the power of

*yirah*/awe (or *din*/judgment, or *pachad*/fear). A person needs to take this understanding into his daily living, as follows.

Let's say a person merits to receive something from another person. He has just witnessed an act of love and kindness – and he needs feel Hashem's love through the act as well. By feeling Hashem's love for us in the love and kindness we receive from others, we are feeling the inner layer of the kindness: its source of love and kindness that it comes from – Hashem.

However, at the same time, there must be an accompanying feeling of fear: maybe we are receiving our reward on this world, only to get punished in the next, just as Hashem deals with the wicked? This is the outer layer of what we must feel in something we receive: awe and dread.

We should mainly feel Hashem's love and kindness in a favor we receive from someone, but at the same time, we should also feel a little of this fear. Since the inner layer of the act is Hashem's loving-kindness, that is what we should *mainly* feel; but it should be accompanied with a little fear, as we said.

However, that is only true when we experience an act of kindness. If we experience something scary, we must react differently: we should first feel afraid of Hashem, because now He is acting with us with *middas hadin* (the attribute of justice). We must first accept this. Together with this, we also need to remind ourselves that everything Hashem does is out of His love for us, a total kindness. We need to feel Hashem's love for us – precisely through this scary experience. This is the inner layer of the act – the love and kindness of Hashem which we can reveal through it.

There is a deep point here which needs to be understood. When we ever feel afraid of something, it must not come from a natural feeling of fear. Our natural fears that we are born with need to be removed through increasing our *emunah*. After all, "Everything Hashem does is for the good." (*Berachos 60b*). Thus, there is no justified reason to ever be worried, because everything Hashem does is out of His total love for us.

Rather, we are supposed to feel a different kind of fear when we go through a scary experience: that Hashem placed the fear in me, and this is His will. If Hashem is acting towards me with the *middas hadin*, then it must be that this is His *ratzon* right now, and therefore He wants me to be afraid.

By reacting like this to a fearful situation, a person uses fear as a way to reveal the will of Hashem through the act, and he is able to feel, "Hashem wants right now that I should be afraid."

This is a deep and subtle point, and it needs a lot of internal understanding (*avanta d'libal*"heart understanding). It is to be able to feel Hashem's love for us even when we have pain or suffering – to feel that even this is good; and at the same time, for us to be afraid of Hashem that He is acting towards us with the *middas hadin*, and thus He wants us to be afraid.

בלבבי ח"ה עמ' רכו (מאמר מח: אמונה)

## 3.14 | Erasing Amalek

### *"Open for Me an opening the size of a needle"*

Chazal said, "Open for Me an opening the size of a needle, and I will open for you an opening the size of an opening to an entranceway".<sup>213</sup> Our *sefarim hakedoshim* point out that the 'opening' has to be made on both sides – it does not suffice to make a mere hole. We will explain the meaning of this.

### *The Concept of Amalek*

The root of all evil in Creation is Amalek. The depth of Amalek is that it is a force of evil which exists to induce doubts into creation. (The hint to this is because the *gematrial*/numerical value in Hebrew for "Amalek" is the same as "*safek*"/doubt). The purpose of Creation is that all of Creation will come to recognize Hashem as King. First, there will be a judgment over Esav, as the possuk states: "*And all the saviors will ascend to the Mount of Zion, to judge the Mount of Esav, and Hashem will become the Kingdom.*" So before Hashem is recognized as King, first, "Esav" has to be judged; in other words, the *kelipah* (husk) of "Amalek" must become shattered. Meaning, the force of "doubt" must become erased. As long as Amalek is in the world, there is doubt, and the world cannot come to its desired purpose.

This concept has two implications: (1) Amalek must be erased from the world. This will happen with the coming of Moshiach, may he come speedily in our days (Amen). (2) There is also a personal "Amalek" in each Jew's personal soul, and it is upon each individual Jew to erase the manifestation of "Amalek" that in himself.

### *Protecting Your Emunah*

The **Ramban** famously wrote that each person must tell himself that if he will have any heretical thoughts on his deathbed, *chas v'shalom*, he is accepting himself that such thoughts are already nullified from the start. Let's think about the depth of these words.

Why would a person suddenly have heretic thoughts on his deathbed, if he believed in Hashem his whole life? The answer is, of course a Jew can believe in Hashem his whole life, but that doesn't mean has acquired that belief in the depths of his soul. It might be that in the depths of his heart, he does not even have *emunah peshutah* (simple faith in G-d), *chas v'shalom*. That means that even the most basic kind of belief in Hashem can be doubted, *chas v'shalom*. If the basis can be doubted – if the basic fact that there is a Creator can be questioned, *chas v'shalom* – then all of one's Torah, mitzvos, righteousness, and holiness will all have no basis to support them [so they will all fall away].

These words of the Ramban can shudder any person's soul. It appears to us, superficially, that we have facts we are clear about as well as facts that we are a bit doubtful about, and that it is merely

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upon us to clarify what we are doubtful about. But the Ramban revealed to us that it's possible that our entire life was spent in one big doubt! If there is *chas v'shalom* any doubt in a person about the fact that there is a Creator, this surely means that all of one's service to Hashem for his entire life is under question.

Thus, the "opening" which Chazal say for one to make in himself, is for one to have *emunah peshutah* that there is a Creator. However, in order for this emunah to really be active in one's heart, one has to make sure that there are no doubts about it. This creates a solid "opening" in oneself. If a person does not make sure about this, his entire life is spent in doubt – he is found entirely in the *kelipah* of Amalek; Amalek will only be rectified when it is broken and destroyed.

A clip from Tefillah #044 – Redemption Unfolding and The Decree on Torah

## 3.15 | Renewing Our Acceptance of Torah

### *Jewish Souls Are Being Destroyed Today By The Outside Influences*

The Greek exile took place when we were in Eretz Yisrael and we had a *Beis HaMikdash*. In our times, when we are in Eretz Yisrael, we are also in the midst of an exile - and it is a very bitter one.

There are decrees being made on us. But all these decrees, as terrible as they are, are not even the depth of this exile! The decrees are only the *external* part of this exile. The *real* part of this exile is that so many *neshamos* (Jewish souls) are being burned up [by the secular influence]! And they have already **burned up most *neshamos*!**

The Chazon Ish said that one shouldn't be afraid of the decrees they make on religion; if that is what someone is afraid of, he is mistaken, because he is unaware of the main problem. Anyone with a little feeling for holiness can see how most *neshamos* have already been burned [by the secular influence]!

Most of the *neshamos* that are being burned up are those who are **from the Torah world!** This 'burning of *neshamos*' taking place is not only referring to people who live outside the world of Torah. Most people are not aware that Jewish *neshamos* are being burned - people simply think that it is simply a war being decreed on religion. But it is *much* worse than that.

Who can't tell of the burning that is taking place? **All** of the evil from the outside society has now entered into the Torah world and influencing people.

### *We Must Go Through A Massive, Internal Change*

Do we really want to leave the current lifestyle and return to living an inner kind of life??

It is true that those who are outside the Torah world will have to do *teshuvah* in order to be saved. But even those who are on the inside [the frum, Torah world] also have to do *teshuvah*; because the *whole way of life* now that people are living is wrong!

We are not presenting here a new path to take. We are describing here how we need to follow in the footsteps of our *Avos*. We need to ask ourselves, "How did our *Avos* live?" The whole way that the generation lives today needs to change.

The Sages state that the Jews living in Persia were deserving of the decree of death, "because they enjoyed the banquet of that wicked one [Achashveirosh]." Of this entire generation, it can be said that "they enjoyed the banquet of that wicked one." People are enjoying the false lifestyle of this generation.

Hashem gives us all the power of free choice. A person therefore can recognize very well what he's "eating"...

If someone searches for the truth, he must make the following reflection: we are the children of Hashem, as we know from the possuk, “*You are children to Hashem your G-d.*” In this generation, we have become very distanced from the level of being “children” to Hashem. This exile has confused us a lot and made us forget about our dignified status; we do not realize that we are really the dignified children of Hashem.

Hashem is calling out to each Jew. It is unbecoming for us to wallow in the empty pursuits of this generation.

### *Returning To The “Desert” Again To Accept the Torah*

We need to ask ourselves: What would any of the leaders of the past do in a generation like this? What would the *Chasam Sofer* have done?

*Parnassah* (making a living) should not be the main point of our life...

We have only one true option: we need to choose the right way to live life. We need to accept the Torah again anew, just as the Jews in Persia did after they were saved from Haman’s decree. They returned to their acceptance of the Torah and gave up their previous lifestyle of enjoying Achashveirosh’s party.

When you re-accept the Torah, you need to feel exactly as the Jewish people felt when they stood at Har Sinai in the desert. You have to be willing to go to the desert again and give up your previous lifestyle. You have to be prepared to abandon everything you’re used to – this whole world of falsity we live in.

Hashem wants to take us out of the current lifestyle of this generation. Our main salvation will not be in escaping the decrees that are being made on us. The decrees on us are terrible, but this is not the main evil “decree” upon us; the main evil decree we are going through is that the generation lives a very false kind of life. We must be able to abandon it.

**We must abandon this kind of life, of which “having *parnassah*” has become the main part of life, so that we can reaccept the Torah again, by returning to the “desert” where we stood at Har Sinai. We have to be able to leave behind the current lifestyle that we recognize, which is already in the “50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Impurity.”**

### *The Torah World Must Now Make Sacrifices*

The main introspection needs to be made by those who are in the Torah world, that we must examine our lifestyle and be willing to undergo an internal change. When we are going through a decree like this, we need to apply the possuk, “*What does Hashem ask of you...so that You fear me.*”

If a person has even a minimal amount of feelings for holiness, he can hear Hashem calling to us to return, and to leave the crooked way of life that this exile has caused us to live with.

In the prayer of *Av HaRachamim* on Shabbos, we mention how the previous generations gave their lives to sanctify Hashem’s Name. We are in a time in which we need to be willing to make the sacrifice and disconnect ourselves from the current lifestyle, a generation which is in the 50<sup>th</sup> Gate of Impurity.

This is not some kind of extreme *chumra* (stringency). It sounds extreme only to those who aren't searching for the truth.

Not only does Hashem want the decrees upon us to end; He wants that we change our lifestyle totally, and return to the true kind of life.

(These days, if a person walks into a *beis midrash*, he can't even tell who is a real "Chareidi" and who isn't....)<sup>214</sup>

### *In Conclusion*

May we merit to live the true kind of life, and to merit a degree of salvation, **וּמִצְמִיחַ יְשׁוּעָה**— even if we do not merit to see the complete redemption in our times, we can at least merit a degree of salvation, by disconnecting ourselves from the false lifestyle of this generation, and to instead see the salvation that takes place in the inner layer of reality.

Although this will not be a complete redemption, at least it will be a partial redemption to our soul. If we merit even that partial redemption in our souls, we can then merit the fulfillment of the possuk, "*The salvation of Hashem can come in the blink of an eye.*"

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<sup>214</sup> See *Chanukah #048-Greek Exile Today*.

## 3.16 | Teshuvah On Purim – Revealing Our Intrinsic Relationship With Hashem

### *Purim – Rectifying the Sin of the Golden Calf*

The birth and the existence of the Jewish people is based on the event of standing at Har Sinai to receive the Torah, where we uttered “*Naaseh V’Nishmah*”, “We will do and we will hear.” On Purim, there was a renewed acceptance of the Torah. When we stood at Sinai, we were forced to accept the Torah, or else we would die. But on Purim, we accepted the Torah willingly.

The elevation of status we enjoyed at Har Sinai was soon shattered, when we sinned with the golden calf. When we stood at Sinai, we were in a state of revealed G-dliness, and the impurity of the Serpent was removed from us, and we were on a level of Adam before the sin. After the sin with the golden calf, we fell back into the state of sin, and once again were like Adam after the sin. Therefore, on Purim, where we re-accept the Torah, our *avodah* is to find the G-dliness revealed as well as to rectify the sin with the golden calf.

Just as Purim revealed to us a re-acceptance of the Torah, which was at Har Sinai, so is it linked with the sin of the golden calf, which took place after standing at Har Sinai. These events re-occur on Purim, but the order of the events changes. Whereas standing at Har Sinai was first an acceptance of the Torah and then there was a decree of death upon us (which resulted from the sin of the golden calf), on Purim there was first a decree of death upon us and later there was an acceptance of the Torah.

Since the event of standing at Sinai ended with a decree of death of mankind, Purim continues where that point left off – it begins with a decree of death upon mankind, and it is upon us to return to the renewed acceptance of the Torah that we were awakened to.

Thus, the essence of the day of Purim is essentially a return to the event of standing at Sinai, as well as to the sin of the golden calf; except that the order of these events is turned around.

Now we can understand why Chazal say that in the future, all the festivals will cease, except for Purim<sup>215</sup>. It is because Purim is the light of the future, where the sin of Adam will be rectified. It is the future dimension, which will be world in which there is no sin.

This is also the depth of how “Yom Kippur is like Purim”<sup>216</sup>, implying a connection between Purim and Yom Kippur. When we stood at Har Sinai, it was the month of Sivan, and then the Luchos were broken, and then Moshe went up to Heaven again to receive the Luchos, and he came down with them on Yom Kippur. Thus Yom Kippur rectified the sin with the golden calf. Purim, which begins from the decree of death upon us, is a continuation of the rectification on the sin with the Golden Calf.

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<sup>215</sup> Midrash Shochar Tov: Mishlei 9:1

<sup>216</sup> Tikkunei HaZohar 57b (tikkun 21).

### ***The Concept of “Igul”***

Purim begins with the point we left off with: the sin with the golden calf. The calf, which is “*eigel*” (עגל), is from the word “*igul*” (עיגול), which means “round” or “circular.” If we reflect into the events recorded in Megillas Esther, we can keep seeing this concept of *igul*, of circles.

For example, Achashveirosh ruled from Hodu through Kush, and the Gemara says that just as he ruled over the distance between these two countries, so did he rule from one end of the world to the other. What is the proof that he ruled the entire world, just because he ruled over these two countries? It means that he ruled over the entire circle between Hodu and Kush – meaning the entire world. In these words of the Gemara, we see the concept of the *igul*, of circle.

Additionally, the party of Achashveirosh lasted 180 days. The number 180 is equal to the letters פ"ק, from the word הקפה, “inclusive”. This further implies that the agenda of Achashveirosh was to attain a kind of royalty that was circular, all-encompassing, where all the points are included.

In addition, the Midrash<sup>217</sup> states that Achashveirosh took control over the entire world by conquering all of the countries that were outside of the more inner countries, and in this way he gained the inner countries without having to conquer them, because once he had the outer countries, the inner countries were defeated with them as well. The depth of this is that he overcame the world in a “circular” manner, for by conquering the outer countries, he had circled all over the inner countries.

Another hint to this concept is that the very word “*Megillah*” (מגילה) is rooted in the word *igul* (עיגול). A *Megillah* is rolled out from a scroll, hinting to the “roundness” that it coming to reveal. The story of the *Megillah* reveals the holy kind of *igul* (circle) which counters the *igul* on the side of evil, which was the *eigel* (the sin with the golden calf).

(As is well-known, the original sin of mankind, the *Eitz HaDaas*, bears a similarity to the sin with the *eigel hazahav*, the golden calf. They both brought death to the world. The sin with the *Eitz HaDaas* was the root of all sin, and the sin with the golden calf was its branch. We can find an allusion to the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas* from the story of the *Megillah*, which begins from the point where the sin with the Golden Calf leaves us off at [a decree of death]. For example, after Vashti was called, letters were sent out to all the countries that from now on, “every man shall rule in his home” – the new decree was that man would now “rule” over his wife.

By the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas*, woman received the curse that man would rule over her, as a punishment upon her for the sin; but this is not how it was supposed to be, had Chavah never sinned. Another connection between the sin with the *Eitz HaDaas* and the story of the *Megillah* is that Achashveirosh requested that Vashti appear unclothed in front of all the guests. This resembled the sin of Adam and Chavah of being unclothed in front of the Serpent, which aroused its jealousy and caused him to want to kill Adam and take Chavah for a wife.)

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217 *Esther Rabbah* 1:7

## ***“Igul” in the Side of Holiness and in the Side of Evil***

Let us see more about the concept of *igul*^circle.

The Gemara says that if a man is unmarried, he is missing a protective wall<sup>218</sup>, for woman’s task is to “surround” man [and thereby protect him from sin], for it is written, “*Woman surrounds man*”.<sup>219</sup> The miracle of Purim was thus brought about by a woman, for a woman is a “wall”.

In the story of Purim, there was an *igul* (circle) on the side of holiness pitted against the *igul* on the side of impurity [as we will soon explain]. The unholy kind of *igul*, as we explained above, is represented by the party of Achashveirosh.

The Gemara<sup>220</sup> says that when Esther entered the court of Achashveirosh, as soon as she encountered the idols there, the *Shechinah* left her, and she said, “*My G-d, my G-d, why do you abandon me?*” She lost her connection to the *Shechinah*, and she faced a difficulty. This was the same kind of difficulty that the Jewish people as a whole were going through before the sin with the Calf, when they were feeling abandoned by Hashem, thinking that they lost Moshe. On a deeper note, not only was Moshe their leader and the one who took them out of Egypt who performed much miracles for them, but he was also the bridge that connects the Jewish people and their Father in heaven.

When *Klal Yisrael* thought that their connection to Hashem via Moshe *Rabbeinu* was lost, they sought a different means of connection to Hashem. Through Moshe, their bond with Hashem had been through *da’as*, for Moshe represents *da’as*. There are three kinds of *da’as*; one of the abilities of *da’as* is that it can differentiate and decide between two possibilities. Thus a person’s *da’as* considers the possibilities. When *Klal Yisrael* thought that their connection to Hashem through *da’as* was now lost, they sought a different kind of connection to Hashem, which does not consider other possibilities. They sought a kind of relationship with Hashem that is *igul*, “circular” - which has no “sides” to it.

But that is where they fell, for they did not reach the holy kind of *igul*, and instead they fell into a kind of “*igul*” that was impure – the “*eigel*”.

## ***Purim: Finding the Point of Equality in the Soul***

Purim is essentially a day where one can build a space in the soul of a holy kind of “*igul*”^circle. It is a day where there are good and evil forces warring with each other, where the sin with the Golden Calf (the *eigel*, which is the unholy kind of “*igul*”) is pitted against the holy kind of “*igul*” in a Jew’s soul.

The Gemara<sup>221</sup> says that Hashem will make a “*machol*” (a circular kind of room, like a tunnel) for the righteous in Gan Eden, and each of them will point with his finger and exclaim, “*This is Hashem my G-d.*” A *machol* is round, like an *igul* (a circle), and the *tzaddikim* will all stand within this “circle” and point to Hashem from there.

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218 *Yevamos 62b*

219 *Yirmiyahu 31:21*

220 *Megillah 15b*

221 *In the end of Tractate Taanis*

The concept of the “*igul*”\circle in the side of holiness is thus a perspective in which all points are equal from each other [when viewed from the center], where the distance between each point and another point in the circle is always the same. This is in contrast to a straight line (a *kav*), where the end of the line is at a greater distance away from the beginning of the line.

### ***Line and Circle***

This represents two dimensions that we have of serving Hashem – “the line” (*kav*) and “the circle” (*igul*).

Moshe received the Torah from Hashem and transmitted it to Yehoshua, and from then on we received the Torah as a *mesorah* (tradition) in a straight, uninterrupted line. This is our *kav*, our line, that connects us to Hashem; the further the generations are from Har Sinai, the greater the distance. Yehoshua was not as close to Hashem as Moshe was, and the Elders were not as close to Hashem as Yehoshua was, and so forth.

But from another angle, it is said, “*All of Your nation is righteous.*”<sup>222</sup> Although no one is similar, and we have our own separate looks and beliefs and abilities, there is a point in which all of us are equal: the fact that Hashem dwells within the heart of each Jew. It is written, “*Make for Me a temple, and I shall dwell amongst them*”<sup>223</sup>; on this the Sages expound that “Hashem dwells within the heart of each of them.” When it comes to that point, all are equal. The differences are only outwardly, for each of us are a different *kli* (container) to hold Hashem’s light, but the light of Hashem that dwells in each person is always the same light. Hashem dwells in the heart of a person, for it is written, “*The rock of my heart and portion is G-d*”.<sup>224</sup> The heart of a Jew contains the concept of the *igul* (circle) in the side of holiness.<sup>225</sup>

From the other perspective, *kav*\line, there is always a system of ten points. There are ten expressions that Hashem created the world with; ten commandments; and so forth. But from the perspective of *igul*\circle, we can reach the heart’s perspective, where Hashem’s presence is contained, and all points are contained in one point.

From the view of our outer layers, which is outer components and unique abilities that differ from one another, we are each a different *kli* (container). The *kli* of each person is different from one another. Each person has a different *da’as*, a different way of thinking, and this is the angle of *daas*\Moshe\*kav*. But from view of the inner light that is contained within each of our souls, we are all equal, when viewed from that point. That is the depth of how all the *tzaddikim* in the future will stand amidst a “circle” and point to Hashem – because when it comes to our bond with Hashem, in that aspect, everyone is equally connected and contained in one point.

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<sup>222</sup> *Yeshayahu 60:21*

<sup>223</sup> *Shemos 25:8*

<sup>224</sup> *Tehillim 73:26*

<sup>225</sup> For an explanation of how the heart represents *igul* (the circle), refer to the Hebrew sefer where this translation is adapted from: ספר בלבבי משכן אבנה פורים - עמל כט

When a person does not stand in that “circle”, he is stuck inside his own ego, always concerned for his own “I”, always trying to know: “Who is the real me?”

But when a person is more concerned about Who we are trying to reveal, and he is not as concerned about his own “I” but about the One who dwells inside him – and He is within each and every Jew, without any exceptions, for His oneness cannot be divided or changed – in that point, all are equal. There are only differences between us on our outer layers, but when we consider the fact that Hashem dwells inside each person, in that point, we find the point where every soul is equal in.

### ***Daas and Above Daas***

The *halachah* on Purim is that “One is obligated to become inebriated on Purim, until he does not know the difference between “Cursed is Haman” with “Blessed is Mordechai.” What is the depth of this? And if the truth is that Mordechai is blessed and Haman is cursed, why must one reach the point where he does not know this?

It is along the lines of what we explained above. [We have two angles of connection to Hashem – the straight line, and the circle]. One angle is *da'as*, represented by the chain of tradition which we received through Moshe, in a straight and continuous line. But Purim is not about *da'as*. That is why one must reach the point on Purim where he doesn't have *daas*, where he does not know the difference between “Blessed is Mordechai” and “Cursed is Haman”. At Har Sinai, we received the Torah through Moshe [which represented our relationship to Hashem through *daas*], but on Purim, we reached a point [above *daas*] that resembles the *tzaddikim* in the future when they are all pointing their finger at Hashem and saying, “*This is my G-d that I hoped for.*”

We will explain this deeper. At Har Sinai, there were two aspects. One aspect of it was that “Hashem descended upon the mountain of Sinai”<sup>226</sup> - in other words, that He revealed Himself there. The other aspect of it was the giving of the Torah. The Torah was means that reveals Hashem upon the world. By Har Sinai, the emphasis was on the Torah that we received; in other words, it was about our *daas* [which is different with each person]. But on Purim, the emphasis was placed more on the “Giver” that is behind the Torah, and that we all receive from the Giver (Hashem). With regards to that aspect, all of us are equal.

We know that the face of each person is different. A deeper reason for this is because each person has a different *daas*, and the face is called “*panim*”, for it reveals the “*pnim*” (the inwardness) of the person, and since each person's *daas* is different, it shows up differently on each person's face; resulting in different faces throughout mankind. Thus there is a connection between *daas*\knowledge and differences. So on a deep note, as long as a person “knows” the difference between Mordechai and Haman, he is still within the perspective of his *daas*, and there he sees the differences. But when a person becomes inebriated to the point where he “does not know the difference between Mordechai and Haman”, there he reveals an even more inner point in himself, which is above his *daas*. There, in that very innermost point, everything and everyone is equal...

### ***Above The Self***

The decree of Haman upon the Jewish people was to destroy all of the nation, men women and children, and all in one day. His agenda was to do it all on all-inclusive level, and he didn't want to do it gradually and in steps; he wanted to wipe all the Jews out at once.

Our salvation was of a similar nature, where we all accepted the Torah again willingly; all of us, with no exceptions. It is understandable that we all accepted the Torah at Har Sinai, where we were all forced. But how does an entire nation willingly accept the Torah? How can everyone want the same thing? The answer to this is that indeed, if it would depend on a person's *daas*, then no one would be able to want the same thing, for every person has a different *daas*. But when we dig deeper into our soul and we go above the point of our *daas*, there we can find a common *ratzon* (will) that everyone will share.

At Har Sinai, it was a revelation of the Torah, of *daas*. And since each person has a different *daas*, we all needed to be forced into accepting the Torah. But on Purim, it was revealed the secret inner unity within the soul, where there are no differences, and all is equal. Besides of what was revealed at Har Sinai (the Torah), Purim revealed a deeper point in a Jew's soul: the idea that one can leave his own self! It is this point which is the deep *avodah* of a Jew's entire life. When Hashem created the world, He created it with ten *levushim*, "garments" (also called *keilim*, "containers), and all people are essentially the "garments" that Hashem wears, which wraps around His existence.<sup>227</sup> When one lives through the perspective of his *daas*, that means he is only busy trying to identify himself, for *daas* is essentially the way of how a person identifies "Who I am." If we want to define what a person is, the way to define it is, by how deep his *daas* goes.

Although we often hear many different definitions of the true inner self of a person which differ from this, that is only because the "I" has been so cheapened, and people only identify its superficial layers. If we want to define the deepest point of a person, what the "I" is, it is the *daas*. One's *daas* is his very "I." The other parts of the self are all but expressions of one's inner *daas*.

However, the purpose of Creation is not for us to reach our "I". It is rather to turn our "*ani*" (I) into "*ayin*" (nothingness), which enables us to reach the true "I", Who is the Creator. The view from one's *daas* is thus the expression of his "I". When we build our *daas*, we are building our "I", and that is one side of our *avodah*. But in order to reach the Creator completely, we need to reach a point where we are able to remove ourselves from our own "I." It is written, "*I (אנכי) stand between Hashem and you*"<sup>228</sup>, and there is a well-known interpretation of this verse that the "אנכי" (the "I") of a person, is what divides him from the Creator<sup>229</sup>, so to speak.

### ***Haman Wanted To Destroy Our Deeper Essence***

How indeed can we reach the point in ourselves that is above our own *daas*? How do we penetrate into this inner spiritual light?

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<sup>227</sup> P'sach Eliyahu; based on Tikkunei HaZohar 17a

<sup>228</sup> Devarim 5:5

<sup>229</sup> Meor V'Shemesh, *ibid*

This is the secret of the concept of *igul* (circle). Having the perspective that comes from standing amidst the “circle” is what reveals true unity between our brethren. Superficially, this is called *ahavas haberiyos* (love for the creations) and *ahavas Yisrael* (love for Jews), and this is also true, but there is much more to it. *Ahavas Yisrael* is about reaching the point [in the soul, inwardly], where all are equal. Only at that point is true unity revealed.

How do we reach that point? Let us reflect into the following.

From what age does a person receive *daas*? The clarity of *daas* can only be received at 20 years of age (because Heaven does not punish a person for any sins committed before that age). One is considered to be capable of *daas* at either 13 for a boy or 12 for a girl. A child younger than that has no *daas*. Haman wanted to destroy all Jews, including children. He also wanted to destroy anyone who didn't have *daas*. Simply speaking, this was a decree to destroy all of the Jewish people. But his deeper agenda was because he wasn't trying to attack us at our point of *daas*. He wanted to destroy even the point in us that is above our *daas*.

This is in contrast with Bilaam, who also tried to destroy the Jewish people. Bilaam is Moshe's equal in the side of impurity, equal to Moshe in prophecy. Bilaam wanted to attack us at our *daas*, which is represented by Moshe. That is one way to start up with *Klal Yisrael*. But there is a deeper kind of war against *Klal Yisrael*. Haman was trying to attack us on a much deeper level. He argued to Achashveirosh that we are “one” nation who did not behave like other nation. He was not picking on the fact that there are differences within the Jewish people; rather, he was attacking our oneness, our unity. He wanted to destroy the entire Jewish people all in “one” day, which hints to his attack on our own oneness.

This was very unlike the war of the Greek nation against *Klal Yisrael*, who were trying to influence our *chochmah* (wisdom) to think like them. When it comes to our *chochmah*, we each think differently because we each have our own *daas*. But Haman wanted to destroy us precisely because of our inner oneness. He was fighting us at a plane that is beyond *daas*.

It is thus said of Amalek (ancestor of Haman), “*There is war of Hashem against Amalek, from generation to generation*”.<sup>230</sup> Amalek is at war with G-d. Why is this the definition of Amalek's war? It is because the Jewish people are one nation who are unified under their connection with Hashem. There is nothing in creation that is absolutely one; the only “one” in Creation is Hashem's oneness, and those who attempt to fight the oneness of the Jewish people are really trying to fight the oneness of Hashem.

In the point of our *daas*, there is no oneness in the Jewish people, for everyone's *daas* is different. But Haman and Achashveirosh were fighting the point of oneness in the Jewish people, where we are indeed connected under one unit. This was not a war against our *daas*, which would only be against our outer layer; it was a war against the “oneness” that is in the Jewish people, which comes from the light of Hashem – thus it was a war against the oneness of Hashem. The light of *echad* (oneness) is the Infinite Light of Hashem; Hashem is called the “One Almighty, Who Is Individual”; and Hashem is called “*Hashem echad*”, “Hashem is one”. Haman was aware of our oneness and he was

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230 *Shemos* 17:15

using it to attack us, by trying to reveal our aspect of “oneness” in the side of evil [by getting the entire people to bow down to him].

We see that when Mordechai didn't bow to Haman, Haman became enraged. Why did it bother Haman so much that one Jew doesn't want to bow down to him? It was because Haman was trying to attack us through revealing our “oneness” in the side of evil, which he was trying to accomplish through getting everyone to bow down to him. Now that one Jew wasn't bowing down to him, it was foiling his plans, because it meant that there we weren't unified in subservience to him. Haman could only have power over us if he could get us all to bow down to him, so if even one Jew isn't bowing to him, he couldn't have power over us.

After he became enraged at Mordechai, he planned a gallows of 50 *amos* high to hang Mordechai on. Why specifically did he want it to be 50 *amos*? The deeper meaning behind this is because there are “50 gates of understanding” in the world<sup>231</sup>, which is the inner structure that Hashem has designed the world with. When Haman wanted to hang Mordechai on a gallows that was 50 *amos* high, on a deeper level, this is a hint that wanted to destroy all of this inner structure of the 50 gates of understanding. By hanging Mordechai, he hoped to destroy the “oneness” that is the root all of the 50 gates of understanding.

Haman also gave the plan to have all the Jews destroyed on the 13<sup>th</sup> of Nissan, and 13 is equal to the letters *yud* (י) and *gimmel* (ג), which is equal to the word *echad* (אחד) (one), because he was trying to fight us through oneness. Haman wanted to destroy us on the grounds that we are all one nation. The fact that his plans were foiled shows us that the light that was revealed on Purim is the inner light of our “oneness”.

### ***Our Avodah On Purim – Reaching The Point of “Oneness” In The Soul***

It is easy to talk about this concept of oneness, but there is a deep *avodah* we have to reach this place of oneness in our own souls. It is not an easy task to penetrate past all of the layers in the soul and to get to the deepest layer of the soul, which is the “oneness” that resides within us.

On Purim, we penetrate into our souls, using external means [intoxication], but there is really an inner work we need to do along with this. The outer tool we use for this is the intoxication, where we become inebriated to the point where we do not know the difference between “Blessed is Mordechai” and “Cursed is Haman.” The wine erases our *daas*, and when we have no *daas*, we can get in touch with the inner root of the soul, the point where all souls are equal in.

That all concerns the physical action of our *avodah* on Purim; now let us explain, with *siyata d'shmaya*, of how we can dig very deep into the soul and reach the inner perspective of “oneness” which we are describing here.

### ***The Secret Which The Wine Reveals***

Chazal state, “When wine enters, the secret come forth.”<sup>232</sup> A “secret” is not merely something that you choose to hide from revealing to someone. Such a secret is only a “secret” due to circumstantial factors. The only true “secret” is something which can never be revealed. A secret is described as “Your mouth is blocked from speaking of it.”<sup>233</sup> There is a deep place in the soul which is called “The heart is not revealed to the mouth.”<sup>234</sup> It is a deep perspective in the soul, and it exists in the depths of each and every Jew’s soul. This deep place in the soul is called a “secret”.

What does it mean, then, that “when wine enters, the secret come forth?” If “secrets” come out, then they are not really secrets, because a secret is only something which can never be revealed. So what are the “secrets” that can come out through intoxication? The depth of the matter is that the “secrets” which can come forth from oneself, via the intoxication of wine, are secrets that can always remain as secrets. It is the “secret” that is in every Jew’s soul: “Hashem is one and His name is one” – and this oneness is called “*Kneses Yisrael*”, the collective unit of the Jewish people.

This point is hidden from most people, because it so deep in the soul, and not only is it hidden from others, it is often hidden from the person himself. When “wine enters, secret come forth”, this does not mean that a person tells these secrets to another. It means that the “secret” becomes revealed to the person himself.

Achashveirosh served wine for seven days after the meal that lasted for 180 days, and the Gemara says that each person had served to him wine which was older than him<sup>235</sup>; every person had wine which preceded his own birth. In this statement, Chazal are hinting to us about the “secret” of the soul, which is **above** one’s “I” – the root of the “I”. When the point above the “I” is revealed to a person, the “secret” of the soul is revealed within him.

This is the depth of “When wine enters, the secret comes forth”: it can be revealed to a person the very root of his essence. Thus, the “secret” that is meant to be revealed on Purim is not about revealing the “I” itself. If that would be the point, then each person at the party would have drunk a wine that was made on the day he was born. But that is not what they drank. They drank a wine that preceded their day of birth, which hints to us that the “secret” revealed to the one who drinks the wine is, the revelation of the point **above** the “I.”

Achashveirosh was trying to reveal this “secret” in the side of evil, through the wine that he served them during these seven days after his grand feast. But in the side of holiness, we have an *avodah* on Purim that parallels this concept: through the wine on Purim, we are meant to reveal within us the presence of the Individual One of the world. Hashem’s oneness resides in the point deep in the soul that is above the “I” of a person. Purim is about penetrating past our very “I” – and to get further and further into **the areas of our soul that are beyond the “I”** (ego\self).

### ***The “I” Is The Ratzon\Will***

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232 *Eruvin 65a*

233 *Sefer Yetzirah 1:7*

234 *Kohel Rabbah 12:9*

235 *Megillah 12a*

Until now we have explained how the light of Purim is above the point of our *daas*. Now we will explain, with *siyata d'shmaya*, of how the light of Purim is also above the point of our *ratzon* (will).

It is written, “*Make for Me a temple, and I will dwell amongst them*”<sup>236</sup>. The *Nefesh HaChaim*<sup>237</sup> and the *Alshich*<sup>238</sup> both explain that the *possuk* does not say “amongst him” but “amongst them”, which shows us that Hashem dwells in each Jew. If so, the *possuk* is saying that Hashem wanted that the heart of each Jew should become a sanctuary where His presence (the *Shechinah*) will reside.

The Sages said that in the seven-day feast which Achashveirosh hosted for the Jews [where he served them wine that preceded their birthdays], he used the vessels of the *Beis HaMikdash*.<sup>239</sup> The depth behind his agenda was because he was really trying to reveal the point in a Jew’s soul that is “above the I”, in the side of evil [by getting everyone to partake in his party and by getting them to reveal what their truest, innermost desires were].

But Achashveirosh’s plan couldn’t work, because since he was a person who did not have recognition of the Creator, he thought that the deepest part of a Jew’s soul is the point of *ratzon*\will [and he didn’t know that there is a point in a Jew’s soul which is beyond the conscious *ratzon* of the person]. Achashveirosh gave the order that all of the wine be served “according to each person’s wish” – according to each person’s *ratzon*. He thought that the essence of the soul is the *ratzon*, and by getting them to have an evil *ratzon* to partake joyously in his party, he thought he could ruin them at their very core.

The “I” of a person (the self) is his *ratzon* (will), but the deeper part of the soul lies beyond the “I”. It is the light of the Creator in the Jew’s soul, and Achashveirosh was unaware of this layer of the soul. He could only get the Jews to sin at the level of *ratzon* [by getting them to pursue gluttony and to want it].

Ultimately, he did not succeed in getting them all to have a unified *ratzon* for evil. This is because the *ratzon* of each person is different, and it is only Hashem, in His Infinite Light, Who can unify and equalize everything. Achashveirosh was trying to equalize everyone by showing how all of us had the same evil *ratzon*. His mistake was that he didn’t realize was that he was trying to do something that was impossible.

The light revealed on Purim is thus a point that not only transcends anything that can become “divisive”: it transcends our *daas* (logical perception), and it transcends our *ratzon*\will [for both our *daas* and *ratzon* are divisive aspects].

### ***Purim – Getting Past Our Ratzon***

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<sup>236</sup> *Shemos* 25:8

<sup>237</sup> *Nefesh HaChaim* 1:4

<sup>238</sup> *Alshich al HaTorah, Shemos* 25:8

<sup>239</sup> *Esther Rabbah* 2:11

It is well-known that the *gematria*<sup>240</sup> of “Moshe” is equal to “ratzon”.<sup>241</sup> As we have been explaining, Purim revealed a level that is beyond *ratzon*. This was also the perspective which the people were trying to gain in making the golden calf. They thought that Moshe was dead, so they wanted to have a bond with Hashem that was beyond *ratzon*: they wanted to have a “circular” relationship with Hashem (“*igul*”), a point where all people have an equal relationship with Hashem. They wanted to reveal this point of equality, and this is what they were trying to show by making the *eigel* (the golden calf), which is from the word “*igul*”. [Their intentions were holy, but ultimately, it led to an action of sin].

On Purim, this perspective was revealed in a holy manner. On Purim, this inner point was revealed, in which are all equal in; this is reflected by the fact that on Purim, we penetrate past our *ratzon*/will, by removing our *retzonos* [via intoxication]. When one removes his *retzonos*, he can get in touch with the reality of the Creator.

### ***Two Aspects of Our Relationship With Hashem***

This is because there are two aspects in the relationship between *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and the Jewish people. One aspect of it is to fulfill the *mitzvos*, which fulfills the will of the Creator, and through that, we bond with Hashem. A second aspect of our bond with Hashem is, “A Jew, even when he sins, is still a Jew.”<sup>242</sup> Hashem loves each member of the Jewish people even if, *chas v’shalom*, he is not doing His will.

Therefore, the bond between Hashem and the Jewish people exists on two levels. One level of the bond is through the *mitzvos*. A person bonds with Hashem through doing the *mitzvos*, which are Hashem’s will. Each morning in the blessings before *Shema*, we express our acceptance of His will upon us. The second level of the bond we have with Hashem, though, is unconditional. It is like how a son is his father’s child regardless of what he does – he is always the child of his father, and it doesn’t depend on anything he does.

One needs to build these two levels in his soul. We need to do the *mitzvos* so that we can attain the level of the bond with Hashem that is available to us through doing the *mitzvos*, where we are fulfilling His will. But along with this, we also need another aspect in our relationship with Hashem. This is not a replacement, *chas v’shalom*, to the first level. Rather, it must rather go hand-in-hand with the first level. One needs to also have a bond with the Creator regardless of the actions that he does. One must ultimately feel towards Hashem that “I am Your son, and You are my father.”

So on one hand, one needs to build a bond with the Creator through doing the *mitzvos*, and along with this, one needs to also enjoy a father-son relationship with Hashem – while making sure not to become lax, *chas v’shalom*, in keeping any part of the Torah: **a Jew must know that he is**

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<sup>240</sup> numerical value in Hebrew

<sup>241</sup> משה equals 345 and רצון equals 346. There is a rule in gematria called “*am hakolel*” that the numbers can still be 1 off and yet there is still a parallel.

<sup>242</sup> Talmud Bavli: Sanhedrin 44a

**loved, on an intrinsic level, by the Creator of the world. A Jew is Hashem's child, and he is a part of Him, so to speak.**

The redemption we had on Pesach prepared us to receive the Torah, where we would receive the *mitzvos*. We declared “*Naaseh V’Nishma*” there and that made us eligible to receive the Torah. This meant that we were making our *ratzon* subservient to the Creator’s will. But the redemption we had on Purim was a new aspect in our relationship with Hashem. It was a re-acceptance of the Torah, which was also done with *ratzon*, and the depth of this was that we became desirous (“*retzuyah*”, from the word *ratzon*) to Hashem.

When we re-accepted the Torah on Purim, it didn’t give us more *mitzvos* than what we received at Har Sinai; our obligation in the *mitzvos* did not change, and indeed, it cannot be ever be forsaken, *chas v’shalom*. But the “*ratzon*” we revealed on Purim was that we revealed this point that Hashem always desires the Jewish people in every situation. So it doesn’t mean simply that they now accepted the Torah again willingly. Rather, they revealed how the One who gave the Torah always wants them.

A person understands simply that if he does the will of Hashem, then Hashem will want him, and if he doesn’t do the will of Hashem *chas v’shalom*, then Hashem doesn’t want him. **But Hashem always desires every Jew.** The prophet states that at the time of redemption, all Jews will return, and no Jew will be left behind.<sup>243</sup> Thus, the light revealed on Purim is really the light of future redemption. The future redemption is not only for those who did Hashem’s will; it is not selective. Rather, every Jew is called Hashem’s child, and he is included in the redemption; it is not possible for any Jew to be left out of it, as the prophet guarantees. The light of the redemption in the future is not dependent on the actions that a Jew has done.

Purim is the source of this light. On Purim, there was a decree of death on all Jews, and the redemption than was experienced by everyone, without any exceptions. It didn’t depend on how worthy their actions were.

(However, we need to emphasize that in addition to the light which is not dependent on our actions, there is also a light that is dependent on our actions. So we need to contain both of these two lights at once, and they go hand-in-hand with each other. Compare this to having a father and mother. A person cannot come from only a father or only a mother; he needs to come from both. The same goes for our bond with Hashem. We cannot say that there is only one kind of bond with Hashem, in which a person is always connected to Hashem even if he doesn’t do His will. Rather, we need both the aspects of doing His will and having an unconditional relationship with Him, in the same way that we need both a father and a mother.)

Purim revealed the deeper aspect of our bond with Hashem: that our relationship with Hashem goes above logic, for it is not dependent on any reason. The Sages said that the Jewish people then were deserving of the decree, either because they enjoyed Achashveirosh’s party or because they bowed to the idols then. **In what merit, then, were we saved from the decree? From a deep perspective, there were no merits that saved us! It was simply because we were Hashem’s children!**

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<sup>243</sup> *Shmuel II 14:14*

When we realized that this was the nature of our salvation, we were able to come to an entirely new acceptance of the Torah, where we realized that **we are connected to the Creator in every situation.**

### ***“I dwell amongst them amidst their impurity”***

This is the secret behind the concept of the “*igul*” (the point of “circular” relationship with Hashem, in which all points are equal) which was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. In the future, when all [*tzaddikim*] will point to Hashem and say, “*This is Hashem, which we hoped for*”, how can they all do this? If it were to depend on their actions, everyone would be different from each other. But it is not dependent on one’s actions that he did. Rather, it is like the Baal Shem Tov taught: “Hashem loves each Jew as if he is His only child”.<sup>244</sup> In that aspect, it can be said that all Jews were created “equal”.

**When we realize that we are each loved intrinsically by Hashem, and that this does not depend on our actions, this is where the secret of “oneness” in the soul is revealed.**

Now we will explain how we can practically live by these concepts in our day-to-day life.

Each person, to a certain degree, has an aspect in which there is a “decree of death” upon him, just as in the times of Purim. We are referring to the part in the soul in which a person feels that he is disconnected from the Creator. How can a person remove that disconnection?

On one hand, he needs to do the *mitzvos*, and along with this, he also needs to realize the verse, “*I dwell amongst them in their impurity.*”<sup>245</sup> If a person can pull himself together and believe that **even as he has become disconnected from the Creator chas v’shalom, because he commits sins, yet he still feels deep down that there is always a connection to the Creator – from there will come his salvation.** So he should continue to do the *mitzvos*, for as we explained earlier, we need both aspects in our bond with Hashem: to realize that we have an unconditional with Him, and to do His will through observing the *mitzvos*. We cannot have one without the other; we need both.

There are thus two parts of returning to Hashem. One part of is to renew our commitment to observing the *mitzvos*; that spurs us on to *teshuvah*. Another part of it is to believe that even though sin causes us to become disconnected from Hashem, we are still always connected to Him, on an intrinsic level. That reveals a spiritual light within our souls, which spurs on us to do His *mitzvos* as well.

### ***Two Ways of Accepting The Torah***

When Hashem redeemed the Jewish people from Egypt, He revealed His presence to them on the night of Pesach, which was a revelation that was beyond their current level. Then there was a preparation to receive the Torah at Har Sinai, and then Hashem revealed Himself to them in order

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<sup>244</sup> *Keser Shem Tov (Chabad), hosafos, p.167*

<sup>245</sup> *Bamidbar 16:16*

for them to receive the Torah. Chazal state that the entire existence of Creation was depending on the acceptance of the Torah by the Jewish people; if they wouldn't accept the Torah, the world would go back to nothingness and desolation.<sup>246</sup>

But there is a deeper point than this [which was revealed on Purim]: a person can be connected to the Creator in every situation, and when he feels that connection, he can then come to a willing acceptance of the Torah. This is what happened on Purim. If a person feels this connection – which is what Purim is all about – he will surely accept the Torah in all its details, all its *halachos*, in all of their nuances.

Thus, there are two aspects of how a person accepts the Torah. One aspect of it comes from the *ratzon* (will) of a person to come closer to Hashem, and another aspect of it is **to feel already close, and as a direct result of feeling this intrinsic closeness, a person realizes that he needs to accept the will of His King upon him.**

At Har Sinai, the people accepted the Torah out of a will to come close to the Creator, and from their *ratzon*, they received the Torah. On one hand, the Sages state that Hashem forced them to accept the Torah, by suspending the mountain over the air above them, but on the other hand, they accepted the Torah in order to become closer to Hashem, for they were already preparing for the Torah by standing at a distance. They knew that in order to become close to Hashem, they must accept the Torah.

But on Purim, the opposite happened. They accepted the Torah then out of realizing that their intrinsic closeness with Hashem, and because they felt the closeness, they automatically came to accept Hashem's will upon them. This is the meaning of how they willingly re-accepted the Torah. They revealed the aspect of the bond with Hashem in which we are always desirous to Hashem, even if *chas v'shalom* we sin; that we are never apart from Him. After we revealed this inner aspect of our bond with Hashem, we were then able to accept the Torah again upon us – because we realized that we are *already* close to Hashem to begin with.

### ***Conditional Bond With Hashem Vs. Unconditional Bond With Hashem***

There is a deep way with which how a Jew can approach life with. If a person wants to have a bond with the Creator, how can he go about attaining it? One way to build a relationship with Hashem is through the *mitzvos*, and through *davening* to Hashem to become close to Him. This is true, but along with this, a person also needs something else, which is a totally opposite perspective: he should believe that Hashem is found next to him, every single moment! It is a reality that does not change, which is not dependent on how he acts.

**When one believes that Hashem is actually next to Him all the time, he will then find it impossible to go against Hashem's will.** For with this attitude, his bond with Hashem is not dependent on any reason.

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<sup>246</sup> *Yalkut Shimeoni Tehillim 75: 811*

If a person feels that his bond with Hashem is dependent on a reason (on the actions he does), then he is trying to have a relationship with Hashem based on *daas*. But a deep bond with Hashem is formed from the point that is above our *daas*.

It is like the verse, *“Just as water reflects a face, so does the heart of a man to another”*. If we ask a person: “Why do you love Hashem? And why do you think Hashem loves you?” and he answers “I love Hashem because he does so many good things for me, and Hashem loves me because I fulfill His *mitzvos* very well”, this is called a bond of “conditional love” with Hashem. A different perspective entirely would be that a person has no question at all of why Hashem loves or why he loves Hashem. It is reality to him and therefore it is not a question to him.

If one can reach this place in his soul in which his love towards Hashem is not dependent on any reason, he has revealed a love for Hashem that can never cease; it is a love that does not depend on any condition to keep it going. When one has only a bond of conditional love with Hashem, his bond with Hashem will weaken at some point. **When one reveals a love for Hashem (and he feels Hashem’s love for him) that is unconditional, not dependent on any reason – such a bond will never cease.**

### ***Purim – The Day To Form An Unconditional Bond With the Creator***

Purim is essentially a day which is meant for one to build this unconditional bond with Hashem. This is in contrast with the rest of the festivals, which reflect our bond with Hashem that is dependent on certain reasons. We need this aspect as well, and we cannot do without it, *chas v’shalom*. But along with it, we also need to build a relationship with Hashem which is not dependent on any reason.

Why does Hashem love a person? It does not depend on any reason. Why does a person love Hashem? It should not either depend on any given reason! It is like asking how we know if there is a Creator. There is no room for this question, because it is a plain reality, just as no one questions how he knows he exists.

One needs to penetrate deeply into his soul. **He first should realize that the Creator is within him**, for it is written, *“I dwell amongst them in their impurity”* – even if his actions make him deserving of destruction. **One should deepen this emunah peshutah (simple belief) that Hashem is with him, just as He was with Moshe Rabbeinu**, and that this is not dependent on any particular reason. **It is simply a gift from Hashem, and this is how Hashem has designed our souls. Just as Hashem was with Moshe Rabbeinu, so is He with every Jew – even in the final generation.**

There is a well-known question: How will Mashiach come in the final generation, which is the most undeserving generation possible? The answer is clear and simple. In earlier generations, there was plenty of reason for him to come; they were more deserving, they had more *zechusim* (merits), so if he were to come then, people would say that it was due to a certain reason that he came, and then it would mean that our bond with Hashem depends on certain reasons. **But in our times, in the final generations, there is no reason that we are deserving of Mashiach. That is precisely why**

**he will come in the final generation – because then it will be clear that his arrival didn't depend on any certain reason.**

That is the light of the future, revealed on Purim: Our bond with the Creator does not depend on anything! The Jewish people accept Hashem's decrees upon them because they realize their intrinsic closeness with Him. Even if a person committed every last sin, G-d forbid, he cannot ever become disconnected from Hashem. A son who rebels against his father is still called his son. Perhaps he has the status of a "wayward child", but he is still called the father's child. Even by a wayward child (*ben sorer u'moreh*), the Torah says that he has a father and mother, because he is still called their son.

### ***Purim – Above Our Daas***

In our relationship with the Creator, one needs to dig very deep into his soul and reach this point of an "unconditional bond" with Hashem. That is where the secret of "oneness" is found in the soul. When a person's bond with Hashem is dependent on a reason to keep it going, there is no oneness, because if the condition for the bond isn't met, the person is not "one" with Hashem and instead there are "two" – for he feels apart from Hashem. But if one has the aspect of unconditional love with Hashem, he has revealed the "oneness" between him and Hashem – forever.

Haman said, "*There is a nation that is spread out and scattered throughout the nations.*"<sup>247</sup> On a deep level, this is the evil, accusing voice that says that our bond with Hashem is conditional and that it can be severed, *chas v'shalom*. Haman also wanted to destroy all of the Jewish people on one day, because he was trying to reveal a "oneness" in the side of evil, in order to counter the "oneness" in the side of holiness. That was how he planned on getting rid of the "oneness" on the side of holiness.

**We defeat Haman's perspective on Purim**, when we become intoxicated to the point that we do not know the difference between "Cursed is Haman" and "Blessed Is Mordechai"; when we lose our *daas*. A drunken person is exempt from *mitzvos*, like an insane person, who does not have to keep the *mitzvos*. This is the secret of Purim! Of course, as soon as the intoxication wears off, we return to our obligation in *mitzvos*. But **the point of this intoxication on Purim is to teach us how to form a bond with Hashem without our *daas*, when we are not obligated in *mitzvos*.**

### ***Beyond Our Obligatory Level***

The Gemara has a discussion: Who is greater – someone who doesn't have to do the *mitzvos* and he does them anyway, or someone who is obligated in the *mitzvos* and he does them? At first, Rav Yosef thought that a person who does the *mitzvos* when he's not obligated is greater, and in the end,

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<sup>247</sup> Esther 3:8

the Gemara brings proof that it is the opposite: the one who is obligated in *mitzvos* and does them, is greater, and he gets more reward than a person who is not obligated in *mitzvos* who does them.<sup>248</sup>

Although the conclusion of the Gemara is different than the original understanding, we know that there is always truth to even an original understanding of the Gemara, so there is truth to either of these opinions in the Gemara. We can learn from this that there is a bond with Hashem attained through being obligated in the *mitzvos* and doing them, and there is also a bond with Hashem we can attain that is not dependent on our obligation in *mitzvos*.

According to Rav Yosef's original understanding, it is a deeper level to have a bond with Hashem when one is not obligated in *mitzvos* and he does them anyway. This shows a deeper bond that the person has with Hashem which goes beyond the level of obligation – the kind of bond with Hashem that is unconditional.

We can understand it in the same way that a mother loves her newborn baby – there is no particular reason that she loves him other than the fact that it is her child.

### ***In Conclusion***

The depth of our life is to reach the point where our bond with the Creator is not dependent on any particular reason or circumstance. And when one loves Hashem unconditionally, he will feel this bond on a constant basis. The bond that he feels with this will cause him to have a constant desire, in turn, to always want to do the *mitzvos* of the Torah. In every situation, this person will always feel his bond with Hashem.

There is a lot more to say about this point, and it cannot be explained entirely in one *derasha*. Our hope here is that you have formed the basis in yourself to want this and search for this: to find the absolute level of connection with Hashem which knows no pause.

The Sages say that the other festivals will all cease in the future, and one of the reasons for this is because they are all dependent on various factors. When the reason for the festival is no longer here, there is no more reason to have the festival. But Purim is of a different dimension than the rest of the festivals. It is based on our bond with Hashem that is not dependent on any reason. That is the deeper reason of why Purim cannot cease.

Reaching this point is a deep, inner journey to traverse in the soul. **One needs to first believe in the concept, and from his simple emunah in this he will be led to reaching this point, where he can know and feel that our existence is eternally attached with Hashem's.**

**The more that people will believe in these words, the more this perspective will be shined within ourselves, and the light from inside our souls can then radiate outward to the rest of the world. That light will have the potency to cause a return of the Jewish people for the better, when the righteous Mashiach can come speedily in our days.**

Amen.

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248 *Kiddushin 31a*

*Clip from Tefillah #043 – Finding Renewal*

## 3.17 | A New Purim Experience Each Year

On Purim, there are aspiring people who want to have an elevated kind of Purim, *Baruch Hashem*, so they make sure to say up the whole night of Purim and learn *Maseches Megillah* (Tractate Megillah of Talmud Bavli). *Baruch Hashem*, people are learning on Purim; this is wonderful. It is wonderful that people learn every year on Purim and review *Maseches Megillah*. But, this is still not the essence of Purim! The Purim which you will have this year does not have to be the same exact Purim you had last year. The *Maseches Megillah* which you are learning this year on Purim does not have to be the same exact *Maseches Megillah* you learned last year on Purim – it does not have to be a mere review of the same words. It can be a whole new kind of *Maseches Megillah*! Reviewing *Maseches Megillah* each year on Purim does not have to just that each year you are simply “reviewing” what you did last year. It can be a completely new experience.

4  
AFTER PURIM

## 4.1 | Raising Happy Children

### *Giving Over The Mitzvos With Happiness*

Since this month is Adar, the month of *simchah*/happiness, we will focus here on a point about *simchah*; we will try to present these words in a way that can be used practically in our life.

When we do *mitzvos*, we have two commandments within every *mitzvah*: the *mitzvah* itself, and the commandment to perform it happily. There is the *mitzvah* itself, and then there is the way we do it. The way we do a *mitzvah* is to do it with *simchah* – happily.

When something is given over to others joyously, those who receive it will want to carry it out joyously. When we give over our *mesorah* (the Torah tradition) and the *mitzvos* with joy to our children, not only will our children want to carry them out, but they will do so with joy.

Most of the time, however, when something in our *mesorah* is told over and given over to others, it is not being received with joy.

This is really because the person himself giving over the *mesorah* didn't convey it in a happy way. There is often a certain joy lacking in the person who is teaching what he wants to impart, and when the child hears what is being told to him, he will mimic the lack of enthusiasm which it was given over with to him.

By the *simchas beis hashoeivah* in the *Beis HaMikdash* (the festival that took place in the Temple during *Sukkos*), the Sages describe that there was a great happiness that took place there.<sup>249</sup> “*Shoeivah*” means to “draw forth”, hinting to the fact that the happiness was drawn forth. Happiness has to be “drawn forth” from somewhere, just like you draw water from a spring.

When we teach about the Torah and *mitzvos* to our children, is the purpose of giving over this knowledge? Is the purpose to give over its information, or is the purpose to give over *joy* that be gained from the information?

Simply speaking, one will answer that in order to give over the *information* of Torah to our children, it has to be given over joyously; so the purpose is the information, and it is just that it needs to be done in a joyous way. But the deeper way to approach it is that the purpose of giving over the information of the Torah to our children is really to give over the *happiness* to our children, from the Torah's information.

It is written, “*Hashem rejoices in His creations.*”<sup>250</sup> Happiness comes from completion, as we see that Hashem rejoiced upon completing the world. By contrast, sadness comes from an absence of something, when something is incomplete.

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<sup>249</sup> see Talmud Bavli Succah 53a

<sup>250</sup> Tehillim 104:34

If we want to give over happiness to a person, we need to bring a person to the source of the happiness and draw it out from there. There are people who very much want to be happy, but they don't know where to get it from; they don't where the source is.

### *The Source Of Happiness*

Where, indeed, is the source of happiness?

It is written, "*The righteous rejoice in Hashem.*" What is the joy that a person can have "in" Hashem? It is when a person lives the right kind of life, a life of connection with Hashem. If a person doesn't live with Hashem in his life, he remains self-absorbed. He won't be able to ever have a complete happiness.

We all want to give happiness to our children. But from where do *we* find happiness to give over to them?

The biggest wonder is that parents want their children to be happy and they want to give them happiness, but they themselves don't have that joy to give over. How can a person give over a *simchas bachaim*, a joy for life, if he himself doesn't have a joy for life? When we try to give our children happiness but we ourselves don't have it, the result we can see (from much trial and error) is that the children remain just like the parents, who aren't happy.

But when the parents live with the joy of living a life with Hashem, they have the ability to give over that joy to their children. They become like a wellspring that can give continuously, a *maayan hamisgaber* (a mighty, flowing spring).

When people only know of temporary happiness, such happiness falls apart in the end. Any joy which we get from the outside of us is just superficial; it is temporary and it goes away. But there is an inner kind of joy we can have – it is real, and it lasts. This is a happiness that comes from a deep, inner point within us.

### *Non-Jewish Therapists Can't Help A Jew*

Every day in the morning, we make a blessing in when we thank Hashem that we were not created as a non-Jew. If we would say this every day from the depths of our soul, it would fill us with an inner happiness.

How does it fill a person with joy? If we truly desire to live the real Jewish kind of lifestyle, the way that a Jew is supposed to live, such a desire will supply us with an inner happiness.

There is a very disturbing thing taking place in our times – when a Jew who has some problems in his life, he gets so desperate for help that he goes to a non-Jewish therapist. But a Jew cannot be helped by a non-Jew! A Jew who needs help is really looking for how he can find the "Jew" inside him [whether he is aware that this is his really his problem, or not]. Can a non-Jew help him find that?!

Really, a Jew who is feeling like his life is full of problems is really having one single root problem: he's not happy being a Jew. Since that is really the problem, there is no non-Jew who can help him find the solution, because a non-Jew will not be able to help a Jew become a better "Jew."

If a person would only desire how he can live more and more like a Jew, he would never even fathom going to a non-Jewish therapist!

How can it be that a Jew is so unhappy? Can the "Jew" within you ever die? You are always a Jew, and realizing this will help you discover the *greatest* happiness.

After Adam sinned, he was cursed with *etzev* (sadness). He was told, "*You are earth, and to earth you shall return.*"<sup>251</sup> This shows us that sadness only affects our aspect of "earth" in us – our physical layer. But in us there is also a Jew, and the Jew within us doesn't come from earth. When a person lives with the Jew inside himself, he will never be sad!

If a Jew is sad, it must be that it is because he doesn't realize what it means to be a Jew. Non-Jewish therapy is therefore never the solution for a Jew.

### *Wanting To Be A Jew*

What exactly is our joy in our life which we must convey? What is the happiness which we want our children to have?

We should want to show our children how happy it is *just to be a Jew*. We want to show them that the more and more of a Jewish kind of lifestyle you live, the happier you will be in life.

We must know what our life is about. Why should we be happy? What is the difference between a Jew's happiness and a non-Jew's happiness? A Jew is happy when his soul becomes more revealed. It says, "*Nagilah v'nismicha bach,*" "We will revel and rejoice, in You."<sup>252</sup> When we reveal our souls – when we have "*nagilah*", which is referring to the revelation of our soul, then we can arrive at "*v'nismicha bach*", to "*rejoice in You.*"

We **know** that we are all Jewish, but how much time do we think about this? It is a superficial attitude to just know you are Jewish and not to search about the meaning of what it **means** to be a Jew.

To be a Jew realizes to mean that you are separated from the non-Jews. "*And I will separate them from among the nations.*"<sup>253</sup> Every day we make a morning blessing, "*That You did not make me a non-Jew.*" Before that, we make the *berachah* that we were woken up – "*Who gives the rooster understanding.*" This shows us that first we need understanding, and after we have true understanding, we can then realize how thankful we are that we were not made a non-Jew.

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251 Beraishis 3:19

252 Shir HaShirim 1:4

253 Vayikra 2:26

When we make *havdalah* on *Motzei Shabbos*, we also mention how we are separated from the other nations. The depth of this is because in order to be able to separate between night and day, we must realize how we are different from the non-Jews.

### *The Joy Of Being Jewish*

So what exactly is the joy of being Jewish? The following will illustrate it.

In certain places of the world today, they still practice *avodah zarah* (idol worship). It seems that it's only in India and the eastern countries where the most idol worship is taking place, but the truth is that there is more idol-worship taking place in America! In India, they might do actual idol-worship, but at least they don't do it every second. But in America, the whole way of life of many people is like a constant life of idol-worship.

What is idol worship, *avodah zarah*? The word *zarah* means "strange." When a person to another person as if the other is 'strange' to him, he won't respond to the other's greeting. He acts towards him like a stranger. That is why a stranger is called a "zar", from the word "*zarah*", "strange." When a person does something but it looks "strange", it's like *avodah zarah*, because he's really doing something that is strange for him to do.

When a person does *mitzvos* but he isn't connected to Hashem through them, this also resembles idol-worship! *Mitzvos* to such a person seem strange! When a person puts on *tefillin* and he is unaware of how this mitzvah furthers his bond with Hashem, deep down he has a "stranger" attitude towards the *mitzvah* of *tefillin*. He's doing an "avodah" that's strange to him – the exact idea of *avodah zarah*.

When a Jew is connected to Hashem in everything he does, he lives like a Jew. But even if a Jew does everything that he is supposed to do – he learns Torah, *davens*, and does *chessed* – it can still very well be that everything he does is like *avodah zarah* to him, because he isn't connecting to Hashem through them! Even though he does everything according to the Torah that he is supposed to do, he is still sad inside, and he doesn't gain happiness from doing the *mitzvos*. Why is he sad? It is because he isn't really serving Hashem, even though he does all the *mitzvos* that he's supposed to do. So he resembles the idol-worshipper, who is involved with something that is strange and disconnected from him.

What does it mean to live like a true Jew? It means for a person to be connected to Hashem in *everything* that we do. This is the whole secret to happiness.

From where can we draw happiness from? It is only when our *inside* is connected to what we do on our outside; when our **heart** is connected to our intellect. If you see any smart person who is sad, it must be because his heart isn't connected to his mind. If his heart would be in the right place, he would be happy.

A person might do all the *mitzvos*, but if deep down, he doesn't really want to do this, and he's secretly wishing deep down that he could live like a non-Jew – then he will be very sad, even though he "does" all the *mitzvos*.

## *Chinuch With The Heart*

The *possuk* says, “*U’lyishrei lev, simchah*”, “To the upright of heart, there is joy”.<sup>254</sup> Happiness is found in our heart. This has been proven medically as well, that the mood changes according to how the heart is. But if our heart is in one place and our mind is in another, can we ever be happy? If someone isn’t happy, it’s a sign that something is wrong with his heart.

A person might teach his child everything in the Torah and tell him it’s all true, and the child grows up knowing that he has to learn and do all the *mitzvos*. But the child can “know” all of it, yet his **heart** isn’t there. We must realize that the main part in all our *chinuch* (child education) of our children is on their heart! We should be trying to impress the mitzvos upon their **heart**, and not merely upon their brain’s memory.

Anything that we draw vitality from in our life is rooted in our heart. Of the heart, it is written, “*For from it, comes life.*”<sup>255</sup> Vitality in life is drawn from living a “life of the heart”. The *chinuch* we give to our children has more to do with the heart than the knowledge we give over to them.

The Chofetz Chaim said that in Gan Eden, there are different levels. There is one kind of Gan Eden for someone who did all the *mitzvos* but his attitude throughout his life was cold towards *Yiddishkeit*. Those who were “lukewarm” toward the *mitzvos* get a higher level of Gan Eden, and those who were at least “warm” about their *Yiddishkeit* get a higher level of Gan Eden. When we impart the values of *chinuch* to our children, we shouldn’t be satisfied with giving them over “lukewarm” or even “warm” feelings about *Yiddishkeit*!

We need to get them to feel very, very warm feelings toward *Yiddishkeit* – the feelings should be very hot, boiling hot! Lukewarm feelings, or a little bit of warmth towards *Yiddishkeit*, won’t be enough. That is why when we give over the Torah’s values to our children, it must be given over with *simchah*, with happiness.

So it is not enough to merely “train” them to do all of the *mitzvos*. They need to **see** it being given over with happiness on our part. If we ourselves aren’t happy, we cannot give over the Torah to the next generation. You cannot give something you don’t have, and if you aren’t happy, you won’t be able to give happiness to your children.

## *The Inner Reason Today of Why Children Go “Off the Derech”*

Unfortunately, we see many children that suddenly go off the *derech* (astray) sometime after their *bar mitzvah*. Until they reached *bar mitzvah* age, many of these boys were learning Torah and doing *mitzvos* just like every other good boy. Suddenly, the child a little after his *bar mitzvah* can throw it all away. In the best of these kinds of situations, he loses his interest for learning and he won’t want to open a *Gemara* anymore, and in worse situations, he doesn’t want to be *frum* anymore at all.

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254 *Tehillim* 97:11

255 *Mishlei* 4:23

How do we explain this terrible phenomenon? Until now, everything was fine. What happened? But upon some reflection, we can discover that it's not that the child suddenly "went off" the *derech*. If a child goes off the *derech*, it's a revelation that he never was "on the *derech*" to begin with. Why? He must have felt like he was in a "jail" all along, and as soon as he felt like he could finally escape from the "jail", he ran from the "jail".

Although the child may have been learning, *davening* and doing *mitzvos*, it didn't become a part of him. It never was. He was never connected to it in the first place. Of course, he *knew* all about it in his mind, but his *heart* was never in it.

### *Chinuch Is On Ourselves!*

Our job in *chinuch* is make sure that our children feel connected to *Yiddishkeit*, to make them feel that what they are doing is a part of them. To do this, we need to make sure that their **hearts** are in it.

Most people in fact know a lot of Torah, but their hearts aren't in it. They have never developed their heart. Just like when a person has a heart problem he needs to have heart surgery, so can it be said of this generation that many of us need to have "heart" surgery...

If we want our children to be happy with *Yiddishkeit*, if we want to see real *nachas* from them, we need to work on ourselves first. This can only be done if we ourselves are connected to *pnimiyus* (inwardness), and only then can we give over the *mesorah* to the next generation with happiness. And when the children see our happiness in *Yiddishkeit*, the *mitzvos* become a part of them as they perform them.

Many people are sitting down and trying to analyze the problem of children going astray in this generation, and what the solution is. Some say that we say that we need to give our children more love; if a child went off the *derech*, it must be that we didn't give him enough love, and instead we pressured the child too much to learn Torah. Others feel differently, that if the child went off, it must be that the parents were too nice to him, and the child should have received a tougher approach that would have disciplined him better. But there is really only one answer which defines the root of the problem: we need to fix our very heart.

There is a prayer that we say, "*And purify our hearts to serve You in truth.*" If we would say this prayer from our heart to Hashem, and we don't just say the words without feeling, Hashem will answer us.

If a person needs heart surgery, how much money is he willing to pay? If it will cost him \$200,000, would he pay it? He would. He'd find a way to come up with the money somehow. How much are we willing to pay for our *real* heart? How much are we willing to put into it?

May we all be *zoche* to connect ourselves with Hashem.

## 4.2 | Happiness During The Entire Year

### *Clarity Brings Happiness*

On Purim we are happy. But what about the rest of the year? Can we be happy during the rest of the year as well?

We have already spoken about what the happiness of Purim is. But we **can** be happy during the year as well. How?

At the third day of Creation, the Torah writes, “*Hashem rejoices in His creations.*” Why does Hashem rejoice in His creations? In the *Gemara*<sup>256</sup> it is apparent that Hashem felt joy at the third day of Creation, the day in which trees and fruit were created, because now there was **clarity** (*behirus*) in each thing; each fruit tasted like that of its tree, which represents clarity. This was the joy, the *simcha* that Hashem had in His creations: that there was clarity.

Happiness is thus associated with clarity. This is how we can always be happy, not only on Purim, but even throughout the whole year: when we have clarity.

### *Two Kinds of Clarity*

There are two kinds of clarity. When we learn Torah, *Chazal* tell us that they must be “enlightening and joyous as if they were given at Sinai.”<sup>257</sup> This is to be clear in our actual learning – we need to clarify our *p’shat* (simple meaning of the text) in *Gemara*. When we learn Torah, the *p’shat* should be clear to us, and only then can we enjoy the Torah.

But there is another field of learning, and it too requires clarity. This is clarity in areas of *da’as*, (lit. knowledge), to be clear in our way of life, to know how to live right. What do we mean by this?

We can find something troubling in today’s time: a person might very well be a *Talmid Chochom* (Torah scholar) when it comes to his learning – the *sugyos* of *Gemara* that he learns - but not when it comes to a basic way of how to live life.

Most of us indeed are very unclear of how to live our lives. We heard a little bit from this *Rebbi* and another *Rebbi*, we got some *hadrachah* (guidance) here and there – but we are still very unclear of how to live our life.

We think that it’s good enough that we have a life full of Torah and that we live a Torah-lifestyle – and we often think that this is enough to have clarity in how to live life. Many people are immersed in Torah all day and doing all the *mitzvos*, living a Torah lifestyle, yet remain complacent towards life.

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<sup>256</sup> *Talmud Bavli Chullin 60a*

<sup>257</sup> *Talmud Yerushalmi Chagigah 2:1, cited in Tosafos to Tractate Chagigah 15a*

But although it is true that, *Baruch Hashem*, many of us can say on ourselves that we are living Torah-based lives, it is not true that we feel clear about our life. We often have no clarity in what our life about.

Rabbeinu Yonah writes in *sefer Shaarei Teshuvah* that a person must be profound in matters of *Yiras Hashem* (fear of heaven). We have to develop a profundity in our *da'as*, the knowledge of spirituality – in other words, we need to be very clear in *how to live life*.

### *Everything Is A "Sugya"*

Knowing how to live life should be a “*sugya*” to us just like any other *sugya* of *Gemara*! It is the *sugya* that is called *chaim*, “life”. We need to be clear in how to live life, if we are to be happy.

To give an example – does anyone know anything about *Gan Eden* or *Gehinnom*? What does *Gan Eden* and *Gehinnom* mean to you? Do you understand it merely as a “place” to get rewarded or punished, and nothing more? Have you ever thought about the “*sugya*” of *Gan Eden* or *Gehinnom*? Did you know that they each have seven rooms?

So it is not like what you thought – it is not just about reward and punishment; there is more to it, there are levels. *Gan Eden* is also a *sugya*, *Gehinnom* is also a *sugya*. We never think about it because we never even bother trying to clarify what the *sugya* known as *Gan Eden* and *Gehinnom* is. We’re not clear in it.

This is what Rabbeinu Yonah wrote: A person has to become profound in matters of *Yiras Hashem*. We should know these things.

We have to clarify **every** *sugya*, not just what we’re learning in yeshiva!

If you try to clarify everything you learn and you make sure that you’re not unclear, you will be living in a world of clarity – as one of the Sages remarked, “You see a clear world.”<sup>258</sup>

The *Mesillas Yesarim* wrote that if a person would know what the depth of a sin is, it would be impossible to sin. From his words we can see that it is not enough merely to **know** every word of *Chazal* and review it many times, and even to feel it very strongly, but that a person must **clarify to himself**, with intense *iyun* (depth) – **all** matters we learn, not only the *sugyos* of *Gemara*.

There is a *sugya* called *gemillas chassadim* (kindness). It’s not enough to be kind – we must clarify to ourselves this “*sugya*” of being kind. *Tefillah* (prayer), is known as *avodah sheb’lev* (service of the heart)<sup>259</sup>, but it is not enough to *daven*. There is a “*sugya*” called *tefillah*, and we must learn it with *iyun*.

What we are saying is here an inner, deeper approach on how to view life: **everything is really a *sugya* that needs to be learned in-depth**. *Abavas Hashem* (loving G-d) is a *sugya* that must be learned. *D’veykus* (attachment to G-d) is another *sugya*.

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<sup>258</sup> *Talmud Bavli Pesachim 50b*

<sup>259</sup> *Talmud Bavli Berachos 31a*

Our *avodas Hashem* is not merely a list of “what to do” and what not to do, nor is it our *avodah* to simply keep away from the *yetzer hora* (evil inclination). Our *avodah* is that when we learn something in *Mesillas Yescharim* such as *zerizus* (zeal) or *zehirus* (alacrity), we have to clarify to ourselves what it means.

When we aren’t clear about the matter of life, we get sad.

### *The Problem of Disconnection*

We will elaborate further with this discussion.

Many people learn Torah, but they forget who they even are. People mistakenly assume that all you have to do in life is to enjoy learning Torah, and that there is nothing wrong with being disconnected from yourself; that self-awareness isn’t important, and the main thing is to always learn Torah and have *cheishek* (enjoyment) for learning. After all, it is written, “*The laws of Hashem are upright and gladden the heart*”.<sup>260</sup> Torah brings us joy when we learn it.

This is misconception. The *possuk* is emphasizing that Torah learning brings us joy, but that doesn’t mean that one should forget about himself! Learning the Torah is supposed to build a person and develop him.

What is the true meaning of a *Talmid Chochom*? If a person is full of problems in his soul, he cannot connect to the Torah. Only if his soul is connected to his learning can he truly learn with *iyun* (in-depth analysis) and from that he can arrive at the clarity found in learning the Torah. This we can understand; a person cannot be a *Talmid Chochom* if he doesn’t have clarity in the *sugyas* he learns, and therefore learning Torah requires *iyun*.

The same goes for learning about matters of the soul. If we learn about these matters with *iyun* just like we do every other *sugya*, then we can come to have clarity in soul matters.

Most people have a hard time being happy. Why is this so? It’s not because we have a lot of problems (although it’s definitely true that we all have degrees of suffering and hardship in our life). The true reason why we aren’t happy is because we aren’t clear about who we are, we don’t know where our hearts are; our **heart** is not clear to us.

*Simcha* is found in our heart – as the *possuk* says, the Torah “*gladdens the heart*.” But if our hearts aren’t clear to us, we cannot find happiness there. Happiness can only come from our heart if there is clarity about the heart.

On Yom Tov and Purim, it’s easy to be happy. These are times of happiness. But how can we be happy during the rest of the year? We are not talking about how to dance wildly at a wedding and to invent new “moves” that only crazy or childish people do. We are searching for a *simcha* that comes from the depths of the heart.

It can only come if we live with clarity. When we have clarity in life, our soul is connected to what we learn in the Torah, and then we will find the joy contained in the Torah.

### *“Simchas HaChaim”*

The sefer *Nefesh Hachaim* wrote that “The entire praise of the *Rishonim* is their original thinking (*sevara yeshara*).” If we don’t have *sevara yeshara*, how can we have what we call “*simchas hachaim*” (a joy of life)?

Of course, there are Gedolim who reach *simcha* just when they do a *mitzvah*; this is a very high level that only the Gedolim reach. But what about us? How can we enjoy life, how can we have a *simchas hachaim* (joy of life)?

It is only when we are clear about what life is about.

### *Clarity Clears Up The Confusion*

Before Adam sinned, there was only good in the world, while evil was only an outer force. After Adam sinned, evil entered the world – meaning, evil became mixed up with good.

This is otherwise known as *bilbul*, confusion. This is the root of all our evil: confusion. All confusion is a mixture of good and evil, a result of the sin. Our entire problem, our entire *Yetzer Hora*, is that our very *da’as* has become mixed up and confused; we have no clarity (initially). We have to work on gaining clarity so that we can remove all the confusion that is embedded in our mind. Our greatest tool to have in life is clarity (*behirus*).<sup>261</sup>

This is why many people learn Torah and they even learn *Mussar* yet they aren’t successful - it is because they don’t have clarity about life.

### *Attaining Clarity – By Learning Everything In-Depth*

*Simchah* (happiness) comes to us from learning a *sugya* of *Gemara* with *iyun*, analyzing the very depths of a *sugya*. This gives us clarity. The same goes as well for matters having to do with our *avodas Hashem* (serving the Creator) – we need clarity in these matters, and thus we must learn these matters as well with *iyun*.

This is why the Sages say that “an ignoramus cannot be pious.”<sup>262</sup> Why? Because an ignoramus has never clarified what it means to be kind, and therefore even if he practices acts of kindness, he still isn’t considered to be devout.

If a person wants to serve Hashem, but he never bothers to clarify the matters of *Avodas Hashem* (i.e. what it means to love Hashem, what it means to fear Hashem, etc.), he is like someone who wants to become a *posek* (Halachic authority) in *Hilchos Shabbos* just by studying the headings of each *halacha*, without looking into any details of each *halacha*.

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<sup>261</sup> Editor’s Note: To work on gaining clarity of your inner world, refer to the author’s series on the “4 Elements”.

<sup>262</sup> *Avos* 2:5

We will give another example of what it means to clarify matters in *avodas Hashem*. All of us are familiar with the *Gemara* that says that “If a person gets angry, it is **as if** he served idols.”<sup>263</sup> Have any of us ever thought about what “as if” means here? Does that mean that a person who gets angry should be killed, just like a person has to get killed for serving idols? Obviously not. But if the *Gemara* says that it is as if he worshipped an idol, why indeed doesn’t he get killed? What is the meaning of this *Gemara*?

If someone doesn’t know the answer to this, it shows how we fail to apply ourselves enough to understanding matters of *avodas Hashem*, leaving ourselves satisfied with a superficial understanding. Such a *Gemara* remains non-clarified to a person who never seeks to understand it; it is another example of a lack of clarity in anything involving *da’as*.

Learning any *sugya* with *iyun*, with in-depth analysis, whether it is what we learn in yeshiva, or whether it is a matter of *agadta* we come across as we learn *Gemara*. The power of *iyun* does not mean to simply gather all the information on the *sugya*, putting together all the facts. *Iyun* means that everything you learn must be clarified to you; you must feel clear towards what you’re learning. Only then can a person’s soul become connected to what he learns, and only with the resulting clarity from learning everything with *iyun* can a person have happiness.

## 4.3 | The Happiness of Learning Torah

### *The Happiness of Learning*

One of the 48 qualities of the Torah is *simchah*, happiness.<sup>264</sup> It is clear that *Chazal* were referring to happiness over the Torah and not any other happiness. What is the happiness over the Torah?

We find such a thing as *Simchas Torah*, in which we are happy over completing the Torah. But this is not the quality of *simchah* which *Chazal* are referring to by the *simchah* that is needed for learning Torah. *Chazal* were speaking about a quality we need to **get** the Torah. This is a happiness that one has in every detail and aspect in learning Torah.

What is this happiness? How does one get it?

### *“There Is No Happiness Like The Clarification Of Doubt”*

The *Rema* (in *sefer Toras HaOlah*) says, “There is no happiness like the clarification of doubts.”

Why is this the greatest happiness? Why is getting rid of our doubts considered the epitome of happiness??

There is happiness between a husband and wife, as well as a *mitzvah* of *simchas Yom Tov*. Is this not as great as when a person clarifies a doubt? What is so joyous about getting rid of one’s doubts?

When it comes to *shidduchim* we can understand why this is such a great *simcha*, because it is a very happy feeling to finally find your life partner. Here we can understand why being clear of a doubt brings a person happiness; it feels like a relief. But in the regular case, why is getting rid of one’s doubts considered the greatest happiness? By *simchas Yom Tov*, is there a clarification of doubt?!

It is written, “*The laws of Hashem gladden the heart.*”<sup>265</sup> The Torah only gladdens a person’s heart when he is in doubt about something as he is learning, and when he finally gains clarity, the learning is very enjoyable to him. But if someone doesn’t think enough in learning, his questions don’t bother him so much, so he doesn’t experience this great happiness of getting rid of his doubts.

This great happiness is only possible for one who thinks and reflects and encounters difficulties in his learning.

We can see many people who learn Torah, yet they don’t look happy. Why don’t they look happy? Doesn’t the Torah gladden a person’s heart? The answer to this is because they aren’t thinking enough as they learn, so they don’t experience the happiness of a doubt that goes away. They never get to the happiness in learning the Torah.

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<sup>264</sup> *Avos* 6:1

<sup>265</sup> *Tehillim* 19:9

Many times a person learning Torah for a long time feels that he isn't succeeding at learning. He thinks he is one of the people whom *Chazal* say "do not see blessing in their learning."<sup>266</sup> Really the reason why a person doesn't see success in his learning is because he isn't really connected to learning and he's thus not learning in the right way. He knows of Torah, but his heart isn't in it. The Torah isn't a life giving connection to him; it's just knowledge to him. When the Torah is just knowledge to a person, and he isn't connected to it with his heart, he is apt to disconnect from the Torah.

But when a person is connected to the Torah with his heart – besides for his mind – he won't be able to pull away from it.

### *The Heart*

There is a verse, "*My heart has seen much wisdom.*"<sup>267</sup> The wisest person of all, Shlomo HaMelech, states that only his heart was able to connect to wisdom. Our brain can know a lot, but it is our heart which really understands wisdom.

The heart "sees" the wisdom. What is the different between when our eyes sees something to when our heart sees something?

The *Gemara* says that "anyone who did not see the building of Hordes never saw beauty his whole life."<sup>268</sup> When someone reads this *Gemara*, does he really see this beauty? He can imagine it, but he will never see it. But someone who saw it saw such beauty that when the Temple was destroyed, it bothered him, because he really knew how beautiful it was.

At the giving of the Torah, there was a great happiness. "The words of Torah should be to you as happy as they were at Har Sinai."<sup>269</sup> What was this happiness? At Har Sinai, they were able to "see" the voice of Hashem. Seeing a voice is not the same as hearing a voice.

### *Responsibility And Happiness*

We were forced to accept the Torah, yet we also said "We will do" and "We will hear", meaning that we accepted it willingly. *Tosafos*<sup>270</sup> asks, why did Hashem have to force us to accept the Torah, if we said that we will do and we will hear?

The answer to this, along the lines of our discussion, is that we need two kinds of connection to the Torah. We need a responsibility toward the Torah – to accept the yoke of Torah. For this reason we were forced to accept the Torah.

But we also need happiness in the Torah, and that is why we had to accept in our own – to show this. Without responsibility, our happiness would be frivolity. But without happiness, it would be impossible to survive.

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266 *Talmud Bavli Chullin 24b*

267 *Kobeles 1:16*

268 *Talmud Bavli Bava Basra 4a*

269 *Talmud Yerushalmi Chagigah 2:1*

270 *Talmud Bavli Shabbos 88a*

Without happiness, it is impossible to learn Torah. This is not just another detail in our learning; it is not another nice quality to have. Without happiness in learning, a person won't be able to learn.

### *Life Without A Heart*

In order to reach this happiness, we need to live the right kind of life.

When a person is brain dead, he can still be considered alive, but when a person's heart ceases to function, it's all over. He's pronounced dead in the hospital. In our own life, if a person lives without a heart connection to the Torah and to *ruchniyus*, his life is not a life. The feelings of love and happiness are in our heart; we must have those feelings, and without them, it's a deathlike kind of existence.

Since the first day a person enters yeshiva – all through high school and *beis midrash*, and then to *kolel* – a person is taught more and more knowledge by his teachers. He is taught more and more – all the many *shitos* (opinions) of *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* that exist; his mind matures with the more knowledge he receives.

What about the heart? Does his heart mature as well?

The mind of a person matures as he gets older, but the heart often remains the same since a person was a child.

When a child is taught all the knowledge about the Torah, his heart often remains immature. Very often, in order to get a child to learn, he is offered more and more physical gratification in order to get him to want to learn. His heart is being more and more attached to materialism and he is expected to grow in his mind through this way!

In fact, often this is the intention of the teachers in the yeshiva: that he should just focus on developing his mind, not his heart. The heart is sacrificed so that the mind can grow. What results from this?

A person gets older and he knows more, but his heart is still the same immature as when he was a child, and many times it can be even more immature than when he was a child.

The person at some point feels a contradiction in his life, and deep down is thinking: "Everyone tells me that the main thing in life is Torah and mitzvos, but my heart feels differently. I know that the main thing is learning Torah and doing mitzvos, but I don't feel it..."

The people who taught him and raised him did this to him intentionally: Just focus on what you are learning...develop your **mind**, don't worry about your heart...

A person in this way grows up with a contradiction in himself. He **knows** in his mind what's important, but his heart **feels** differently. He knows a lot of *Gemara* with *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* and all the various opinions out there, but meanwhile, his heart wants many various worldly desires. He doesn't feel that *ruchniyus* of his mind's knowledge is his actual life.

We are not saying that a person has to cut himself off totally from physical desire and just eat bread and water. We are not speaking of high levels. We are speaking about simple feelings that a person needs to have – to feel that the Torah is our life, to feel a vitality from Shabbos and Yom Tov when it comes. Many people don't even have these simple feelings, and it is because they don't consider these matters to be what gives them life. It is all because people are raised with a contradiction between the heart and the mind.

The problem is not that people don't feel a *cheishek* (enthusiasm) for *ruchniyus* (spirituality) or that they don't feel like getting up on time in the morning to *daven*. Those are just the results of the problem; the root of the problem is that people have a heart of an infant. The heart is still immature and hasn't grown since the person was a child.

### *When The Heart Is More Revealed Than The Mind*

Others have the opposite problem. Their hearts are very strong, but their mind is not. It can get to the point that a person only listens to what his heart feels, so if one day he just feels like going off the *derech*, he will choose to listen to his feelings over what he knows in his mind.

We can compare this to the following scenario. Imagine a person becomes a *baal teshuvah* and he wants to start learning. He comes to the *beis midrash* and he is told, "Figure out the difference between what Rav Chaim Brisker is saying to what Rav Shimon Shkop is saying." He has no idea what to do. Why not? Isn't he a smart and intelligent person? He is, but when it comes to Torah, his mind is the same as a child's mind.

Anyone who has learned with *baalei teshuvah* knows what this is. Many *baalei teshuvah* indeed fall back to their old ways because of this; their heart is strong, but their minds are lacking. There is a contradiction between the mind and the heart.

The first kind of contradiction we mentioned – a strong mind with a weak heart – is a problem that most people have. Only few individuals who have worked very hard on themselves don't have this problem.

### *Build Your Heart's Connection To The Torah*

If we build our hearts, we will have a connection to the Torah through our heart, not just through our mind. No one is perfect - no one has a heart that is perfectly in line with what they know in their mind. If someone's heart and mind is totally equal, he is probably one of the thirty six hidden *tzaddikim*. But we just need to build up our hearts more.

May we merit that these words should change our heart and to grow higher and higher, and to connect to the Torah with our heart – and through that, we will arrive at the great happiness that can be felt in learning the Torah.

5  
Q & A

## *Q&A – To Drink Or Not To Drink*

### *QUESTION*

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. Every year when it comes 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, for they are moving around and happy and enjoying and growing, utilizing their elements of water, wind, and fire, while I remain stuck in my element of earth.

I made a self-accounting with myself and I concluded that I have several reasons why I don't want to become drunk on Purim. Firstly, I am afraid that this will cause me to be careless about *mitzvos*, i.e. when it comes to *davening* and *bentching*, and I see that usually when people drink a lot on Purim, they become sick the day after Purim and they don't daven with a *minyán*, etc. So I always think to myself: What do I need this for?! Any gains from drinking on Purim become voided, due to all of the losses that result from it. Sometimes people ruin their Purim [because of drinking too much] and sometimes this extends to the day after Purim as well.

Another reason I don't get drunk on Purim is because I am afraid that I will reveal to others what's going on deep inside myself. I am afraid of discovering what's really in me, and I am afraid that I will tell others about my darkest secrets. (I am aware that the Rav has spoken about this in a derashah: that people are scared to discover what's really inside them).

So I am having contradicting feelings, if I should get drunk on Purim or not. On one hand, it just may be my personal soul redemption. On the other hand, I am afraid of the detrimental results it may cause, as mentioned above.

I will add that I have another reason why I should get drunk on Purim: during the rest of the year, I don't express love to others, and I have some family relatives that I would really want to express love to, such as my father, father-in-law, brother-in-laws, uncles, etc. During the rest of the year, I don't have the emotional courage to let them know that I love them (as most people). But if I get drunk on Purim, I will be able to express love to them. I could call my parents and brothers on the phone on Purim, and I would be eating the Purim *seudah* with my father-in-law, brothers-in-law, and uncles. Perhaps for this reason alone I should get drunk on Purim!

Maybe the Rav can guide me about this. It is one day of the year which all of the year depends on [spiritually], and especially because I wouldn't want to fall into the "doubts" of "Amalek" on Purim, of all days. Much thanks to the Rav, and a tremendous *yasher koach*.

### *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, your 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 14<sup>th</sup> of Adar, which is for the regular cities, represents the level of nullifying one’s *daas*. The 15<sup>th</sup> 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.*”

## ***Q&A – What To Drink***

### ***QUESTION***

I heard the Rav say in a derashah that only when one has already revealed his *neshamah* throughout the course of the year is it proper for him to become intoxicated on Purim. If not, then his intoxication is not in the category of “Wine enters and secrets come out” because such a person has not yet revealed the “secret” [the soul] beforehand. The Rav explained much about the depth of drinking wine on Purim, from different angles. This would seem to imply that all of one’s growth through intoxication on Purim can only come through wine specifically, as opposed to other beverages [i.e. whiskey, schnapps, vodka, beer], for only wine reveals the secret.

Therefore, how are we to understand the different views in the Poskim regarding whether one fulfills intoxication on Purim through wine specifically or even through other alcoholic beverages?

### ***ANSWER***

Everything has a root, as well as branches, to it. The “root” of drinking on Purim, which is “When wine enters, the secret comes out” (*Talmud Bavli Eruvin 65a*) implies that it is wine specifically which reveals the secret. However, in the “branches” of this matter, the spiritual effect of the wine on Purim also extends to other intoxicating beverages. However [any intoxicating beverages other than wine] would not have the gain of the spiritual illumination of the “root”, for it would only be on the level of “branch”.

## ***Q&A – Women On Purim***

### ***QUESTION***

- 1) 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.

## *Q&A – Depth of Eating Hamantaschen*

### *QUESTION*

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?? I was thinking that maybe the reason is because it is like “erasing Amalek”, because by “eating” Haman, we are hinting to our desire to erase Amalek. But it’s still very hard to understand, because if we want to erase Amalek, why don’t we just burn these cookies? Why do we have to eat them specifically?

Maybe the reason for this is because the *Midrash* says that Haman wanted to swallow the Jewish people, just as a big fish swallows a bunch of little fish, and therefore we “swallow” Haman on Purim, by eating the *hamantaschen*, as a remembrance to the fact that Haman wanted to swallow us.

However, it is still bothersome, because why do we fill the *hamantasechen* with sweet filling in the middle? Shouldn’t we make these cookies taste bitter, just as Haman sought to embitter our lives? Perhaps the answer is because on Purim, we come to the recognition that even the bad is good, even bad can be “sweet”, and that is what we want to show on Purim, that even Haman, and all bad things, can also be “sweet”, when we have the perspective that comes from the future, when we will recognize how everything is good. Does the Rav agree to these insights? Much thanks to the Rav, and may the Rav have a *Purim Sameiach!*

### *ANSWER*

That is all true. 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 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.”

## Q&A – Fish On Purim

### QUESTION

I have heard the Rav explain in a *derasha* about the depth of eating fish at the Purim *seudah*, that the Purim *seudah* represents the “*seudah* of the leviathan” in the future, so we eat fish at the Purim *seudah* to hint to the big fish that will be eaten in the future, the leviathan. However, I looked all

over for a source for this *minhag* and I could not find the source. All I found was that there is a custom to eat fish in the month of Adar because the *mazal* of Adar is *dagim* (fish), but I didn't find anyone that mentions any custom to eat fish specifically at the Purim *seudah*. Can the Rav quote to me some sources for this *minhag*?

## 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 lachem*), whereas Purim is the other half of the Yom Tov that is devoted to you (*chatzi lecha*). 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 *posuk* 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.

## Q&A – Utilizing Purim

### QUESTION

1) What is the *avodah Hashem* on Purim night? Is it better to learn Maseches Megillah, say Tehillim, drink a little and show some *simchah* a little?

### ANSWER

The *Poskim* say that one should eat a bit of a festival meal on Purim night. Chazal established that people should hear Megillah at night. Inwardly, the *avodah* is to see how the nighttime, which is known as the time of *hester* (concealment), is really *Esther* (the *aleph*/One that is found in all the *hester*/concealment, the concept that Hashem's Presence that is found with us in the darkness.)

### QUESTION

2) Should a person drink slowly throughout Purim so that he will constantly be in a relaxed and joyous state, or should all of the drinking be limited to the Purim *seudah*?

### ***ANSWER***

Each person according to his nature and his needs.

### ***QUESTION***

3) Should Purim mainly be utilized as a day of *tefillah* (prayer)? Sefer Shem M'Shmuel says that a person can daven for whatever he wants on Purim. Should that be our focus on Purim day? And when should a person daven on Purim?

### ***ANSWER***

The main part of Purim is to access the special levels of spiritual awareness that are available on Purim, whereas only a part of Purim should be spent on *davening* for anything you want. The main *tefillah* to daven on Purim is that you should be *zocheh* to gain the special power available on Purim day, and the time to feel it is when one is imbibed with wine [at the Purim *seudah*].

### ***QUESTION***

4) What is the main *avodah* on Purim? Is it *simchah*, or *ahavas Yisrael*, or erasing Amalek, or *bitachon*, or gaining a deeper connection to Hashem (which goes beyond even talking to Hashem)? The sefarim all say many different definitions of what Purim is all about, so can the Rav please clarify what the primary *avodah* on Purim is and what the branches are?

### ***ANSWER***

*Lo yoda !!!* [it is mainly a day to reach the awareness beyond or normal *daas*-knowledge].

## ***Q&A – Insights On The Megillah***

### ***QUESTION***

1) Since Esther didn't return to Mordechai for the rest of her life, how can it be that Purim was a time of *Geulah* if this *tzadekes* had to spend the rest of her life being married to a *rasha*?

### ***ANSWER***

The *Geulah* on Purim was a preparation for the *Geulah shelaimah* (complete Redemption), but it was not yet the *Geulah shelaimah* itself. The Gemara says that “We are still the slaves of Achashveirosh” (*Talmud Bavli Megillah 14a*). Mordechai was only favored by “most” of Klal Yisrael, but not to all of them, and the Gemara says that this was because he had to be involved with the

government, so he was not accepted by everyone after that. And, similarly, Esther remained as Achashveirosh's queen.

However, the *Zohar* says that Esther took control of Achashveirosh's power and of his entire kingdom. Esther represents the spiritual point of *malchus d'Atzilus*, and Achashverosh was the *Zeir Anpin* on the side of impurity. According to the *Zohar*, she sent a demon in her stead to be with Achashveirosh, and this is unlike the view of the Talmud Bavli, which states that Esther was forced to be with Achashveirosh.

The *sefer Magid Meisharim* writes that because the Jewish people sinned by marrying gentile women, they were punished with Esther being forced to be married a *rasha*. The *sefer Chemdas Yomim* says that Esther represents the *Malchus D'Atzilus*, the *Shechinah*, which was placed into exile, for she was forced to be married to a wicked person, like a rose among the thorns. The *Ramchal* also writes that Esther being forced to be with Achashveirosh represents how the *Shechinah* is currently exiled to the *Sitra Achra*, to the side of evil. Achashveirosh wanted to control Esther – the *Shechinah*.

However, Mordechai made the demon swear that it would take Esther's stead and go to Achashverosh instead. So even when she had to go willingly to Achashverosh, she never actually was with him, because she sent a demon to be with him instead, so she never actually stayed with Achashverosh for the rest of her life. It was only in the beginning when she was first taken as queen, that she had to be with Achashverosh – but she did not actually remain with him.

## QUESTION

2) Did Achashverosh become a friend of the Jewish people after the Purim story? Did he come to love the Jewish people?

## ANSWER

*Yaaros Devash (I:3)* states that Achashverosh remained an anti-semite and enemy of the Jewish people, and the Gemara (*Talmud Bavli Megillah 16a*) says how Achashverosh remained a treacherous enemy of the Jewish people for he still wouldn't allow the Beis HaMikdash to be rebuilt. The Gemara there also says that when Esther pointed her finger at Haman and said, "*This terrible man and enemy*", she was actually referring to none other than Achashverosh. Thus, any power that Achashverosh allowed to Mordechai afterward was only out of his love for Esther, but not because he loved the Jewish people.

## QUESTION

3) The Gemara says that "The grandsons of Haman learned Torah in Bnei Brak" (*Talmud Bavli Gittin 57b*). How could something good come out of Haman, who is Amalek, total evil?

## ANSWER

This is discussed in *sefer Pachad Yitzchok: Purim* and in *Kedushas Levi*. The *sefer Shem m'Shmuel (Tetzaveh)* says that it doesn't mean Haman's actual grandsons, because how could they have converted to Judaism if we aren't allowed to accept converts from Amalek? What the Gemara means

is that there were some sparks of holiness in Haman. The *sefer Beis Aharon* explains that these sparks of holiness in Haman were rooted in the fact that Esther invited Haman to her party, which apparently gave some holiness to Haman. And on a deeper level, the Torah learning of Haman's grandsons means that Haman had a spark of good in himself simply because the name "Amalek" is a word of the holy Torah, and that is what enables Amalek to have any holiness in it – the fact that Amalek is a word in the Torah. Reb Tzadok HaKohen (*in sefer Resisei Leilah*) also discusses this matter. Even in cases where there were those who accepted Amalekites to convert to Judaism, it was in order to convert any sparks of holiness found in Amalek, into Judaism.

### *QUESTION*

4) What is the connection between the events of Purim and *Acharis HaYomim* (the End of Days)?

### *ANSWER*

In the times of Purim, the people fell into the "50<sup>th</sup> level of impurity" [from enjoying the party of Achashverosh] and as a hint, Haman built a gallows that was 50 *amos* high. In the *Acharis HaYomim*, we are in the 50<sup>th</sup> level within the 50<sup>th</sup> level of impurity, its innermost level.

### *QUESTION*

5) What's a good commentary to learn on *Megillas Esther*?

### *ANSWER*

This is relative to each person.

## *Q&A – A Tikkun For Vashti ?*

### *QUESTION*

1) Why is it that sometimes there are wicked people who were sent to come back in another lifetime and they achieved a tikkun for their soul? For example the *Rama m'Pano* says that Vashti came back as a cow who wouldn't work on Shabbos, and the owner (who was a reincarnation of Achashveirosh) got angry at the cow for not working and he took a knife and killed the cow in his anger, and this is how Vashti fixed her sin of making the Jewish girls work on Shabbos. Why would such an evil person like Vashti have the *zechus* to come back down again and fix her soul?

### *ANSWER*

When wicked souls comes back in another lifetime, any *tikkun* they reach can only be for part of their soul and not for their entire soul, and only for the good sparks that were present in their soul.

### *QUESTION*

2) As an aside, the *sefarim* explain that Vashti represents *kelipas noga*, the part of our being which is mixed with good and mixed with evil, which needs to be sanctified and turned into holiness. Is that the reason why Vashti merited a *tikkun*?

### *ANSWER*

Her *tikkun* was only for the good sparks in her soul, as mentioned.

### *QUESTION*

3) And if a wicked person (such as Vashti) gets a *tikkun* for her soul, does that mean that the wicked person goes to *Gan Eden* afterwards?

### *ANSWER*

Same answer as before [only the good parts in her soul are raised to Gan Eden].

## *Q&A – Corona & Purim*

### *QUESTION*

Normally every year on Purim I drink a lot to fulfill *ad d'lo yoda*. Should this year (5781) be different than other years, due to corona?

### *ANSWER*

The special *ohr* (spiritual light) that is shining in our times will be here until Mashiach comes, as well as afterwards. It is the illumination of the *Keser*. It depicts the concept of “The purpose of knowing is to know that we do not know.” That is the entire purpose of the obligation to drink on Purim *ad d'lo yoda*, “until one does not know”. **From now onward and for the rest of the year, the light of Purim will be shining much clearer, in a way that can be more easily discerned.** For this reason, **the primary manifestation of this illumination was in the month of Adar of last year (5780) in Eretz Yisrael**, the source of the world. The Talmud Yerushalmi is of the view that one can fulfill the *mitzvah* of hearing *Megillah* throughout the entire month of Adar, and this is because Adar is the month where mourning was turned into joy, celebration, and festivity. And now, **this year, the special light is shining very strongly on this year's Purim, and it is being made more clear that Purim is the “head of all the festivals”, as Rebbi Nachman of Bresslov taught.** For this reason, we should continue to extend this light into the rest of the year, though it **will appear and disappear in a cycle.**

Purim is the time of *lo yoda*, the time to transcend our regular awareness, and Chanukah is the time to draw forth higher wisdom from *ayin*, the spiritual source of understanding, and we are meant to progress and regress back and forth from Chanukah/*chochmah/ayin* and Purim/*lo yoda*, in a cycle.