

LET'S BE REAL - UNMASKING PURIM - 5786

PURIM! When most people hear or even think about this day, their adrenaline starts rising. Purim is a day packed with action and excitement! On this day everyone is busy throughout the day. Here are some examples.

Mikra Megilla: A nice part of Purim is spent reading the megilla. So much energy goes into reading the megillah; whether it is remaining focused and listening to every single word, and the feelings of hatred displayed toward Amalek when hearing the word Haman. Some people, after finishing, despite the busy day, read the megilla for others.

Raising funds: Many people spend much of this great day raising funds [and giving tzedaka] for the many choshuve mosdos haTorah, and a huge variety of unbelievable organizations, and especially מתנות לאביונים. The amount of tzedaka raised on this day is simply mind boggling. The only words that come to mind are מי כעמך ישראל-ל.

Mishloach Manos: After weeks of preparing mishloach manos, people spend lots of the day delivering Mishloach Manos all over, spreading achdus and friendship throughout our nation. According to the Terumas Hadeshen, they are helping people with their simcha to have food for their seuda.

Seudas Purim: Many people make a lavish feast with much food and wine and lots of divrei Torah, of course. The seuda can go on for hours, continuing into the night with continuous music, singing and dancing. The delicious wine that is consumed keeps us going for ad delo yada amount of time!

Learning on Purim: Many people make a nice seder on Purim, as they immerse themselves into the holy Torah, especially the sugyos (subjects) that pertain to Purim. There are yeshivos that actually have a solid seder the first night of Purim after Megilla, followed by dancing.

Purim Shtick and Costumes: Now, the idea of costumes has sources, and the

seforim expound on this custom. There are many different reasons given. One fascinating reason I heard for dressing up is as follows: Why did Haman's daughter think that Haman was on the horse, and Mordechai was leading?

He explains that Haman was so mortified that he would be leading the horse, that he took Mordechai's clothing and put them on, so that he wouldn't be recognized by people. When Haman's daughter looked down and saw Haman leading the horse, to her it seemed like Mordechai, so she emptied the feces on his head. However, when Haman looked up and their eyes met, she realized her mistake, and she collapsed and fell to the ground.

Therefore, to commemorate this incident that came about through Haman dressing up like Mordechai, we dress up as well on Purim. There are many other reasons given, and with Hashem's help we will give another reason as well.

Disclaimer: Before we begin, we would like to say that the point here is not to bash costumes, chas v'shalom, our goal is simply to rewire our brains to undo the way many of us have been celebrating Purim over the years.

Purim with a twist: There were things to add to simchas Purim, such as in R' Elchonon Wasserman's yeshiva in Baranovitch, the talmidim performed various humorous skits on Purim. When it comes to these types of things, as long as they are in good spirits, they add to the day. (Once, a skit in the yeshiva – about a tailor trying to fit a coat that was too small for the customer – was so humorous, R' Elchanan had to ask them to stop, as one is not supposed to laugh too loud in galus!)

However, over the years, we see some new additions. There is shtik for children that is relatively safe, however when it comes to fireworks and firecrackers, Hashem should watch over those who use them. At a minimum, they must be used safely with special caution that they should not possibly cause any harm to anyone.

Now, I don't want to bash anyone, but everyone with a little bit of seichel understands that this has gotten out of control: During the seudah, you hear practically non stop fireworks. And especially when this insanity starts two weeks before Purim. I mean of all times to do fireworks – Purim?! Anyone who has learned about the פנימיות of Purim, knows a little bit what an awesome day it is. Of all days to do fireworks! It is simply astonishing. (And certainly, doing them late at night is terrible middos.)

So, there can be several explanations to this behavior. One reason is that since this day is so powerful, the baal davar gets involved so that we don't utilize the day properly. Another reason can be because these boys or teenagers were simply not enlightened to understand the essence of this awesome, joyous day.

Another fundamental reason is that some people unfortunately don't really appreciate what real authentic joy is all about. They think Purim is a day that we can let ourselves loose, so to speak, and do things that are perhaps not proper. In other words, they think it is a day of hefkeirus.

Many people have a hard time differentiating between joy and frivolity – הוללות. The truth is that true joy comes when the neshama is in control over the body, and not vice versa. So, if Chazal want us to attain joy, they are not telling us to drink and drink until we lose control over our words and actions.

The Gemara says, and it is recorded in Shulchan Aruch l'halacha, חייב איניש לבסומי בפוריא עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי. One classic explanation to this gemara is that we should drink enough so that we can become stress-free as we forget about our problems, which represents ארור המן. However, obviously, the goal is that the wine should uplift a person and put us on a high, not the opposite!

Letting loose: B"H there is so much positive on Purim; we see people giving each other brachos and saying over divrei Torah and showing love recognition, all

with great geshmak! Conversely, due to our lengthy galus, issues have arisen. Here are some examples. I remember from many years ago when I was a teenager, and I see that this “custom” is still going strong by some. On Purim, it is “okay” to smoke, even if you never smoke, and even if you are underage. “On Purim we smoke.” I remember the guys in my group teasing me for not smoking. (And today, as experts say, don’t think vaping is better.)

Honestly, I could only imagine how many bachurim’s career of smoking began on Purim. How awful is that? On such an awesome day like Purim, when we are celebrating the fact that our lives were spared, should we celebrate by launching a life full of smoking which may ch”V lead the opposite?! This is the epitome of *stira*/contradiction.

Another oxymoronic idea that overwhelms me every Purim, is that of all days, Purim may become the greatest day of chillul Hashem. Do we have a license on Purim to create a chillul Hashem?! The entire idea of celebrating in the streets amongst the gentiles in galus is a new phenomenon, as the Jews feared for their life.

Especially in recent years that antisemitism has reared its ugly head, perhaps it is debatable if we should go all the way out in the streets – especially on the more public streets. However, to do things in public that are not a Kiddush Hashem should be out of the question. (Bearing in mind that there are certain laws about public intoxication, with the main point being it should not cause disturbances.)

There is an actual danger that heavily drunk people put themselves into as they run through the streets, dodging cars and trucks; your heart skips a beat viewing such scenes. This is another discussion of about groups going around drunk, it is not so simple, as we are discussing. The place to be mekayen ad delo yada is in yeshiva or your house, but roaming the streets is an entirely different level. Likewise, if one is driving – and obviously not drunk, but Purim is a lively day, and it is important to bear in mind that driving must be in a calm manner.

Similarly, if you see Gentiles stopping to observe the scene, and maybe even taking pictures, do not be surprised, it is only natural they should do so; they are seeing something unusual! (It is perfectly legal to take photos of public scenes. Obviously, one should not exploit this law to the point of harassing others, but for scenes that are respectable, why not?) Moreover, all they want to do is show their families and friends what they’ve seen, and maybe even to print it in the news. *Just smile to them!* Ask any photographer, a picture with a smile is infinitely nicer than with a glum look – it’s basically the difference between a usable and unusable photo! But here, it may be the difference between a Kiddush Hashem and ch”V the opposite! Moreover, *you are a walking Kiddush Hashem – they are enjoying the sight, that’s why they are photographing it!*

Bearing in mind that one of the only ways for Gentiles – and even many Jews – to see yeshiva bochurim is on Purim! *And they enjoy it much!!!* As the mashgiach Rav Matisyahu Salomon zt”l explained in a shmuz, while the greatest Kiddush Hashem is our avodas Hashem, the umos don’t see that much, but they *do* see the way we go about our life in the street.

To summarize: Purim is not a day of wildness, and if you think it is you have a different holiday. *Purim is not about simply indulging in food, and it is certainly not a day when we let our bodies on the loose to do whatever it pleases. Yes, we eat lots of delicious foods* as mishteh is certainly one the mitzvos hayom, and we dance and sing, but at the same time, we are not celebrating the party of Achashveirosh!

Recapturing Purim: Now, some of you are perhaps thinking ‘This fellow is taking away my Purim! I was looking forward to a day full of fun and action, and now he is giving me the guilt trip’. The response is that you are wrong from all angles. You simply have it all wrong.

Your Purim and sense of simcha has been hijacked with ideas that stem from the influences of golus. Purim and simcha is not about having fun, as some think [some subconsciously]. We must realize that thinking about Purim this way is using the diamond that one has, and playing with it as if it were a toy ball that is lots of fun.

Making Purim Great again: Let us put Purim on the table, and try to get a whiff and appreciation for this amazing day. We must realize that as we discussed, the entire yom tov of Purim has a mask. What this means is that when looks at this Yom tov superficially, it does not seem to be such a holy day. On the contrary, it seems to be more mundane than a typical day, in a sense, as we don’t go to such extreme gashmiyus on a regular day. With lots of the madness that goes on by some people, this makes the mask of Purim even more intense that the words הסתרה בתוך הסתרה comes to mind. Our job is to reveal the light of Purim and connect ourselves to it.

Megilla - Revealing: The word Megilla can mean to be megaleh – reveal, and Esther can mean hastara – covered. Through the Megilla, we reveal the hidden miracles that happened ואסתר בימי מרדכי, as there were no open miracles as by Yetzias Mizrayim, and if not for the Megilla telling us the complete story, we would not have put it all together to appreciate the complete story of Purim today.

However, it goes even deeper than that. The seforim reveal that through reading the Megilla, we reveal the light of Purim. We reveal the kedusha and sanctity that the yom tov of Purim has to offer. Furthermore, they tell us that when we read the megillah, we are bringing down the light of Purim as well. This would also include when we learn מגילה, as the Kedushas Levi teaches.

Purim - A tremendous עת רצון: Now, everyone knows that Purim is an עת רצון as no other, and many people have merited tremendous yeshuos on this day. Whether it was with parnassa, shidduchim, health and other areas as well.

Times of connection: The truth is that while we go through our journey of life, there are endless opportunities to connect to Hashem. Throughout our day we can connect ourselves to Hasahem through Torah, tefilla, brachos, doing mitzvos and even by doing mundane activities l’shem shamayim.

Shabbos Kodesh and Yomim Tovim: There is the weekly Shabbos which is a

day of connecting to Hashem that is a tremendous boost to our neshama. We have the special tefillos and the three seudos which help us achieve the connection that Shabbos has to offer.

Resting from the thirty nine melachos also enables us to connect to Hashem. All the yomim tovim – including Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, are ways for Yidden to connect to their father in heaven.

Purim is no exception. The Arizal in Tikunei Zohar famously says that Purim is greater than Yom Kippur. As the name Yom Kippurim can be read to mean a day of kapara, and it can mean a day like Purim! Some Seforim explain that Purim is connecting to Hashem through love, while Yom Kippur is connecting to Hashem through Yirah - awe. As it says kimu vekiblu – we reaccepted the Torah on Purim through love, and Ahavas Hashem is greater than Yiras Hashem.

Therefore, we must stay focused on this day on love and connection. When davening and learning and performing the mitzvos hayom, we should do it with the utmost connection.

A new dimension to Purim: As we mentioned earlier, the Yom tov of Purim is wearing a mask, as it masks the tremendous light that is hidden inside it. I would like to reveal another light that was revealed already by the seforim hakedoshim. I would like to give a mashal to bring it out.

Mashal: *There was once a group of prisoners who were languishing in a fortified prison that no one had ever escaped from. One day, a relative of one of them came up with a brilliant plan. He first smuggled a bunch of shovels into the prison. His plan was for half the prisoners to begin fighting and acting wild on one side of the prison, while on the other side, the shovels would be distributed to the strong prisoners to quickly dig an escape tunnel. However, when the shovels were distributed, the group that received them were not told what they were to do with them.*

The group of diggers were wondering what they were supposed to do with their new tools. Finally, one “wise” prisoner got up and suggested that they build an

underground room so that they should have a place to meet and use it to make their life easier. No one thought about making an escape route.

Things went pretty smooth, and finally, when things calmed down, the rest of the prisoners rushed to the tunnel that they thought was waiting for them. Much to their chagrin, they realized that it led nowhere. Not only that, but they realized that now that the day was over, the guards would soon find the shovels, and their escape opportunity would be lost.

Nimshal: As we explained earlier, Purim is a powerful eis Ratzon. There is much to understand about this, but it is a tremendous day. On this day we distract the Yetzer Hara as we eat and drink, which makes it into a hidden day, as we explained. At this time, when the Yetzer hara is distracted, we can ask for something huge, and that is for the final redemption.

Purim was the time that Klal Yisroel had their geula, as they were saved from Haman and destroyed much of Amalek. Klal Yisroel at this time was zoche to Layhudim hosa ora v'simcha v'asson vikar, and on this day we beg Hashem 'ס תהי' לננו.

Let's take action: So, yes, we need to storm the Heavens for sick people who are suffering. Yes, we need to daven for our families and friends that they should be well and have everything they need. Obviously, davening for our connection to Hashem and His Torah is a must.

However, we cannot forget to daven for Moshiach as well. On a day like this we cannot suffice with davening for our needs. We need to aim for the top. So, when you drink more than usual and you feel high and joyful – and you are feeling connected, don't forget to daven to Hashem with all your heart that we should reconnect with Him as never before – with the Bais Hamikdash, the place where Klal Yisroel connected to Hashem on the highest level.

So yes, you can cry out “I want to learn, Hashem!” This year, you should add on another request to Hashem: PLEASE

HASHEM TAKE US HOME! WE WANT TO FEEL YOUR LOVE! TAKE US HOME! You don't even have to wait for Purim. You can begin right now! Let's get ready to reconnect to Hashem once again.

We will end with the words of the Chida in his sefer Lev Dovid [29]

ובעיני הדבר פשוט. שאם כל ישראל היום הזה, אשר זרע עמלק לטבח יובל, ונפל המן הרע הזה, ראש מבית רשע היו נוהגים בסדר קדושה, והשמחה היתה מקודשת לשמים, ויתר היום עוסקים בתורה כל א' כפי שיעורו. ע"כ בשכר זה היינו נגאלים גאולת עולם. וימחה זכר עמלק כי היום הזה אשר החל לנפול ונפל מהם רב. הן עם ישראל אם היינו מתאמצים בתורה ומצות כהיום הזה, רעה תבוא אליהם לזרע עמלק עד כלותם אותם, ובא לציון גואל. ומה גם, אשר רוב ישראל מרבים צדקה היום הזה, עם עמלי תורה, ועניים מרודים, וביונים אשרך ישראל, כמה מאות נתונים נתונים המה למצות והוא אשר דברתי, כי בכח מעשה הצדקה, אשר היא היתה אם לכל הטובה, לכפרה ולבטל גזירות רעות, ולהחיש תשועתינו, ובכח עבודתינו לה' ית' היום אין ספק שהיתה מפלת עמלק גמורה ותפרה ישע גאולה שלימה:

"It is clear in my eyes that on this day, in which Amalek was taken like sheep to the slaughter and Haman fell from his haughty heights, if Klal Yisroel were to act in a manner of *kedusha*, truly rejoicing *l'shem Shamayim*, and they would also learn Torah on this Day - each one at his level - **they would merit the Final Geulah**. Amalek would be completely destroyed, as since their downfall began on this day, when Klal Yisroel strengthens themselves in Torah and *mitzvos* on this day, it will finalize their defeat!"

Have a wonderful Shabbos and a joyous, uplifting, derhoibener and of course *high!* (pun-intended) Purim!
Pinchas Halevi Doppelt

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'(Yeish m'farshim 'high' davka – v'lo yoser!)