



Chicago Rabbinical Council

מועצת הרבנים דשיקגו

Divrei Torah

PURIM 5785



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Purim Meshulash

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This year (5785) is unusual insofar as Purim falls out on *Erev Shabbos*, and since the fifteenth day of *Adar* falls out on Shabbos, those who celebrate Purim on the fifteenth day, such as residents of Jerusalem—and others who live in walled cities from the days of Yehoshua—are faced with the conundrum that their Purim falls out on Shabbos! This raises the fascinating question of how individuals who reside in those locations should celebrate Purim this year. It is worthy of note that although this phenomenon did occur four years ago, it will not occur again for another twenty years (5805) according to our fixed calendar.

For residents of Jerusalem and others in this predicament, this type of year is described as *Purim Meshulash* (the tripartite Purim) since the Purim observances are spread out over three days. Some prominent rabbinic scholars have written about this topic, including Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld and, more recently, Rav Seraya Deblitzky. A helpful and comprehensive responsum on this subject authored by Rav Ovadia Yosef can be found in *Yechaveh Da'as* (1:9).

In this essay, we will review the basic rules regarding *Purim Meshulash* and their underlying sources. The *Shulchan Aruch* (OC 688:6) sets forth a succinct summary of the main rules that are followed. For purposes of our discussion, we will outline the different Purim observances based upon the different days that they are observed.

Finally, we will discuss the one major

ramification when Purim falls out on *Erev Shabbos* for those of us who live in a regular, unwalled city – namely, figuring out when to schedule the *Purim Seudah*.

1. EREV SHABBOS – PURIM MESHULASH (for residents of Jerusalem and walled cities)

A. Reading of the Megillah

The reading of the *Megillah* is pushed back for residents of walled cities to *Erev Shabbos*. Therefore, this year, residents of all cities, whether walled or unwalled, read the *Megillah* on the 14th day of *Adar*. The source for this practice is a *Mishnah* in *Megillah* (2a). The *Gemora* (*Megillah* 5a) explains that the reason the *Megillah* may not be read on Shabbos when the fifteenth day of *Adar* falls out on Shabbos is because of the concern expressed by *Rabbah* that a person who is unfamiliar with how to read the *Megillah* may take it to a more knowledgeable person, and will thus violate the Biblical prohibition of carrying an object in a public thoroughfare on Shabbos.

Rashi (*Megillah* 2a s.v. “chal”) asks why the *Megillah* reading is not postponed until the next day (Sunday) which would be the sixteenth day of *Adar*. He responds that since there is a verse in *Megillas Esther* (9:27) that states ולא יעבור להיות עשים את שני הימים האלה ככתבם וכזמנם בכל שנה ושנה, we derive from the words ולא יעבור – which can be interpreted as “you shall not pass over them”—that the reading of the *Megillah* is never to be

postponed, but only moved up in the event that it cannot be read on time.

There is an interesting question as to whether the reading of the *Megillah* on *Erev Shabbos* this year for residents of Jerusalem is considered בזמנה – the official time for the *mitzvah*, or שלא בזמנה – not the official time, but simply a necessary concession. The reason this question is important is because the halacha follows the opinion of Rav that a minyan for reading the *Megillah* is only required when the *Megillah* is read שלא בזמנה, but that the *Megillah* may be read without a minyan בזמנה. Rav Asi held that a minyan is always required.

The *Rishonim* disagree about whether Rav and Rav Asi argue only about whether a minyan is required בזמנה on an ideal level, but that they both would agree that a minyan is never indispensable (see, e.g., Rashi *Megillah* 5a, s.v. “*veRav*”) or whether there is always an indispensable requirement for a minyan whenever one is required, so that even according to Rav, if the *Megillah* is read שלא בזמנה, it can only be read in front of a minyan (see *Tosafos Megillah* 5a, s.v. “*havah*”; *Rashash ad locum*).

During most years, this disagreement is purely academic, since the *Megillah* is read בזמנה and therefore all the *Rishonim* would agree that a minyan is not indispensable (even though a minyan is always preferable). However, for a *Purim Meshulash*, the *Mishnah Berurah* (690:61) assumes that reading the *Megillah* on *Erev Shabbos* would be considered שלא בזמנה for a resident of a walled city. Therefore, since there is a dispute among the *Rishonim* as to whether a minyan would be indispensable, if someone from a walled city, such as Jerusalem, would not be able to attend a minyan, that person should read the *Megillah* without reciting any berachos.

The prooftext for the *Mishnah Berurah*

(cited in *Sha'ar Hatzion* 610:59) is the Gemora (*Megillah* 5a) which states that when the fourteenth day of *Adar* falls on *Shabbos* (before the current calendar was devised by Hillel HaSheni) and the *Megillah* would therefore be read on *Erev Shabbos*, that would be considered שלא בזמנה.

However, the Chazon Ish (OC 155:2) notes that the Rambam (*Megillah* 1:7) indicates that reading the *Megillah* on an earlier day is only considered to be שלא בזמנה when the *Megillah* is moved up to be read prior to the fourteenth day of *Adar*, like the case in the Gemora, so that the application of the *Mishnah Berurah* to our case when the *Megillah* is being read on the fourteenth day of *Adar* is very questionable.

Accordingly, the Chazon Ish is lenient to make *berachos* on the reading of the *Megillah* in a situation when the *Megillah* is read specifically for women in Jerusalem on *Erev Shabbos* of a *Purim Meshulash*, based on four considerations: (a) many *Rishonim* hold like Rashi that even when the *Megillah* is read שלא בזמנה a minyan is not indispensable but simply preferred; (b) according to the Rambam, it seems that the reading of the *Megillah* by a resident of Jerusalem during a *Purim Meshulash* on the fourteenth day of *Adar* is in fact considered to be בזמנה, (c) it is very possible that women count toward a “*minyan*” for these purposes (in terms of publicizing the miracle of Purim) since they are also obligated in the reading of the *Megillah*, and (d) the *Rema* (690:18) indicates that when there are other minyanim taking place on the same day in the city, the minyan requirement is satisfied even if a particular individual reads the *Megillah* without a *minyan*.

A related question is whether a resident of Jerusalem is considered to have the same level of obligation as a resident of a non-walled city when he reads the *Megillah*

on the fourteenth day of *Adar* this year. According to the *Turei Even* (*Megillah* 5a), since the reading of the *Megillah* is only moved up to *Erev Shabbos* because of the consideration that a person might otherwise carry on *Shabbos*, and not based on any scriptural decree, the reading of the *Megillah* for residents of Jerusalem on the fourteenth day of *Adar* is only considered to be a fulfillment of a “rabbinic” *mitzvah*, while for inhabitants of unwalled cities it is a higher-level *mitzvah* due to the scriptural decree (*divrei kabbalah*) to read *Megillas Esther*. Because of this possible discrepancy in terms of the level of obligation, some rabbinic authorities conclude that a resident of Jerusalem should not read the *Megillah* on behalf of a resident of an unwalled city on the fourteenth of *Adar* (*Erev Shabbos*) during a *Purim Meshulash*.

Another question that emerges from the comment of the *Turei Even* relates to a boy in Jerusalem who becomes a *bar mitzvah* on the fifteenth day of *Adar* this year. Did his obligation to read the *Megillah* set in on the fourteenth day of *Adar*, in which case he performed the *mitzvah* from the standpoint of *Chinuch* as a twelve-year old boy, or does his obligation only set in on the fifteenth day of *Adar*, except that it was “pushed back” to the fourteenth day, in which case the boy could not have fulfilled his obligation at that time since he wasn’t yet obligated in *mitzvot*?

R. Shlomo Hakohen M’Vilna suggests (*Cheshek Shlomo*, *Megillah* 5a) that according to the *Turei Even*, since the *Megillah* reading was only pushed back to *Erev Shabbos* to satisfy a rabbinic decree, the *bar mitzvah* boy in our case may need to re-read the *Megillah* on *Shabbos* itself. According to this opinion, we would also not worry that he might come to carry the *Megillah* in a public thoroughfare since we

are only concerned about this eventuality if everyone is reading the *Megillah* that day. This indeed was the ruling of R. Yehoshua Leib Diskin (see *Shevet HaLevi* 5:83).

However, R. Shlomo Hakohen M’Vilna concludes that once the *Megillah* reading for residents of Jerusalem and walled cities was uprooted from *Shabbos* to *Erev Shabbos*, that becomes the only acceptable date for reading the *Megillah*. He also states that the concern about carrying the *Megillah* in a public thoroughfare on *Shabbos* should apply even in a case when only one individual is obligated to read the *Megillah* that day. R. Shmuel Vozner similarly ruled that there is no basis to allow the *bar mitzvah bachur* to read the *Megillah* on *Shabbos*.

Others (see *Piskei Teshuvos* 688, n. 22) bring additional support from the opinion of the *Minchas Chinuch* (10:3), based on the Rambam (*Korban Pesach* 5:7), that a minor boy who was included in a *Korban Pesach* on *Pesach Rishon* does not need to bring another *Korban Pesach* after he becomes a *bar mitzvah* prior to *Pesach Shenit* because although he wasn’t strictly obligated in the first *Korban Pesach*, he nonetheless experienced a full-fledged fulfillment of the *mitzvah*. So too the minor boy who heard the *Megillah* on the fourteenth day of *Adar*, even though he wasn’t obligated yet, achieved a full-fledged fulfillment of the *mitzvah* by hearing the *Megillah* that day.

B. Matanos L’Evyonim

The giving of two gifts to at least two poor people (*Matanos L’Evyonim*) is also fulfilled by residents of Jerusalem and other walled cities on *Erev Shabbos* this year. The source for this practice is the Gemora (*Megillah* 4b-5a) that records the opinion of Rav Yosef that the reason the *Megillah* is not read on *Shabbos* is because the “eyes of the poor

are raised up towards the reading of the *Megillah*” – namely, that those who are poor depend on the generosity of those who have just heard the *Megillah* to provide gifts to the poor. Since *Matanos L'Evyonim* cannot be presented on Shabbos (the Chazon Ish explains that this is because it would generally necessitate carrying outdoors on Shabbos even if the gifts would be food items and not *muktzah*), it wouldn't be correct to read the *Megillah* at that time and thus deprive the poor people of the windfall that they would generally receive immediately after the *Megillah* is read.

It is clear from this Gemora that *Matanos L'Evyonim* is always connected to the timing of the reading of the *Megillah*. Therefore, since the *Megillah* is read on the fourteenth day of *Adar* (*Erev Shabbos*) during a *Purim Meshulash*, it logically follows that *Matanos L'Evyonim* are also given on *Erev Shabbos*.

2. SHABBOS – PURIM MESHULASH (for residents of Jerusalem and walled cities)

A. Krias HaTorah – Vayavo Amalek

On Shabbos, which is the actual day of Purim for Jerusalem and walled cities, the Torah reading includes the *maftir* of *Vayavo Amalek* (*Shemos* 17:8-16). The source for this practice is the *Mishnah* in *Megillah* (3:6) which states that this Torah reading is always read on Purim.

The Rambam in his commentary to the *Mishnah* (*ad locum*) adds that if Purim falls out on Shabbos, the *Haftorah* that is read is “*pakadti asher asah Amalek*” (*Shmuel* 1:15) which is the identical *Haftorah* reading that is read the previous Shabbos during *Parshas Zachor*.

B. Public Derasha and Al HaNissim

The Gemora (*Megillah* 4a) cites R. Yehoshua Ben Levi who states that when Purim falls

out on Shabbos, it is necessary for everyone to be engaged in Torah learning about Purim. According to Rashi (s.v. *Shoalin*) this means that a learned Rabbi must deliver a public shiur on Shabbos about *Megillas Esther*. The *Mishnah Berurah* (688:16) notes that this is specifically a requirement during a year that Purim falls on Shabbos because during other years this requirement of learning about Purim is satisfied through the reading of the *Megillah*. The Rambam (*Megillah* 1:13) writes that this Torah learning on Purim when it falls out on Shabbos is necessary כְּדִי לְהַזְכִּיר שֶׁהוּא פֻּרִים – so that there will be a proper remembrance that this day is Purim.

The *Shulchan Aruch* (688:6) also records that the residents of walled cities recite *Al HaNissim* on Shabbos since this day is the actual day of Purim for them. Rav Ovadia Yosef (*supra*) cites an opinion (*Shem Chadash*) that *Al HaNissim* is not recited during *bentching*, because that would have constituted a sufficient remembrance of Purim so that a public shiur would not have been necessary according to the reasoning of the Rambam. However, Rav Yosef convincingly demonstrates that the private mention of the miracle in *bentching* would not constitute a sufficient broadcast of the miracle of Purim on Shabbos, especially since all authorities agree that the *Al HaNissim* prayer is recited publicly on Shabbos during the recitation of *Shemoneh Esrei*, and yet it is clear from the Rambam that this is not considered a sufficient remembrance of Purim by itself.

3. SUNDAY – PURIM MESHULASH (for residents of Jerusalem and walled cities)

A. Seudas Purim

The *Seudah* (Purim feast) is held this year in walled cities such as Jerusalem on Sunday, the sixteenth day of *Adar*, even though

this day is clearly not Purim according to anyone's calendar. This practice is based on the *Yerushalmi* (*Megillah* 1:4) which says that when Purim falls out on Shabbos, the festive meal of Purim is pushed off until Sunday. The reason for this is because the *Megillah* states (9:22) לעשות אותם ימי משתה ושמה – the Purim meal needs to be ordained by us (i.e. through the Bet Din that declares the new month of *Adar*) and not by Heaven. Thus, the Shabbos meals, which are ordained by Heaven, since Shabbos automatically takes place each week, are not the appropriate venue for the festive meal of Purim. The *Ran* (*Megillah* 5a, *Dapei HaRif*) explicitly applies the *Yerushalmi* to the case when the fifteenth day of *Adar* falls out on Shabbos for those who live in walled cities. The *Ran* explains that according to the *Yerushalmi*, the mandate of ולא יעבור – not to pass over the day of Purim, only applies to the reading of *Megillah* but not the Purim meal, which is pushed off until the next day.

The *Nitei Gavriel* (*Purim* 80:25) cites Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld that since this is the *Seudah* for Purim, even though it takes place after the actual day of Purim, it is appropriate to recite *Al HaNissim* at least in the *Harachaman* section at the end of *Birkat Hamazon*.

Not everyone agrees that we should follow the ruling of the *Yerushalmi*. Rabbi Levi ben Chabib (*Maharalbach*, *Siman* 32) held that the *Talmud Bavli* disagrees with the *Yerushalmi*, and therefore the residents of walled cities should observe the *Seudah* on Shabbos itself. His prooftext was from a discussion in the Gemora (*Megillah* 30a) regarding when to read *Parshas Zachor* on a year such as this one when the fourteenth day of Purim falls out on *Erev Shabbos*. According to Rav, *Parshas Zachor* is read on the previous Shabbos, consistent with

our practice. The basis for his opinion was to ensure that the עשייה (performance) of the *mitzvot* of Purim does not precede the זכירה (remembrance) of reading *Parshas Zachor*, in accordance with the order of the verse (*Esther* 9:28) והימים האלה נזכרים ונעשים בכל דור ודור. However, Shmuel held that *Parshas Zachor* is read that Shabbos (i.e., the fifteenth day of *Adar*), because residents of walled cities who would be celebrating Purim on Shabbos would observe both the זכירה of *Parshas Zachor* and the עשייה of Purim simultaneously such that the עשייה would not precede the זכירה. The *Maharalbach* argued on this basis that there must be a significant *mitzvah*, namely the *Seudah*, that is observed on Shabbos for those who observe Purim on the fifteenth day of *Adar*.

However, the *Pri Chadash* (*OC* 688:6) rejected the proof of the *Maharalbach*. Since the *Seudah* that is performed on the sixteenth day of *Adar* (Sunday) is done as a “*tashlumin*” – replacement – for the meal that was supposed to take place on Shabbos, it is considered as if it is observed on Shabbos itself, and in any event, it is not happening prior to the זכירה of *Shabbos Zachor*. The *Aruch Hashulchan* similarly writes that אין לזוז מדברי הירושלמי – that one should not veer from the ruling of the *Yerushalmi* that the *Seudah* takes place on Sunday.

Nonetheless, many authorities (*Yechave Da'as*, *supra*, *Kobetz Halachos*, *Purim* 20:6) recommend that residents of the walled cities should add an extra dish and some extra wine to their Shabbos meal so that there can be an evocation of the miracle of Purim on Shabbos as well. Also, this way they pay deference to the opinion of the *Maharalbach* as well as the *Ritva* who both

held that the *Seudah* should take place on Shabbos, and the opinion of the *Pri Chadash* (cited by the *Sha'ar Hatzion*, 688:30) that the *Seudah* should be observed on both days.

B. Mishloach Manos

The one *mitzvah* that is not mentioned at all in the earlier sources regarding *Purim Meshulash* is that of *Mishloach Manos*. The *Mishnah Berurah* writes (688:18) that it is obvious that *Mishloach Manos* is intertwined with the *Seudah* of Purim (this is consistent with the *Terumas HaDeshen* [Siman 111] who held that the *mitzvah* of *Mishloach Manos* is for the purpose of providing food for the *Seudah*). Therefore, since the *Seudah* takes place on Sunday, *Mishloach Manos* must take place on Sunday as well.

Not all authorities agree with the *Mishnah Berurah*. The Chazon Ish (OC 155:1) writes that in his opinion, *Mishloach Manos* is linked together with *Matanos L'Evyonim*, and since the latter is performed on *Erev Shabbos*, the same should be true with respect to *Mishloach Manos*.

Interestingly, the *Korban Nesanel* (*Megillah* 1:7) was of the view that *Mishloach Manos* should be given on Shabbos, and that this is what Shmuel meant when he said that on the fifteenth day of *Adar* in the walled cities there would be both a זכירה (remembrance of *Amalek*) and עשייה (observance of Purim) at the same time. Shmuel was not alluding to the *Seudah* because we follow the *Yerushalmi* that the *Seudah* takes place on Sunday, so he must have been alluding to *Mishloach Manos*, where it is more obvious that this practice of exchanging meal portions would not be a standard part of the observance of the Shabbos if not for the fact that it is Purim.

However, the Chazon Ish rejects the position of the *Korban Nesanel* since the

simple reason why we don't allow *Matanos L'Evyonim* on Shabbos is because it would lead to carrying, and the same concern would pertain to *Mishloach Manos*.

In any event, the common practice in Jerusalem is to observe *Mishloach Manos* this year on the sixteenth day of *Adar* in accordance with the ruling of the *Mishnah Berurah*. There are some authorities who are personally stringent to send *Mishloach Manos* on Shabbos as well, but only privately, such as by inviting guests to the Shabbos meal and fulfilling the *mitzvah* in this fashion.

4. SEUDAS PURIM ON EREV SHABBOS

For those of us who do not live in Jerusalem or any other walled city, we observe Purim in all respects on the fourteenth day of *Adar*, just like every other year. There is, however, one difference in terms of when the *Seudah* is observed.

On most years, the *Seudas Purim* is held in the later afternoon. However, when Purim falls on *Erev Shabbos*, it is important not to eat too late in the day so that one can enter Shabbos with a hearty appetite (OC 249:2). Accordingly, the *Rema* rules (OC 695:2) that when Purim falls on *Erev Shabbos*, the *Seudah* should take place in the morning out of respect for Shabbos. The *Mishnah Berurah* adds that this should be prior to noon. Despite the early hour, the *Seudah* should still include meat and (of course) wine.

This year the clocks will be moved ahead shortly before Purim so that one can continue the *Seudah* until around 1 p.m. and still have finished "prior to noon" from a halakhic standpoint. Furthermore, Rav Hershel Schachter *shlit"a* writes ("*Inyanei Purim*") that finishing before noon is really

a stringency (see OC 471:1) and that one can continue the meal until the end of the ninth hour of the day (a half hour prior to *Mincha Ketana*) which would not be until after 3 pm.

There is additionally a custom mentioned by the *Meiri* (*Kesuvos* 7b, s.v. “*ve’af*”) to be פורס מפה ומקדש for the Purim meal – meaning that one could start the Purim meal in the mid-afternoon and then continue until close to sunset at which point one would cover up the food and make *kiddush* (without an additional blessing on either bread or wine, since one would have already washed on the bread, and drunk the wine during the meal), after which one would eat an additional amount of bread (a *k’zayis* and ideally more than a *k’beitzah*) during the continuation of the meal, in order to satisfy the requirement of the Shabbos meal.

The *Meiri* goes on to say that when the meal is later concluded at night, one would mention both *Retzeh* and *Al Hanissim* in the *bentching*, since the fifteenth day of *Adar* also has a connection to the miracle of Purim, even for those who do not live in a walled city. The *Magen Avrohom* (695:9) adopts this position as well. However, the *Mishnah Berurah* (695:15) considers this practice to be an internal contradiction and therefore rules that only *Retzeh* is recited in such a case but not *Al Hanissim*. Other authorities suggest a compromise, whereby one would say *Retzeh*, but then *Al Hanissim* would only be added in the *Harachaman* section towards the end of *bentching*.

Rav Schachter points out that although

the practice of פורס מפה ומקדש is mentioned in the Gemora (*Pesachim* 100a) in connection with meals that are begun before Shabbos or Yom Tov, it is not recommended as ideal (see the formulation of the *Sho’el in Maharil, Siman* 56[8]). Nonetheless, there may be certain communities or settings where for logistical reasons it is necessary to juxtapose the Purim *Seudah* with the Shabbos meal, in which case this practice (of beginning the Purim meal in the later afternoon) could potentially be adopted.

5. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Although most of us will not be observing the *Purim Meshulash*, we should bear in mind, as Rav Shlomo Alkabetz wrote (*Manos HaLevi* 4:16), that Haman was originally able to threaten the Jewish people based on our being an עם מפוזר ומפורד בין העמים – a scattered and fragmented people - and we therefore merited salvation only when *Esther HaMalkah* united us with the directive of כל היהודים את לך כנוס – “gather together all the Jews” - and this is a primary reason why Purim is celebrated through the *mitzvah* of *Mishloach Manos* that brings us together in love and friendship.

Similarly, this year, we can revitalize the unity of the Jewish people by learning about *Purim Meshulash* and thus joining our hearts and minds with all our brothers and sisters in Jerusalem who will be observing Purim this year in this very special fashion. May we thus merit to celebrate Purim together, as one united people, in the rebuilt Jerusalem *bimherah v’yameinu*.



When Shushan Surpassed Sinai

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Chazal (Shabbat 88a) make an astounding statement regarding *kiymu v'kiblu haYehudim* (Megillah 9:27) — that the events of Purim constituted the true fulfillment of *Matan Torah*. This assertion raises a fundamental difficulty: how could a generation living in *galus*, under the rule of *Achashverosh*, surpass the monumental revelation of Har Sinai? Previous generations had experienced open and supernatural miracles and *giluy Shechinah*—how, then, could the Jewish people living (and even assimilating) in the Persian Empire, who only experienced a concealed miracle, be considered as having the ultimate acceptance and fulfillment of *Matan Torah*?

To appreciate the depth of this concept, we must transport ourselves to a perilous moment in Jewish history. It was *Purim Katan* of 1927 in Moscow, a time when the Soviet regime relentlessly sought to eradicate Jewish observance. Despite the omnipresent threat of the NKVD (People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs) hundreds of *Chassidim* gathered in a modest wooden shul on Archipova Street. They knew that their very presence endangered their lives, as secret agents were undoubtedly planted among them. Yet, their commitment to Judaism compelled them to attend.

In this charged atmosphere, the Rebbe Rayatz, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn of Lubavitch, delivered a *Chasidic* discourse beginning with the words “*Vekibeil*

HaYehudim.” He expounded upon the concept of *mesiras nefesh*—self-sacrifice—for the sake of Torah and its *mitzvot*. He emphasized that true *kabbalas haTorah* is not in moments of revelation, but in times of *hester panim*, when Hashem's presence is concealed and adherence to Torah requires *mesiras nefesh*. At *Matan Torah*, *Chazal* teach that Hashem held Har Sinai over the Jewish people like a barrel—suggesting an element of coercion. However, this coercion was not by physical force, but rather by the overwhelming intensity of Divine revelation, which swept the Jewish people off their feet, leaving them with no choice but to accept. The true test of commitment would only come when the overwhelming spiritual revelation was gone, and demonstrating unwavering devotion required an inner strength—like oil squeezed from a crushed olive, revealing its purest essence.

Purim embodied this level of commitment. The Jews in Shushan could have blended into Persian society, forsaking their identity to avoid Haman's decree. Instead, they stood firm, embracing their Judaism with renewed fervor. This was an acceptance of Torah that surpassed Sinai—it was *na'aseh v'nishma* without *giluy Shechinah*, without coercion, born from their own deep, unwavering connection to Hashem, revealing their truest essence.

This concept was vividly exemplified recently by former hostage Agam Berger,

a young Jewish woman who, while held captive by Hamas for 482 days, refused to compromise on *Shmiras Shabbos* and *Kashrus*. In the most unimaginable darkness and circumstances, she embodied the spirit of *kiymu v'kiblu*—maintaining her faith and practice despite inconceivable danger and hardship. This is the ultimate affirmation of *na'aseh v'nishma*: when the Jewish soul, stripped of external support, still clings to Hashem and His Torah.

Purim's eternity stems from this principle: that commitment forged in darkness is stronger than that born from revelation. *Matan Torah* was bestowed upon the Jewish people; Purim was their own act of acceptance. The *Megillah* declares, *v'yimei haPurim ha'eleh lo ya'avru*

mitoch haYehudim—Purim will never be nullified, because it reflects the deepest, most enduring bond between Hashem and *Am Yisrael*.

In a world that increasingly challenges Jewish identity, the lesson of *kiymu v'kiblu* remains as relevant as ever. It is in times of *hester panim*, when we refuse to define ourselves by the darkness, and tap into our truest self, that the greatest light Hashem emerges.

In Agam's amazing *zechus* and inspiration to *Am Yisrael*, as well as the *mesirus nefesh* of all of the hostages and the IDF, may we be *zoche* to *laYehudim haysa orah v'simcha v'sason vikar, kein tihyeh lanu*. May we all merit to reveal the hidden light of the *geulah shleimah*, speedily in our days!

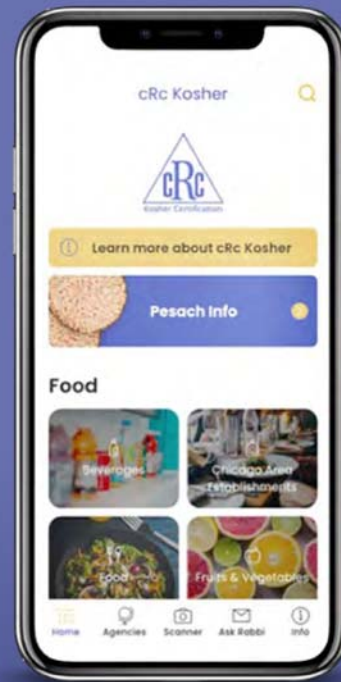
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Simcha on Purim

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The Rambam writes in *Hilchos Megillah* (2:17): “It is better for a person to increase *Matanos L'Evyonim* (gifts to the disadvantaged) than to increase his meal or in *shiluach manos l'rai'aihu* (portions of food to friends). For there is no greater and more beautiful rejoicing than gladdening the hearts of the poor, orphans, widows and converts. For one who gladdens the hearts of these downtrodden is like the *Shechinah* (Divine). As it says, ‘...and to revive the heart of the dejected.’”

So, according to the Rambam it's better to give much money to *evyonim* than to have much feasting and *mishloach manos*, because by so doing, one emulates the *Shechinah*, which revives the hearts [and spirits] of the *nidca'im* (lowly).

Elsewhere, the Rambam formulates the concept differently. In *Hilchos Yom Tov* 6:18, he writes: “When he eats and drinks [on Yom Tov], he is obligated to feed the convert, the orphan and the widow with the other poor and downtrodden. But one who locks the doors of his courtyard and eats and drinks – he and his children and wife – and does not feed and give drink to the poor and bitter-spirited, this is not the rejoicing of *mitzvah*, but *simchas creiso* (the rejoicing of his belly).”

The difference between the Rambam's formulations of the same concept is striking. The basic principle is common to both Yom Tov and Purim: make sure you take care of the have-nots when you celebrate, and not just your own rejoicing. In *Hilchos Yom Tov*, the Rambam characterizes starkly the shortcoming of the rejoicing of a person

who doesn't take care of the less fortunate. It's not a celebration of *mitzvah*, but of his belly. In *Hilchos Megillah*, on the other hand, the Rambam doesn't characterize the shortcoming, but formulates the principle affirmatively: the greatest and most beautiful *mitzvah* is to gladden the hearts of those less fortunate. Why does he declare a self-absorbed *simcha* to be *simchas creiso* only for Yom Tov, but for Purim he simply says that to take care of the less fortunate is to be like the Divine?

I heard this question from Rabbi Moshe Katz (Chicago Torah Network), who heard it from Rav Yitzchak Hutner, z”l. Rav Hutner answered that the Rambam's characterization in *Hilchos Megillah* reflects the essential character of Purim. The events in *Megillas Esther* took place a few decades after *churban bayis rishon* (the destruction of the first Temple). The Jews found themselves in exile. Their attempts to rebuild the Temple had been fruitless. And then – the royal decree of their extinction. It is fair to characterize the Jews as *nidca'im*. As the *Megillah* observes: *V'ha'ir Shushan navocha* (the city of Shushan was depressed).

The salvation of Purim wasn't solely a physical salvation. It was a psychological and emotional redemption as well. The Almighty brought *simcha* to *K'lal Yisrael*: ...*v'ha'ir Shushan tzahala v'sameicha*; ...*v'aso oso yom mishteh v'simcha*; ... *es yom arba' asar l'chodesh Adar simcha umishteh*; ...*v'yom tov u'mishlo'ach manos ish l'rai'aihu*; ...*v'hachodesh asher nehepach lahem miyyagon l'simcha uma'ivvel l'yom tov*. The

Megillah describes the Jews' turnabout from depression to rejoicing. Purim celebrates the revival of the Jews' spirits by the Almighty and the *simcha* that He brought to the downtrodden, that is, *K'lal Yisrael*.

And so, the Rambam's unique formulation in *Hilchos Megillah* reflects accurately the essential character of the day of Purim: one who gladdens the hearts of the downtrodden is like the *Shechinah*. Thus, the *halacha* requires that on our Purim we emulate the Almighty on Purim in Shushan.

Rav Hutner's answer to this question on the Rambam would appear to explain many, if not all, observances of the day, not just *Matanos L'Evyonim*. The organizing principle here is, just as the Almighty brought happiness to the Jews of Persia, so the goal of our observances on Purim is to bring happiness to Jews:

· *Mishlo'ach manos* is for the people for whom the handout of money, the dollar or two or eighteen, wouldn't have such an impact. **Everyone** likes food – a treat (two are even better!). Especially if you can eat it right away, without having to prepare it. Give a billionaire a tasty cookie, and you bring him *simcha*.

· Tips for children who bring the *mishlo'ach manos* – since when do we pay people to perform a *mitzvah*? The practice turns an activity that might otherwise be a burden to the children, or at best a minor role in the performance of a *mitzvah*, into an exciting moment of *simcha*.

· How about those costumes? Well, what does a person do when he sees another in a costume? He smiles! The person who wears a costume brings *simcha* to all who see him.

· And the drinking? What does a person do when he sees an observant Jew tipsy from drinking “a bit more than his usual [amount]” (the *halachic* standard according to the *Ram"a*)? He smiles! The person who imbibes—and relaxes a bit -- brings *simcha* to all who see him. This is implicit in the language that *Chazal* use for drinking —“*livsumei*,” rather than “*lish TUYei*” (to drink) or “*lashkurei*” (to become drunk). “*Liv'sumei*,” like “*b'samim*,” connotes fragrance. Someone who exudes sweetness (rather than coarseness) as a result of his drinking brings *simcha* to others. (I heard from Rav Mordechai Greenberg of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh that Rav Kook interpreted this use of *livsumei* to mean that only one

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who exudes fragrance should drink on Purim).

With this *yesod* (principle), we can also understand another halacha the Rambam cites. In *Hilchos Megillah* 2:16 the Rambam writes: “[we] don’t scrutinize when giving Purim money. Rather, whoever extends his hand to take, we give to him. And we can’t direct Purim money to any other charity.” So, Purim money is treated differently from *tzedakah* generally. Why? Because in its essence Purim money isn’t so much *tzedakah* as it is *simcha gelt*! The normal standards of *tzedakah* don’t apply. We don’t apply objective “needs” standards – we’re giving *simcha*. So, if someone holds out his hand to receive Purim money, then you know that by giving that money, you’ll be giving *simcha*, regardless of his actual financial condition.

Finally, the reading of the *Megillah*

every year would appear to be in the same category. We are all depressed and downtrodden, *nidca'im* and *umlalim*. We don’t have the Bais Hamikdash. We are still subject to *shiabud malchuyos* (subjugation by other governments). *K'lal Yisrael* has all kinds of *tzaros*. The *Megillah* responds with a clear message: *Yeshuas Hashem k'heref ayin* – Hashem’s salvation comes in the blink of an eye.

Megillas Esther is in *kisvei hakodesh* (the books of the Bible) not because of its history, but because of its precedent: In a single moment, Hashem can change our lot in life. He will bring about a salvation – and it may well be happening even as we are so consumed by our *tzaros* that we don’t see the events aligning to facilitate the salvation. This is the Almighty’s message that **all** – men and women – are required to hear. This is Hashem’s message of *simcha* to us on Purim.



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