

THE AVODAH OF PURIM

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לימוד הדבר תורה לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שי' בן רבקה לגאולה קרובה מן המיצר אל המרחב

THE KEDUSHA OF THE DAY

The tzaddik, the Chiddushei Harim of Ger, emphasized the great potential of Purim with a story:

There was once a Yid who set out on a journey, intending to commit a grievous sin, and took along five hundred gold rubles, which he had amassed over quite some time. While traveling, he suddenly heard the heartfelt crying of a family in trouble. They were being evicted for not paying their rent. His pity aroused, the Yid gave them all the money he had with him, which he had intended to use for the aveira.

A great tumult took place in Shamayim, and a verdict was made. Whatever this man would decree, would materialize. However, to ensure the privilege not be misused, it was decreed that the man become a drunkard.

Some time later, a terrible tzarah came upon the world. The Baal Shem Tov sent his talmidim to beg this drunk Yid to intercede and ask Hashem for mercy. Arriving at his place, they found him drunk, and had to try a number of times until they managed to catch him sober. They presented their request and he successfully abolished the decree.

The Chiddushei Harim would conclude: Purim is a day of Eis Ratzon, when every Yid can accomplish without limitations. The merrymaking should not interfere with one's accomplishments.

(שפתי צדיק אות נ"ג)

The Zohar notes that Purim is similar to Yom Hakippurim. This means that what is accomplished on Yom Kippur with fasting, can be accomplished on Purim with joy. Furthermore, the name "Kippurim" ("like Purim"), implies that Purim is the greater yom tov, having a stronger effect upon the person.

According to Chazal, when Moshiach comes all the yomim tovim will be nullified, only the yom tov of Purim will remain. Chassidus explains that the simcha and kedusha of Purim is so great, that even when we will have the simcha and kedusha of the geulah, Purim will still be special.

(תיקוני זוהר נ"ז ע"ב, מדרש משלי פ"ט, ד"ה להבין מארז"ל כל המועדים כו' תשט"ז וש"נ)

For a number of years, the tzaddik Reb Menachem Mendel of Kotzk lived in seclusion, not even having yechidus with his chassidim. One Purim, the holy tzaddik Reb Yechiel Meir of Gostynin found

himself in Kotzk and came to the Rebbe's room, knocking hard on the door. "What's this?" the Rebbe asked when he opened the door. Reb Yechiel Meir replied, "It says in Shulchan Aruch, 'Whoever stretches out their hand for tzeddaka on Purim, he is given.' Rebbe, I am naked and want to be clothed; teach me!" The Kotzker Rebbe let him in, and the two tzaddikim spent many hours together. From then on, the chassidim of Kotsk treated Reb Yechiel Meir with utmost respect.

(סיפורי חסידים זוין מועדים ע' 303)

Many communities had the minhag of appointing pretend rabbonim, policemen, judges and other important public figures for Purim. One year in Zidetchov, the townspeople chose Reb Koppel (the nephew of the tzaddik, Reb Tzvi of Zidetchov) to be governor, and he chose some chassidim to act as his advisers.

On Purim day, the entire group drank I'chaim and then went to the tzaddik's house in great spirits. Reb Tzvi treated the "governor" with great respect, and asked him to remove the candle and meat tax that the government had recently placed. The lively "governor" agreed, but when he was asked to repeal the army draft on the Jewish boys, he refused. No amount of begging, pleading or threatening could make him change his mind, and the tzaddik left the room in anger.

The following day, when the effects of the wine had worn off, and fellow chassidim told Reb Koppel of what happened the previous day, he had no recollection of it and could barely believe the story.

Later that year, the chassidim realized what had occurred on Purim, for the candle and meat taxes were removed, but the draft remained enforced.

(סיפורי חסידים זוין מועדים ע' 300)

When the Tzemach Tzedek was a small child of five or six years old, his grandfather, the Alter Rebbe, asked him if he had learned Megilas Esther, to which the boy replied, "Yes."

The Alter Rebbe then asked if he understood it, and the Tzemach Tzedek responded, "No. I do not understand why Haman had to build such tall gallows of fifty amos. After all, Mordechai was not so tall!"

The Alter Rebbe did not reply, but in the maimar he said on Purim, he explained how Haman wanted to raise himself to great heights,

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and this is what brought his downfall.

(סיפורי חסידים זוין מועדים [לה"ק] סיפור 265)

THE AVODAH OF THE DAY

It is written in the Shulchan Aruch that one should wear fine clothes when going to hear the megilla. The holy talmid of the Ariza"l, Reb Chaim Vital, would immerse in the mikvah and then don Shabbos clothes in honor of Purim.

After returning home from shul on Purim night, one should have the table set and candles lit, and have a seuda in honor of Purim.

(רמ"א סי' תרצ"ה ס"ב, כף החיים שם סק"ג, רמ"א ס"א)

During the month of Adar, the tzaddik Reb Shmuel Abba of Zichlin would behave very joyously, and on Purim his avoda was done with extraordinary simcha. He greatly criticized those who did not treat the day properly, and those who did not come dressed in Shabbos clothing to the megillah reading.

One year, all were gathered, dressed in their Shabbos best, in the beis medrash to hear the megillah. Only one man wore his weekday garb. When some chassidim questioned his behavior, the man responded (using a common Yiddish expression), "Purim is not a yom tov and fever is not a sickness." At that moment, the tzaddik entered, gave a piercing look at this fellow and said, "Purim is a yom tov, and fever is a sickness."

Upon arriving home that night, the man suddenly fell ill with a raging fever, which only worsened as the days wore on. He sent a message to the tzaddik, asking for a bracha. The tzaddik replied, "Now he knows that fever is really a sickness, and he needs to know that Purim is really a yom tov." The man suffered in sickness the entire year, until the following Purim.

(סיפורי חסידים זוין מועדים ע' 271, ובס' הצאצאים ע' 62 הביאו על אדה"ז)

The megillah records that after the miracle of Purim, the Yidden had "orah", light. Chazal explain that this refers to the freedom to learn Torah. Therefore, it is appropriate to learn some Torah before the seuda, specifically the laws of Pesach. Purim marks thirty days before the yom tov, when it is considered proper to begin learning about it in preparation.

(מגילה ט"ז ע"ב, רמ"א סי' תרצ"ה ס"ב, תו"מ תשמ"ח ח"ב ע' 410)

The Rambam writes: It is preferable to increase in matanos le'evyonim, spending more than the amount used for the seuda and mishloach manos combined. There is no greater and more beautiful simcha than cheering up the poor, orphans, widows and converts. One who makes these people happy is similar to Hashem.

(רמב"ם הל' מגילה פ"ב הי"ז)

THE SIMCHA OF PURIM

We read in the Gemara that on Purim one must drink "until he cannot differentiate between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordechai." The Gemara records a story of two amora'im, Rabboh and Rav Zeira. The two ate their Purim seuda together, where they drank much wine and discussed secrets of the Torah. The kedusha of Rabboh was too much for Rav Zeira, and his neshama left his body.

The following day, Rabboh davened for Rav Zeira and brought him back to life. The next year, Rabboh once again invited Rav Zeira to join him for the seuda to discuss the secrets of Torah, but Rav Zeira turned down the offer saying, "One cannot rely on a second miracle."

The Rebbe explained: The purpose of 'ad d'lo yada' is for a person to reach a level of complete subservience to Hashem, which is not limited by his own understanding. As the Rambam writes that one should completely immerse himself in the pure 'waters of understanding,' and through this, all the undesirable perspectives will be cleansed away. As a result, a person will have the strength to continue this avoda throughout the entire year.

(מגילה ז,ב, לקו"ש ח"ד ע' 1277)

After the miracle of Purim, the megillah says that the Yidden had "Simcha," which Chazal interpret to mean that they could celebrate the yomim tovim. The Rebbe explains that though goyim also have holidays, they celebrate it with drinking and wildness. Whereas Yidden, even when they rejoice and drink they become closer to Hashem, increasing yiras shamayim and kedusha.

The Rebbe explains that the simcha of Purim is greater than all other types of simcha. The happiness on Purim should be to the extent that one does not feel himself at all, and is totally enveloped with simcha. This is the meaning of 'ad d'lo yada'.

(לקו"ש ח"ג ע' 920, ח"ד ע' 1274, וראה שו"ע ר"ב סי' רצ"ב ס"ג)

On the first Purim after his chasunah, the Alter Rebbe explained the avoda of reaching 'ad d'lo yada'. On Purim we must ensure that the "lo"- the things that are forbidden, should be "yada"- known. What we are supposed to do is well-known, but it is also necessary to know what is forbidden and to treat it with extra caution.

The Rebbe emphasized that precautions must be taken to ensure that Purim does not lead to negative behavior. This is done by fulfilling the mitzva only because the Torah commanded so. One must follow the takanos limiting the drinking of mashkeh; bearing in mind that mashkeh in itself is repulsive.

(ספר השיחות תש"ה ע' 72, היכל מנחם ח"ג ע' רנ"ח, תו"מ תשד"מ ח"ב ע' 1179)

The Rebbe related how the Rema would disguise himself on Motzoei Purim and make rounds amongst the houses of Krakow, reminding the residents to daven Maariv.

(שיח"ק תשל"ז ח"א ע' 608)

The Rebbe said: It is obvious that we must distance ourselves entirely from anything bad ("cursed is Haman"), and we are to treasure and embrace all good things ("blessed is Mordechai"). The unique aspect of Purim is that we can accomplish this with the neshama itself, which is a greater than doing it with conscious thought ('yada'). This is similar to the Yidden in the time of Purim who, with their neshamos, fulfilled all the mitzvos faithfully.

(לקו"ש ח"ד ע' 1280)

לזכות ר' יצחק זוגתו שרה שיחיו איזאוי
לרגל יום הנישואין יובל שנה