

Purim 2017

1.

Why is the holiday of Purim, called Purim? The pasuk says in Megilas Ester (9, 26) that **this holiday is called Purim because of the פּוּר, lottery**. The question still arises; why is this holiday called Purim? The lottery doesn't have to do with the main purpose or mitzvos of this holiday. Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (Drash Moshe page 67) says that we shouldn't think that since Hashem gave us a lot of beracha, therefore we no longer need Hashem's help. Rather, we need to realize that **just like we davened to Hashem before we were successful, so too, we must daven after we become successful as well**. We still don't know our lot. Something negative could occur. This is precisely what happened to Haman. He had a good lot; everything was going his way and then suddenly he had a turn for the worst which led to his downfall. **This holiday is therefore rightfully called Purim in order to allude to the concept that our lot can instantly change.**

This shtims (coincides) with the following (Pesach 2016 part 1); the Haggadah quotes Rebbi Gamliel, who says **'anyone who did not say pesach, matzah and maror does not fulfill his obligation.'** There is a machlokes (argument) amongst the Reshonim as to what this means and to what degree. Does Rebbi Gamliel mean that one would actually not fulfill his obligation at all? Also regarding what do you not fulfill your obligation? Do you not fulfill your obligation of the consumption of pesach, matzah and maror (which would seemingly be illogical if you ate these foods) or sipor (speaking about) yesiyatz (leaving) mitzrayim (Egypt) or saying the Haggadah in general? Whichever of the possible aforementioned approaches pertaining to the status or lack thereof, of not fulfilling your obligation it is, we see that one needs to be extremely cautious and utter pesach, matzah and maror. Rav Moshe Feinstein zasa"l (Drash Moshe, in between parshas Tzav and Shemini page 81) asks, **what is so crucial about mentioning these three mitzvos to the extent that if they weren't enunciated one would not fulfill his obligation? Pesach, matzah and maror symbolize something much greater and deeper than mere food, something physical. Pesach, matzah and maror each represent a unique significant aspect of Judaism; let's take each mitzvah individually and isolate it and analyze it.**

Pesach teaches us that we must strive to know and understand that Hashem performs miracles for us, whether they are obviously apparent or less apparent to us. For example; if we are traveling, either as a pedestrian or by means of a car. Typically we will not think about the fact that an amazing miracle is occurring. We must realize that the reality is that this is a miracle that Hashem is involved with. Dissimilarly, if a person gets in a car accident and walks out unharmed, he will tend to think that a miracle just occurred. Both cases are miracles; the difference between the cases is the miracle was more evident in the latter case. The Ramban (end of parshas Bo) explains Hashem performs supernatural miracles in order to show that even seemingly normal nature is in fact a miracle. Our ability to breathe normally and use the restroom properly, are miracles. Pesach literally means pass-over. Hashem passed over the Jewish houses and solely killed the Egyptians. The Egyptians were killed regardless, meaning whether they were with the Jews or away from the Jews. This miracle was felt in one place more than another place. Meaning, when numerous Egyptians dropped dead right in front of the Jews and the Jews remained alive, the miracle was apparent. Conversely, if an Egyptian was in an

isolated area and died, such as in the middle of the woods, his death wouldn't have been as noticeable and recognizable.

Matzah represents that Hashem doesn't need preparation; rather Hashem is able to immediately bring salvation and success. In Egypt Hashem brought salvation even before the Jew's dough leavened and became actual bread. Therefore, we shouldn't give up and lose hope even in a pressing or painful situation. Even if our potential odds appear bleak, we must not lose hope. Hashem can instantaneously bring success. The message of maror symbolizes the opposite of matzah. Maror represents Hashem's ability to instantaneously bring bad. Therefore we shouldn't get too comfortable in the foreign country where we dwell. Something disastrous could immediately occur, embittering and threatening our lives faster than the blink of an eye. We must realize that history tends to repeat itself. In Europe the holocaust happened speedily. We must not be overly confident. Similarly, in Egypt everything was going well and then suddenly matters began to get bitter. We must daven intently that everything continues peacefully.

Due to the aforementioned reasons, we can easily understand why mentioning these three mitzvos is so significant. **It is so crucial to mention Pesach, matzah and maror because they each represent fundamental principles of the Jewish religion. In summary; Pesach represents that Hashem is running the show and that He performs miracles for us, whether they are evident or not. Matzah represents that Hashem doesn't need preparation; rather even instantaneously Hashem is able to bring salvation and success. Maror represents Hashem's ability to instantaneously bring bad.**

2.

Rabbi Shimshon Pinkes (sichos pages 11-16) quotes the Gemara in Tanis that says when the month of Adar comes we must increase our happiness. (משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה.) The month of Adar is the last month of the year (assuming that one is calculating the year from Nison (see Rosh Hashana (10))). Nison is like Rosh Hashana. It is therefore incumbent upon us to properly prepare for this holy time. We must utilize this time properly in order that there won't be a spiritual decline. **Happiness tends to result from something new.** For example, when someone becomes a bar mitzvah he is happy. Why? Because it's new; similarly, when one begins to put on tefillin, or when someone first gets married. New stages of life also tend to be exciting such as starting high school. Receiving a new gift is also exciting. A new chidush (Torah insight) also brings happiness.

Everything that is different from the usual order will cause an interest. For example, little kids tend to like seeing fire trucks. Why? Since fire trucks aren't usually seen. If however, a little kid lived next to a fire house, then he wouldn't be as interested when he would see a fire truck. Pleasure will more likely result from something new. It is for this reason that we recite a שהחיינו on new items. This beracha was enacted to be recited on a pleasure that was attained from a new item. The essence of this is based on the following; before benching at a sheva berachos the zimun consist of the addition of 'שהשמחה במעונו' for this celebration is in His abode' The Kol Bo explains that the joy is by Hashem. The joy is so great because new angels are being created. The angels increase Hashem's joy.

Nothing in the world has more newness than the Torah. The Torah is the vessel that the world was created from. The Zohar (parshas Teruma page 161) and Berashis Raba (1, 1) say that Hashem looked into the Torah and created the world. (אסתכל בה באורייתא וברא עלמא.) Kings don't use their own knowledge when they decide to build a palace. Rather, they rely on professional builders. These builders don't just mentally think of the best way to build the palace, rather they write blueprints. So too, **Hashem used the Torah as the blueprint to create this world.** The Torah includes any potential new item. This is why the Zohar says that every single word of new Torah is so important. Hashem actually kisses and crowns us. New worlds are created as related in the Nefesh Hachaim (shar daled).

This is what Purim is about. The deeper idea behind Purim is newness. This is what we must focus on during the month of Adar and especially during Purim. Throughout history the Jews have sinned in various ways and have been punished accordingly. In Shushan they sinned by partaking in the meal of Achashverosh. Since they derived pleasure from this meal it was decreed upon them to be destroyed. It was decreed in heaven that the Jews would be hopeless and they would literally be annihilated. This detached them from Hashem and holiness. Since they made themselves wicked; it was therefore decreed upon them that they would die. **The Purim miracle was resurrection of the dead. We became like a new nation.** The fact that we still exist is a chidush (insight). **Therefore, once Adar comes we must be very happy.** The reason for this is because during the time of Purim Adar changed from sorrow to happiness and death to life. We must be even happier during Purim because the biggest change for the better occurred then. On Purim we became a new nation. Consequently we must be very joyful in order to properly commemorate that memories juncture.

Pesach is a time when we left the impurities of Egypt. We cleansed ourselves from the idolatry that was worshiped while in Egypt. During sefera we become sanctified and elevated. On Shevuos we merit to receive the Torah. On Rosh Hashana we reach the level of fear. On Yom Kippur we cleanse our sins. During Sukkos we attach ourselves to Hashem. Winter is the darkest time of the year because sunrise is late and sunset is very early. During these dark days we need the Chanukah candles to protect us from the Hellenization of the Greeks. The peak of the year is really the end. Unfortunately, many times people give up. We must utilize this vital time. We must tap into this newness and resurrection. Just like there was a physical resurrection, so too, we need to make a spiritual resurrection. **In order to make ourselves new we must be happy.**

With this we can explain the material that the aron (ark) was comprised of. The aron is made from gold and wood. The inside and outside of the aron was made from gold. The middle of the aron is made out of wood. The Torah refers to the aron as עצי שיטים, something made from wood from Shetim. Why is this so? Seemingly it would be much more logical to refer to the aron as gold after the fact that both the exterior and interior part of the aron is made from gold. The explanation is as follows; wood has an advantage over gold. Wood is included in the category of צומח (growth). There are four categories: מדבר (those who speak, aka humans), חי (living animals), צומח (growth, for example plants) and דומם (inanimate such as a rock). דומם is biodegradable unlike צומח. If a plant is uprooted it can be relocated and grow somewhere else. This is the advantage that wood has over gold. This is what the Torah is compared to. The Torah has limitless potential to grow and increase. **The potential for new Chidushei Torah is infinite. We need to impart this newness that we attain on Purim to the rest of our lives. We need to**

have newness when we learn, daven and perform mitzvos. The reason why we need to rejoice when Adar arrives is because it is the end of the year, the time when Purim occurred and we had this newness.

3.

Why were the mitzvos of mishloach manos and matanos l'evyonim, specifically enacted to be performed on Purim? Rabbi Yaakov Niemen (Darchei Mussar page 310) answers this by means of a parable. There were two children. One was wealthy and the other was poor. The father sent a letter to his wealthy son saying the following: 'I want you to come to your sister's wedding. All of the expenses spent for the necessities of the wedding will be reimbursed. Also bring your brother with you.' He bought very nice clothing for himself, but not for his brother. They both arrive at the wedding. The wealthy brother looked very elegant while his brother looked like a poor man. After the wedding he asked his father for the reimbursement. His father took out the letter and read 'I will reimburse all of the expenses spent לכבודי (in my honor).' The clothing you bought was for your own honor. That is why you didn't buy your brother any clothing.

The same applies to us. Sometimes we buy Shabbos food for ourselves and not for Hashem and Shabbos. We must make sure to take care of the poor people as well. The same applies on Purim. Purim is a time of happiness and feasting. The Gemara in Megilah (7) says to give both mishloach manos and matanos l'evyonim. **Giving matanos l'evyonim reveals that our mishloach manos were also for the right reason.** The Gemara in Beitza (16a) quotes Reish Lakish who says we have a neshama yeseira (extra soul) that is given to us on Shabbos. Rashi explains that we have a widened heart for sleeping and eating. Even so we need to be careful not to overeat. The Aliya Raba (siman 170 os 23) quotes the safer Hagan who says that even if a person eats and drinks on Shabbos and Yuntif, but over indulges, he sinned. He actually transgressed three negative commandments; "do not abominate yourself" "guard yourself" "lest you forget God". (כתב בספר הגן דאפילו עושה לשם מצוה כגון שבתות וימים טובים עובר ג' לאוין, השמר לך פן תשכח, בל תשקצו שממלא כריסו כמו בהמה.) This is not lechvod (for the honor of) Shabbos and Yuntif, this is lechvod your guf (body).

The quality of the mishloach manos that we give needs to be the quality that we would like to receive from others. The Gemara in Shabbos (30a) relates a story of someone who wanted to convert and learn the entire Torah while standing on one leg. Hillel told him what you wouldn't want done to you; don't do to others (דעלך שני להברך לא תעביד). The Mishna Berurah (156, 2) writes that we should work the amount of time we need to. How do we measure this? **We must pretend that we are working in order to support our friend. How long would we work for? This is how long we must work to support ourselves.** We must only work for necessities and not allow our yeitzer haras to trick us that we need to work more.

The Gemara in Brachos (8b) quotes the pasuk (Vayikra 23, 32) that states "you shall afflict yourselves; on the ninth of the month." The Gemara is bothered by the simple explanation of the pasuk. It is implied from this pasuk that everyone should fast on the ninth. How is this so, Yom Kippur is on the tenth! Rather, anyone who eats and drinks on the ninth it's as if he fasted on the

ninth and tenth. (ותנא ליה חייא בר רב מדפתי כתיב "ועניתם את נפשתיכם בתשעה לחדש בערב", וכי בתשעה מתעניין?)
(והלא בעשרה מתעניין! אלא לומר לך כל האוכל ושותה בתשיעי מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו מתענה תשיעי ועשירי.)

What is so important about eating on the eve of Yom Kippur to the extent that it is considered a mitzvah? The Malbim (Melitzeh Yosher page 5) says that **it is more difficult to eat leshma (for the sake of heaven) than to fast leshma**. Meaning, it is much easier to feel holy after fasting and being in Shul for a full day. Feeling this holiness while eating is much more difficult.

These two mitzvos were specifically enacted on Purim because we could easily get carried away with the obligations of the physical mitzvos of the day. One of the reasons there are many physical obligations explains the Levush (siman 670), is because on Purim we were physically saved. **It is very easy to get carried away in the overindulgences of these temporary lusts and desires. We are therefore commanded to perform the mitzvos of mishloach manos and matanos l'evyonim in order to make sure that these physical mitzvos are properly done.** This is why these two mitzvos are designated to be performed specifically Purim day.