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TOURO TORAH

• Lander College for Women • Divrei Torah Newsletter • Adar Sheini •

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אדר שני תשע"ט

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The Power of *Purim*

By Shuli Mammon

In order to explain the awesome power of the day of *Purim*, the *Chiddushei Harim* relates the following story about the *Ba'al Shem Tov*:

The dismayed Jews of a certain town came desperately to the *Ba'al Shem Tov*.

"Please, help us, *Rebbe*," they pleaded. "A local ruler plans to enact a decree against the Jews of our town. Please, give us a *berachah*!"

The *Ba'al Shem Tov* summoned two of his *chassidim* and instructed them to go to a certain village and bring "Moshe the *Tzaddik*" to him. The two left. Upon entering the village, they asked the first man they came across where they could find "Moshe the *Tzaddik*." The villager thought for a moment, and then replied that there was no one by that name in the town. The *chassidim*, undeterred, asked the next man, but were met with the same response. After the same scene repeated itself several times, they changed their question, inquiring simply after Moshe, figuring that he was perhaps a hidden *tzaddik*. But this was to no avail: no one seemed to understand whom they were looking for. Finally, the *chassidim* asked someone if there

was **anyone** in town named Moshe.

The man thought for a few moments. "I suppose there is one Moshe, but it is definitely not him you want," he finally answered. "They call him 'Moshe the drunkard.'" The *chassidim*, thoroughly confused as to their *Rebbe's* instructions, went to find him.

When they found the man called Moshe, their confusion was even greater. He sat on the sidewalk surrounded by wine-bottles, muttering under his breath. This was no hidden *tzaddik*.

After much cajoling, the reluctant drunkard consented to come to the *Ba'al Shem Tov*.

When they arrived, the *chassidim* were surprised at the *Ba'al Shem Tov's* delight in seeing this man. Their surprise was compounded when the great *Rebbe* humbly asked Moshe the drunkard to

"When they arrived, the chassidim were surprised at the Ba'al Shem Tov's delight in seeing this man. Their surprise was compounded when the great Rebbe humbly asked Moshe the drunkard to bless the endangered city."

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bless the endangered city. Moshe finally mumbled a *berachah* and the *chassidim* brought him back to his hometown. Within one week, the news came from the endangered city that the decree had been abolished.



“At that moment, another battle erupted, this one in the Heavenly court. What reward could be given to a man who had given money intended for *aveiros* to do such a special *mitzvah*?!”

–Shuli Mammon

The *chassidim* could not contain themselves any longer. They entered the *Rebbe's* study and asked about Moshe's powers: how had his *berachah* surpassed the *Rebbe's tefillos*?

“Some years ago,” the *Ba'al Shem Tov* recounted, “this man Moshe was a *rasha*, spending his days chasing the materialism of this world. One day, he took his life's savings and boarded his wagon to go to a distant town where he would spend his money to fulfill his base desires. As he was riding, he heard screams in the distance. At first he paid no heed, but the shouts did not stop, so Moshe decided to investigate. He traced the noise to a large mansion and knocked at the door. The man who answered readily told Moshe what was causing the screaming. ‘This woman is in debt,’ he explained, ‘and until it is paid off, she will stay in the dungeon.’ Moshe found himself asking how much she owed and was stunned to hear that it was exactly the sum that he had in his wagon: the amount that he had been saving to use for his self-gratification.

A battle erupted in Moshe's mind, a terrible tug-of-war between this lady's plight and his own desires. ‘I have that amount,’ he heard. Moshe realized it was he who had spoken. He promptly went to his wagon and paid the woman's ransom. At that moment, another battle erupted, this one in the Heavenly court. What reward could be given to a man who had given money intended for *aveiros* to do such a special *mitzvah*?! It was finally decided that he would be given the power to give *berachos*. Some of the angels, however, were nervous. Moshe was still far from pious; what if he abused this power? And so,” the *Ba'al Shem Tov* finished, “they made sure that Moshe was always too drunk to use his power to bless.”

This, the *Chiddushei Harim* explains, is the secret of Purim. On this day, “כל הפושט ידו נותנים לו”: *Hashem* gives us whatever we ask for. To balance this tremendous power, *Purim* is a busy day, with four special *mitzvos* – and drunkenness. But if we know that there's a deeper power to the day, we'll be able to find a time on *Purim* to use it. We can ask *Hashem* for all the *berachos* that we want, and He will give them to us.

Based on a shiur from Rabbi Cooper of Brooklyn.

A Higher Happiness

By Chava Romm

Now that Adar has arrived, we are supposed to increase our feelings of happiness. Chazal teach us, “משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה,” but have we ever stopped to ask for the Torah’s definition of happiness? The *Alai Shur* and the *Orchos Tzadikim* provide those sorely-needed definitions.

The *Alai Shur* instructs us to strive for a general feeling of inner happiness that stays with a person throughout his life. He explains, “It is a feeling of happiness about your lot in the world and about your spiritual service.” One should appreciate the bond he has with Hashem as a member of His Chosen People. Also, he should consider the unique role that he has been given to carry out in this world. No one else can play his part. His awareness of his close relationship with the Creator, coupled with understanding of the impact he can make in this world, should fill a person with overwhelming joy.

The *Orchos Tzadikim* offers us another formula for happiness: “If a person obtains all that he desires and no ill befalls him, he will constantly be happy. His face will shine, he will be physically healthy, and he will be slow to show signs of old age.” This might sound nearly impossible to achieve, yet it is not actually as difficult as it appears. One can train himself not to wish for things that are

difficult to achieve, to hope only for realistic desires. Any additional gain will be cause for extra delight. By lowering his expectations, one can ensure that he is not disappointed. Additionally, one should not let himself feel sad over external life events. This can be achieved by developing a new perspective on life that allows one to accept all that happens to him as ultimately for his good.

Do these suggestions still sound difficult to follow? If you answered yes, then you are not alone. Many people, including myself, can read articles upon articles about achieving true happiness, and **still** feel that it is a goal beyond reach. We know instinctively that true happiness is not procured by acquiring fashionable clothes, stylish hairdos, or jewelry. Yet when we feel empty and our souls crave happiness, we take the easy way out. We reach for material comforts rather than delighting in our spiritual lot. But materialism only provides a temporary happiness, feeding our desire for happiness rather than satiating it.

According to the *Alai Shur*, the key to happiness is a keen appreciation for what we already have. Yet to appreciate our bond with Hashem, we need to develop our relationship with Him and feel His constant presence at our side. This requires more effort than running out to buy the latest top, but it will ultimately pay off. The *Orchos Tzadikim*’s suggestion that one should lower his expectations also requires more work. Both of these definitions of lasting happiness demand one to develop as a person. Spiritual growth is very difficult, but the highest form of happiness beckons. Will we accept its challenge, or will we continue to chase a cheap and unfulfilling imitation?

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—Chava Romm



Based on Gateway to Happiness by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin.

Filling Our Roles: Giving Is Getting

By Zahava Pfeifer and Dina Resnick

Many people have a hard time connecting to *parshiyos* that are not in a story format. *Parshiyos Terumah* and *Tetzaveh* are two of those *parshiyos*. A lot of time is spent discussing different *keilim* and *begadim*, something that is difficult to relate to.

However, a closer look at the *parshah* reveals so many beautiful and applicable lessons. For example, when the Torah discusses the stones for the *choshen*, it then discusses the stones that fill the rest of the empty spaces. The *passuk* calls these stones "אבני מלואים". Why would these stones be called "filler stones"? These are precious and gorgeous stones. How could we just call them fillers?

The same question can be asked regarding Yocheved and Miriam. Yocheved and Miriam were called "Shifra" and "Puah" because they beautified and "pu pu-ed" the babies. One can ask, "How can we refer to these major *tzidkaniyos* with names referring to what they did with the babies? We should have used their actual names." Yet, the *passuk* does not do that in order to teach us an amazing lesson about life. Yocheved and Miriam were in a situation in which cooing and beautifying and taking care of these babies was their role in life, and they filled that role.

The same applies to the אבני מלואים. Like calling Yocheved and Miriam "Shifra" and "Puah", calling the אבני מלואים "filler stones" does not put down the value of these stones. In fact, this is actually the most honorable description one could assign to these stones. The stones filled their role of filling up the *choshen*. Filling the role that *Hashem* has assigned a person is the greatest thing that person can do. This is our job in life.

It is easy to just sail through life without filling your role in it. There are many times when we think, "Okay, I am in college in Manhattan, I do school work all day... what am I supposed to be getting out of all of this? Why am I here?" Clearly, we must be here for a reason, because *Hashem* put us here. That means we have a role to fill. We need to make the most of wherever we are. It is hard, but when we take that step, we will find *Hashem* helping us along.

There is a *passuk* in *Devarim* (10:12) that says, "*Ma Hashem elokecha sho'el me-imach, ki im liyra es Hashem elokecha*". What does *Hashem* ask of us? He asks for our *yir'ah*. Rav Wolbe says that one meaning of "*sho'el*" is to borrow. That would make this *passuk* say that *Hashem* wants to "borrow" our *yir'ah*. *Hashem* has everything. Why would He want to borrow something from us?

In order to answer this question, *Chazal* offer the *mashal* of a wealthy woman who asks to borrow a pot from her poor and sick neighbor. The



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neighbor lends the woman the pot, wondering why her wealthy neighbor with full time cleaning help needs to borrow a pot. Five minutes later, the wealthy woman returns with the pot she borrowed, now full of soup. "I saw you were having a hard day", the wealthy woman explained, "so I made you some soup. I just needed a pot to put it in to give it to you."



Hashem constantly wants to give us *berachah*, but we need to build ourselves in order to receive that *berachah*. If we are not prepared to accept the *berachah* *Hashem* is giving us, it is as if that wealthy neighbor is at our door with a pot of soup and just pouring it, without any container to receive and hold the gift. That *kli* that we must build for ourselves is *bitachon*. We give *Hashem* that *kli* of *bitachon*, and He fills it up with whatever *berachah* He wishes to give us and gives our *kli* back full. We have to give, and then *Hashem* will give. When we use what *Hashem* gives us in order to give more, then *Hashem* will give us even more. We need to partner with *Hashem* to reach the goal of our existence.

We have to remember, though, that while we are contributing, He is controlling. It is not our job to control whatever situation we are in. We do our part and *Hashem* will do whatever is left. We have to have *bitachon* and do the right thing, and then *Hashem* will shower us with abundant *berachah*.

Based on a *shiur* by Rabbi Kalish on Parshas Terumah.

A Non-Kosher *Purim* Party

By Anonymous

The *Gemara* in *Megillah* presents an intriguing question that was posed to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai by his students: Why were the Jews destined to be annihilated in the days of Achashverosh? When he asked them what they thought the reason was, they replied, "because they derived pleasure (ate) from the meal of the wicked person" (*Megillah* 12a). This answer is problematic, however, since the punishment for not keeping kosher is *karet*, not death. There are two accepted answers used to address this issue.

The first relates to the prophet Yirmiyahu, who witnessed much destruction in his life-- the downfall of the Assyrian Empire, the death of Josiah, the destruction of the Jewish State by the Babylonians, and the exile of most of the Jewish people to Babylon. Yirmiyahu prophesied that seventy years after the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, *Hashem* would bring the Jews back to Israel. Achashverosh knew of this prophecy, and, calculating that the seventy-year period had passed without the Jewish people being redeemed, figured that *Hashem* had forsaken them. In



celebration of this, the king threw an extravagant party utilizing the vessels from the *Beis Hamikdash*. He was so happy that he even invited the Jews to partake in the festivities. Their participation, however, showed *Hashem* that they were in some sense joyous over the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*. This behavior is what caused *Hashem* to consider annihilating the Jewish people.

The second possible explanation of the *Gemara* deals with the fact that the Jews were not forced to attend the party. Rather, they chose to go, and they even experienced a sense of pleasure there. They believed that they had finally been accepted into the Persian high society, while the whole event was essentially a ruse to get them to violate *Hashem's* will. Even though the food and drink were strictly kosher under the supervision of Mordechai himself, they still should not have partaken. They should have heeded the advice of Mordechai and not attended the event, a party which was in essence a celebration of the destruction of the house of *Hashem*. By attending, the Jews communicated that they felt they no longer needed *Hashem* and His help.

The lesson to be taken from this *Gemara* is that no matter how successful one is, he must never forget the instrumental role that *Hashem* plays in each of our lives. *Bitachon* in *Hashem* is something that needs to be continuously worked on, but this mindset is the way we must live as Torah Jews.

Purim Sameach!



~Touro Torah~

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