



Enhancing Exuberance: Purim

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles
Summary by Channie Koplowitz Stein

"*Mishenichnas Adar marbin b'simcha*"- When Adar comes we increase joy. What is the essence of this joy, and how can we keep it going? The simcha of Jews is inherently different than other nations. While they celebrate with eating and drinking, Jews celebrate by understanding Hashem's role in the victory, and instituting rituals and laws that will cement this understanding and joy for all generations. It is in this context that the true joy of Purim is embodied in our re-acceptance of the Torah out of love.

Rabbi I. Bornstein uses The Vilna Gaon's analysis to explain how the four elements of man's existence parallel the evil plans of Haman and the four *mitzvot* of Purim. Haman wanted *lehashmid*/to destroy the spiritual *neshama*; *laharog*/to murder the *nefesh*/life force; *le'abeid*/to eradicate the body and to plunder their possessions/*ushellalm lavoz*. Megillah reading satisfies our spiritual need to recount the miracle of redemption. Feasting satisfies the need for our bodies to feel redeemed. Rejoicing makes us feel more alive, and giving gifts to each other and the poor expresses our ownership of our possessions and ability to make decisions about them.

We are required to take a *lulav* and *etrog* on Sukkot and eat *matzah* on Pesach, but these *mitzvot* do not define the day, notes the Noam Siach. Nor does rejoicing on these holidays define its essence. In contrast, Purim is

defined by rejoicing and giving gifts to the poor and downtrodden. There are two parallel motifs in the Purim tapestry, writes the Sichot Eliyahu. There's the reestablishment of our relationship with Hashem as we re-accepted the Torah and the cementing anew the relationships between man and his fellow man. According to the Rambam this is primary. When one rejoices, one does it with others. When a Jew brought the *chagigah* offering on yom tov, he was commanded to invite the poor and the orphans. In this way, he would emulate Hashem Who brings life to the downtrodden.

How can we compare Purim to Yom KiPur(im), asks Rabbi Roth z"l? On Yom Kippur we resemble angels who neither eat nor drink, but on Purim we're even greater acting in ways that are similar to God's presence and bringing simcha to others. Giving fills one with happiness as it fills others with happiness and fulfills man's mission. The body is about me, notes the Sichot Eliyahu, while the soul is about giving to others. On Purim, the body and soul work together. We choose to accept the Torah out of love, to emulate Hashem and be like Him, to be givers and make others happy.

Rabbi Pincus z"l sees the essence of Purim as being renewal. By attending Ahashuerosh's festivities, *Bnei Yisrael* cut themselves off from holiness and killed their inner essence. Their re-acceptance of the *Torah* brought reconnection with Hashem, the source of great joy.

Purim's essence, then, is renewal, and any act that fosters this can be the source of great joy, teaches Rav Dessler z"l. *Simcha* comes from attentiveness and mindfulness. It brings renewal to our lives. At least on Purim, writes Rabbi Weissblum, let us pray with intention, for Hashem has opened His treasure house for us, and every prayer brings with it connection.

Reading the Megillah restores our faith in Hashem, in the knowledge that He runs the world, writes Rabbi M. Schwab z"l. Haman made elaborate plans to destroy the Jews, but Hashem foiled it. When we live with complete faith that Hashem writes the *megilah* of our own lives we will always be joyous. The Slonimer Rabbi notes that even when a decree is "signed and sealed," we must maintain our faith that He can change the outcome even at the last moment. It was Mordechai's faith that rescinded Haman's decree, and every Purim we too have the ability to change the decrees against us by working to draw closer to Hashem through our love for Him. On Purim, we can break the wall between Hashem and ourselves as quickly as dynamite, unlike Yom Kippur when we must do it one brick at a time.

There is *simcha* in being a simple Jew who has a relationship with Hashem. On Purim, we enhance this simcha through giving to each other, through renewed faith in Hashem as the center of our lives, and through the sense of rejuvenation that this faith brings.

The Power of Women to Partner with Hashem Serach Bas Asher Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

Serach tells Yoav he cannot kill the people of the city nor can he kill Sheva as it is a complex situation to give him up. She tells him she was the 70th person who turned 69 people into a nation. She is *shlomei emunai Yisrael*. She knows we are responsible for each other. Yoav answers that Sheva rebelled against the king who is the heart of the nation, the unifying force that directs all of them to serve Hashem. Sheva is fighting against the

unity of the Jewish people and therefore he must be killed. Yoav tells Serach, "Give me Sheva and I will let the city live." Serach comes to the people and convinces them to kill Sheva and then Yoav leaves. Serach used the wisdom of Torah. She looked at the way Avraham negotiated with Hashem. When he wanted to save Sedom he started with 50 righteous people. She told the people that Yoav only wanted to kill 1000 people. Then she lowered the number until she said he only

wants Sheva. They agreed to kill him and peace was restored.

Serach asked Yoav, "Will you destroy this *ir v'eim b'Yisrael*, center of Jewish life?" The commentators explain that she was referring to herself. Will you destroy a whole city and a woman who is an *em b'Yisrael*. A mother is someone who is compassionate and cares about her children. She sees the city in danger

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and tries to save it. She harbors hope for her children and helps plan their future so that they will succeed. She sees things from the beginning. She saw the pilgrimage down to Egypt and the Exodus. She saw the first *Beit Hamikdash* built and destroyed, the exile to Bavel, and Hashem's plan for the Jews' continued existence. Serach's aim was to create peace and nurture *emunah*, to give the people hope for the future, to show they can define how their future will look by how they behave. She offers the right Torah outlook and where there's danger she makes sure to bring what she got from Moshe firsthand to Yoav to stop him from destroying the city.

The Amora, Rabbi Yochanan lived in Israel in the year 280 CE after the destruction of the second *Beit Hamikdash*. He was sitting in the

beit hamidrash reading the Chumash explaining what happened at the splitting of the Yam Suf. Chazal tell us there were two walls. The water stopped and accumulated on top and the Jews walked across dry land. Rabbi Yochanan described that the waters were like a wall on both sides. When he said it was like a layer he meant to say the waters looked opaque. There was so much water on top of each other you couldn't see through. Suddenly Serach, who was already buried in Bavel, appeared. She said, "I will give you firsthand testimony. The water was not opaque. It was transparent like a glass pane that lets the light come through. Why did Serach have to appear and why was this so important to know? When the Jewish people crossed the *Yam Suf* each tribe had a path with two walls specifically for them. When we speak about *chomot* we speak

about many. Did one tribe see the other? Rav Yochanan claimed no, it was opaque. But Serach appeared to teach us that it was transparent although each tribe had its own path. This was after the second *churban* which happened because of hatred in vain. On their level of greatness, everyone just saw himself. The redemption will come if we see others and their unique path. Each must contribute to the nation what is unique to them. But it's like pieces of a puzzle. Altogether they create the whole picture but each piece is concerned that the other pieces should be in the right place. Otherwise their part is meaningless. We are each unique and special in our own way, but the goal is to live in harmony with all of *Klal Yisrael*. That is the key that will ultimately bring Mashiach.

Agonut Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dayan Shlomo Cohen

According to *halacha*, a get has to be given willingly. There is a very fine line between pressuring a husband and not getting into a situation where the get is considered having been given under duress. Only respected, experienced, Rabbis can decide that. In Israel, there is no separation between religion and state. All laws of marriage and divorce are dealt with by the religious courts. If a *beit din* in Israel has decided that a couple must divorce, they have the power to force the husband to divorce his wife. If he refuses, they can take away his driver's license, government aid, government job, and passport. He can eventually end up in prison until he gives a get. Outside Israel, because of the separation of religion and state it can be more difficult. In England, the courts are very cooperative with the *beit din* and they do use sanctions to force a husband to give a get. In the U.S., there's less cooperation and it's more of a problem there to force the husband to give a get.

Recently it has become more accepted for couples to sign a prenuptial agreement. Each side obligates themselves that in the event they need to divorce, they will cooperate with giving a get within 30 days. For every month that goes by that one side is not cooperating, that side must pay a sum of money to the other side. The obligation to pay the money is an *asmachta*. If something happens in the future, one is obligating oneself to pay. This is not like a normal condition which says- "If I sell you something and then something happens, the contractual obligation becomes invalid." An *asmachta* says, if something happens in the future, then an obligation will be created. There is a problem of *gemirat daat*, if a definite decision was made that one is prepared to take upon oneself this obligation. Therefore, in order that the agreement should be valid, it should include a *siluk asmachta* to prevent the problem of an *asmachta*. This proves that both sides have a definite intention to obligate themselves, although it's a future obligation. The agreement is worded that it was agreed in

an important *beit din*. According to the Shulchan Aruch, this avoids the problems of the *asmachta*. Other opinions hold that there's no problem. It's a financial obligation meant to push the other side to give a get. It's something that both parties obligate themselves to do as they realize it's an important thing. Therefore, even if one didn't do the *siluk asmachta*, there are opinions that hold that it's still valid.

The main problem of *aguna* is when the husband is missing and there's no dead body or any other evidence to know what happened to him. Where the body is unrecognizable, DNA on its own is not proof enough that the husband is dead because of shortcomings in the identification process. The *beit din* will need to know the quality of the sample taken and the probability that there is a 98% match. According to that, they will then render a decision. Very often the *batei dinim* will use DNA together with other evidence to help solve the problem of the *aguna*.