

## Enhancing Exuberance

משונכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה

“From the arrival of the month  
of Adar we increase joy.”

This well-known saying of Chazal seems to be the linchpin for all our Purim festivities. What is the essence of this joy, and how can we keep it going?

The *simcha* of Jews is inherently different from the *simcha* of the rest of the world. When other nationalities celebrate, a business success or victory for example, eating and drinking pretty much completes their celebration. For Jews, however, celebration means understanding G-d’s role in the victory, and instituting rituals and laws that will cement this understanding and joy for all generations.

While every one of our holidays includes specific *mitzvot*, there is a difference between the *mitzvot* of Purim and those of other holidays. Yes, we are required to take a *lulav* and *etrog* on Sukkot, and we are required to eat *matzah* on Pesach, but these *mitzvot* do not define the day. And although we are commanded to rejoice on our holidays, that rejoicing does not connote their essence. In contrast, Purim is defined by rejoicing. We are commanded to make the day itself a day of rejoicing.

In that respect, we are to make it a day of rejoicing for all, not just for ourselves. We are to embrace members of our community, especially those on the fringes who may feel downtrodden or lonely, by including them in our *mishloach manot*. We are to give joy to the poor, the orphan, the widow who may not have the wherewithal to buy

delicacies on Purim, or perhaps even to pay for necessities, by giving them gifts and dignity. We create more joy by giving to the poor than by creating very elaborate *mishloach manot* baskets to share our friendship with others. *Simcha* is about making other people happy.

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There are actually two parallel motifs in the Purim tapestry. We certainly have the motif of reestablishing our relationship with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* as we accepted the Torah anew. But we also have the motif of establishing and cementing relationships between each other, and the Rambam maintains the interpersonal motif is primary. When one rejoices, one does it with others. When one brought the *chagigah* offering to the *Mikdash* on *yom tov*, he was enjoined from eating it alone. He was commanded to invite the poor and the orphans to share the meal with him. In this way, he would emulate *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* Who brings life to the downtrodden and unfortunate.

How is Purim meant to be a day on

which we should resemble the *Shechina*? Further, how can we compare Purim to Yom KiPur(im)? On Yom Kippur we resemble angels who neither eat nor drink, but on Purim we are even greater than angels since we are acting in ways similar to G-d’s presence and bringing *simcha* to others.

Since we are created in the image of G-d and are told to emulate G-d, we, like G-d, will want to give. Giving fills one with happiness as it fills others with happiness and fulfills our mission here on earth.

Nevertheless, we are physical bodies as well as spiritual beings. There is a constant conflict between one’s egocentricity and one’s care for others. The body is about me, while the soul is about giving to others. But on Purim, the body and soul work together, as the body also recognizes that the greatest joy is in giving to others. On Purim we chose to accept the Torah out of love, we chose to emulate *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* and be like Him, to be givers and to make others happy. On Purim, we should be filled with and reflect joy both when we give and when we receive *mishloach manot*. Our focus should be on making others happy.

Which is largely true the rest of the year as well.

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