

THE WEISS EDITION

Light
points

FROM THE TEACHINGS OF
THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE ON
THE JEWISH FESTIVALS

PURIM

משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה

“From when Adar arrives, joy is increased.”

Taanis 29a | תענית כט, א

Adar: A Reason to Celebrate

The entire month of Adar is a season of joy and good fortune—so much so that our Sages¹ encourage scheduling any upcoming litigation with a non-Jew for the month of Adar, as the entire month is a favorable time for the Jewish people.

But celebrating from the very beginning of the month, “when Adar arrives,” seems somewhat premature. After all, the victory over our enemies only took place on the 13th of the month, meaning that for the first twelve days of Adar the Jews remained at great risk of decimation! Conversely, if the celebration is due to Achashverosh granting the Jews permission to defend themselves, that happened nine months earlier; the start of Adar marked no significant change in their status. So how does the Talmud deduce that the *entire* month is a time of joy and good fortune?

In addition to Purim, however, another important event impacted the entire month of Adar—the birth of Moshe Rabbeinu. When Haman was drawing lots to determine a date for his plot to annihilate the Jews, he rejoiced when the lot fell on the month of Adar, saying, “The lot has fallen for me on the month in which Moshe died.” What Haman did not know, says the Talmud, is that Moshe was also born in the month of Adar.²

1. Taanis, 29a.

2. Megillah 13b.

Moshe's birth on the 7th of Adar thus gave rise not only to the Redemption from Egypt that he personally led, but also to the miraculous salvation of the Jews in Persia, which the Talmud says was due to the "chance" occurrence of Haman's plot in the same *month* as Moshe's birth. It is not only the Purim miracle on the 13th and 14th of Adar that makes the month special; it is—more so—Moshe's birth on the 7th. And according to the Talmud, Moshe's birth makes *every* day of the month "propitious for miracles," rendering every single day of Adar celebratory.

—*Likutei Sichos, vol. 16, pp. 345-347*

עֲלֵינוּ קָרְאוּ לַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה פּוּרִים עֲלֵי־שֵׁם הַפּוּר

“For that reason, these days were named Purim, after the pur.”

אסתר ט, כו | Esther 9:26

Say It in Persian

The joy of Purim reflects the extraordinary miracle in which G-d saved His people from the signed and sealed plans of a powerful tyrant.

Considering the exalted nature of the holiday, it is surprising that its name, unlike those of all other holy days on the Jewish calendar, is not taken from the Hebrew language, but from Persian. As the Book of Esther³ explains, “A *pur* is a *goral*, lottery,” hence the holiday is named for the lots that Haman drew to determine a date for the mass annihilation. But why not use the Hebrew word, *goral*, instead?

One of the most telling features of the Purim story is Mordechai’s and Esther’s order of priorities when it came to saving the Jews. First and foremost, they roused the community to repent, declaring days of fasting and contrition. Only then did Esther use her charm to plead her people’s case before her husband, the king.

In doing so, Mordechai and Esther demonstrated that even in the natural world, it is G-d Who truly moves the pieces. The efforts to secure a mortal king’s favor were a mere front for the *real* action taking place behind the scenes—the efforts

3. Esther 3:7.

to re-spark the Jews' commitment to G-d, and to evoke His favor, forgiveness, and deliverance.

The same is true in all of a Jew's endeavors. Purim teaches us that if we prioritize securing G-d's supernatural assistance through prayer and observance of the Torah's Divine commands, we can rest assured that our efforts in the natural realm will be blessed, without subjecting ourselves to undue anxiety and excessive toil and risk.

The name of the holiday is therefore taken from a secular language, and not from Hebrew, the Holy Tongue, to underscore that the lesson from Purim applies not only to matters related to Judaism and holiness, but even to the most mundane and material. Even if the parties involved are not all Jewish and are not associated with the Torah and its language, all the cards are in G-d's hands and utterly beyond nature's control.

-Likutei Sichos, vol. 6, pp. 189-195

שֶׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה

“One hundred and twenty-seven provinces.”

Esther 1:1 | אסתר א, א

127 Varieties

In the story of Purim, the miraculous salvation of the Jewish people came about through Queen Esther, who ruled 127 provinces. The Midrash asks, “Why would Esther merit to rule over 127 provinces?” and answers, “As Esther was the granddaughter of Sarah, who lived 127 years, let her come and rule over 127 provinces.”¹

The correlation between Sarah and Esther is not merely a numeric parallel; the matching numbers indicate a connection between Sarah’s life and the miracle of Purim.

After reading that “the life of Sarah was 100 years and 20 years and seven years,” Rashi wonders why it is necessary to recap that “these were the years of the life of Sarah.”² He concludes that this phrase comes to summarize all 127 years, indicating, “They were all equally good.”

Now, no person’s life is unmarked by change, yet remarkably, the Torah attests to Sarah’s having experienced all 127 years of her life as equally good.

When we encounter the same number, 127, in the Book of Esther, the Midrash understands that this serves to draw our attention to Sarah’s life. During the Persian exile, the Jewish people lived scattered across 127 different lands. Each place was unique in culture, language, and character. Inevitably,

1. Bereishis Rabbah 58:3.

2. Bereishis 23:1.

outside of their Torah observance, the lifestyles of the Jews in these diverse locations varied tremendously, yet when the decree of annihilation reached each province, not a single one considered the option to renounce his or her Judaism and be spared!³

Like Sarah's 127 years that were astonishingly "all equally good," the Jews of 127 different "varieties" were identical in their steadfast belief and devotion to G-d. They therefore merited the miracle of Purim, when, "the granddaughter of Sarah" would "come and rule over 127 provinces."

—*Sichos Kodesh 5730, vol. 1, pp. 638-639*

3. Torah Ohr 91b.

חור כרפס ותכלת אחוז בתכלי בוץ וארגמן על גילי כסף
ועמודי ישי מטות זהב וכסף על הצפת בהט ויש נדר וסחרת

“White, green, and blue fabrics, embroidered with cords of linen and purple wool, were draped on silver rods and marble pillars. There were couches of gold and silver on a pavement of green, white, shell, and onyx marble.”

אסתר א, ו | Esther 1:6

Party Like It's 366 BCE

The Megillah recounts Achashverosh's excessive partying as a prelude to the salvation of the Jews through Esther. After months of revelry, when “the king's heart was merry with wine,” he summoned Queen Vashti to appear before him. Her refusal resulted in her death and paved the way for Esther to take her place.

Even so, the Megillah's elaborate description of these feasts seems entirely unnecessary, if not misplaced, in this holy tome. Is it really necessary to read, in exhaustive detail, every year, about the food, drink and décor of Achashverosh's perpetual partying?

Evidently, his knack for hosting contains an important and relevant message for us.

After three years as king, Achashverosh felt that his authority was well-established and the time was ripe to properly celebrate his rise to the throne of the greatest empire in the world. Eager to demonstrate his confidence in his crown, Achashverosh invited all his subjects to partake in extravagant affairs, the likes of which could be hosted by

no one other than a ruler of 127 lands. A feast of any lesser proportion, even if well beyond any other living person's means or capabilities, simply wouldn't convey the full extent of his power and wealth.

This teaches an important lesson about measuring success. Success in your Divine mission in this world cannot be defined by a job well done, nor can it be measured in comparison to the achievements of others. Rather, as Achashverosh taught, you can't call it a success until you have maximized the potential that G-d has given you to the absolute fullest! Only when you have benefitted as many people as you can possibly reach, and have made the greatest impact on the world that you—and only you—can make, can your “heart be merry,” having truly succeeded in the mission G-d has entrusted to you.

—Sichos Kodesh 5733, vol. 1, pp. 410-414

לְךָ כְּנֹס אֶת־כָּל־הַיְהוּדִים הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוּשַׁן וְצוּמוּ עָלַי וְאֶל־תֹּאמְלוּ
 וְאֶל־תִּשְׁתּוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים לֶלֶה וַיּוֹם גַּם־אֲנִי וְנַעֲרֹתַי אֲצִום בֵּין
 וּבֵין אָבוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־כִדַּת וּכְאֲשֶׁר אֶבְדַּתִּי אֶבְדַּתִּי:

“Go, assemble all the Jews who live in Shushan, and fast on my behalf; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maidens will observe the same fast. Then I shall go to the king, though it is contrary to the law; and if I am to perish, I shall perish!”

Esther 4:16 | אֶסְתֵּר ד, טז

It's Not About Politics

The Jewish nation faced a threat of annihilation. At that time, Mordechai, their leader, occupied a prominent position in the government¹ and the beautiful and beloved queen of the land was Esther, also a Jew. In addition, Mordechai had once saved Achashverosh's life, for which the king was deeply indebted to him. Nevertheless, neither Mordechai nor Esther considered using diplomacy as their first course of action.

Mordechai's primary response to the news of the decree was to don clothes of mourning, and to rouse the Jewish people to repent for their wrongful participation in King Achashverosh's feast. He turned to Esther for help only after he had successfully rallied the Jews to repentance.

Esther, in turn, called for the entire nation to observe three days of penitential fasting before she would approach the king and plead on their behalf. Esther herself participated in those fasts, despite the negative impact that not eating

1. Esther 2:19.

for three days would likely have on her appearance when she would present herself before the king.

Both Mordechai and Esther were certain that the physical threat facing the Jews was not merely a change in political tides which might be undone through the natural means at their disposal. Rather, they recognized that a threat to the Jewish people reflects, first and foremost, a need to strengthen the nation's Torah observance, particularly in areas they may have struggled with. Once the spiritual shortcomings that brought about the threat were repaired through sincere repentance, the mortal danger that the Jews faced would certainly be removed as well—via whichever conventional means they would employ.

—*Likutei Sichos, vol. 6, pp. 191-193*

לעילוי נשמת
הרה"ת יצחק יעקב בן ר' משה ע"ה
סיימאן
נלב"ע ד' אדר א' התשע"ט
תנצב"ה

*

נדפס ע"י חתנו ובתו
הרה"ת שמואל זאנוויל וזוגתו מרת צירל שיחיו
גאלדמאן