

The Day of Liberation **By Rabbi Pinchos Lipschutz**

If you would want to describe the Yom Tov we celebrated this week in one word, what would it be?

I would say liberation.

Purim is the day of liberation, because that is what it does: it liberates us from the things we are regularly forced to do, whether because of financial considerations or those of a social variety.

On Purim, it's all different. Yes, of course we behave appropriately at home and in shul and don't – or shouldn't – run around making fools of ourselves and a chillul Hashem. But we are freed from obligations that, while they keep us and the world going around, are not always enjoyable.

We celebrate Mordechai, who the Megillah describes as a Yehudi, and we do so by behaving as Yehudim, observing the Torah and mitzvos as we run around celebrating.

I am fortunate enough to live in Lakewood, NJ, and on Purim night I was at the Bais Medrash Govoah Bais Aron Bais Medrash where the yeshiva's large mesibah took place. On the way out, at 2:30 a.m., I passed through one of the side botei medrash and saw hundreds of people sitting there, lost in concentration as they were learning with their chavrusos.

What I saw inside the large bais medrash watching thousands celebrate the neis Purim caused my heart to pump with extra Yiddishe pride, but seeing that side bais medrash pulsating with Torah was a reminder of what being a Yid is all about. It was a realization of why the neis was made back in Shushan, a realization of the ancient promise of “netzach Yisroel lo yeshaker.” Why don't we say Hallel on Purim? Besides for the other reasons, it is because living a Yehudi life is the greatest expression to Hakadosh Boruch Hu, who saved us then and provides for us every minute of every day.

People who mock us and our way of life would do themselves well to visit Lakewood, or any Torah community, on Purim, or any day of the year for that matter, and see the joy and satisfaction everywhere. They would see the camaraderie and be astounded by the amount of tzedakah that is given by generous Jews and collected by humble volunteers. There is no other community in the world that gives as much charity as the Torah community, and there is no day that generates as much giving as Purim. It is a day of sharing and caring, of love and devotion. It is a day that brings out the best in our people.

On Purim, we put aside our regular daily considerations and responsibilities and spend the day reveling in the joy. We mask our everyday preoccupations and concerns. The four mitzvos of Purim, including simcha and mishteh, take precedence over everything. The simcha shines from

each face you encounter. Whatever covers the Yehudi characteristics and middos the rest of the year is peeled back on Purim and the inner goodness shines through.

This is brought about because Purim teaches us a supreme lesson about life. As we read the Megillah, we see how a hopeless situation is alleviated. We see that the feast that caused the catastrophe gave birth to the salvation that they all enjoyed.

Apparently, the people of Shushan were like the people of today. They read and followed the news and viewed everything that was going on through the eyes of the media. One day there were big headlines, as there are today, that the Jews are neither loyal nor subservient to the wishes of the person considered the most powerful man in the world. They read that the secretary of state delivered a speech against them, warning them that if they refrained from bowing to him and his wishes and commands, there would stiff penalties and punishments. With time, the threats were ramped up and they were all threatened with death. The threat was serious, as the Jews feared for their lives.

Those who saw things through the media mentality blamed the mess on Mordechai and his obstinate refusal to play the game and do as the administration wanted. They were unhappy with the old-fashioned Yehudi who wouldn't bend. But as the story played out, they realized that it was in the zechus of Mordechai and listening to his eitzos that they were saved.

As the people davened and repented, they realized that things were not as they appeared and certainly not as they were reported. They recognized that there was more to the events in the kingdom than their eyes could see. As they began appreciating that everything that happened was coming from Hashem, things started turning around and, eventually, they triumphed over the evil ones who sought their destruction.

Life gets complicated, especially when we forget that everything is coming from Hashem.

The Megillah ends with the words, "Vedover shalom lechol zaro – Mordechai spoke peace to all of his children."

Rav Yisroel Eliyohu Weintraub explains in his sefer that in life, there are ups and downs. There are times of great elation and success and there are others of depression and loss.

People who don't recognize that everything that happens is from Hashem have mood swings. When things appear to be going well for them, they are happy, and when things don't look so good, they are sad. Their mood on any given day depends on the news, or the doctor, or their job, or their business, or their spouse, children and parents.

But when a person finishes reading the Megillah, he sees that although Hashem is hidden and His name doesn't appear at all in the entire Megillah, it is evident that He was everywhere, pulling the strings of His human puppets. Nothing happened randomly, and nothing that happened did so for the reasons the media and most of the world thought.

A person then recognizes that in his personal life as well as in life in general, nothing happens arbitrarily. His product selling or not selling, the beds in homes filling up or sitting empty, a grumpy spouse, or a tough teacher are not that way just because. These things happen because Hashem causes them to happen for deeper and longer-lasting purposes than we can ever perceive.

The person is then at ease. His life is no longer a series of ups and downs, because he has learned that if he follows the word of Hashem, life is a constant up and everything that happens to him occurs for a good reason.

He is at peace no matter what is going on.

When a person understands that he is with Hashem and under His control, then not only is he at peace with himself, but because he is, he can develop proper middos, study and grow in Torah, and learn to love every Jew.

In the time of Shushan, their teshuvah brought Klal Yisroel closer to Hashem, which gave them the ability to appreciate all that He was doing for them. That enabled them to learn and appreciate Torah, which in turn brought about a tremendous achdus. When they were together, me'uchodim, they merited their redemption.

Therefore, Chazal gifted us with the Yom Tov of Purim and fortified it with four mitzvos that bring us together b'achdus, so that we, too, can merit being redeemed. The mitzvos are only on that day, but their impact on us can last throughout the year.

When things don't feel right and we start getting down; when we worry about the nations of the world and their antagonism towards us; when we have fears, pressures, or challenges; remember the Jews of Shushan. Remember the Megillah and how you felt on Purim. It's not a cliché. It's real.

If you enjoyed Purim – and who doesn't? – take the lessons of the day to heart so that every day of the year we can be b'shalom, at peace, appreciating what Hashem has given us as we joyfully await the ultimate redemption soon in our day.