

TORAS AVIGDOR

AUTHENTIC TORAH THOUGHT FOR LIFE

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

PURIM

WITH

RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

CONTENTS

Start With a Drink - 1 | Purim Memories - 2 | Sleeping Instead of Drinking - 3
Transformed by Haman - 3 | The Main Lesson of Purim - 4 | Nuclear Nissim - 5
The Mitzvos of Purim - 6 | From 'Pur' to Purim - 7 | Jewish Self Defense - 9 | Achashveirosh
and Eisav - 10 | Achashveirosh and Esther - 10 | Purim on Friday - 11 | Post Purim - 12

Start With a Drink

— Q: —

What should be our attitude towards those who become *shikur* on Purim?

— A: —

When a person becomes very intoxicated so he is already *b'geder beheima*, he's in the category of an animal, and that's no praise for him at all. We have to know that the purpose of our lives is to acquire *da'as*, not to lose *da'as*.

However, sometimes in order to raise the airplane off the ground, you have to put high octane fuel into the tank to help get liftoff. And therefore, in order to make yourself more enthusiastic it's the proper thing – there's nothing wrong with imbibing a certain amount. But to get out of control, that's a mistake. It's not a *kiddush Hashem*; you make yourself look disgusting. No, I don't approve of that; it's very wrong – very wrong.

And therefore, although there's a mitzvah on Purim of *nichnas yayin yatza sod*, but you have to be very careful that *nichnas yayin*, the wine

should come in to you, and *yatza sod*, and the secret of the Jew comes out. That's the only thing that should be coming out. **ל** is *gematria* seventy, and **סוד** is also *gematria* seventy. So the seventy of wine comes in and it pushes out the secret that the Jew keeps inside him.

The Jew has in his *neshama* a love of Hashem, only that he's too bashful to talk about it. He's enthusiastic for the Torah and *mitzvos* but he's embarrassed to show it. But when the wine comes in, so the truth comes out and it shows his real *pnimiyus*. When he's a little bit intoxicated the Jew shows the real enthusiasm that he possesses, things that he never showed before.

So therefore, Purim is a great opportunity for people to demonstrate their loyalty to the Torah, their *emunah* in Hakadosh Baruch Hu that He's protecting us at all times, and that eventually we will conquer, that we will outlive all of our enemies just like we outlived Haman. All this and much more we can demonstrate on Purim; and we are able to do it when we elicit from within us the greatness of which we are capable. We have it in

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ourselves! And a little bit of *mashkeh* helps out, no question about it.

March 1992

Purim Memories

— Q: —

Can you describe Purim in Slabodka?

— A: —

On Purim it was a *minhag* of the *bnei hayeshiva* to go to all the *roshei yeshiva* and *menahalim* of the *yeshiva*. We went to the homes of the *roshei yeshiva* and to the *mashgiach* and we went to all the important people of the *yeshiva*. And these two *rebbe*s of mine were different in the way they behaved on Purim. Pay attention, because the ways of *tzaddikim* we have to learn; both of them are ways in *avodas Hashem*.

One *rebbe* – I won't tell names – when he sat at the head of the table and the *yeshiva* people were dancing around the table, he was watching to see who was a little wild, and those were the ones he gave wine or a glass of schnapps to. He poured fuel on the fire in order it should burn more brightly!

The other *rebbe* was an old *misnaged* type; a cold *misnaged*. When we were dancing around his table, he looked at the boys suspiciously to see if somebody was *ungeshikert*, intoxicated, and anyone who was drunk and a little wild, his face turned unhappy and sour. That was the other *rebbe*.

Now, which *rebbe* I followed you can understand yourself.

And this *rebbe* said two separate *schmoozen*. One *schmooze* was that you shouldn't get drunk on Purim; you should drink but don't get drunk. Because *gedolah deiah* – how great it is to have *daas*! It means Awareness of Hashem. It's always good to have *daas*. You drink *עד ולא ידע* – until you

don't know. *עד ולא ידע* means *בכלל עד*; it means just before you lose your *deiah*, that's when you stop. You should drink *עד ולא ידע* – until you don't know. When you reach that stage, you're *yotzei* already the *mitzvah*. More than that – stop. That was one *schmooze*; that whatever you do, you shouldn't lose your *deiah* on Purim.

Because Purim is a time of *deiah*; Purim is time to gain *Daas Hashem*, Awareness of Hashem. *נודע* *ה' משפט עשה; בפעל בפיו נוקש רשע* – Hashem becomes known when He does justice; when the wicked is ensnared in the work of his hands (Tehillim 9:17). So when Haman was hung on the same *eitz* that he made for Mordechai, it was *בפעל בפיו* – it was the work of his own hands, *נוקש רשע* – that ensnared the wicked one; and that's when *נודע ה'* – that's when you get *daas Hashem* awareness of Hashem. That's when you get real *emunah*. When you see that *בור כרה ויחפרהו, ויפל בשחת יפעל* – the wicked falls into the same pit that he himself made for somebody else (*ibid.* 7:16), that's an opportunity for people to get *daas* of Hashem.

So Purim is a time to recognize Hakadosh Baruch Hu from what happened on Purim and to be *mefarseim* the *neis*, to publicize what Hashem did for us. And therefore Purim is not a time to lose your *deiah*, no. On Purim you have to have *deiah*, you have to acquire *deiah*. Only you drink up till then, as we said before, in order to get more *hislahavus* in *deiah*; more enthusiasm in this knowledge of Hashem.

However, the other time we went to him he said as follows: Since Purim is a time for *deiah*, therefore we have to know that there's a rule that the *Mesillas Yescharim* teaches us. *החיצוניות מעוררת את הפנימיות* – The outward acts of a person awaken up the inner thoughts. By doing certain outward actions, you stimulate your inner *machshovos*, your emotions.

“Therefore,” he said, “on Purim when we dance” – we were dancing around his table – “every stamp you make on the floor” – the floor was shaking from that – “every stamp you make, you have to know that you’re stamping *emunah* into your *neshama*.”

Don’t think it’s not so! You may be thinking also of a good time; why not? You like the exhilaration of dancing; you can let go on Purim. But if you’re doing it with a little bit of ‘*isheim Shamayim*, you have to know that you’re imprinting *emunah* onto your *neshama*. That’s what you’re doing. “Every klop that you knock with your foot,” he told us, “you’re knocking the *emunah* into your *neshama* more clearly.”

From the Rav’s Purim Mesiba, תשמ”ה,
March 7th 1985

Sleeping Instead of Drinking

— Q: —

The Rama says if you can’t drink wine you should go to sleep; what’s the *p’shat*?

— A: —

If you can’t drink wine, you should demonstrate some other form of *simcha*. Sleeping is a *simcha* too, yes. It doesn’t mean you should sleep all day long. If you can’t drink wine, you can also open Gemara, why not? That’s also a *simcha*. And if they don’t let you learn in the house, go to the public library with your Gemara. Sit in the public library and learn Gemara. Nobody will bother you there, I can guarantee you that.

March 2001

Transformed by Haman

— Q: —

The Gemara (Shabbos 88a) says that when the Am Yisroel experienced the *neis* of Purim, so קיימו מה שקבלו בְּבָר – they accepted the whole

Torah again only this time it was accepted willingly (Shabbos 88a). Does that mean that the generation in the time of Mordechai actually became better than our forefathers were at Matan Torah?

— A: —

The answer is no.

But you have to understand that the difference is as follows: There is no question that the generation of Matan Torah was far superior to any generation that ever existed – don’t make any mistake about that. The generation that went out of Mitzrayim was the best generation that ever lived. Moshe Rabbeinu had a tremendous influence on them and so did Aharon. And Miriam was the teacher of the women and בְּזִכּוֹת נָשִׁים – the women were very great in Mitzrayim.

And so when we went out of Mitzrayim, it was a generation that knew Hashem! They were the Dor Deiah – what they learned when they saw the *makkos* transformed their minds; they became so elevated. וַיִּירָאוּ הָעָם אֶת ה' – They feared Hashem. וַיֵּאֱמִינוּ בֹה' – They had full belief in Hashem, וּבְמֹשֶׁה – and in His servant Moshe (Shemos 14:31).

And at Har Sinai they were so elevated that רֹבָם מִגִּיעִים אֶל הַנְּבוּאָה – most of them became *Neviim* at that moment when they heard Word of Hashem (Kuzari 1:109). We have no concept of the greatness of that generation! It may seem like an exaggeration to you because you’ve been taught in *cheder* to despise that generation. וְהֵם לֹא יָדְעוּ. “וְדָרְכָי”, you say, “They didn’t know the ways of Hashem.” No. Don’t make any mistake about it; they were ones who knew *darkei Hashem* more than anyone. Only they were criticized because they should have known more according to their opportunities. But they were extremely great.

However, as great as they were, no experience in history equaled that of the Jews in the time of

The Main Lesson of Purim

— Q: —

The Rav spoke tonight about the lesson of Purim being the internalizing of how much Hashem loves us and our responsibility to love Him and to love the Am Yisroel. But isn't it possible to say that the Simchas Purim is because of קִיּוּמוֹ וְקִבְלוֹ, that the Jewish Nation accepted the Torah again after the witnessing the neis of Purim?

— A: —

I want to explain something to you. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 21b) says about Ezra Hasofer that רָאוי הָיָה עֶזְרָא שֶׁתִּתֵּן הַתּוֹרָה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל עַל יָדוֹ – he was big enough that the Torah could have been given to us through him.

I'll explain that. Ezra came along and he made a tremendous change in the Klal Yisroel. Before Ezra, you didn't have to daven Shachris, Mincha and Ma'ariv. You didn't have to make a *bracha* either; a בּוֹרָא פְּרִי הָעֵץ or הַמּוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ wasn't a requirement. Of course, people were *mispallel* to Hashem. And people thanked Him for the food, absolutely. But there was no *chiyuv* to daven three times a day or to make *brachos*. And *muktzeh* as well. Many types of *muktzeh* were permitted.

And Ezra came along with the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah and they made a whole list of *takanos Chachomim*. He changed the entire *tzura* of being a Jew. Ezra changed everything because he saw that with the Jews being in *golus*, they needed a סִיּוּג לַתּוֹרָה, a fence around the Torah; otherwise who knows what's going to happen to us. And so he made fences around the Torah. So Ezra actually came with a new Torah for Klal Yisroel. Now, it wasn't actually new. It's *ossur* to be *mosif*, to add on, but he made *issurei d'rabanan*. He said that it's all *mid'rabanan*, but it's a סִיּוּג, a fence, to protect the Torah – to protect the Am Yisroel.

Now, how could he get the Klal Yisroel to accept that? You think it's easy?! We're a stubborn

Haman because they were sentenced to certain death. That's a big difference. In Mitzrayim they weren't sentenced to death. “זָכְרָנוּ אֶת הַדָּגָה”, they said. It means they lived, they survived. It wasn't the very best form of existence, but they lived. But here, by Haman, they knew that imminent death was waiting for them. And there was no way out! אֵין לָהֶנְשִׁיב! You cannot turn back the king's decree. They were finished!

And therefore the change that took place in them was more fundamental – not because afterwards they became more pure and more noble than the generation that listened to Moshe Rabbeinu's words. No; the people who saw Moshe Rabbeinu were unequaled. But the transformation in the days of Haman was so immediate that nothing compared to it.

I'll give you a *mashal*. Let's say somebody lives a normal life and he lives with the rules of health; he eats properly, he exercises properly, he takes care of his body. So this man is a model of perfect health. Now suppose somebody else neglects his health and now he becomes deadly ill. And in order to save his life the physician gives him an injection of a very extreme medicine and he saves his life. Now he's back to life again! So the experience is unequaled; he was on the verge of death and now he was brought back to life. But in the end he is not healthier than the other party. The first one who lived a normal existence is much more sound in body than the second one.

And therefore although after the story of Purim our generation was rejuvenated – we had a shot, a real shot in the arm, and we were reborn – but in no way did we resemble the *dor* that received the Torah; no question about that.

March 1989

nation. And we're talking now about a tremendous change! How did Ezra succeed? And the answer is that Purim came along! The miracle of Purim came along and there was such a love for Hashem, that **קִיְמוּ וְקִבְּלוּ**, they accepted the Torah again. Not only did they accept the old Torah again, but they accepted it with such a willingness that they now took upon themselves all the new *takanos* of Ezra, to be *mekayeim* them too. So on Purim the *takanos* of Ezra were finally given the *chizuk* needed to remain with the Klal Yisroel forever.

So you're asking if we celebrate that? Absolutely we celebrate that. No question about it. But you have to know, that that's only *agav urcha*. That's not the main idea of Purim. That's not an open *possuk*. That idea of **קִיְמוּ וְקִבְּלוּ** is not the plain *pshat*. The *pshat* in that *possuk* doesn't mean that they accepted to fulfill the Torah. It's a good *drash* and it's true, but it's not the original *pshat* of the *possuk*.

And therefore the most important lesson of Purim is something else: that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is *ohev amo Yisroel*. That is the lesson of Purim! That Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves the Am Yisroel more than anything else, that's the main lesson of Purim! Other things, what you hear in other places, it's true also. Could be. But the main lesson of Purim is that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is *ohev amo Yisroel*.

Of course, as a result of that we're more loyal to Him. We're *mekabeil* to do everything now, because He saved us. Of course, that was a result of the *simcha* that we had when we saw how much He loves us. But the great lesson of Purim is just that. That He loves us.

And the lesson that we have to learn is that we have to love the Am Yisroel the same way Hakadosh Baruch Hu does. Hashem made a public demonstration on Purim. He demonstrated His love for us. And He wants us to follow His lesson

and love His people like He does. We love the Am Yisroel because Hashem loves the Am Yisroel. It's a way of us demonstrating our love for Hashem. And on Purim we have to start on our own, to fulfill what Hakadosh Baruch Hu showed us as an example by means of the *neis* of Purim.

March 2000

Nuclear Nissim

— Q: —

How are we really supposed to see the *neis* of Purim if it was a *neis nistar* that was hidden in the natural events?

— A: —

The answer is that sometimes a thing can be so startling that you just can't hide it. The American government is carrying out nuclear tests, nuclear explosions, and they're trying to hide it, but the scientists who have the proper instruments know what's going on, and they can tell you the details where it's going on and when. And your mind is your instrument. With a little bit of thought, you see the Hand of Hashem.

You can't hide certain things. And when Haman, who was the king's favorite, is now not only not a favorite, but he's wiped out – and not only that, but the one who took his place was the least likely person, so even the biggest dumbbell could guess Who is to blame for all this. **יוֹשֵׁב בְּשָׁמַיִם יִשְׁחַק** – The One Who dwells in heaven is laughing (Tehillim 2:4). Hakadosh Baruch Hu was playing the joke and everybody could see it.

And therefore **רָאוּ כָּל אֲפִסֵּי אֶרֶץ אֶת יְשׁוּעַת אֱלֹהֵינוּ** – All the ends of the world saw that it was a salvation from Hashem (*ibid.* 9:3). It was very clear to everyone. Only that if you don't put your mind to it, you don't see anything and you'll remain the same person you were last Purim, and the year before that, and the year before that. But the wise person will use his Purim to see how Hashem is

doing everything for the Am Yisroel, and he'll fall in love with Hashem. And therefore the person who is the same person on the day after Purim as he was the day before Purim, has wasted a tremendous opportunity.

March 1976

The Mitzvos of Purim

— Q: —

Why is there a mitzvah of mishloach manos and matanos l'evyonim on Purim?

— A: —

Good question.

On Purim the first thing we're celebrating is that we're happy that Hashem saved us in the times of Achashveirosh. And we're happy that He always will save us! That's *simchas Purim*! Purim means that we are a nation forever, that we are still celebrating 2500 years after it happened. We have to be excited about that, excited that we're still around, that we're the eternal people. We're forever and ever. וְיָמֵי הַפּוּרִים הָאֵלֶּה לֹא יַעֲבֹרוּ מִתּוֹךְ – *There will always be a Purim among the Yehudim; the memory of Purim will never go away from us* (Esther 9:28). Forever and ever there's going to be a Purim.

That's a tremendous statement because it means everything to us. It means that when you walk through the street and a goy says something to you, or maybe he'll even spit at you or throw a rock, it means nothing at all because you know in your heart that you're forever and he's going to go lost. He'll go lost; there's no question about it. That's the underlying *simcha*, that no matter how much *sinah* there will be, we're going to be forever. And so it's a *simcha* of gratitude to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, *ahavas Hashem*.

But for that we could have just a day of happiness; a day of reading the Megillas Esther and eating and drinking and dancing and thanking

Hakadosh Baruch Hu. But what's this business of מִשְׁלֹחַ מָנוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ וּמָתָנוֹת לְאֶבְיוֹנִים – *The sending of portions, every person to his fellow, and gifts to the poor* (Esther 9:22)? What's that have to do with Purim?

The answer is that there's another purpose to Purim besides *ahavas Hashem* and that's *ahavas Yisroel*. And the mitzvos of Purim are intended to encourage that. Chazal wanted us to make a special demonstration because בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר עוֹמְדִים עָלֵינוּ לְכַלּוֹתֵנוּ – *the gentiles will always rise up against us*. They'll always slander us and hate us. And therefore our Sages wanted us to counteract that attitude of the world. And that's one of the great functions of Purim: "I'm demonstrating that I love my fellow Jew. I'm giving you this as a demonstration of what's in my heart."

That's what Purim is for: אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ – *Each man to his friend*. Who is your friend? Everybody should be your friend. On Purim when you send gifts, it's because you're making friendship, you're increasing friendship. מִשְׁלֹחַ מָנוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ – *We send gifts to our fellow Jews to show them it's יְרֵעֵהוּ; you're my friend*.

So let's say you're going to bring *shalach manos* to a neighbor. So you go to his house and you see a little boy passing. You say, "Little boy, here's a quarter. I want you to take this *shalach manos* and give it to the people in the house."

If you want to, you can go to the door yourself too, only that some say you should do it with a messenger, that it's more *chashuv*, more important that way. You know, in the Gemara's times when a man was *mekadesh* a girl so he used to send *sivlonos*, gifts. But he didn't go himself; he sent it by means of a *shaliach*. It makes the gift more important. A messenger comes with a basket of fruit or with a bag of diamonds, whatever he gave her. You're showing that this person is so

important to you that you send it by means of a *shaliach*.

And so you can send the *shalach manos* with a messenger; but if you can show yourself, even better. So pay a little boy a quarter he should hand it over to your neighbor but let the neighbor see that you love him. Let him see that he's important to you.

So the little boy rings the bell and they come out and they'll see you. You can wave to them: "A *freilechen* Purim." They'll see that you gave the little boy the basket: "Oh you're the man? You came personally to give *shalach manos*. Ohh, thank you very much." That's *marbeh ahavah u'reus*. It's *marbeh* love among the Jews.

Matanos l'evyonim too. It doesn't say צְדָקָה לְאֶבְיוֹנִים, 'charity' to the poor; מַתָּנוֹת לְאֶבְיוֹנִים means 'gifts' to the poor. We're giving them gifts too. Only that the poor prefer *tzedakah*, money, rather than a little dishful of cake and *beblach*. They want money so we give them money. That's a sign of loving the poor people, giving them money. And if you'll say nice words to them too and honor them and make them feel good even better.

If you can invite poor people to your table, even better; not everybody has a home. Not only the poor; some people don't have a place to be on Purim for the *seudah*, for the happy festivities of the day. There are lonely Jews. So bring them into your home. Show them that you're with them, that we're the *Am Olam*, the Forever Nation, together.

"Oh," Hashem says "Now I see that you know how to utilize the day. That's why I gave you Purim; because Haman wanted to utilize Purim for the opposite, for a tremendous *sinah* against the *Am Hashem*, and you're going to utilize that same day for a tremendous *ahavah* to the *Am*

Hashem. וְנִתְפַּדְּ הוּא! That's the best way to utilize Purim."

March 2000

From 'Pur' to Purim

— Q: —

If Purim got its name עַל שֵׁם הַפּוּר, because of the lot that Haman cast, why isn't it called *Pur*, singular, instead of the plural *Purim*?

— A: —

Pur means a lot, the casting of lots. The Persians used to throw dice among themselves to find an auspicious date. So why Purim? The *yomtiv* should be *Pur*. That's the question.

The answer is Purim means two kinds of lots. One is the lot that Haman threw. And one is the lot that Hakadosh Baruch Hu threw; it means what He manipulated. Haman chose a date that was auspicious for him but Hakadosh Baruch Hu said, "That date is auspicious for Me too; this happens to be a good date for Me too. That's the date I want that the Jewish nation should sing forever and dance and drink a little bit and eat and remember what happened on that day!"

Now, what does that mean? It means this. It could have been *Pur*! Don't think that the whole thing was just a frame-up, just a show or an empty demonstration. It could've turned out like Haman wanted! It could've turned out like it turned out in Europe.

The truth is, it was also possible for it to be Purim in Europe. Only that in Europe there was no Mordechai. In Europe, the few Mordechais that were present were not able to talk. The press wasn't theirs. The newspapers didn't belong to them. The Jewish people didn't listen to their leaders anymore. The Jewish people listened to the misleaders. There were reform rabbis and socialists and extreme secular Zionists. They were the ones who led the Jewish people in

Europe. Did anybody raise the banner of *teshuva* in Europe? Maybe somebody, a *rebbe* in his *shtiebel* somewhere, but nobody saw it. There was no call to the national conscience of the Jewish people to do *teshuva* and that's why it didn't turn out Purim; it turned out to be a *pur*.

But here it says *וּמֶרְדֵּכַי יָדַע אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר נִעְשָׂה* – Mordechai knew all that was taking place (Esther 4:1). And the Chachomim (see Rashi) say he knew why it was taking place. Mordechai understood that they were getting a little too close to the gentile. “You’re fraternizing with gentiles! You see that in the Persian Empire you have full equality and you’re forgetting that your destiny is to be separate. Oh, if that’s the case then you better change your ways.”

And so Mordechai gathered them all together for three days and they wept and prayed; they didn’t eat or drink for three days. Try that! Try it sometime, just for fun. They did it!

And then when they were saved they accepted the Torah all over again from the bottom of their hearts without reservations. Ah! The Pur changed into Purim – there were two faces to that Purim. Oh yes, it was a chosen date, but instead of being what Haman wanted, it turned out to be what Hakadosh Baruch Hu wanted. That’s why it’s called Purim, *על שם הפור*.

But unfortunately, in Europe there was no Mordechai and there wasn’t a Purim. It was nothing but a *pur*. And a very poor kind of a *pur* it turned out to be.

We have to learn from that. Oy, it could’ve been another Purim. Hitler you know finally was burned. I remember the day Hitler was burned. It was splashed all over the world. His picture was on the front page and the Yiddish newspapers said *א. שיינע ריינע כפרה*. It was a big headline: *א. שיינע ריינע כפרה*. You know what that means? “An atonement for the Jewish people.” But it’s a big

pity it was so late. If they had done what they were supposed to do, it could have been different. The Jewish people had always listened to the Torah leaders. But now – if only they hadn’t accepted Stephen Wise, *yemach shemo*, a *rasha merusha*, as the leader of American Jewry. There have been terrible stories reported about him, terrible. That’s the leader of the Jewish people in America!

That was the ‘Mordechai’, *l’havdil*, the American Jews chose. He was the one who had the ear of the President and all the Jews of America listened to him when he broadcast on the radio. So with such a leader, he changed the Purim into *pur*.

And in Europe who were the leaders? The Bundists. The Socialist were the leaders. Atheists were the leaders. The *rabbanim* and the *roshei yeshiva* didn’t have a word. Nobody listened to them and that’s why in Europe it turned into *pur*.

And that’s one of the great lessons of Purim! We have to remember why this Purim turned into Purim. It was because we had Mordechai! We had Esther too! Esther was very important in this. It was Esther’s idea to fast three days and to do *teshuva*!

And therefore our success on Purim is if we’ll dance and sing this and we’ll also give money to the poor; poor *bnei Torah*, poor *lomdim* in Yerushalayim or elsewhere, and we’ll invite them to our tables wherever we can and we’ll talk about this great lesson that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is running the world and there’s nothing of chaos in our history. It’s all purposeful and it’s all connected from the beginning till *אחרית הימים*. We have to learn that and stick to the chain. And any Jew who tries to break away from that chain will go lost. Only *אתם הדבקים בשם אלקיכם חיים בלכם היום*.

February 1978

Jewish Self Defense

— Q: —

I want to ask a question about Purim. It says in the Megillah that Achashveirosh gave the Jews the right to defend themselves again. And I would like to know, what would have happened if he didn't give this right? Wouldn't they try to defend themselves anyway somehow?

— A: —

When Achashveirosh gave them the right to defend themselves it meant that the authorities in the cities, the garrison, the soldiers in every city, should not interfere with the Jews self defense. Because otherwise, throughout history when Jews defend themselves, they are considered criminals. That's how it is in the eyes of the *goyim*. If we defend ourselves against the *goyim* who attack us, they say that we're making a pogrom. And so whenever Jews try to protect themselves, then the authorities interfere and try to repress the Jews.

That's what happened in Alexandria of Egypt when the Jews tried to defend themselves, the Roman governor sent his legions and then they massacred the entire Jewish populace.

Wherever Jews try to protect themselves, it's considered a big crime; Jews are not supposed to defend themselves. Not long ago the New York Times was complaining that the Jews whenever they have a chance, they make pogroms against the *goyim*. The writer mentioned that in the times of Haman the Jews made a pogrom on the *goyim*, and he was upset that the Jews were doing it again, now in Williamsburg instead of Shushan.

What was the story? A homeless man, a bum with a razor blade, was in an elevator in Williamsburg and he gashed a Jew's face and took away his wallet. So the Williamsburg Jews are not fools. They couldn't appeal to the police; the police wouldn't do anything. So one of the Jews

who saw what happened ran after this homeless man and while he was running he called for help. "*Chaptzem!* Catch him!" He put out the Williamsburg call for reinforcements.

You know, Williamsburg is not West Orange; they have big families in Williamsburg, and so all of a sudden the windows and doors of the apartment buildings open up and there are *chassidim* pouring out from everywhere into the streets. A deluge of human beings; some are putting on their pants, putting on their coats, running out into the streets and they're ready for business. And when they caught this *shaigetz* they gave him the special *chaptzem* treatment. He had to go to the hospital.

So how did our good friends of the Jewish people report it in the New York Times? Headline: *Homeless Man Attacked By Hassidic Mob*. You know what that means, right? An innocent homeless man walking in the street with no place to go, probably just looking to do a good deed, and the *hassidic* mob rushed out of their houses and made a riot; for no reason they attacked the poor honorable fellow. Because that's always how it is for the anti-Semites – when Jews defend themselves it's called a riot. The New York Times doesn't like that Jews should make pogroms; they prefer it the other way around.

And when the Jews in Eretz Yisroel fought back against the Arabs who attacked them so when the Jews won the war they gained many enemies at that time. Now, I'm no patriot for Medinas Yisroel but if the Arabs are coming to kill, the Jews shouldn't defend themselves? No, the gentiles don't think so. The U.N. makes a special meeting about the problem, a special declaration against Medinas Yisroel. All over the world, all the *goyim* hated the Jews because they won the war.

Because that's the way of the world. When Jews are killed, *chas veshalom*, so the *goyim*, even the good *goyim*, don't mind it much. But when Jews kill *goyim*, all the *goyim* are hurt very much.

And that's why after Purim the Jews gained more *sonim* than before. Even Achashveirosh, although he was friendly to Esther, when he got the report about how many *goyim* were killed in Shushan he said וּבְשָׂאֵר מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ מָה עָשׂוּ – “And in the other provinces what did they do?” It hurt him. He thought like a New York Times writer; it hurt him that they killed the *goyim*. וּבְשָׂאֵר מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ מָה עָשׂוּ means, “How many did they kill already?! So many?!”

Now, *chalilah* had they killed the Jews, Achashveirosh wouldn't have said anything. Killing too many Jews, he wouldn't say a word. But if Jews kill *goyim* in self-defense it's already a tragedy.

And so when Achashveirosh gave permission, that was part of the *neis*. For the sake of the Purim miracle, Achashveirosh was prevailed upon to let them defend themselves. He did them a favor and gave them the right to fight back. It was a great favor that the Persian army did not interfere.

March 1972

Achashveirosh and Eisav

— Q: —

Yaakov Avinu dealt with Eisav by sending him gifts in order to appease him. Why in the time of Purim didn't we try to do our *hishtadlus* by trying to bribe Achashveirosh?

— A: —

Achashveirosh was so wealthy that you couldn't bribe him. Haman offered him עֶשְׂרֵת אֲלָפִים כֶּבֶד כֶּסֶף, ten thousand silver talents, and Achashveirosh said: הֶכְסֵי נָתַן לָךְ – You take it (Esther 3: 9,11). Now a *kikar* is a talent, and a talent is a big amount of silver. Ten thousand heavy

talents! And Achashveirosh said, “I don't need it.” So they couldn't bribe Achashveirosh – he was too wealthy.

— Q: —

So why didn't they follow the other lesson of Yaakov and try to escape to another country?

— A: —

In the ancient times you couldn't just escape. Nobody was able to move around freely the way you imagine today. Every country had its ruler.

Today in America, it's somewhat easier. You just get into a car and you travel. But in those days you couldn't just make a fast escape from the country. And therefore, they were caught in a trap with no way out.

March 1995

Achashveirosh and Esther

— Q: —

How did Esther manage to conceal her identity from people for so long? What did she say every time Achashveirosh asked her?

— A: —

How did Esther manage to conceal her identity? That's part of the lesson that Mordechai had taught her. Mordechai had taught her, ‘Don't talk!’ It's a tremendous *shleimus* not to talk. Another girl would have babbled and sooner or later she would have blabbed it out. But not Esther; she was trained not to talk.

Now, nobody would ask questions unless the king asked the question; there was a *derech erez* that people had towards her. And the king wasn't interested. The king was a *ba'al ta'avah*; he was half drunk when he was in contact with his wives. So he wasn't thinking about his wife; he was only thinking about his own business. And the other people around wouldn't have the boldness to

question her. Nobody would do that – you can't just ask the queen questions like that.

So nobody bothered her and she didn't confide in anybody. She kept her mouth closed. And that was one of the great perfections of *shleimus* that she was taught by Mordechai. כִּי מִרְדֵּכַי צִוָּה עָלֶיהָ – אֲשֶׁר לֹא תִגִּיד – Mordechai told her not to tell and she had the self-control (Esther 2:10). It's a great perfection of character to learn to not say things that are not necessary.

March 1972

Purim on Friday

— Q: —

What is the mitzvah of seudas Purim, the meal that we eat on Purim and why do we do it?

— A: —

The mitzvah of *seudas Purim* is to show our happiness in the great kindness that Hakadosh Baruch Hu did for our nation at that time. We have to demonstrate gratitude.

And the gratitude is for two things; for the great kindness and also for the *neis*. It was a great miracle that took place there because in the midst of the worst kind of a threat everything changed and they saw a tremendous *yeshua*. And therefore, it's our duty to demonstrate gratitude.

So the *seudas Purim* is a demonstration of our gratitude to Hakadosh Baruch Hu and of our recognition that He controls this world. That's what it's for.

And we should go out of our way therefore to make it a great celebration. It should be a very important affair, a very important celebration in your home. As much as possible make a big fuss out of the whole Purim day! And by making Purim very prominent in our lives, it becomes one of the jewels, one of the most beautiful *tachshitim* on

the *luach* of the Jewish year – it's one of the most precious jewels on our calendar.

Now, this year, I'm going to make one remark, that Purim is on Friday and so you shouldn't eat the *seudah* late otherwise you won't have any appetite for Shabbos, Friday night. So this year, you have to make it in the morning as early as possible.

Also, to prepare for Shabbos on *erev Shabbos*; that's also important. How important? כָּבֹד מִבְּתוּחַ – לָהֶם לְיִשְׂרָאֵל שְׂאִין אֵלָיו בָּא בְּעֶרְבֹה – The Am Yisroel is guaranteed that Eliyahu Hanavi won't come to announce the good tidings of the *geulah* on *erev Shabbos* (Eiruv 43b). You hear that? Even Eliyahu can't come to announce Mashiach on Friday because the Shabbos is too important for us and we need time to prepare *ma'adanim* and *ta'anugim* for Shabbos. We can't be bothered with Eliyahu right now because the achievement of the Shabbos *seudos* is too important.

Now, that sounds queer to people who don't know but the Shabbos *seudah* is intended for achievement. When you sit down on Shabbos to eat so you're thinking "I'm eating now זִכָּר לְמַעֲשֵׂה בְּרָאשִׁית, to celebrate that Hashem made the universe; everything, from nothing. בְּדִבְרֵי הָשֵׁם – שְׁמַיִם נִעְשׂוּ – All this came by the word of Hashem; כִּי הוּא אָמַר וַיְהִי – He spoke and it came into existence.

And while you're thinking that, you're eating, so you're appreciating not only that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the Creator, but that it's עוֹלָם חֶסֶד, that He made a world of kindness. It's a *geshmaka sugya* this *sugya* of זִכָּר לְמַעֲשֵׂה בְּרָאשִׁית. A *geshmaka chulent*! You're eating and enjoying it.

And it's so important that this *sugya* of Shabbos should be learned with *cheishek* and therefore Eliyahu has no business interfering with that. It's too important. So on *erev Shabbos* he won't come. It would spoil the lesson of Shabbos if we were too busy to prepare tasty foods; and it's such an

important lesson that even Eliyahu Hanavi has to wait.

By the way, it's a very important lesson and we should utilize that lesson. When you sit on Shabbos and you're enjoying the *ma'achalim* you should be thinking, "Baruch Hashem, that He gave us the Shabbos." What a great blessing the Shabbos is for the Am Yisroel!

And among the blessings is **כִּי אוֹת הִיא בִּינִי וּבִינֵיכֶם**. The Shabbos is a special sign of recognition for the Am Yisroel. It's a sign of kavod. Suppose a man came over to you and gave you a gold medal to hang on your chest. You'd be very excited. You'd wear it every day. Shabbos is a gold medal for us. And we're so happy with it. And therefore you have to enjoy the Shabbos and feel what a *kavod* it is for the Am Yisroel – **כִּי אוֹת הִיא בִּינִי וּבִינֵיכֶם**.

And therefore Eliyahu Hanavi cannot come on *erev Shabbos* and spoil the *geshmak* of that *seudah*; because all these lessons go in best when the food is tasty. And so even though it's Purim, remember that it's *erev Shabbos* too.

March 2001

Post Purim

— Q: —

Now that Purim is over, what are we supposed to think?

— A: —

Ahh, the age old question: What will be left after Purim? What packages are we taking with us after Purim? On Purim, over here, we sang "Ah *gantz yahr freilich*" and we added in the words "Ah *gantz yahr Purim*." Because the wise man uses his Purim, he puts his mind to all the lessons of Purim, and the day of Purim makes his whole year *freilich*. His whole year becomes a Purim. Not

only *ah gantz yahr freilich*, but all your life becomes *Purimdik*.

And one of the biggest *simchos* is the recognition that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is **אוֹהֵב עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל**. That's the second *yesod*, the second foundation, of the whole Torah. The first *yesod* is **בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ** – that Hashem made the world. **הוּא אֱמֵר וַיְהִי, הוּא צִוָּה וַיַּעֲמֹד** – The whole world is nothing but the *dvar Hashem*. That's the first *yesod* of the Torah. And the second *yesod*, right on the heels of the first one, is **אוֹהֵב עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל** – that Hashem loves His people. The whole Torah, the whole Tanach talks only about *Amo Yisroel*. And that's a great happiness when you know that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is thinking about you. Not about the Am Yisroel in general – He's thinking about you! You see this man sitting here? Hakadosh Baruch Hu is thinking about him. Hakadosh Baruch Hu says, "That's My son!" Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves us more than parents love their children. The love that a mother has for her children is nothing compared to the way Hashem loves each one of us.

And since Hashem loves us so much, that's the happiness in life. There's no happiness like that. The greatest *simcha* is that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is **אוֹהֵב עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל**. That's the true *simcha*, and that *simcha* remains all year round. And that's the lesson that you study all day on Purim and then you take it with you all year long.

So let's think about that for a minute before we say goodbye to Purim. Hashem is looking at us right now, and He's thinking, "Ah, I have *nachas* from you, My children. I love you My *tyierah kinderlach*."

From the last moments
of the Rav's Purim Mesibah – March 23, 1997



QUESTION

**What did Amalek do that was so terrible
that he deserved to be destroyed?**

ANSWER

Now, I must explain something before I answer you. We have to understand that the purpose of the ten *makkot*, the ten plagues in Egypt, were not just to punish Egypt. It says openly the purpose is למען ידעו מצרים כי אני, – תדע כי אין כמוני בכל הארץ – you should know that there's no one like Me in the world, אני, – השם – to teach the world that I am Hashem.

Now *Hakodosh Boruch Hu* does not want miracles. That's a big principle. Because He established all the laws of nature. They're His laws and if He has to abrogate the laws of nature, it means He has to change His word. And just as He expects us to be loyal to His laws, He shows an example to us and He is loyal also to His laws of nature. And so when He does make an exception, it's for a very important reason. And the reason was to demonstrate for all time, to make a lasting impression on all the world, they should understand there's a Hashem.

Now after all this effort, when the whole world was duly impressed and everybody was afraid because they learned the fear of Hashem, all of a sudden an *az ponim*, one bold and brazen Amalek came up and he attacked the Jewish people. Right away. And he broke the spell.

Imagine, somebody is preaching to the people. He inspires them and everyone now is in a pious and noble mood, an inspired mood. All of a sudden, one clown in the back makes a crack and there's a joke and people laugh and the whole effect is dispelled. ליצנות אחת דוחה מאה תוכחות. And the *letz*, that was Amalek. He ruined it. He ruined the world. He ruined the nations. The lesson they should have learned, he came and he smashed the lesson.

That's why it says לץ תכה – you have to smite the *letz*, זה עמלק.

April 1973