

## Ad d'La Yada: Blurring Boundaries for the Sake of Wholeness

Slonimer Rebbe, *Essays on Purim* (Excerpted)\*  
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חייב איניש לבסומי בפוריא עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי (מגילה ז:). הגה חיוב זה הוא מן הדברים המופלאים בפורים, שהרי פורים יום גדול וקדוש הוא עד מאד, והרבה ענינים נשגבים כלולים בו. שהוא כיום כפורים, ויום קבלת התורה דהדר קבלה ברצון, היינו במדרגה יותר גבוהה ממעמד הר סיני. וגם עת מחיית עמלק. ובו כל הפושט יד נותנים לו. ולכאורה דרוש לכל זה הרבה הרבה ישוב הרעה, ואיך זה מתיישב עם החיוב לבסומי בפוריא. וע"ד העבודה י"ל שמרומז בלשון המאמר חייב איניש לבסומי בפוריא, דלא אמרו לבסומי בין אלא בפוריא, שישתכר מהפורים עצמו וע"פ זה יש לבאר ענין עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי, שהוא קשור לכל מצוות היום של פורים, קריאת המגילה, משלוח מנות, ענין מחיית עמלק, וקבלת ברצון שקימו וקבלו היהודים עליהם ועל זרעם. דהנה עניני הפורים מתחלקים לג' חלקים כנגד ג' חלקי השלימות בעבודת ה', כמש"כ המהר"ל דשלימות עבודת ה' כוללת שלם עם בוראו שלם עם חבריו ושלם עם עצמו. ובכולם יש בחי' ברוך מרדכי ובחי' ארור המן, אשר חייב איניש לבסומי בפוריא מקדושת היום עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי.

קריאת המגילה היא מכלל השלימות עם בוראו. דהנה יש זמנים שהקב"ה עוזר ליהודי שמחו ולבו פתוחים ומרגיש קרוב לאלוקיו, בבחי' ברוך מרדכי. וישנם זמנים חשוכים ביותר, שמרגיש כי נרחק מאד מהש"ת בבחי' ארור המן. אכן בפורים חייב איניש לבסומי עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי, שישאב מהפורים שמחה עצומה עד שירגיש בלבו שאין כל הבדל בין העתים שבהם הוא מרגיש את עצמו קרוב להש"ת לבין העתים שמרגיש מרוחק ונדחה.

וכן בחלק של שלם עם חבריו יש בחי' ארור המן ובחי' ברוך מרדכי. יש תברים שמרגיש כי הם קרובים ללבו וכי הם הגונים וראויים בבחי' ברוך מרדכי. ויש שרואה את תבריו בבחי' ארור המן, אם מחמת שהוא בעצמו במצב ירוד ומשום כך נדמה לו על אחרים שאינם בסדר, או כאלו שבאמת אינם הגונים. ובפורים חייב אדם לבסומי עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי, שזה ענין מצות משלוח מנות איש לרעהו, להרבות הרעות והידידות.

**Each person is obligated to get drunk on Purim until they cannot distinguish between 'cursed is Haman' and 'blessed is Mordechai' (Megillah 7b).** This obligation is one of the wondrous things about Purim – Purim is an extremely great and holy day, and there are many exalted things included in it. Purim is like Yom Kippur (*Yom KiPurim*), and it is the day of accepting the Torah, that we accepted it again willfully, a more elevated event than Sinai. And there is wiping out Amalek. And on Purim we give to anyone who extends a hand. So it would seem that all these actions would require significant presence of mind, which doesn't sit right with the obligation to be drunk on Purim. But we can say that our work around this obligation is hinted at in the very language – Each person is obligated to get drunk on *Purim*. It doesn't say that each person must get drunk on wine, but on *Purim*, that is, to get drunk from Purim itself.

The idea of obscuring the difference between 'cursed is Haman' and 'blessed is Mordechai' is connected to each of the mitzvot of Purim – reading the megillah, sending *mishloach manot*, erasing Amalek, and accepting the Torah willfully. **Purim can be divided into three parts, corresponding to three quests for wholeness in serving God: wholeness with the Creator, wholeness with other human beings and wholeness with oneself.** In each, there is an aspect of 'cursed is Haman' and 'blessed is Mordechai' and a person is obligated to be drunk on Purim from the holiness of the day until they cannot distinguish between these aspects.

**Reading the megillah is about wholeness with the Creator.** There are times that the Holy Blessed One helps a person feel open in mind and heart and close to God – blessed is Mordechai. And there are darker times when a person feels distance from the Holy One – cursed is Haman. So on Purim a person is obligated to be drunk until they cannot distinguish between 'cursed is Haman' and 'blessed is Mordechai.' From Purim each person should draw deep happiness until the feeling arises in their heart that there is no difference between the times when they feel close to the Holy One and the times when they feel distant or pushed away.

וכן יש בפורים ענין שלם עם עצמו.  
 דכאשר אדם אינו שלם עם עצמו בכח' מאה"כ (תהלים לח) אין שלום בעצמי, או בעוסקו בתורה ועבודה הוא בכח' ברוך מרדכי, ואילו בעת עוסקו בענינים הגשמיים ושקוע בתאוותיו החומריות זריחו בבחי' אורח הנון.  
 שמכח הפורים לא יהיה הפרש אצלו בין אם עוסק בעניני תורה ועבודה או שעוסק בענינים הגשמיים, כמו שאפשר לקנותו ע"י תורה ועבודה, כך אפשר לקנותו בשעה שעוסקים בענינים הגשמיים ומאמינים שזהכל ברא לכבודו, שאו מגיע האדם לשלימות עם עצמו. ופורים הוא היום המסוגל לכך לחולל ביהודי מהפכה כללית בבחי' הדר קבלוה ברצון, שהארות הגבוהות האלו יורדות מדי שנה בשנה. ואם ביום הכפורים דרושה עבודה ויגיעה רבה באתערל"ת להמשיך הארת היום הקדוש, הרי בפורים זה נשפע באתערותא דלעילא אפילו בלא הכנה. שהיום מסוגל שיהודי יוכל להיות שלם עם עצמו ועי"י יהיה שלם עם חבריו ויגיע להיות שלם עם בוראו.

דוקא מתוך תכלית שפל המצב בימי הפורים הגיעו להדר קבלוה ברצון. וזה שייך לכל יהודי, שגם בהיותו בתכלית שפל המצב מסוגל להגיע למדרגה הגבוהה ביותר של הדר קבלוה ברצון מכה הפורים.

And so too in the part about **wholeness with fellow human beings** there is an aspect of 'cursed is Haman' and 'blessed is Mordechai.' There are friends who feel close to your heart, that they are really appropriate and worthy friends – blessed is Mordechai. And there are some who see their friends as 'cursed is Haman' – either because that person is down or because it seems that there is something wrong with the other, or really they are not a good fit. On Purim a person is obligated to be drunk until they cannot distinguish between 'cursed is Haman' and 'blessed is Mordechai,' this is sending *mishloach manot* each person to their fellow human beings, increasing friendliness and friendship.

And on Purim there is the aspect of **wholeness with oneself**. The role that **erasing Amalek** plays on that day is to turn away from evil and return willingly to doing good. And about this, too, it is written that a person is obligated to get drunk on Purim until they cannot distinguish between 'cursed is Haman' and 'blessed is Mordechai'. When a person is not whole with him/herself, then they think that learning Torah or praying is 'blessed is Mordechai' while being involved in physical actions and material desires is 'cursed is Haman.' Through the power of Purim, there need be no separation between involvement with matters of Torah and involvement with physical matters. Just as it is possible to praise God through prayer and Torah, so too is it possible to praise God while involved in physical matters – we believe that all was created for God's glory – that is how a person comes to wholeness with him/herself.

Purim can bring about transformation, rooted in accepting Torah willfully, for these great revelations arrive every year. If on Yom Kippur we work really hard to bring about revelations of holiness, on Purim it can happen even without preparation. It is the day when people can become whole in themselves, and through this be whole with other human beings and come to be whole with the Creator. It was specifically through experiencing lowliness in the days of Purim that we were able to go back and accept the Torah willfully. This connects to the experience of every Jew – for each of us, through the experience of lowliness we can come to the highest level – through the power of Purim.

### Discussion Questions:

- > According to the Slonimer Rebbe, what do 'blessed is Mordechai' and 'cursed is Haman' mean?
- > What kind of transformation is possible on Purim?
- > How does the holiday bring about that transformation?
- > When in your life have you had moments of this kind of transformation?
- > If one of the goals of Purim is to blur the boundaries of 'blessed is Mordechai' and 'cursed is Haman' - how can this concept be useful in your life?

## Commandments of Purim (loosely defined)

### **Purim is like Yom Kippur**

Purim is called by the name *Yom HaKiPurim* ("the day that is like Purim"), as in the future [World to Come] when we shall delight in it, and change it from affliction [as we do on Yom Kippur] to delight [which we do on Purim].

### **"Erasing Amalek"**

The Torah says: "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you were leaving Egypt.... Erase the memory of Amalek.... Do not forget" (Deut. 25:17-9).

The first Amalek appeared just as the Jews were making their way toward Sinai about to cross the sea of reeds. The nation of Amalek attacked the Israelites in this moment of extreme vulnerability. Throughout history, Amalek's descendants have attacked us. One of the most famous is Haman, whose defeat we celebrate each Purim. One traditional perspective is that every generation and every community has its own "Amalek." This concept is somewhat problematic because it creates a paradigm in which every generation of Jews is under attack. It perpetuates a narrative of victimhood, othering and reinforces the good/evil binary. But there is also a spiritual "Amalek." One story compares Amalek to one who jumps into a boiling tub, which everyone is afraid to touch, and cools it off. Where there is warmth and enthusiasm, the voice of Amalek is there to discourage and throw cold water. Amalek is numerically equivalent to the Hebrew word, *safek*, doubt. Whenever one considers doing a positive thing, Amalek introduces doubt into one's mind.

### **"Reading the megillah" (the story of Esther)**

To re-live the miraculous events of Purim, we read the Megillah (the Scroll of Esther) on Purim eve and again on Purim Day. Whenever Haman's name is mentioned, we twirl graggers and stamp our feet to "drown out" his evil name.

### **"Sending *mishloach manot*" (literally, "sending portions")**

In accordance with the festive spirit, we are required to send a gift of at least two kinds of ready-to-eat foods (for example, pastry, fruit, beverage), to at least one friend on Purim day.

### **"Accepting the Torah willfully"**

*In the Talmud it states:* Rava says [the Torah] was reaccepted (willingly) in the days of Achashverosh [Purim], as it is written *Kimu V'kiblu* (literally, "they were established and they were accepted." (Shabbos 88a).

What is the implication of *Kimu V'kiblu*? That when the Jews accepted the mitzvot of Purim upon themselves, they **willingly** accepted the Torah, albeit 1300 years after it was revealed to Moses at Mt. Sinai. This holiday of backward, queer craziness is the moment when we affirm ourselves as Jews.

### **Gifts to the low-income and poor among you**

Concern for folks who are poor and low-income, homeless, hungry and oppressed is a year-round responsibility Jews. On Purim, particularly, it is a special mitzvah to remember those who are poor. A person should give money or food to at least two, but preferably more, poor people on Purim day. There are other moments in the Jewish year cycle to think about the redistribution of wealth and organizing for economic justice. This is a moment of direct service.

### **A Festive Meal**

Like good Jews, we celebrate Purim with food and a special festive meal on Purim Day!