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Parshas Tetzaveh ✍️ Rabbi Yehoshua Goldstein

The Power of Purim

The *Yom Tov* of *Purim* is a very powerful day. It is said that *Yom Kippur* is comparable to *Purim*, implying that the loftiness of the day of *Purim* is greater than that of *Yom Kippur* itself. Let us try to focus on some of the lessons of *Purim*, and thereby enhance our *Avodas ha'yom*.

The *Gemara* (*Megilla* 11a) quotes the introductions offered by several of the *Amoraim* prior to their discussion of *Megilas Esther*. *R' Elazar* introduced the topic of *Megilas Esther* with a verse from *Koheles*: *Ba'atzaltayim yimach hamekareh*, which he explained as follows: due to the laziness of *Klal Yisrael*, who were not fully engrossed in *Torah* study, *Hashem's* protection of *Klal Yisrael* was weakened. It is interesting to note that many years earlier *Amalek*, the ancestors of *Haman*, also waged war against *Klal Yisrael* due to a *rifyon*, a laxity in *Torah* study.

At first glance, this idea would appear to contradict another *Gemora* in *Meseches Megila*. The *Gemara* mentions that *R' Shimon bar Yochai* was asked by his students why *Klal Yisrael* were deserving of punishment at the time of *Purim* (*Megila* 12a). *R' Shimon bar Yochai* in turn asked the students to offer their own explanation, and they responded that *Klal Yisrael* had sinned by deriving pleasure from *Achashverosh's* party. *R' Shimon bar Yochai* replied that this sin was only committed by those who dwelled in the city of *Shushan*, and explained that the collective sin of *Klal Yisrael* was that they had bowed to an idol in the days of *Ne-vuchadnetzar*. This appears to be inconsistent with *R' Elazar's* statement that the decree against *Klal Yisrael* was caused by laxity in *Torah* study.

Harav Mattisyahu Solomon (in his *Sefer Matnas Chaim*) explains that there is no contradiction at all. *Klal Yisrael* were in fact deserving of punishment because of their involvement in *Achashverosh's* party and bowing to an idol. However, the power of intense *Torah* study is such that it can cancel the worst evil decree. Had *Klal Yisrael* learned *Torah* with the proper intensity (*i.e.* sacrificing personal enjoyment for the sake of *Torah*), the *gezeirah ra'ah* could have been thwarted. *R' Elazar* felt that the message one must derive from the *Megilah* is the importance and power of *Torah* study, and the *yeshuos* that it can bring, by realizing what a perilous situation *Klal Yisrael* was placed in when their focus on *Torah* study was lacking.

Perhaps we can add an additional point. We find that after the miracle

of *Purim*, *Klal Yisrael* renewed their acceptance of the *Torah*. The *Gemara* notes that even though the original acceptance of the *Torah* at *Har Sinai* included an element of duress, this *kabalah* was *bi'ratzon*, with entirely free will. *Klal Yisrael's* realization of the *koach haTorah* and the overwhelming influence that it has on the world led to this enhanced acceptance of the *Torah*, and implanted the day of *Purim* with a tremendous light of *kabalas haTorah*.

The *Gemara* further quotes the introduction of *Rav Masna*, who cited a *posuk* in *Sefer Devarim* describing the greatness of *Klal Yisrael* that *Hashem* is close to us whenever we call out to Him (*Megila* 11a). *Harav Mattisyahu Solomon* points out that a careful look at the aforementioned *posuk* reveals that in addition to the fact that *Hashem's* closeness to us is a reason why He hears our *tefilos*, our *tefilos* also bring *Hashem* closer to us. By crying out to *Hashem* and doing *teshuva*, one comes to the realization that our *aveiros* bring about our punishment and that *teshuva* and *tefila* have the power to remove the *tzarah*. *Ta'anis Esther* reminds us that *Hashem* is close to us and hears our cries when we *daven* and do *teshuva* with a complete heart, as *Klal Yisrael* did in the days of *Mordechai* and *Esther*. In fact, *Rashi* notes that we read the *Megila* at night and repeat it during the day to remember how *Klal Yisrael* *davened* by night and by day (*Megila* 4a). The reading of the *Megila* is not only to publicize the *nes* but also to remind us that it was through the sincere fasting, *tefilos*, and *teshuva* of *Klal Yisrael* that they merited to be saved.

This may be related to the well-known *halacha* on *Purim*, *kol haposhet yad, nosnim lo*, anyone who stretches out his hand is given charity. In *halacha* this refers to a special concept of giving *tzedaka* on *Purim*. However, in the *sefarim* it says that this also alludes to the idea that anyone who "stretches out his hand" in *tefila* to *Hashem*, will have his *tefilos* accepted on *Purim*. Perhaps, *Purim* was designated as a day of extraordinary powers of *tefilos*, to help us focus on this very important lesson of the power of *tefila*, learned from the miracle of *Purim*.

The *Ribbono Shel Olam* should help us utilize this special day of *Purim* to strengthen our commitment to *Torah* study and *tefila* with proper concentration, and we should be *zocheh* to *yeshuos*, *bimheira be'yo-meinu*. *A freilichen Purim!*

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Mishloach Manos

Rabbi Moshe Rokach

One of the *mitzvos* unique to *Purim* is *Mishloach Manos*. The *Poskim* differ as to the reason for this *mitzva*:

1. To ensure that everyone has food for the *Purim* meal (*Terumas Hadeshen*, 111). In order to avoid embarrassing those in need, it is a *mitzva* to give to both rich and poor people alike (*Teshuvos Chasam Sofer* O.C. 196).
2. To create a spirit of friendship and unity in contrast to *Hamán's* claim to *Achashveirosh* that the Jews are "scattered and separated" by their disagreements. (*Manos Halevi*)

In light of these reasons, a number of interesting questions arise:

Return to Sender

Reuven sends Mishloach Manos to Shimon who declines to accept it.

The *Rema* (O.C. 695:4) rules that the sender fulfills his obligation even if the recipient declines the offer. The *Chasam Sofer* (*Teshuvos* O.C. 196) suggests that this scenario only satisfies one of the reasons mentioned above for *Mishloach Manos*. While offering the *Mishloach Manos* alone generates friendship and goodwill whether the recipient chooses to accept it or not, the fact is that it does not serve the purpose of providing for the recipient's *Purim* meal. (Even if the recipient declines because he has plenty of his own food for the meal, the *Chasam Sofer* says it still defeats the purpose of avoiding embarrassment to those in need.) The *Chasam Sofer* therefore concludes that the *Rema's* scenario only satisfies the reason of the *Manos Halevi*, and questions on what basis the *Rema* follows this opinion and ignores the *Terumas Hadeshen*. The *Mishna Berura* (695:24) quotes the *Chasam Sofer's* objection to the *Rema's* ruling, thus implying that he accepts the *Chasam Sofer's* premise that *Mishloach Manos* must be sent in a way that satisfies both the reasons of the *Terumas Hadeshen* and the *Manos Halevi* to properly fulfill the *mitzva*.

Dropoff

Reuven brings a package of Mishloach Manos to his friend Shimon's home and is informed that Shimon is out of town for Purim. Does Reuven fulfill his obligation by leaving the Mishloach Manos with Shimon's wife or family members?

It seems that neither objective of *Mishloach Manos* is accomplished in this case and the *mitzva* has therefore not been fulfilled (see *Moadim U'zmanim Purim* 186). Being that *Shimon* is completely unaware of what happened, no feelings of goodwill or friendship were generated and *Mishloach Manos* one doesn't know about cannot provide for his *Purim* meal. (See *Aruch Hashulchan* 695:16, reaching the same conclusion for a different reason and implying that the *mitzvah* would be fulfilled if *Shimon* is made aware of the gift on *Purim*, see also *Moadim U'zmanim Purim* 186, suggesting that perhaps the *mitzva* is fulfilled since the intention is to give *Mishloach Manos* to the family as a whole and not *Shimon* alone). Of course, if *Shimon* is returning home on *Purim* itself and will notice the *Mishloach Manos*, *Reuven* has fulfilled the *mitzvah*.

Unknown Sender

Reuven arrives at Shimon's home to deliver Mishloach Manos and no one is home. He leaves the Mishloach Manos between the doors unmarked, knowing that Shimon will return shortly and find the basket.

The *Ksav Sofer* (*Teshuvos* O.C. 141) rules that one cannot fulfill the *mitzva* by sending an anonymous *Mishloach Manos*. Although the reason of providing for the *Purim* meal has been met, no friendship or goodwill has been generated since the recipient does not know who sent it. In the above scenario, the *Mishloach Manos* should either be marked or else *Reuven* should inform *Shimon* before *Purim* is over that he was the sender.

Mishloach Manos that the Recipient Cannot Eat

Reuven sends his diabetic friend Shimon a candy basket for Mishloach Manos

Hagaon R' Chaim Kanievsky *shlita* (quoted in *Sefer Birur Halacha* O.C. 2; 695) rules that *Mishloach Manos* is **not** fulfilled by sending sweets to a diabetic who cannot eat them for medical reasons. His reasoning seems to be that neither objective mentioned above is accomplished. Since the recipient cannot eat the *Mishloach Manos*, it neither provides for his *Purim* meal nor generates friendship and goodwill. Harav Yehoshua Neuwirth *shlita* also maintains that *Mishloach Manos* cannot be fulfilled in this way and provides support to his ruling from the *Chayei Adam*. The *Chayei Adam* (155:31) writes that sending a simple *Mishloach Manos* to a wealthy person is not a fulfillment of the *mitzva*. The gift must be appropriate for the status of the recipient. (The *Bur Halacha* 695 quotes this *Chayei Adam* and concludes that one should adhere to his ruling *l'chatchila*.) R' Neuwirth concludes that in order to fulfill *Mishloach Manos* the gift apparently must provide joy to the **particular person who receives it**.

According to Harav Yitzchak Zilberstein *shlita* (in a letter printed at the end of *Nishmas Avraham* vol. 1), however, the *mitzva* of *Mishloach Manos* is fulfilled by sending sweets to a diabetic. In his opinion *Chazal* only required that one send something that is appreciated by **people in general**. The fact that the particular person receiving it cannot enjoy it because of his individual circumstances is immaterial. He further argues that the recipient **does** appreciate the *Mishloach Manos* even in such a case since he can share it with others. To illustrate his point he asks rhetorically, "Would anyone suggest *Mishloach Manos* is not fulfilled by sending a dairy *Mishloach Manos* to someone who ate meat on *Purim* afternoon and will be unable to enjoy it on *Purim*?" The author of *Nishmas Avraham* writes that he discussed this issue with Hagaon R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt"l* and he sided with R' Zilberstein.

This discussion regarding foods the recipient cannot eat for medical reasons may also relate to a similar situation where *Mishloach Manos* is sent to someone who will not eat it for halachic reasons. For example, has one fulfilled *Mishloach Manos* by sending non-*cholov yisrael* or non-*yoshon* foods to a person who does not eat them for halachic reasons? The dispute mentioned above may apply in this case as well.

(Please note: No practical halacha should be concluded from this article.)

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