

LIFTING OUR CUP OF SALVATION

by Rabbi Yehudah Prero

Purim, the holiday on which we celebrate the salvation of the Jewish people from the hands of the evil Haman, this year begins at sunset, March 1, 1999. (See I: 66-77 for additional information.)

The Talmud in the tractate of Megillah (7b) relates: "Raba said: It is the duty of a man to mellow himself [with wine] on Purim until he cannot tell the difference between cursed be Haman' and blessed be Mordechai'." This teaching is the source for imbibing more than the usual amount of alcohol by the Purim feast. The Rema (Orech Chayim 695) writes that one need not get drunk to accomplish this level of incapacity to discern; one may drink more than he is used to and then sleep, and because he is sleeping, he will not be able to differentiate. The bottom line, the Rema writes, is that the drinking must be done "for the sake of heaven," with pure intentions, with the intent to fulfill the dictate.

Why, on Purim, is there a special commandment to drink? All holidays carry with them an obligation to rejoice, to feel happiness. However, on Purim, we are told to take this happiness to an added level. Why is this the case?

Haman did not merely want to kill all the Jews. He wanted to eradicate every vestige of the Jewish nation that existed. The Megillah of Esther (3:13) states Haman's plan: "... to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to plunder their goods." Why does the Megillah use a number of synonyms to repetitively describe the destruction of the Jews? The Vilna Gaon explains that each expression of destruction related to a different aspect of Jewish existence. Haman wanted to "destroy" the spiritual existence of the Jews, by destroying all mention of the Torah, its commandments, and their observance. Haman wanted to "kill" the Jewish spirit, the spark that exists in the heart of every Jewish soul, binding the nation together culturally. Haman wanted to physically "annihilate" the Jewish nation. Not only did he want to kill them; he wanted to destroy every last shred of their existence by burning the corpses, hence a literal annihilation. Lastly, Haman wanted to plunder the goods of the Jews, so that no physical remnant would remain of the Jewish people.

However, Haman was denied the opportunity to carry out this horrendous plan. Instead, the Jewish people, by the grace of G-d, were saved. Their spirit perseveres, their Torah lives, and they are found throughout the world. We commemorate this all-encompassing salvation in four ways. We observe an additional Mitzvah, the reading of the Megillah, to celebrate our spiritual salvation. To mark the

continuance of the Jewish spirit, we have a commandment to rejoice, to feel gladness in our hearts. Because the physical existence of the Jewish nation was spared, we celebrate in a physical fashion, by feasting and drinking. Lastly, as the property of the Jewish people wasn't plundered, we give gifts to the poor to mark this preservation. Because Purim commemorates a multifaceted salvation, the commemoration consists of more than just a commandment to be happy. It has an added aspect: to feast. Because of this specific facet of the celebration, we feast and drink on Purim, unlike other holidays.

(Adapted from Sefer Kimu V'Kiblu)

A Freilichin Purim!

R' Yehudah Prero

For questions, comments, and topic requests, please write to [Rabbi Yehudah Prero](#).
