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ע"ה דוד חנניה פינטו



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## The Festival of Purim

We are now in the midst of celebrating Purim. This day marks the great miracle that was performed for our people in the days of Mordechai and Queen Esther. However, Am Yisrael experienced many equally great and wonderful miracles during other months and festivals too, for example the Exodus from Egypt and the Splitting of the Sea. So why did Chazal establish a day of such great joy, starting already from the beginning of the month of Adar, particularly for this miracle of deliverance experienced in the days of Achashverosh?

The answer could be that times of physical deliverance are days of expressing great appreciation to Hashem. However, this joy is not complete for true joy is only experienced by one who studies Torah in perfection. The Gemara (Shabbat 88a) says that at Har Sinai Am Yisrael were forced to accept the Torah. Hashem picked up the mountain and told them, "If you accept the Torah all is good, if not, here will be your grave". So Am Yisrael accepted the Torah without a choice and the joy in Torah study that is a result of compulsion is not complete joy.

But the Megillah writes (Esther 9:27) that in the days of Purim *"The Jews confirmed and undertook upon themselves, and their posterity, and upon all who might join them"*. Chazal expound (Shabbat ibid) on the words *"they confirmed and undertook"* that they confirmed with love what they had already undertaken at Har Sinai out of compulsion. Meaning that at the time of the Purim miracle, due to the great salvation Am Yisrael once again accepted the Torah but this time with great love. This inspiration of Torah with love returns every single year on Purim.

This is the reason why Chazal established particularly this day as one of joy and feasting, for true happiness is the joy of Torah. Now that Am Yisrael accepted the Torah with love, it was a complete acceptance of the Torah and their joy in Torah study can now be great and genuine.

Once when I was in Canada, someone from New York approached me and gave me an extremely generous donation for our holy institutions that it called for me to thank him profusely. Indeed, I did express my heartfelt appreciation. But it seems that he was waiting for my exceptional admiration due to the large sum that he had charitably donated, so he retorted, "Just thank you? I thought the Rabbi would jump for joy at receiving such a generous donation!"

I understood how he felt but replied honestly that genuine joy bursts forth from the heart when one hears a wonderful Torah thought, for this is a joy that reaches the heavens. But even though money can make me happy, it will always be a more restrained kind of joy for there is no joy like the joy of the Torah.

Not wanting to him to leave with a feeling of disappointment, I added that the money he so kindly donated will serve to increase Torah in a great way and so the joy he caused Hashem is a joy that has no parallel, for his donation brought Hashem Himself happiness and delight and He will certainly bless him in return with all kinds of goodness.

He understood what I was saying and even agreed and added that if he could, he would right now donate another sum so as to bring even more joy to Hashem.

**Purim Same'ach and Shabbat Shalom,**

David Chananya Pinto