

Miracles Don't Always Happen

Rabbi Reuven Mann

As we approach the Holiday of Purim, it is gratifying to reflect that the popularity of this special day has steadily increased among the Jewish People. It is not as complicated as the Biblical Festivals, which are fully observed essentially by the Orthodox. Purim lasts for a day and is marked with a festive meal at which costumes are worn, wine is consumed, and homemade entertainment is provided.

There is a certain wildness in the air, as it is understood that this is a time to “let loose” and engage in some behaviors that would not be acceptable at any other time of year.

Purim commemorates the salvation of the Jews from the wicked Haman who had arranged for them to be annihilated, men women and children, on one day. But, due to the strategy of Esther and clear manifestations of Divine Providence, everything was turned on its head and the enemies of the Jews were destroyed.

For a brief moment in time, the Jews were greatly admired and feared. This type of transformation from hopeless doom to supreme victory brings forth unique emotions. All barriers of etiquette are dropped, and social status loses its meaning. People dance in the streets, and the lowly beggar embraces the business tycoon. An uncontrollable elation sweeps over everyone, eliminating all inhibitions and barriers which would normally apply.

Of course, there are *Mitzvot* to perform, namely reading *Megillat Esther* (Scroll of Esther) by night and day, giving gifts to the poor, and exchanging food packages with one's friends. These Rabbinc enactments are far easier to observe than the complicated prayer services of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur, not to mention transferring one's habitation to the Succah. And the general tenor of the day which includes wearing masks and original costumes, partying and noise making assures a great deal of participation from all sectors of Jews.

Concerning the religious nature of the Holiday, it is interesting to note that the *Hallel* (songs of praise for miracles) is *not* recited on Purim. This is strange in light of the fact that on Chanukah which also celebrates a great military victory the recitation of *Hallel* is a key requirement. So why is *Hallel* said for the miracles of Chanukah but not for those of Purim?

There are basically two answers that are given. One explanation is that the reading of the *Megilla* is itself a form of *Hallel*. If the objective of *Hallel* is to publicize a miracle that elicits significant praises to the One Who granted it, then that is done via the reading of the Purim story, which covers all the

relevant events. According to this view, we fulfill the obligation to recite *Hallel* when we read the *Megilla*.

However, not all agree with this resolution. They contend that the praises of Hashem that emerge from the *Megilla* are only implied, but not explicitly stated. The obligation to sing the praises of Hashem must be done in a direct and clear manner. Thus, reading the Purim story alone does not fulfill the obligation we have to offer praise to Hashem for the miracle He wrought for the Jews when they were threatened with annihilation by Haman.

Those who maintain that the *Megilla* reading does *not* fulfill the requirements of the *Hallel* explain the reason for its absence in a unique and eye-opening way. They say that the salvation experienced on Purim was *incomplete* because “we are still servants of Achashveirosh (Ahasuerus)”. Thus, there is a clear-cut distinction between Chanukah and Purim.

The former took place in the land of Israel, where Jews are supposed to be free of foreign domination. They lost their freedom when they came under the alien control of the Greek Hellenists. When the Maccabees defeated the Greeks and drove them out of the land, the Jews achieved true freedom as they were once again sovereign in their own land. This is the state that is appropriate to Jewish existence, and so they sang songs of praise to Hashem, i.e. *Hallel*.

But that was not the case with Purim. Even before the persecution of Haman, the Jews had no true freedom as they were under the dominance of Achashveirosh. The hatred of Haman and his decree of destruction placed them in grave jeopardy. The rescue of the Jews from this horrible calamity was a great miracle, which obligated us to offer prayers of thanksgiving to Hashem. But *Hallel* was not called for because we still remained in an inferior state of subjugation to an alien ruler in a foreign land.

The state of exile in which the Jewish People have lived for thousands of years is an inferior and dangerous one. Whatever good conditions Jews have enjoyed in various stages of their journey were only temporary. Eventually, they were persecuted and exiled by the various rulers who had originally invited them in, so they could benefit economically from the Jews’ superior skills and talents.

But there always came a time, as in Egypt of old, when the host country turned on them and accused them of being disloyal and undesirable people. Thus, any positive accommodations in a foreign country that the Jews may occasionally secure are only temporary.

The potential for true Jewish independence exists only in *Eretz Yisrael*. Even the U.S. which has been the friendliest place for Jews in history is not immune to the possibility of betrayal. Whoever would have ever thought that there would be loud and hostile protests blaming Jews for Genocide in Gaza

and even calling for violence against them? The days when Jews could feel totally secure in America are gone.

What is unique about our time is that *Eretz Yisrael*, which the Jewish People have prayed for during these last two thousand years, is now a *reality*. But instead of taking advantage of the opportunity and the *Mitzvah* to dwell in Hashem's holy land which He bequeathed to our forefathers, many are content to stay abroad and simply continue to pray for the return of our homeland. At what point does one realize that what he has long prayed for has been granted? And what does he then do about it? These are some of the things we should deeply consider as we prepare to celebrate Purim.

The Talmud, in tractate Megilla 7b, recounts a story in which two distinguished sages, Rabba and Rebbie Zeira took the Purim meal together. Rabba became so intoxicated that he arose and “slew” Rebbie Zeira (maybe not literally, but severely harmed him). The next day, Rabba prayed for his colleague, and he recuperated. The following year, Rabba again invited Rebbie Zeira to his Purim feast. This time, Rebbie Zeira demurred and said, “Miracles do not happen every time.”

As we witness the spectacular rise of anti-Semitism in formerly friendly countries and the deterioration of the Jew’s position there, and we wonder what will be, perhaps it is a good time to remind ourselves of the very prescient observation of Rebbie Zeira; “Miracles do not happen every time.”

Shabbat Shalom and Purim *Sameiach*.

Questions? Comments? Please email Rabbi Mann at: rebmann21@aol.com

Dear Friends,

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I hope that my essays will enhance your reading and study of the Book of Devarim and would greatly appreciate a brief review on Amazon.com.

For those in *Eretz Yisrael*, my books are available at David Linden’s bookstore located at Emek Refaim Street 21, Jerusalem, and at Pomeranz Book store, Be’eri 5, Jerusalem. They are very nice stores to visit and browse.

Additionally, I have a new series of YouTube videos called “Rabbi Reuven Mann Torah Thoughts”. You can find them here: <https://bit.ly/49N8hyX>



—Rabbi Reuven Mann