

# L'Chaim



The bitter cold chilled the officer's bones and fear made his heart tremble. Ivan was not a coward, but the rumors of the sadistic Bolsheviks who were nearing the city of Rostov frightened him terribly. He paced the streets, waiting anxiously for the light of day. He was oblivious to the two men following at his heels, not making a sound, the distance between them narrowing...

Suddenly he felt powerful hands grabbing him. He screamed a loud and bitter scream, but the two held him and... In the morning the body of the officer was found with the warning: "Beware! The Bolsheviks are coming!"

The Jews were the most shaken by news of the Bolsheviks' approach, as the study of Torah and observance of mitzvot was a most serious crime to the Bolsheviks. There was only one part of the city where life went on as usual, where fear of the Bolsheviks was not felt: in the Yeshiva Tomchei Temimim.

The yeshiva students continued their studies without disruption. They drew their strength from their Rebbe, Rabbi Sholom Dovber of Lubavitch -- the fifth Rebbe of the Chabad dynasty. The Rebbe encouraged them to study and pray as usual, and the yeshiva bustled with life.

It was Zundel the Beggar who brought the news: "The Bolsheviks are on their way into the city!" Soon Rostov became a city of flames and the Bolsheviks beat and killed anyone they chanced upon.

Thus passed several weeks. The holiday of Purim was approaching. The Rebbe isolated himself and didn't speak to anyone. The students could not make peace with the Rebbe's isolation. They remembered the great joy of Purim, when Jews celebrate the victory over Haman who tried to "destroy, kill and annihilate."

And then it was Purim. Not a soul smiled. Finally, two of the yeshiva students who could no longer bear the thought of Purim passing in such a manner, summoned up their nerve and entered the Rebbe's room. After a few silent moments they heard the Rebbe's voice: "The Bolsheviks are in the city. I cannot exist together with them. But for the sake of Purim, we'll forget about the situation. Go buy plenty of vodka and let there be light for the Jews!"

The good news spread through the city and the yeshiva students took their places for the Purim gathering. The Rebbe spoke and all listened. When the Rebbe concluded, an older Chasid began singing a soulful Chasidic niggun (melody). Everyone joined in, singing from the depths of their hearts. Suddenly the door burst open. At the entrance stood a Chasid. "The Bolsheviks are coming," the Chasid cried, wringing his hands in fear.

The singing stopped at once; everyone was gripped with terror. The Rebbe, however, disregarded the news, and began singing a niggun very softly. The melody touched and calmed the frightened crowd. Having concluded the melody, the Rebbe began saying a Chasidic discourse. The room was silent; the only audible sound was the Rebbe's voice.

Suddenly the silence was broken by loud knocking. The Rebbe continued speaking as though nothing was happening. After a few moments one of the members of the Rebbe's family said: "Rebbe, the Bolsheviks are demanding that we let them in. If they see us gathered here it will be our end...G-d forbid." The Rebbe interrupted the discourse and said, "Open the door for them."

In the doorway stood two tall and fearsome looking Bolsheviks, their eyes darting all about, hungry for prey. "What is this gathering? What is going on?"

Trembling, one of the Chasidim called out, "This is the Rebbe Sholom Dovber of Lubavitch. He is teaching Torah to his Chasidim. The Rebbe is busy with his talk and he cannot be bothered." He could hardly believe the words that came from his mouth. The two soldiers were astounded at the Chasid's nerve, and they turned on their heels and departed.

"An open miracle!" the Chasidim exclaimed to one another. They felt protected and

sang with greater fervor. Thus passed two hours. So immersed were they in their joy, that they did not hear the Bolsheviks knocking again... "Rebbe, what shall we do?" several frightened Chasidim cried out.

The Rebbe freed himself from his thoughts and said, "Open for them! I don't fear them." The Chasidim understood that another great miracle was about to occur. The Bolsheviks burst through the door, their weapons in hand. The Rebbe ignored their threatening presence and said, "We will begin saying some words of Torah." The Rebbe raised his voice and began, "Amalek is first among the nations but his end will be destruction."

The faces of the Bolsheviks softened. The swords returned to their sheaths, and they watched with growing perplexity as the Chasidim listened to their Rebbe. They looked at one another and then, without a word, turned and left...

The Chasidim thanked G-d for miraculously saving them and for giving them their Rebbe in whose presence evil had no power. Everyone was deeply moved, feeling in their hearts without knowing why that this would be their last gathering with the Rebbe. Painful tears flowed from their eyes, tears of parting. A week after Purim the Rebbe became very weak, and on the second of Nissan his soul departed in holiness and purity.

## THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

On the weekly Torah Portion

### If his offering be from cattle (Lev. 1:3)

Three types of burnt-offerings may be brought upon the altar: cattle, sheep, and fowl. A wealthy person is self-assured and prideful, and therefore most likely to sin. For this reason he must bring the largest and most expensive offering, "from the cattle." A less affluent person, less likely to sin, fulfills his obligation by offering a sheep. But the poor man, who is already humbled by his poverty, need only bring "of the fowl," the least costly type of offering. (Zohar)

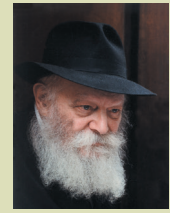
### And the sons of Aaron the priest shall put fire on the altar (Lev. 1:7)

Even though a heavenly fire descended from on High to consume the offerings, the priests were still required to bring ordinary fire as well, to the altar. We learn from this that one may not rely solely on the "fire that descends from on high"--the natural, innate love of G-d which is present in the soul of every Jew. Each of us must also bring an "ordinary fire," kindle that innate love of G-d by taking the initiative and contemplating His greatness, to further nurture that inner spark. (Lubavitcher Rebbe)

### If any person sin through ignorance against any of the commandments of G-d...and do any of them (Lev. 4:2)

There are times when even a mitzva can be considered a transgression. If a person fulfills a commandment of G-d, with full knowledge that he is doing a mitzva, yet he thinks he is doing a great favor to G-d by his compliance--this attitude is in itself sinful. (Kedushat Levi)

**6:53 Candle Lighting Time**  
NY Metro Area  
**12 Adar II / March 22**  
Torah Portion Vayikra  
Parshat Zachor  
Shabbat ends **7:53 PM**  
14 Adar II / March 24 - Purim Holiday



## LIVING WITH THE REBBE

from the teachings of the Rebbe on the Torah portion

This week's Torah portion, Vayikra, is the first portion in the book of Leviticus. It discusses the various types of sacrifices the Jewish people were commanded to offer in the Holy Temple. In the description of the first few types of sacrifices, the wood used for the fire on the altar is mentioned numerous times.

The Talmud relates that when the Jews returned to Israel from the Babylonian Exile, they found no wood for the altar in the Temple's storehouses. Several families banded together and donated wood. Later, these families were given the permanent honor of supplying the wood for the altar. The Sages decreed that the days when the wood was donated should be celebrated as a minor festival by the families.

Interestingly, there is another instance in which celebrations are connected to wood. The Mishna states: "There were no other holidays as great to all of Israel as the 15th of Av and Yom Kippur." One of the reasons for the joy on the 15th of Av was that this day marked the end of the harvest of trees whose wood would be used to burn the sacrifices.

What is so significant about the wood for the altar that its donation mandated an actual holiday?

To grasp the importance of wood, we must first understand the significance of the sacrifices. According to Nachmanides, an individual bringing an offering was to have in mind that the animal being slaughtered was in his place. Only through G-d's good will did He accept an animal in exchange.

There were many different types of offerings, and the thoughts accompanying each of them varied. For example, when a person brought a sin offering, he was required to dwell on thoughts of repentance, whereas the thanks-offerings aroused a deep love for G-d. Each offering was to be brought with its appropriate meditations.

But the most fundamental thought of all, no matter which offering was brought, was that of giving oneself totally over to G-d. Only after this requirement was met could the individual go on to express the emotions demanded by the particular offering.

This self-sacrifice was expressed by the burning of the wood on the altar. The Torah likens man to a tree. The burning of the wood symbolized the willingness to sacrifice oneself without personal considerations. For, when bringing an offering, the donor might derive some degree of satisfaction, personal glory or benefit from the act. However, the burning wood reminded him that there should be no such ulterior motives. The celebrations surrounding the provision of wood for the altar therefore epitomized the purest and most lofty aim of the sacrifices themselves.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

## Purim: Learning To Appreciate the Ordinary Moments

By Rabbi Lazer Gurkow

Life's ordinary moments are, well, simply put ordinary. Can't G-d just give us a life filled with thrills and excitement rather than a life with long stretches of ordinary, often uneventful and or mundane moments?

The Book of Esther that we read on Purim (this year, Saturday night, March 23 and Sunday, March 24) begins with a heated exchange that broke out at a party between King Achashverosh and his wife, Vashti, for which he had her put to death.

These details seem not to be critical to the Purim story at all. Why don't we begin by stating that Esther was the queen of Persia and Haman wanted to annihilate the Jews?

In truth, the story of the Megillah does not present much of an open miracle. King Achashverosh organized a beauty pageant to find a wife, Haman was enraged that Mordechai would not bow to him, the Jews prayed to G-d - considering Jewish history, all of this seems natural. So, what is so impressive about the story of Purim?

While it may seem ordinary and may not be obvious at first, however in truth, something profoundly relevant and miraculous occurs in the first seemingly "non-crucial" chapter.

Let's take a deeper look. King Achashverosh threw a lavish party. Near the end, the king drank like a peasant, and decided to show off his wife Vashti's beauty to all his old cronies.

Vashti broke out in leprosy and when her husband's instructions threatened to expose her, she responded with scorn. The king was enraged and in his drunken state, sentenced her to death.

Now, for the king to publicly get so intoxicated, and equally, for his wife the queen to publicly express such anger towards him, to the extent that she spoke openly with such impudence, which led to her execution, were all shockingly unexpected.

However, it was only later that it became apparent that this episode was miraculous and orchestrated from above, in order to save the Jewish people by placing Queen Esther precisely where she needed to be.

As to the question, why does G-d put us through all the ordinary and sometimes uneventful moments of life? The first answer is that if we wouldn't have contrast, we wouldn't be thrilled by the thrilling moments.

From a deeper perspective, it is Only because of the "ordinary moments" that we have and appreciate the special moments. In fact, miracles can be found in the most ordinary places where we least expect it.

In general, If the cast wouldn't practice, the performance wouldn't be spectacular. If the athletes wouldn't train, their achievements would be mediocre.

The same is true for every aspect of life. The exciting highs are only possible because of the ordinary and often hardworking moments that precede them. That is when we fulfill the purpose of our existence. The thrilling moments are our reward, but our regular day to day routines, obligations and ordinary moments, are our purpose.

And in the end, the ordinary moments are not so ordinary, because nothing is more thrilling and accomplishing than being able to fulfill our Divine purpose in this world.

Dedicated to the memory of  
**Chana bas Mendel A"H**  
**Mrs. Anita Adler OBM**  
Long Beach, New York  
By her family

In dedication on page  
call (714) 778-6000

# SLICE OF LIFE

## Southern Lebanon: A Purim that Almost Wasn't Purim

By: Daniel Bouskila



IDF soldiers dancing in the desert with Chabadniks

It was Purim, 1985. The surroundings seemed so strange to me. From childhood, Purim always meant Megillah reading, noise from noisemakers, loud music, lively dancing, people dressed up in different costumes, lots of good food, exchange of Mishloach Manot gift baskets, and a little "l'chaim" to top things off.

This year, it just wasn't the same. There was no Megillah scroll available to be read. There were some occasional loud noises, but they did not come from kids cranking noisemakers. There was no music to dance to, and nobody was really in the mood to dance.

Purim 1985. Southern Lebanon. A lonely platoon of IDF soldiers, stuck in a small fortress. Not a very friendly place to be. The noise of gunfire, not the rhythm you would want to dance to. Young boys dressed up in khaki uniforms. Neighbors who were not interested in receiving Mishloach Manot. Strange, surreal. "During the month of Adar, we increase in joy" says the Talmud. Not here. Not in this place. No joy, nothing to celebrate. Just long shifts of guard duty, and patrols that

really warranted the wishes of "l'chaim."

That night of Purim is one big blur to me. Same with the morning – a total blank. All I could remember is the same exact things I could remember from any other day in Lebanon. But I will never, ever, ever forget the afternoon.

I was standing on guard duty with Moti, my sergeant who I had become very close to ever since basic training was over. We always did guard duty together, often talking about life, big dreams, and great hopes for the future. We would take turns looking through the binoculars, as there was this one long road we had to watch over.

All sorts of traffic passed through this road. Lebanese delivery trucks, civilians driving from one town to the next, IDF convoys, ambulances. Due to the rise in suicide car bombs in Southern Lebanon, the IDF declared a rule that any vehicle that had only a driver and no passengers would immediately be suspected as a suicide bomber. We had the dubious honor of watching over this road.

Moti was staring through the high-powered binoculars, and he told me that an IDF convoy was on its way. "I see some IDF vehicles approaching us," he said, "and there is some other non-IDF van with them, but I can't recognize what it is from here. Take a look." I looked through the binoculars, and the convoy of jeeps and armored personnel carriers, still quite a distance away, was indeed accompanying a white van, but I could not make out the writing on the van. I looked and looked and looked, until the writing on the van suddenly became clear to me.

"Oh my G-d, I can't believe my eyes," I said in English. "What, what is it?" asked Moti. My eyes stared in amazement through the binoculars at the writing on the van: Chabad. That's right, this IDF convoy was accompanying a Chabad van.

The convoy pulled up to our fortress, and my friends guarding the gate opened it up. In drove IDF jeeps, armored personnel carriers, and a van carrying Chabad rabbis and students. Like a mirage in the desert, the van stopped, and

out came four Chabadniks. One of them held a Megillah scroll. Another had an accordion slung over his shoulders. Another had a bag filled with small copies of Megillahs, Purim cards with kids, and blessing notes from the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Last but certainly not least, one of them brought out several bags of hamentashen pastries, various other sweets, and, of course, a bottle and shot glasses for a true "l'chaim."

Just like that, out of nowhere, in the middle of a war zone, this little IDF fortress suddenly came alive with the spirit of Purim. Now it was surreal. From the bleak picture I described above, I could suddenly see somebody reading the Megillah from a parchment scroll, with people following in small paperback Magillahs (I have mine to this day).

I now heard joyous accordion music, and I could see people dancing with big smiles in small circles. People were eating hamentashen, and l'chaim was not about a patrol, but instead was a good shot of vodka. We were all taking turns guarding the various posts, as everybody wanted to share in this sudden outburst of Purim joy.

Purim was here, alive and well, in an IDF fortress in Southern Lebanon! Here we were – religious soldiers, secular soldiers, simple soldiers, officers, mechanics and cooks – together with these four Chabad angels, who brought us the purest sense of joy and the sincerest expressions of solidarity, support and unity I have ever experienced.

There is not one single mention of G-d's name in Magillah scroll. Rabbinic tradition interprets this as the Purim story being an example of the "hidden hand of G-d," where miracles happen behind the scenes.

I wasn't in Shushan 2,500 years ago, so I can only rely on what the Megillah tells us. But there is one thing I am sure of: on Purim Day, 1985, for my friends and I in an IDF fortress in Southern Lebanon, there were no "hidden miracles." G-d's name was in the air, and the miracle of Purim was out in the open – in the most unlikely of places – for all to see and hear.

## Customs

### What are the mitzvot of Purim?

- There are five special mitzvot of Purim:
1. We listen to the reading of the Scroll of Esther (Megila) in the evening and during the day.
  2. We send gifts of food--at least two kinds of ready-to-eat foods--to at least one friend on Purim day.
  3. We give charity to at least two needy individuals on Purim day.
  4. We eat a festive meal during the day (kreplach and hamentashen are traditional Purim foods).
  5. We add the special Al HaNissim prayer ("Concerning the Miracles") to our prayers.

## The Rebbe Writes

from correspondence of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

By the Grace of G-d  
7th of Adar, 5713 [1953]  
Brooklyn, N.Y.

The story of Purim, as related in the Book of Esther, gives us a clear analysis of the "Jewish problem."

Being dispersed over 127 provinces and lands, their own still in ruins, the Jews undoubtedly differed from one another in custom, garment and tongue according to the place of their dispersal, very much in the same way as Jews in different lands differ nowadays. Yet, though there were Jews who would conceal their Jewishness, Haman, the enemy of the Jews, recognized the essential qualities and characteristics of the Jews which made all of them, with or without their consent, into "one people," namely, "their laws are different from those of any other people" (Book of Esther 3:8).

Hence, in his wicked desire to annihilate the Jews, Haman seeks to destroy "all the Jews, young and old, children and women." Although there were in those days, too, Jews who strictly adhered to the Torah and Mitzvoth, and Jews whose religious ties with their people were weak, or who sought to assimilate themselves, yet none could escape the classification of belonging to that "one people," and every one was included in Haman's cruel decree.

In all ages there were Hamans, yet we have outlived them, thank G-d. Wherein lies the secret of our survival?

The answer will be evident from the following illustration. When a scientist seeks to ascertain the laws governing a certain phenomenon, or to discover the essential properties of a certain element in nature, he must undertake a series of experiments under the most varied conditions in order to discover those properties or laws which pertain under all conditions alike. No true scientific law can be deduced from a minimum number of experiments, or from experiments under similar or only slightly varied conditions, for the results as to what is essential and what is secondary or quite unimportant would then not be conclusive.

The same principle should be applied to our people. It is one of the oldest in the world, beginning its national history from the

Revelation at Mount Sinai, some 3300 years ago. In the course of these long centuries our people has lived under extremely varied conditions, in most different times and different places all over the world.

If we wish to discover the essential elements making up the cause and very basis of the existence of our people and its unique strength, we must conclude that it is not its peculiar physical or intrinsic mental characteristics, not its tongue, manners and customs (in a wider sense), nor even its racial purity (for there were times in the early history of our people, as well as during the Middle Ages and even recent times, when whole ethnic groups and tribes have become proselytes and part of our people).

The essential element which unites our "dispersed and scattered people" and makes it "one people" throughout its dispersion and regardless of time, is the Torah and Mitzvoth, the Jewish way of life which has remained basically the same throughout the ages and in all places.

The conclusion is clear and beyond doubt: It is the Torah and Mitzvoth which made our people indestructible on the world scene in the face of massacres and pogroms aiming at our physical destruction, and in the face of ideological onslaughts of foreign cultures aiming at our spiritual destruction.

Purim teaches us the age-old lesson, which has been verified even most recently, to our sorrow, that no manner of assimilationism, not even such which is extended over several generations, provides an escape from the Hamans and Hitlers; nor can any Jew sever his ties with his people by attempting such an escape.

On the contrary: Our salvation and our existence depend precisely upon the fact that "their laws are different from those of any other people."

Purim reminds us that the strength of our people as a whole, and of each individual Jew and Jewess, lies in a closer adherence to our ancient spiritual heritage which contains the secret of harmonious life, hence of a healthy and happy life.

All other things in our spiritual and temporal life must be free from any contradiction to the basis and essence of our existence, and must be attuned accordingly in order to make for the utmost harmony, and add to our physical and spiritual strength, both of which go hand in hand in Jewish life.

With best wishes for a joyous Purim, and may we live to see a world free of Hamans and all types of Amalekites, the enemies of the Jews, of their body, soul and faith,  
Cordially yours,

## MOSHIACH MATTERS

In what respect is Purim greater than all the other festivals? All the festivals are sanctified

by Israel, and in the future when the world will be completely redeemed -- and all its days will be like Shabbat... the light of Purim, which is greater than the light of other festivals, will shed light even in the Messianic age.

(Book of Our Heritage)

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

The Megillah, which we will read in just a few days on Purim, describes how Mordechai refused to bow down to the wicked Haman. Our Sages tell us that it is because Mordechai refused to bow down that he was called "Mordechai HaYehudi." He was given this title even though he was not from the tribe of Yehuda (Judah), but rather from the tribe of Benjamin.

"Yehuda" is from the word "hoda'ah," meaning "to acknowledge." The Talmud states that when a person rejects idol worship, it is as if he has acknowledged the entire Torah. By refusing to bow to Haman, Mordechai was acknowledging the truth of the entire Torah. For this reason, he is called "Mordechai HaYehudi." And it is for this same reason that all Jews, regardless of their tribe, are called "Yehudim" - Jews, for they acknowledge the truth of G-d's Torah.

The days of Purim teach us a lesson for all times: The Jewish people may be a minority in the world. They may be scattered among all the nations. But when it comes to the Torah and its commandments everyone must see that the Jewish people bow before no one. They do not bow before other nations or their beliefs, but stand tall with all their might for the Torah, the inheritance of the Jewish people.

In 1940, on the ninth day of the month of Adar, the Previous Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Schneersohn, arrived in the United States. Like Mordechai, the Previous Rebbe refused to bow down to the "idols" of communism, assimilation, and modernism. In fact, when he came to the U.S. and began implementing his many projects for the revitalization of Judaism, he was told by many people that he would not be successful with such traditional programs in the "Goldene Medina." To this comment, the Previous Rebbe resolutely responded, "America is not different."

The hundreds of Chabad-Lubavitch Centers throughout North America are testimony to the truth of the Previous Rebbe's words.

There is far more that unites the Jewish people than what divides us. On this holiday of Purim, may we acknowledge, recognize and focus on that which makes us "Yehudim," until we experience the ultimate unification of all the Jewish people with G-d, in the Final Redemption.

Shmuel Beilman

## L'ZICHRON CHAYA I MUSHKA לזכרון חיה י מושקא

The name of our publication has special meaning. It stands for the name of Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka Schneerson (obm), wife of the Rebbe.



Published by  
Lubavitch Youth Organization  
1408 President St., Brooklyn, NY, 11213  
phone 718 778 6000

Chairman  
Director  
Program Director  
Secretary  
Administrator  
Layout  
Associate Editor  
Chairman Editorial Comm.  
Rebbe photo

Rabbi David Raskin י"ד  
Rabbi Shmuel Butman  
Rabbi Kasriel Kastel  
Rabbi Moshe P. Goldman  
Rabbi Shlomo Friedman  
Rivky Lauffer  
David Y. B. Kaufmann י"ד  
Rabbi Nissen Mangel  
S. Roumani

L'Chaim contains words from sacred literature. Please do not deface or discard.  
All contents © 2023 by L.Y.O. ISSN 1050 0480  
L'Chaim Subscriptions  
For a one year subscription send \$55,  
payable to LYO (560 elsewhere) to:  
L'Chaim, 1408 President St., Bklyn., NY, 11213  
Learn about Moshiah  
Visit www.moshiah.com or call (718) 953 6100