

From Simchas Purim to Simchas Olam

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The *gemara* in *Taanis* (29a) says: "משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה, Once *Adar* begins we increase our rejoicing." *Rashi* explains: "ימי נסים היו לישראל פורים ופסח, The Jews experienced miraculous days, *Purim* and *Pesach*." Why does *Rashi* mention *Pesach*, which falls in *Nissan*, when the *gemara* is clearly discussing *Adar*, the month in which *Purim* falls? Rather, *Rashi* is pointing out that if we wish to properly understand the *nes* (miracle) of *Purim*, we must understand the *nissim* (miracles) of *Pesach* as well. Through an understanding of *Pesach* we will be better prepared for the *simcha* (joy) of *Purim*.

The *navi* (prophet) refers to *yetzias Mitzrayim* (the Exodus from Egypt) as the birth of *Am Yisrael* (the Jewish people), calling it, "יום הולדת, אותך, Your birthday" (*Yechezkel* 16:4). This birth, like every birth, required a period of pregnancy before it could take place. This pregnancy, like every pregnancy, was divided into three stages: the first trimester, the second trimester, and the third trimester. The three stages of *Am Yisrael's* pregnancy correspond to *parashas Shekalim*, *parashas Zachor*, and *parashas Parah*, three of the four special Torah readings read during *Adar* and *Nissan*. After passing through these three stages of pregnancy, we arrive finally at *parashas HaChodesh*, which represents התחדשות (renewal) and birth.

Parashas Shekalim, which corresponds to the first trimester, discusses נתינה (giving). When a person gives willingly, it is an expression of the love he has inside. Love is expressed practically through *zeal* and desire to give. In nature, זריזות is represented by water, which is constantly flowing, as well as constantly giving of itself in order to help others grow. *Avraham*

(our Father) is called "אוהבי, the one who loved Me," as it says, "זרע אברהם אוהבי" (*Yeshayahu* 41:8). In תפילת גשם (the Prayer for Rain), recited on *Shemini Atzeres*, we refer to *Avraham* as "אב נמשך, אחרך כמים, The Patriarch who followed You like water." This is the first stage of pregnancy, corresponding to *Avraham Avinu*, corresponding to the *middah* (characteristic) of זריזות, and corresponding to the act of נתינה. זריזות is the message of *parashas Shekalim*, represented by the act of giving willingly.

However, when a person gives and gives with no restraint, he can reach a level of forbidden נתינה, a level of forbidden התקרבות (closeness). When the Torah discusses עריות (forbidden relationships), it says, "חסד הוא, It is an abomination" (*VaYikra* 20:17). In order to prevent over-זריזות, one must practice זיהרות (watchfulness). זיהרות is an expression of fear; when one is afraid, he proceeds with caution. In nature, זיהרות is represented by ashes, as one who fears something will destroy it to its very foundation as soon as he gets the chance. *Yitzchak Avinu*, whose כסא הכבוד (Throne of Glory), is the Patriarch who represents זיהרות. זיהרות is the message of *parashas Zachor*, when we fulfill the obligation to remember evil, remain wary of it, and to ultimately destroy it.

However, too much זיהרות is also not good. One needs to find the proper balance between זיהרות and זריזות, and to combine them harmoniously. The proper synthesis of זיהרות and זריזות is נקיות (cleanliness). This is the message of *parashas Parah*, which discusses the process of purification from טומאה (impurity), leading the person to a state of נקיות. The כהן (priest) takes מים חיים (water from a flowing source), representing זריזות, and

mixes in the ashes of the פר אדומה (red heifer), representing זיהרות. The proper mixture of water and ashes, זריזות and זיהרות, creates a state of נקיות. This is *parashas Parah*.

Once we arrive at a state of נקיות, we are prepared for התחדשות. Just as these three states set the stage for our birth as a nation with *yetzias Mitzrayim*, which was in the merit of the זריזות of *Avraham Avinu*, the זיהרות of *Yitzchak Avinu*, and the נקיות of *Yaakov Avinu*, so too did they lay the groundwork for our rebirth as a nation in the days of *Mordechai* and *Esther* (*Yalkut Shimoni, Tehillim* 102).

How were we reborn in the days of *Mordechai* and *Esther*? *Haman* knew that he could not rely on physically overcoming *Am Yisrael* in order to defeat them, but that he must destroy them spiritually as well. Therefore, *Haman* drew lots, as if to suggest that *Hashem* had set the date for the destruction of the Jews, not *Haman*. *Chazal* tell us that the shock this caused was so powerful that tragedies immediately began to take place: women would go up to the roof to lay out clothes to dry and fall to their deaths; men would go to draw water and simply fall into the well. This only deepened the sense of shock and abandonment.

This continued to happen until *Mordechai* pointed out that, although *Haman* was correct that our lot looked dismal, the Jewish people also have power over lots, as the כהן גדול (High Priest) would draw lots on *Yom Kippur*. If the Jewish people could change *Purim* to *Yom HaKippurim*, to *teshuva* (repentance) and willingness to change, they would regain power over chance and be reborn. The *gemara* in *Niddah* (31a) says that in the first trimester of pregnancy, the fetus grows in the lower part of the womb; in the second trimester, the fetus grows in the middle part of the womb; in the final trimester, the fetus grows in the upper part of the womb. When it comes time for the child to enter

