



SERENITY, FAITH, AND HAPPINESS

Haman draws the lot, and out comes the date. The thirteenth of Adar, the day fated for hanging, destruction, and tragedy for the Jewish people, and the day that all those plans shockingly turned around. It all happened on the thirteenth of Adar; yet we celebrate Purim on the fourteenth of Adar. The Megillah (9:22) says that this is because these are the days when the Jews rested from their enemies. This is very strange. Most other holidays that we celebrate take place on the day the big event occurred. Pesach is on the 15th of Nissan, when we left Mitzrayim, Shavuot is on the sixth of Sivan, when, according to most commentators, we received the Torah. Why then do we celebrate Purim on the fourteenth day, the day *after* the miraculous event took place?

Rav Avrohom Schorr writes in his *Halekach Vehalivuv* that we specifically celebrate on the fourteenth, the day we rested from our enemies, because “*Avodat yom HaPurim hu lehasig shalva amiti*” the goal of Purim is to attain a sense of true serenity, a sense of inner tranquility and peace. This idea may seem comical considering the way most of us view the holiday of Purim, a day of chaos, drinking, and costumes. Tranquility is not the usual word associated with Purim. Yet there is something about this day, that when

accessed properly, can transport us to that place of true calmness.

What is the secret to serenity? Take for example, a baby sleeping in the arms of its mother. The mother may be in a quiet room, or a bustling supermarket, but as long as the baby is in its mother's arms it feels safe and calm. How do we achieve a sense of true tranquility? The answer is *bitachon*. The feeling that Hashem is carrying us and that we are safe with Him. David Hamelech beautifully writes of *bitachon* in his songs of Tehillim. In Perek 16 (passuk 8), he says “*Shiviti Hashem lnegdi tamid*”, I am always mindful of Hashem's presence. These words, found on many walls of shuls, remind us that Hashem is always watching us and we should act accordingly. Beyond that, Rav Hershel Schachter added in the name of the Baal Shem Tov, that the word “*shiviti*” comes from the word “*hishtavut*”, which means a person who is tempered and moderated. The reason I am able to be “*shiviti*”, composed and tempered throughout all times, is because “*Hashem lnegdi tamid*,” Hashem is always by my side. Whether the times are high or low, Hashem is a constant and I don't need to be frazzled by the different circumstances. It is the ability to let go

and let God in, that brings serenity.

It is this feeling of serenity that brings true simcha. David Hamelech continues in the next passuk, “*Lachen samach libi*”, because I feel this calmness, I feel happy. The midrash (*Esther Rabbah* 7:13), explains that Mordechai saw young children leaving school and he asked them to share what they learned in school that day. They each relayed the pesukim they learned which all centered around the theme of faith and Hashem's care for his people. Mordechai then laughed and had great joy. Upon witnessing this entire scene, Haman asked Mordechai why he is so overjoyed, Mordechai explained that it is because he no longer needs to fear Haman's decree. He didn't hear that the decree changed, or that all would work out for him and his people. But he heard that he should have *bitachon* and with that, there is no room for fear, there is just room for simcha.

Purim is the day of serenity, not because all is necessarily calm in our homes on that day, but because when hearing the words of the Megillah, we get a renewed sense of faith that Hashem is taking care of us and there is nothing to worry about. It is this faith that carries us through all situations and brings us to a true sense of joy.