



לקוטי שיחות  
PROJECT  
LIKKUTEI  
SICHOS

## **Sicha Summary**

Chelek 16 | Purim | Sichah 2

### **The Context:**

The Talmud says that originally, G-d “coerced” the Jewish people to accept the Torah when the Torah was given at Sinai. In the aftermath of their salvation on Purim, however, the Jewish people wilfully accepted the Torah upon themselves, cementing their earlier, compelled commitment. (*Shabbos 88a*)

### **The Question:**

Why did our Sages not institute any commemoration on Purim of this significant turning point — our willing acceptance of Torah?

### **The Explanation:**

When a person is coerced into action, he lacks enthusiasm. When a person willingly commits to something, he acts with alacrity and excitement.

The Jews’ willing acceptance of Torah on Purim is commemorated not by performing any new, novel action, but by demonstrating enthusiasm and joy in the performance of *mitzvos* that were given previously. The three *mitzvos* unique to Purim are expressions of a new eagerness toward basic, fundamental *mitzvos*.

Reading the *Megillah* — Reading accounts of G-d’s miraculous salvation is not a novel practice. But reading an account twice publicly, at night and during the day, is unique to Purim, and expresses our enthusiasm toward retelling and publicizing the miracle.

*Mishloach Manos* — Commentators explain that the *mitzvah* to give gifts of food to a friend is meant to foster love and tranquility among people. This

corresponds to the long-standing obligation of loving your fellow Jew. On Purim, however, this love is given heightened attention; it engenders excitement by seeking out others in order to gift them food items that they can enjoy immediately.

Gifts to the poor — the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* is a foundation of Jewish life. But on Purim, we express our enthusiasm by seeking out people who need our help. We are not satisfied to fulfill this obligation by giving *tzedakah* to only one person; rather, we look for two or more people to support.

### **The Question:**

Other commentators explain that the objective of giving gifts of food and *tzedakah* is to enable others to fulfill the *mitzvah* of having a festive meal on Purim. If this is the only purpose of these *mitzvos*, how is our enthusiasm for the wilful commitment to Torah expressed?

### **The Rambam:**

To understand this, we need to preface with the Rambam's characterization of the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* to the poor on Purim:

“It is preferable for a person to be more liberal with his donations to the poor than to be lavish in his preparation of the Purim feast or in sending portions of food to his friends. For there is no greater... happiness than to gladden the hearts of the poor....” (*Hilchos Megillah* 2:17)

By inserting this clause into the laws of Purim, Rambam implies that although giving *tzedakah* is imperative year round, the joy engendered by *tzedakah* is a fundamental component of Purim.

Why is the joy resulting from *tzedakah* integral to Purim?

The *Megillah* implies that the *mitzvos* of donating to the poor and sending food to one's friends are both expressions of the essential theme of the holiday — joy: “To make them days of feasting and joy, and sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.” (*Esther* 9:22) The holiday of

Purim is a day of joy, the sending of portions and gifts to the poor is a result and expression of that joy.

The joy of Purim is unique in that there is a halachic obligation to become intoxicated to a point that is beyond rationality. (*Rambam, Hilchos Megillah, 2:15*) This irrational joy is essential to accepting the Torah wilfully on Purim. In order to receive the Torah, a person must leave behind their own conception of reality and surrender himself to Torah's truth. The inebriation of Purim is the joy of letting go of one's own limited consciousness as a preparation to truly accept the Torah.

Thus, even according to the interpretation — that the objective of *tzedakah* and sending food to friends on Purim is to enable them to enhance their feast — these *mitzvos* still express our re-acceptance of Torah, for the joyful feast of Purim itself is the ultimate expression of our unbounded joy that is the prerequisite for receiving Torah.

The Rambam makes a deeper point: It is better to focus on *tzedakah* on Purim more than spending on one's own feast or gifts to one's friends, because "there is no greater... happiness than to gladden the hearts of the poor." The more a person transcends his own private concerns, the more ready he is to receive Torah. When we give charity to the poor above all else, we demonstrate that someone else's happiness is more important to us than our own. This is the deepest expression of Purim joy — a joy that lifts us from our own bounded selves, and allows us to happily, wilfully, receive the Torah once again.