



Likkutei Sichos

Volume 16 | Purim | Sichah 2

Sealing the Deal

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1.

CELEBRATING TORAH ON *PURIM*

On the verse,¹ “The Jews confirmed and **accepted**,” our Rabbis explain:² “They confirmed what they had already accepted.” Meaning, because “Hashem held the mountain over them like a barrel...” at the time of *Matan Torah*, there was a “strong alibi³ {to lessen Jewish culpability for violation of} the Torah.”⁴ This alibi was nullified at the time of Purim because “they again accepted it in the time of Achashveirosh.”

We see from here that the Jewish people’s acceptance of the Torah (at that time) was of fundamental significance. Ostensibly, it is unclear why the Sages did not establish any observance on Purim to commemorate their re-acceptance “in the time of Achashveirosh.”

Although the fact that the Jewish people accepted the Torah willingly at that time was “because of loving appreciation of the miracle⁵ done on their behalf,”⁶ nonetheless, it is difficult to suggest that nothing at all was established to commemorate something so fundamental brought about by the miracle of Purim — the upgrade and culmination of *Matan Torah* — their willing acceptance of the Torah.

¹ *Esther* 9:27.

² *Shabbos* 88a.

³ {In the Aramaic/Heb. original, “*modaah*”; lit., “a protest” (lodged about a forced, impending transaction).”

⁴ {*Shabbos*, *ibid.* See Rashi, *ad loc.* The Jewish people could claim that they were coerced into accepting the Torah, and as such, that it was not (absolutely) binding.}

⁵ {In the Hebrew original, “*me’ahavas ha’nes*”; lit. “love of the miracle.”}

⁶ *Rashi* on *Shabbos* 88a, s.v., “*biyme’i*”; similarly, *Tosafos* on *Shabbos* 88a, s.v., “*moda’a*”: “they accepted it willingly because of love of the miracle.”

2.

THE PURIM MITZVOS ARE ALL ABOUT THIS

{To answer the forementioned question:} We can say that on the contrary, this willing acceptance of the Torah is expressed in **all** the unique *mitzvos* on Purim: (a) reading the *Megillah*; (b) *mishloach manos*;⁷ and (c) *matanos la'evyonim*.⁸

These *mitzvos* emphasize the uniqueness of Purim over other holidays and festivals. [Whereas the other *mitzvos* and practices of Purim — reading the Torah, reciting “*Ve'al Hanisim*” in prayer and in “Grace after Meals,” the prohibition of fasting and eulogizing, the festive meal {an expression of} “feasting and gladness”⁹ — also feature (in a similar fashion) on other holidays and festivals.]

To preface — there is a difference between a person who is compelled and forced to act and one who acts willingly and intentionally. When a person acts against his will and by force, he only does as much as is absolutely necessary (to discharge what he must do). In contrast, when a person is self-motivated, he is not content to merely fulfill his obligation. Rather, he invests effort, and looks for ways to augment and excel at what he does. He goes beyond his obligation.

This was evidenced when “the Jews confirmed and accepted upon themselves and upon their descendants” — by the *mitzvos* of (writing and) reading the *Megillah*, *mishloach manos*, and *matanos la'evyonim*.

To elucidate:

On the one hand, these three *mitzvos* are not entirely new; on the other hand, their earlier parameters were augmented {on Purim}:

⁷ {Sending two portions of food as gifts to at least one person.}

⁸ {Giving *tzedakah* to a least two poor people.}

⁹ {*Esther* 9:22.}

The *Megillah* was not a novelty. (From earlier on, there were many sacred texts. The Torah, Prophets, and Writings. Nonetheless, the *Megillah* incorporated another book into Scripture by specific request: ¹⁰“**Write me** for future generations.” This miracle became one of the concluding and final ones,¹¹ at least of those miracle narratives that were **canonized**.)¹² The same applies to reading the *Megillah*. The idea of reading Torah already existed, as did the (general) concept of recounting a miracle on a festival. However, reading the *Megillah* is unique because it takes place {also} at night, from a scroll written on parchment, in order to publicize the miracle, etc.

*Mishloach Manos: Manos Halevi*¹³ explains that the purpose of giving *mishloach manos* is to foster goodwill and friendship among Jewish people. This *mitzvah* and the general ideal — *ahavas Yisrael*,¹⁴ which is a fundamental principle of Torah¹⁵ — is relevant on all days of the year. However, the *mitzvah* “love your fellow as yourself,”¹⁶ does not require a person to go **looking** for other Jews in order to fulfill it. The novelty of the *mitzvah* of “sending portions of food to one another”¹⁷ is that we are obligated to invest effort to find “another” and send him portions of food to actively “love your fellow as yourself,” in a form that is beneficial immediately (— not by sending money).¹⁸

*Matanos la’evyonim: Tzekakah*¹⁹ is a *mitzvah* that applies all year round. Purim adds the following element: A person cannot be content to wait until encountering a poor person before fulfilling the *mitzvah* to “open your hand to him,” and “you shall give him.”²⁰ Rather, he must search for **two** poor people and give them (in the manner of) “*matanos*” {lit., “gifts”}.²¹

¹⁰ *Megillah* 7a {this was Esther’s petition to the Sages}.

¹¹ *Yoma* 29a.

¹² As opposed to the miracle of Chanukah {which does not appear in Scripture}.

¹³ Commenting on *Megillas Esther* 9:16, 20 (ff.). {The book *Manos Halevi* was written by the great Kabbalist of the 16th century, perhaps best known for his composition of the prayer *Lecha Dodi*.}

¹⁴ {The *mitzvah* to love one’s fellow Jew.}

¹⁵ *Toras Kohanim* and Rashi, *Vayikra* 19:18.

¹⁶ {*Vayikra* 19:18.}

¹⁷ {*Esther* 9:19, 22.}

¹⁸ See *Taanis* 23b.

¹⁹ {Lit., “righteousness,” the obligation to give charity to the poor.}

²⁰ *Devarim* 15:8,10.

²¹ {It should be given in the way that a person would give a gift to his friend.}

This is also emphasized by the words, “They **confirmed** what they had **already** accepted.” These are *mitzvos* that the Jewish people have “already accepted.” In any event, the Jewish people had been obligated to keep them. On Purim “they confirmed” them, **however**, making them permanent and everlasting. This applies in both areas of a person’s *avodah*,²² between him and Hashem,²³ and between him and his fellow.²⁴ Meaning, unequivocally, Purim strengthens and adds to Torah itself — writing and reading the *Megillah*, and by extension, also increasing praise and song to Hashem, more so than other festivals (*avodah* between man and Hashem).

Additionally, we increase in our performance of, and make exceptional effort in fulfilling, the *mitzvah* to “love your fellow as yourself” and the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* by sending *mishloach manos* and giving *matanos la’evyonim* (*avodah* between man and his fellow).

3.

WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO SAY THAT IT IS FOR THE PURIM MEAL

This raises a question: Other reasons have been offered to explain the *mitzvos* of *mishloach manos* and *matanos la’evyonim*. Concerning *mishloach manos*, it says:²⁵

So that every person will have ample provisions to have the holiday meal as required. As implied by the *Gemara* in the first chapter {of *Megillah*},²⁶ ‘Abaye bar Avin and Rabbi Chanina bar Avin would exchange their meals with each other, and in this way they would fulfill their obligation of *mishloach manos*.’ Thus, this indicates that the purpose of sending these portions of food is for the holiday meal.²⁷

²² {Divine service.}

²³ {E.g., ritual *mitzvos*, Torah study, prayer, love and reverence for Hashem, and faith.}

²⁴ {Interpersonal *mitzvos*, such as *tzedakah*, honoring parents, and *ahavas Yisrael*.}

²⁵ *Terumas Hadeshen*, section 111.

²⁶ 7b.

²⁷ See *Responsa of Chasam Sofer*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 196, concerning the two reasons offered.

Similarly, regarding *matanos la'evyonim*, several sources imply that the purpose of giving *matanot la'evyonim* is so that the poor will have (enough) money to purchase food for the Purim meal.²⁸

According to these opinions — that the purpose and reason behind these *mitzvos* is to enable people to fulfill the *mitzvah* of the Purim repast, and for this reason, we expend effort to perform these *mitzvos* (although it is true that by doing so, one automatically fulfills the *mitzvos* of “love your fellow as yourself,” and the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*) — these *mitzvos* do not evince and emphasize that “they confirmed what they had already accepted.” {Accordingly, the original question returns: Why is there no commemoration of the voluntary acceptance of the Torah that took place on Purim?}

4.

RAMBAM'S VIEW OF THINGS

We will clarify this issue by prefacing with a discussion of Rambam's opinion. Rambam also seems to maintain, as mentioned, that the *mitzvah* of *matanos la'evyonim* is not (merely) about the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* (and the same applies to *mishloach manos*, as will be explained). Rambam says:²⁹

It is preferable for a person to increase his {expenditures on} *matanos la'evyonim* rather than to increase {those of} his {Purim} feast or sending portions of food to his friends. For there is no greater and more splendid joy than to gladden the hearts of the poor, the orphans, the widows, and the converts. For one who brings joy to the hearts of these unfortunate individuals resembles the *Shechinah*,³⁰ as it says {that the *Shechinah* acts},³¹ “to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the despondent.”

²⁸ See *Levushei Serad*, commenting on *Magen Avraham*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 695, sub-par. 13; and see *Pri Megadim*, *ibid.* [See *Bava Metzia* 78b; and Rashi, *ibid.*; *Avodah Zara* 17b (and Rashi and *Tosafos*, *ibid.*)] *Tzofnas Paneach* on Rambam, *Hilchos Megillah*, ch. 2, par. 16.

²⁹ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Megillah*,” ch. 2, par. 17.

³⁰ {Divine Presence.}

³¹ *Yeshaya* 57:15.

If Rambam would maintain that the essence of the *mitzvah* of *matanos la'evyonim* is *tzedakah*, then the advantage of *matanos la'evyonim* (that by a person fulfilling “*matanos la'evyonim*... {he} resembles the *Shechinah*”) should apply to the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah* all year round. If this were true, Rambam should have recorded this (i.e., the virtue of a person who gladdens “the hearts of the poor... resembles the *Shechinah*”) in its principal place — in “*Hilchos Matnos Aniyim*,”³² for there, Rambam discusses the excellency of giving *tzedakah* in general. Of what relevance is this specifically to (Purim and) “*Hilchos Megillah*”?

Conversely, the virtues of giving *tzedakah* that Rambam mentions in “*Hilchos Matnos Aniyim*” (“Israel will only be redeemed through *tzedakah*,”³³ and the like) are not mentioned here in “*Hilchos Megillah*” (which also explicates the laws of Purim).

Therefore, we must conclude that Rambam maintains: Although by giving *matanos la'evyonim* on Purim, a person (also) fulfills the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, nonetheless, the essence and purpose (of the *mitzvah* of *matanos la'evyonim* on Purim) is not (only) about *tzedakah* — to supply “whatever he lacks,”³⁴ i.e., all of the poor person’s needs, literally — but rather, about (primarily) giving the poor person joy,³⁵ “to gladden the hearts of the poor.”

[On this basis, we can also appreciate why Rambam includes “the orphans, the widows, and the converts” in the {obligation to give} joy inherent in *matanos la'evyonim*. Ostensibly, if the members of these groups are needy, they would fall under the category of *evyonim* and poor people. Why does Rambam delineate them specifically? And if they are not needy, and they do not subsist on *tzedakah*, why does Rambam mention them in the context of the *mitzvah* of *matanos la'evyonim*?

However, in light of the above discussion — that the purpose and gist of the *mitzvah* of *matanos la'evyonim* is primarily to “**gladden** the hearts...,” this *mitzvah* consequently, applies to all these unfortunate individuals. {For even if

³² {Lit., “Laws of Gifts for the Poor,”} ch. 10.

³³ Ibid, sec. 10, par. 1.

³⁴ {*Devarim* 15:8.}

³⁵ See also *Ritva* on *Megillah* 7b; *Ramban*, and the novellae attributed to *Ritva*, on *Bava Metzia* 78b.

they do not need money, they are nevertheless despondent and need to be cheered up}. And we can posit, albeit with a bit of a stretch, that regarding the particular {need for} the aspect of joy, they are all poor and needy.]

Furthermore: {Not only does Rambam maintain that the reason for *matanos la'evyonim* is to gladden the needy, but} Rambam's wording implies that the purpose and point of all three *mitzvos* — “his feast,” “sending portions of food to his friends,” and “*matanos la'evyonim*” — is joy (and not for some other reason). But since, “there is no greater and more splendid happiness than to gladden the hearts of the poor,” therefore, “It is preferable for a person to **increase** his {expenditures on} *matanos la'evyonim*.”

We need to clarify: We can appreciate how the purpose of the holiday meal is joy. But how does Rambam derive that the purpose and point of *mishloach manos* and *matanos la'evyonim* is about joy?

[Additionally, we need to clarify: How does the idea that “one who brings happiness to the hearts of these unfortunate individuals **resembles the *Shechinah*,**” relate specifically to the purpose behind the *mitzvah* of *matanos la'evyonim*? On the surface, this applies to every act of *tzedakah*, as implied by the verse that Rambam quotes. Nevertheless, Rambam does not mention, at all, the virtue of resembling the *Shechinah*” in the context his discussion of *tzedakah*, as discussed, even though there he *does* quote the verse, “to revive the spirit of the lowly....”]³⁶

³⁶ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Matnos Aniyim*,” ch. 10, par. 5.

5.

PART OF THE FEAST, MAYBE

Regarding {Rambam’s source that the purpose of} *mishloach manos* {is joy}: We can posit that Rambam maintains that the reason behind this *mitzvah* is to ensure that others have sufficient food for their Purim feast, as explained. This is part of an individual’s **own** obligation to partake in a festive Purim meal. As Rambam says,³⁷ “What is the nature of our obligation for this feast? A person should eat...” (In the very same *halachah*, Rambam continues:) “Similarly, a person is obligated to send two portions.... If he does not have the means to send gifts of food to a friend, he should exchange his meal with his friend: One sends to the other {what he had prepared for} his Purim feast, and the other sends {what he had prepared for} his Purim feast.” And the point of the Purim feast is to celebrate the joy of the *mitzvah*, “feasting and rejoicing” {and thus, by extension, the theme of the *mitzvah* of *mishloach manos* is also joy}.

And similarly regarding *matanos la’evyonim*, we can say that the *mitzvah* is linked to **his own** obligation to feast and rejoice — his own festive Purim meal. {So to facilitate enjoyment of his own festival meal, he needs to ensure that poor people should have money to buy food for the Purim feast}. Meaning, as Rambam says earlier:³⁸

When a person eats and drinks {in celebration of a holiday}, he is obligated to feed converts, orphans, widows, and others who are destitute or poor. In contrast, a person who locks the gates of his courtyard and eats and drinks with his children and his wife without feeding the poor and the embittered, is rejoicing not with a *mitzvah*, but with his belly.

However, it is difficult to apply the same concept here, to *matanos la’evyonim*, since Rambam breaks this up and discusses the law of *matanos la’evyonim* in its own *halachah*:³⁹ “One is obligated to distribute to the poor on the day of Purim....” This is in contrast to the law of *mishloach manos*, which Rambam does include in the same *halachah* as the *mitzvah* of the Purim feast.

³⁷ {*Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Megillah*,” ch. 2, par. 15.}

³⁸ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yom Tov*,” ch. 6, par. 18.

³⁹ {*Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Megillah*,” ch. 2, par. 16.}

Moreover, neither in this *halachah* nor in the following one regarding *matanos la'evyonim* does Rambam say, “When a person eats and drinks...” or the like, as he does in “*Hilchos Yom Tov*.”

This omission makes it clear that *matanos la'evyonim* is a separate topic and is unrelated to **a person's own** obligation to feast and rejoice, i.e., to make a Purim feast.

Furthermore: According to the above proposition, it would emerge that *mishloach manos* and *matanos la'evyonim* on Purim are not independent *mitzvos*. Rather, they are part of a person's obligation to feast. Accordingly, if a person does not fulfill the *mitzvos* of *mishloach manos* and *matanos la'evyonim*, he does not properly discharge **his own** obligation of feasting on Purim (“feasting and rejoicing”), similar to {his obligation to rejoice on} the festivals {which is dependent on rejoicing the poor, as mentioned above}.

However, this conclusion runs contrary to the simple meaning of the verses and to the way that these *mitzvahs* are explained in numerous sources — that these are three distinct *mitzvos*. In fact, this is what Rambam's wording regarding *matanos la'evyonim* suggests:

It is preferable for a person to increase his {expenditures on} *matanos la'evyonim*...
For there is no **greater** and **more splendid** happiness than to gladden the hearts of the poor....

Meaning, even without doing so, he fulfills the {other} *mitzvos* of Purim, including the *mitzvah* to rejoice. But this is not a great and splendid happiness; this rejoicing cannot compare to the rejoicing of *matanos la'evyonim*.

6.

DAYS OF JOY

The explanation of all this as follows:

The wording of the *Megillah* (from which we derive the three *mitzvos*: feasting — a meal; sending *mishloach manos* to others; and *matanos la'evyonim*):⁴⁰ “To observe them as **days** of feasting and rejoicing, and *mishloach manos* to one another, and *matanos la'evyonim*.” The word “days” implies that the obligation to feast and rejoice on Purim is not an activity that must be carried out in the timeframe of that day. But rather, it expresses the very character (obligation) of the day, **a result** of the fact that this **day** (“days”) is all about “(feasting and) rejoicing.”

In light of this, it is clear that also the other aspects and obligations of the days of Purim — at least those which are explicitly written in the very same verse, “and *mishloach manos* to one another, and *matanos la'evyonim*” — are also a consequence of the fact that these days themselves are “days of feasting and rejoicing.”

This idea — that the days become (days) of feasting and rejoicing — is not evident in other festivals.

This explains the connection to the idea that “they confirmed what they had already accepted.” These days being “**days** of feasting and **rejoicing**” is an expression of the Jews’ re-acceptance of the Torah (the antithesis of coercion) — a time when the Jewish people accepted the Torah intentionally and willingly.⁴¹

⁴⁰ *Esther* 9:22.

⁴¹ {I.e., the unique feature which expresses the very essence of Purim, *joy* (in contrast to coercion), is an expression of the voluntary acceptance of Torah.}

7.

GET DRUNK?!

Commemoration of the milestone that “they confirmed what they had already accepted” is expressed primarily in the unique manner of rejoicing on Purim, in contrast to other festivals and joyous obligations:

Regarding the obligation to feast on Purim, Rambam says:⁴² “What is the nature of our obligation for this feast? A person should eat... and drink wine until he becomes intoxicated and falls asleep in a stupor.” The source for this law (as the commentators say⁴³) is a teaching of Rava:⁴⁴ “A person is obligated to become intoxicated on Purim until he does not know the difference between *cursed is Haman* and *blessed is Mordechai*.”

Seemingly, becoming intoxicated is undesirable; in fact, some of the commentators⁴⁵ go into great length regarding **this** issue. And the Rambam himself explains regarding (other) **festivals**:⁴⁶ “For drunkenness, silliness... do not constitute rejoicing; they are frivolity....” How could it be that the “**obligation** for this feast... {is that a person should} drink wine until he becomes intoxicated and falls asleep in a stupor”?

⁴² *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Megillah*,” ch. 2, par. 15.

⁴³ *Maggid Mishneh* and *Hagahos Maimoniyos* on *Mishneh Torah*, *ibid*.

⁴⁴ *Megillah* 7b.

⁴⁵ *Meiri*, *ibid*; *Kol Bo* (ch. 45 at the end).

⁴⁶ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yom Tov*,” ch. 6, par. 20.

8.

TRANSCEND

We can answer this question in light of the above discussion: As the *Gemara* says, the days of Purim brought with them a re-confirmation by the Jewish people of “what they had already accepted” — the perfection and culmination of receiving the Torah. Since Torah is the revelation of Hashem’s will and wisdom — “a **hidden** treasure”⁴⁷ — no created being (perforce, limited in knowledge and understanding, and in his very existence) can assimilate it. Therefore, at *Matan Torah*, “at each and every utterance {from Hashem}, their souls departed.”⁴⁸

The same holds true and in an even greater measure when “they again **accepted** it in the time of Achashveirosh.” In order to **accept** Hashem’s Torah, the Jewish people had to let go of what they knew and understood, striving to become divested of physicality. This is similar to what is written in *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch* (and in the *Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch*)⁴⁹ regarding the prayer of pious individuals and men of repute (as “one who prays needs to picture himself as if the Divine Presence were opposite him”):⁵⁰ “They would seclude themselves and meditate on their prayers until they would divest themselves of their physicality and their intellectual spirit was predominant, until they reached nearly the rung of prophecy.”

During the time of Purim, the Jewish people reached this state by means of their self-sacrifice⁵¹ throughout the entire year.⁵²

⁴⁷ *Shabbos* 88a.

⁴⁸ *Shabbos* 88a; see *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 36, “*Iggeres HaKodesh*,” epistle 10.

⁴⁹ *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 98, par. 1; see also *Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch*, “*Hilchos Talmud Torah*,” ch. 4, par. 5.

⁵⁰ *Sanhedrin* 22a.

⁵¹ {They exhibited self-sacrifice by not converting to another faith, G-d forbid, although had they done so, their lives would have no longer been endangered.)

⁵² See *Torah Or*, 92d, 95d ff., 97a, 98a, et al.

9.

PROPHECY DURING SLEEP

On this basis, it becomes evident how the (primary) element of Purim — “the essence of the day” — is expressed by “days of feasting and rejoicing,” i.e., in rejoicing at a Purim feast in a manner of “drinking wine until he becomes intoxicated and falls asleep in a stupor.”

That “they again **accepted it** in the time of Achashveirosh,” and that “they confirmed what they had already accepted” at the time of *Matan Torah* is expressed when a person surrenders his understanding and conceptions to the degree that he can be said to be “divested of physicality.” This is similar to what we find regarding prophecy, as Rambam says:⁵³

All of them receive {prophetic visions} only in a dream, in a night vision, or during the day **after slumber has overtaken them**.... And when any of them prophesy, their limbs tremble, their physical powers become weak, they lose control of their senses....

Thus, we are obligated to rejoice on these days of feasting and of rejoicing in a boundless manner such that a person “becomes intoxicated and falls **asleep** in a stupor.” For only then does the facade⁵⁴ of a person and his sensibilities become nullified.⁵⁵

⁵³ *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Yesodei HaTorah*,” ch. 7, par. 2.

⁵⁴ {In the original Hebrew, “*tziur*”; lit. “form.”}

⁵⁵ See *Torah Or*, end of 95d ff., et al.

10.

ONLY PURIM

For this reason, Rambam says that “it is preferable for a person to increase his {expenditures on} *matanos la’evyonim* rather than to increase {those of} his {Purim} feast or sending portions of food to his friends.” All three *mitzvos* express happiness, however, “there is no greater and more splendid happiness than to gladden the hearts of the poor, the orphans, the widows, and the converts.” When does a person reach true and consummate happiness to the extent that he moves beyond himself and reaches a level at which “he does not know,” {i.e., he transcends the level of intellect}, which expresses (the confirmation of the) acceptance Hashem’s Torah? When he increases {his expenditures on} *matanos la’evyonim*. By doing so, he demonstrates that gladdenning the hearts of the indigent brings him more joy than **his own** rejoicing and feasting — or even a {Purim} feast with his “friends”⁵⁶ (his peers) — could have brought.

This sort of rejoicing is not experienced on festivals. The obligation to rejoice on festivals — the *mitzvah* that “you shall rejoice on your festival”⁵⁷ — does not include an obligation to become intoxicated “**until he does not know** {the difference},” “until he gets drunk,” to the extent that he is divested of his sense of self. On the contrary! As evident from Rambam’s ruling cited above, if no one poor or embittered can be found, a person’s own rejoicing suffices, and he lacks nothing in his observance of the *mitzvah* that “you shall rejoice in your festival,” for this *mitzvah* is {a} limited {and contained rejoicing}.

Only if he “locks the gates of his courtyard,” meaning, if he does something to prevent the poor people from experiencing the joy of the festival, then it is considered that he is not rejoicing in the *mitzvah*, but rather, indulging his belly.

⁵⁶ {The term used in the *Megillah*: *mishloach manot ish lerei’eihu* — lit., “sending portions, a man to his friend.”}

⁵⁷ *Devarim* 16:14.

11.

RESEMBLES THE *SHECHINAH*

The advantage of rejoicing on Purim is that a person must rejoice “until he does not know the difference” — surpassing understanding and constraints. And this great and splendid joy is expressed when he gladdens the hearts of the poor, etc.

To this Rambam adds: Not only must a person experience joy “until he does not know {the difference},” to the extent that “he becomes intoxicated and falls asleep in a stupor,” for in this way he fulfills the “they again **accepted** it...,” as mentioned, but even more:

“One who brings happiness to the hearts of these unfortunate individuals **resembles the *Shechinah***.” This ideal — that the rejoicing of a wretched Jewish person should bring his benefactor to a state of great and splendid joy — is unattainable by **created beings**. For every person is a discrete being and is subjective;⁵⁸ accordingly, his own self and (consequently) his own joy matters more to him than that of someone else, and certainly more than that of someone (a poor person) of lower stature. Only the *Shechinah* can experience such {lofty} joy. Therefore, when a Jewish person can (and does) engage in this {selfless, joyful} experience, it is because he is emulating the *Shechinah*.

By his behavior, he fulfills the verse, “days of feasting and rejoicing” in a complete sense. For then his actions demonstrate perfectly that “they again accepted it in the time of Achashveirosh,” and “they confirmed what they had already accepted.”

— Based on a talk delivered on Purim, 5736 (1976)

⁵⁸ *Yevamos* 25b, and sources noted there. {A person cares for himself more than for others and, therefore, he cannot judge himself objectively.}