

Foundations of Truth

On

Purim:

V'nahapoch Hu – Being In Control

Torah Thoughts From

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Torah nuggets harvested from Rav Weinberg's thought-provoking classes given at Yeshivas Ner Yisroel and Aish HaTorah, Jerusalem, that uniquely reveal essential foundations of Torah and Jewish thought. While these essays include some edits for readability, they largely preserve the Rosh HaYeshiva's unique style and original messages.

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Purim: V'nahapoch Hu – Being In Control

Rav Shmuel Yaakov Weinberg zt"l

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The Source

On Purim, Klal Yisrael has the *minhag* (custom) to dress up in costumes and change the *gedarim* of *derech erez*, what's considered acceptable conduct. All of these changes are built on the *yesod*, on the underlying fact, that the source of our *simcha* (joy) on Purim comes from a "ונהפוך הוא." That everything is turned upside down (*Esther 9:1*): "ונהפוך הוא אשר ישלטו היהודים המה" "בשנאייהם" "...And it was turned around: the Jews gained control over their enemies."

The centrality of the miracle and the *simcha* of Purim, all of the *halachos* and its make-up are **not** built on *hatzalas Yisrael*, that Klal Yisrael was saved from a threat of total annihilation. It's not even a focus on the *hapalas oyveihem*, the downfall of our enemies. The downfall of Haman, his sons, and that Amaleik was defeated. Rather the basis of the entire month of Adar is: "ונהפוך הוא אשר ישלטו היהודים המה", things being turned over. The *simcha* at its core comes from: "ונהפוך הוא אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשנאייהם."

Who's In Control?

We need to recognize that the Torah's outlook is that there's always an ongoing question at play: "*Mi sholeit al mi?*" – "Who is in control over who?" Are our *oyvim* (enemies), Heaven forbid, in control over Yisrael or are Yisrael in control over our enemies?

The Megilah tells us: "אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשנאייהם" - "...And it was turned around: the Jews gained control over their enemies."

The pasuk is telling us that the real *simcha* of the "ונהפוך הוא" is not that the Jews were saved, but rather for *kovod shamayim*, for the honor of Hashem. "אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשנאייהם" means that there is no greater *chilul Hashem* as when other nations are *sholeit*, in control of Yisrael. And that a real *kiddush Hashem* occurs when "אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשנאייהם", when Yisrael is in control over its enemies.

Not only this, but you have to understand that the whole *inyan* (concept) and composition of *Moshiach* is the idea of "אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשנאייהם." *Moshiach* is such a basic part of our *emunah* because the very *metzi'us* (actuality) of Hashem having a relationship with the world requires a "אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשנאייהם". This is because the whole idea of Hashem relating to the world, can only come through the conduit of a Klal Yisrael.

This fact began as *Chazal* (*Avos 5:2*) tell us: "עד שבא אברהם וקבל שכר כולם" – "... until Avraham came and received the reward of all of them." That from Avraham's time and on, the whole *metzi'us* of *gilu'i* and *hakaras Shem Shamayim*, the entire ability to recognize Hashem in His world, is only and specifically through Yisrael.

This is why the Chumash first tells us about the world in general, its initial relationship to the Creator through the original commandments and sins, and then shifts to a narrative about a relationship with only Avraham Avinu and his descendents. This is because until Avraham, it was always possible to relate and have a connection with *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*. But after Avraham, it's only possible to have a revelation of Hashem in the world through Yisrael.

As a result, the whole *metzi'us* of the *bri'ah* (all of creation itself) requires that Yisrael specifically should be *sholeit* (reign) over *kol ha'umos ha'olam*, the nations of the world. This, as the *Ramchal* explains, is what we're praying for on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur – that there should be a recognition and that Klal Yisrael should actually be in control, a "ישלטו היהודים." That is the "ותן פהדך" in our tefilos. When is *Yiras* (awe of) *Hashem* and *Malchus Shem Shamayim* clearly seen by the entire world? When Yisrael is *l'malah* and uplifted.

An Uplifting Purim

So on Purim, although we react to the fact that we were saved, Baruch Hashem, and that our enemies were destroyed, but "אשר ישלטו" - our real *simcha* is because "אשר ישלטו." The understanding that Yisrael are *kadosh* (holy) and bring about a *kiddush Hashem* (sanctification of Hashem) which can only happen through a "אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשנאייהם" – this is what our entire *simcha* is really all about.

The entire way we act on Purim is different than how we act all year long, because our *minhagim* (customs) on Purim come from a "ונהפוך הוא" - which at its core is in order to bring about a *kiddush Shem Shamayim*.

The entirety of this "ונהפוך הוא" is to uplift the *kavod* of Hashem. It expresses itself through a Purim filled with a greater *havana* (understanding) in Torah, higher levels of *kishron* (cleverness), and the *simcha* that derives from it.

But it should be clear then, that since the entire point of "ונהפוך הוא" is to bring about a *kiddush Hashem*, obviously the "ונהפוך הוא" should not be one that, *chas v'shalom*, expresses itself or leads to the opposite of a *kiddush Shem Shamayim*. Our conduct can't allow for *nivul peh* (improper speech), it has to be with limits and that our *peh* (mouth) is *tahor* (pure).

It shouldn't be, *chas v'shalom*, with insults that give pain to others. The jokes have to be good-natured, with a *kishron* (cleverness) that makes others feel good. Not, *chas v'shalom*, things that leave others with a spark of hurt. The "ונהפוך הוא" should be one that brings forth things that are *mikadesh* and *misgadel* (sanctify and raise) the *Shem Shamayim*, and not, *chas v'shalom*, the opposite.

Eternal Struggle

There is another aspect.

What does "אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשנאייהם" mean? It's *pashut* (obvious), that when Yisrael is acting *k'hilchoso*, living as it should, then *heim b'rosh*, they're on top. We know that either Esav will be *b'rosh* or Yaakov is *b'rosh*. When Yaakov is as he should be, then he's the *sholeit*, the one in charge. When Yisrael is not as it should be, then Eisav is the *sholeit*. That's also the case with Amaleik (a descendent of Esav): either Amaleik is the *sholeit* or, with *Hashem's* help, Yisrael is *zocheh* (merits) to be in control.

"אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשנאייהם" is obviously referring to the Jews reigning over our enemies who wanted to kill us: Amaleik and the other *Sonei Yisrael*. But it's also well known that Amaleik and Eisav represent the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination), the *mekor of tumah*, the source of impurity. The two are connected and one grows out from the other. So while "בשנאייהם" includes those who wanted to kill us physically, the "אשר ישלטו" that we're trying to conquer, is of course referring to our *oyev ha'amiti*, our ultimate enemy. Who is the primary enemy, the source from

which comes all hatred towards Klal Yisrael? Of course Eisav and Amaleik, but ultimately from the *yetzer hara*.

To this end then, the whole source of true *simcha* is the "אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשנאייהם" - a *shlita* on the *yetzer hara*, conquering our evil inclination. Discipline and control is what real *simcha* is all about. That *libam b'yadom* (their hearts are in their own hands) - that they are in charge. The question in life is always: "Who is in charge?"

Who is the *sholeit* on whom? Is Eisav, Amaleik, our *yetzer hara* in control, *rachmanah litzlan*, or with Hashem's help, do we rule over them?

This is constantly at play in the *milchemes hacha'im*, throughout the struggle of life. This is a communal battle, the *milchamas Yisrael* but it's also the conflict that every single person goes through individually as well. This is our constant *avodah* in life, which is the very essence of Yisrael being the *Am* (nation of) *Hashem*. How we are the nation of Hashem derives itself from how each and every one of us control our own *yetzer hara* and come together as a people, or the other way, *rachmanah litzlan*.

The Purim Battleground

The "ונהפוך הוא" is "אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשנאייהם." That we overcome and "turn things around" and rule over "our enemies". So on Purim we can't lose sight of the "ישלטו", that whatever things may come up, the fact remains that we're *b'shlita*, we're in control.

Now, you might ask: "but on Purim we see the opposite is true?! The entirety of Purim is the opposite; that we're out of control?" But like we said, the "ונהפוך הוא" has to be: that with all the *simcha* and seeming *holelus* (frivolity) involved, there has to be a control. That it doesn't become, *rachmanah litzlan*, a *yetzer hara* filled one. That it doesn't come to a *holelus* that is a *chilul Hashem*. That it doesn't come to a point where the *tzuras ha'adam*, our humanity, is "נהפוך". The "ונהפוך הוא" has to be one of control, where we retain our *tzelem Elokim*, being in the image of G-d.

In the midst of all the joking, like we said, we need to maintain a *kedushas hapeh* (pure speech) and not do anything which could cause pain or hurt the feelings of others. While we're involved in those things that are not normally done, we have to maintain control. Within the "ונהפוך הוא", we have to preserve the "ישלטו".

It has to be within the confines of *darkei ha'emes v'darkei kedushah* (truth and holiness), and in a way that we're not *mechalel Shem Shamayim* - and if at all possible, that are *mamash mikadeish Shem Shamayim* (sanctify G-d). It can be a *simcha atzumah* (tremendous joy), that flows over the normal boundaries. But at the same time, we remain in control of those aspects that mark the definition of how Yisrael is a nation that transcends above the nations of the world. *Tznius* (*modesty*), *rachmanus* (*compassion*), those things that mark the *tzelem* (form) of Yisrael - that has to remain under our control.

Strength From Joy

That's what we're trying to accomplish on Purim. And that can only come from a *Chodesh Adar* where there's a "מרבית לשמחה" (increase in joy) - a *tahor simcha* (joy of purity) that stems from *Torah* and *mitzvos*. If we then come, with such a *simcha* into the extra "ונהפוך הוא" of Purim, then we know that it will remain a "אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשנאייהם".

With such a foundation, we know that it will remain a *simcha shel kedushah* (happiness based on holiness) and that will result in an uplifting *kiddush Shem Shamayim*. Out of this can come something indescribable: an avodah of *kimu v'kiblu*, where we renewed our commitment. Where Yisrael accepted the Torah anew and the *mitzvos b'shleimus*, without reservation. *B'shleimus ub'ratzon*, freely given and freely wanted. That's the ultimate "ישלטי", the greatest expression that we're in charge.

On *Har Sinai*, there was a lack of "ישלטי". On *Har Sinai*, they were overwhelmed and not in control. Who can be in control in the presence of *Kaviyachol*, the *gilu'i panim el panim*, being face to face with Hashem that *Klal Yisrael* were *zocheh* to? It's such a high level of reality that never happened again that we can't even begin to talk about.

But being on this very high level means that we are not fully in charge; you're lost. Who wasn't lost on *Har Sinai* when we saw with our own eyes that *gilu'i Shamayim* (revelation), Him speaking to us personally, *b'hakitz v'lo bachalom* - fully awake and not in a dream? With all of the *aspaklarya hameira* (spiritual enlightenment), who can retain *shlita* (control) in such a moment?

So at that time, the Torah was given as *kofah aleihem* (holding *Har Sinai* above them) with a *geder of kfi'ah*, an element of force. *Ein lecha kfi'ah gedolah mizu!* What greater coercion could there be?! We weren't in charge.

However, the "ישלטי היהודים" of Purim, is an expression of *shlita* (being in control) out of which we were able to fully say "נעשה ונשמע" - willingly, from our own *bechira* (free will), and in full control. Being able to know what we want and what we want to do with it, we were able to say that same "נעשה ונשמע" but on an entirely different level and *havana* (understanding). It was a "נעשה ונשמע" that came when we were *b'shlita*, fully in charge.

Putting It All Together

Where did we get this from? By seeing the *yad Hashem*, His hand in the whole running of the world - which is what Purim is all about. From this recognition, a "ונהפוך הוא" with a "ישלטי" came forth and provided us with the *ko'ach* of *shlita*, the ability to choose freely and be in charge. The ability to be a *makir* and be an *oveid*, have an awareness and serve Hashem fully. To be able to say, *b'ratzon gamur*, fully and freely: "we're makebel (accept) Your Torah completely!"

This *ko'ach* came because we were *makir* (recognized) the *yad Hashem mitoch hester panim*, we saw G-d's hand while He seemed to be hidden, so too speak. We didn't see irrefutable miracles that couldn't have been explained away. Just the opposite. We saw things that we could've labeled as "coincidences". We could have explained them away by saying: "Sure, it happened this way: The king fell for the blandishments of a Haman. Of course, a Haman is going to run after his honor, and bring about his own undoing. And so we see in this, no more than a series of accidental events."

It would have been easy to see it that way. But the *Yidden* said no, this is *kulo mei'Hashem yatzar hadavar*, it was totally from Hashem. Then and only then was it possible for *Klal Yisrael* to do such a *teshuvah* (repentance), to that *kabbalah* (acceptance), out of which came a "ונהפוך הוא".

It was a "ונהפוך הוא" where Yisrael saw Hashem's hand directly guiding things in His world. We realized then that *hester panim*, when Hashem seems hidden, *chas v'shalom*, does not mean that He's abandoned us. They recognized that within all of the *gezeiros ra'os* (evil decrees)

that it's actually the *yad Hashem* guiding us and in charge. Out of all this, came a "ונהפוך הוא" with a "ישלטו", a Klal Yisrael able to be in charge.

This is our *avodah* (our duty) on Purim. In the midst of all the *simcha* and all that we do, to remember and to see the Hand of G-d, as it reveals itself. Which means to know and understand that Hashem is here, is being *manhig* (guiding us), and is in charge. To not lose sight of this in all of the *simcha* and *avodah* of Purim.

This *avodah* requires that we enter Purim with the right mindset and preparations. That we do our *avodah* now and tomorrow, then on Tanis Esther, followed by reading the megillah - everything. The entire Purim *avodah*, all of our *minhagim* including the jokes, done as it should be, with this recognition and this *kabbalah* (undertaking) on ourselves. Then we can be *zocheh* (merit) to a Purim with a "ונהפוך הוא" that will remain a *kiddush Shem Shamayim*. With an " אשר "המה בשנאיהם" in the truest sense, the "יהודים" fully in control over all of our enemies "המה בשנאיהם".

With this, we should be able to overcome all of their *sinah* (hatred) and the *sinah* of the ultimate enemy, the *yetzer hara*, and be *sholeit* over all of them. We should be *zocheh*, to be a *sholeit al leiv*, to rule over our hearts and come to the fullest " אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשנאיהם" which is the ultimate kedushas Hashem and the meaning of *Moshiach tzidkeinu* that we should see *b'mheirah b'yameinu*, speedily in our days.