

SICHOS IN ENGLISH CLASSICS

PURIM KATAN 5746



# PURIM KATAN

NOT SO SMALL, AFTER ALL



## In Place of an Introduction

At the Shloshim of R' Yonah Avtzon A"H, Director of Sichos in English, a resolution was taken to reprint the original weekly Sichos in English publications.

To fulfill this, a weekly booklet including a translation of a *fabrengen* as it was first published will be distributed. Our intention is to reprint the entire set in the near future.

Following the Sichos we will include an addendum with pictures, notes, and insights into the process of its publication.

These weekly publications can be sponsored to honor a loved one, a Yortzeit or a simcha by contacting us at [sichosinenglish@gmail.com](mailto:sichosinenglish@gmail.com).

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# Purim Katan 5746

## Purim Katan – Not so Small After All

### I

#### *Purim Katan: A Special Guest*

*Once every few years we are given a special visit. There is no difference between Adar 1 and Adar 2. The power of young children and the special Maamar of 1927. The power to be free even in exile.*

Every day of the year has its own unique quality, and when a Jew is told about the special character of a particular day, it encourages him to accomplish more on that day.

The day of *Purim Katan* (the 14th of Adar I) should be viewed as a precious guest. Frequent guests deserve polite attention and hospitality, but when a guest arrives, who has not come for a long time, then he deserves special attention.

*In the 19-year cycle of regular years and leap years we have 19 Purims, but only 7 Purim Katans.*

So, when Purim Katan comes, we truly have an infrequent and rare guest which deserves special attention.

How must we appreciate and savor every moment of this rare and precious day? By utilizing it for special activities. This special treatment will

also include the following night, for in the case of Purim the following day is Shushan Purim, and in the case of Purim Katan it is Shushan Purim Katan so the night of the 15th is still part of the holiday.

There is a strong connection between Purim and Purim Katan. As the Mishnah teaches:

*There is no difference between the first Adar and the second Adar save only in the reading of the Megillah and the distribution of gifts to the poor.<sup>1</sup>*

In all other matters it would appear that both Purims are the same, with Purim Katan retaining the quality of being first.

The theme of both is, of course, the Jewish victory over their enemies: “And it was turned about: the Jews gained the upper hand over their adversaries.”<sup>2</sup>

So much so, that: “Many from among the people of the land professed themselves as Jews”<sup>3</sup>. While the others were overcome with the “fear of the Jews,” and deferred to the Jews (exalted them), because “the fear of Mordechai had fallen upon them”<sup>4</sup>.

So, Purim Katan carries this influence of evoking and eliciting the assistance and cooperation of the nations for the Jewish people.

### ***The Special Maamar***

In the year 5687 (1927), the Previous Rebbe delivered the *Maamar* (Chassidic discourse), “*V’Kibel HaYehudim*” on Purim Katan, in the largest

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<sup>1</sup> Megillah 6b

<sup>2</sup> Esther 9:2

<sup>3</sup> Esther 8:17

<sup>4</sup> Esther 9:3

synagogue in the capital city of Russia, before a huge crowd. He did not give consideration to the dangers involved, and, as we discovered later, he exhibited superhuman self-sacrifice.

The *Maamar* itself discusses the reaffirmation of *Kabbalas HaTorah* (receiving the Torah) on the part of the Jewish people, in the time of Mordechai. This came about through the *mesirus nefesh* (self-sacrifice) of Mordechai in conjunction with the Torah studies of the small children. Their Torah and self-sacrifice nullified the decree of Haman.

In the words of Tehillim: *“Out of the mouths of children and sucklings You have fashioned an invincible might... to put an end to (destroy) foe and avenger.”*

The *Maamar* goes on to say that the education of the children is necessary as the foundation for the future existence of the Jewish people: *“If there are no kids, there will be no he-goats.”*<sup>6</sup>

As you educate the child so will they grow and develop and so will they teach their children, and they, their children, forever. Thus, it is this dedication to educating the young generation which represented the essence of the reaffirmation in the time of Mordechai – with an eternal force – so that *“the remembrance shall not perish from their descendants”*<sup>7</sup>.

The *“children and sucklings”* referred to in the *Maamar* are infants and nursing babes (as is evident from the commentaries). Yet, the dedicated educational foundation given to such young children, e.g., when their mothers sing to them lullabies about the greatness of Torah, will set the foundation for their proper upbringing and foil and destroy the enemy.

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<sup>5</sup> Tehillim 8:3

<sup>6</sup> Esther Rabbah, Proem 11

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. 9:28

*The Previous Rebbe stressed the importance of Jewish education at that time and did not show any fear of the enemy that hovered over him, emphasizing that the work would bring the results of destroying the enemy. In fact, he explained, that those who were previously foes would be converted to become allies and assist in the holy work. Consequently, all of Torah would be reaffirmed in the broadest possible way.*

With this in mind, we may derive the lesson and theme of Purim Katan. If there should arise “a foe and avenger” against Yiddishkeit, Torah and mitzvos, not only must we not lose hope, but we must also increase our activities in all areas of Yiddishkeit. Start with establishing the “invincible might” (through raising babes and sucklings who are connected to all aspects of Torah). This will automatically “put an end to (and destroy) the foe and avenger.” And, in fact, just as “Many from among the people of the land professed themselves Jews”, during the redemption of Purim, similarly, the foe will be transformed, and assist you in spreading Torah.

From this we may also project, that even partial independence also carries with it the characteristics outlined here. The exile of Babylon did not end until the Jews returned to Eretz Yisroel at the end of the 70 years. Yet, when Chananiah, Mishael, and Azariah were saved from the fiery furnace, Nevuchadnetzer and his ministers were very much aware and influenced by the miracle – **a partial redemption also has its influence.**

Similarly, when a Jew, in the golus, feels himself free and pursues his goals of Torah and mitzvos, then, because the “servant of the King is like a king,” and being that he is serving the King – he is truly in a state of freedom.

This will lead to the ultimate redemption. First, we will reach the redemption of Purim, when Mordechai became great and the condition of

the Jews improved, to the point that soon after the miracle of Purim the work on the Beis HaMikdash was started again (in the days of King Darius).

May all these forces be utilized in the proper manner, to become a partner with the Holy One, Blessed be He, and to reach the level of “*ad d’lo yoda*,” beyond understanding and measure, which is the theme of Purim, but which will be even stronger on Purim Katan, because of its rarity. May this all bring to action, from now into the future, from the redemption of Purim Katan to the true and ultimate redemption, through Dovid, King Moshiach, speedily and truly in our times.

## II

### *The Giver and Receiver Dynamic*

*Everyone and everything in this world have something to contribute.*

*Purim Katan opens the gates. Getting ready for Mivtza Purim.*

“Purim Katan” is also called the “fourteenth of Adar I” in the Gemara. Therefore, when we choose to use the term “Purim Katan,” we are emphasizing that it has an aspect in which it is “smaller” than Purim.

On the one hand we say it is “smaller,” which would seem to indicate that it is less important than Purim. On the other hand, the Gemara says: “There is no difference between the first Adar and the second Adar (meaning Purim and Purim Katan) save only in the reading of the Megillah and the distribution of gifts to the poor.”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Megillah 6b

This would seem to indicate that in all other matters the two Purims are equal. Add to this the fact that we call it the “fourteenth of the first Adar” which would seem to say that it is “first” in importance.

Interestingly, Purim has in common with Pesach that they both have a “small” partner. Purim has Purim Katan and Pesach has Pesach Sheni (Katan). Except, that in the case of Purim, the small Purim is first (more important).

G-d created the world in a manner of giver and receiver. Nothing is completely independent, but everything must rely on something else, sometimes. This provides us with the opportunity to do good, by being benevolent to others, and it precludes jealousy in creation. Therefore, the adage,

“Who is wise? He who learns from every person”<sup>9</sup>, means that even a great scholar, who usually finds himself teaching others, must also keep his eyes, ears and mind open to learn from others who are less wise than he.

Since everything was created for the glory of G-d, it follows that everything in existence can contribute something which another creature cannot give. Now if G-d’s honor and glory is enhanced by the contribution of a particular creature, certainly man must be ready to gain from everyone and everything. If so, Purim Katan, although it may be “small,” certainly has something important to contribute.

By coming first, Purim Katan opens the gate and makes it easier to follow through with the Divine service of Purim later on. It also provides the opportunity for Purim to introduce new aspects, subsequent to, and in

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<sup>9</sup> Avos 4:1



addition to the theme of Purim Katan. *In a sense, it serves as a training day for Purim.*

Now, by giving encouragement and enthusiasm a month ahead, on Purim Katan, all of the themes of Purim will be richer and stronger. And, although this could be done in a normal year as well, we see that there is a distinct advantage when the motivation is clothed in a Purim format, on Purim Katan.

This provides an additional reason for this farbrengen, to encourage and inspire everyone to make the proper preparations to carry out “Mivtza Purim,” to educate and inform the Jewish people of the mitzvos of Purim — so that they will perform them. By starting on Purim Katan, we will neutralize any problems and instill more power and enthusiasm for the mitzvos of Purim.

So, may it be, as the Magen Avraham cites at the close of the laws of Orach Chaim: “Then our mouths will be filled with laughter,” quickly in our days.

### III

#### *30 days of Preparation for Purim*

*Where is the source to prepare for Purim 30 days in advance? The power to renew ourselves each year. A lesson from recently discovered medicines.*

There may be those who seek a pretense and argue that we find no source for a 30-day preparation or encouragement period for Purim. In

Shulchan Aruch we are told only of the rule to teach the laws of Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkos, 30 days before each holiday.

The truth is, that regarding the mitzvah of *shekalim* the Gemara also teaches that on Rosh Chodesh Adar they would announce about the half-shekels, because the donations had to reach the Beis HaMikdash before Rosh Chodesh Nissan. Clearly here we have an example of a 30-day preparation period besides the Yomim Tovim.

Why did the Alter Rebbe not include these additional holidays when he listed the 30-day teaching period? Because in Halachah only those holidays which had complicated laws connected to the sacrifices needed the extra time of study. After the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, however, the rabbis ruled not to change the custom of 30-day study. In other cases, the Shulchan Aruch has no basis for establishing such a rule.

Nevertheless, it is logical and sensible that since we want the activities to be even better than last year, we must talk about it and inspire people to go out and do the work.

You ask why must we do more than last year? Then we also did a lot!

That is like saying that if someone is ill do not use a medicine that was recently discovered because it did not exist last year?!

This becomes all the more relevant when we realize that in recent times new diseases (may G-d protect us) have appeared in the human race, which were never imagined before.

You can even ask a child whether during the past year new problems and tragedies have arisen in the world. The answer: Everyone knows (would that they knew the detailed laws of Torah as well as they know

the details of what they read in the newspapers!) of the terrible calamities (may they be far from any human being) that have come to light during the past year: in the area of biological health and mental health, in human relations, in the conduct of society, international relations, and so on.

Of course, by searching in Torah for a remedy we will find the advice that when we increase Torah and mitzvos it will bring healing to the world.

When the Talmud discusses the period of the “footsteps of Moshiach” it tells us that each day will see worse curses than the preceding days (cf. Sotah 49a). Why must we be foretold of the unpleasant events of the future? Enough that we have to live through the present problems! Should we also worry and fret about worse times to come?!

The answer is that Torah wants us to prepare ourselves so that we should be immune to the tragedies, and neutralize the suffering, by increasing holiness in the world. In this way the foresight will raise the individual to a loftier level which would not have been possible previously.

When a Jew sees the troubles of the world increasing – it is a sign for him – that he must likewise increase his work in the areas of holiness.

Therefore, for those who say, “Is it not enough to do as much as we did last year?” The answer: “You are going against the intention of Torah.” For Torah wants us to increase our good activities, just as we see the growth of evil. This is why we should encourage the activities of Purim starting from Purim Katan.

We speak of an increase in happiness and happy things, that a person naturally enjoys doing. Without question it is a worthy undertaking to awaken Jews to be happier and more joyous. This happiness will lead to the ultimate happiness of: “Then our mouths will be filled with laughter;”

when the joy will be perfect and complete with the true and complete redemption through our righteous Moshiach, may it come speedily in our days.

#### IV

### *Connection to Parshas Ki Sisa*

*Half a Shekel and the connection to Purim. The need for atonement.  
Purim Katan and Moshiach*

What special significance can we learn from the concurrence of Purim Katan on the first day of the week of Ki Sisa?

The first section of the Torah portion Ki Sisa, in addition to its being the section designated for Sunday, it also has an overall connection to the entire week. Its theme is the commandment of *Machtzis Hashekel* – the half-shekel donated for the sacrifices in the Tabernacle (and several vessels and parts of the Tabernacle).

The Gemara<sup>10</sup> makes an exegetic reference between the half-shekel of the Temple and the blood-money Haman gave to Achashverosh:

Haman said, “If it please the king, let it be written that they be destroyed, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver”<sup>11</sup>.

...It was well known beforehand to Him at whose word the world came into being [Hashem] that Haman would one day pay shekels for the destruction of Israel. Therefore, He anticipated his shekels with those of

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<sup>10</sup> Megillah 13b

<sup>11</sup> Esther 3:9

Israel. And so, we have learned: “On the first of Adar proclamation is made regarding the shekalim”<sup>12</sup>.

In other words, when the tragic decree against the Jews was accepted in the heavenly court at the time of Haman, it was the shekalim which the Jews had given centuries before, which ultimately nullified the decree!

Thus, as the shekalim are a preparation for the miracle of Purim, when, on Purim Katan, we read the first part of Ki Sisa about the shekalim, this inspires us to begin our work of preparation for the holiday of Purim, and all the activities associated with it.

But this connection is really much more fundamental. Even the five-year-old Chumash student knows that in speaking of the purpose of the half-shekel the Torah expresses that it will be: “To atone for your lives”<sup>13</sup>.

Even a child can comprehend this concept. For the Torah said: “This shall they give,” and Rashi directly comments: G-d showed Moshe a kind of fiery coin the weight of which was half a shekel and said to him, “Like this shall they give,” this contribution would serve as “an atonement offering for his life.”<sup>14</sup>

The child is not surprised, for he knows that when he fulfills his father’s wishes he feels uplifted because he caused his father pleasure and satisfaction. How much more so in relation to our Father in Heaven! The words: “Ki Sisa” have been translated not only to mean a census, but also an uplifting; through the half-shekel the Jews are uplifted, and it brings atonement.

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<sup>12</sup> Shekalim 1:1

<sup>13</sup> Shmos 30:15

<sup>14</sup> Shmos 30:12

Now, on Purim the Jews needed just such an atonement for their lives, spiritually and physically and it came about in merit of the shekalim that the decree of Haman was nullified. Thus, the concurrence of Purim Katan with Ki Sisa emphasizes this connection.

When the Previous Rebbe spoke about the education of young children on Purim Katan 5687, he emphasized that they are the foundation of the Torah and the future of the Jewish people. Similarly, the half-shekels were used to manufacture the silver bases for the walls of the Tabernacle — and as such they constituted the foundation of the Mishkan. The true essence of the Tabernacle was also the Holy Ark — which held the Torah.

The annotators of the Shulchan Aruch write about the re-building of the Third Beis HaMikdash in the laws of Purim Katan. The connection now seems clear. The destruction of the Beis HaMikdash came about because of our sins, and the half-shekel was the foundation of the Tabernacle and by extension, of the Third Beis HaMikdash. By giving the half-shekel we achieve atonement; by nullifying the cause of the exile we will bring the redemption from exile.

May it come speedily; may we leave the golus with our youth and elders, sons and daughters, so that no one remains in the golus and we will come to the Holy Land speedily and truly in our times.

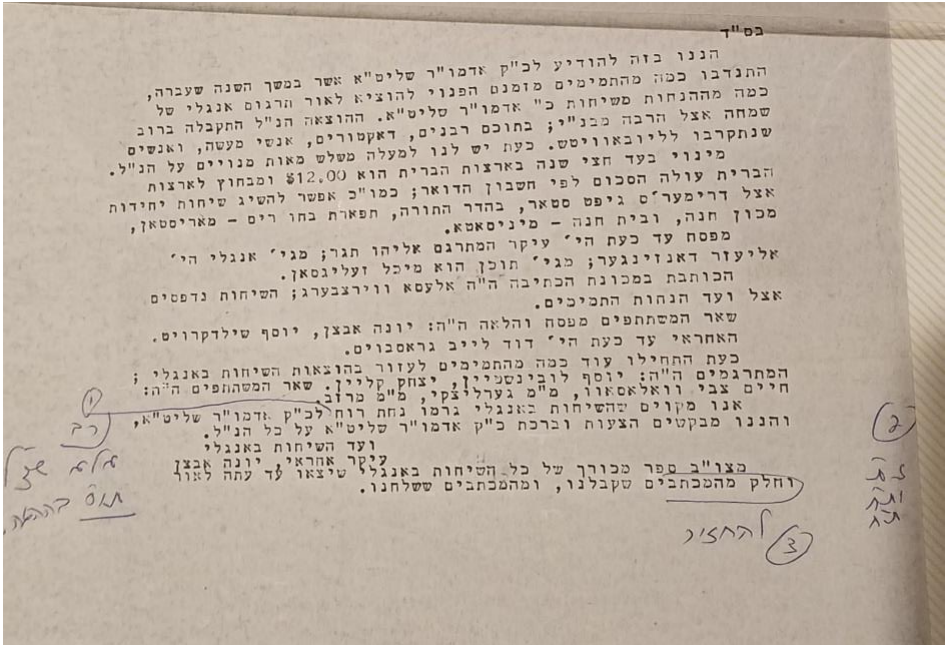
# Addendum

## Behind the Scenes of Sichos in English

In the coming weeks and months, we will share some incredible notes, responses and stories of the Rebbe's guidance and encouragement to Sichos in English over the years.

This week we share the inaugural letter that the SIE team sent to the Rebbe about their new organization and what their plans are. It can be found on page 14 of this booklet.

As you can see the Rebbe responded **גרם נחת רוח רב** - that they brought the Rebbe lots of Nachas. Rabbi Yonah Avtzon merited to hear these same words from the Rebbe a few more times, some of which we will share in the upcoming weeks.



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