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**Sichos in English Classics 6**

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# **Wine and the Jewish People**

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**PURIM, 5739**



**Sichos In English**  
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## IN PLACE OF AN INTRODUCTION

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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 *farbrengen* 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.

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# A UNIQUE START TO A FARBRENGEN

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1. Translator's note: The Rebbe Shlita opened this farbrengen in a different manner than he usually does. He stated, "Since it's Purim, rather than begin with a talk, we'll begin with a niggun (song)." The Chassidim followed by singing the Purim niggun and the Rebbe led everyone in a long and vigorous round of hand clapping. Afterwards, he continued, "The custom of drinking wine on Purim is a Law (Rabbinical). Therefore, everyone should say 'LeChaim' now (exclusively on wine)." Then the Rebbe said "LeChaim" himself and drank a cup of wine. Afterwards he remarked, "Nu,' time is being wasted. Say LeChaim. I would like to suggest that someone who can speak English announce "Hurry Up?" Everyone should now say LeChaim a second time."

The announcement was made and the Rebbe continued; "Since once something has been done three times, Halachah considers it a surety, therefore, everyone should say LeChaim a third time."

He paused and continued, "This would have been sufficient for the other festivals. However, on Purim the celebration must be 'O'd'lo-yada' — totally beyond all bounds. Therefore, everyone should say LeChaim a fourth time and afterwards 'all those who add on — are to be praised accordingly.' "LeChaim."

He paused and continued again; "In this case, the principle 'When in doubt follow the stricter opinion,' applies. If someone is unsure whether he said LeChaim four times or not, he should do so again now. Lchaim vlivrocha." Then the Rebbe led the Chassidim in the singing of his father's Hakkafos Niggun.

# PURIM, 5739

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2. The Talmud prescribes, “a person must become drunk on Purim.” Rashi comments that he must drink wine. What is the reason for this law? One of the answers usually given is that the miracle of Purim is closely connected with wine. Many of the crucial episodes of the Megillah happened at wine-parties.

That answer merely shifts the question on to the Megillah. Everything that happens is controlled by G-d and G-d does not create anything without a purpose. Since the purpose of a Jew’s life is the service of G-d, it follows that G-d directs everything that happens to him. Therefore, everything which a Jew sees or hears must serve as a lesson for him in his service to G-d. Since we see the correlation between the Purim miracles and wine, we must immediately search for a conceptual understanding of that relationship, asking ourselves, “Why is it important? What lesson can it teach?”

This question can be answered by posing another question. Three people attended the wine party described in the Megillah: Haman, Achashveirosh, and Esther. Of those three, Haman and Achashveirosh were both in high spirits, yet Esther had to beg for her life. Was this just? Particularly after Esther had demonstrated her dedication to her people, should she have been subjected to such circumstances: How could the Jews – particularly after they had attained the spiritual level of “Yehudi”<sup>1</sup> (the term with which they

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1. The Talmud defines a Yehudi as someone who denies false gods and acknowledges the entire Torah. The Hebrew phrase meaning the worship of false gods is “Avodah Zarah,” literally translated as “strange worship.” In a wider sense, it refers to any service which is strange or foreign to a Jew. Since a Jew’s purpose in creation is the service of G-d, anything else he does is foreign. He might be involved in worthwhile activities, projects which for anyone else would be considered good and valuable; however, unless they are connected with the service of G-d, they are strange and foreign to a Jew.

How can a Jew become involved in this “Avodah Zarah?” Because he forgets about G-d. The Baal Shem Tov interpreted the verse, “and if you turn away and serve other

were referred to in the Megillah) be threatened by a decree calling for their total extinction?

Wine provides us with a lesson which answers these questions. The Torah regards wine very highly. *Psalms* describes wine as “rejoicing both G-d and man.” It was considered an honored drink in Persia, as well. Due to that importance, Achashveirosh felt it appropriate that Esther tell him her request at a wine-party.

Wine is not found naturally. Wine is contained in grapes and released when the grapes are squeezed. If the grapes are of high quality, they produce wine after only slight pressure. If they’re of a lower quality, you have to squeeze harder to extract the wine. Of course, the squeezing is not intended as a negative action, but rather to elevate the grapes to a higher state. Grapes do not have the qualities of “rejoicing G-d and man,” only wine. Therefore wine requires a different and special brocha. This added quality is produced through taking the grapes and squeezing them.<sup>2</sup>

The above serves as a parable explaining the position of the Jewish people. What was the purpose of Haman, Achashveirosh, and the entire decree? To squeeze the grapes, to bring out the “wine” held within each and every Jew. Then the Jewish people showed a complete and total dedication to G-d, to the point of self-sacrifice. Our Sages considered their level of service then to be higher than at the time of Receiving of the Torah at Mt. Sinai, as the Gemara comments, “They affirmed (at Purim) what they accepted before (at the Giving of the Torah).”<sup>3</sup>

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gods” as follows, “if you turn attention away from G-d, to even the slightest degree, you will begin serving other gods.”

In the Purim narrative, Mordechai personified this level of service called Yehudi. He was willing to sacrifice his life for G-d. All the Jews followed him, even the young children. They showed they were “Am Mordechai” — Mordechai’s People. He didn’t “bend or bow down” before Haman and they followed his example.

2. The superior quality of wine over grapes is emphasized from the blessing of the Land of Israel in the Torah as “a land of wheat and barley, a land of vines, figs, and pomegranates...” Instead of using the word “grapes”, (like it uses wheat, barley, figs, etc.), the Torah uses the word “vine,” which is more closely related to wine, showing that the brocha is more closely related to wine.
3. The fact that the Purim narrative came to its climax at the wine-party is very significant. It helped Esther realize that she and the Jewish people need not fear all the decrees

To emphasize this idea, the celebration of Purim is connected with wine. From then on Purim is celebrated with much happiness, and will continue as a festival forever. So shall it be for us. May the Jews have “light, happiness, joy, and honor.”

3. The Torah lesson contained in the above concept (the study of which itself is a step in the service of G-d), also has practical application in our own times. We live in a time where people conspire against the Jewish people. None of these plans pose a genuine threat. Their purpose is merely to “give a squeeze” — to help the Jews<sup>4</sup> “give out their wine.”

Even if we are to be considered “bad grapes” — still after all the suffering of Galus, no more “squeezing” is necessary to bring a Jew to reveal his “Pintele Yid,” — “the part of G-d in his soul.”<sup>5</sup> All that is asked from the Jew is to reveal this potential.

[Translator’s note: The Rebbe Shlita then addressed himself specifically to the decision of the Israeli Cabinet on the Peace Treaty]. They are faced with a test. However, they should be strengthened by the fact that the decision will be made on Purim (which is celebrated on the 15th of Adar in Jerusalem). Some will have heard the Megillah read on that day — others on the day before. They will have heard how Mordecai “did not bend or bow” and how his firm resolution brought about a total transformation; Haman’s decree was annulled and his house, i.e. all his power and possession was given to Mordechai.

The same applies today. If they are not ashamed, if they stand firm, all threats will disappear.<sup>6</sup> Even though we are in Galus and are

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against-them. She should understand that they are only temporary, necessary to give a squeeze, to bring the Jewish people to the point where they “release their wine.” Likewise for Haman, came the realization that his purpose for existence (and that of Achashveirosh and all 127 of his provinces) was only to aid the Jews in the service of G-d, served as a crushing blow to his pride.

4. The prophet Isaiah compares the Jewish people to a vineyard.

5. According to the Rambam, the true will of every Jew is to serve G-d.

6. The disappearance of the threats will then be total, as if they never had existed. Their promise is brought out by the verse in Isaiah (8:10) “They will contrive a plan but it will be foiled.” The Hebrew word translated as foiled is “V’sufar” derived from the root “hafara.” “Hafara” has a specific Halachic meaning — a judge’s annulment of a vow. This annulment takes effect retroactively, as if the vow had never been made. For example, if a

dependent on other powers — as in the time of Purim, when the Jewish people were servants of Achashveirosh and needed his approval — the only way to succeed is not “to bow or bend.”

The opposite course of behavior, as we can see from past experiences, has just brought about increased pressure. Each concession by Israel has been met by an increase, not decrease, in the Arab demands.

Some argue we have no choice. In truth, we have no choice G-d wants to give Haman’s house, his power and possession, to the Jews and we must follow G-d’s will. Only G-d doesn’t want to give it as a present — he wants the Jews to earn it — by standing proud and not bended. Then they will enjoy true peace. Then the Jews will have “light and happiness, joy and honor.”

[The Rebbe continued addressing himself specifically to the peace treaty. He spoke against autonomy, which he called “a new name, but everyone knows what it really means, giving up the West Bank entirely.” He also spoke against the return of the oil fields in the Sinai, noting that they are essential for Israel’s future. Israel cannot afford, he maintained, to rely on the U.S.’s offers. The U.S. has its own oil problems and the growing Soviet influence in the Middle East jeopardizes the future of America’s interests there].

4. Translator’s note: In the midst of the Sicha concerning the situation in Israel, the Rebbe Shlita noted that the very same “religious leaders” who fully support concessions to the Arabs, during the first Aliyah of Iranian children, took children from observant homes and allowed them to be sent to non-observant kibbutzim and schools. In return for this cooperation, the Israeli government allowed 20% of the children to be educated in Torah

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man agrees to marry a woman who has taken a vow, on the condition that at this time she has no vows upon her, the woman has the option of going to a judge, a Chacham, and asking him to annul her vow. If such action is taken, the marriage contract is upheld.

What gives the judge (Chacham) the power to do this? Pirkei Avos describes a Chacham as one who “sees what will be.” Commenting on that description in Tanya, the Alter Rebbe added “he sees how G-d brings existence into being from absolute nothingness.” Because the Chacham’s perspective is not limited by the boundaries of creation, he can rise above them and take action that have retroactive effects.

schools and provided large amounts of government support for Yeshivos. The Rebbe continued...

The same process is being repeated a second time. They are taking Jewish children from Teheran and sending them to non-observant schools and kibbutzim. The children protest — “they want to follow Torah.” For example, Sephardic Jews (and even non-Jews from those countries) stressed “Tzinus” (modesty) much more than those of Ashkenazic tradition. In Persia, the concept of coed schools was unheard of. Yet, many of these children, upon their arrival in Israel, were placed in coed schools and they have protested, but to no avail.

When the question was brought up publicly, the leaders immediately called a meeting. There, they decided to call another meeting. When American Jewish leaders asked, “Why are you being silent?” These leaders were not embarrassed to answer “We have considered it in our best interests to remain silent. However, it is improper for someone outside Israel to make a protest.”

Then they will boast and try to bribe G-d, proclaiming “We have saved 20% of the children. We have received this and this much money for Yeshivos. Meanwhile this girl has been sent to that kibbutz and this one to the other — a sin which, Heaven Forbid, cannot be atoned for.”

The shame which this situation creates is enormous. Today there are no secrets. Everyone, their students as well, have been informed of the matter. Most important, G-d Himself has observed all these dealings and knows all the particulars.



On Friday 12th of Adar Beis Rabbi Yonah Avtzon writes another note informing the Rebbe that indeed volume 8 has been printed before Purim.

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