Shavuot is celebrated together on one day in the diaspora. In Israel, Shavuot is a festival of the Torah (Sh'mini Atzeret and føtalgion of the Torah) and a festival of the celebration of Sukkot. This day, Shavuot Azizat, is a festival of the celebration of Sukkot. On this day, Jews leave their sukkahs to resume enjoying the comfort of their homes. In English, this day is called "Feast of Tabernacles." The Torah sounds of music and pleasure and the happiness of the people. The Torah contains six musical themes. God will soon miss the sounds of music and pleasure and the happiness of the people. God will miss the sounds of music and pleasure and the happiness of the people. God will miss the sounds of music and pleasure and the happiness of the people.
where an extra holy day is added (making a ninth day), Shemini Atzeret is followed by Simchat Torah on the ninth day. The rejoicing makes a statement. Whatever the law denies to Jews, whatever suffering the people have undergone for upholding the covenant cannot obscure the basic truth: The Torah affirms and enriches life. At the end of this week of fulfillment, on this day of delight, all the scrolls are taken out of the ark, and the Torah becomes the focus of rejoicing.

In many congregations the evening service mixes melodies of solemn days with melodies of modern music and frequently employs a lay “cantor” and mock choir. Simchat Torah and its good humor puncture religious pomposity and overseriousness. At night, all the scrolls are taken out of the ark and members of the congregation take turns marching around the synagogue while holding the scrolls aloft. There are seven circuits. At the completion of each circular procession (hakafta), songs and wordless melodies (niggunim) are sung, and people dance with the Torah. All night, children march around the synagogue carrying flags and accompanying the parade of Torahs. Candy and gifts are showered on the children who escort the Torah and kiss it and dance with it. The service is followed by a feast at home.

The holy pandemonium reaches a climax the following morning. Again, there are seven hakafot. It is now a world-wide custom to go outdoors for the seventh hakafah and dance in solidarity with Soviet Jewry, which declared its renewed Jewishness publicly by dancing in the streets of Moscow on Simchat Torah. As Jews spill out into full public view, they declare the wonder and the glory of the eternal miracle: Am Yisrael Chai—the people Israel lives! Od Aveyenu Chai—our Heavenly Father still lives! In traditional synagogues, mini-congregations are convened in various parts of the building. Thus, all present (including women in liberal and egalitarian synagogues) have an opportunity to receive an aliyah (the honor of being called up to the Torah) and recite the blessings of thanksgiving to God who chose Israel “who gave us a Torah of truth and thus planted eternal life in us.”

As each person finishes the aliyah, it is traditional to pledge a contribution to charity. Then one makes kiddush over wine or liquor. With each passing aliyah the synagogue gets livelier and the happiness higher (or is it that the synagogue gets higher and the happiness gets livelier?).

For the final few aliyyot, the entire congregation comes together again for the special ceremonies. The first of these is called the Kol Ha’ne’arim (all the children) aliyah. The children under the age of twelve or thirteen are gathered to the bima, the central podium where the Torah is read. A group of adults hovers over the children, and a giant canopy made up of large talitot (prayer shawls) held together by loving

human hands is stretched over the heads of the children. One adult takes the aliyyah and recites the blessing aloud with them. When the second blessing is finished, the classical blessing of Jacob is recited including the following: “Bless the children, and may my name and the name of my ancestors be called on them [that is, may they continue the line], and may they multiply and be fruitful in the midst of the land” (Genesis 48:16). With the shower of blessings comes a shower of candy and of song. The Jewish people have children, have life, have continuity. A generation ago the fate of cruelest death was decreed for every Jewish child and inflicted on more than one million of them. Today, they live, they grow, they laugh and dance, they rejoice to be Jewish, they are unafraid. Was there ever joy like this? Was there ever faith or power of life like this?

The final three aliyyot evoke the classical symbols of marriage and covenant to extol the faithfulness of Jews to the Torah. The first is the hattan Torah (the groom of the Torah). An honor usually given to a person who exemplifies the love and practice of Torah, (in egalitarian settings, a kallah [bride] is sometimes substituted for any of the traditional hattanim [grooms]). The hattan is called to the Torah with a special proclamation declaring his good deeds. In many synagogues the groom is escorted to the Torah under a chuppa (canopy) and with singing and dancing, and then the throwing of candy and rice. In the good old days, in some central and eastern European congregations, people would light bonfires, leap over them, even shoot off gunpowder to add to the exhilaration of the “wedding.”

The hattan Torah aliyah completes the annual cycle of the reading of the entire Torah. The final portion of Deuteronomy is read. However, lest anyone think that the Torah reading is ever completed, the cycle is immediately begun anew by reading the first chapter of Genesis, the creation of the world.

This next aliyah is called hattan bereshit (groom of Genesis). It is typically given to someone who has given outstanding service to the community of the people of Israel in the past year. As each day of the seven days of creation is read from Genesis, the congregation recites in joyous choral response to the reader: “And there was night and there was day, the first day...the second day...” and so on. After each unit is completed, the assembled sing a niggun of rejoicing.

The last aliyah is maftir (in some congregations it is now called hattan maftir—groom of the prophetic reading). Again, a person is chosen to be honored for appropriate service or exemplary living. The prophetic portion tells how Joshua succeeded to leadership when Moses died. Whoever may die, whatever leader or generation may perish, the circle goes on. Another Jew steps forward and says, “Hineni—here I am.”
Along the Way

Personal Life

PART TWO

ANOTHER WORLD

A joyful messianic prayer is followed by a feast of holiday meal at home. Community-wide singing concludes the last day of Sukkot.
she and Haman—she more likely than Haman—would be condemned to death, and the fate of the Jews would be seven times sealed.

It was a risky plan, unsavory in many ways. If Esther failed, she would be denied the dignity of death as a martyr. She would die as a courtesan. What would Mordecai think when he learned that the queen had died for the crime of sexual infidelity with Haman? Was this why she had held back from going to the king when he asked?

Esther understood that just as there were no simple, easy-to-read directions from God anymore, there were no guarantees of salvation either. Esther’s use of feminine wiles was only the first step in redemption. Her tactic worked. Then she and Mordecai won the right of self-defense for the Jews. In a bloody showdown, the Jews’ genocidal enemies were destroyed.

Bedroom politics, revenge, murder. Some twenty centuries later, Martin Luther wanted to drop the Book of Esther from the Bible because it lacked piety and “spirituality.” Yet these actions—fallible, open to question, morally ambiguous—were acts of responsibility that interacted with the forces of history and brought forth salvation. A woman’s daring saved the people of Israel.

Perhaps this is the point of the traditional concept of a personal Messiah. Modern people are embarrassed by this concept and prefer to speak of a messianic age or the triumph of the forces of progress. The Purim story, like the Passover story, emphasizes that one cannot pass the buck to forces of history. The concept of the personal Messiah should not represent some deus ex machina, some divine intervention that will relieve humanity of its responsibility or of the consequences of its folly. Rather, it is meant to underscore that, in the final analysis, humans must take responsibility for their own fate: The final liberator will be a human redeemer. Then all our limited strides forward will become part of the way to the realization of the grand design.

**Celebrating Purim**

The holiday of Purim is marked not as “sacred time” but as a time of secularity and natural joy. There are no restrictions on creative labor such as there are in the pentateuchal sacred days (that is, Shabbat, first and last days of Passover, first and last days of Sukkot, Rosh Hashanah, and Yom Kippur). All men, women, and children are commanded to celebrate. Women are obligated to hear the Megillah reading. The Talmud adds that since they are obligated to hear, they may fulfill the mitzvah to read the Megillah for others, including men. It is a rare if unexercised religious role for women found in the traditional sources.

One has to love the Purim holiday. At what other time can one eat, drink (even get drunk!), send and receive gifts, make jokes and kid around, even have the rabbi encourage everyone to make noise in the synagogue (at the proper time, of course), and get mitzvah points for doing this!

Still, the core religious model of Purim observance is the classic mode of reenactment. Jews relive the entire event, from the depths of despair and looming genocide to the delirious exaltation of deliverance, revenge, and victory.

Purim opens on a somber note. Haman is identified as the descendant of Amalek, whose people attacked Israel in the desert, the symbol of cruelty to the weak. Before celebrating the defeat of the wicked, one must remember that God (as well as God’s people) has a war with the Amalekites and will not be at ease until the Amalekites are blotted out. Jews are pledged to work for the end of oppression of the weak everywhere; a temporary, partial victory should not blind one to the persistence of evil in the world. On the Sabbath before Purim, the portion of the Torah dealing with Amalek is read. This day is called Shabbat Zachor, the Sabbath of Remembrance. It is a special mitzvah of the Torah to hear the reading and thus remember.

Zachor is a mitzvah that has made modern Jews uncomfortable. The natural desire to forget and be happy collides with the ongoing pain of memory and analysis. When asked why President Ronald Reagan in 1985 initially declined to visit the Dachau concentration camp, a presidential aide explained that the President was an “up” type of person and did not like to “grovel in a grisly thing.”

Modern people who are future-oriented stress the need to forgive. They argue that there will be no reconciliation as long as the memories of the cruelties and atrocities of the past are preserved and thrown in the face of those involved. “Forget and forgive” becomes the slogan. This argument can even take the form of an attack on the victims for keeping the memory alive. In May 1985, a storm of opposition arose against President Reagan’s visit to the Bitburg, Germany military cemetery because the ceremony involved paying homage and laying a wreath in a cemetery with graves of S.S. soldiers. During the uproar, one German parliamentarian attacked the Jews for their unchristian-like refusal to forget the past!

The primary lesson of Parshat (Torah reading) Zachor is that true reconciliation comes through repentance and remembrance. Confronting the evils of the past is the most powerful generator of moral
At each revelation of Humans' wisdomness—indeed, of this presence—
there was a profound reverence that the People were moved by. Their hearts stirred, their
deep thoughts and emotions were awakened. The chill of the moment.

Indeed, it was a day of grace when the Lord appeared to the People.

And so it goes...

...and so it goes...

The Lord is present in the very earth beneath our feet, in the

rain that falls, in the grass that grows, in the sun that shines. He is

present in all things, in every moment, in every breath.

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—the congregation explodes into a cacophony of angry booing, hissing, and demonstrating. The community, delighted by Mordecai’s rise, exultantly chants aloud the verses of his rise to power at every stage: from his initial appearance as a refugee immigrant from Jerusalem and Babylonia (Esther 2:5) to his first appearance as prime minister amidst the shouts of joy of the inhabitants of Shushan (Esther 8:15–16), to the fadeout with the “full account of the greatness of Mordecai” (Esther 10:2, 3).

The synagogue atmosphere can be compared to that of an old true-blue “meller-drammer.” Haman is boooed whenever he is mentioned (by clacking goggers, blowing horns, firing cap pistols, stamping feet, and so forth). Mordecai is saluted. Some have developed the custom of reading the Megillah with appropriate voices—a snarling basso for Haman (hal hal me proud beauty, I’ve come to foreclose the mortgage), a sweet soprano for Esther, a beamish baritone for Mordecai, and so on. Some insert mock melodies that satirize the action.

Purim certainly challenges theuptight approach to religion. On this day, no fasting is permitted, no eulogies are given, no penitential prayers are recited. The Rabbis were so determined to make this point that they instructed people to drink—at least to the stage when they could no longer tell the difference between blessed Mordecai and accused Haman. (Those who can’t tell the difference all year long are excused on Purim.)

Other elements of celebration have been added, such as “Purim nussach” (musical mode). The evening service is chanted with a medley of melodies taken from the more solemn holidays, which holidays are, in effect, being satirized here. Some use popular and folk melodies for the prayers to create a humorous musical effect. People teach “Purim Torah” in which learning and scholarship are burlesqued. A sample: The Megillah tells us that on 15 Adar the Jews found relief from their enemies (Esther 9:16—d’noah may—oyehem). In Hebrew, this phrase can be read literally as: And Noah was from their enemies.

Question: What was Noah—a “good man” (see Genesis 6:9)—doing amidst their enemies? He should have been on the side of the Jews! Answer: The Rabbis command us to drink on Purim until one cannot tell the difference between Mordecai and Haman. Noah, that old rascal and drunkard, was only too glad to get blotto on Purim, and then, not knowing the difference, joined Haman’s side by error.

Purim Kiddush is recited; its text consists of bits and pieces of various other prayers and verses strung together in nonsense meanings. Verses run into each other. A sample: Aleynu leshehechta la-adon/Adon olam asher malach beterem Kol/Kol od balevo et pnimah (Hatikvah). Thus, the tradition satirizes its own pretensions, affirming yet recognizing the contradictions to its own fundamentals.

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FUN AND PLEASURE

Over the years the Jewish community has developed Purim carnivals and Purim masquerades. Note the role of costumes in the Megillah: Mordecai dons sackcloth and ashes to symbolize the looming genocide; he is clothed in royal robes by Haman in a foreshadowing of the coming reversal; he is dressed as the actual prime minister at the moment of triumph. On this one day, in Eastern Europe, Jews were permitted to dress as Gentiles (Haman, Ahashverosh). In fact, men were permitted to dress as women (Esther, Vashti, and others) and women as men, something that normally was strictly forbidden.

There seemed to have been a practice in Eastern Europe of snatching food from one another and hitting one another on the holiday. The legal codes rule that these actions on Purim do not constitute violations of the prohibitions against stealing and assault.* The actions add to the topsy-turvy tone of the day. On the actual Purim day then, Jews did not take spoil from Gentiles (Esther 9, 10:15–16). In a reversal, on Purim day now, they do take spoil from Jews.

There is a double vision throughout the day, strengthened by the spoofing that enables one to play a role and yet be an observer at the same time. The double vision reflects the contrast of blind fate or chance (Purim means casting lots), as against a hidden Providence. It also stems from the split in the Diaspora Jew’s life between Esther and Haddassah; her two names, her two personalities and lives are paradigms of the bifurcation in the soul of the Jew living outside of the land of Israel.

Then there are the Purim-shpieler, Purim players circulating through the community, visiting homes and putting on skits. They are rewarded with coins for charity. In the yeshivot, it became a tradition to satirize the Rabbis and Roshei yeshiva (heads of the yeshiva), their personalities and styles of learning. Thus, an act of lese majesté year-round became part of the fun of Purim.

The centerpiece of the day is the Purim seudah (Purim feast). Since on Purim the Jewish body was to be destroyed, the celebration must stuff the Jewish body for joy. Since the entire family was exposed to danger, the entire family is to be brought together for the feast. As the meal is eaten, the exaltation and relief of the day sinks in, overcoming

The refusal of the Jews to acknowledge the Messiah as the Chosen One caused a profound spiritual crisis within the Jewish community. The period known as the Second Intifada saw a resurgence of religious zealotry and violence, with some Jews calling for a return to the ancient ways of their ancestors.

In response to this, Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi, a prominent 12th-century Jewish philosopher, wrote a letter to his friend, the Islamic scholar Al-Maqrizi. In his letter, HaLevi expressed his love for the Jewish people and his belief in the possibility of their return to spiritual greatness. He argued that true Judaism was built on a foundation of love and compassion, and that the true path to spiritual growth was through the practice of these virtues.

HaLevi's letter was a powerful call to action, urging the Jewish people to return to their roots and to reclaim the spiritual legacy that had been lost. It became a cornerstone of Jewish thought and has been widely studied and discussed ever since.

In his work, HaLevi also emphasized the importance of education and the need for Jews to beacons of light in the world. He believed that by living according to the principles of Judaism, Jews could inspire others to follow in their footsteps and to work towards a more just and compassionate society.

Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi's letter to Al-Maqrizi is a testament to the enduring power of spiritual leadership and the importance of maintaining a connection to one's heritage and traditions. It serves as a reminder to all Jews of the importance of maintaining a strong identity and of working towards a brighter future for the Jewish people.
pressed in the absence of God’s name in the scroll. However, by their acceptance of the Purim holiday, the people and ultimately the Rabbis, showed their grasp of the way to understand how God acts in history in the postprophetic age. They realized that God operated not as the force crashing into history from outside but in the center of life as the One who is present in the “natural” and in the redemptive process in which the human is co-partner.

In the tractate of Shabbat (88A) the Talmud tells a story that captures that transformation in the character of redemption and of covenant. The Talmud says that when the Israelites came out of Egypt to Sinai, God held the mountain over their heads and said: Accept my Torah or I will bury you right here. To which a scholar, Raba, comments: Then we can plead “acceptance under duress” (as extenuating circumstances if we fail to live up to the covenant). Not so, responds the Talmud, in the Book of Esther, for it states that “The Jews accepted and upheld [the Purim holiday],” (Esther 9:27). This means that the Jews, by freely accepting Purim, upheld (reinstituted) the original covenant acceptance of Sinai.

In hindsight, the Rabbis perceived the Exodus model of Revelation as “flawed” in that the saved humans were overawed, “coerced” into accepting God’s revelation and commandments. On Purim, however, the mature Jewish people, rejecting the need for audiostream fireworks, discerned God’s presence in their history. This understanding enabled them to encounter God in the reality of natural, or partially redeemed, history. They concluded that, after all, in Shushan, flawed human beings had been the carriers of divine redemption. The lesson may be generalized: moral ambiguity dilutes but does not negate the triumph of good.

Living after the Destruction, they noted that the Divine had ceased to intervene in manifest fashion. Therefore, in retrospect, the overt divine salvation that backed the Sinai offer of covenant was perceived as coercive, if for no other reason than the gratitude in the heart of the people saved from slavery obligated them to accept. The recognition of the hidden divine hand in Purim was the insight that showed that the Jews had come of age. They had reaccepted the covenant of Sinai on the “new” terms, knowing that destruction can take place, that the sea will not be split for them, that the Divine had self-limited. They took on the additional responsibilities for the covenant, maturely and bravely.

If one takes the Talmudic story to its ultimate logic, it is even bolder. It says that were Jews living only from the covenantal acceptance at Sinai, the Torah would not have been fully binding after the Destruction. Post-destruction Jews are living under the command of the Torah by dint of the reacceptance of the Torah at Purim time. The covenant of

Purim is also a covenant of redemption, but it is built around a core event that is brought about by a more hidden Divine Presence acting in partnership with human messengers. Yet the covenant of Purim does not replace Sinai; it renews it. Purim confirms that the road to redemption continues even though we live in a world where the mighty, manifest acts of God are not available.

The Talmud finds the biblical source for Esther in Deuteronomy 31:18: Anochi haster aster—"I will hide my face on that day."

(Ester is a Hebrew pun on Esther.) Esther’s and Mordecai’s covenantal roles are rooted in the hiddenness of God. The lesson of Purim is that in an age of "eclipse of God," look for divine redemption in the triumph of the good, even if that victory does not meet preset notions of purity and perfection. To pass that up is to ask to be back in the ruddy youth of religion when the answers are crystal clear and miraculous, and redemption is untouched by human hands. By the will of God, that world is no longer. If people insist on having extraterrestrial redeemers, they will perceive themselves as living in a world abandoned by God, when in fact God is the Divine Redeeming Presence encountered in the partial, flawed actions of humans. The truth of this salvation eludes both those who explain everything away as coincidence or random occurrence and those who insist on “out of this world” revelation.

Purim is the holiday for the post-Holocaust world; it is a model for the experience of redemption in the rebirth of Israel. In this era, too, the redemption is flawed—by the narrow escape, by the great loss of life, by the officially “irreligious” nature of the leadership, by the mixed motives and characters of those who carried it out, by the human suffering it brought in its wake, and by the less-than-perfect society of Israel. In our time, too, the “purists” wait for a “supernatural” miracle. Some object because of the religiously nonobservant element; others are crushed by the morally disturbing Arab refugee problem. Just as doctrinaire feminists get hung up on the “feminine” techniques of Esther, so are ideologues put off by the moral compromises involved in Israel’s alliances and by the fact that it now gets support from the Establishment. People preoccupied with the equivocal details miss the overriding validity of the Purim and Israel events, events which occurred when the moral condition of the world needed such redemption, almost at all costs. Similarly, the Martin Luthers of the world are embarrassed by religious miracles that cost blood, so they question the fundamental validity of any divine but all too human redemption. The people, Israel, knew then and now better. In an imperfect world, one must be grateful for partial redemption. Celebration inspires the people to perfect that redemption.

In fact, there is a way in which the contemporary Redemption ou-
and affirmation. The material embraces the spiritual hope of a life
expressed in a certain value. The material embraces the spiritual
wealth with the goal of fulfilling your dreams. Your material and spiritual
values are not dependent on the material wealth. The spiritual
wealth is found in the spiritual realm. This means, for example,
our Jewish heritage and our culture are part of our identity.

One way to speak of God today.

PURNIM: HOW TO SPEAK OF GOD TODAY

On the central dilemma of identity.

"Purnim" is a Hebrew word that means "to express" or "to declare." It refers to expressing one's identity in a certain way. In this context, "Purnim" is used to describe a person who expresses their identity in a way that is meaningful and authentic. The word "Purnim" is often used in a religious context to refer to expressing one's identity in a way that is consistent with one's religious beliefs. This can include the way a person talks about their faith, their cultural heritage, and their identity as a Jew.

PURNIM. HOW TO SPEAK OF GOD TODAY

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THE JEWISH WAY
HUMOR: THE LANGUAGE OF FAITH

On Purim, the laughter reaches surprising heights. This forces some consideration of the role of humor in religion in general. Purim is a put-on in many ways: witness the broad caricature of the Megillah and the raucousness of the celebration. The humor carries a religious message, however. Humor expresses transcendence of unredeemed reality, and it takes sanctity itself with a sense of limits. Satire prevents us from making the sacred absolute (only God is absolute). The unchecked tendency to respect religion all too often leads to deifying the ritual and the outward form of God. If people take the sacred too solemnly, they are confusing their religious expression—which is relative and limited in truth—with the infinite God whom they really seek to serve.

There is another element involved, an element one can appreciate a bit more in the generation after the Holocaust. The humor is in part a defiance and an outcry. In a sense, is it not absurd that the genocide came so close? That a tyrant was enraged and a whole nation was condemned? That a drunken, fatuous king casually agreed (a week later he didn’t remember) and a whole people’s doom was sealed? Is it not ridiculous that but for Esther’s tricks and by that narrow margin Jews were barely saved from total savagery? Does this momentary confrontation with mass death not strip the veil of rationality from reality, exposing its tragic and outrageous nature?

One can only respond with laughter and mockery and put-on, satirizing God and the bitter joke this world threatens to become. It is enough to drive a person to drink! (Jews act this out.) But as the hilarity reaches its climax, Jews move beyond bitterness to humor. In laughing at religious forms and at reality, one admits the fallibility of religious hopes but one also affirms them. In satire and humor, the pretensions of the moment are punctured. Through the humor, Jews project themselves into future redeemed reality that transcends the moment. Thus, hope is kept alive and the Messiah remains possible.

Ultimately, laughter is a unique reflection of Judaism’s conception of life and reality. One of the Torah’s central positive teachings is that there is no other God. If one believes in the infinite One God, then everything else is relative. No other deity, no other value source, no other power has the right to claim absolute status.

Therefore, Jews not only teach monotheism, they teach against idolatry. To be a Jew is to fight idolatry. The midrashim about Abraham’s earliest years describe him as a child smashing the idols in his father’s shop; this is his introduction to becoming a Jew. But how should one fight idolatry? One of the real dangers is that in trying to refute the absolute claims of the idols, the very argument gives them significance. The presumptuousness of the demand for absolute loyalty on the part of human systems is best undermined by mockery and laughter, which puncture pretensions without giving weight to the pretender.

The Book of Exodus describes how the awesome all-powerful Pharaoh, the tyrant who claimed to be the embodiment of the Divine, was undermined by a plague—a profusion of frogs that crawled out of his shelves, his closets, his very bed. One can imagine the queen or the king climbing into the royal four-poster and sliding under the sheets with all the arrogance of dynasty, only to jump out in fright at the little frogs. Similarly, the Torah describes how the Egyptian wise men, who claimed they controlled the powers of the universe, were undermined by crawling, swarming, and biting little bugs. One can picture in the mind’s eye how they scrambled desperately and in vain until they had to retreat before Moses, the representative of the slaves and of the Infinite One whom they were trying to dismiss.

The same satiric approach is captured by Isaiah, who describes a naive bumpkin shaping and worshiping idols. The idolator carved half his wood into an awesome god before whom he bowed down and to whom he sacrificed everything. The other half—the broken pieces of wood and shavings—were thrown into a fire on which he cooked his food, and the pumpkin sat there and said, “Ahh.” The Psals poke fun at idols who have eyes but see not; ears but hear not; and legs but walk not.

Just as idolators absolutize their deities, so do people tend to give infinite weight to their own contemporary situation. People are obedient to the norms of their society; they stand in awe of the authority that addresses them in their own lives. In a way, this is contemporary idolatry. When people sacrifice all ethics for the sake of making money, money has become their god. When people kill or drop all their values because of a totalitarian system that demands it, this is contemporary idolatry. Humor comes to the rescue by debunking the present situation, by revealing that this structure of the world is not absolute; there is something beyond it.

One of the amazing things about the record of the shoah is how Jews were able to use humor in the face of the most absolute evil of all time in order to reassert their human values. They told the story in the Warsaw ghetto, during the bitter mass roundup in which thousands of children were deported. An SS officer invaded one home, and was about to take away a woman’s only child. She pleaded and wept so piteously that the Nazi hesitated for a moment. Then, to make cruel sport with her, he said, “I will give you one chance to save your child.
Purim, remarkable role in Jewish history, purim's laughter preserves integrity and solidarity together. This is a special Purim, offering an extraordinary humorous affirmation. Thus, Purim's laughter protects integrity and solidarity. The Purim holiday celebrates the deliverance of the Jews from Haman's plot. The Purim story is a reminder of the power of humor in preserving identity and community.

The Purim tradition culminates in the feast of Purim, a day of joy and revelry. The holiday is marked by the reading of the Book of Esther, which recounts the story of Purim. Jews around the world gather to eat, drink, and dance, celebrating the miracle that saved their ancestors from destruction.

Purim, through its unique blend of humor and tradition, serves as a reminder of the resilience of the Jewish people. It is a time to come together, to laugh, and to be grateful for the blessings of freedom and survival. The Purim story is a testament to the enduring spirit of the Jewish community, and its celebration serves as a reminder of the importance of maintaining a sense of humor even in the face of adversity.
HASIDIC TEXTS ON PURIM & JOY

The "Seer" of Lublin said of Rabbi Isaac Luria (important Kabbalist, 1534-1572) that he had two chief merits: that he made plain and translucent the mysteries of the Zohar (a major mystical work), and that he placed rejoicing foremost in the service of God, whereby he acquired sufficient merit to be deemed worthy of seeing the prophet Elijah.

Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk said [These are all causes for joy]: Rejoice that you have an opportunity to sing unto God. Rejoice that you are a Jew. Rejoice that you are able to pray, to study, and to perform God's will. Before the endlessness of God the highest saint and the lowliest commoner are equal. Be contented with your achievement in affairs of the spirit, as well as with your worldly status. Do not doubt yourself, but enjoy the Light of God.

Said the Ba'al Shem Tov: No child can be born except through pleasure and joy. By the same token, if one wishes his prayers to bear fruit, he must offer them with pleasure and joy.

Said the "Yud" (Jacob Isaac of Pursisch): The Talmud tells us that all the Heavenly Gates are closed except the Gate of Tears. Why this exception? Because tears are a sign of grief, and grief cannot open gates that are closed. The other portals, however, can be opened wide by joyous prayer.

Said the Mezeritzer: When a King is at a celebration he is approachable to many people who otherwise would be denied admittance to the palace. Likewise when we serve God with joy, He is more approachable.

Rabbi Samuel Abba of Slovita said: There is a saying that when other memorable days are no longer observed, Purim will still be commemorated. This means that all our festivals are demonstrations of God's miracles, but Purim is in commemoration of a natural event. Though we may not merit it that God deliver us in a miraculous manner, nevertheless we may still hope for aid in a natural way.

Said Rabbi Bunam: Purim is greater than Yom Kippur. On Yom Kippur we are ordered to starve our bodies, but on Purim, the Talmud enjoins us to imbibe more than usual, thereby starving our minds. The affliction of the mind is greater than the affliction of the body.

On the day following Purim, the Porrissover would call the poor to his home early in the morning and distribute money to them. He gave as his reason the following: "Because it is a special Mitzvah to make gifts to the poor on Purim, every one neglects this Mitzvah on the next day, and I deem it an excellent deed to perform a neglected Mitzvah."