

Rabbi Rosenblatt, Reverend Marciano Friends and family

Happy Purim !

For those of you who don't know, I am a Purim baby. I was born on March 18, 2003 or the 14th day of Adar in the year 5763. I was not only born on my grandparent's 47th wedding anniversary but also on Purim. I am the total Purim package...complete with the jokes. And simply by attending this morning you too will get the full Purim package.

What is the Purim package, you ask?

Essentially there are four special Mitzvot or moral deeds of Purim.

They are

1. Listening to the Megillah. The megillah is the story of Esther (not Glotman) that is printed at the end of most editions of the Hebrew Bible. You have to hear the whole thing from the beginning to end, no skipping, from a hand scribed scroll. The racket you have all been listening to the past 45 minutes from

those noise makers is only a tradition, not a formal mitzvah.

Some consider it torture, others just think Haman deserves it.

2.

The special purim feast also called the purim seudah All that is required at the feast is bread and the rest is as you like it, as long as it is kosher. People are also encouraged to drink plenty of wine. Some say enough so that you don't know the difference between Mordechai and Haman. More on that story later. So let's eat drink and be merry.!

3. Mishloach Manot or Gift baskets of food for friends

Traditionally these gift baskets are meant to be 2 different food items made of ready to eat kosher foods. So please hold the raw briskets.

4. Giving To the poor- Minimally this is two gifts to two different people in need, Ideally it should be the equivalent to the amount that you might spend for dinner in Vancouver, or wherever you live.

Rambam, or Maimonides, a great Rabbi from the 12th century wrote the following about the mitzvot of Purim

“It is preferable for a person to be more liberal with his donations to the poor than to be lavish in his preparation of the Purim feast or in sending portions to his friends. For there is no greater and more splendid happiness than to gladden the hearts of the poor, the orphans, the widows, and the converts.

One who brings happiness to the hearts of these unfortunate individuals resembles the Divine Presence, which Isaiah 57:15 describes as having the tendency "to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive those with broken hearts."

Maimonides tells us that the most important mitzvah of the day, is to give gifts to the poor and that you should spend more money and time on this mitzvah than any other. One might have thought that the reason for this is because, the poor also deserve to celebrate Purim and can only do so with our charity. I think Maimonides means that you should do this for the feeling that you get in your heart and the joy that it brings you, not just because you are meant to do this.

To better understand Maimonides it is helpful to distinguish between two words in the English language, “Happiness” and “Pleasure.”

Pleasures are things that you experience for a moment. Such as a cold ice cream on a hot summer’s day, or your mom’s chocolate chip cookies right out of the oven when they are still gooey and warm or watching my hero, Kevin Durant play in an NBA basketball game. All of those things are enjoyable for a moment, and then sadly they are over. On the other hand, happiness is an overall state of effectively living a life of value. This could mean a feeling of personal growth or giving to others or building something important or meeting a challenge head on .

Back to Maimonides. What Maimonides is saying is that your Purim should not be just about pleasure, it should also be about happiness and there is no better way to achieve happiness than to provide someone else with pleasure, especially those people who live in poverty.

While we are on the subject of happiness, let me tell you about a study that has been going on at Harvard for the past 75 years. The

subjects of the study are all men who were at one time either children who grew up in the poorest Boston neighborhoods or were Harvard students. The study has been following these men from age 18 to age 90 and above. The number one conclusion of the study so far has been that to be in the happiest state you have to have good relationships. Fame does not make people happy, money does not make people happy, but relationships do make people happy.

The Torah must have understood an important lesson about happiness and relationships. Our people were onto something from the beginning of time, when they saw the value of a good meal in creating and sustaining relationships.

Throughout the torah, there are lots of mentions of great meals shared with both friends and enemies. Abraham had an open feast, sort of like an all you can eat buffet, at the intersection where two ancient roads met .. Esther (again not Glotman) invited Haman and Achashverosh to two different feasts in order to soften up Achashverosh for her big request of saving the entire Jewish people. More than that, Jewish tradition centers almost every holiday around a meal.

We celebrate our freedom around the Seder meal, We pray for a good new year around the Rosh Hashanah table. The talmud says that eating before Yom Kippur, is itself a mitzvah equal to fasting on the Yom Kippur. The Talmud actually compares the Shabbat Table to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem and that feeding a needy guest is as significant as performing the Holy Rituals of the Temple.

As my dad says, “they tried to kill us, we survived, so lets eat!”

Of course I don’t need the talmud to teach me about the value of relationships around the table. Esther (And this time I do mean Glotman) has been teaching me that lesson since I was a baby.

My mother has also continued that tradition. Both my grandparent’s dinner table and our table have always been a place to gather family and friends and even a lonely soul or two to share a delicious meal and a lot of noisy conversation. And I mean NOISY. I have so many special memories of sitting together around so many different tables with my family and friends I can tell you from first hand experience how much happiness it can bring and that it easier to make friends on a full stomach.

Circling back to Purim, there are two mitzvot that relate directly to the importance of relationships and sharing food and they are

the Purim Seudah and the giving of Mishloach Manot. At this holiday, the Rabbis were not satisfied with confining the mitzvot to those at our own table but to also include those people who are not. The idea is that sometimes you need to reach a little further. So let's just say if Amazon and FedEx had been set up on a blind date by Queen Esther, the baby would have been Mishloach Manot. Long distance gifts of caring delivered in a neat package.

I am totally excited about delivering Mishloach Manot this afternoon with my brother, sister and cousins to different people in need in our community.

The very thought of including food in my Dvar Torah has gotten me totally distracted from one additional but very important point.

That is, the Purim story or the whole megillah. Allow me to interject a summary (ala fresh prince of Bel Air)

Now, this is the story all about how

My life got flipped-turned upside down

And I'd like to take a minute, just sit right there

I'll tell you how I became the Queen of Persia named Est-air

In West Shushan, born and raised

In Mordechai's house I spent most of my days

Then came to power a king quite a fool

Named Achashverosh. chopped off His wife's head with a sharp
sharp tool '

a couple of guys who were looking for a Girl good

Snatched me up from my neighborhood

A guy Named haman bullied up a new scare

And said, "Get rid of all the Jews, how you kill'em I don't care"

Well, The king fell in love and I was picked out

Why Gd wanted me to be his wife was a matter of doubt

Uncle Mordechai Appeared at the palace his eyes full of fear

He said, Did you know Haman is planning for all the Jews to
disappear

Me and all my gals we were filled with fear

I invited the king and Haman to to a party in my lair

Made sure I was looking beautiful with flowing hair

I told the king that Haman was a Jew-Hater

The king said to Haman , "Yo homes, See you later"

For your crimes you hang from that tree

Ester and her people they got to be free

Looked at my people, peace was finally there

I could sit on my throne as the queen Est-Air

The Story is one about the survival of our people and the fact that we are alive here today. There were many times over the course of Jewish history where we could have been entirely destroyed. In fact, a famous mathematician by the name of Blaise Pascal was once asked by King Louis of France for proof that Gd exists.

Pascal, answered, "the Jews, the Jews." In many different generations, time periods and kingdoms from the Euphrates to the Ukraine, tyrants, religious fanatics and racists have tried to kill us. One famous Jewish historian once said, that Jews believe that "the heavens might declare the glory of Gd, but his will is revealed through the events of history." We are very invested in these stories and the holidays that celebrate them because they

are reminder that Gd has saved us for a reason. That reason is to fulfill the mitzvot, to care for one another and to act righteously.

The mitzvot of Purim are one good example of how we do that.

I know that I, Oliver Munt, will have to carry this forward by continuing to do countless mitzvot. I was born on Purim Day, and I feel a special connection to the Mitzvot of giving gifts to the poor, and to the story of our people.... the good news is that I can do this every Purim and every other day of the year .

Another thing the torah has always understood is the connections between counting your blessings and happiness. Today, on my bar mitzvah I am happy to say I have so many things to be thankful for and so many people to thank. Of course, I want to thank all of you for coming today as without you it would not be a celebration. I want to give a special thank you to friends and family who have come from afar. We have people who have travelled from Toronto, London (ontario that is), ,and Montreal,

... California, Portland and Seattle... and even as far away as the original London... London England. Thank you!

There are so many special people in my life whom, without their love and support I would not be here today. Coaches and teachers, friends and family have shaped me in to who I am and who I will become

Firstly, I would like to thank Rabbi Rosenblatt and Reverend Marciano for their spiritual guidance and for bringing me to this day confident and prepared. Reverend Marciano I would like to thank you for your endless patience as I learned my torah portion.... and I mean endless. Rabbi Rosenblatt, you helped me to understand the true meaning of Purim and more importantly, the meaning of becoming a bar mitzvah.

Then there is my family..... and WOW how lucky am I!!!!

I have a special place in my heart for both my grandmothers. I am so fortunate to have you here to celebrate with me today.

Grandma Peggy although you live far away I think of you often and wish I could spend more time with you. I am always amazed that a card arrives from you exactly on the day of every holiday and birthday that I celebrate.

Grammy Esther. You are the perfect grandmother. You do all the amazing things that a grandmother does. You give love and

support when other family members don't. You always bring out the best in me and you do what all Jewish grandmothers do perfectly, NAG.

Sadly, my Grandpa Martin and Grandpa Ian are no longer with us . I hope that they are looking down on me and are proud of me today and every other day.

Most of you know that I am the youngest kid in the family and yes, I know, that explains a lot about me. But let me take a minute to tell you about them.

Lucy has always been a loving sister... or has she. They call you my half sister for a reason, half the time you think Im adorable and the other half you think I am annoying. Seriously Lucy you are wonderful amazing and beautiful . I love you 100 percent of the time.

Benjamin, in grade 2 I had to write a paragraph on the positive influence you had on my life and I was scrambling for words.

Today I can truly say that I could write a book on all the ways you have made my life better. You are the best brother I could ever dream of having.

Last but definitely not least, Id like to thank my loving parents
who have given me