



REBBE RESPONSA

The Rebbe's English Letters

Purim and the Secret to
Jewish Survival

Issue 96
Purim, 5785

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ב"ה

A Word from the Publishers

Dear reader,

We hereby present **Issue 96** of *Rebbe Responsa*, a compilation of letters originally authored by the Lubavitcher Rebbe in English.

In this week's booklet, you will find a selection of letters addressing the key to Jewish survival in the face of annihilation and assimilation, as taught to us by the Purim story.

The footnotes and titles accompanying these letters have been added by the publisher.

* * *

The Rebbe's English letters represent a little-known facet of the Rebbe's Torah, containing profound wisdom and practical guidance expressed in clear, accessible language. We encourage you to download the Rebbe Responsa app, which offers the only comprehensive collection of the Rebbe's English letters available to date. With of over 5,000 organized by both topic and date, the app makes finding the Rebbe's guidance and opinion simple and accessible.

The Rebbe Responsa Team

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Editor@RebbeResponsa.com

1

Unbiased History

Jewish history books; Jewish history amply demonstrates Divine Providence and that Jewish survival is through attachment to the Torah¹

By the Grace of G-d
28th of Adar I, 5725
Brooklyn, N.Y.

Mr. [Charles Raddock]²
New York, N.Y.

Greeting and Blessing:

This is to acknowledge receipt of your letter as well as the preview sampling of your history of the Jews.

I believe that there has been a crying need for a condensed form of Jewish history, which should reflect its essential aspect through the ages, namely that it is quite different from the histories of other peoples. I trust that your book will fit this need.

Speaking of the essential aspect of Jewish history, I have in mind the Divine Providence which has been so evident in Jewish history, perhaps more so than it is evident even in the private life of Jews as

¹ **Published:** *The Letter and the Spirit*, Vol 2 (Nissan Mindel Publications, 2013), 348.

Note: Letters printed in "*The Letter and the Spirit*" are from the archives of Rabbi Nissan Mindel A"H, the Rebbe's personal secretary entrusted with writing up the Rebbe's orally dictated responses. The "Nissan Mindel Archives" are comprised of secretarial copies, including first drafts, and may have subsequently been published with editorial changes. Therefore, the letters as they appear in the book may not be the final signed version.

² In 1965, Raddock published a three-volume history of the Jews titled *Portrait of a People: The Story of the Jews from Ancient to Modern Times*. An excerpt of this letter appeared as part of an ad for the book which was published in various newspapers. For more of the Rebbe's involvement in the publication of the book, see anash.org '*It's Not My Worry, It's the Rebbe's*'.

individuals, and in the affairs of mankind in general. For, as one turns the pages of history, whether during the time of independence or throughout the long period of dispersion, and one sees the changes which were taking place in the surrounding world, changes relating to culture, religion and other spiritual areas, not to mention the material ones; changes which were often quite radical; and considering the fact that throughout the ages Jews have always been in the minority, and according to any and all historical theories there was no possibility of survival for the Jewish people under such conditions in the natural order of things - yet the Jewish people has carried on its existence with an ever growing vitality.

It seems that even the enemies of our people realized the uniqueness of our people, as we find Haman say, "There is one people, scattered and dispersed among the nations, and their laws are different from those of any other people."³ He realized that the Jewish people is "one people" - one, constant and unchangeable, despite that it is "scattered and dispersed among the nations." Since the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdash, and even during the period of the second Beis Hamikdash, a sizeable part of our people was dispersed among other nations. The very existence of our people, therefore, is living testimony of hashgocho protis.

And since all matters connected with the Torah, including the history of our people which is alluded in the words, "This is the book of the history of man" (Gen. 5:1), serve as timely and practical lessons for all times, our history teaches us among other things, the following basic principle:

Regardless of what the prophets of doom of our generation may say as to the final duration of our people, as a people, giving it x number of years until its dissolution, G-d forbid; regardless also, on the other hand of those who wish to "save" our people through sacrificing half of the Torah, or through various other reforms, etc. - the very history of our people is proof that our people will outlive all those prophets of doom and would-be saviors. Moreover, the continued existence and the ultimate fulfillment of the destiny of our people will be carried out through those Jews, though they may be in the minority, who will steadfastly hold to the eternal values and truths of the Torah and mitzvot, which have assured our

³ *Esther* 3:8.

existence in the past and precisely on the principle of “Lo, it is a people that dwell alone and is not reckoned among the nations” (Num. 23:9), and precisely because “Their laws are different from those of any other people.” And although these words were said by the arch enemies of our people, they spoke the truth and it is part of the Torah.

I would like to add that it is curious how most Jewish historians have been so obviously biased and prejudiced, although a historian must try to preserve complete objectivity and not allow himself to be influenced by personal inclinations. Most of them, as you surely know, have distorted Jewish history, and have emphasized secondary or completely unimportant aspects while minimizing or disregarding the fundamentals. They were further influenced by their desire to follow the trend of the proponents of various historiographies, disregarding the irrefutable truth that the Jewish People is a unique people, whose uniqueness is derived from its being inseparably bound up with the Torah - one people, one Torah, one G-d.

A history book that reflects the author’s determination to present an authentic view of Jewish history, and does not fear the reactions of certain groups which will not find this view to their taste and some of which groups have usurped to themselves the monopoly of Jewish historians - such a history book is to be commended and welcomed. I extend my personal congratulations to you, and wish you to continue from strength to strength.

With blessing,

P. S. I take the liberty of adding the following remark in view of the importance that this type of Jewish history should enjoy the widest circulation and acceptance, including such quarters where knowledge of Jewish history had been drawn from “broken wells.” It is advisable to pay attention to certain external matters such as illustrations, tables, charts, etc., wherever possible. For although these are not the essence of the matter, they do appeal to many people. In your book I notice a description of some illustrations themselves in the preview sampling. But these are things of which we can safely say, “The more the better.”

2

The Age-old Secret of Survival

It was our children's education that was the secret of survival in the story of Purim⁴

FREE RENDITION

By the Grace of G-d
7th of Adar, 5728
Brooklyn, N.Y.

To All Participants in the Opening
of the New Lubavitch Community Centre
in London,

G-d bless you all –

Greeting and Blessing:

The opening of the New Lubavitch Centre and attending events taking place in the week of Purim, will surely be imbued with the sublime spirit of those auspicious days.

The essential aspect of Purim is the miraculous escape of the Jewish people from the decree which, as the Megillah tells us, threatened the annihilation of the entire Jewish people, “young and old, infants and women in one day.”⁵ According to our Sages of blessed memory, the decree was nullified when Mordechai gathered 22,000 Jewish children, and so inspired them, by word and education, that they were prepared to give up their very lives rather than depart from Yiddishkeit.⁶

The relevance of the Purim events to our day is pointedly emphasized by the Baal Shem Tov, whose disciple and successor was the teacher of the Alter Rebbe, author of the Tanya and (Rav's)

⁴ **Source:** Photocopy of original. Although this letter is presented as a *free rendition*, translations sent on the Rebbe's stationary were meticulously reviewed and often edited by the Rebbe. The Hebrew version of this letter is printed in *Igros Kodesh*, vol. 25, letter 9,462 (p. 103-105). The following footnotes are taken from there.

⁵ *Esther* 3:13.

⁶ See *Esther Rabbah* 8:7; 9:4; 10:4; *Yalkut Shimoni*, Remmez 1057, et al.

Shulchan Aruch, and the father of the Chabad-Lubavitch system. Referring to the Mishna (Megillah 17a), the Baal Shem Tov declared that the words, “He who reads the Megillah ‘backward’ does not fulfill his duty” allude also to “one who thinks that the miracle of Purim was valid ‘back in those days,’ but not now”.⁷

Thus we are reminded emphatically that all the events that took place on Purim are equally applicable today. And although no such decree, G-d forbid, now hangs over our people, and, on the contrary, Jews can, thank G-d, live in peace and even prosperity – the secret of Jewish survival remains the same: It is to be found in the kosher education of Jewish boys and girls to the degree of Mesiras Nefesh (self-sacrifice) for Yiddishkeit.

This precisely is the basic function of the Lubavitch Centre: To gather Jewish children – children in the plain sense of the word, as well as “children” in terms of knowledge of G-d, His Torah and Mitzvoth – in order to reveal their inner soul and true essence, that they should recognize that “You are children of G-d, your G-d,”⁸ and should continue to forge the golden chain of their ancestral tradition to the point of veritable self-sacrifice for the preservation of the Jewish way of life, the way of the Torah and Mitzvoth.

Such Mesiras-Nefesh includes, of course, also complete dedication to helping others, both spiritually and materially.

We have seen these features personified in my father-in-law of saintly memory, the leader of Chabad-Lubavitch of our generation, as they came to light in his eventful life, from his earliest youth. (Thus, for example, at the age of eleven he was arrested and imprisoned for coming to the aid of a Jew harassed by a Russian official⁹).

⁷ See *Kesser Shem Tov* (Kehot Publication Society, 1999), appendix 100, and what is referenced there.

⁸ *Devarim* 14:1.

⁹ For a more detailed account of this episode see *Igros Kodesh*, Rebbe Rayatz, Vol. 3, letter no. 719 (pp. 82ff.)

May G-d grant that the new edifice should be filled to capacity with "our young and our old, with our sons and with our daughters,"¹⁰ who will follow in this path and in this spirit.

It is impossible to overstate the extraordinary Zechus of all those who have lent a hand in the erection and equipment of the centre, and who have been and will continue to be its ardent supporters, and participants in its activities. For every good deed by any of the youngsters who are educated within its walls and atmosphere will be attributable to the everlasting credit and Zechus also of the builders and helpers of this great institution.

With esteem and blessing for much Hatzlocho and good tidings in all above, and for a joyous Purim -

Signed /Menachem Schneeson/

3

The Haman's Throughout Our History

Haman recognized Jews as "one people" despite their dispersion; Jewish survival throughout history is due to Torah and mitzvos, not physical or cultural characteristics¹¹

A PURIM MESSAGE

— ACADEMIC YOUTH GROUPS —

By the Grace of G-d
7th of Adar, 5713
Brooklyn, N.Y.

The story of Purim, as related in the Book of Esther, gives us a clear analysis of the "Jewish problem."

Being dispersed over 127 provinces and lands, their own still in ruins, the Jews undoubtedly differed from one another in custom,

¹⁰ Shemos 10:9.

¹¹ **Source:** Photocopy of the original.

garment and tongue according to the place of their dispersal, very much in the same way as Jews in different lands differ nowadays. Yet, though there were Jews who would conceal their Jewishness, Haman, the enemy of the Jews, recognized the essential qualities and characteristics of the Jews which made all of them, with or without their consent, into “one people,” namely, “their laws are different from those of any other people” (Book of Esther 3:8).

Hence, in his wicked desire to annihilate the Jews, Haman seeks to destroy “**all** the Jews, young and old, children and women.” Although there were in those days, too, Jews who strictly adhered to the Torah and *mitzvos*, and Jews whose religious ties with their people were weak, or who sought to assimilate themselves, yet none could escape the classification of belonging to that “one people,” and every one was included in Haman’s cruel decree.

In all ages there were Hamans, yet we have outlived them, thank G-d. Wherein lies the secret of our survival?

The answer will be evident from the following illustration: When a scientist seeks to ascertain the laws governing a certain phenomenon, or to discover the essential properties of a certain element in nature, he must undertake a **series** of experiments under the most **varied** conditions in order to discover those properties or laws which obtain under all conditions alike. No true scientific law can be deduced from a minimum number of experiments, or from experiments under similar or only slightly varied conditions, for the results as to what is essential and what is secondary or quite unimportant would then not be conclusive.

The same principle should be applied to our people. It is one of the oldest in the world, beginning its national history from the Revelation at Mount Sinai, some 3300 years ago. In the course of these long centuries our people have lived under extremely varied conditions, most different times and different places all over the world. If we wish to discover the essential elements making up the cause and very basis of the existence of our people and its unique strength, we must conclude that it is not its peculiar physical or intrinsic mental characteristics, not its tongue, manners and customs (in a wider sense), nor even its racial purity (for there were times in the early history of our people, as well as during the Middle Ages and even recent times, when whole ethnic groups and tribes have become proselytes and part of our people).

The essential element which unites our “dispersed and scattered people” and makes it “one people” throughout its dispersion and regardless of time, is the Torah and *mitzvos*, the Jewish way of life which has remained basically the same throughout the ages and in all places. The conclusion is clear and beyond doubt: It is the Torah and *mitzvos* which made our people indestructible on the world scene in the face of massacres and pogroms aiming at our physical destruction, and in the face of ideological onslaughts of foreign cultures aiming at our spiritual destruction.

Purim teaches us the age-old lesson, which has been verified even most recently, to our sorrow, that no manner of assimilationism, not even such which is extended over several generations, provides an escape from the Hamans and Hitlers; nor can any Jew sever his ties with his people by attempting such an escape.

On the contrary: Our salvation and our existence depend precisely upon the fact that “their laws are different from those of any other people.”

Purim reminds us that the strength of our people as a whole, and of each individual Jew and Jewess, lies in a closer adherence to our ancient spiritual heritage, which contains the secret of harmonious life, hence of a healthy and happy life. All other things in our spiritual and temporal life must be free from any contradiction to the basis and essence of our existence, and must be attuned accordingly in order to make for the utmost harmony, and add to our physical and spiritual strength, both of which go hand in hand in Jewish life.

With best wishes for a joyous Purim, and may we live to see a world free of Hamans and all types of Amalekites, the enemies of the Jews, of their body, soul and faith.

Cordially yours,

M. Schneerson

4

Purim and Troubled Youth

*Deterioration of observance brought the decree, gathering of children
brought salvation*¹²

By the Grace of G-d
7th of Adar, 5728
Brooklyn, N.Y.

To the Participants in the
Annual Celebration of Lubavitcher Yeshiva
"Achei Tmimim", Roxbury, Mass.
G-d Bless You All –

Greeting and Blessing:

This year's annual event, taking place on the 24th of Adar, will surely be inspired by the spirit of Purim which highlights this auspicious month.

Our Sages of blessed memory have given us some insights into the events which culminated in the wonderful festival of Purim. They tell us that the decree which threatened the total annihilation of the Jewish people in those days had been brought about by a breakdown of the Torah-way of life, under the impact of the non-Jewish environment.¹³ Furthermore: that the decree was nullified when Mordechai gathered 20,000 Jewish children and inspired them, by word and education, with such a degree of Mesiras-Nefesh for Torah and Mitzvoth, that they were prepared to give up their very lives rather than depart from Yiddishkeit.¹⁴

The relevance of the Purim events to us here and now is clear:

To be sure, Divine Providence has been kind to us in that we live in no such imminent danger, G-d forbid, as threatened our people

¹² **Published:** *Letters From the Rebbe*, Vol. 5, 92.

¹³ See *Megillah* 12a.

¹⁴ See *Esther Rabbah* 8:7; 9:4; 10:4; *Yalkut Shimoni*, Remmez 1057, et al.

in those days. However, the future of large segments of our Jewish youth does give us ample cause for serious apprehension.

Lacking the faith, security and moral strength which only Torah-true education can provide, as a shield against the ills and frustrations besetting the younger generation of our day – ever increasing numbers of our children and youths are being swept by the undertow of the environment, where delinquency, rebellion, hippie-cults, etc., have reached unprecedented proportions and continue to rise. At the bottom of these ills is the lack of inner harmony between the heart and the mind, emotion and intellect; the inability, often the absence of motivation and will, to curb the drive for all sorts of indulgence with reckless abandon.

This is why Yeshiva education is nowadays even more vital than ever. Here the emphasis is not on the acquisition of knowledge alone, but knowledge that is coupled with, and based on, the eternal values of our eternal Torah and Torah-way of life.

The distinguished Lubavitch Yeshiva of Boston, like all Lubavitch Yeshivoth, places special emphasis on the essential aspect of Chinuch, which is to bring the mind and heart into harmony, based on the principle that “the mind has a natural supremacy over the heart”¹⁵ – one of the basic foundations of the Chabad-Lubavitch system expounded by the Alter Rebbe, its founder, and author of the *Tanya* and *Shulchan Aruch*.

This Chinuch, which begins at the earliest age of the child, continues consistently throughout the child’s education and into maturity. It has the element of *Mesiras Nefesh* (*Nefesh* = *Rotzon*, “desire”), in that it trains the child to control, and “surrender” to *Kedusha*, the desire to indulge and overindulge, thus cultivating true inner harmony – the mainspring of a wholesome and meaningful life.

May the forthcoming annual event accomplish and exceed all expectations, and may the merit of it be a source of generous Divine blessings to each and all of the participants, friends and supporters of the Boston Lubavitcher Yeshiva, in all needs, material and spiritual.

¹⁵ *Zohar*, vol. 3, 224a; *Tanya* ch. 12 (17a).

With esteem, and with blessing for Hatzlocho, and for a joyous Purim,

5

Chabad Foiling Haman's Plan

*Haman recognized that the secret to Jewish survival is Jewish education; What Chabad is all about!*¹⁶

By the Grace of G-d
Purim Koton, 5746
Brooklyn, N.Y.

To All Participants in the
Third Anniversary Banquet
Chabad Community Center
Anaheim, CA

Greeting and Blessing:

I was pleased to be informed of the forthcoming Anniversary Banquet, taking place at the end of the current month Adar I, on the eve of Rosh Chodesh Adar II. Both these months are particularly auspicious and joyous for our Jewish people, which makes the date of the event doubly favorable.

Purim has a special relevance to the cause for which you are gathered on this occasion. Purim emphasizes the vital importance of Torah education. The Midrash tells us that Haman met Jewish children coming from school and asked them what they had learned that day. In reply, they quoted verses which eventually were included in our Siddur. One verse particularly inflamed Haman: "Contrive a scheme, but it will be foiled; conspire a plot, but it will not materialize, for G-d is with us" (Isaiah 8:10). He vowed that when he puts his decree into effect, the children will be his first target.

Haman knew then that as long as the Jewish people remembered and adhered to the secret of their survival, namely - in his words -

¹⁶ **Source:** Photocopy of original.

that they are "one people, (though) spread and scattered among the nations, and their (Torah-) laws are different from those of any other people"; so long, that is, as Jewish children receive Torah-true education - his plots and schemes against the Jews could not succeed.

Indeed, as he was soon to learn, when his plot collapsed and he was led to the gallows he had prepared for Mordchai - it was the extraordinary resurgence of Torah education brought about by "Mordchai the Jew," who "would not bend his knee nor bow down" before any tyrant that would presume to compel him to compromise his Jewishness, that brought about the miraculous reversal of the Jewish situation "from sadness to gladness and from fasting to feasting," bringing to the Jews of Shushan, and to Jews everywhere and in all generations, "light, joy, gladness and honor."

This, in essence, is what Chabad is all about. It is dedicated to bringing about a resurgence of Torah education, especially of the young - young not only in years, but also who are still young in Jewish experience of Torah-living. It is a cause that deserves the support of all concerned Jews and an extraordinary Z'chus for all who share in it and support it generously.

With esteem and blessing for Hatzlocho in all above

לזכות החתן
הרה"ת ר' פרץ מאיר שמחה שיחי'
מינקאוויטש

והכלה המהוללה
מרת שיינא נחמה שתחי' שעיו

לרגל חתונתם בשעטומ"צ
כ' אדר ה'תשפ"ה

יה"ר שיזכו לבנות בית נאמן בישראל בנין עדי עד
כרצו"ק כ"ק אדמו"ר נשיא דורנו

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