



KEEPING PURIM HAPPY

Dear Parents,

Erev Shabbos Parashas Tetzaveh Parshas Zachor 5780

Purim has so much to offer our children – an exciting story with a dramatically wonderful outcome, costumes, treats, legal noise-making in *shul*, excitement, delivering *Shalach Manos* and much, much more. It's a day that children look forward to with eager and delighted expectation, as well it should be.

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There is, however, an aspect of the *Purim* celebrations that children do not adore. There are in fact any number of children who have a conscious or subconscious feeling of embarrassment or even worse, actual dread as *Purim* approaches. I am not referring to some unfortunate children whose family lacks the basic resources to celebrate the holiday. There are children who fear confronting yet another *Purim* when their father loses control due to excessive drinking.

There is ample support in *Sifrei Halacha* to justify imbibing greater amounts of alcohol at the *Purim Seuda* than the small amounts that are acceptable throughout the year. The injunction to feast until the distinction between the *curse of Haman* and the *blessing of Mordechai* becomes blurred certainly seems to indicate a rationale for dulling of the senses through ingesting wine and liquor. And yet, as with all our other actions, and all other *Mitzvos D'Oraysa* (Biblical laws) and *Mitzvos D'Rabbanan* (Rabbinic Laws) there are guidelines and parameters as to what is appropriate.

No one would consider that stealing an *Esrog* is justified in order to fulfill this most important and significant *Mitzvah*. Hitting and cursing workers to ensure that the *matzos* they are baking contain no *chometz* isn't something acceptable in anyone's book. The same is true of *Ad D'Lo Yada* on *Purim*. If a person, especially a father in the presence of his own children, gets to a state where he has lost control of his actions due to alcohol presumably consumed *L'Shem Shamayim* (for the sake of Heaven), this is no longer an acceptable or effective *Mitzvah* act.

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Purim is for children and for mothers and for fathers. The adults in this picture have the responsibility to achieve personal *Simcha* in a manner that will enhance everyone else's *Simcha*, not detract from it through self-centered, self-absorbed behavior. Think of your children before you are too far gone. Ask a good friend to be your drinking buddy, agree beforehand to allow him to help you stop before your behavior disintegrates to the point your children start getting traumatized.

Equally, and perhaps more troubling, is excessive drinking by young teenagers. Adults serve as role models for the children. The responsibility to act within the parameters of a *Simcha Shel Mitzvah* and not a *simcha* of destructiveness is magnified, because the children are watching.

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Enjoy *Simchas Purim* – prepare now to understand the deep joy and special opportunities for *Mitzvos*, *Tefillah* and *Torah* growth that *Purim* represents, so when Tuesday arrives, the schnapps will merely be useful to put the icing on your already achieved state of *Simcha*, and not be its foundation.

Have a wonderful *Shabbos* and achieve true *Simcha shel Mitzvah* this *Purim*,

L'CHAIM!

Rabbi Kalman Baumann