



# MACCABI WORLD UNION

## Department of Education

KFAR HAMACCABIAH RAMAT GAN 52105, ISRAEL

TEL: 03-671-5731 FAX: 03-574-6565

Email: [carlos@maccabi.org](mailto:carlos@maccabi.org) Website: [www.maccabi.org](http://www.maccabi.org)

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י"א אדר תשע"ז

### חג פורים - אחריות הדדית

## Purim as Jewish responsibility

**Dear Friends,**

**Purim**, the most festive of Jewish holidays, teaches the idea of **Klal Israel**, namely, that **all Jews must stand together as a "Community of Israel"**. In times of crisis no one is free from the obligation to help out. After Haman's decree "*to destroy, kill, and eradicate all the Jews, young and old; men, women and children, in one day, on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar, and to pillage their property*"<sup>1</sup>, Mordechai, the Jewish leader of that era and Esther's uncle, sent a message to Queen Esther saying:

*"Don't imagine that you alone among the Jews will escape to the king's palace, and that this will save your life. Even if you are silent now, the Jews will get relief and rescue, some other way, and you and your father's house will be lost. And who knows? Maybe it was for just such an occasion that you were made queen!"*<sup>2</sup>

Mordechai expresses what is articulated in a powerful fashion in the Talmud: "*Kol Israel Arevim Ze BaZe*"<sup>3</sup> - every Jew is responsible for every other Jew in every possible way. We are urged not to alienate ourselves of that responsibility; this is a real gift to us – the gift of being part of a People with the marvelous goal of bringing an eternal, ethical message to all of mankind.

**Purim** has a specific law regarding this value of interpersonal and National Jewish responsibility: the commandment of *matanot laevionim*, giving "gifts to the poor"<sup>4</sup>. Through this law, we show our concern for the more needy. We are required to give at least two portions, which need not be food, to two poor people.<sup>5</sup> According to our Sages, the main reason that the commandment of presents to the poor, is specifically for Purim, is that this holiday is the pinnacle of joy for the Jews. On this day in particular, we must share our happiness with those less fortunate than ourselves, in order for their happiness to be complete – and ours, as a consequence of theirs. In a conceptual world of true inter-responsibility, this would mean that

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<sup>1</sup> Esther III, 13.

<sup>2</sup> Esther IV, 13-14.

<sup>3</sup> Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Shavuot 39b.

<sup>4</sup> Esther IX, 22.

<sup>5</sup> "One does not count coins when giving charity on Purim; one must give to anyone who extends his hand to receive it"- Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Megillah 2.



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**whilst the less fortunate are not being practically helped and supported by us, we cannot be truly happy.**

This is because Purim's concept of happiness is an interdependent one: the happiness of *Klal Israel*, the Community of Israel as a whole.

With mankind becoming more and more materialistic and individualistic; with intense competition and struggle for power being the constant message of the post-modern world, Purim comes as a timely reminder and says to us: we should care for the destiny of our family, our People, the society we live in. We should care, because we were given the responsibility of caring by doing deeds such as *matanot laevionim* and so many, many more as stated in our Torah. We should care, because for happiness to be complete, it should include those who are around us, and need us so much.

**For a Chag of *real* happiness,**

**With our best wishes,**

**Chag Purim Sameach!**

**Rabbi Carlos A. Tapiero**  
**Deputy Director-General & Director of Education**  
**Maccabi World Union**