

B'S'D'
INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON PURIM - 5761

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SHIUR HARAV SOLOVEICHIK ZT"L on Inyana D'Megilas Esther (Shiur Date: 1956, tape available from M. Nordlicht. Thanks to Arnold Lustiger for providing the tape!)

The Rambam (Hilchos Megila 1:3) and the Rabbeinu Tam (Tosfos, Megila 4a, Chayav Adam Likros quotes the Ree) disagree as to whether one recites the blessing of Shehecheyanu prior to reading the Megila on the morning of Purim. According to the Rambam we do not recite it because we already did so at night. Rabbeinu Tam says that we do recite it again, because the main obligation to read the Megila is by day, Ikar Kriyasa Bayom. Some explain that Megila is a twofold Mitzva. A mitzvah Mdivrei Kabalah of Hayamim Hayleh Nizkarim Vnaasim, these days [of Purim] are remembered and practiced, which has a direct reference to the obligation to perform by day, without mention of the [previous] night. According to the Divrei Kabalah, which is also referred to as Divrei Nviim, the enactment was specifically limited to the day. We read the Megila at night based on a Takanah of Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi, who says that we are obligated to read the Megila at night and repeat it by day, based on the verse (Psalms 22) Elokay Ekra Yomam Vlo Taaneh Vlayla Vlo Dumiah Li (Megila 4a). Thus the obligation to read at night is a Takanas Chazal. However the main Mitzva is by day, therefore according to Rabbeinu Tam, we make Shehecheyanu by day as well.

The Rav noted the following difficulty: whether Mikra Megila is a Takanas Neviim or Takanas Chazal, in the final analysis we perform the same Mitzva, of reading the Megila, twice. So why should we recite Shehecheyanu again in the morning? The Rav answered based on the Gemara (Megila 14a) that asks why don't we recite Hallel on Purim? The Gemara offers two answers. The first is that we do not recite Hallel on a miracle that occurred in Chutz La'aretz. This answer is supplemented by the statement we are still servants of Achashvayrosh, the redemption of Purim was not complete. The second answer is that the reading of the Megila takes the place of the recitation of Hallel. In other words, we do recite Hallel, but it is a different form of Hallel from what we normally recite, as the Purim Hallel assumes the form of Megila. The Rambam cites the second answer, that reading the Megila is Hallel (Hilchos Chanukah 3:6).

There are two Kiyumim, fulfillments of Mitzva, in the reading of the Megila: reading the Megila for its own sake, and Megila as a recitation of Hallel. But this Hallel is unique from all other recitations of Hallel that incorporate the standard format of Hallel from Tehillim and is recited on Yom Tov and Rosh Chodesh and Chanukah. On Purim the recitation of Hallel must be done specifically through the format of the Megila. When a Jew reads the Megila he has two Kiyumim, reading the Megila and a special Kiyum of Hallel on Purim that is different from the Kiyum of Hallel throughout the year. It is a different Cheftza of Hallel, not a Hallel based on Hallel Hamitzri, but rather Shevach V'Hodaah based on the text of the Megila. Since Hallel is only recited by day, this

Kiyum can only be fulfilled by day. Hence the requirement to recite Shehecheyanu again by day when we fulfill this unique, once a year form of Hallel. With the exception of Pesach night, we do not recite Hallel at night (based on the verse Hashir Yihye Lachem Klayl Hiskadesh Chag (Isaiah 30))(Psachim 95b). Therefore the night of Purim has only one Kiyum: that of Mikra Megila, not Hallel. On Purim day there are 2 Kiyumim, and the Shehecheyanu covers the unique Kiyum Mitzvah which we did not fulfill the previous night, of Hallel through the Megila. So Shehecheyanu is recited at night for Mikra Megila and by day for Mitzvas Hallel.

[The Rav asked why would we make Shehecheyanu on Hallel Purim when we don't recite Shehecheyanu during the year when we say Hallel on the various occasions? The Rav answered that the traditional Hallel Hamitzri is recited a number of times throughout the year, hence we do not make Shehecheyanu. However the unique Hallel of Megila comes only once a year, therefore it is appropriate to recite Shehecheyanu over it.]

Why did Chazal institute this unique form of Hallel for Purim? If they were already instituting some form of praise to Hashem for the miracle of Purim, why not use the same format as was used for Chanukah, that of Hallel Hamitzri? Why link the two Kiyumim into one act of reading the Megila? For example on Pesach night we have a Mitzva of Sippur Yetzias Mitzrayim and a separate Mitzva of reciting Hallel which are unique and independent of each other. We don't say "Sippurah Zu Hillula", that telling of the story of the exodus is the fulfillment of the Mitzva of Hallel, rather we fulfill both Sippur and Hallel individually. Yet on Purim these distinct Kiyumim of reading the Megila (telling the story) and reciting Hallel were integrated and identified with a single Mitzva act. Why?

The Rav explained that there are 2 forms of Hallel: Hallel Hamitzri and Hallel D'Psukei D'Zimarah. The Gemara (Shabbos 118b) says that one who completes Hallel daily is a blasphemer, Mcharef U'Mgadef. The Gemara asks: this contradicts Rabbi Yossi who said "let my portion be with those that complete Hallel daily"? The Gemara answers that Rabbi Yossi was referring to reciting Hallel D'Psukei D'Zimarah, the last 6 chapters of Tehillim starting with Tehilla L'David, which is viewed favorably. Daily recitation of Hallel Hamitzri is viewed negatively and should not be done, because recitation of Hallel Hamitzri was established for a supernatural miracle, Lmaalah Mderech Hateva. Hashem is Meshaded, He breaks the process of nature to perform the miracle. He suspends for a limited time the natural order of Yom Vlayala Lo Yishbosu, Sibuv U'Mesubav. The concepts expressed in Hallel Hamitzri of Hayam Raah Vayanos refer to a supernatural miracle. What we call Hallel Hagadol is also similar to Hallel Hamitzri, indeed parts of it are included in our Hallel Hamitzri. We recite Hallel Hagadol Pesach night as well, based on the same verse which we base the recitation of Hallel Hamitzri on Pesach night, Hashir Yihye Lachem etc. Pesach night is symbolic of the performance of supernatural miracles by Hashem. This is the essence and fundamental idea of Hallel Hamitzri.

The Hallel of Psukei D'Zimrah focuses on a different theme. In this Hallel no supernatural miracles are mentioned. We praise Hashem specifically for His revelation through nature itself, without any supernatural miracles. When man wakes and sees the sun in the east, he should appreciate the wonders of nature and the basic laws that Hashem planted in nature. One who can't recognize Hashem through the medium of nature is a non-feeling person. After all, is the consistency of nature any less of a miracle than the splitting of the sea? Are the natural wonders performed by Hashem, [that we take for granted], listed in Barchi Nafshi any less significant? Therefore we say Hallel D'Psukei D'Zimra in praise of Hashem for nature itself.

Judaism did not wish to resort to supernatural miracles. When Hashem established the laws of nature at the time of creation, He did not want to have to break those laws. Chazal (source unknown) refer to

someone who attempted to change Maasay Breishis as Kamah Meguneh, disgusting. When does Hashem resort to supernatural miracles, when the natural processes no longer suffice. Chazal say that had Hashem Himself not been involved through supernatural miracles, in the exodus process, the Jews would have completely assimilated into Egyptian society. Chazal describe the supernatural actions of Hashem with the parable of a Kohen whose Teruma was lost in the middle of a cemetery (a Kohen is normally forbidden to enter a cemetery). If he leaves the Teruma there it will become defiled. If he enters the cemetery to retrieve it, he will defile himself. (Shmos Rabah 16). Chazal's analogy is to Hashem's choice of either remaining outside of Egypt with the ultimate loss of Bnay Yisrael or to Kvayachol, defile himself and enter Egypt, for all purposes a cemetery where there was no house without a dead body on the night of Pesach, to rescue his Teruma, Bnay Yisrael. Hashem opted for the latter but we see that Chazal viewed negatively the deterioration of the situation of Bnay Yisrael in Mitzrayim to the point that it required supernatural intervention. As it says Vayrayd Lhatzilo, and Hashem descended to rescue the Jewish Nation, it was a degradation Kvayachol, for Hashem to have to rescue Bnay Yisrael through supernatural means.

The Midrash is saying that had the Jews been on a higher level, there would have been no need for all the miracles wrought on the Egyptians. Hashem would have not needed the afflictions of blood, frogs, etc. to free the Jews. After all, the creation and maintenance of the universe, of nature, of human biology are significantly greater events than causing the frogs to infest Egypt. For Hashem, the Makot and the inherent suspension of the laws of nature they entailed was a minimal event compared to what occurs in nature constantly. Had the Jews been worthy, Hashem would have had no need to suspend nature. Had He waited for the natural miracle process to unfold, they would have assimilated. This is considered a condescension for Hashem, as it says Vayrayd Lhatzilo. Was the drowning of 600 Egyptians at the Red Sea remotely comparable to the maintenance of the nebulae throughout the universe and the Yad Hashem everywhere? Of course not! However in emergency situations, Hashem has to resort to extraordinary measures to accomplish His will. But when Jews are deserving, they can accomplish everything through the natural order, without miracles. That's why Chazal said one who says Hallel Hamitzri every day, one who wants Judaism to exist through the support of supernatural miracles, is a blasphemer. The Gemara said that one who appreciates and praises Hashem through nature, one who follows the statement of Rabbi Yossi that his portion should be with those that complete Hallel of Psukei D'Zimrah daily, is acting admirably and meritoriously.

The miracle of Purim is different from the other miracles (Pesach, Shavuot, etc.) because whereas the other occasions are distinguished with obvious supernatural miracles, Purim was a Nes Nistar, a hidden miracle, a miracle through the natural process. Chanukah was an obvious miracle from two perspectives, the victory of a tiny force over the armed might of the Assyrian/Greek armies as well as the miracle of the oil that burned for 8 days. The story of Purim does not have any supernatural occurrences.

Chazal interpret that Esther said Lamnatzyach Al Ayelas Hashachar Kayli Kayli Lama Azavtani (Psalms 22). Esther continues Elokay Ekra Yomam Vlo Taaneh Vlayla Vlo Dumiah Li. I have called to You by day but You have not answered and at night I have not heard a sound. The next verse is Vata Kadosh Yoshev Thilos Yisrael. [The Rav said that is why we recite Vata Kadosh after the Megila at night, even when Purim is not Motzai Shabbos.] When Esther appeared before Achashvayrosh even though everyone knew that anyone who approaches the king without being called to appear is to be put to death unless the king extends his scepter. She knew that her chances were slim because she had not been called to appear before the king for 30 days. Chazal say that Achashvayrosh did not want to extend the scepter to her. Esther was

doomed at that point, she calls out Kayli Kayli Lama Azavtani. Esther exclaims, in Lamnatzyach Al Ayelas Hashachar that she thought that she would bring salvation to the Jews through supernatural miracles, similar to those performed at the time of the Exodus, or in the time of Gideon. She imagined that salvation would come through Hallel Hamitzri. When it did not appear, she said Kayli Kayli Lama Azavtani. She called to Hashem expecting visible miracles but there was no discernible response. But then she understood that there was a Nes Nistar, a hidden salvation. She recited Vata Kadosh Yoshev Thilos Yisrael. Kadosh means hidden, separated from others. Kadosh can be positive and negative. For example, Hashem is called Kadosh, separated from everything. A negative use of Kadosh as separated is a prostitute, who is also called Kdaysha, as she is separated from the rest of the people by her actions. Kdoshim Tihyu, requires Havdala, separation. When Hashem conducts the world through nature, He is Kadosh, hidden. When He rescued the Jews from Egypt, He was visible to all, the Jews exclaimed Zeh Kayli V'Anvayhu. When Hashem is hidden and man is perplexed by his inability to discern His plan, He is called Kadosh. Where the concept of Vayered Hashem Beanan applies, where Hashem is hidden from man, the concept of Kadosh applies. Esther said I now understand Vata Kadosh Yoshev Thilos Yisrael, the salvation will come through natural means. Our daily praises to Hashem of Hallel D'Psukei D'Zimra are not for supernatural miracles but for the miracles through nature that are shrouded in the obscuring cloud, Vayered Hashem Beanan. Purim is the symbol of Jewish Salvation through ostensibly natural means. For example, it seemed that Haman would conquer the world and his plan would succeed. But Hashem works His plan in an unobtrusive way that ultimately results in salvation for the Jews. That's why Chazal say that Esther is called Ayelet Hashachar. The morning star does not rise at once. When the Ayelet Hashachar is visible, it is difficult to discern whether the black, night sky is brightening. Only after some time is it clear that indeed the sky has brightened and the day is about to dawn.

Hallel Hamitzri was not instituted on Purim because Purim is the miracle of Vata Kadosh, when Hashem is hidden and there are no supernatural miracles. No supernatural afflictions befall Haman or Achashvayrosh. The story of Purim describes how the Jews have to approach the king and beg for mercy, to fast. But through all these things, in retrospect, we see the hand of Hashem in everything, and though we may think that He is far and removed from us, we must realize Vata Kadosh, He is working His plan even though it might seem that He is separated from the Jewish nation because the Jewish nation does not seek salvation through supernatural miracles, through Hallel Hamitzri. The name of God, Shaday, is not connected to the term Yoshev Thilos, as Shaday comes from the root Shoded, Hashem breaks the laws of nature. Kadosh is Yoshev Thilos, hidden from all. At such situations, where a Haman and an Achashvayrosh can sit down to drink while the Jews are suffering, some might think that there is no justice and there is no judge, Les Din V'Les Dayan. [Note that this Shiur was given in 1956, when the US Secretary of State Dulles was arming the Arabs against Israel] When a Dulles sits with Arabs and plots against the Jews, just like V'Hamelech V'Haman Yashvu Lishtos, we might despair and say Les Din V'Les Dayan. We can't! We are confident in Vata Kadosh, we can't point to Him as Zeh Kayli Vanvayhu, but Vata Kadosh Yoshev Thilos is always there. [The same applies to our current situation Eretz Yisrael, B'Ezras Hashem].

We say Vata Kadosh Yoshev Thilos Yisrael Vkar Zeh El Zeh Vamar, Kadosh Kadosh Kadosh Hashem Tzvako M'lo Chal Haaretz Kvodo. Tzvako comes from the root of an army camp, which is comprised of many small details. Vayechulu Hashamayim Vhaaretz Vchal Tzvaam, heaven and earth and all their details were completed. Hashem is revealed through small details that we do not immediately appreciate. Only later, in retrospect do we appreciate more fully what

transpired, as we continue and explain, Kadish Al Arah Ovad Gevurtay. When we ascribe the attribute of Kadosh to Hashem we might be tempted to think that Hashem does not even bother to look at this world. Our situation is so hopeless and Hashem is not interested in helping us. His interest is limited to Asar Beis Shchintay, the place of His Shechina. But we immediately say that is not true, Kadish Al Arah Ovad Gvurtay, we don't see Him, but we know that whatever happens on this world is not random, it is through Hashgachas Hashem, it is all part of Hashem's master plan and direction and ultimately there will be Kadish Lalam Ulalmay Almaya, He will be recognized as such forever and ever.

When we recite the Hagadah on Pesach night there is no need to say Vata Kadosh. When we mention Dam, Tzfardaya, Kinim, we acknowledge the obvious revelation of Hashem that took place in Egypt. Hashem was not Kadosh, hidden, that night. Rather, He was visible as Zeh Kayli Vanvayhu, Kchol Haosos Aher Asa Hashem Bmitzrayim Laynecha, as manifested through all the miracles that Hashem performed before our eyes. However on Purim, when we read the Megila, we read a story of a foolish, drunkard king who is led astray by an evil adviser who ultimately bribes the king to murder all the Jews. Haman and the king sit down to drink and the Jews are desperate. One might proclaim at this juncture Les Din Vles Dayan, the Jewish nation is in danger and Hashem is nowhere to be seen. But the amazing turning point of the Megila is Balayla Hahu, on that night when it appeared that Hashem was a Kadosh, hidden from the Jews. On that long, bitter night, it appeared that there was no merit to be found for the Jews and their destruction was imminent. The nation does not have a single friend in the world, rather all the other nations heap calumny upon her. On that long bitter night Mordechai pours out his heart and attempts to approach the king and is rebuffed because he is dressed inappropriately. Why does the king need to see this disheveled Jew? He has 40 Arab nations as his friends. Les Din Vles Dayan. But this is the turning point of the Megila. On that night Hashem, hidden in the place of His Shechina, B'Asar Beis Shchintay, began to maneuver events, even while Haman was still in control on the ground. [The Rav remarked that this was similar to events in Eretz Yisrael where Arab regimes were given aid despite their declared intentions to destroy Israel and Saudi Arabia was being supplied with unnecessary tanks by a foolish administration, in the mid 1950's. 50 years later we find ourselves in the same situation. Eretz Yisrael was in the same situation as Mordechai relative to Haman's decree and power.] When Mordechai attempted to protest the decree of Haman, he was branded a disloyal officer of the king. After all, if Mordechai was truly loyal to the king, he should be implementing the decree of the king, not protesting it. [Similar accusations have been registered against the Jews for protesting foolish administration policies that put Eretz Yisrael in grave danger.] But on that dark and bitter night, it was Vata Kadosh, we were far from Yoshev Thilos Yisrael, from imagining that the day of destruction decreed by Haman would turn into a day of celebration and victory over our enemies. Yet Hashem, hidden above in His Bays Shechina, did not sleep, Kvayachol, and He starts in an innocuous manner the process of salvation that results in the hanging of Haman and Chamas Hamelech Shachacha, the quieting of the anger of Hashem. Achashvayrosh's insomnia and his anger at Haman later are insignificant here. In retrospect we see that these events in the Megila refer to Hashem.

One who reads and understands the Megila fulfills Mikra Megila and the Mitzva of Hallel. Chazal say (Megila 19a) that the Megila is called a Sefer, book, and an Igeres, a letter. It is called a Sefer to teach us that it must be sewn up with appropriate thread made from a kosher animal, Bhayma Thora, similar to a Sefer Torah. If it was sewn together with threads of flax it is not acceptable. Sefer means something written on parchment. Sefer in Hebrew means something that exists for many generations. Sados BaKesef Yiknu Uksov Basefer Vachasom, Lmaan Yaamdu Yamim Rabim (Jeremiah 32:44). The prophet was commanded

to use a Sefer in order that it should last for generations as a verifiable document. A Shtar R'ayah, a document for proof, is called a Sefer because it is something that I might need many years from now to prove something. Chazal say that the obligation of a king to write a Sefer Torah requires that he write it on parchment, it is unacceptable to write it on plain paper. Paper does not last, however parchment does. For example, the Dead Sea Scrolls were written on parchment and have survived for thousands of years. If a scribe makes a mistake in a letter on a Mezuzah it is Pasul, invalid, (Menachos 28a), because it has an aspect of permanence and must be complete and accurate. However if one makes a mistake when writing a letter it does not matter. An Igeres, a letter, is transient, after its use it is thrown away. A Sefer is intended to be read by people many years from now; we don't want it to contain any mistakes.

The greatness of Megilas Esther is that it is both an Igeres and a Sefer. It is a letter that tells about a drunkard, foolish, weak King who killed his queen on the advice of his minister and was led by his wicked prime minister down a path to destroy the Jews. The same fool later murdered his prime minister because he followed the advice of his queen, Esther. This is a common story, where a foolish pliable leader is convinced to adopt dangerous and misguided policies by conniving advisers [no shortage of examples from the last century, including Nazi Germany and the US administration relation to McCarthy]. Powerful leaders do not fall prey to the advice of such malingerers. But the story and its details are material for a letter, an Igeres, the story is read and disposed of like one would read and dispose of a newspaper or magazine. It is news today but of no relevance tomorrow or a year from now. For an Igeres, threads of flax are sufficient to satisfy its limited required duration. However the Megila is also a Sefer and a great book of the Jewish History that contains a fundamental principle of Judaism, that Jews recite Hallel not only on supernatural miracles as described in Hallel Hamitzri, but also on natural invisible miracles as seen in retrospect in the story of Megilas Esther. It is a Sefer of Balayla Hahu, of that dark sinister night, when the Jews could find no help from heaven and no ally below. There was no staff of Moshe that was used to perform miracles. No angel came forward to help. At the time, it was not even obvious that Nadedah Shenas Hamelech, that Hashem's, Kvayachol, sleep was disturbed. Similar to events in Eretz Yisrael today and 55 years ago when the Nazis, Yimach Shemam, came to power and decimated our people. Only later, after the fact, was it obvious.

The Megila is a great Sefer that describes how Esther's first impression was Kayli Kayli Lama Azavtani, that Hashem was not performing visible miracles for the Jews, and in the end she exclaims Vata Kadosh, though Hashem was hidden, the end result was the salvation of the Jews [though a terrible price was exacted from our people]. It describes no less of a miracle than other books of Tanach. Therefore it must be treated the same as the other Sifrei Kodesh, and must be sewn with threads from a Kosher animal.

We must understand the Megila. Without Taharas Hanefesh we can't understand the Megila. Chazal explain that when the Megila says Divrei Shalom Vemes, we learn that Megila require Shirtut [etching lines in the parchment] similar to a Sefer Torah, Laamito Shel Torah. Rabbeinu Tam says it means that the Megila has the same importance as a Sefer Torah that contains Shema Yisrael (See Megila 16b, Tosfos Sotah 17b D'H Kasva Igeres, Tosfos Gittin 6b D'H Amar Rabi Yitzckak). The story about a drunkard king and the great Parsha of Shema Yisrael have a common Kedusha and linkage. The Jews in Egypt did not say Shema Yisrael, because they saw supernatural miracles, they exclaimed Ashira L'Hashem Ki Gao Ga'ah, I will sing to Hashem for He is exalted. When do Jews say Shema? When they perish for Kiddush Hashem, another manifestation of Balayla Hahu, when all is bleak and hopeless, when they proclaim Kayli Kayli Lama Azavtani, all is black and sinister. Rabbi Akiva was tortured with steel combs ripping his flesh, yet at that

time he saw Hashem and recited Shema. When the Gemara (Megila 14a) asked why don't we recite Hallel on Purim, Rava answered, what form of Hallel should we recite? Hallel Hamitzri? There were no obvious supernatural miracles on Purim, so Hallel Hamitzri is not appropriate. The greatness of Purim was through Balayla Hahu, Kayli Kayli Lama Azavtani and the juxtaposition of Vata Kadosh. It appeared that Hashem has no contact with the world and the world is controlled by the Hamans, the Muftis, the Arabs [and the Arafats] of the world. However we know that Hashem is Yoshev Thilos Yisrael, that is why the Jew recites Uva Ltzion after reading the Megila because this is the central point of the Megila. The main theme of Hallel is through the reading of the Megila, a Sefer that revolves around the Yoshev Thilos Yisrael and the hidden, natural miracle of salvation.

It is interesting that there is a Machlokes from where we start to read the Megila (Megila 19a). One opinion is that we start from Balayla Hahu, from the start of the salvation. Rabbi Yehuda says we start from the story of the rise of Haman, Rabbi Yossi says M'ish Yehudi, because we need to know who were Mordechai and Esther. Rabbi Mayer says from the beginning. Why should we be interested in the story of a drunkard king and his miserable queen? Why recite blessings and Shehecheyanu on this? The answer is that every detail of the Megila is crucial to the story. Had Achashvayrosh not been drunk, had the king not summoned Vashti, had Vashti not been murdered, Esther would not have become queen. At the time, the Jews did not understand the importance of the episode with Vashti. Only afterwards was it clear that this was the master plan of Hashem to rescue the Jews. The Jews realized in retrospect that the miracle began from the moment the king became drunk that first time.

It is also important to read all the details because the story of the Megila, that of near disaster and salvation through seemingly natural means, has applied to the Jews throughout the generations. We call this day Purim because of the lottery conducted by Haman, but why do we refer to it in the plural? Why not Pur? The Rav explained that had the miracle described in the Megila been a singular event, we would have called it Pur. But since Haman's intention was attempted many times throughout the millennia, the lesson of reciting Hallel for salvation through natural means applies after those situations as well.

When Esther asked the Rabbis to canonize the Megila they were hesitant (Megila 7a). Until they found a reference in the Torah based on the war with Amalek. The Parsha of Amalek continues throughout all generations. We must constantly review it. It is noteworthy that where Amalek is mentioned we do not find supernatural miracles performed by Hashem for the Jewish People. Hashem showed so many miracles in Egypt and at the Red Sea. However when Amalek attacks, Moshe commands Joshua to select troops and battle Amalek. Why didn't Hashem perform miracles with Amalek just like He performed against the Egyptians? Miracles are performed against other enemies of the Jewish People, but not Amalek. Jews must fight Amalek on their own, in the natural realm. Victory over Amalek will only come through Megilas Esther, natural victory that in retrospect will show the hidden hand of Hashem.

Amalek is not battling the Jews. Rather they are battling Kvaichol Hashem. Since they could do nothing against the God of the Jews they instead went after the Jews (Hitler was the same) and tried to destroy them, all because Mordechai Lo Yichra Vlo Yishtachave, Mordechai lives differently. He has a different diet, calendar, education system. So they attacked him and tried to destroy him. Paroh was interested in maintaining the cheap slave labor of the Jewish People, his intentions were different than Amalek, hence a different battle plan was used against him. Where the adversary attacks the Jews, Hashem helps with supernatural miracles. But when the adversary seeks to attack Hashem, then the Jews are on their own. Haman was battling the God of Mordechai, which was the reason that Mordechai will not bow before

him. And if Mordechai will not bow, then most likely the rest of his people will not bow before him either and Haman decided to seek their destruction. Haman could have gotten the Jews to do his bidding. But once he got involved with idolatry, then all Jews resisted him. That's why he said their religion is different from all others. He was not angry with the Jews, but rather he could not tolerate their uniqueness of religion, their commitment to God and His Torah and Mitzvos. In such a situation Hashem works through the motif of Vata Kadosh, He allows the Jews to do battle through natural means and helps them through natural events, but not through obvious miracles.

Throughout our many encounters with Amalek we have been overcome with the emotions of Kayli Kayli Lama Azavtani. We have felt stranded and separated from Hashem. The Jew waits through the long night. Chazal tell us that the end of the night is bleaker than the beginning, because at the end of night the light from the houses has been extinguished and all are asleep. At the time of deepest despair the Ayelet Hashachar rises and the sky and situation begin to brighten. The illumination is unnoticeable at first until it is obvious to all in retrospect. At the end of each encounter with Amalek we conclude Vata Kadosh Yoshev Thilos Yisrael for the salvation provided by Hashem.

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The Eyes Of Doves

by RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

The silent rush of air passing over feathered wings at a thousand feet. A dove flies high over the fields, its eyes probing the distance. Looming out of the morning mist a haystack about a quarter mile ahead. A lone dove in an unfriendly sky. No other birds in sight. It scrutinizes the sky with its piercing gaze. Will it be safe to land? The dove has no talons. Its wings will not carry it fast enough to escape its many predators. The eyes of a dove are its only protection.

The Torah is the blueprint of reality. Through this blueprint, the great Rabbis of every generation have illuminated and elucidated the world we live in. They know this blueprint to a depth and subtlety which is almost beyond comprehension. They can see into the depths of the world's construction just like a builder visualizes a building by looking at its blueprint. Nothing is new to them because everything is in the Torah. G-d gives these Torah sages a power - a distant hint of prophecy - to guide the Jewish People. It is they who can read His "guidebook" better than anyone else. Everything is contained in the Torah, either explicitly or covertly, but it takes a Rabbi Akiva, a Maharal or a Vilna Gaon to be able to accurately extract its meaning and apply it to a contemporary context. The great talmidei chachamim (Torah Scholars) of every generation are given a unique insight into the ways of the world. This qualifies them to lead the Jewish People as no one else can.

Gut Feeling

Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai's students asked, "why did the Jews of Persia deserve Haman's decree of annihilation?" They answered "because they benefited from the meal of that evil Achashverosh." To flaunt his power and wealth, Achashverosh decided to throw a party of mind-boggling dimensions that lasted for six months. At the end of this party, Achashverosh threw another party for all who were present in Shushan the capital. Mordechai issued a ban on attending the feast even though the food was kosher. Mordechai knew that there was something very non-kosher about this meal.

The prophet Yirmiyahu had prophesied that the Babylonian exile would end after seventy years. Achashverosh was aware of this prophecy, and according to his calculations seventy years had already passed. Emboldened by this, he took out the holy vessels of the Temple at his feast and caroused with them. Despite Mordechai's ban on the feast, the Jewish People ignored him. They surmised that it would be considered an unforgivable sleight to the king's honor were they not to attend. Conventional wisdom would have agreed with them. Wasn't this a case of a life-threatening situation, which made it not just permissible, but a mitzvah to attend the feast?

But Mordechai's decree was not based on gut feeling nor conventional wisdom. It was based on Torah wisdom, reality seen through Torah knowledge.

Conventional wisdom and gut feeling would have put all the blame on Mordechai. Surely, what provoked Haman to issue his genocidal decree against the Jewish People was his fury when Mordechai refused to bow to him. Wasn't it Mordechai himself who placed the Jewish People in jeopardy by his stiff-necked refusal to bow? Wasn't this another case of a life-threatening situation calling for the temporary abrogation of Torah law?

Conventional wisdom would also have dictated that Esther reveal her Jewish background to Achashverosh so that he would favor the Jews. And yet Esther's hiding of her identity, on Mordechai's instructions, was a key factor in the redemption.

The Eyes Of Doves

In the Song of Songs the verse states, "Your eyes are doves." The Midrash tells us that "your eyes" refers to the Sanhedrin, the supreme legislative body of the Jewish People. The Sanhedrin are the "eyes of the congregation." They can see behind the mask of reality, beyond the grasp of mere conventional wisdom.

The power of leadership flows from the people. In every generation G-d promises us there will be spiritual leaders, great Torah sages, who are given by G-d the ability to advise and direct the nation. However, when the Jewish People refuse to listen to these spiritual giants, following instead after politicians and those with no more insight than the rest of us, then our spiritual leaders become powerless to influence or to help. When G-d told Moshe to go and speak to Pharaoh, he said: "Behold, the Children of Israel have not listened to me, so how should Pharaoh listen to me? And I have sealed lips." (Shemos 6:12) If the Jewish People had listened to Moshe, his mouth and lips would have been opened and his words would have affected even Pharaoh, but since the Children of Israel did not listen, Moshe's "lips were sealed."

A Torah Scholar is not just someone you go and ask whether or not your chicken is kosher. A Torah Scholar is someone who knows the nature of every action, thought and word. Is it kosher? Is it "fit?" The modern world lionizes non-conventionality. What is truly unconventional is the wisdom of our great Rabbis. It is bounded neither by the mores or the exigencies of the moment. Implicit in the command of "Hear O Israel!" is the understanding that G-d speaks to us through his appointed emissaries at all times and in all places.

Sources: Tractate Megillah 12a, Meam Loez, Shir HaShirim Raba 1, Sfias Emes, Rabbi Reuven Subar

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<http://www.ohr.org.il/special/purim/os-127.htm>

Insights Into Megillas Esther by RAV MENDEL WEINBACH, Ohr Somayach Institutions, Dean Excerpt from the Book (Targum/Feldheim) Overview

The history of the Jewish people in the close to three millennia since the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdash is divided into four phases. These are the arba galuyos-the four exiles-which, with only a brief

respite in the days of the Chashmonaim, span all these years, to this very day.

In his prophetic dream, Yaakov Avinu saw a ladder with its base on the ground and its top in Heaven and angels going up and down its rungs. These angels are identified by the Midrash as the sarei ha'umos, the patron angels of the four kingdoms that would oppress Yaakov's descendants in their exile. Yaakov saw the sar of Babylon ascend seventy rungs-representing the number of years that nation held power over Jewry-and then descend. Next came the sar of Medea, whose ascent of fifty-two rungs symbolized the length of the Persian-Medean exile. Then came the sar of Greece, who got as high as 180 rungs-the number of years Jews suffered under the Hellenist yoke until their liberation on Chanukah. It was only the ever-ascending sar of Edom that led Yaakov to ask Hashem if this meant that the fourth exile would never end. He was reassured that even if Edom-Rome and its heirs-reached the stars, Hashem would bring it down.

This theme of the four kingdoms and the exiles they were to impose upon Jewry is not encountered for the first or last time in Yaakov's vision. There are at least half a dozen other references in Tanach.

Yaakov's dream is unique in pinpointing the length of each exile. But all the other symbols and visions are alike in offering an opportunity to analyze the nature of each kingdom. It is these concise yet profound insights into the personality of each nation that Chazal and Torah commentators throughout the generations have developed into a fascinating picture of Jewish history.

The events described in Megillas Esther transpired during the second of these four exiles, when Jews were ruled by the kingdom of the Persians and Medes, with a Persian on the throne. We shall therefore repeatedly refer to Chazal's descriptions of these two nations in order to better understand their behavior as reflected in the Megillah.

Daniel's nocturnal vision offers us a perspective on the king whose power is the focal point of our first section. The second animal that arises from the storm-tossed sea is similar to a bear.

With this background we approach our first section. Analyzing the power of Achashveirosh, a self-made monarch who succeeded Koresh as the second of the three Persian rulers of a mighty kingdom, is indispensable to understanding the Megillah. It was his absolute control over the entire inhabited world that made the threat of Haman's genocide so menacing.

The magnificent banquet that occupies the first part of the Megillah was motivated by a combination of factors. From a political point of view it was an effort to achieve reconciliation with those provinces whose rebellion had been crushed. The opulence of the affair expresses the great wealth of king and empire while the orgiastic indulgence reflects the appetites of the bear.

But perhaps most important, it represents the second kingdom's hopes of succeeding where the first one failed. Belshatzar prematurely celebrated the end of Jewish hopes for redemption and was punished with the premature end of his Babylonian kingdom. Achashveirosh follows his

example at this banquet, bringing forth the vessels of the Beis Hamikdash to show that there is no longer any need to fear that the Jews will ever have a second one. This Persian dream of succeeding where others failed will recur at the great trial at the end of days, as described by our Sages (Avodah Zarah 2b).

In the hereafter all the nations of the world will be summoned before Hashem, who will point to the sefer Torah in His lap and ask all those who studied that Torah to come forward and claim their reward. The Romans, as the mightiest of empires, will be first in line. They will claim to have established many marketplaces, built many bathhouses, and amassed many great treasures of gold and silver for the sole purpose of enabling Jews to study Torah. But this contention will be rejected by the Divine Judge, who will point out their selfish motivation in all of these

achievements.

As the crestfallen Romans depart, their place will be taken by the Persians, who-like them-will enjoy power until the Messianic era. The Persians will feel confident of succeeding where the Romans failed because it was one of their kings who granted permission to build the second Beis Hamikdash, whereas it was a Roman ruler who destroyed it. Their argument will be that they built many bridges, conquered many cities, and waged many wars only so Jews could study Torah. Once again, Hashem will shatter this defense by exposing its selfish and vainglorious nature.

It is difficult to imagine how nations standing before the omniscient Creator in the final hour of truth will dare to present such transparent claims of being motivated in all their worldly achievements only by the desire to promote Torah study among Jews!

The Brisker Rav, Rav Yitzhak Zev Soloveitchik, z"l, offers an explanation based on Rambam's famous mashal in his introduction to his Mishnaic commentary. Why should a fool enjoy great wealth and order his servants to build him a luxurious palace and plant a lush vineyard nearby? Because one day a righteous man dying of hunger and exhaustion will find comfort in the shade of the palace walls and sustenance in the fruits of the vineyard. Although the owner of the palace and vineyard had no intention of rescuing any righteous traveler, it is this salvation that justified all of his wealth and efforts.

Similarly, there is no doubt that Jews have been able to study Torah with greater ease because of the commerce, transportation, and other advances of civilization wrought by Romans, Persians, and all the other nations of the world. But this is merely the way the Creator arranged His world to ensure that those who study and live by the Torah will have their needs provided for by others. Credit and guilt, however, depend on one's intention. Each nation is therefore discredited in that ultimate trial for having other reasons in mind.

In a broader sense this idea can be applied to all of Jewish history. The Romans provided us not only with marketplaces and money but with the soul-searing lesson of destruction and exile. Persia provided not only bridges and conquests but the catalyst of teshuvah, in the form of Haman's plot. Each nation that has plagued Israel has served as the rod of Divine anger, so mercifully applied to awaken us before we destroy ourselves with our sins. But Rome and Persia, like Babylon and Greece before them, will be punished for their intention to harm a people they hated without justification.

This is the true perspective of the Purim story. The royal ring transferred from the hand of Achashveirosh was a blessing in disguise for a Jewish nation in need of a shock. But it was also the instrument of a monstrous plan for a "final solution," which inevitably resulted in the downfall of the planner and the triumph of his intended victims.

Insight #127: Blessed be Mordechai the Jew

"For Mordechai the Jew...[was] accepted by most of his brethren [as] a seeker of good for his people and a spokesman of peace for all his posterity" (Verse 10:3).

"By 'most of his brethren' but not 'by all' - this teaches that some members of the Sanhedrin distanced themselves from him" (Gemara Megillah 16a).

With all its opportunities for saving Jewish lives, Mordechai's rise to power was not without its drawbacks. His preoccupation with communal matters forced him to spend less time learning Torah. As a result, some of his colleagues in the Sanhedrin withdrew from him.

This would seem to indicate that these sages considered Torah study more important than saving lives. Indeed, in Sefer Ezra (2:2) Mordechai is mentioned after four other names while in Sefer Nechemiah, concerning events that took place twenty-four years later, his name appears after five others. This demotion is interpreted as Heavenly support for the sages' decision to abandon Mordechai after he neglected

Torah for lifesaving communal work.

Yet the poskim (Turei Zahav, Yoreh Deah 251:4) state that one is obligated to put aside learning Torah in order to save lives. The same halachic principle obliges a community to take funds collected for the support of Torah study and utilize them for taxes if evasion could endanger Jewish lives. Mordechai therefore had no alternative but to assume the responsibility thrust upon him.

Nonetheless, if one Jew must sacrifice his learning in order to save lives while another can continue his learning undisturbed, the latter is greater.

This idea, interjected into the last words of the Megillah and in the midst of such elaborate praise for Mordechai, is the Megillah's way of reinforcing its readers' Torah perspective. Of course every Jew, like Mordechai, must be prepared to put aside every personal consideration-even the greatness he can achieve through learning Torah-if Heaven has put him in a position where he alone can save Jewish lives. But what is even greater than such heroism, and is the only guarantee that dangers such as Hamanic decrees will not threaten the Jewish people? The learning of Torah.

Those members of the Sanhedrin who distanced themselves from Mordechai after he took on his new responsibilities were demonstrating for their generation and all future generations that Jewish survival is guaranteed not by Jews like Mordechai in high places in the government, but by Jews who are deeply committed to uninterrupted Torah study. Mordechai, who unshirkingly accepted the lifesaving responsibility for which Heaven had singled him out, was certainly the first to appreciate the significance of their gesture. Nevertheless, he was capable of proudly continuing as "a seeker of good for his people and a spokesman of peace for all his posterity."

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<http://www.ohr.org.il/special/purim/timeline.htm>

Purim Timeline

3338 (422 BCE) Destruction of 1st Temple - Tisha B'Av
Nebuchadnezzar Jeremiah, Ezekiel Prophecies of destruction and exile,
Prophecies of return Babylonian Exile, Daniel and Ezra
3387 (373 BCE) Proclamation of Cyrus, Return to Israel Persian
Empire Minority returns with Nehemiah in Nissan
3389 (371 BCE) Foundations laid for Second Temple Medes Empire
3390 (370 BCE) Achashverosh (or Cambyses, Cyrus's son) stops
construction
3391 (369 BCE) Banquet in Shushan using vessels of Temple
3395 (365 BCE) Cyrus dies, Achashverosh becomes sole ruler
3401 (359 BCE) Renewal of settlement in Israel, including Golan and
East Bank
3408 (352 BCE) Purim - Mordechai and Esther Second Temple
completed 70 years after destruction The Great Assembly, Shimon
HaTzadik Alexander of Macedon Establishment of Prayers, End of
Prophecy
Produced by Ohr Somayach Institutions, Jerusalem Written by Rabbi
Mordechai Becher General Editor: Rabbi Moshe Newman

From: Eretz Hemdah - Machon HaTorah
Ve'Hamedinah[SMTP:feedback@eretzhemdah.org] Subject: Hemdat
Yamim - The Weekly Publication of Eretz Hemdah - Machon HaTorah
Ve'Hamedinah
Hemdat Yamim Parshat Tetzaveh

This parasha sheet is dedicated to the memory of Rivka Chaya bat Asher Zelig Nistenpober of blessed memory. ...

Moreshet Shaul (from the works of HAGAON HARAV SHAUL YISRAELI ZT"L) Drasha from Purim 5717 (courtesy of Yisrael Sharir)

Two apparently contradictory ideas find expression in the behavior of Mordechai, as related in Megillat Esther. One is activism and independence; the second is unlimited trust and belief in the Creator and Leader of the world. "And Mordechai was sitting in the gate of the king." We don't know exactly what his role was as a "gate-sitter", but it was certainly an important position. For a member of a foreign, exiled nation to reach such a status must have required great talent and much public involvement. Uncovering the plot of Bigtan and Teresh also displays a high level of involvement in the affairs of the state. When Haman's decree was still secret (see Malbim), Mordechai had already uncovered it, started drumming up reaction from the Jewish people and demanded Esther to endanger herself in an attempt to undo the decree. Thus, it is clear that Mordechai believed in activism, in not accepting the situation, but taking normal "political" and strategic steps to improve the situation. On the flip side, we see Mordechai acting in a rash and irrational way, refusing to show respect to Haman. He certainly knew the dangers that inciting such a powerful and ruthless man raised, not only for him, but for the entire Jewish people. Furthermore, when the plot became known, we see not the slightest hint of remorse on Mordechai's part for his reckless policy of incitement. Rather, instead of confessing his apparent folly, he continued to act with the confidence that "respite and salvation will arise for the Jews." The question begs asking: if Mordechai was so confident that, one way or another, Hashem would save the Jews, then why did he expect Esther to risk her life to bring about the salvation? After all, there are many Divine proxies, and salvation can come about in totally unexpected ways. Couldn't Hashem Himself pick the hero or heroine? We see here, in the most unequivocal way, the Jewish approach, stressed by Chazal, to faith and activism. Namely, there is no contradiction between complete faith in Hashem and the obligation to be proactive in the private and public domain. The two are actually intertwined, as Hashem tells us: "I shall bless you in all that you do." A person should not wait passively for a miracle. On the other hand, one must realize that any and all success which he sees from his actions is nothing but a miracle. A person's skill and effort are not the cause of his success but the vehicle through which the Divine Providence chooses to bring about that which should happen.

Understanding these concepts gives energy and confidence to act without fear, even when the external indications seem to discourage the proper mode of behavior. At this difficult time for Israel [ed. note - Rav Yisraeli spoke decades ago, but the theme always seems current], we should act with the faith that: "they may plan their plans and they shall be undone; let them speak their word and they will not come about, for Hashem is with us."

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From: Shlomo Katz[SMTP:skatz@torah.org] Subject: HaMaayan /
The Torah Spring - Parashat Terumah

HaMaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by Shlomo Katz Megillat
Esther

"The Queen was greatly distressed; she sent garments to clothe Mordechai so that he might take off his sackcloth, but he would not accept them." (4:4) Presumably, says R' David Soloveitchik shlita (in the name of his father, the "Brisker Rav" z'l), the reason Esther

wanted to send clothes to Mordechai was so that he could enter the palace to confer with her on a plan to counter Haman's decree. (After all, Mordechai had his own clothes at home!) Why then did Mordechai refuse? Because the halachah states that when an evil decree is made against us, we must dress in sackcloth, fast and pray. This is the first order of the day and it takes precedence over meeting with politicians or lobbyists to work against the decree. (Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Shai La'Torah p. 417)

"Mordechai left the king's presence clad in royal apparel of turquoise and white with a large gold crown . . . ; and the city of Shushan was cheerful and glad." (8:15) Was the city of Shushan cheerful and glad because Mordechai was wearing these royal garments, or does the verse contain two separate pieces of information? R' David Soloveitchik shlita answers in the name of his father: We say in the hymn recited after the Megillah reading, "Shoshanat Yaakov . . ." / "The rose of Yaakov was cheerful and glad when they jointly saw Mordechai robed in royal blue." It appears, therefore, that Mordechai's garb was the cause of Shushan's joy. Why? After Haman was forced to lead Mordechai around Shushan on the king's horse, the verse says (6:12), "Mordechai returned to the king's gate." The gemara states that Mordechai returned to wearing sackcloth and fasting at the king's gate. Why? Because although he had personally triumphed over Haman, the Jewish people were still in danger. That was what concerned Mordechai, and he would not remove his sackcloth until the Jews were safe. It follows, then, that when Mordechai did remove his sackcloth and don royal robes, it was a sign for the people of Shushan to be cheerful and glad that Haman's evil plot had been defeated. (Quoted in Haggadah Shel Pesach Shai La'Torah p. 425)

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<http://www.yu.edu/riets/torah/halacha/author.htm> Matonos Lo'evyonim and
Mo'os Chitim Ho Lachmo Anyo and Shir HaShirim:

BY RAV AHARON KAHN

I: Tzedakah: For Personal and National Redemption

Tzedakah and ge'ulah always go hand in hand. Wherever we find ge'ulah we find an increased emphasis on tzedakah. We live through a ge'ulah process each year. Actually, there are two periods of ge'ulah in the year. The Elul- Tishrei period is a time for personal ge'ulah. The Adar-Nissan period is a time of national-historical ge'ulah. Both periods of ge'ulah require a special emphasis on tzedakah. It is most interesting that where the ge'ulah is personal, as in the teshuvah process, the emphasis on tzedakah is personal and individual. Where the ge'ulah is of klal Yisroel, the stress on tzedakah reflects that public, klal Yisroel focus. Thus the months of Adar-Nissan include specific public expressions concerning tzedakah, beginning with mashmi'im al hashekolim at the beginning of Adar and including matonos lo'evyonim, machtzis hashekel and mo'os chitim. All these have specific structures and have public and communal natures. The tzedakah of the ba'al teshuvah is a personal, private affair.

There are two focal points which divide the calendar year precisely in half and which divide the mo'adei HaShem as well. These two points reflect two very different calendar perspectives. The first, measured by the moon's 12 months, begins in Nissan which is the Hachodesh hazeh lochem month and represents the creation of klal Yisroel as a mamleches Kohanim veGoi kodosh. The second is measured by the sun and is a continuum which is 365 days in length. This calendrical cycle begins in Tishrei and relates to the entire world as creation of HaShem. It is in the context of this cycle that the entire world and all its inhabitants are judged.

We note another distinction. The Tishrei focus is on the yochid in his relation to HaShem; the Nissan focus is on the tzibbur, on klal Yisroel.

Although we have three regalim, these three are actually two. The three regalim are really two periods of the year because the Nissan period includes not only Pesach but also Shevu'os. This is, of course, because of the special relationship of mattan Torah to yetzi'as Mitzrayim. Thus, if we look at all the mo'adim together, we find that the Tishrei focus includes the mo'adim from Rosh Hashanah through

Simchas Torah, and the Nissan focus includes Pesach through Shvu'os.

Just as the Tishrei focus requires a period of preparation, chodesh Elul, so too the Nissan focus requires its preparation, chodesh Adar. It is fascinating to note that we must pass through an Adar, and appreciate the presence of HaShem in hester panim, before we can relate to HaShem as revealed in nissim geluyim. So too we must relate on a personal level to HaShem distant from the sinner before we can relate to the ultimate lifnei HaShem of Yom Kippur and simchas hachag.

Elul and Adar are also periods of greater tzedakah. This is stressed in the acronym of ELUL. In this sense, both Adar and Elul are: ish lere'ehu umatonos lo'evyonim. Tzedakah is one of the ways to petition HaShem, and the giving of tzedakah is part of the teshuvah process. The ways of teshuvah include the constant petition of the shov to HaShem and doing tzedakah to the fullest capacity.... This is one of the reasons why the quintessential perek of tzedakah (Yashayahu 58) is read as Yom Kippur's haftorah.

Adar's emphasis on tzedakah is twofold. These are days of achdus and of ge'ulah and tzedakah is crucial for both.

Am Echod. Tzedakah is the acid test; there is no better measure of achdus than tzedakah. Beginning with the announcement of parshas shekolim and continuing through machtzis hashekel, matonos lo'evyonim and mo'os chitim, the Adar-Nissan period is a time to identify with the totality of Israel, to declare one's self to be part of klal Yisroel. This is achieved in great part by my identification with another's needs and concerns as if they were my own needs and concerns. If we show that we are brothers, we show that we have one Father. Here the words of the Rambam (Hilchos Matnos Aniyim, 10) strike a compelling chord: For all Yisroel and the geirim who join them are brothers as is written: You are children to HaShem Elokeichem. And if a brother does not have compassion for a brother, who will have compassion for him? And to whom are the eyes of the poor raised? Are they raised up to the goyim who hate them and pursue them? Of course, the poor raise up their eyes only to their brethren.

Moreover, Ain Yisroel nig'olim elo bishvil hatzedakah. These months, beginning with Adar, are the months of redemption. Mishenichnas Adar marbim besimchah. Rashi comments: these were days of miracles for Yisroel--Purim and Pesach. It is clear that Rashi includes Nissan in the marbim besimchah period. But this is not merely a joy for blessings past. We had the miracles of Purim and Pesach and we will enjoy future miracles in the very same season. It is a season for miracles. We sense the harbinger of redemption, and we rejoice in its promise. It is once again the springtime of klal Yisroel, with all the potential for ge'ulah.

The season of ge'ulah brings with it a responsibility for one another and a requirement to do specific mitzvos of tzedakah.

II: Matonos Lo'evyonim

Are matonos lo'evyonim a kiyyum of mitzvas tzedakah? Of course. If one gives matonos lo'evyonim one has definitely achieved a d'orayso of tzedakah. Nevertheless, the question remains as to what is the nature of this mitzvah on the derabonon level.

Is the mitzvah of matonos lo'evyonim a miderabonon which was instituted as a distinct form of tzedakah which is connected to Purim and to the mitzvah of se'udas Purim, or is the derabonon of matonos lo'evyonim not instituted as a derabonon mitzvas tzedakah altogether? This question has bearing upon many halachos. We will mention several.

Does an oni have an obligation to give matonos lo'evyonim? The Taz (Orach Chayim #694) in the name of the Bach, says: yes. Does this prove that matonos lo'evyonim is, on the derabonon level, not a tzedakah mitzvah? It does not. The specific mitzvah of pe'ah is also incumbent upon the oni who happens to have a field.

Can matonos lo'evyonim be something other than food or money? Perhaps not. But, if it is a mitzvas tzedakah miderabonon, why not any gift?

What kavonoh should one have when giving matonos lo'evyonim? If it is not a mitzvas tzedakah miderabonon, then a kavonoh of tzedakah seems to be out of place. It is interesting to note that in Siddur Bais Ya'akov, the kavonoh for the mitzvos tzedakah of poso'ach tiftach and nosson titayn are mentioned.

Can one fulfill with the same gift both mitzvos (mishlo'ach monos and matonos lo'evyonim) simultaneously? This issue has been discussed at length. Does this have bearing upon our question? It may. If the mitzvah of matonos lo'evyonim is a separate mitzvas tzedakah we might imagine that the same items might be used to fulfill two mitzvos simultaneously. But there is no conclusive proof here.

We mention only the opinion of the Ran who argues that the distinction in the number of gifts given, two for an oshir and one for an oni, is understandable. An oni doesn't expect much and even one gift is a big thing; an oshir requires a more substantial expression. From the fact that the Ran connects the two, mishlo'ach monos and matonos lo'evyonim, and from the explanation he gives as to the varying amounts, it seems clear that the Ran considered these two mitzvas as essentially the

same. The mitzvah, for the Ran, is giving gifts to others, to aniyim in one form, to ashirim, in another. If so, it is not a mitzvas tzedakah derabonon but rather a mitzvas matonos Purim.

So it would appear from the words of the Rambam (Hilchos Megillah, 2:17) that it is better to increase the gifts to the poor on Purim than to increase mishlo'ach monos and se'udah. If matonos lo'evyonim would be a mitzvas tzedakah, how does the Rambam compare these mitzvos?! Obviously, these three mitzvos of Purim are of one piece, a mitzvas ribbuy simchah for one's self and for others.

The Ritva in his chidushim to Megillah, 7a, seems to say the same. Matonos lo'evyonim is a mitzvas simchah, not a mitzvas tzedakah. Therefore, the meticulous concern present with respect to tzedakah, that the monies fall into the hands of aniyim davka, does not exist on Purim, and whoever asks is given.

On the other hand, the targum seems to call matonos lo'evyonim monies of tzedakah. Moreover, Rav Amram Gaon [in Siddur, Purim, 95b], seems to say that there is no upper limit to matonos lo'evyonim because it is tzedakah, and tzedakah is given by each person according to his heartfelt desire (ayin yafah).

III: Mo'os Chitim

Let us now explore the institution of mo'os chitim as a specific tzedakah for the season of redemption.

Mo'os chitim is mentioned in the Rema, Orach Chayim, #429:1 who writes: There is a minhag to buy wheat to distribute to aniyim for Pesach and whoever has lived in a town for twelve months must give towards this purpose. The source for this is Yerushalmi, Baba Basra, 1:4 where mo'os chitim is called: chiti d'pische. (Apparently, wheat, rather than flour or matzos, was distributed. The phrase: kimcha d'pische implies that flour was given. Mo'os chitim does not imply that money was given, because it may well refer to the money that is collected, not to the medium that is distributed.)

The question is: If the oni does not have food for Pesach, isn't providing for him part of the basic mitzvah of tzedakah. After all, matzoh on Pesach is the equivalent of bread throughout the year. We are hard pressed to understand why mo'os chitim was instituted as a distinct minhag.

In answer to this question, the Avodas Hagefen (cited by Machzik Brachah, #429) explains that the mo'os chitim minhag segregated this form of tzedakah from all the others, encouraging even talmidei chachomim who were aniyim to accept mo'os chitim though they did not take any other tzedakah throughout the year.

R. Shlomo Kluger, in Chochmas Shlomo to Orach Chayim #429:1 reasons that the minhag of mo'os chitim was instituted to prevent a potential prevarication. After we give mo'os chitim, even if we fail to invite aniyim to share the matzoh at our table, we can say ho lachmo anyo...kol dichfin... and it will not be a falsehood. We have accomplished, through mo'os chitim, that kol dichfin will have for Pesach.

Can we view mo'os chitim as an obligation to provide aniyim with matzos mitzvah to enable the aniyim to fulfill the mitzvah of achilas matzoh? Off hand, we must ask first whether there is an obligation to give tzedakah so that aniyim should be able to do mitzvos. There is much discussion on this subject. However, perhaps mo'os chitim is a special case.

We might suggest an additional source for the minhag of mo'os chitim. The Avudraham (in his Seder Hagadah, on the section of ho lachmo anyo) cites the following in the name of the Gaon R. Mattisyah: "The custom to recite kol dichfin (all who are hungry, let them come and eat), [derives as follows]: Such was the custom of [our] fathers that they raised their tables and they did not close their doors and they recited thus [i.e., kol dichfin] so that the Jewish poor amongst them should come and eat....But now that there are more gentile neighbors than Jewish neighbors, they [the Jewish poor] are provided for earlier [i.e., before Pesach begins] so that they do not have to beg from door to door, and then the table is raised and he recites what was always recited...." In other words, the recitation of an invitation to the poor was retained at the seder even after the procedure of providing had changed.

It seems possible, therefore, that the institution of mo'os chitim was introduced when it became impossible to invite the poor Jews directly to the seder.

According to the Gaon of Vilna, mo'os chitim is a minhag whose roots are in mitzvas matzoh itself. It is brought in the name of the Gaon of Vilna that a remez to mo'os chitim is found in the posuk (Shemos 13:6) which has Matzos Ye'ochel in the passive, that is, that we should see that matzos should be eaten by others, that is, by the aniyim. Also, the same posuk has: Seven days shall you eat matzos...matzos shall be eaten seven days. The first refers to the mitzvah that we should eat matzoh, the second that we should see to it that matzoh is eaten by others. In the former, the word matzos is choseyr, in the latter, it is molay. This indicates that the aniyim should be given enough for kday svi'ah as is written: (Devorim 26:12) they shall eat in your gates and be sated. It is interesting to note that the posuk speaks of eating matzoh seven days. The remez encourages us to provide matzoh for the aniyim for all of Pesach.

IV: Ho Lachmo Anyo

We now turn to the recitation of ho lachmo anyo at the outset of maggid, the central hagadah section. Why do we say the segment of ho lachmo anyo at this point?

Perhaps, we may view ho lachmo anyo as being at the beginning of maggid, perhaps we may view it as being after yachatz.

Ho lachmo anyo may be at the beginning of maggid because we wish to declare that now, on this night, is the time for the hagadah and not before. Now, besho'oh sheyesh matzoh umoror munachim lefonecho.

Perhaps it is an explanation of yachatz. After all, if the matzoh represents cheirus and yetzi'as Mitzrayim, why do we break it in half in the manner of the oni who saves half for the next meal? Ho lachmo anyo teaches the lechem oni aspect of matzoh and informs us that matzoh must reveal the darko shel oni biprusoh.

As we are reminding ourselves that matzoh is lechem oni, we are required to invite those who are true aniyim. The ho lachmo anyo triggers this sensitivity.

We do not recite kol dichfin at any other yomtov meal, although the simchah of yomtov demands the invitation of aniyim to join with us at our table. Otherwise, says the Rambam, it is simchas kreiso. But now that we mentioned lechem oni at the outset of maggid, we add kol dichfin, etc.

The Rov, zt"l, often mentioned that the kol ditzrich yeysi veyifsach invitation to korban Pesach is because lechatchilo it should not be eaten alone (Rambam, Hilchos Korban Pesach, 2:2)

The question is, if so, how can we say it at the seder, when Pesach requires minuyim. Moreover, in general, how can we say it with the door closed?

The invitation for aniyim to join was communicated by Rav Huna all the time. (Ta'anis 20b). He invited the poor by going out to them, by opening his door and calling out into the courtyard. How can we say this at our table, and when it is too late, and with the doors closed?

Indeed, we find in the Avudraham quoted above, (also brought in Otzar HaGe'onim Pesachim [p.112]), that one of the explanations for leaving our doors open on the night of the seder is this very invitation to the aniyim which we recite: ho lachmo anyo, etc. But what about us? The ge'onim explain that the minhag remained to say ho lachmo anyo, even though the doors were closed.

Perhaps we can illuminate the continued recitation of this defunct invitation with the following remarks. The doors are now closed; this clarion call to share will fall as silent as a vacuum's space. To whom do we speak? To the relatives and friends who belong? To those who have food and a home and a korban Pesach? Of course, not! We speak to the others, to the homeless and the vagrants, the miserable and the helpless. Let them come and eat!

But this eager invitation beckons to strangers who are not there and addresses poor who will remain outside and hungry. It is too late. Kol dichfin recited at the seder is a mute cry, absurd and of no relevance!

Yes, we merely repeat, at night, what should have been declared in the marketplace earlier in the day. There was a chance then, an opportunity. The poor gathered; they had come to be invited into home and heart. They waited for the herald, their hopes riveted, their ears ready for kindness, for the good words of good Jews.

Why? Why do we repeat the morning's declaration of love of brother Jew? I believe we are being asked to do teshuvah. We are exhorted, before we can speak of our cheirus, to make a declaration of interdependence. We are all Jews, intertwined in the helical strands of hashgachah. Our collective destiny begins tonight in the retelling--reliving of yetzi'as Mitzrayim.

Have we cared enough? Do these words ring easily in our ears as we begin the seder story? If we have succeeded, then these words are themselves welcome friends, words that we remember from the morning. I can repeat them now and feel that all is well, that I have cared and HaShem has provided. The poor are here with me, the miserable find a home, the gleaming table settings reflect the brightness of an eye that gleams tonight, not from the tears of yi'ush but from the joy of hope. Someone cared enough, these words say. So, instead of an osisi kechol asher tzivisoni we simply repeat this morning's call. But the words ring well.

Of course, there is, choliloh, the possibility that I did not care enough. Then these words at tonight's seder, words which I am commanded to utter, will be witnesses which I myself summon to testify against me.

In short, if, indeed, I failed, then the words of kol dichfin are recited at night in order to give me a guilty conscience. These words are summoned to reprimand me, to remind me that I did not care for all those others who needed me. They force me to admit that, as far as tonight's seder is concerned, it is now too late!

One final question. Why first kol dichfin and then kol ditzrich? We suggest two explanations. Since pesach is ne'echal al hasova it comes at the end of the other achilah. So pesach is mentioned afterwards. Also, by asking the oni first to eat and only afterwards mentioning the mitzvah of korban pesach, we show that we care

about the human being first, and then about his chiyuv hamitzvos, and not in reverse order.

V: Shir HaShirim

We mentioned that the two halves of the calendar represent two perspectives. Adar-Nissan embody the klal Yisroel--HaShem connection; Elul-Tishrei embody the individual's connection with HaShem. We find that these two distinct relationships, that of the klal and that of the yochid, are also depicted in Shir HaShirim.

In the Rambam's presentation of avodah me'ahavah he mentions that all of Shir HaShirim is a moshol of the preoccupation of the Oved Me'ahavah with HaShem. The metaphors of Shir HaShirim are those of a lovesick heart yearning and striving; a heart preoccupied, even obsessed.

According to the Rambam's interpretation the yochid in his relationship to HaShem is the focus of Shir HaShirim, not the tzibbur. It is a relationship of personal intimacy, of a neshomo striving towards HaShem.

Rashi, and most meforshim, on the other hand, see Shir HaShirim as a moshol of klal Yisroel and HaShem. It is a relationship of HaShem with His chosen people, a relationship of past history and future destiny.

We find that, in the cycle of the chomesh megillos, the place for Shir HaShirim is on Pesach. Pesach, the yom tov of history and of destiny, is the backdrop for the public rendition of Shir HaShirim. This seems to follow Rashi's approach to Shir HaShirim.

There is also a minhag to recite Shir HaShirim on the first night of pesach, after the seder. Here, I believe, both interpretations express themselves. This recitation on Pesach night, at the seder's end, declares the individual's commitment of love to HaShem, even as the history of yetzi'as Mitzrayim and the experiences of golus and ge'ulah are told.

Finally, it is a minhag to recite Shir HaShirim every Erev Shabbos. This is the individual Jew's declaration of total commitment. With Shir HaShirim upon his lips, he goes forth to greet the Shabbos, as one would greet a king. Here, the individual's hishtapchus hanefesh is manifest.

Both moments, Erev Shabbos and Seder night, are encounters with the Shechinah, a rendezvous with HaShem. As the midrash declares, in this respect Shir HaShirim's song is unique: no other song is a declaration of mutual love, of mirrored commitment.

Shir HaShirim is kodesh kodoshim. It is something of an irony, that we are capable of making the most grievous error of reduction and profanation davka with that Song which has been defined as exceedingly sacred, as kodesh kodoshim. Any corruption of Shir HaShirim's significance, purpose and place, results in utter defilement. Thus, Shir HaShirim seems to prove that, where the potential is the greatest, the danger is also the greatest.

There are two moments when a Jew is elevated to an almost transcendent state--on Erev Shabbos before kabbolas Shabbos and at the culmination of the Pesach seder. At these two moments, our lips have been sanctified and our minds and hearts prepared to receive the King of Kings, and we can recite: Moscheini acharecho norutzo, hevi'ani haMelech chadorov nogiloh venismecho Boch.

Sources available from the Max Stern Division of Communal Services.

The Halachah and Hashkafah of Tzedakah During Adar and Nissan

From: Ohr Somayach[SMTP:ohr@ohr.edu] Subject: OS-Special - No-Jackpot Lottery

THE NO-JACKPOT LOTTERY by RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH "Lotto" of Israel's Mifal Hapayis. The New York State Lottery. The Irish Sweepstakes. The Football Pools.

These are just a few of the famous lotteries which regularly offer jackpots of small fortunes to a hopeful public dreaming of becoming overnight millionaires with a small investment.

But the most important lottery of all time was one with no jackpot of money. Its prize was the fate of an entire people. This was the lottery of the wicked Haman which endows the holiday of Purim with its name -- the Feast of Lots.

Haman cast lots to determine an appropriate date for his final solution to the Jewish problem some two and a half millennia ago. The Divine intervention which foiled his genocidal plot is what is remembered and celebrated by Jews each year on that very date.

What is the significance of Haman's casting of lots which entitles it to such a central role in recalling Jewry's deliverance from its enemies?

On the Shabbat before Purim we perform the once-a-year mitzvah of

recalling what Amalek did to us. We read in the Synagogue a section of the Torah (Devarim 25:17-19) which describes the vicious ambush which the Amalekite nation perpetrated against our weary and thirsty ancestors on their way out of Egyptian bondage. The term used by the Torah to describe this vicious aggression is "asher karcha baderech," which is interpreted either as "he cooled you off" or "he happened upon you."

Amalek, the sworn enemy of G-d and His chosen people, was determined to challenge the aura of Israel's invincibility created by the miracles of the ten plagues and the splitting of the Sea of Reeds. Amalek is compared by our Sages to the fellow who dives into a boiling hot bath which all others are afraid to enter. Although he emerges badly scalded, he succeeds in cooling off the water for those who may follow. All nations who heard of the Divinely orchestrated miracles which rescued Israel from the Egyptians shuddered at the thought of any military action against G-d's people. But Amalek recklessly plunged into this steaming bath. He was indeed battered by a Jewish army looking at Moshe's upraised hands as a signal to rely on Heavenly help. But he succeeded in cooling off Israel's reputation.

Amalek's purpose in this interpretation of "asher karcha" can be understood by applying the complementary interpretation of "he happened upon you." Miracles can be seen either as an expression of a Divine force in control of worldly affairs or as the random manifestation of coincidence. When the Prophet Eliyahu prayed for fire to come down from heaven in order to discredit the idolatrous prophets on Mount Carmel, he cried out "Answer me, Hashem, answer me!" The double entreaty, explain our Sages, was for fire to miraculously rain down from heaven, and for the assembled onlookers to accept it as a Divine miracle and not the work of human magic.

The non-believer is so determined to resist the responsibility of subservience to a Divine ruler that he will stretch his imagination to unbelievable lengths to discredit miracles as either magic or coincidence. This is why the great miracles of history and the minor ones of today still leave so many people unconvinced of Divine providence.

Amalek "happened upon you" because Amalek's entire approach to earthly affairs is one of things "just happening" and not Divinely determined. This is what he set out to prove with his military challenge to Israel. And this is what the descendant of Amalek, Haman, wished to express with his casting of lots. As he plans to carry out the genocidal mission initiated by his ancestors, he refuses to attribute the failure of that first effort to Divine intervention. Things like that "just happen" and he will cast lots to see what date coincidence will indicate as a suitable one for another attempt at a final solution.

But it is not only Amalekites who fail to see the Hand of Hashem in everything. Many of us also fall prey to the temptation of attributing things to coincidence. When Jewry demonstrates a particular spiritual weakness, our scholars point out, Hashem sends a nation personifying that characteristic to shock us into a realization of where we went wrong. Immediately after the Jews suffering from thirst in the desert raise the question "Is Hashem amongst us or not?" (Shmot 17:7), Amalek, the personification of coincidence, arrives on the scene to bring home a Divine lesson.

When this weakness emerges again in the exile twilight between the two Beit Hamikdash periods, it is the descendant of Amalek who is delegated by Heaven to shock Jewry into abandoning its inclination towards seeing the world through the warped lenses of coincidence.

This is why the holiday celebrating the Divine redemption resulting from our repentance from that sin is called Purim. It is our way of triumphantly declaring to the world that there is no coincidence, and that the real jackpot in Haman's lottery was this dramatic demonstration of Divine Providence.

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<http://www.ou.org/torah/tt/5761/trumah61/purim.htm>

Purim M'shulash - Tripple Purim

It happens about 11E% of years, but its occurrences are not evenly distributed. The last time it happened was 7 years ago. The time before that, 13 years earlier. It is scheduled to happen 4 years from now and 3 years after that. And then not for another 13 years. Whenever Jerusalem-Purim is Shabbat, so will Erev Pesach be. Another complex halachic event. And the following Rosh HaShana will begin on a Tuesday.

The rabbinic ban on reading Megilat Esther on Shabbat is similar to the ban on Shofar and Lulav on Shabbat ϕ namely, that the Sages did not want any of these mitzvot to be the cause of someone's inadvertent violation of Shabbat, under the mistaken idea that carrying in a public domain without an Eiruv would be allowed to facilitate the mitzva in question (which it isn't). The ban goes "across the board" and applies to all Jews, wherever they live.

[Only in the current year's type - a 4.3% frequency - do we have Shofar, Lulav, and Megila all banned on Shabbat.]

Much of what has been said so far, was to satisfy curiosity. Let's get tachtlic! (The less sophisticated version of that word is tachis-y.)

The Mishna in Megila is clear on when people of Walled Cities are to hear Megila when the 15th of Adar is a Shabbat ϕ a day earlier, just like the people of the "big cities". That is, on Thursday night and Friday day. And that is what Jerusalemites will be doing this coming week.

Since it isn't our Purim on Friday, we will not be saying AL HANISIM, nor will we have a special Torah reading on Friday morning. We will do both of those things on Shabbat, our real Purim day. But Megila is Thursday night and Friday.

Although there is always a preference to hear Megila with a Minyan, when we hear it "early" the preference almost becomes an insistence. This applies to both men and women. People who cannot get to shul for Megila (either at night or during the day) who in regular years might suffice with a private reading in the house, this year should go out of their way to have a minyan at home. Even if the other 9 people have already fulfilled the obligation of Megila, the 10 of you are still considered the Tzibur that the Halacha wants. For Megila purposes, a group of 10 women for women counts as a Tzibur.

[There are halachic problems with a mixed group of 10.]

Bottom line: Megila read privately is still "kosher", including brachot, but should be avoided if possible (specifically, this year in Jerusalem).

It sounds a bit strange, but people should be reminded on Friday non-Purim, NOT to say Al HaNisim. The temptation will be there. The Purim atmosphere.

Speaking of which, it is proper to dress nicely on Thursday night and Friday, in honor of the Megila, even though it is not our Purim.

Besides Megila reading, the other mitzva of Purim that is to be fulfilled on Friday is MATANOT LA'EYONIM. Care should be taken to give to at least two poor people who live in Jerusalem. The recipients of the money or gifts of food should not use it all up on Friday, but keep some until Sunday morning. (If the poor people use the money to buy food for Shabbat and for Sunday's Seuda, this is fine because that's what MATANOT LA'EYONIM is supposed to be for.)

The other mitzvot of Purim, namely Mishlo'ach Manot, Seudat Purim, and the custom to drink a bit more wine than one is accustomed to, do not officially apply to Jerusalemites on Friday, but it is suggested that one do each aspect of these mitzvot (in token form) on Friday. One should give a simple two-food minimum Mishlo'ach Manot to one person on Friday, although the main observance of this Purim mitzva is Sunday for Jerusalemites.

So too, should one eat a meal on Friday morning (before halachic noon) and have in mind the mitzva of Seudat Purim ϕ even though our main fulfillment of Seuda is Sunday.

Similarly, a modest drink of wine and the subsequent nap that often is induced by the wine, would be in keeping with the "extra measure" of doing those mitzvot on the same day that we read Megila.

Remember, none of the above is MEI-IKAR HADIN, part of the actual requirements of Purim, but it is praiseworthy to do these mitzvot on Friday, nonetheless.

Back to Al HaNisim for a moment. A Jerusalemite who unthinkingly says Al HaNisim on Thursday night or Friday, in the Amida or Birkat HaMazon does not have to "correct" that error. Still, one should be careful to think and act in a halachically proper manner.

If a Jerusalemite said Al HaNisim on Friday and he has not completed the MODIM bracha, should go back and repeat the last few words of MODIM and then continue with V'AL KULAM. Once the bracha is completed, one does nothing about the Al HaNisim that was said.

SHABBAT

Shabbat is the "real" Purim in Yerushalayim. Al HaNisim is said in each Amida of the four Shabbat davenings. If one forgets Al HaNisim, and remembers the omission before concluding the bracha of HATOV, go back and say it. After the bracha, one continues until right before Y'HYU L'RATZON at the end of ELOKAI, N'TZOR, and says it there. Finished the Amida? Do not say it over.

Similar rule for Birkat HaMazon. Within the NODEH bracha, go back and say it. Past that point, do not go back, but say it in the HARACHAMAN section of the benching. In this case, the beginning is modified to fit. HARACHAMAN HU YA'ASEH LANU NISIM, K'MO SHE'ASITA LAVOTEINU BAYAMIM HAHEIM BAZMAN HAZEH. BIYMEI MORDECHAI... If one finishes Birkat HaMazon and then realizes his omission, he does NOT go back.

The above rules for Al HaNisim apply to each person on his Purim. The Friday night meal should have something extra or special in honor of Purim, although the meal is primarily a Shabbat meal.

In Jerusalem, on Shabbat morning, two Torahs are taken out of the Ark. In the first, we read Parshat HaShavua, T'rumah. After "half" kaddish, we read from the second Torah that which everyone else have read on Friday morning ϕ the 9-pasuk portion of VAYAVO AMALEK, from the end of B'shalach. The haftara for Shabbat-Purim is the same as that of Parshat Zachor. This means that we read the same Haftara two weeks in a row, while the rest of the world reads the regular Haftara for T'ruma. The reader is challenged to think of different ways riddles can be asked about this unusual situation. However, it is recommended that one not ask the riddles this week or next, since the answers would be too obvious. For example, in what situation do we read from more than one Sefer Torah five Shabbatot in a row? Too easy now, but save it for a year and a half and you might have a tough riddle.

Those who follow Minhag Yerushalayim (the GR"A) and say special Psalms on special days in lieu of the regular ones, do NOT say the Purim Shir shel Yom, neither on Friday, which isn't Purim in Yerushalayim, nor on Shabbat, since Shabbat's Psalm has priority of Purim's.

A person in Jerusalem who did not hear Megila on Friday, may not read it on Shabbat (because of the ban mentioned above), but should say Full Hallel on Shabbat, without brachot. This is not required, but suggested. (The rationale is that we don't say Hallel on Purim because Megila takes its place - there are other reasons - but if one didn't hear Megila and now cannot hear or read it - because of Shabbat - then Hallel is the way to acknowledge and thank G-d for His miracles.

ZEICHER L'MACHATZIT HASHEKEL, to commemorate the Half Silver Shekel, give before Megila reading. Minimum is a half shekel. Custom is to give 3 half-shekel coins. Also a custom to add to the 1.50NIS to equal the value of the original Silver Half Shekel, 10 grams of silver, somewhere from 8-10NIS.

Megila. Thursday night & Friday morning, like the rest of the Jewish world. Higher priority than in regular years for reading-hearing Megila with a Tzibur.

Matanot La'Evyonim. To be done on Friday. Without the busy-ness of the Seuda and Mishlo'ach Manot, one can and should do an extra nice job on this important Purim mitzva. Make this mitzva a priority (as it should be every year).

Seuda & Mishlo'ach Manot. Main observance is on Sunday. Because of varying opinions on the subject, some have the custom of giving a token Mishlo'ach Manot (two different food items to one person) on Friday and on Shabbat as well. Similarly, the main Seuda is Sunday. Some also will have a modest seuda on Friday before noon. On Shabbat, the custom is to add something special (extra fancy dessert, side dish, wine) to the main Shabbat meal. Some try to schedule the Shabbat meals to add an extra meal in honor of Purim. This can be accomplished by splitting lunch. Fruit and appetizer, for example, then bench. Go to early Mincha (just a suggestion). Then come back, wash for HaMotzi again (should be on Lechem Mishna) for the main dish and dessert. Token Purim observances on Shabbat should not be too overt. Sunday is the "real" Seuda. Some finish before dark. Others say that there are Kabbalistic reasons to extend Seuda into the night even when it is the 17th of Adar.

Al Hanisim Not on Thursday night of Friday. Yes on Friday night and Shabbat, in davening and Birkat HaMazon. One does not go back if omitted. Can be said before the concluding pasuk of the Amida if forgotten in its regular place. Similarly, in Harachaman section of benching. No Al HaNisim on Sunday. Some say it as a Haracham for the Purim Seuda. ENJOY!!!

From: Aish.com[SMTP:aishlist@aish.com] Subject: Purim - Hidden Miracles

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Aish.com HOLIDAY SERIES

Purim begins Thursday evening, March 8, 2001. Send Purim

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"HIDDEN MIRACLES"

by Sara Rigler

The Book of Esther is the only book in the Bible which does not mention God. After 3,000 years of Biblical history where God speaks to a cast of characters from Adam to Job, appears in dreams, works sensational miracles, reveals Himself at Sinai, and sends His prophets with explicit messages for the people and the kings of Israel, suddenly ... a story without God.

Or is it?

The Book of Esther takes place six decades after the destruction of the First Temple. This cataclysmic event changed the way that God relates to human beings. While the Temple brought the Divine Presence into explicit manifestation (witness the ten open miracles everyone could see there), with its destruction, the Divine Presence receded into a state of hiddenness.

The sages called this still prevailing modus operandi hester panim, meaning "hidden face." from the same root word as the name Esther. Megillat Esther, the Scroll of Esther, can as well be translated: "the Scroll of Hiddenness."

If someone is hiding, it means he is there, but you can't see him. Nevertheless, certain signs, such as a bulge in the curtain, may hint at his whereabouts. The Book of Esther is full of coincidences, the right person "happening" to be in the right place at the right time, and dramatic, unexpected reversals of fortune. These are the bulges in the curtains that hint at the Divine orchestration of events. A witness can choose to attribute such serendipitous happenings to "luck" or to God.

Our challenge since the destruction of the First Temple is to find God hiding behind the curtain of history, to identify the Divine hand behind current events, and to recognize God's direction in the seemingly fortuitous occurrences of our own lives.

COINCIDENCE?

To give an example of a hidden miracle in my own family's life: My cousin Larry and his wife Ruth were married for several years when they realized that they could not have children. Longing for a family, they adopted a baby. Randi was a beautiful child, with blond hair and big blue eyes, but soon it became apparent that she suffered from a chronic breathing problem which required constant medical care, tests, and periodic chest X-rays.

Years passed. Meanwhile Larry and Ruth had adopted a second child. Then, much to their surprise and delight, Ruth discovered that she was pregnant. This precious pregnancy ended with the birth of Amy, a healthy and robust baby.

Ruth naturally took Amy with her wherever she went. When the baby was about a year old, Ruth took Randi for one of her regular chest X-rays. While they waited for Randi's turn, Ruth decided that as long as they were going through this whole rigmarole, she might as well also have the baby's chest X-rayed.

Amy's X-ray revealed that she had a rare and fatal cancer.

Because they caught it so early, before the baby was even symptomatic, they were able to effect a total cure. Almost three decades later, Amy is married and has her own baby.

Or take the case of a man who suddenly decided to take a new route home one night. As he walked past a clump of bushes, he heard the unmistakable sounds of a struggle. A woman was being attacked.

The man, who, by his own admission was neither brave nor athletic, feared for his own safety if he got involved. But hearing the girl's cries growing weaker, he resolved to try to help her. He ran behind the bushes, pulled the assailant off the woman, and wrestled with him until the attacker jumped up and ran away.

Only then did he realize that the girl was his own daughter.

The book *Small Miracles* by Yitta Halberstam and Judith Leventhal, from which the preceding story comes, relates dozens of such occurrences. Although the book is subtitled, *Extraordinary Coincidences from Everyday Life*, the authors clearly believe that coincidences are far more than just chance or luck. As Yitta Halberstam asserts in her introduction, "To us, coincidences are ... vivid, striking, awe-inspiring examples of Divine Providence. They are acts of God."

Such camouflaged acts of God also take place on the national level.

THE SIX-DAY WAR

In May, 1967, Egyptian and Syrian troops massed on Israel's borders, Egypt closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, and Egyptian President Gamel Abdal Nasser filled the airwaves with calls to drive the Jews into the sea. The mood in the 19-year-old-country of Israel was bleak. Facing five well-equipped, Soviet trained Arab armies, Israel's defeat was virtually a foregone conclusion. The black humor on everyone's lips that Spring was: "The last one out, don't forget to turn off the lights."

Everyone knows that instead of defeat, Israel achieved a stunning victory. On June 5 at 7:46 AM, Israeli planes destroyed the entire Egyptian air force on the ground. In six days, Israel tripled its territory, gaining the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights, the West Bank, and -- most precious of all -- the Old City and the Temple Mount.

The crucial strategy of destroying the Egyptian air force while their planes were still on the ground opened the way for the Israeli victory. The success of the maneuver is generally attributed to the Israeli planes flying below the tracking altitude of Egyptian radar. Many other factors, however, contributed to the success of the air strike and the subsequent battles. In fact, the coincidences and unlikely happenings at precisely the right time were so plentiful that, as we learn the details of the victory, the bulge in the curtain almost knocks us over.

For example, a few days before the war, the Commander of Egyptian forces in the Sinai was ordered to change commanders in most of his brigades, putting in charge officers who didn't know the terrain or their forces.

On the very morning of June 5th, three hours before the Israeli air strike, Egyptian intelligence did in fact issue a warning that an Israeli air attack would begin "within minutes." At that point, Egypt still had time to get its planes off the ground and save them. The message reached the command bunker in Cairo. An aide-de-camp signed a copy, but no one bothered to look for the Commander in Chief.

On the same morning of the attack, Egyptian officers stationed at the radar station in northern Jordan picked up the scrambling Israeli aircraft, and sent a red alert message to Cairo. The sergeant in the decoding room of the supreme command tried to decipher the message using the previous day's code and failed.

And where was Egypt's Commander in Chief? The night before, he and most of his top officers attended a party at an air force base in the northern delta area, at which a renowned belly dancer performed. Early the next morning, he took off for the Sinai, where he had ordered all his top commanders to assemble in order to meet a high-level Iraqi delegation. When the Israeli strike happened, not one senior officer was at his post.

TODAY'S MIRACLES

The daily news in Israel is replete with miracles. The latest took place on February 8, 2001, when a car bomb packed with a whopping 15 kilos of explosives exploded in a narrow street in the densely populated religious neighborhood of Mea Shearim. According to eye witnesses, debris from the explosion soared 150 meters into the air. Yet no one was killed, and only one person was lightly injured.

Three minutes before the car bomb went off, a truck filled with propane gas drove past the parked car. Ten minutes before the explosion, which took place at the height of the local shopping period, a vegetable store directly adjacent to the car closed briefly so its owner

could attend afternoon prayers. Normally, the wife of the vegetable store owner fills in for him during that time, but, when he telephoned his wife to come, she was at a critical point in her Shabbat cooking. By the time she turned off the stove and ran around the corner to open the store, it was a gutted out hole, without even a floor. Only 20 minutes after the bomb went off, dozens of indigent people were scheduled to line up on the adjacent sidewalk for their weekly charity food allocations. The magnitude of the miracle was so obvious to the local residents that they broke forth in spontaneous singing and dancing and praises of God, which lasted for two hours.

The next day, signs went up on every tree and telephone pole enjoining people to recite Psalm 21 in gratitude for the miracle. And a "thanksgiving feast," required by Jewish law when one's life has been saved, was held on the very spot in the street where the bomb, which had been devised to kill and maim, had erupted in its futile blast.

RESPONDING TO A MIRACLE

Some years ago, I read a *People Magazine* article about a woman parachutist. On one of her jumps, her parachute failed to open. She pulled the cord for her back-up parachute, but that, too, was defective. As she free-fell thousands of feet toward the solid ground, she was sure she was going to die. Then she landed in a large puddle of water, unharmed.

The reporter asked her to what she attributed her improbable survival. She answered with conviction: "Luck."

Hidden miracles operate by the same economics as lactation. The more a baby nurses from her mother, the more milk the mother produces. Similarly, the more we respond appropriately to God's hidden miracles, the more miracles He bestows on us.

The converse is also true.

The appropriate response to a miracle is not to say, "Wow! That's amazing!" but rather, "Wow! God's amazing!"

The victory of the Six Day War was so dramatic and unexpected -- especially the regaining of the Temple Mount after 2,000 years -- that virtually everyone in Israel considered it a Divine miracle.

Even the avowedly secular Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan acknowledged God's hand in the triumph. Coming to the Western Wall the day after its liberation, Dayan, following the prevailing custom, wrote a message and stuffed it into a crevice between the ancient stones of the Wall. As soon as he left, of course, newspaper reporters extricated the note and read it. It contained a line from the Psalms:

>From God this was. It is marvelous in our eyes.

But finding God in this long, dim era of hiddenness requires both recognizing His hand and remembering what you have seen. Only months after the Six Day War, people were already crediting the military prowess of the Israeli army for the astonishing victory. This attitude -- that the might and brilliance of the Israeli army had saved the day -- prevailed until the army's near-defeat during the Yom Kippur war, with its 2,000 casualties and Syrian tanks trampling the Galilee on their way to Haifa.

Miracles have to be not only acknowledged, but also responded to in ways which change the beneficiary of the miracle.

PUBLIC GRATITUDE

Judaism, a religion which abhors the nebulous, instructs us how to respond to miracles in concrete ways. These ways consist of both praising God publicly and thanking Him in kind: Just as He has been magnanimous to us, so we should be magnanimous to His children.

Thus, a person whose life has been saved should recite a blessing of thanksgiving known as *Birkat HaGomel* in the presence of a minyan. When a car bomb exploded recently in downtown Netanya during the height of the evening shopping hour, and no one was killed, the secular Mayor of Netanya enthused: "We should all say the blessing *Birkat HaGomel*."

Notice that *Birkat HaGomel* must be recited in public. The point is to

publicize what you have experienced. The veil of hiddenness thins every time you reveal God's revelation to you.

That's why the Chanukah menorah must be lit where others can see it, either outside (as we do in Jerusalem), or in a window, or in a public room in front of others. The whole point of that mitzvah is "to publicize the miracle."

A person who has experienced a miraculous salvation, such as recovery from a life-threatening illness, is also enjoined to make a "feast of thanksgiving." This provides an occasion both to publicize the miracle and to express your gratitude to God, as well as an opportunity to feed other people, just as you have been fed from the largesse of God's kindness. Other appropriate responses to a miracle are to give charity or to upgrade one's service of God.

Now we can understand the four mitzvot of Purim. We are told in the Book of Esther not to remember a tale of palace intrigue and Shakespearean-like reversals in ancient Persia, but to publicly acknowledge how God orchestrates events in this post-Temple era. We also make a feast, give charity to the poor, and send two foodstuffs to a friend. Since King Ahashverosh's kingdom encompassed virtually the entire Jewish population of that era, every Jew living today (except for converts) is descended from someone who was saved by the hidden miracles of Purim. The appropriate response is these four mitzvot.

The Divine hides in order that we will look for Him ... and find Him. Once, as a child playing hide-and-seek, I came upon a great hiding place. I waited and waited for my friends to find me, as my titillation turned to impatience and finally to despair. When, after what seemed like an eternity, I emerged from my hiding place, I found that my friends had given up and gone on to a different game.

God does not despair of human beings. He stands behind the curtain waiting... and waiting... and waiting...

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Preparation and Spontaneity

Based on a sicha by HARAV YEHUDA AMITAL

Adapted by Rav Ronnie Ziegler Translated by David Silverberg

Regarding the first verse of Parashat Vayikra, "And He called to Moshe," Rashi writes,

"Calling' preceded every utterance, every speech, and every commandment. It is an expression of love, the expression used by the heavenly angels. To the gentile prophets, by contrast, He reveals Himself in expressions of transience and impurity, as it says, 'God chanced upon Bilam.'"

God reveals Himself to Jewish prophets only after having first called them, whereas to the gentile prophets He appears suddenly, by chance, without their having been previously informed. Unlike their gentile counterparts, Jewish prophets have the opportunity to prepare themselves for prophecy. This indicates the importance of preparation, especially in matters of sanctity.

The Kotzker Rebbe makes a similar comment on the following midrash (Tanchuma, beginning of Parashat Tzav):

"This is what is meant by the verse (Tehillim 89:7), 'For who in the heavens can equal God, can compare with God among the divine beings?' Said the Almighty, 'If I wanted a sacrifice, wouldn't I simply ask Michael, who is right here next to Me, to offer to Me a sacrifice? From whom do I want a sacrifice? From Israel!'"

According to the Kotzker, this midrash teaches us that the Almighty desires not the sacrifice itself, but the investment of the person bringing the offering. If God had really wanted the sacrifices themselves, He would have requested so from the angels in heaven.

This, too, tells us something about the value of preparation. Preparation for the performance of a mitzva bears profound significance, just as preparation for prophecy is of utmost importance. A mitzva loses much of its value when performed straightaway, with no prior emotional preparation. By preparing for a mitzva beforehand, one identifies with it more profoundly and infuses it with greater value. Indeed, this rule applies even beyond the realm of specific mitzvot: every spiritually meaningful experience requires prior preparation. The more the individual has thought about the approaching event and worked towards it, the more he will derive from that event.

For example, the festival of Pesach receives added significance from the intensive preparations in the preceding weeks. The halakhic problem of chametz could be resolved without the lengthy and involved cleaning process. Why do we need to turn the house upside down and clean every square inch? Let us not be so quick, however, to dismiss this time-honored custom. The cleaning process forces us to engage in preparation for the festival, which contributes significantly to the emotional impact of the holiday itself. Expending all that effort cleaning results in a totally different Pesach experience!

Regarding Shabbat, as well, there is a mitzva to prepare in advance: "They shall prepare that which they bring." The Gemara (Beitza 2b) posits that an egg laid on a Yom Tov that occurs on a Sunday may not be eaten, since we view it as having been prepared on Shabbat, and "Shabbat does not prepare for Yom Tov." But if so, why do we not forbid any egg laid on a Sunday (even if it is not Yom Tov), since it too has been prepared on Shabbat? Rashi (ibid., s.v. Ve-ein) answers that Yom Tov meals require special preparation, which cannot be performed on Shabbat; weekday meals, however, do not require any special preparation. This added importance of Shabbat and Yom Tov meals derives from the concern that we adequately prepare ourselves for these days in advance. In other words, spiritually meaningful phenomena require preparation.

Herein lies the meaning behind the concept of "erusin" - engagement - in Judaism. The relationship between husband and wife becomes warmer and stronger as a result of a prolonged process of preparation. The inherent problem with the institution of the "pilegish" (concubine) is the fact that a man lives with a pilegish without the process of chuppa and kiddushin, and the two thus undergo no preparation for their lives together.

This also explains the common custom to recite "Hineni mukhan u-mezuman" ("Behold, I am prepared and ready") before the performance of mitzvot. One cannot jump right into a mitzva without prior preparation. In fact, the Gemara (Berakhot 30b) tells us that the "pious ones of old" would wait an entire hour before beginning to pray, so as to properly focus their minds in anticipation of their encounter with the Almighty.

There is, however, one important exception to this general rule: acts of kindness and charity are meant to be spontaneous, stemming from one's deep love for his fellow man. Hence, the Maharal explains that we do not pronounce a blessing before fulfilling a "mitzva bein adam le-chavero" (interpersonal mitzva) because this would defeat the purpose of the mitzva. Imagine if before giving charity, the donor insisted on dipping himself in the mikveh, putting on his "gartel" and saying both "Hineni muchan u-mezuman" and a berakha; in the meantime, the pauper might drop dead! Furthermore, this would be treating the pauper as an object through which we fulfill a mitzva, not as a brother whom we instinctively care for.

Undoubtedly, spontaneity has its place in Judaism, but in

general, the rule is always to ensure careful preparation. This message is especially relevant to Purim. Amalek represents the secular view that all history is mere chance and essentially meaningless. In contrast to that world-view, we maintain that God acts within history, and we must behave accordingly. We must act only after careful thought; only then will we truly succeed in maximizing our spiritual potential.

The Gemara (Megilla 7b) asserts that "one is obligated to get intoxicated on Purim until he cannot differentiate between 'Blessed be Mordechai' and 'Cursed be Haman.'" Does Judaism really encourage this state of uncertainty, the inability to distinguish between good and evil? The answer is that the Gemara here teaches one to strive occasionally for a level of such straightforward thought and reasoning that he need not engage in complex questioning, nor experience doubts, nor undergo excessive pondering. This is the condition of the simple, spontaneous Jew, who worships God out of a genuine sense of joy and contentment, like a drunkard.

Thus, Judaism does leave room for spontaneity, but specifically on Purim, AFTER an entire year of preparation for this moment. If one properly prepares himself for Purim, then he can go into Purim with simple and spontaneous joy. Otherwise, without proper preparation, one cannot allow the spontaneity to burst forth, as one has no idea where such spontaneity will lead.

Thus, even on Purim, the secret of spontaneity lies in prior preparation, in the refining of the personality throughout the year which ensures that the spontaneous outburst of Purim will reveal a pure interior.

[POSTSCRIPT: At the conclusion of this sicha, following a long winter of preparation and personal growth, the entire student body SPONTANEOUSLY burst forth in song and rose to dance with Harav Amital.]

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Megilah 13 PRAISING MORDECHAI FOR SAVING THE JEWS, OR
BLAMING HIM FOR ENDANGERING THEM

QUESTION: The Rabanan say that the families of Yehudah and Binyamin were claiming credit for the miracle of Purim. The family of Yehudah claimed credit because David ha'Melech refrained from killing Shim'i ben Gera, from whom Mordechai descended. The family of Binyamin claimed credit because Mordechai was a member of Binyamin. Rava argues and says that Mordechai was not to take credit for the salvation, but rather was to blame for the troubles to begin with. According to Rava, K'neses Yisrael was bemoaning what the families of Yehudah and Binyamin caused: since David ha'Melech, who came from Yehudah, did not kill Shim'i ben Gera, Mordechai was born who aroused the enmity of Haman and thus caused the entire Jewish people to become endangered. And since Shaul ha'Melech, who came from Binyamin, did not kill Agag, Haman was born who threatened the Jewish people with annihilation.

According to Rava, how could there be any allegation against Mordechai for provoking Haman's wrath? He was acting according to Halachah by refusing to bow down to Haman, since Haman was deifying himself! Why is there any reason to blame Mordechai?

ANSWER: The Gemara earlier (6b) discusses whether or not a Tzadik may confront a Rasha who is experiencing good fortune ("ha'Sha'ah Mesachekes Lo"). The Gemara concludes that even if the Tzadik is a Tzadik Gamur, a total Tzadik, he should not contend with a Rasha in worldly matters. There is a similar discussion in Berachos (7b -- see TUREI EVEN to Megilah 6b), the conclusion of which is that even with regard to *spiritual* matters, only a Tzadik who is a "Tzadik Gamur" may contend with a Rasha. If he is *not* a Tzadik Gamur, he should not contend with a Rasha at all, even regarding spiritual matters (that is, if suppressing his aggravation will not cause him to transgress of a Mitzvah). (See Berachos 7a, a Tzadik Gamur will not bear any suffering in this world; Ta'anis 21a, "If you [Nachum Ish Gam Zu] are a Tzadik Gamur, why are you suffering?" and

MAHARSHA there.)

Haman's demand that the Jews bow down to him was clearly a spiritual matter; he was antagonizing the Jews and insisting that they worship him (Megilah 10b). Although it may have been permitted, Halachically, to bow down to Haman, nevertheless by not bowing in order to make a Kidush Hashem Mordechai was certainly protesting a *spiritual* matter (see TOSFOS Shabbos 72b end of DH Amar Rava). If so, it could be that the question whether Mordechai is to be praised for what he did, or blamed, depends on whether Mordechai was considered a Tzadik Gamur or not. The families who said Mordechai is to blame for causing danger to the Jewish people maintain that he was not a Tzadik Gamur (see later, 16b), and therefore he should not have started up with Haman. The families who said Mordechai is to be praised maintain that he was a Tzadik Gamur, and therefore he was permitted to start up with Haman!

We see from the way that we commemorate Purim that we rule like the opinion that Mordechai was correct in what he did, and it must be because he was considered a Tzadik Gamur. For this reason, perhaps, the Targum always refers to Mordechai as "Mordechai *Tzadika*," "Mordechai the Tzadik," to emphasize that he was a Tzadik Gamur and therefore he was justified in confronting Haman. (M. Kornfeld)

Megilah 13b "SLEEPING" FROM THE MITZVOS AGADAH: Haman, when presenting to Achashverosh his argument for destroying the Jews, claimed "Yeshno Am Echad" -- "there exists a certain nation" (Esther 3:8). The Gemara explains that Haman was saying, "This certain nation is sleeping (Yeshno) from the Mitzvos."

(a) The Jews' performance of the Mitzvos had become so heartless that Haman reasoned that his attempts to destroy them would be successful, since their apathy towards the Mitzvos would forfeit any Divine protection to which they might otherwise have been entitled. Indeed, Hashem reacted to their "sleepy" performance of the Mitzvos measure for measure by acting as if He was sleeping and He did not show His presence to them. According to the Midrash (Esther Rabah 7:12) Haman claimed outright that Hashem was "sleeping from protecting his people," and cites the verse (Tehilim 44:24), "Arouse, why should You sleep, Hashem!" (Esther Rabah 10:1). Later in the Megilah, the verse says, "ba'Laylah ha'Hu Nadedah Shenas ha'Melech" -- "on that night, the king's sleep was disturbed" (Esther 6:1). The Midrash (ibid. 10:1) comments that this refers to Hashem's sleep. Realizing the danger that faced them, the Jews did Teshuvah and they turned to Hashem in fervent prayer and fasting. They aroused themselves from their slumber, and in return Hashem aroused Himself from His slumber, so to speak. "Va'Yikatz k'Yashen Hashem" -- "and Hashem woke up as one who sleeps" (Tehilim 78:65, cited by Esther Rabah 7:12). When the Jews repented with a complete Teshuvah and they took upon themselves to fulfill the Torah as if they were accepting it for the first time, as it says "Kiyemu v'Kiblu" (Esther 9:27; Shabbos 88a), Hashem responded accordingly and treated the Jews with a display of renewed love.

(b) This theme is reflected in other elements of Purim. The Gemara (Megilah 7b) states that a person should become inebriated on Purim "Ad d'Lo Yada Bein Baruch Mordechai l'Arur Haman." The REMA (OC 695:2) rules that it does not mean that one should get drunk, but rather it means that one should drink a little and then go to sleep. Perhaps the reason that a person should fulfill the Halachah in this way is to commemorate what happened on Purim; the Jews were "sleeping" and Hashem was acting as if He was asleep, and through the miraculous events of Purim, the Jews were inspired to do Teshuvah and they awoke from their slumber, becoming worthy of Hashem awaking from His slumber, so to speak.

In addition, the Gemara (Megilah 10b) says that Mordechai's name comes from the words "Mor Dror" (or "Mori Dachi" in Aramaic) which was the first of the Besamim used in the Shemen ha'Mishchah and the Ketores (Shemos 30:23). This alludes to the fact that one of Mordechai's talents was arousing people to renew their love of Hashem. Just like the aroma of the Besamim which went into the Ketores was always stimulating and no one could ever become bored of the smell, so, too, Mordechai aroused the people to a level of love of Hashem that never becomes dull.

This quality of Ketores is hinted to in the Mishnah (Yoma 26a) which says "Chadashim la'Ketores" (which literally means that only new Kohanim, who had never brought the Ketores before, could participate in the Payis for the Ketores). A characteristic of the aromatic Ketores is that its sweet smell arouses people to renew their love of Hashem. Perhaps partly in order to take advantage of this point, it was instituted that only new Kohanim could bring the Ketores, in order that the Mitzvah be done with even greater zeal and love.

(c) This element of Purim, of the Jews awakening from their slumber, explains why Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi said that "one is obligated to read the Megilah at night, and to repeat it at day (u'Leshanosah ba'Yom)." This strange way of saying

that the Megilah should be read a second time confused his students, who thought that he meant that the Mishnayos ("Leshanosah") of Maseches Megilah should be learned during the day. Why did Rabbi Yehoshua state his ruling in such a strange way, instead of saying simply that one must "read the Megilah again" during the day?

Moreover, TOSFOS there says the main reading is the one during the day. If the first reading of the Megilah is at night, why is the main reading during the day?

The answer is that by reading it a second time and making that the main reading, while emphasizing that it is a *repeat* of the first reading ("Leshanosah"), one shows that he is not bored with the Mitzvah, and thereby rectifies the shortcoming of the people at the time of Purim! (M. Kornfeld)

Megilah 16 THE ROLE OF CHILDREN ON PURIM

AGADAH: The Gemara relates that when Haman went to Mordechai to dress him in the royal garments and lead him upon the royal horse, he found Mordechai sitting in front of the Rabanan, teaching them the laws of the Kemitzah (the handful of flour brought for the Korban Minchah). The same story appears in the Midrash (Esther Raba 10:4).

(a) In addition, the Midrash relates that the Rabanan who learned before Mordechai were children; he was a 'Cheder (kindergarten) Rabbi.' According to the Midrash, Haman first came looking for Mordechai on the previous night, the night that Haman built the gallows upon which he intended to hang Mordechai. He found him seated with 22,000 children before him, dressed in sackcloth and studying Torah. The children had been fasting for three days. Haman had them shackled in iron chains and appointed guards to watch them, announcing, "Tomorrow, I will first kill these children and then hang Mordechai!" They all burst out in tears and their cries rose to the heavens. Two hours into the night, Hashem hearkened unto their cries, and "at that moment, Hashem took the decrees [that He had written to punish the Jews] and tore them up" (ESTHER RABA 9:4). In an earlier Midrash (Esther Raba 7:13) we find that it was a group children who first heartened Mordechai with an omen from heaven that his prayers would be answered. We see from the Midrash that it was the *children* who predicted, and brought about, Haman's downfall. This is reflected in the verse that says, "Through the mouths of children and babes You have shown Your power to the oppressors, bringing an end to a vengeful enemy" (Tehilim 8:3).

This explains the widespread custom that is cited by the REMA (OC 690) in the name of the AVUDRAHAM and ORCHOS CHAYIM. The Rema writes, "It was once customary for *children* to draw a picture of Haman or to write the name 'Haman' on sticks and stones and to clap them together so as to erase his name, in the spirit of the verse, 'You shall erase all trace of Amalek...' (Devarim 25:19). This eventually evolved into the children's present custom of banging [at the mention of] Haman when the Megilah is read publicly." Perhaps it was the practice of *children* to demonstrate the eradication of Haman by erasing his name from stones and by protesting the mention of his name, because it was they who brought about his downfall!

(b) It is indeed appropriate for children to play an important role in protecting us from Haman in particular and from Amalek in general. According to the Gemara (Bechoros 5b and Rashi there), Amalek first attacked the Jewish nation only because they "weakened their hands from [studying] the words of the Torah." When the Jewish People conquered Amalek, they corrected this weakness, and stood ready to accept on Har Sinai the rest of the Torah and Mitzvos. Similarly, Haman only succeeded in passing his evil decree because the Jews "were lazy in the study of Torah" (Megilah 11a).

It is the role of our children to preserve the study of Torah among us. According to the Midrash (Shocheh Tov 8; Shir ha'Shirim Rabah 1:4:1, see also Shabbos 33b), our children are our "guarantors" that we will study the Torah. Children learn Torah in the purest manner possible, since "the breath (i.e. speech) of one who has not sinned cannot be compared to that of one who has sinned" (Shabbos 119b). The children, who had not accomplished their task of seeing to the perpetuation of Torah in Israel, fell prey along with the rest of the nation to Haman's evil plot. When the children, led by their bold mentor, Mordechai, strengthened themselves in the study of Torah, the Jewish people too became stronger, and as a result were saved from the hands of the enemy. The jubilant nation was now prepared to accept the entire Torah anew (Shabbos 88a, "Kiyemu v'Kiblu").

(c) Our observation about children being central to the miracle of Purim lends clarity to what Tosfos writes later in Megilah.

In the Mishnah in Megilah 19b, Rabbi Yehudah states that a minor may read the Megilah for an adult on Purim. Why is this? We know that for all other Mitzvos, a minor cannot exempt an adult from his obligation to perform the Mitzvah, because the minor's obligation is only due to Chinuch and is thus

secondary to the adult's obligation. What makes the Mitzvah of reading Megilas Esther different from all other Mitzvos?

TOSFOS (24a, DH Aval) addresses this question by referring to the obligation of women to read the Megilah. Tosfos explains that when the Chachamim instituted the Mitzvah of reading the Megilah, they fully obligated minors along with adults in this Mitzvah, because "children, too, were included in the miracle" of Purim, just as the Gemara (4a) obligates women to read the Megilah for this reason. Since their obligation in reading the Megilah is not just a secondary obligation of Chinuch, but rather the same primary obligation as applies to all adults, minors may exempt adults by reading the Megilah for them according to Rabbi Yehudah.

There are *two* explanations among the Rishonim for what the Gemara means when it says that women are obligated in the Mitzvah because "they were also included in the miracle:" (1) Haman originally decreed that Jewish women, as well as men, were to be slain (Esther 3:13). Since the Purim miracle saved the lives of the women just as much as it saved the lives of the men, it is only appropriate for women, too, to proclaim their appreciation for the salvation by reading the Megilah every year. This logic is indeed applicable to children as well. (2) On Purim, a woman was the *central figure* in the Jews' salvation. It was Queen Esther who risked her life and persuaded the Persian king to intervene on the Jews' behalf. In recognition of that fact, the Sages placed the obligation of reading the Megilah upon women as well as upon men. How can this logic be applied to obligate *children* in Megilah like adults? In what way were children instrumental in bringing about the rescue from Haman's decree? According to the Midrashim mentioned above, children indeed played a pivotal role in bringing about the salvation of Purim. That is why, according to Rabbi Yehudah, children have the same obligation to read the Megilah as adults, because they caused the salvation of Purim to come about! (M. Kornfeld)