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**Reb Aharon Leib Shteinman on Purim and Megillas**  
**Esther**  
by Rabbi Avraham Yeshayahu Shteinman  
**No Hallel on Purim**

The Gemara (Megillah 14a) wonders why we do not  
recite Hallel on Purim, and it cites the answer of Ray  
Nachman, who says that reading the Megillah on Purim  
is equivalent to reciting Hallel. If so, we can ask, why do  
we recite Hallel on the Seder night, considering that we  
read the Haggadah, which, like the Megillah, recounts

the miracles that Hashem performed for us?

Rav Shteinman answered that Megillas Esther differs  
from the Pesach Haggadah, as it is one of the 24 books of  
Tanach, and we can therefore discharge our obligation of  
reciting Hallel by reading it. The Haggadah is not part of  
Tanach so reading it is not equivalent to reciting.  
Furthermore, each father adds to the Haggadah, or  
subtracts from it, according to his child's ability to  
comprehend; it therefore cannot take the place of Hallel.

Rav Shach gave a different answer, The Ran  
(Pesachim 401) writes that the Halls we recite on the  
Seder night is considered a shirah, a song of praise, and is  
not the SannIV as the Hallel we recite on other festivals.  
We can say, therefore, that although we do discharge our  
obligation of reciting Hallel through reading the  
Haggadah, on the Seder night we have an additional  
requirement to say shirah by means of Hallel, which is  
part of the obligation of telling the story of Yetzias  
Mitzrayim.

R' Chaim Kanievsky and R' Gershon Edelstein gave a  
third answer: The opinion of the Vilna Gaon and the  
Elyail Rabbah (cited in Mishnah Berurah) is that one  
cannot fulfill two commandments with one mitzvah act.  
Even those who disagree and say that one who fulfills  
two commandments with one as does discharge both  
obligations, that is not the optimal way to perform the  
mitzvos as per the principle that we do not perform  
mitzvos in bundles. (Sotah 8a). Accordingly, at the Seder  
we both recite Hallel and read the Haggadah (which is a  
fulfillment of the mitzvah to relate the story of Yetzias  
Mitzrayim). Unlike the mitzvah of relating the story of  
Yetzias Mitzrayim, which is from the Torah, the mitzvah  
to read the Megillah is of Rabbinic origin, and Chazal  
instituted this reading as a means of discharging the  
obligation to recite Hallel and give praise to Hashem.

Finally, R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach answered that  
the miracles of Pesach were open wonders, while the  
miracles of Purim were concealed. Therefore, on Pesach  
we recite Hallel openly; while on Purim, we give praise to  
Hashem in a concealed fashion, through the reading of  
the Megillah.

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from: [updates@yated.com](mailto:updates@yated.com)  
date: Mar 11, 2022, 12:05 PM  
**Purim versus Putin**  
**Rabbi Yaakov Feitman**

March 9, 2022

### **A New Look At The Megillah**

There is something eternal about Purim that is even greater than all the other Yomim Tovim. The Medrash (Mishlei 9, Yalkut Shimoni 944) and the Rambam (Hilchos Megillah 2:18) famously teach that although all the other Yomim Tovim will become null and void, Purim will be celebrated forever. Now, meforshim tell us that this does not mean that there will be no Pesach, Sukkos or Shavuos. The Torah itself is eternal, so this cannot be. However, Purim will outshine them all. In what way will this happen?

My rebbi, Rav Yitzchok Hutner, explained this with a moshol that I hereby present with slight modernization. Two people enter a dark cave. One turns on his flashlight to be able to navigate the darkness. The other is blind, but his sixth sense allows him to walk safely through the cave, since for him it is but a continuation of his usual existence. Klal Yisroel has been able to survive the millennia of gloomy exile because of the shining light of the Yomim Tovim. Each of them is a different lamp in the obscurity of golus, allowing us to realize and even see that there is a path to geulah and complete redemption. However, even after Moshiach arrives and the hand of the Creator is manifest, we will need to recognize the Divine Presence in everything. The growth of a tree, the birth of a child, the healing of the sick, and the glory of the physical universe will still have to be acknowledged as coming from Hashem. That is the purpose of Purim and the Megillah. Although the light of Moshiach will outshine all previous events (Brachos 12b-13a), the innate human blindness that causes us to mistake G-dliness for nature and hidden miracles for science will still require Purim to teach and guide us.

This concept is taught by the Chofetz Chaim (Parshas Beshalach, page 104) in another way. He points out that each detail in the Megillah – Bigson and Seresh's plot to assassinate the king, Mordechai's knowledge of 70 languages, Achashveirosh's insomnia, and many more – in and of themselves may not seem like miracles. But when taken together, in hindsight and in tandem, they constitute one of the greatest miracles of all. This dovetails closely with the well-known explanation of the Chasam Sofer of Hashem's words to Moshe Rabbeinu after the sin of the Eigel. Moshe wants to understand more about Hashem's ways, but this cannot be revealed

directly even to him. Hashem tells Moshe, "You may stand on the rock. When My glory passes by...you will see My back (es achorei) but My face may not be seen" (Shemos 33:21-23). The Chasam Sofer (quoted in Chut Hameshulash, page 68) explains es achorei to refer to the aftermath of tragedies and perplexing events that led to yeshuos. At the time of challenges and confusion, it is impossible to understand the purpose and meaning of these events. However, in retrospect, often, everything becomes crystal clear. So was it with the nine-year prelude to Purim and then the blazing illumination of our triumph over Haman and Amaleik.

Interestingly, Rav Yechezkel Abramsky is quoted as having seen this lesson in the very last pesukim of the Megillah: "King Achashveirosh levied taxes...all his mighty and powerful acts...are recorded in the book of chronicles of the Kings of Media and Persia." Says the author of Chazon Yechezkel, "If you want to know more about Achashveirosh's escapades, read the history books. But in the Megillah there is no politics or hero glorification. It is simply the Hashgocha – Providence – of Hashem in His world. It is the revelation of miracles where some see only human interest and coincidence. It is this work that demonstrates to us that where events seem to proceed within the laws of nature, they are in actuality the work of the Creator Himself" (Shalmei Todah, page 4).

Rav Eliyohu Lopian (Lev Eliyohu) adds another dimension to this approach using the posuk (Shir Hashirim 2:9), "He was standing behind our wall, observing through the windows, peering through the lattices." Rav Elya explains that the open miracles are reflected in the word "windows," whereas the hidden miracles are reflected in the word "lattices." In both cases, we are being watched and protected by our Father in heaven. However, whereas when He looks through a window, we can perceive that He is there (e.g., Krias Yam Suf), when He looks through the lattice, we do not readily realize His presence (Purim). To Hashem, it makes no difference, but for us, the reassurance of Hashem's manifestation seems preferable. Yet, when we tabulate all the events that Hashem manipulated for us so that we would triumph over Haman, there is a special satisfaction that can be even longer-lasting than the open miracles.

To return to the Pachad Yitzchok (Purim, No. 13), Rav

Hutner finds a halachic element in differentiating between a hidden miracle and an open one. The Gemara (Megillah 14a) asks why we do not recite Hallel on Purim. The answer is that “the reading of the Megillah is its Hallel.” The Me’iri therefore concludes that if one doesn’t have a Megillah, he should recite Hallel. However, most Rishonim disagree with this position and rule that no Hallel is ever recited on Purim. Rav Hutner explains that the majority position is that the Megillah is not a “substitute Hallel.” It is a “hidden Hallel” for a hidden miracle. Therefore, even if someone doesn’t happen to have a Megillah, the usual Hallel is not appropriate because that particular set of praises was designed for open, not hidden, miracles. As Rav Avigdor Miller (Purim With Rabbi Avigdor Miller, page 188) once said on Purim, “Even by Har Sinai, you couldn’t see what you saw on Purim! Purim was such a tremendous giluy Shechinah. It’s ne’elam (hidden), but He’s not ne’elam at all.”

Let us utilize current events to get a newfound picture of what happened at the beginning of the Megillah. Chazal (Megillah 11a) teach that Achashveirosh was in many ways a carbon copy of Nevuchadnetzar. The wicked Nevuchadnetzar was so cruel that “it was said of him that during his time no one ever smiled.” Does it sound a bit like Mr. Putin? But there is more. The Gemara goes on to say that even after he was in gehennom, those who were already burning there lamented that he had arrived to rule over them. But Achashveirosh was his equal as a tyrant and a madman. The Gemara (Megillah ibid.) continues that the name Achashveirosh signifies that “hushcheru peneihem,” their faces blackened like a pot on the fire because of his evil, having brought poverty to his people. Indeed, the opening word of the Megillah, “vayehi,” is understood to mean that the response he elicited was vay – woe – from all in his realm.

Yet, just as Hashem decided to empower Nevuchadnetzar for a time over virtually the entire world, so did He enthrone Achashveirosh “from Hodu until Kush,” meaning the entire ancient world. Why? The Vilna Gaon (commentary on the Megillah) reveals that everything that happened, even before the events in the Megillah itself, was because of Mordechai and Klal Yisroel. Shushan was not originally the capital of the Persian Empire, but Achashveirosh, the king who had an inferiority complex about his lack of royal lineage, needed to feed his ego

with an extraordinary throne. The throne makers were in Shushan, and it was said that only they could imitate and produce a throne with the glory of Shlomo Hamelech’s famous royal seat. Once it was made, it was incapable of being moved, so Achashveirosh had to move his own capital to the place of his throne. “And why did this happen?” asks the Vilna Gaon. The answer is because “there was a Jewish man in Shushan” named Mordechai. So from the beginning, it was all for and about Mordechai, the tzaddik who would bring about the geulah.

We are watching and hearing about another madman who is shaking up the entire world to feed his own irrational ego. Yidden have already been displaced and many are suffering. At this point, we don’t know why and all we can do is daven. But perhaps with Purim looming ahead, the yeshuah is not far behind. We are now in the midst of an event and, as the Chasam Sofer taught us, we can’t understand. But we must know that everything happens for Klal Yisroel and Hashem is watching, albeit through the cracks in the wall, not through the windows.

It has been pointed out that when Esther stood uninvited before the king, taking her life in her hand for Klal Yisroel, a great miracle occurred, one of the hundreds hidden in the Megillah. Achashveirosh’s scepter was extended miraculously over 60 feet toward Esther, so that she was saved from execution. Did Achashveirosh do teshuvah because of this amazing neis? Not quite. As we know, at the end of the Megillah, all Achashveirosh can do is go back to levying taxes. His evil soul is untouched, but the time for complete geulah had not yet arrived, and as the Gemara reminds us, we were still servants of Achashveirosh. But perhaps what is happening in Ukraine is a reminder that Hashem runs the world. Goodness and virtue will soon triumph over the Nevuchadnetzars, Achashveiroshes, and all evil bimeheirah beyomeinu. And then we will truly understand.

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**Rabbi Yissocher Frand**

**Be Very Careful About What You Daven For**

We all know the story very well. Vashti refused to accede to the wishes of her inebriated husband to appear before

him. In response, he in effect said, “Off with her head.” Achashverosh woke up from his drunken stupor and realized that he needed a new wife. He held a “Beauty Contest” to choose the new queen. “...and Esther was taken to the king’s palace, under the charge of Hegai guardian of the women.” (Esther 2:8) Lo and behold, Esther is chosen as the Queen of Persia-Media.

Achashverosh was very pleased with Esther. She was beautiful. She was charming. He had only one problem with her. “Esther refused to reveal her origins or her people...” (Esther 2:20). Apparently, this fact drove Achashverosh crazy. For some reason, he wanted to know what she was hiding from him. The pasuk says: “Then the king made a great banquet for all his officers and his servants – it was Esther’s banquet – and he proclaimed an amnesty for the provinces, and gave gifts worthy of the king’s hand.” (Esther 2:18).

Achashverosh declared a tax holiday in the name of the Queen for all citizens of his empire in order to ingratiate himself to Esther. His plot was, if I put out this decree declaring the tax amnesty in her name, she will break down and reveal to me that which I desire to know. However, the plan did not work: “Esther refused to reveal her origins or her people.” (Esther 2:20).

The very next pasuk reads: “And when the maidens were gathered together the second time and Mordechai sat at the king’s gate...” (Esther 2:21). Suddenly, Achashverosh holds another Beauty Contest! Why did he do that? He loved Esther! The Gemara (Megillah 13a) writes that he took counsel from Mordechai. He asked, “Mordechai, how do I get her to tell me where she is from?”

Mordechai said, “I’ll give you great advice: Have another beauty contest as if you are going to pick another wife. Women are always jealous of the “thigh of their rival”! She will want to ingratiate herself to you to regain her favored status, and she will break down and tell you her secret!” The Gemara says that nevertheless, Esther still refused to reveal her origins to Achashverosh.

What was Mordechai thinking? Did he actually think that Esther would break down because of another beauty contest and reveal her secret that Mordechai forbade her to tell? The answer is that Mordechai thought “Esther hates being there in the palace with Achashverosh. I don’t want her being there. I want her out of there. Takeh! Let Achashverosh find another wife, another beauty, and let him get rid of Esther, and the problem will be solved.” In

other words, Mordechai’s intent was not that this would induce Esther to reveal her origins. His intent was in fact that Achashverosh should find another wife! Esther the righteous will be freed from this horrible situation in which she found herself. Mordechai’s plan did not work. Let me ask: When this did not work, what was Mordechai thinking to himself? “Oy, vei iz mir! Nebach! She is still stuck in the palace! My grand plan on how to extricate Esther from this predicament did not work! Woe is me!” But what would have happened if Mordechai would have been successful in this plan and Achashverosh would have thrown her out and she would not have remained the Queen? The Salvation of Klal Yisrael would not have happened. This is one of the great lessons of life: Do not try to run the world. Be very careful about what you daven for. Sometimes we daven for things because we think that will bring our salvation, and they turn out to not be our salvation.

The take-away lesson from the way Chazal present this story is that sometimes we pray for something to happen in order to bring about a certain result, but if our prayers were answered as formulated, they would have brought about the opposite result! If our prayers appear to go unanswered, we should never think “Woe is me – the Almighty is ignoring my pleas”. The Ribono shel Olam knows better. The Ribono shel Olam wanted Esther to be in the palace, and therefore nothing was going to get her out!

We see a similar phenomenon in the beginning of Parshas Shemos. Moshe Rabbeinu’s parents put him in a little basket in the Nile River to hide him from Pharaoh and to save their child. What happened? “And Pharaoh’s daughter descends to bathe by the Nile...” (Shemos 2:5) The daughter of the tyrant who ordered that every Jewish boy should be drowned is the first person to come across the floating basket! Miriam is standing a short distance away on the banks to watch what is going to be with her brother (Shemos 2:4).

When Miriam sees the daughter of Pharaoh approaching the floating basket, what must she have been thinking? “Oy vey iz mir! Of all the people in the world to come down to bathe in the Nile right now, this is the worst person who could possibly have shown up!” Miriam must have been davening with great intensity to the Almighty: “Please, Master of the Universe, please do not let her notice the basket with my baby brother inside! If Bas

Pharaoh sees Moshe, she will most likely drown him. He will not have a chance!”

What happens? Miriam’s prayer was not answered! Pharaoh’s daughter sees the little baby and decides to take him into the palace, to hire his mother to nurse him, and ultimately, as a result of this, Klal Yisrael has salvation. What did Miriam think when Bas Pharaoh took the baby? “Nebach, the Ribono shel Olam did not listen to my prayers! He didn’t answer me!”

And yet, what do we know? This was the yeshua (salvation). This was another example. We daven for “X” because we think “X” is going to be good, and what unfolds is exactly the opposite of what we prayed for – and it is even better than we could have ever hoped for! We see this all the time. Someone davens for a Shidduch: “Ribono shel Olam, I want this shidduch to go through, I want this shidduch to happen so badly! This will be the best thing in the world for me!” And then the shidduch does not work out. The person is crushed with disappointment. “Oy vey iz mir – woe is me!” Sometimes people do not realize that they have been saved from great pain!

We see this in business. “Ribono shel Olam, if this deal succeeds, I will be so successful...” We see this all the time.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, zt”l, before he came to America, applied for a rabbinic position in Europe. Someone else also applied for the job. Rav Yaakov said “In all honesty and in all modesty, I was a much better candidate for that position in Lithuania.” The other fellow got the job. Rav Yaakov said about himself that he was very depressed about this development. “What will be with me and my family?”

Nebach, what did he need to do? He had to come to America. He came to America, eventually became a Rosh Yeshiva in Yeshivas Torah Vodaath, and was respected as one of the Gedolei HaDor (Greatest Rabbinic personalities of his generation). The “winning candidate” was unfortunately killed out with the entire city by the Nazis. How much did Rav Yaakov daven that he should get that position! How disappointed he was that he didn’t get that job!

But such, my friends, is life. We don’t know what is good for us and we don’t know what the Ribono shel Olam has in mind for us. That is why the best Tefillah is “V’HaTov b’Einecha assei” (And that which is good in Your Eyes,

do) and likewise “Maleh mish’alos lee’beinu l’tova” (fulfill the requests in our heart – for good!). I don’t know what is good; You know what is good. Fulfill the requests of our heart for good.

This is the lesson that we learn from Mordechai and Esther. We also learn it from Moshe and Miriam and Bas Pharaoh. And we see it time and time again in our own lives.

*Have a Freileche Purim Transcribed by David Twersky; Jerusalem [DavidATwersky@gmail.com](mailto:DavidATwersky@gmail.com) Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD [dhoffman@torah.org](mailto:dhoffman@torah.org) Rav Frand © 2020 by Torah.org.*

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***Rav Kook Torah***

***Purim in Volozhin - The Purim Gabbai***

***Rabbi Chanan Morrison***

In 1885, the year that Rav Kook studied in the famed yeshivah of Volozhin, he was unanimously chosen to lead the Purim revelry as Purim gabbai. The most important students in the yeshivah lit the streetlights along the road from Rav Kook’s lodgings to the yeshivah. This created a festive atmosphere, as Rav Kook was led to the yeshivah and to the home of the Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Naftali Tvi Yehudah Berlin, known as the Netziv.

Efraim Teitelbaum, Rav Kook’s roommate, related that when the Rav reached the home of the Netziv, he recited the usual verses poking fun at the administration and at events that had occurred in the yeshivah. However, instead of composing his doggerel in the vernacular Yiddish, he did so in Hebrew and Aramaic.

One of his quips was, “Berlin will sink and Berlin will rise.” That is, the Haskalah of Berlin - the Enlightenment movement that advocated integrating into European society - will sink, while the Torah of the Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Berlin, will rise.

Several students in the yeshivah had studied Haskalah literature and had been enticed by it. When they expressed their delight and amazement at the Rav’s mastery of Hebrew and Aramaic, the Netziv turned to them and remarked, “Not only does he excel in Torah and

yirat shamayaim (piety), but even in this subject you do not reach his ankles.”

#### Measure for Measure

In delivering his Purim compositions, Rav Kook imitated the Netziv’s manner of speech and enunciation. But he was repaid in kind many years later by the great-grandson of the Netziv, Rabbi Yitzchak Charif, who was chosen to be the “Purim rabbi” in Rav Kook’s own yeshiva, Yeshivat Mercas HaRav.

Rabbi Yitzchak, having internalized every word that he had heard Rav Kook speak, proceeded to make a Purim speech in precise imitation of the Rav’s style and cadence. In his speech, he analyzed his position of “Purim rabbi.” Did it encompass only the rabbinate of Jerusalem? Or did his nomination entitle him to officiate as the chief rabbi of all of Eretz Yisrael?

The scholarship and mental agility which he brought to his speech amazed all those present. Rav Kook was also impressed by Rabbi Yitzchak’s address. He admitted that he had been unaware of the scholar’s greatness in Torah. “Now I am getting my due,” Rav Kook noted. “The great-grandson is repaying me here in Jerusalem for that which I said to his great-grandfather in Volozhin.”

*(Celebration of the Soul by Rabbi Moshe Zvi Neriyah, translated by Rabbi Pesach Jaffe, pp. 123-124.)*

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<https://jewishvues.com/articles/purim-the-power-of-silence-2/>

#### **Purim- The Power of Silence**

Posted 08 MAR 23:36h in by **vueseditor**

#### **[Rav Meilech Biderman]**

The mazal of the month of Adar is Dagim. The Klausenberger Rebbe zt”l said that this month, which is represented by fish, is a month of happiness, since while lions roar, donkeys bray, horses neigh, and so on for all other animals, fish are silent, and remaining silent is happiness.

On the passuk in Mishlei 15:23), the Noam Elimelech explains, “Simcha Lish”, how does a Ish Tzedek get to simchah? “Bmanaeh Bpiv”, by afflicting his mouth [Enuy means affliction]. A person should afflict his mouth by refraining from idle talk that has no purpose. He should guard his mouth immensely, to speak with holiness. By doing so, his mind will be pure to think about Hashem’s

greatness. and he will love the Creator and desire the mitzvos immensely.” This inspirational commentary teaches us that remaining silent is mesugal for happiness. When you want to say something and refrain, it’s painful to remain silent. Yet, you will be better off remaining silent (if there is no valid reason to say it) and you will be happier too. This is implied by the silent fish, which are the mazal of Adar, the month of happiness.

The Chasam Sofer zt”l teaches that the Purim miracle happened because of remaining silent. To explain that, we begin with the following passuk: Haman said to Achashveirosh, “There is one nation, dispersed and spread out between the nations in all the states of your kingdom. Their laws are different from all nations, and they don’t keep the laws of the king, and the king has no reason to tolerate them. If it is good for the king, inscribe to destroy them...” (Esther 3:7-8). On this passuk, the Gemara (Megillah 13:) says, “no one knows how to speak lashon hara like Haman.” The Gemara writes the conversation that took place between Haman and Achashveirosh (which is alluded to in this passuk) and Haman’s terrible lashon hara:

Haman: Destroy them. Achashverosh: I’m afraid their G-d shouldn’t do to me, as He did to my predecessors.

Haman: They are sleeping from the mitzvos (Yeshno).

Achashverosh: But they have rabbis [and in their merit, I’m afraid to start up with them]. Haman: They are one nation (Am Echad). [And since they are one nation,

Hashem will not avenge for the rabbis, as there are many among them who are “sleeping from the mitzvos.”]

Haman: Perhaps you fear creating an uninhabited area in your kingdom [since if you kill them, and they all live together in, you have made that country forsaken. You don’t need to be concerned about that, because] they are dispersed over all nations [they don’t live in one location] Haman: Perhaps you will claim that you earn profits from them? Mephurad, they are like a Perada, mule, that doesn’t bear children.

Haman: Perhaps you will say [that even if there isn’t a large area where the Jews live all together] perhaps there is a small province that belongs to Jews [and to kill them will turn that province into a ghost town. Once again, you don’t need to worry about that, because] they are spread out over all the countries of your kingdom, [and they don’t have their own land].

Haman: “Vdoshem Shonot Mikal Am”. They don’t eat our food; they don’t marry our daughters; and they don’t give their daughters to us for marriage.

Haman: “Ves domei Hamelech Eino Osim”, they don’t work for the king, as they are always claiming “today is Pesach,” “today is Shabbos” [and they say that they can’t work].

Haman: They eat and drink and disgrace the king. If a fly falls into a cup of [wine of] one of them, they take out the fly and drink the wine. But if my master, the king, will touch one of their cups, they pour it out on the ground and they don’t drink it.

Haman spoke lashon hara on the Jewish nation until Achashveirosh agreed to annihilate them. The Chasam Sofer explains that we were saved by the tzaddikim, Mordechai and Esther, because they had the trait of silence, which served to annul Haman’s lashon hara. Mordechai and Esther weren’t the only tzaddikim of that generation. There were many others. But Mordechai and Esther were chosen for the miracle because they were silent (when necessary), and that merit defied Haman’s lashon hara. As the megillah states, “Esther didn’t reveal her nation or her birthplace because Mordechai told her not to tell” (Esther 2:10). The merit of their silence overcame Haman’s lashon hara, and we were saved. The importance of being silent is hinted in this week’s parsha with the me’il of the cohen gadol.

The Gemara (Zevachim 88:) asks, “Why does the Torah juxtapose the korbanos with the special clothes of the cohen gadol? 4 To teach you that just as the korbanos atone, so do the clothes of the cohen gadol atone. The Ketonet, tunic, atones for murder (see Bereishis 37:31)... The pants, atones for adultery (see Shmos 28:42)... The turban, atones for arrogance. Why? Let something that’s worn high on the head atone for someone who feels high. The Avnet, belt, atones for the heart’s bad thoughts, because the Avnet was [wrapped upon the cohen gadol’s] heart. The Choshen, breastplate, atones for [the courts’] errors in judgment, as it states “Vasita Choshen Mishpat” (28:15). The Eiphod atones for avodah zarah... The Meil, robe, atones for lashon hara. Why? Let a garment that makes sounds (the Tzits had bells along its hem) atone for lashon hara. The Tzits (the gold band worn on the cohen gadol’s forehead) atones for chutzpah...” Thus, the me’il atoned for lashon hara. The bells that were sewn along its

hem, atoned for the ounds of lashon hara. The Rambam (Kli HaMikdash 9:3-4) describes the Meil: “The me’il was made entirely from techeles... It didn’t have sleeves. It was divided into two cloths, [one part hung in front, and one in the back] from the neck down, like all robes, connected solely around the neck... Bring blue died wool, purple wool, and scarlet wool... and make them appear like pomegranates, with their mouths unopened, and hang them on the me’il’s [hem]. Bring seventy-two bells... thirty-six on either side... So that on the hems of the me’il will hang a bell, a pomegranate, a bell, a pomegranate.”

As the passuk states, “a gold bell and a pomegranate, a gold bell and a pomegranate, on the hems of the me’il, all around” (28:34). The sequence was one bell and one pomegranate, all along the hems of the me’il. Based on this information, we ask: were the pomegranates between the bells, or were the bells between the pomegranates? Was a pomegranate between two bells, or was a bell between two pomegranates? The answer is, both statements are true, as they were sewn onto the me’il successively, a pomegranate, a bell, a pomegranate, a bell. The Alshich HaKadosh asks, why then does the Torah (Shmos 28:33) write that the gold bells were in the middle? Why not that the pomegranates were in the middle?

The Alshich writes, “The Torah Hakdoshah says ‘the gold bells were between the [pomegranates].’ This passuk arouses a question, because just as there were bells in the midst of pomegranates, so were there pomegranates in the midst of bells, since the bells and pomegranates were arranged one after the other.” So why did the passuk express specifically that the bells were in the middle? The Alshich answers, “This passuk is a mussar from our Father in heaven, teaching us that there is nothing better than silence. The bells with the tongue that clangs in them were made to signify a tongue that clangs within one’s mouth... It’s a mashal, hinting to speech. The pomegranates... are hollow closed mouths, that don’t make any sound. They hint to silence, to not speak. Hashem teaches us that we should not consider it as though the pomegranates are in between the bells, [which would imply] that there should be once silence between twice speaking. Rather, [one should view it] as though the bell were in between the pomegranates, which means that between being silent twice, speak only once. One should

be silent double the amount he speaks. After keeping silent and not saying two things, say one thing, just as there's a bell between two pomegranates. For, it wasn't for naught that Hashem gave the person one mouth and two eyes if it weren't to teach the person that he should speak half of what he sees with his eyes. This will be his prevention, [from speaking forbidden talk]..." The face tells you to share only 50% of what you know, because a person has two eyes to acquire information, but only one mouth to reveal what he saw. This is also implied by Chazal, "A word for a sela, silence for two." (Megillah 18.). This can imply that for every word spoken, be silent twice. This is what we learn from the me'il, which had one bell (representing speech) between two pomegranates, implying to be twice silent, and to speak once.

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**Shema Yisrael Torah Network**  
**Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Tzav**  
 ב פרשת צו תשפ"ב

אם על תודה יקריבנו

**If he shall offer it for a thanksgiving offering. (7:12)**

Paying gratitude to the Almighty when everything seems to be going our way is very convenient. Everyone would agree that we have an obligation to acknowledge our debt of gratitude. What about when our prayers are answered with a reply that we find "unacceptable" – when the answer is, "No"? Do we still thank Hashem? We should understand that Hashem is either testing our reaction or He is saving the positive response that we crave for another time. Unfortunately, gratitude under unagreeable, trying circumstances requires cognitive deliberation, hindsight as well as foresight, to understand, accept and show our appreciation for what Hashem does for us.

The *Pnei Menachem* paid a *shivah* call to comfort a grieving family. While there, he presented the following question. In *Hallel/Sefer Tehillim* (116: 4,13), David *Hamelech* declares, *Tzarah v'yagon emtza*; "Distress and grief I would find." The *pasuk* ends. The next *pasuk*

begins, *U'b'Shem Hashem ekra*, "Then I would invoke the Name of Hashem." At that point, a break occurs in the *pesukim* between the grief and the gratitude. In *pasuk* 13, however, David declares, *Kos yeshua esa, u'b'Shem Hashem ekra*, "I will raise the cup of salvation, and the Name of Hashem I will invoke." In this case, no break occurs. Why? *Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl*, explains that when our cup is overflowing with good fortune, the gratitude just oozes forth. It is an immediate response to the positive. When we are dealing with grief, challenge and adversity, however, we need to stop, take a break, and mull it over before we realize that we have a *chov kadosh*, sacred obligation, to thank Hashem for everything – even if we do not understand His actions concerning our lives. Thus, when life is good we declare, *kos yeshuos esa*. When it is *tzarah v'yagon emtza*, we must (especially now) thank Hashem.

*Horav Avraham Grodzensky's rebbetzin* was *nifteres*, passed away, at a young age, leaving him to raise his ten children. It was an epic tragedy. He tore *kriah*, rent his garment in mourning, but did not recite the *berachah*, *Baruch Dayan HaEmes*; "Blessed is the True Judge" (which is usually recited at the time of *kriah*). He waited until the third day of *shivah*, seven-day mourning period, and then recited the blessing. He explained, "*Chazal* teach that one must bless Hashem when confronted with adversity (death) as he would when he is the recipient of good fortune. *Chazal* charge us to recognize and acknowledge that nothing bad comes from Hashem. Thus, our attitude toward both must be the same. It took me three days to accept this reality cognitively."

If a person acknowledges that even the pain and adversity which appear to him as "bad" are really for his good, he will have a deeper understanding of the notion that "bad" and "good" are in reality both good.

אם על תודה יקריבנו

**If he shall offer it for a thanksgiving offering. (7:12)**

*Horav Mordechai Schwab, zl*, distinguishes between the secular concept of *hakoras hatov*, gratitude/appreciation, and that of the Torah. Truthfully, this differential applies to all *middos*, character traits, because, first and foremost, we execute them in response to the Torah's command that we do so. *Derech erez kodmah l'Torah*; human decency/ethical character, refinement, precedes Torah knowledge. One whose

*middos* are flawed will not approach Torah as *divrei Elokim Chaim*, words of the Living G-d, but as a secular, mundane discipline. As such, Torah will do very little to nothing in terms of transforming him into a *ben Torah*.

*Hakoras hatov* is an accepted way of life. In the secular world, *hakoras hatov* seems to be contractual: You help me; I, in turn, repay the favor. America has a day dedicated to thanksgiving to the Almighty for favors rendered five hundred years ago. We have a Father's Day and Mother's Day and a host of other days dedicated to appreciating individuals. How is the Torah's concept of *hakoras hatov* different? Appreciation and the sense of gratitude (you do for me; I owe you) are *t'chunos ha'nefesh*, innate qualities, that are intrinsic to human DNA. We all have an inborn sense of obligation to the one who benefits us. When character is molded and shaped by one's DNA, however, one can assuage the obligation/demand for gratitude by devoting one day a year to expressing gratitude, or by limiting his gratitude to individuals whom he has determined are worthy of his thankfulness. It is certainly not a one size fits all form of appreciation, whereby we demonstrate our endless indebtedness to anyone, regardless of the size of the favor, the benefactor's personal gain, the beneficiaries' level of necessity, etc. It is everyone all of the time, anywhere. It does not have to make sense. We owe the Egyptians for their "hospitality"; as such, we may not hate them. We must be cognitive of inanimate objects from whom we have benefitted; thus, Moshe *Rabbeinu* was not permitted to strike the earth or water of Egypt. Perhaps, his subconscious sense of gratitude might have been stunted.

A people/person who is deficient in *hakoras hatov* is distanced from the Jewish people. They can never be attached, accepted as a convert. Hence, the Torah condemns Ammon and Moav. The issue is not so much the evil that they perpetrated against us, but rather that they, as descendants of Lot who was saved by Avraham *Avinu*, should act differently. On the other hand, the Egyptians who persecuted us, but actually housed us (regardless of the self-serving reason), can one day convert and be accepted into *Klal Yisrael*.

Rav Schwab related that his *Rebbe, Horav Boruch Ber Leibowitz, zl*, took the obligation of *hakoras hatov* seriously – especially concerning a student's responsibility towards his *yeshivah*. A *yeshivah* is not simply someone's holding pattern until he is ready to

move on to the next institution. A *yeshivah* is a home: a father and a mother, a place where one is nurtured. As such, the obligation of *hakoras hatov* to one's *yeshivah* is overwhelming.

When Rav Schwab traveled to England for the purpose of *shidduchim*, seeking a wife, he took leave of the *yeshivah* (Kaminetz, under the leadership of Rav Boruch Ber). He was supposed to be gone for a short duration, which stretched out to two months. When he returned, he immediately went to give *shalom* to his *Rebbe*. Rav Boruch Ber was visibly upset and asked, "Where is your *hakoras hatov*? Two months passed and not a single postcard!"

Another incident took place following World War I. The wicked *Yiddishists* and Jewish Communists had convinced the Russian government to close *yeshivos* and, instead, to demand the students study secular subjects. The *yeshivos* were forced to close in the larger communities. This did not put an end to formal Torah study. It just required creativity on the part of the *Roshei Yeshivah*, who encouraged their students (at the behest of the *Chafetz Chaim*) to travel to all the small outlying communities and establish *chadorim*, schools, for the Jewish children. These small schools were not culturally correct; thus, they delivered their lessons clandestinely. Money was a major problem, because the *yeshivah bachurim* had expenses, and the schools needed money to function.

In Kaminetz, a group of students consisted of capable young men. They suddenly became adept at the art of fundraising, as they traveled all over raising funds for the newly-established *yeshivos*. They sought out alumni who were able to help and solicited them on behalf of their *yeshivos*. This is when it became tricky. In the *Kaminetz Yeshivah* (as well as in other *yeshivos*), a fund called TAT existed. It referred to *Tomchei Torah*, supporters of Torah, a program earmarked to help with the physical needs of the poorer students – i.e. clothing, travel expenses, even food. The funds for this program had heretofore been solicited from the *yeshivah* alumni. Now the alumni were being approached for the establishment of *yeshivos*. Apparently, just so much money was accessible. When discord emerged between the two fundraising factions, they decided to settle their disagreement by presenting their contentions to the *Rosh Yeshivah, Rav Baruch Ber*. The *Rosh Yeshivah* listened

and commented, “A student’s first responsibility is to his *yeshivah*. Afterwards, he can go help others. His *yeshivah* and its students are priority number one. He must have *hakoras hatov* to the *yeshivah* that nurtures him.”

*Horav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg, zl*, was a *Rosh Yeshivah*, a Torah giant who achieved an extraordinary level of erudition in the entire Torah. His *hasmadah*, diligence in Torah, was legendary. His erudition was matched only by his level of *hakoras hatov*. He showered every person who benefitted him – regardless of faith – with gratitude for even the simplest, most basic and decent favor. This was especially true if Torah benefitted as a result of a person’s generosity – material and emotional. (Yes, giving of one’s time and strength to help a Jew in need should be recognized, acknowledged and appreciated.)

*Rav Scheinberg* had a good friend, Mr. Meyer Marlowe, who was a pharmacist living on the Lower East Side of New York. Upon the *Rosh Yeshivah’s* recommendation, Mr. Marlowe served as the provider of medicines and medicinal supplies for the students and staff of *Yeshivas Mir*, which was located in Shanghai, China. They, together with other *yeshivah* men and families, escaped during World War II just as the Nazis were about to overrun their *yeshivah*. *Rav Shachne Zohn, zl*, served as the liaison between the *yeshivah* and Mr. Marlowe. This represented much more than an act of generosity on Mr. Marlowe’s part. The medicines required meticulous, uniform packaging in order to pass muster with the Japanese (who controlled it until 1945) authorities. If a shipment that arrived did not meet their strict guidelines, it landed in the ocean. As a result, Mr. Marlowe worked long overtime hours, painstakingly packaging and seeing to it that they executed everything to perfection. All of this was without a fee. It was pure *chesed*, kindness at its apex. This was not a one-time endeavor. It went on for months; whenever the call came, he was prepared to help. Indeed, he viewed this as his special *mitzvah* to assist in the furtherance of Torah.

Years passed, the war ended, and life slowly was returning to a sense of normalcy. Mr. Marlowe developed painful ulcers which, after a while, began to hemorrhage. Even today, with many drugs and procedures, this is a serious illness. Then, it was life-threatening. He was admitted to the hospital where he was treated for a number of months, during which time he required

numerous blood transfusions to replenish the blood that he had lost due to hemorrhaging. Regardless of the severity of the illness and station of the patient, only so much blood was available and everyone received an allotment. Mr. Marlowe’s allotment had reached its completion. The administrators of the hospital informed the family that they felt bad for them, but other patients were also in need of blood. They were halting Mr. Marlowe’s transfusions. This was essentially a death warrant.

The family immediately consulted *Rav Scheinberg*. He, in turn, called *Rav Shachne Zohn* and informed him that the individual who had given selflessly of himself to supply drugs to the *Mir talmidim* was in dire need of blood. The very next day, in what was an extraordinary demonstration of *hakoras hatov*, a line formed from the hospital entrance, stretching around the block. The students of the *Mir* came *en masse* to repay their benefactor. This was true *hakoras hatov*. They realized that his hard work and devotion to Torah played a critical role in their survival. True, he was Hashem’s *shaliach*, agent, but, obviously, Hashem had chosen him for his worthiness. He had modeled *chesed* for them.

אם על תודה יקריבנו

**If he shall offer it for a thanksgiving offering. (7:12)**

We all have reasons to be grateful. Who is not the beneficiary of some form of good? While some of us have it better than others, it just means that our sense of gratitude should be commensurately greater. We are sorely deficient in one aspect of life: gratitude that we are Jewish; gratitude that we have the opportunity and cognition to realize how fortunate we are to have Torah and *mitzvos* to study and observe. How vacuous are the lives of those who are bereft of these unique Heavenly gifts? Do we show our appreciation? Do we walk around smiling that we are Jewish? Do our children have a sense of excitement at being able to learn Torah, go to shul and perform *mitzvos*? The *Baal Shem Tov, zl*, was an assistant *cheder rebbe* (prior to revealing himself). His position entailed bringing his young charges to *cheder*. He did so with great vigor as he led the children, singing and dancing to words of *Tehillim*. When a child goes to school in such a manner, the enthusiasm and vibrance of *Yiddishkeit* are always with him.

Rabbi Yitzchak Rubin relates a poignant story which underscores this idea. In the 1950's, *Yiddishkeit* in America was in its bare nascency. At that point, *Rav Yosef Gelertner, zl*, a *Gerrer chassid* was *rav* of a small *shteibel* in Queens, N.Y. Recent immigrants, most of whom were survivors of the Holocaust, comprised the majority of those who frequented the *shteibel*. Indeed, *Rav Gelertner* was himself a survivor of Auschwitz. Suffering through the purgatory of a number of camps, he and his wife had miraculously survived and came to these shores with the hope of rebuilding their lives. Queens, at that time, was not a hub of *chassidus* and as a *Gerrer chassid* with all of the regalia, he stood out. Yet, people flocked to his *shul*, because it was a warm and friendly environment. The *davening* was enthusiastic, with much singing, and the *rav* extended himself to strangers, as well as to his members.

One day, a young, observant boy walked into the *shul*. A member of the local Orthodox *shul*, he was looking for a *shul* in which he would feel at home and would receive the personal attention that he craved. One problem that he had to overcome was the language barrier: he spoke no *Yiddish*, and most of the members spoke no English. After a few visits, *Rav Gelertner* walked over to the boy (who was all of thirteen years old) and invited him to his family's *Pesach Seder*.

Apprehensive, but excited, the boy accepted. (He must have cleared it with his parents.)

*Pesach* arrived, and on the second *Seder* night, the boy found himself seated at a long table that was bedecked with all of the *Pesach Seder* accouterments. At the head of the table sat the *rav* in his white *kittel*, sporting his *shtreimel* on his head. Next to him was the *rebbeztin*, dressed in her *Yom Tov* finery. Lying in a bassinet next to them was their three-month-old infant. Her name was Miriam, and with her came a poignant story of survival, hope and miracle.

Miriam was not supposed to be. The Nazi fiends were infamous for their cruel, maniacal murder of the Jews. Their perverted experiments on their hapless victims has been glossed over for obvious reasons. While some Jews survived these experiments, their ability to propagate and one day have a family had been seriously compromised. The *rav* and his wife were such victims. The doctors they consulted were frank: "You will not have a family. End of story." The doomsayers were

unaware of the power of sincere *tefillah*. Prayer storms the Heavens and penetrates the gates of tears that remain open to those who pray with hope. Twelve years passed, during which time the Gelertners pleaded with Hashem for a miracle. Finally, the time to realize the miracle had arrived with the birth of their precious Miriam, who now lay sleeping peacefully in her bassinet.

Toward the middle of the *Seder*, Miriam made her presence known. She woke up screeching at the top of her little lungs. Her mother attempted to quiet her by rocking the bassinet, to no avail. When she kept on crying, *Rav Gelertner* rose from his seat, took the little bundle into his arms and went upstairs. A few minutes passed until the boy heard the *rav* dancing with his infant daughter. Round and round, up and down, with increasing fervor he danced and danced. He also sang, "*Oy es iz gutt tzu zein a Yid! Oy, ez is gutt tzu zein a Yid!*" "Oh, it is good to be a Jew! Oh, it is good to be a Jew!" He went on and on. This holy man had survived purgatory on earth, had experienced the redefined meaning of travail, had suffered for one reason: he was a Jew. Yet, he danced and sang, "*Oy, ez is gutt tzu zein a Yid!*" He had every reason to seethe with anger. Instead, he sang with deep pride and praised Hashem with gratitude for creating him as a Jew.

*In memory of a friend*

*Iverson לזכר נשמת חיים בן אברהם זל*

"No Jew should be left behind "

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prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum*

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Subject Weekly Halacha

by **Rabbi Doniel Neustadt**

Weekly Halacha :: Purim

**Dressing Up: The Prohibition Of Lo Yilbash**

Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Question: Is it permitted for boys to dress up like girls and vice versa in celebration of Purim?

Discussion: Before we are able to answer this question we must first explore the laws of Lo yilbash that apply all year around, and then we will discuss if Purim is an exception.

It is biblically forbidden for a man to wear women's clothes or for a woman to wear men's garments. The

Torah refers to this kind of conduct as an abomination since it can easily lead to promiscuity and immorality[1]. This prohibition, known as Lo yilbash, applies even if one cannot be seen by others and even in the privacy of one's home[2].

“Men's clothing” includes any garment which, in that locale, is worn strictly by men, and “women's clothing” means garments which are worn strictly by women. But an item which is not gender specific and is worn in that locale by both men and women is permitted to be worn by either gender[3]. While contemporary poskim debate whether or not women who wear pants which are specially designed for them are in violation of Lo yilbash[4], all poskim — without exception — agree that it is strictly forbidden for women to wear pants or slacks in public, since it is forbidden for them to wear in public any form-fitting garments which outline any part of their body.

Lo yilbash includes wearing even one garment that is specifically worn by the other gender[5]. It is forbidden, for instance, for a woman to wear a man's hat, belt, tie or shoes even if the rest of her clothing is clearly feminine and she is clearly identifiable as a woman. Similarly, it is forbidden for a man to wear a woman's shawl, tichel, jewelry or wig, even if that is the only feminine item that he is wearing.

Once a boy or a girl reaches the age of chinuch, parents are forbidden to dress them in the clothing of the opposite gender. The age of chinuch concerning this halachah is defined as the age when a child is old enough that his mother is particular not to dress a boy like a girl or vice versa, or when a boy or girl is old enough to be embarrassed to wear the clothing of the opposite gender[6].

Question: Are there any situations where the prohibition of Lo yilbash does not apply?

Discussion: Many poskim are of the opinion that the prohibition of Lo yilbash applies only if one's intention is to beautify, adorn or to call attention to oneself; if, however, the intention is for other reasons, e.g., to protect oneself from the sun or rain, it is permitted[7]. According to this opinion it is permitted for a man to wear his wife's sweater, scarf, socks or slippers if he is cold and needs to warm himself, her rain coat or boots if it is raining, her slippers if he needs to protect his feet from cold or

wetness, or her apron if he is cooking and needs protection from splatters. While a minority opinion disagrees with all of the above[8] and some poskim recommend being stringent[9], the basic halachah follows the more lenient view[10].

Based on the above, we may also permit a man to wear his wife's watch or ring for safekeeping[11], or her sunglasses if the purpose is to protect his eyes from the sun's rays.

The poskim also agree that Lo yilbash does not apply to umbrellas, canes (when used as a walking aid) or handkerchiefs, even if a particular type or style is designed for use by men primarily or by women primarily[12]. It is also permitted for a man to wear a toupee[13], to use a hair-clip or bobby pin to fasten his kippah[14], to wear a ring on his finger in a locale where men wear rings[15], and to ride a woman's bicycle[16].

Question: May women wear pants when they are exercising in the privacy of their homes or in gyms which are for women only? Is it permitted for them to wear ski pants when they are sledding in an area where there are no men around?

Discussion: From a strict halachic perspective there are grounds for leniency, since many poskim maintain that Lo yilbash does not apply to pants or slacks which are designed specifically for women, and since the activity is taking place in a private area there is no breach of modesty. In addition, wearing pants for those activities is generally not for the purpose of adornment but for other reasons, e.g., for protection, as in the case of ski pants, or for ease of movement, as in the case of exercising, which is permitted according to most poskim mentioned earlier. Still, for a variety of reasons, some authorities are hesitant to permit women, even when there are no men around, to wear pants indiscriminately. Rav Y.S. Elyashiv is quoted as ruling that women may wear ski pants only if they wear a top that reaches the knees over the pants[17]. In actual practice, women should follow the ruling of their own rav who is in the best position to judge what the proper approach is for his community.

Question: Is the prohibition of Lo yilbash less severe when dressing up in celebration of Purim?

Discussion: This topic has been hotly debated for generations. In some communities it was customary for

men to dress up as women and vice versa on Purim, and the rabbonim did not object. They reasoned that the dressing up was being done only for the sake of simchas Purim and it does not violate Lo yilbash[18]. But in many other communities the rabbonim were strictly opposed to the practice and demanded that it be stopped[19], and this has become the prevalent custom nowadays[20]. Children below the age of chinuch, however, are permitted to dress like the opposite gender[21]. Even for adults, the poskim do not object to those who wear just one item that is usually worn by the opposite gender, as long as one's true identity is clearly recognizable (even though this is forbidden during the rest of the year)[22].

1. Rashi, Rashbam and Ibn Ezra, Devarim 22:5. See Rambam (Sefer ha-Mitzvos, lo saseh 39 and Moreh Nevuchim 3:37) and Chinuch 542 who connect this prohibition to idol worship as well. 2. Some poskim suggest that the prohibition of Lo yilbash in the privacy of one's home applies only to men but not to women. According to this opinion, women are permitted to wear men's garments as long as they don't mingle with men. But most poskim hold that mi-derbanan, this is forbidden for women as well; see Darchei Teshuvah, Y.D. 182:7, Minchas Yitzchak 2:108-3, B'tzeil ha-Chochmah 5:126-3 and Shevet ha-Kehasi 2:258 for the various views. 3. See Maharshah, Nedarim 49b. 4. See Avnei Tzedek, Y.D. 172, Minchas Yitzchak 2:108, Tzitz Eliezer 11:62, Shevet ha-levi 2:63; 6:118; Yabia Omer 6: Y.D. 14. 5. Rama, Y.D. 182:5, based on Rambam, Hilchos Avoda Zara 12:10. 6. Igros Moshe, E.H. 4:62-4. Some poskim maintain that the prohibition begins even earlier than that; see Minchas Yitzchak 2:108 and Yechaveh Da'as 5:50. 7. Bach, Taz and Shach, Y.D. 182:5. 8. Yad ha-Ketanah (pg. 279b); Chochmas Adam 90:1, Binas Adam, 74. 9. Maharsham 2:243; Rav C. Kanievsky (Halichos Chayim, pg. 120). 10. See Igros Moshe, Y.D. 2:61 and Yabia Omer 6 Y.D. 14-4. 11. Teshuvos Torah Lishmah 214. See also Avnei Yashfei 4:90-4. 12. Chochmas Adam 90:1, Binas Adam 74; Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Ve'oleihu Lo Yibol, vol. 2, pg. 72). 13. Levushei Mordechai, O.C. 1:108. 14. See Rivevos Ephraim 5:40 and Da'as Noteh, pg. 76. 15. See Ran, Shabbos 62a and Mishnah Berurah 161:19. 16. Be'er Sarim 6:61. 17. Yashiv Moshe, pg 170. 18. Rama, O.C. 692:8. 19. Bach and Shach, Y.D. 182:7, quoted by most of the latter poskim. 20. Aruch ha-

Shulchan, O.C. 692:12. See Be'er Moshe 8:7-8. 21. Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 3, pg. 60; Rav Y.S. Elyashiv, quoted in Yismach Yisrael 31, note 309. 22. Mishnah Berurah 692:30, quoting Peri Megadim.

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### **Rabbi YY Jacobson**

#### Futile Revenge of a Bird

When G-d Told Haman: "Even I Could Not Destroy the Jews!" On Anti-Antisemitism & Jewish Eternity

A fascinating Midrash compares Haman to a foolish bird attempting to take revenge on an ocean that destroyed its nest. This deceptively simple fable tells about the secret behind Anti-Semitism, the inner conflict within the Jewish psyche, and the meaning of Jewish history. A journey into the heart of what it means to be a Jew.

#### The Frog

A lonely frog, desperate for any form of company, telephoned the Psychic Hotline to find out what the future has in store for him.

His Personal Psychic Advisor advises him, "You are going to meet a beautiful young girl who will want to know everything about you."

The frog is thrilled and says, "This is great! Where will I meet her, at work? At a party?"

"No," says the psychic, "in a biology class."

#### The Bird and the Sea

As our brothers and sisters in Ukraine face brutal uncertainty, let us pay heed to a Midrash about the Purim

story which occurred in present-day Iran, in ancient Persia.

It is a fascinating and enigmatic Midrash [1] describing the plot of Haman, the villain of the Purim story:

“What is a suitable parable for the vicious Haman? To what can he be compared? To a bird which made its nest on the shore of the sea, and then the sea came and swept away the nest. The bird said: I will not budge from here until the sea becomes dry land, and the dry land becomes the sea. What did the bird do? It took some water from the sea in its mouth and dropped it on dry land, and took dirt from the land and dropped it into the sea. Its friend came and stood alongside. He said to the bird: You ill-fated, hapless one! How do you ever hope to succeed in destroying the sea?”

“Similarly, G-d said to Haman the Evil One: Fool of fools! I myself planned to destroy the Jewish people and was unsuccessful, as it is written [2] ‘He intended to destroy them [and would have] were it not that Moses, His chosen one, stood before Him in the breach to return His wrath from destroying,’ and you, Haman, think you will be able to decimate and annihilate them?! I swear by your life, that your head will be in place of theirs; they will be saved and you will be hanged.”

At first glance, the Midrash is saying that the annihilation of the Jews is as impossible and ludicrous as the draining of the ocean, beak-full by beak-full, by a bird. The bird is so blinded by its anger at the sea for destroying its nest, that it does not realize the absurdity of its quest.

Yet the Midrash is perplexing.

1) The role of a metaphor in Midrashic and Talmudic literature is to explain and clarify a difficult concept, an abstract idea. What is the concept being clarified via this metaphor of a bird attempting to drain an ocean? What component of the Haman story begs for enlightenment to be understood only via this metaphor?

2) In the Midrashic fable, the sea first sweeps away the bird’s nest, arousing its quest for revenge. What is the paralleled meaning of this sequence of events? What did the Jewish people – compared to the sea – do to Haman – compared to the bird -- to trigger his desire to destroy them? Is the Midrash suggesting that we, the Jews, were guilty of his hatred [3]?

3) The bird was quite foolish in its strategy to dry an ocean drop by drop. It is a ludicrous proposition. Haman - the viceroy of the greatest empire of the time, who had

the full cooperation of the mightiest man in the world, King Achashveirosh – had a well-thought-out plan, and it came dangerously close to fruition. Why then is he compared to the bird trying to drain the ocean, defined as the “fool of fools?”

4) The Midrash relates that “G-d said to Haman the Evil One: Fool of fools! I myself planned to destroy the Jewish people and was unsuccessful.” How can G-d be “unsuccessful?” Who can possibly stop G-d from executing His plans?

Why the Jews?

In truth, this simple fable in the Midrash captures the secret behind Anti-Semitism, the inner conflict within the Jewish psyche, and the ultimate meaning of the long Jewish story. In this Midrashic metaphor, we are invited on a journey into the heart of what it means to be a Jew and how to ensure Jewish continuity. [4].

What was it that really perturbed Haman about the Jewish people? What was it about the Jews that struck such a deep chord in so many Haman’s throughout the ages, including during our very own times? “Why the Jews?” is one of the oldest mysteries of civilization. Are we really that different?

The Midrash, in its own inimitable way, gives us perspective. Like that little desperate bird trying to take revenge for a nest which the sea swept away, Haman felt that as long as the Jews were alive, the nest he attempted to build would be washed away.

One millennium before Haman was born, at the foot of a lone mountain, the Jewish people received a gift that transformed their destiny and changed the landscape of human civilization. It was an experience that imbued Jewish life with the nobility of transcendence, the majesty of Divine ethics, and the grandeur of holiness. The gift of the Torah inculcated Jewish life with great moral and spiritual responsibility, but it simultaneously bestowed upon the Jewish heart, the Jewish home, the Jewish family, and the Jewish community a piece of heaven, a glow of eternity.

But what is heaven for one person may spell hell for another; piano lessons for a 4-year-old Mozart is a paradise, while for another child the lessons may be a living purgatory. Heaven for the Jews was hell for the Hamans of the world. If G-d exists, then the moral law prevails, and there must be limits to power and self-aggrandizement. If G-d exists the barbarian must

vanquish himself. Haman felt that two diametrically opposing and mutually exclusive powers were competing for the heart of humanity. If his “nest” was to take root, the Jews must be obliterated [5].

2300 years later this notion was captured by a contemporary Haman, Adolf Hitler. He remarked that “The Jews have inflicted two wounds on the world: Circumcision for the body and conscience for the soul. I come to free mankind from their shackles.”

But Haman, the avid student of history [6], knew that this was no simple task. He had seen many powerful and seemingly permanent “nests” washed away by the Jewish “sea.” He knew what had happened to Pharaoh, Sisera, Goliath, Sancheirav, and Nevuchadnezzar; how they each attempted to “drain the sea,” to eradicate the Jew once and for all and how they each ended up eradicated and forgotten themselves. Like that poor frog that ends up having its moment of glory in a biology class, all of these cultures and civilizations today appear only in history classes...

Yet the Jew still remained. Not only in Wikipedia, but in real life as well. What was the secret of this “sea?”

It is here where Haman invented an ingenious strategy. Haman believed that he had the “final solution” which had eluded all of his predecessors; he knew how to solve the “Jewish problem,” this time for real. And that was by taking beak-full after beak-full of water and dumping it on dry land.

#### Haman’s Final Solution

The key to this puzzle lies in reflecting on another Talmudic metaphor concerning “sea” vs. “dry land.”

The Talmud relates the following story [7]:

The Evil [Roman] Empire had prohibited Torah study. Pappus the son of Yehuda came and found Rabbi Akiva making large public gatherings and teaching Torah. Pappus said to him: Akiva! Aren’t you afraid of the authorities? And Rabbi Akiva replied: I will give you a parable.

A fox is walking along a river. He sees the fish frantically scurrying from one place to another.

He says to them: From whom are you running?

From the nets and traps of the fishermen.

Why don’t you come up to the dry land, and we will live happily together, just as our forefathers did!

The fish replied: Is it really you whom they call the cleverest of animals? You are not clever, rather a fool! If

we are afraid in the place of our vitality, how much more so in the place of our death!

Rabbi Akiva concluded: If the life is tough as we are sitting and studying Torah, about which it is written “It is our life and the length of our days,” how much worse it will be if we cease to study Torah.

The Torah – Rabbi Akiva is saying -- is to the Jew what the water is to the fish. It is his necessary habitat, the source of his vitality, it is where he can live, breathe, thrive, and be most creative. Like a fish washed up ashore, the Jewish soul deprived of Torah, will struggle to find real enduring meaning on “dry land,” in an environment unsuitable for his spiritual DNA to flourish and express itself fully. He, like the fish, will flip and flop, experiment with different ideologies and lifestyles, desperately attempting to find solace for his aching soul. He may become a Darwinist, a Marxist, a Bundist, a Buddhist, or what have you, failing to realize that by his essential nature he must remain in his water.

Haman, therefore, understood that what he had to do was dry up the sea; sever the relationship between the Jewish people and their Torah. His goal must be to antiquate the Torah, to teach the Jews how to become “land animals.” He must invite them, in the words of the fox, to “live together with us in peace as our forefathers did.” Once the fish was out of the water, it would be vulnerable to destruction.

And the time seemed ripe for this endeavor.

#### Out of the Waters

The Talmud asks [8], why was annihilation decreed on the Jews of that generation? Because they enjoyed the feast of that wicked man (Ahashveirosh, the Persian king).” As the book of Esther relates in its opening chapter, the Persian monarch threw a major feast, and the Jews of Shushan, the capital of the Persian Empire, enjoyed the feast.

Note the words: The Talmud does not state that they were guilty of eating non-kosher food (if so, it would not make a difference who was serving the meal – a wicked or a righteous person, nor is death the penalty for eating non-kosher food), in fact, the Talmud relates [9] that there was a designated kosher section at the king’s feast. The issue was that “they enjoyed the feast of that wicked man.” It was not the food; it was the psychological transformation of the Jewish psyche: Their dignity and sense of inner worth did not stem from their own soul and identity; it

came from being invited to the Persian “White House,” from rubbing shoulders with the Iranian celebrities and from having their photos appearing on the front pages of “The Shushan Times.” As they took their places among the Persians, Medians, Babylonians, Chaldeans and the other nationalities at the feast, they felt that they finally “made it.” After seventy years of exile, they had set themselves free from the “Jewish stereotype,” they were now a member of equal standing in the family of nations at Achashveirosh’s table [10].

Alas, the fish left the water and it was given a royal welcome! Everybody was cheering for the fish which finally made it out of its “prison,” the fish was flipping and flopping to demonstrate its excitement. But inside – it was dying...

This, then, was Haman’s strategy: Dry up the sea, take the Jews out of the water, introduce them to dry land, and they will become vulnerable to destruction.

So “G-d said to Haman: Fool of fools! I myself planned to destroy them and was not able to do so... and you, Haman, thought you would be able to decimate and annihilate them?!”

This divine response captures the essence of Jewish existence. G-d Himself, so to speak, could not destroy the Jews. Why?

Because the Jew is one with G-d at his or her very core. that innate connection and oneness can never be obliterated because it is intrinsic and essential. Just as no one can destroy G-d, no one can destroy His people, as the prophet Malachi says, "I G-d have not changed, and you have not been destroyed." G-d says: Even I cannot destroy them, because at their core they are Divine; it is not something that anyone can change. It is who they are. The Jew is the manifestation of the Divine light in this world.

The relationship between the Jew and Torah is innate, intrinsic, and essential, and it can never be severed; only eclipsed. Unlike the fish, the Jew can never really leave the water. What occurred at Sinai was that Torah had become part of the very DNA of the Jew; he can love it, he can hate it, but he can’t ignore it. He can embrace it, he can run from it, but he cannot stop being defined by it, if sometimes only negatively.

Jewish DNA

The Anti-Semites of the world never loved secular, modern, and assimilated Jews any more than religious

and observant Jews. They acutely felt that the Jewishness of the Jew is embedded into his or her very essence, no matter the amount of “nose jobs” or “soul jobs” he or she undergoes.

And paradoxically, this very truth has become our very source of eternal life. Since the Jewish people can never sever their relationship from Torah, our sea can never dry, and our existence can never be obliterated.

This is what G-d is telling Haman: Even I have tried... When the Jews sinned, I planned to destroy them, but I could not because My relationship with them proved deeper than all of our “issues” with each other. It is like the relationship between parents and children: Parents sometimes harbor deep resentment toward the behavior of children who make their lives miserable. Sometimes a parent has been tempted to write-off a child, to stop helping him, even to stop loving him. But they can’t... The inner bond proves far more powerful. “A kind is a kind,” a child is a child.

Haman’s strategy was brilliant, but he failed to understand “vos eiz a yid,” what is a Jew. He did not realize that Torah to the Jew is what the piano was to Mozart, and even more. The fish will never fully leave the water, and the Jews will never die.

And this gives us all perspective on how we ought to view and embrace each Jew, no matter who he or she is. If he was Jewish enough for Hitler to send him to the gas chambers he is Jewish enough for me to love him, embrace him and be there for him. We need to be here for each other unconditionally, and we ought to remember that as we become more saturated with Yiddishkeit and Torah, we bring light and salvation to each of our brothers and sisters.

(This essay is based on an address by the Lubavitcher Rebbe on Purim 5720 (1960) and Purim 5724 (1964)).

[1] Esther Rabbah 7:10. [2] Psalms 106:23. [3] The Yafah Anaf to Midrash ibid. suggests that it was Haman’s revenge against the war of the Jews against his great-grand father Amalek. Yet this begs the question: Amalek, too, launched an unprovoked war against the Jewish people when they left Egypt. [4] For alternate explanations for this Midrash, on the Kabbalistic and Chassidic realm, see Or Hatorah Megilas Esther; Sefer Hamamarim 5629 p.87; Pelech HaRimon Shemos Megilas Esther pp. 370-379. In essence, this essay, based on Sichas Purim 5764, presents the Kabbalistic

explanation in relevant language. [5] This is the depth behind the famous Talmudic metaphor about the “pit” and the “mound” (Megilah 14a), explained at length in Sichas Purim 5725, translated and discussed in a previous Purim essay. [6] See Talmud Megilah 13b. [7] Berachos 61b. [8] Megilah 12a. [9] Megilah ibid. Esther Rabah 2:13. [10] See at length the Sichos of Purim 5722, 5726, 5727 (1962, 1966, 1967). Likkutei Sichos vol. 31 pp. 170-176 and references noted there. This is one of the most prevalent themes in the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s Purim Farbrengens (gatherings) over the years, as he fought for the soul of American and world Jewry.

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date: Mar 16, 2022, 6:36 PM

subject: Reb Yeruchem - Way Above Suspicion

**Reb Yeruchem**

**By Rabbi Yitzchok Adlerstein**

Parshas Tzav

Way Above Suspicion

Moshe said to the congregation: “This is the matter that Hashem commanded to do.”[2]

What was Moshe telling them? Were there matters that Moshe demanded of the congregation that were his own invention? Why would Moshe reassure the people specifically at this time that he always acted as the shaliach Hashem?

Rashi responds to these questions. “It is Hashem who commanded me to do the things that you see me perform before you. Don’t think that I do them for my honor, or the honor of my brother.” Moshe was about to conduct the formal investiture of Aharon as the Kohen Gadol. He therefore needed to stress that there was no nepotism involved in Aharon’s selection. As if there could be! It is inconceivable that Moshe, described by Hashem Himself as “my servant, trusted in all my house,”[3] could be capable of that.

Indeed, there wasn’t. The Torah teaches us an important principle in our obligation to protect our reputations. A mishnah[4] describes the way that a Temple functionary approached the chests in which Jews deposited their shekalim, the yearly contribution to the supply of korbanos. He had to avoid any possibility of helping himself to some coins and hiding them in his hems, shoes

– even tefillin, which could presumably be opened and re-sewn after sequestering a few! All of this lest he become rich in the future, leading people to speculate that his wealth was the consequence of years of his skimming from the treasury. Why should we be so concerned with this unlikely accusation? Because the Torah instructs us:[5] “You should be blameless to G-d and to Man.” The Torah insists that being blameless before an all-seeing G-d Who knows our intentions is insufficient. We must be blameless even before suspicious mortals.

Removing any cloud of suspicion does not, however, fulfill our obligation to appear virtuous to all. Moshe had no reason to believe that there would be such utterly unreasonable suspicions. Rather, “Be blameless” is more demanding than dispersing the clouds when they appear. It requires that we inherently shy away from any possibility of leaving the door open for suspicion.

Moshe had no reason to believe that there would ever be a cloud of suspicion hovering over him. Still, had he been given the right to choose a kohen gadol, he would not and could not have chosen Aharon, despite his being far and away the logical choice and the most qualified. “Be blameless” would not have allowed such a choice. For this reason, Moshe in our pasuk tells the Bnei Yisrael that he had no discretion in the matter. Hashem was the One Who picked Aharon, and Moshe had no choice but to comply.

1. Based on Daas Torah by Rav Yeruchem Levovitz zt”l, Vayikra pgs. 37-38 ↑ 2. Vayikra 8:5 ↑ 3. Bamidbar 12:7 ↑ 4. Shekalim 3:2 ↑ 5. Bamidbar 32:22 ↑ Reb Yeruchem © 2020 by Torah.org.

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