

INTERNET PARSHA SHEET
ON ZACHOR & PURIM - 5760

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From: kenblock@att.net[SMTP:kenblock@att.net]
Subject: NCYI Weekly Divrei Torah - Parshat Vayikra - Zachor
Parshat Vayikra; Parshat Zachor
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11 Adar II 5760 March 18, 2000 Daf Yomi: Yevamot 109

The Jewish people are not particularly good at holding grudges, so our preoccupation with Amalek, now more than 33 centuries old, is startling. The Torah admonishes us to "Remember what Amalek perpetrated against you on the way when you left Egypt ... you shall obliterate the memory of Amalek from beneath the heavens, do not forget." (Dvarim 25:17-19). Indeed, HaShem promises Moshe that "I will totally obliterate the memory of Amalek from under the heavens" (Shmot 17:14). Of all the enemies of Israel, why is Amalek singled out for eternal enmity?

This historic hatred is almost as surprising as the original battle. Why did Amalek attack an unsuspecting, unprepared people? The Torah in its account of the battle is silent on Amalek's motivation, simply stating "And Amalek came and fought with Israel...." (Shmot 17:8, the beginning of the Torah portion we will read on Purim morning). So how was Amalek transformed into evil incarnate?

Some other details of the war stand out. Immediately after the start of hostilities, "And Moshe said to Yehoshua, choose men for us and go out to battle Amalek. Tomorrow, I will stand on the top of the hill with the staff of HaShem in my hand. And Yehoshua did as Moshe told him, to battle Amalek, and Moshe, Aharon and Chur ascended to the top of the hill." (Shmot 17:9-10) But who is Yehoshua? The Torah assumes we know who he is, but this in fact is the Torah's first mention of Yehoshua! No biographical data of Yehoshua is provided here. Later, we are told that Yehoshua is Moshe's "attendant" (Shmot 24:13), and even later "And his youthful attendant Yehoshua the son of Nun did not leave the tent" (Shmot 33:11). Why doesn't the Torah introduce Yehoshua here, at the first reference to him? For that matter, why is Chur similarly not introduced at his first mention here?

Finally, why did Moshe, Aharon and Chur ascend the mountain? And why did Moshe build an altar (Shmot 17:15) after the battle?

My teacher and friend, Rabbi Joseph Schapiro, zt"l, once explained as follows:

Amalek is an unusual enemy, one which challenges the very essence of our national existence. The Divine mission of the Jewish people encompasses two components. Avraham is told that he will be the progenitor of a great nation which will be the repository of a unique moral code, and given the responsibility to keep that moral code alive and accessible to mankind. We are designated the "first born" of HaShem, and this designation is transmitted to Yitzchok and Yaakov - but disputed by Esav, who claims the birthright for himself.

Avraham is also promised the land of Israel for himself and his descendants, and he builds an altar upon his arrival in the land. When the covenant of the land of Israel is reiterated to Yitzchok and Yaakov, they, too, build altars. Yet, historically, our rights to Eretz Yisrael were consistently challenged by Canaan and the other indigenous tribes.

In effect, the first-born status of Israel has two elements, rights to the Torah and to the land of Israel - and Amalek contests and wages war against both.

After all, who is Amalek? Amalek is a mixed-breed - he is the

B'S'D grandson of Esav on his father's side (Breishit 36:12) and a descendent of Canaan through his mother Timna (see Sefer HaYashar). Amalek is therefore a dangerous, volatile and frightening hybrid of Esav and Canaan who seethes with resentment and lives with a dual grievance against the Jewish people. As the seed of Esav, he denies our status as the Am HaShem and our religious legitimacy; as the offspring of Canaan, Amalek rejects our rights to the land of Israel, stridently proclaiming "listim atem - you are robbers of our land"(cf. Rashi, Breishit 1:1)

Amalek always launches a two-pronged assault - on our religion and nationhood, on our legitimacy as G-d's people and our title to the land of Israel. Amalek's hatred is fierce, ideological and eternal; it cannot be assuaged or negotiated away. He is more than just a political or military foe.

Amalek's dual attack demands a dual response. The challenge to our claim to Eretz Yisrael can only be met by Yehoshua - not Yehoshua who is Moshe's attendant, but Yehoshua who will ultimately be the conqueror of the land of Israel. And Amalek waves the banner of Esav and his claim to the birthright; this assertion is defused by the prayers of the three people whose lives reflect the three expressions of the birthright; Moshe, the symbol of Torah and prophecy; Aharon, the representative of the priesthood; and Chur, the scion of Yehuda, the symbol of Jewish royalty.

Yehoshua and Chur require no formal introduction, because they appear here not as personalities in their own right - but as symbols of their respective missions; the conquest of Eretz Yisrael and the establishment of the monarchy of Israel.

The battle with Amalek is joined when Moshe ascends the mountains and raises his hands heavenward. And it is not merely a battle of men, swords and spears - but a battle of ideas which have shaped history, moved civilization forward and transformed mankind. In the battle, we succeed only when the people of Israel "turn our thoughts Above" (Rosh HaShana 29a), when we remember our cause and mission, and embrace our righteous destiny. Amalek aims to undermine the Kedushat Ha'Am and the Kedushat HaAretz (the sanctity of the people and the land) - and in every generation we must respond to their aggression vigorously and forcefully.

When that battle ended with the weakening (but not defeat) of Amalek, Moshe imitated the Avot and built an altar, confirming the destiny of the people of Israel in the land of Israel by elevating the earth itself to serve of HaShem. Even before we received the Torah, Amalek's surprising and dastardly attack was a brutal reminder of our mission and its opponents, and the source of our enemies' relentless and unending hostility to the Am HaShem.

"Zachor b'peh, al tishkach b'lev - Remember verbally, do not forget internally". We must remember Amalek in every generation, because Amalek still lives! Our standing as the Am HaShem is still under assault, and our claim to Eretz Yisrael is still under siege. We must therefore ever verbalize our remembrance of Amalek's evil, and never let our passion moderate or fade with time. We must never reconcile ourselves to the existence of the evil of Amalek, for accommodating that evil jeopardizes our existence and diminishes our national purpose.

To overcome the threats of Amalek requires strength of character, Torah knowledge and Jewish commitment - a willing soul and an able spirit.

In the end, our struggle with Amalek is the struggle for our national identity. In that struggle, we embrace our destiny and revel in our status as the nation whom Divine Providence protects and preserves in the face of intractable evil. To remember Amalek - who they are and who we are - is to hasten the day when HaShem's internal war with Amalek will reach its just and inevitable conclusion, when again "His name and His throne will be complete", and His kingship will reign supreme over all mankind, speedily and in our days.

http://www.torahweb.org/torah/1999/purim_ramu.htm [From last year]

RAV MORDECHAI WILLIG
PURIM: THE HOLIDAY OF GIVING

The Rambam (Hilchos Megila Ch. 2 Hal. 17) rules that it is better to increase the amount of money spent on matanos laevyonim than to add to the lavishness of one's seudah and mishloach manos. The reason is that there is no greater and more splendid simchah than to gladden the hearts of the poor and downtrodden. Moreover, one who gladdens the unfortunate is compared to Hashem, who revives the spirit of the lowly and the heart of the depressed.

Physical pleasure is necessarily limited. The human body can tolerate only a small amount of meat and wine. Therefore, in order to maximize the mitzvah of simchah on Purim, the added dimension of helping others was included. Sharing with peers, mishloach manos, establishes a joyful spirit of camaraderie. Giving to those who are needy and cannot reciprocate, matanos laevyonim, creates an even higher level of simchah. Spiritual pleasure on the other hand knows no limits. The soul cannot be satiated (Koheles 6:7). Indeed, even negative insatiable drives are corruptions of the unending desire to serve Hashem. One who loves money can never be fully satisfied with the money he has (ibid. 5:9). The Medrash interprets this to mean that one who loves mitzvos is never content with those he has performed. Why did Chazal feel compelled to explain the verse this way when the simple meaning is so clearly true? The ba'alei mussar explain that Man's never-ending quest for money is inexplicable. It must, therefore be a perversion of the inborn, unfulfillable love for mitzvos.

What is the source of this unquenchable thirst for spiritual accomplishment? The Rambam provides the answer. Hashem revives the spirit of the needy. The human soul is a part of the divine above. Therefore, the human soul, as a part of the infinite, has infinite capacity for fulfillment in the divine enterprise of helping others. The mitzvah to be happy on Purim is best fulfilled by assisting others and ideally by supporting the needy. As such, mishloach manos is an integral part of the mitzvah of eating and drinking on Purim. Matanos laevyonim, which more closely resembles Hashem's acts of kindness to the downtrodden who cannot reciprocate, is the greatest and most splendid simchah for the person who is able to help.

The rabbinic commandment of how to fulfill the obligation of Purim is patterned after the Torah's requirement to rejoice on the Shalosh Regalim together with servants, orphans, widows, and others who need financial or social assistance (Devarim 16:11). Indeed, the Rambam (Hilchos Yom Tov Ch.6 Hal.18) describes the joy of one who does not help the poor and the embittered yet himself enjoys a festive meal as merely the joy of the stomach. The happiness of mitzvos must include gladdening the hearts of the depressed.

II The difference between the two interpersonal mitzvos of Purim can be traced to their very inception. The original observance of Purim in the scattered cities included only mishloach manos (Esther 9:19). Only the subsequent enactment of Mordechai, which included walled cities as well, added matanos laevyonim (ibid. 20-21).

Moreinu Harav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik ZT"L explained this distinction based upon the Ramban's analysis of the historical development of Purim recorded in the Megillah. When Haman threatened the Jews, those who lived in walled cities were in considerably less danger than the rest of their brethren. Therefore, following their deliverance, the walled city dwellers celebrated at the time of the miraculous event (ibid. 18), but not in subsequent years on

its anniversary. Only those who were in an immediate danger observed the 14th of Adar as a recurring holiday (ibid. 19). Later, when Mordechai and his beis din instituted Purim as an official day of joy, they realized that all Jews ought to celebrate. No Jew could rightly say, "Haman would not have attacked us anyway", for Haman was the enemy of all the Jews (ibid. 24).

In most of the world Purim is observed on the 14th of Adar. In ancient walled cities it is celebrated on the 15th. The Ramban asks, why did the Rabbis, who are always concerned about uniformity in religious observance, institute a mitzvah with a built in dichotomy? The Ramban answers that we celebrate two days to commemorate the original enactment of Purim. However, to emphasize that the Jews in more vulnerable areas experienced a greater miracle, and that they were the ones who observed Purim first, Mordechai saw fit to establish one day for them and a subsequent day for inhabitants of walled cities. And so a dual date for Purim emerged for all generations.

Rav Soloveitchik ZT"L added that this very difference underlies the delay in the observance of matanos laevyonim. Originally, when only the Jews outside walled cities celebrated Purim, the lesson of the common destiny of all Jews was not fully appreciated. Therefore, only the mitzvah of mishloach manos, representing closeness with one's peers, was observed. Mordechai's enactment included the walled cities to emphasize the unity of the Jewish people. To do so, he added not only a different date, but also the mitzvah of matanos laevyonim. Helping the disadvantaged reinforces the notion that all are united and must care for one another. III The importance of Jewish unity on Purim can explain an enigmatic statement attributed to the Arizal. Yom Kippur is called Yom Kippurim, which the Arizal reads as Yom K'-Purim - a day like Purim. Since Yom Kippur is a much holier day than Purim, why is Yom Kippur compared to Purim?

The ba'alei mussar suggest that the statement of the Arizal refers to the interpersonal dimension of these two days. On Yom Kippur, we must seek unity. Forgiveness is contingent upon appeasing a fellow Jew (Yoma 85b). The day is described as one which does not contain hatred, jealousy, or competition (Musaf). The fast must involve sinners, just as the ketores included a foul-smelling spice, chelbena (Krisus 6b). The very name Tzom, fast, is related to Tzamah, a braid which symbolizes the unity of different strands within the Jewish community (Rav Soloveitchik). Purim also stresses togetherness. Haman's statement that the Jews were spread out and divided (ibid. 3:8) reflected our disunity. Esther's exhortation to gather all the Jews of Shushan (ibid. 4:16) teaches that Jews must unite, especially in times of crisis. The mitzvos of the day reflect the same theme. The Megillah should be read in a large assemblage (Mishnah Berurah Orach Chaim 689 note 16). Mishloach manos and, especially, matanos laevyonim reinforce the need for Jews to assist their friends and, especially, the disadvantaged. The Arizal maintains that the unity of Yom Kippur exists in an unnatural state. In the absence of work and physical pleasure, Jewish unity is more readily achieved. As such, it is hardly a precedent for the rest of the year.

In this sense, Purim is greater than Yom Kippur. Work is permitted and eating and drinking are mandatory. Unity under such circumstances is a greater accomplishment and a better example for other days as well. Purim and Yom Kippur share another common factor. They are both days of kabbalas haTorah. The second luchos were given on Yom Kippur (Rashi Shmos 34:29). And the second, compelling acceptance of the Torah took place during the story of Purim (Shabbos 88a). This is no coincidence. The Torah can be given only when there is Jewish unity. At the original kabbalas haTorah on Shavuot, the singular form (VaYeChan) is used in reference to Am Yisrael (Shmos 19:2). Rashi explains: as one person with one heart. This prerequisite for receiving the Torah was recreated on Yom Kippur and during the story of Purim with similar results.

IV Jewish unity cannot possibly be realized without authentic Torah leadership, which requires humility and concern for others. Moshe Rabbeinu was our greatest leader and the humblest of men. He gave us the Torah on Shavuot and Yom Kippur. On Purim, the Torah was reaccepted under leadership of Mordechai.

Although his humility is not stated openly in the Megillah, an insight can be gleaned from the cantillation (ta'amei hamikrah) of the Megillah. Two psukim - 3:12 and 8:9 recount the calling of the scribes to write the king's orders in nearly identical terms. In the first, Haman's commands were written; in the second, Mordechai's.

The emphasis, as denoted by the highest and longest cantillation, known as the pazer, is remarkably different. In Chapter 3, the Pazer is on the word "Haman". In Chapter 8, Mordechai's name is read with the least significant note (munach), and the emphasis of Pazer is reserved for the word "Yehudim," the Jews. This is the fundamental difference between the two types of leaders. Generally, leaders are largely concerned about their own welfare, as was Haman and the Megillah drops us a hint of this by stressing his name as he would have. Authentic Torah leaders, such as Mordechai, however, are devoted to the Jewish people in general, and the people who follow them in particular. Their own needs are downplayed and muted similar to the note on Mordechai's name, and the needs of the Jew are emphasized.

From: Yated USA[SMTP:yated-usa@ttec.com] Yated Neeman
PURIM STORIES BY M. GARDNER
A Special Revelation

Every Purim Reb Chaim of Volozhin would fill his pockets with silver coins, and throughout the day he would give away the coins to anyone who came to him asking for a donation. One year, an old man with a long, flowing, white beard came to Reb Chaim while he was eating his Purim seuda and asked for a donation. As was his custom, Reb Chaim reached deep into his pockets and withdrew a silver coin, which he handed to the old man. The old man, however, wanted more. "Let's make a deal," the old man said. "I'll tell you a chiddush on the Megillah, and in exchange, you'll give me another coin." Reb Chaim was in a magnanimous mood and so he decided to accept the deal. He handed the man another coin and waited to hear what he had to say. "The Midrash in Yalkut Shimoni," began the old man, "teaches us that Eliyahu Hanavi appeared to Mordechai and revealed to him that there was room to nullify Haman's decree against the Jews. "He told Mordechai that because the decree wasn't sealed with blood, but with mud, Hashem would listen to Bnei Yisroel's tefillos and save them." The old man cleared his throat and, with a twinkle in his eye, continued.

"Now, let me ask you a question: Where do we see the words of this Midrash hinted to in Megillas Esther?" Reb Chaim spent several minutes pondering the question but could not come up with an answer. "I will keep up my end of the deal," said the old man, "and tell you the answer. "One opinion in the Gemara says that every time the word hamelech, the king, appears in the Megillah, it is a reference to Hashem.

"Now in the Megillah it says, 'If it is good in the eyes of the king, he should write to destroy them (l'abdam).' "The word l'abdam, to destroy them," continued the old man, "can also be read lo b'dam, which means 'not with blood.' Then the verse has a new meaning: 'If it is good in the eyes of the king-i.e., Hashem-He should write the decree not in blood, but only in mud.'" When Reb Chaim heard the old man's answer, he became very excited and thanked him profusely for sharing his chiddush.

The chiddush made such an impression on Reb Chaim that the next time he was in Vilna, he told his Rebbe, the Vilna Gaon, about the old man's chiddush. The Vilna Gaon was astounded. "That old man who revealed that secret to you," said the Vilna Gaon, "was the same man who revealed it to Mordechai Hayehudi. "You merited to see Eliyahu Hanavi."

Kortz Un Sharf- Purim Vertlach by SHAYA GOTTLIEB

V'keilim Mikeilim Shonim-and the vessels were varied The Targum Sheni remarks that when the gentiles drank from the holy vessels of the Bais Hamikdosh, their face became distorted and changed. This alludes to the custom of wearing a mask and costume to disguise ones identity on Purim. -Keren Yeshua

V'do seihem Shonos Mikol Am 6V'es Dosei Hamelech Einom Osim: And their laws are different from every other nation; they do not obey the laws of the king. This can be interpreted in the Purim spirit, as an implied threat to Achashverosh. Haman said, "Their laws vary, from nation to nation-The Jews celebrate every Yom Tov as a result of a gentile king: Pesach because of Pharaoh, Chanuka because of Antiochus. However they still do not have a day of celebration for your downfall, Achashverosh! Therefore, let us scheme to destroy them, and then their Father will come to their aid, and they will have a Yom Tov in your memory." -Rav Meir Shapiro

Horotzim Yotzu Mivuhlim-the couriers left, confused When the couriers left to deliver the earlier letters, they were not confused! Earlier, they had gone to spread an evil decree against the Jews, a customary and usual occurrence. However, when they were bidden to spread a positive decree regarding the Jews, they were confused and uncertain. -Minchas Halevi

Ad D'lo Yoda-'til you don't know the difference between 'cursed is Haman' and 'blessed is Mordechai' The wealthy people curse Haman, because they have to empty their purses and give to the poor. The poor people bless Mordechai, who caused them to have this day of bounty. However, on Purim it is a mitzva to drink, and when one is drunk he forgets about his financial status, whether he is rich or poor. This is the meaning of the verse: A person should become drunk until he is no longer capable of discerning whether he belongs in the category of those who bless Mordechai, or those who curse Haman. -The Maggid of Vilna

Parshas Zochor-Purim by RAV AHRON RAPPS

On the Shabbos before the Yom Tov of Purim, Klal Yisroel reads Parshas Zochor. We are commanded to remember what Amalek did to us when we left Mitzrayim and to wipe out their memory from the world. The Torah tells us, "For the hand is on the Throne of Hashem: Hashem maintains a war against Amalek from generation to generation." In the Posuk the word for Throne is written "Chosor," with a letter missing as "Kais" and not "Kisai", and the name of Hashem is also written "Chosor" as "Kuh" instead of the regular "Shem Hashem." Chazal say that this teaches us, that because of Amalek, the Name of Hashem and His Throne are incomplete. What is it specifically with regard to the battle with Amalek that causes a sense of something "missing" from Hashem's Throne and His Name? Chazal say that "Mishenichnas Adar Marbim Besimcha." As soon as the month of Adar is upon us, we are supposed to increase our Simcha-happiness and joy. This Simcha is to peak on the day of Purim. How are we to relate to the happiness and joy that we are implored to feel in this month and specifically on that holy day?

The Gemara in Mesechta Chulin asks, "Where is Haman hinted to in the Torah." The Gemara answers that we see it from the Posuk of "Hamin Haetz." Hashem asked Adam Harishon after he had committed his Chet by eating from the forbidden tree, "Did you eat from the Eitz?" The same Hebrew word is used for Haman and for Hamin. Chazal say that when Haman said Loshon Hara on Klal Yisroel to King Achashveirosh he had grasped the profession of the Nachash-serpent. We see a connection between Haman and the Nachash at the Chet of Adam Harishon. But in Seforim we find a more exact reason as to why it is hinted to in those exact words.

Chazal explain that the banner of Esav and Amalek is "Les Din Veles Dayin"-no judgement and no judge. This means that there is no connection between the physical and spiritual worlds, and thus, there is

no Judge and no concept of reckoning for one's actions. Due to the innate baseness of this world, there is no way to elevate it, and thus all actions of Man are insignificant. It is for this reason that Esav despises anything that is beyond the lowly desires of being one composed of flesh and blood. After the "Chet" of Adam Harishon, Hashem comes and asks Adam a question. "Did you eat from the forbidden tree?" Chazal saw in this question that Hashem came to Adam and gave him the opportunity to repent. Rav Tzadok, in his sefer Machshivos Charutz, explains that Haman understood something else. When Haman sees that Hashem asks Adam if he ate from the tree, Haman asks, "You mean You don't know?" Here is where his denial of the Creator's involvement in the world is established. Haman states that from here he sees his credo: Hashem isn't involved and doesn't know what is happening in the world. It is specifically here where Haman is hinted to, because it is from here that his doctrine emanates. Rav Tzadok, in his Sefer Resisei Layla, explains how Amalek affects the Name and Throne of Hashem. The Name of Hashem refers to how Hashem is perceived as the source of all that there is. The Throne represents that Hashem acts as a King who monitors and deals with his subjects. One develops from the other in the fact that, if there is no purpose in creation to be monitored, why create anything? Because of Amalek, the world does not have the ability to clearly see that Hashem created the world and is an active King. When Klal Yisroel is poised to totally recognize Hashem, there must be a Mechiyas Amalek. Before the building of the Mishkan as well as before the first and second Beis Hamikdash, Amalek had to be destroyed. Klal Yisroel cannot totally perceive the presence of Hashem as long as Amalek exists and proclaims against it. That is why it is Hashem's battle. The world's perception of His being the source of all, as well as His Majesty, is faulty. This is why the words for Hashem's Name and Throne are "Chosor." Klal Yisroel, as the representative of Hashem, must annihilate those who cause His Name and Throne from being totally recognized. One of the Mitzvos of the Yom Tov of Purim is "Chaiv Adam Libsume Bepuria Ad D'lo Yada." A person is to drink until he is at the point where he doesn't know the difference between blessing Mordechai and cursing Haman. Rav Tzadok explains that this is the goal of Purim. Haman claims that Hashem isn't involved with the world, and therefore the destiny of Man is dependant on the shrewdness of his own actions. But on Purim, Klal Yisroel sees clearly through all the masks and veils, that everything is only because of Hashem. Hashem's name is not mentioned in the Megillah, but Esther knows that when she talks to King Achashveirosh she is really talking to Hashem. "Lev Malochim Beyad Hashem," the heart of Kings is in the power of Hashem, so it is to Him that she relates. When a person is totally drunk they are incapable of functioning for themselves. On Purim we don't have to do, and in a drunken stupor we can't. But it doesn't matter, for Hashem is our Source, and He constantly is involved with us. Our actions don't count, because we have given ourselves totally over to Him.

It is this appreciation that creates Simcha. The recognition that Hashem is involved and cares about our actions creates happiness and joy. Man might be insignificant, but Klal Yisroel matters. Our actions have cosmic consequences-how could we not feel substantial? When Klal Yisroel was in Refidim they felt lowly, and it was then that Amalek was able to attack. Amalek, whose entire doctrine is that there is no meaning, feeds on such feelings when copied by Klal Yisroel. If Hashem doesn't care about the world, then humans aren't important. But Hashem does. He is the Source of all, and its monitor. There is no greater Simcha than in realizing that Klal Yisroel is dealing with Netzach-eternity, and it is on the day of the Yom Tov of Purim that one can experience and live it. May Klal Yisroel be Zoche to acquire that which is being offered on this Holy Day.

<http://aish.com/holidays/purim/>

aish.com -- Purim site "FAST OF ESTHER"

by RABBI SHRAGA SIMMONS

Every year, the Fast of Esther is held one of the days prior to Purim. Usually it is the day immediately before Purim, and this year falls out on Monday morning, March 20, 2000.

What is the source of this fast?

In the Megillah (4:16), Esther agrees to see the king uninvited, and asks the Jewish People to fast for three days beforehand.

Why did she call for a fast? Because a fast helps to lower the volume on our physical pursuits in order to focus more acutely on our spiritual selves. This facilitates the process of "teshuva" -- literally "return." We return to our essential state of purity. Esther called for a fast, knowing that through soul-searching the Jews would forge a spiritual connection necessary to make her mission successful. (And it paid off!)

This is not a fast of sadness. Rather, the purpose of the fast is elevation and inspiration.

PRE-WAR FASTING

Similarly, there was another fast during the Purim story: The Jews fasted and prayed on the 13th of Adar in preparation for their defense against Haman's decree. The Torah prescribes that whenever a Jewish army goes to war, the soldiers should spend the previous day fasting. This is in stark contrast to a secular army which spends the day preparing weapons and armaments. A Jew's best weapon is the recognition that strength and victory come only through G-d. (see Exodus 17:10) Additionally, the fact that we are physically weakened when the battle begins, assures us that any victory cannot be attributed to our physical prowess.

Mortals have limits, but G-d can achieve the impossible. (Case in point: the Six Day War.) As Mark Twain wrote, "All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"

It is actually this one-day pre-battle fast that we commemorate every year before Purim. However, in honor of the Purim heroine, it is called Taanit Esther -- the Fast of Esther.

HALACHAS (LAWS) OF FAST OF ESTHER

1) The fast begins at dawn ("Alot Hashachar") and ends after nightfall ("Tzeit Hakochev").

2) No eating or drinking is permitted. Though other aspects -- like wearing shoes and washing -- are permitted.

3) Since this is not a major fast, pregnant or nursing women are exempt from the fast, as are moderately ill people. If one is otherwise healthy but has a headache and finds it difficult to fast, he may eat, but is obligated to "make up" the fast another time. In all cases, a competent rabbi should be consulted.

4) If the 13th falls on Shabbat, we don't fast that day, due to the honor of Shabbat. The fast is not even held on Friday, since this would adversely affect Shabbat preparations. Rather, we observe the fast on Thursday, the 11th of Adar.

5) It is customary to extend the fast until after the Megillah is read. (Except in walled cities, where the Megillah is read on the night of the 15th.)

6) During the afternoon Mincha prayers, the paragraph of "Aneinu" is added to the silent Amidah, during the blessing of "Shema Koleinu." In both Shacharit and Mincha, the chazan inserts "Aneinu" as a separate blessing between "Geulah" and "Refuah."

7) As on other public fasts, the Torah reading of "Vayechal Moshe" (Exodus 32:11-14, 34:1-10) is read both at Shacharis and Mincha.

8) If a Brit Milah falls on the Fast of Esther, all guests may eat from the Seudat Mitzvah. The father, mother, and Sandek need not make up the fast, but other guests must make up the fast.

9) "Avinu Malkeinu" is said only in Shacharit, but not in Mincha. (An exception is if Purim falls on Sunday and the fast is observed on

Thursday, then "Avinu Malkeinu" is in fact said in Mincha.)

From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND ryfrand@torah.org]

"RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayikra

Hearing Voices from Heaven

Vayikra begins with the words "And He called to Moshe and HaShem [G-d] spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying" [Vayikra 1:1].

Rash"i comments that [the wording "spoke to him (Moshe), from the Tent of Meeting"] teaches us that the Voice stopped and did not go out beyond the confines of the Ohel Moed [Tent of Meeting]. [This is because if the only purpose of the pasuk [verse] was to tell us the location from where HaShem's Voice emanated, the pasuk should have said, "And He called to Moshe from the Ohel Moed, and HaShem spoke..."]

Rash"i continues by explaining that one might have thought that the reason why HaShem's Voice was not heard beyond the Ohel Moed was because it was a soft voice. In order to teach us otherwise, the Torah in Bamidbar uses the words 'ES hakol' - 'THE Voice' [7:89]. This refers to the Voice described explicitly in Tehillim 'The Voice of Hashem is powerful; the Voice of Hashem is majestic; the Voice of Hashem breaks cedars.' [29:4-5]. So if the Voice was so powerful, why could it not be heard beyond the Ohel Moed (as indicated by "from the Ohel Moed")? The answer is that the Voice stopped and did not go any further.

If someone wanted to eavesdrop behind the curtains of the Ohel Moed on the conversation Hashem was having with Moshe Rabbeinu, he would not hear anything. Now, if in fact it was a loud voice, why did it not go beyond the confines of the Ohel Moed? There are two possible explanations.

One possibility is that it was a miracle. (Which would lead us to the question -- what would be the purpose of Hashem making such a miracle?)

The other possibility (which the sefer Darchei Mussar suggests) is that there was no miracle. In reality the Voice was loud enough to be heard. However the people were not "tuned in" to hear that Voice.

The frequency of a dog whistle is set to a range that is audible for a dog, but not for humans. The Voice of Hashem, l'Havdil, was a sound that could only be "picked up" if one were on the spiritual level of Moshe Rabbeinu. The Voice was there. Conceivably, anyone could have heard it, provided they were properly "tuned in". There are sometimes voices that are present which we just do not hear.

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi teaches: "Every day a Heavenly Voice (Bas Kol) goes forth from Mt. Horeb and proclaims 'Woe to the creatures because of the shame caused to the Torah'" [Avos 6:2]. Have we ever heard this Bas Kol? No. Does that mean Rav Yehoshua ben Levi is wrong? The answer is that he heard a Voice that we do not hear -- because he is "tuned in" to that Voice. There are many sounds from Heaven that are present, but unfortunately we are often not receptive to them.

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From: RABBI RISKIN'S SHABBAT SHALOM LIST
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Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Vayikrah (Leviticus:1:1-5:26) Parshat Zachor -- Purim by Shlomo Riskin < What is the real consequence of the sin of eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden? And what do our Sages mean when they link the Scroll of Esther to the original sin of the serpent, when they ask, "What is the source of Haman from the Bible? Is it true that from (Hamin) the tree which I commanded you not eat therefrom, you ate?" (B.T. Hullin 139b). < An easy answer would be based on the Talmudic suggestion that the forbidden fruit was the grape, and the sin of Adam and Eve was their becoming inebriated; indeed, the secular and sacrilegious character of the atmosphere surrounding the Scroll of Esther is punctuated by an unhealthy emphasis on drinking wine, partying and carousing. But this would hardly explain the central commandment of the Purim Festival, that "an individual is commanded to drink on Purim until he no longer knows the difference between cursing Haman and praising Mordecai. "If becoming drunk on wine was Adam's original sin, why eternalize the transgression each year as a Rabbinic command? < A much more profound interpretation is suggested in an article written by Ariel Eitam in "Hadassah is Esther," (a compendium of articles about Purim memorializing Dassy Rabinovitch, a most unusually gifted, dedicated and spiritual young woman of Efrat who tragically died of cancer at the age of 17). The "tree of knowledge of good and evil" is clearly identified with death, first of all because the Almighty warns "that the day you eat of it, you shall surely die," and secondly because in a later Biblical passage life is identified with good, and death with evil - our charge being "to choose life" (Deuteronomy 30:15-20). From this perspective, the counter-weight to the tree of knowledge of good and evil is the tree of life (in later Rabbinic literature, to be identified with Torah; the tree of knowledge of good and evil denies one of the true tree of life.) < Eitam magnificently explains that even before Adam and Eve's transgression, evil did exist; however, it was external to the human personality, it stood outside of humanity much as did the serpent. Eating the forbidden fruit meant that evil would become an intrinsic aspect of the human psyche itself, mixed in together with good to such an extent that it often could not even be identified as the evil which it was. Before the sin of eating the forbidden fruit, the human material impulse and inclination was directed only towards purity and sanctity; hence, "they were naked, the man and his wife, and they were not ashamed." After having sinned, evil became internalized, the human instinctive drive towards evil could lead to its rationalization and even justification, and so the boundary line between good and evil became hopelessly eroded and confused; hence, when man and woman are exiled from the Garden of Eden the Almighty must gift them with outer garments to cover over their nakedness. < The task of Torah, "a tree of life for those who grasp it, and those who uphold it are content," is to provide the clear line of demarcation between good and evil, to clean away the obfuscation and confusion, "to distinguish between the holy and the profane, that which is permitted and that which is forbidden." Before the sin of the fruit, the human being could be trusted, his essence was pure, his emotions were sacred; after the sin of the fruit, the human being had to be commanded, his reason had to overcome his emotions, only Biblical distinctions and lies vigilant adherence to those distinctions could guarantee his proper conduct. Hence, after his sin, "Noah awoke from (the drunken stupor brought about by too much) wine, and he knew what his youngest son had done to him" - either he had committed an act of homosexuality or castrated him. After the forbidden fruit, anything like wine which removes one's capacity to distinguish clearly between good and evil can only doom the human personality to disaster. After the sin, it is forbidden for one who drunk wine to enter the Temple precincts, and "You shall be holy" rules the day! < A careful reading of the first chapters of the Scroll of Esther will reveal a total confusion between good and evil; evil acts are described as being good - because of the influence of excessive wine which removes the capacity to discern and distinguish. " The heart of the King is good

(Katov) with wine" - and he banishes Vashti (1:10,12,19-21); the King rounds up "virgins of goodly appearance" - and thereby justifies mass prostitution and haremization (2:2-4); "if it be good with the King, it shall be written to destroy them" - and the Jews will be decimated (3:9-11); "and the matter was good (Vayitav) before Haman and he made a tree" - upon which to hang the virtuous Mordecai (5:14). < It is only after Esther emerges as a heroic protector of her people that she succeeds in separating between good and evil - and in isolating evil for what it really is: "...If it is good for the King, let him grant me my soul for my request and my nation for my petition.. the foe and the enemy is this evil Haman" (7:3-7). Haman is evil (8:3), the Jewish people are facing the evil he has wrought (8:7,8), and the victory day of Purim is one of "joy, feasting and a good day - yom tov" (9:19). Indeed, it is Mordecai who "seeks good for his nation and speaks peace to all his progeny" (9:25). Esther has taught Torah, has insisted on the proper distinctions between good and evil, has enabled reason to triumph over base materialism and petty jealousies. < Allow me a final word to explain the nature of our Purim celebration according to this thesis. On the evening of Purim we read the Scroll of Esther - and it is forbidden to drink to excess. We also read the Scroll again in the morning - and the prohibition against inebriation is still in place. Torah and human reason remain paramount; indeed, we follow each reading with the special Shoshanat Yaakov prayer, emphasizing the necessity to "curse Haman, praise Mordecai, curse Zeresh (Mrs. Haman), praise Esther, curse idolaters, praise Israelites, and even remember Harvona for good. < And then we perform the commandments of gifts to our friends, charity to the poor - commands linking us to Torah and the Tree of Life! It is at this point that we feel that we may have transcended the world of sin and forbidden fruit, that we may be worthy of returning to the pure and pristine state of humanity before the fall, when human nature was only directed to the good, the godly, the glorious. Perhaps this is why we can conclude Purim by drinking until we no longer know the difference between cursing Haman and praising Mordecai," because we no longer have to know how to distinguish, because we have returned to our original purity and have gained the merit of basking in the eternal tree of life. How do we know if we've truly gotten there? If, when we drink to surfeit, what comes out of our mouths is not curses or smut, but rather praises to G-d and novel Torah interpretations. < Shabbat Shalom, and Purim Sameach!

Yeshivat Har Etzion's Israel Koschitzky Virtual Beit Midrash
 [SMTP:yhe@vbm-torah.org]
 Developing a Torah Personality
 Based on addresses by HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN
 Adapted by RAV RONNIE ZIEGLER Lecture #26:

"If You Remain Silent at This Time:" Esther's Moral Development - and Ours

WHY IS THE MEGILLA NAMED AFTER ESTHER?

The Kabbalists compare Purim to Yom Ha-kippurim, and indeed, even on the "revealed" level, there are many parallels between the two. Both are days of public assembly and soul-searching. My remarks today should be seen in this context.

The Megilla is known to all of us as "Megillat Esther." This title indicates more than just the identity of a central character around whom the plot revolves. Chazal teach us (Megilla 7a): "Rav Shemuel ben Yehuda said: Esther sent [a message] to the Sages, demanding, 'Inscribe me (my story) for all generations.' (Or, according to an alternate reading, 'Establish me for all generations.')

Hence, the obligation of recording and reading the Megilla would seem to arise from a direct request by Esther that HER story be inscribed, or set down, for generations: "Inscribe ME, establish ME." But the Megilla in fact recounts a story which unfolds in the

public arena. Is it the story of Esther alone? Surely it is the story of an entire nation, dispersed throughout Achashverosh's 127 provinces, faced with the threat of genocide. The story also involves other heroes, such as Mordechai. Nevertheless, throughout history this book has been known not as "Megillat Ha-yehudim," or even "Megillat Mordechai," but rather as "Megillat Esther."

This being the case, an accurate and thorough reading of the Megilla requires that we pay special attention not only to the public, national aspect of the story - the threat of destruction and the salvation - but also to Esther's personal story. Reading and understanding the Megilla requires that we understand what happened to ESTHER, and take note of the various stages of her development. What is the actual story of the Megilla from this point of view?

ESTHER I: PASSIVE AND GENERIC

I believe that Esther's development finds expression on two interrelated levels: strength of character and moral awareness. The Esther depicted in the closing chapters is entirely different from the Esther of the opening chapters. Let us first study her psychological development and then her moral progress.

Who is the Esther who appears on the scene in the second chapter? A beautiful young woman, but one who is powerless and completely lacking in independence of thought or action. She is under Mordechai's patronage; he treats her like a daughter. Even if we adopt the opinion that she was his wife, we are clearly dealing with a woman who lives completely under her husband's wing. "And whatever Mordechai said, Esther would do - just as when she was still in his home" (2:20).

There is also a certain lack of sophistication about her, a simplicity and innocence. This point is emphasized not only in her character but also in her outer appearance. All other maidens come to the royal palace with every type of adornment: "Six months [of anointment] with oil of myrrh and six months with perfumes and women's cosmetics..." (2:12). But "when it was the turn of Esther ... to come to the king, SHE ASKED FOR NOTHING" (2:15). She wears no makeup; she is completely natural, simple, innocent and honest.

At the same time, what is equally apparent is her passivity. She does whatever Mordechai asks her to, because she lives in his home. And when she moves to the royal palace - no longer under the patronage of Mordechai but rather under the patronage of the royal entourage - she does only "what she is told by Hegai, the king's officer, appointed over the women." She simply follows orders, completely devoid of individual will.

Aside from her beauty, Esther lacks any distinguishing characteristics. Although there was public significance to her entry into the royal palace, there is really nothing that gives her spiritual or national prominence. The Gemara comments (Chullin 139b), "Where does the Torah hint at Esther? From the words, 'I shall surely hide My face' (Devarim 31:18)." (This plays on the similarity of the words "haster astir" to the name Esther.) At the beginning of the Megilla it is not only the Divine Presence which is hidden - Esther herself is hidden from us. "Esther did not mention her birthplace or her nationality" (2:20). There is no Esther; she is a "tabula rasa" - no national identity, no moral identification, no roots and no background. Rather, she presents the type of generic, cosmopolitan image of one who hails from some unknown part of the 127 provinces and arrives at the royal palace. No one knows whether she is a Mede or a Persian, from the north or from the south. Only one thing is known: she is beautiful and charming. But what is her identity? What is her character? What philosophy drives her?

ESTHER II: ACTIVE AND PROUDLY JEWISH

Such is the Esther of the opening chapters. A glance further on reveals how this innocent girl suddenly displays initiative that we would never have expected of her. She takes on Achashverosh and Haman at

their own game; she displays cunning, leading both of them by the nose. She leads Haman into a trap, simultaneously arousing the anger and desire of Achashverosh. Together with her personal initiative, her inner, spiritual, national and moral identities also come to full expression.

The anonymous Esther, devoid of roots, hailing from the "127 provinces," reveals herself and is transformed into a specific, singular Esther, belonging to a "special nation." What characterizes her from that point onwards is not shrinking back into a haze, but on the contrary - an emphasis on her uniqueness, her belonging to a unique people, a nation whose "ways are different."

From here onwards Esther not only displays initiative in the sphere of political manipulations, but, brimming with self-confidence, she faces up to Haman. Here Esther takes her place as a worthy member of the royalty, a leader. Her leadership is so outstanding towards the end of the Megilla that to some degree it overshadows even that of Mordechai.

Once upon a time, "whatever Mordechai said, Esther would do." He was the one pulling the strings. Suddenly Mordechai's own achievements come only in the wake of Esther's initiative. How does Mordechai come to possess Haman's home? Through Esther. Who writes the Megilla? While Mordechai is still debating, "Queen Esther, daughter of Avichayil, wrote" (9:29), and only afterwards did Mordechai join her.

Now it is Esther who is prepared not only to stand before Achashverosh, but also to send a letter to the Sages and demand, "Write me down! Remember me for all generations!" Is this really the same innocent girl who "did what Mordechai told her," and "whatever she was told by Hegai, the king's officer, appointed over the women?"

STIRRINGS OF CONSCIENCE

The answer - the difference between the end and the beginning - must be sought elsewhere: in the middle of the story, in particular, in the four verses in which the change occurs. These verses represent the key to the entire Megilla.

After the royal decree to exterminate all the Jews is issued in Shushan, messengers are dispatched throughout the kingdom to publicize it. Upon hearing the terrible report from her maidens and eunuchs, Esther begins to awaken somewhat from her passivity. "The queen was greatly distressed" (4:4). Esther, who indeed has the power to avert the evil decree, who lives in the royal palace, who could pull the necessary strings, does nothing. She thinks to herself: "The decree has been issued - what can I do? I'm a young and simple girl; I can't move mountains."

What eventually gets her to act? Mordechai disturbs her comfortable passivity. The entire nation of Israel faces mortal danger, and this she is able to bear. But then she hears that Mordechai, her beloved uncle, has removed his regular clothing and is wearing sackcloth instead. "And she sent clothing to clothe Mordechai and to remove the sackcloth from upon him, but he did not accept it" (4:4). Instead of trying to have the royal decree canceled, instead of expressing solidarity with her people, instead of joining Mordechai in protest and mourning, she begs: "Go and make him stop this nonsense; let him accept the decree as it is, and let him put on some decent clothing."

Despite everything, this still represents progress. She no longer is completely inactive. Something has started to move, and once she shows active concern for an individual, Mordechai, once the mire of passivity has been abandoned, things start to happen.

Mordechai refuses to accept a change of clothes from Esther, so she sends a messenger to Mordechai a second time, "to learn what this was and why this was" (4:5). What is his problem? Mordechai sends back a very clear message: a copy of the royal decree. True, it is not clear from the Megilla - and this is a critical question in itself - whether

Esther knew of the existence of the decree before Mordechai sent her a copy. Even if we suppose - as I am inclined to - that she had heard mention of it, there is still a vast difference between vague rumors which reach her by various means and a copy of the actual decree sent to her directly by Mordechai. Esther starts to react to his influence, but in a limited way.

Mordechai persists in his appeal to her. "Know, my dearest, that the entire nation of Israel - young and old - is in danger. Everyone. This is the appointed date. Go and do something, in your position as wife in the royal palace: Shout! Appeal! Beg! Pray!"

All around the swords are being sharpened, the ammunition is being gathered, but Esther remains unmoved. She tells Mordechai that she cannot approach the king - it is against palace regulations. "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that if any man or woman comes to the king, to the inner courtyard, without being called, there is a standard penalty - he is put to death!" (4:11). Of course, there are exceptions: "Unless the king holds out to him the golden scepter, then he shall live" - but I? "I have not been called to come to the king for thirty days." For a whole month we have not seen each other, and so approaching him will be a problem.

Such was Esther's response even after "the queen was greatly distressed," even after Mordechai has sent her a copy of the king's decree. Suddenly, Esther might be exposed to personal danger. The entire nation of Israel stands on one side of the scale, and she stands alone on the other. What decides the issue? Obviously, her own problems. If there is a personal interest and a public interest at stake, which is more likely to prevail?!

THE TURNING POINT - "DO NOT IMAGINE THAT YOU WILL ESCAPE"

At this point, Mordechai sends her a message which, if we read it correctly, is quite terrible. I myself tremble anew each time I reach this verse (4:13): "And Mordechai said in reply to Esther: DO NOT IMAGINE THAT YOU WILL ESCAPE IN THE KING'S PALACE FROM [AMONG] ALL THE JEWS."

What a biting accusation! It would seem that he should have told her, "You don't want to do anything? Then don't. You're cowardly and lacking in any initiative! You haven't been called to the king in thirty days? So what?" This would have put Esther in a more positive light. It's terrible that you aren't prepared to risk yourself, even at the expense of the entire nation, but still - it's a result of your inherent weakness.

But Mordechai doesn't put her reaction down to weakness. He takes his gamble all the way, appealing to the deepest recesses of the Jewish soul. He accuses Esther of refusing to go to the king not because she lacks courage, not out of weakness, but rather as a calculated choice: "Let the entire Jewish nation be destroyed. Let them all perish - young and old, men and women. I will remain secure in the royal palace." This is how Mordechai interprets her response, and this what he addresses: not weakness, not a lack of courage, but rather what he fears may lie behind everything. Behind the apparent timidity lies APATHY. If you really cared, if you considered your own soul to be at stake, would you be able to say, "For a whole month I have not been called to the king"? Is this how someone talks when she believes that her nation is in danger? Is this the response of someone who cares?

Someone who really cares, someone whose consciousness is deeply rooted in the collective experience of Am Yisrael, someone whose destiny is bound up with that of the nation, disregards any consideration of danger or possible anger on the part of the king. In fact, such a person doesn't even have to disregard these thoughts - they don't even enter her mind. Such considerations arise, whether consciously or subconsciously, out of a perception that everyone else may perish, but I will manage to save my own skin.

This, as we have mentioned, is a most serious accusation. What does Mordechai want from her? He knows her, after all. She has been in his care for a long time, a young and innocent girl, passive and naive. Why is he attacking her with this terrible accusation? Give her the benefit of the doubt! Understand her weakness! How do you expect this unfortunate girl, an orphan who has spent years in the care of others, to enter courageously the royal courtyard?

Mordechai will not compromise. He understands that if one knows what the situation is, and if one is truly concerned, then no considerations are admissible and no rules are relevant. Rather, one must be prepared for self-sacrifice, taking care that not personal interests but rather national interests will dictate one's plans and actions. "Do not imagine that you will escape in the royal palace from all the Jews!"

"IF YOU REMAIN SILENT"

Mordechai adds a further note: "For if you remain silent at this time, relief and salvation will arise for the Jews from elsewhere, and you and your father's house will perish. Who knows, perhaps for the sake of a time like this you came to join the royalty?" (4:14). He is telling Esther: Know that your calculations are mistaken. Not only does your response exhibit moral and ethical rot, but you are mistaken in a practical sense as well. Do you believe that everyone will perish and you will remain there, in the royal palace, just because you have succeeded in entering the king's bedroom? Is that how you think G-d runs His world? Someone who avoids any responsibility, who doesn't care, who isn't prepared to risk himself, who gives his personal ambitions priority over the interests of the nation - is that the person you think will survive? Will he be the one to succeed? Will all values just disappear? "And you and your father's house will perish."

"For if you remain silent at this time, relief and salvation will arise for the Jews from elsewhere." Salvation will come. I don't know how or from where, but it will come! Those who pay heed to sundry considerations and circumstances, the doubters and cowards of many types, those who put themselves first - all of these will perish! "Who knows, perhaps for the sake of a time like this you came to join the royalty?" Now is zero hour. This is the test.

This is also the turning point. For the doubtful, hesitating, fearful Esther at whom Mordechai directs this terrible accusation, pushing her back to the wall and demanding that she stop making excuses and abandon her calculations - these are the real calculations: "Look deep into your soul and see what lies behind your situation. Do not try to trick either me or yourself. Do not try to trick G-d. There are no calculations or considerations, no fears or hesitations, no orders or rules. What lies behind all your excuses is APATHY. What you have to decide is, DO I CARE OR DON'T I?"

The excuses fall away; Mordechai rejects, one by one, all of her claims and considerations. Morally laid bare, Esther must make her fateful choice: Do I care or don't I?

It is now that the young, passive, powerless Esther faces her moment of truth, and she prevails. She passes the test. It is now that she rises to her full stature and reveals herself - not just in title, but in essence - as a queen.

At this moment Esther realizes that what is at stake is not just another private matter involving Mordechai. She realizes the dimensions of the threat, the potential tragedy looming over the whole of Am Yisrael, including herself. She is no longer the anonymous Esther; she is prepared to reveal herself, to identify herself openly. She is ready to cooperate, and to stand together with her nation. This Esther understands that her fate and destiny are not her private, personal matter, but rather bound up with those of the nation as a whole. And when the danger and the mission are public, then the course of action, too, will of necessity be a public one: "Go and gather all the Jews" (4:16).

THE WILL AND THE WAY

Well aware of her true destiny, Esther presents herself before Achashverosh. She discards personal considerations in favor of public ones. Only after she has passed the test of identification and concern is she capable of standing before Achashverosh, appearing before the people, leading the camp, initiating action, demanding and even deciding events.

The key to the question of where we find the transition from the retiring Esther of chapter 2 to the regal and commanding Esther of chapter 9 is to be found in the Esther of chapter 4. In the zero-hour of chapter 4, the fateful showdown between Mordechai and Esther decided the struggle between apathy and empathy, selfishness and selflessness.

As mentioned earlier, the Megilla is a story of development on two levels: one in terms of strength of character, initiative and courage, and the other in terms of moral awareness, of reassessing priorities. The two processes go hand in hand: when Esther finds the WILL to achieve an important end, she finds the ABILITY to do so as well. This is the essence of Mordechai's message to her - if there is a will, there is a way. But first, you must truly will it.

This is indeed what happens. Once Esther cares enough, she thinks hard and arrives at a solution. Her two-pronged plan consists of prayer - "Gather all the Jews," a call to the Almighty - and donning her royal garb in order to find favor in the eyes of an all-too-human king. There is fasting and crying and tearing at the heavens, together with an easy smile and moving to action. When the will prevails, suddenly it becomes apparent that one possesses the means to accomplish. Those potential character traits which until now have been concealed burst outward. Deeply hidden treasures that have lain dormant in the recesses of the soul reveal themselves in the wake of the will and initiative, and prove themselves capable of overturning worlds, canceling decrees, changing the fate of an entire nation.

DO WE REALLY CARE?

Such was Esther's redemption then. THE SAME APPLIES TO US TODAY.

We are all, to some degree, Esther. Each of us, for whatever reason, has doubts as to his ability to accomplish. We, too, are hesitant: "What, we're going to achieve all that? We're going to save Am Yisrael? I'm going to put a stop to assimilation? I'm just a youngster; I can achieve only little: a little bit in my neighborhood, a little bit in a youth group, a little bit in the family. But to start a revolution? To determine the future of a nation? To avert an evil decree? Little me?"

Here comes the demand. I don't want to use Mordechai's words, but I do want to at least pose the question. How much of our resignation is motivated by supposed "inability" and how much is a result of the fact that our concern simply doesn't run deep enough?

Esther's concern doesn't run deep enough for two reasons, both extremely serious. On one hand, perhaps she doesn't act because of a lack of knowledge. True, she maybe heard something about the decree, but she didn't pay much attention. What penetrated the depths of her soul was only the family issue, the distress of her uncle Mordechai.

The question is obvious: how can this be? The whole of Shushan is shouting it out, there are posters on every corner, children in the streets are sharpening swords, everyone knows. Can it be that only Esther, who is right in the middle of all of it, in the palace, doesn't see?

Today too, everyone knows that Am Yisrael is in grave danger. There is danger of assimilation, danger of mixed marriages, danger of people losing their way, danger of being cut off from roots and values. Can it be that only you can't see it? As if this information is hidden somewhere? Is there any difficulty involved in obtaining the statistics on Jewish education in Israel and in the diaspora? Someone who

cares enough can get his hands on the figures: at least sixty percent of Jews in the diaspora are being lost! And the situation here in Israel is nothing to be excited about, either. A person is quite capable of finding out, if he's interested enough, the number of students who "drop out" of the National-Religious education system or who discard their kippa in the army!

But even more serious are Mordechai's words to Esther. At a certain stage there is an effort to give her the benefit of the doubt: "Well, it certainly sounds very strange: the whole of Shushan knows, except the queen?" Still - maybe they told her it was just a possibility, a thought, and she may have thought that the danger wasn't imminent. But after copies of the decree of annihilation were distributed, and Mordechai brought them to her attention, can Esther still say, "What do you want from me?"

Herein lies the ultimate question. It is directed to each and every one of us. Let each person do as Esther did: stand before himself, stand before G-d, and once the situation is quite clear to him, ask himself, "Where do I stand, who am I, what comes first, what is vital and what is secondary?" This does not imply that what is secondary is necessarily unimportant: Esther's plans of being queen and ruling over 127 provinces certainly represented serious career considerations. The question is not whether one's personal plans are inherently improper. Rather, a person must ask himself not only whether what he is doing is good and worthy, but whether it is the BEST and MOST WORTHY thing that he could be doing. He has to keep asking himself, "Is this really what the circumstances require? Is this the best that I can do at this time?"

Chazal teach that G-d once criticized no less than the ministering angels themselves. When G-d saved the Israelites at the Red Sea by drowning the Egyptians, the angels requested to do what would appear to be their rightful job, to fulfill themselves, to express their innermost souls - they wished to break out into a joyous song of praise to G-d! G-d said to them: Indeed, song is beautiful and wonderful; it gives expression to the soul. But there are times when even song itself is not worthy of the ministering angels. "My creatures are drowning in the sea, and yet you sing my praise?!"

The angels' song itself is not necessarily wrong; it is just inappropriate at that given time. The question is one of priorities. It is good and worthy to sing praise to G-d, but is that all that needs to be done at this particular time?

"My creatures are drowning in the sea" - a sea of assimilation, a sea of ignorance, a sea of alienation from Knesset Yisrael, a sea of disconnection from roots. And you - who are capable of moving the carriage out of the mud, you who could lend a hand, you who could uplift the nation, you who could be inculcating values - you offer song?!

This is the real question. If you understand the situation - and there is no reason or excuse not to - then you hear the cry that emanates from every part of the country, from every corner of the globe, expressed in the spiritual dangers surrounding us and threatening us on every side. Someone who cares knows what is going on, and once he knows he must ask himself: What significance does this knowledge have for me? To what extent does it cause me pain? To what extent do I identify with world Jewry, in fasting and prayer? To what extent is my spiritual world structured such that Knesset Yisrael and its dangers are on one side and I, with my considerations and private plans, am on the other?

Like Esther, we will all have to ask ourselves the question when the time comes: We could have saved; did we? What will be our answer then? More importantly, what is our answer today?

(Based on a transcript by Aviad Hacoen. Translated from Hebrew by Kaeren Fish and Ronnie Ziegler. This sicha was delivered in Yeshivat Har Etzion on Ta'anit Esther 5744 [1984]. It has not been

reviewed by Harav Lichtenstein.)

From: RABBI LIPMAN PODOLSKY [SMTP:podolsky@hakotel.edu]
Subject: Taanis Esther Special

Don't You See?

Taanis Esther, as fast days go, is an enigma. Besides the fact that the idea of fasting seems to contradict the entire mood of the Purim festival, another facet is even more bothersome: Taanis Esther -- a commemoration the fast of the Jews at the time of Purim -- was not even instituted on the same date! They fasted from the thirteenth to the fifteenth of Nisan, while we fast on the thirteenth of Adar! Why did our Sages position Taanis Esther on the day before Purim?

How did the whole Purim story get started in the first place? What empowered Haman to achieve dominion over Hashem's chosen? The Gemara traced the source of the evil edict against the Jews to a misdeed on their own part a full generation or two earlier. During the time of Nevuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the Jews prostrated themselves before a gargantuan idol (Megillah 12a and Rashi there).

The Gemara then poses a startling question: Why were the Jews forgiven? After all, national idolatry is not a sin to be taken lightly. How did they achieve atonement?

Answers the Gemara: Their sin was only superficial. The Jews had bowed down solely because of fear of Nevuchadnezzar, as he had threatened to execute anyone who dared to refuse to bow. Out of fear for their lives, they submitted. Deep inside their hearts, though, the Jews remained loyal to their Maker. Thus was their sin mitigated.

Rabbi Shlomo Brevda asked, inasmuch as the Jews bowed only under extreme duress, why were they held responsible? The Rambam clearly writes that in a case where a Jew was obliged to sacrifice himself rather than transgress -- as by idolatry -- but due to the unbearable pressure he succumbed and transgressed, he is not punished (Yesodei HaTorah 5:4). Consequently, why were the Jews deemed culpable?

The entire universe was created for Yiras Hashem -- fear, awe, and an awareness of the Creator (Brachos 6b). "I place Hashem constantly before me (Tehillim 16:8) -- this is a great principle of Torah (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 1:1)." This is the end-purpose of Creation.

All of our mitzvos, all our Torah study, leads to this goal. When a person is completely aware of Hashem's constant presence, he cannot sin. "There is nothing beside Him (Devarim 4:35)." There is therefore nothing to fear. Only G-d can help or hurt.

Why did the Jews bow down? They were afraid of Nevuchadnezzar. Let us get the picture. It is clearly implied that the entire nation had bowed down. Not individuals, not just the simple people, but the entire nation, with only very rare exceptions. How could such a thing have happened? How could so many Jews, collectively, have lost their awareness? Nevertheless, happen it did. As a result, they blew a fuse. They were in great need of rectification, and repair.

How does one attain Yirah? From where can one quell awareness? Are we not all ego-centric? Doesn't the universe revolve around me? Who has room for Hashem? What can we do?

When the much sought-after Yirah eludes us, Hashem comes to our rescue. He subjects us to a horrifying plight from which there is no visible escape (See Tanchuma Bechukosai 5). In such a predicament, a person finds himself totally impotent. He is completely helpless. As he begins to realize the gravity and hopelessness of his situation his self-confidence falters. All he previously knew to be stable and solid proves to be jello. The proverbial rug has been pulled out from beneath him, as he finds himself suspended precariously in mid-air, grasping at a thread to hang onto. Another moment and all is lost! His every effort to save himself ends in utter futility. Nowhere to run, nowhere to turn!

Only then does man see -- "There is nothing beside Him!" There is no one upon whom to rely except our Father in Heaven (Sotah 49a)!

There are no atheists in foxholes! His vision is restored.

Make no mistake. Hashem decreed genocide against His first-born son. What Hitler failed to accomplish in six years, Haman would finish in a single day (Esther 3:13)! To whom could the Jews turn? The government itself had turned against them! They were utterly alone.

Perhaps you will suggest that they had no reason to fear. After all, they had protektzia! Queen Esther was one of their own!

"Why did Esther invite Haman [to the feast with Achashverosh]?" ...Rabbi Nechemia explained, so that the Jews would not say, 'We have a sister in the palace,' and cease praying (Megillah 15b)." Esther wisely understood the intent of the Divine edict -- to arouse her people -- and so she jeopardized her own reputation to insure its success.

The only address was G-d. They had to learn to come to the realization that indeed, "There is nothing beside Him!"

This is diametrically opposed to the weltanschauung of Amalek, the nation of Haman. Amalek preaches that everything is the result of coincidence. All is fate.

But we know that nothing is coincidental. Just a superficial reading of the Megilla -- the only book of the Bible that fails to mention G-d's name -- reveals that G-d is present and active between each and every line. Every scene in the Megillah was written and directed by the Divine Screenwriter. Megillas Esther is truly Megaleh HaHester (Reveals that which is hidden). But it took a Haman to teach us this fact. Only when the Jews reached rock-bottom could they begin to climb.

This is the theme of Taanis Esther. "Mordechai learned of all that had been done; and Mordechai tore his clothes and donned sackcloth and ashes. He went out into the midst of the city, and cried a loud and bitter cry... And in every province, any place the king's command and his decree extended, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting and weeping and lament; sackcloth and ashes were spread out for the masses (Esther 4:1-3)."

The Jews understood that this was the end of the rope. Their puny, political maneuverings would be of no avail. Even Esther would be of no help (or so they were convinced). Their only avenue was repentance. And not your old run-of-the-mill, perfunctory klop-on-the-chest, repentance. They needed to make a public statement -- "into the midst of the city." There was no room for embarrassment, no room for fear of, "What will the gentiles say?" Indeed, there was no more room for fear. "There is nothing beside Him!"

In this manner, they attained the awareness they so desperately yearned, and the decree against them became outmoded. It was therefore instantly rescinded.

Within a mere three days, everything was reversed. Haman, the has-been, who had previously been on top of the world, was ignominiously hanged. And Mordechai, the leader of the once-doomed nation and Haman's arch-foe, took his place. All of Haman's vast estate became the property of Mordechai. "On the day that the enemies of the Jews expected to prevail over them, it was turned about, [and] the Jews prevailed over their adversaries (Esther 9:1)."

Taanis Esther provides awareness. Thus, our Sages instituted Taanis Esther on the day before Purim. Before we can experience Purim -- the day of Divine Love -- we must first learn to recognize our absolute dependence upon Him. We must first descend to the lowest low, before we can ascend to the highest high.

Nine years ago, we here in Israel experienced a unique kind of war -- the Persian Gulf War. We were sitting ducks. We were not even allowed to defend ourselves, for fear of breaking apart the fragile American coalition. The Americans arrogantly promised us that should Saddam Hussein dare to fire even a single scud missile toward Israel, they would totally annihilate his entire army within a brief twenty-four hours. In truth, the scuds continued to rain down upon our heads for nearly two months. The Patriot missiles, intended to protect us from the deadly scuds, were shown to have done more damage than good.

When we came to the stark realization that there was no one to whom to turn besides our Father in Heaven, we then -- with rare unity -- repented whole-heartedly. We restored our awareness.

And then, when the Divine decree obsolesced, it ended as quickly as it had begun. And when did the war end? When were we permitted to put away our gas masks and dismantle our sealed rooms? On Purim! A veritable modern-day Purim, with a modern-day Haman! Miracle of miracles!

Our goal on Purim is to learn how to listen to the news. Read between the lines, and try to see just Who is running the show! Why should we need an evil Haman or Saddam Hussein to wake us up? If we would do it ourselves, we would save ourselves all the trouble! But we fail to learn from our mistakes. And then, as usual, history repeats itself once again.

May Hashem inspire us with the fortitude to open our eyes and see. What we will behold is Truth!

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From:Shlomo Katz[SMTP:skatz@torah.org]

Hamaayan / The Torah Spring Edited by Shlomo Katz Vayikra-Zachor

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Parashat Zachor / Purim

"The Jews confirmed and undertook upon themselves . . ." (Esther 9:27)

The gemara (Shabbat 88a) teaches that although Bnei Yisrael had said (Shemot 24:7), "Na'aseh ve'nishmah"/"We will do and we will obey," Hashem held Har Sinai over their heads, forcing them to accept the Torah. Technically, Bnei Yisrael were not obligated to observe the Torah, as they had accepted it under duress. Later, in Mordechai and Esther's time, the Jews accepted the Torah willingly, as it is written, "The Jews confirmed and undertook" - "They confirmed what they had undertaken before."

Another gemara (Megillah 7a) interprets this verse differently: "The Jews confirmed and undertook" - "They confirmed above what had been undertaken below," i.e., the Heavenly court above confirmed that which the Jews had undertaken.

R' Yehonatan Eyebchutz z"l (Germany, died 1764) writes that these two interpretations are closely related. He explains:

When Bnei Yisrael accepted the Torah at Har Sinai, they did so outwardly because they were scared by the awesome revelation that they witnessed. They did not accept the Torah fully in their hearts. Only later, at the time of the Purim miracle, did the Jewish people accept the Torah fully, even in their hearts. Why?

Haman was a descendant of Esav, about whom the Torah writes (Bereishit 25:26), "Game was in his mouth." Rashi explains that Esav used to "hunt" Yitzchak's love with his (Esav's) mouth, pretending outwardly to observe mitzvot and asking Yitzchak questions about how he could be more stringent in his mitzvah observance.

Thus, writes R' Eyebchutz, when Haman threatened Bnei Yisrael, Hashem was, so-to-speak, faced with a dilemma: should Bnei Yisrael be saved because they accepted the Torah? They accepted it only outwardly! Should Hashem then give them credit for what they did outwardly? But then Haman, the descendant of Esav, who honored his father outwardly, will deserve Hashem's kindness as well!

The only solution to this dilemma was for the Jewish people of that generation to accept the Torah anew with a full heart. Only then would they merit to be saved.

Just before Amalek, a grandson of Esav and ancestor of Haman, attacked Bnei Yisrael in the desert, Bnei Yisrael wondered (Shemot 17:7), "Is Hashem among us or not?" Literally, they asked, "Is Hashem

within us or not?" meaning, according to some commentaries, "Does Hashem know our innermost thoughts or not?" This is why Amalek, of all nations, was sent to attack them. It was as if Hashem said, "You wonder whether I know what is in your hearts? I will punish you with one (Esav) who performed mitzvot only outwardly."

All of the foregoing has a practical application, R' Eyebschutz writes. Most people pray with their mouths, but not with their hearts. Their lips hurry through the words, while their hearts have no idea what the words mean. Maybe (only maybe!) a person prays two or three proper shemoneh esreis in his entire lifetime.

Ironically, while we pray every day for an end to our exile, we have the power to weaken the hands of our oppressors, and we do not use that power. The verse says (Bereishit 27:22), "The voice is Yaakov's voice, and the hands are Esav's hands." When prayer is done with Yaakov's (i.e., a Jew's) mouth, but not his heart, then the hands of Esav are strengthened. Conversely, if we would pray with our hearts, we would weaken the hands of Esav. (Ya'arot Devash Part I, No. 2,)

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From: Har Etzion Virtual Beit Midrash [SMTP: yhe@vbm-torah.org]
Subject: HAFTORA -24: Shabbat Zachor [Vayikra]
BY RAV YEHUDA SHAVIV

Haftora for Shabbat Zachor (Shmuel I 15:2-34)

a. Remember in order to wipe out

We learn in the Tosefta on Megilla 30a:

"On the second [of the four special Shabbatot, we read] Zachor, and the haftora is "So says the Lord, I have remembered what Amalek did to Israel..." What is considered the second week [out of the four]? The week in which Purim falls."

The connection between the Torah reading and the haftora is clear and obvious. The verses of the Torah contain the mitzva to "remember what Amalek did to you" ϕ a remembrance that is meant to lead us to wipe Amalek out, as we are told later on: "And it shall be when G-d your Lord gives you rest from all your enemies around you...you shall wipe out the memory of Amalek." The verses of the haftora contain a narration of how the mitzva was fulfilled ϕ "And Shaul smote Amalek" (7). In other words, the mitzva is not merely theoretical, such that we may "study it in order to receive reward," but is in fact meant to be carried out. It is not sufficient that the evil nation and their evil acts be remembered and mentioned; we must act to uproot them. But the story also teaches us other things.

b. Command vs. Fulfillment

First and foremost we learn of the difficulty of fulfilling the command perfectly and completely. King Shaul succeeded in recruiting a great army (two hundred thousand footmen and ten thousand men of Yehuda ϕ verse 4), but he failed in his mission, for he did not succeed in completely wiping out the memory of Amalek. This was not for lack of physical ability (the usual reason underlying the disparity between an idea and its realization), but rather because of psychological inability. Shaul, it seems, could not bring himself to fulfill this difficult mitzva, and Chazal (our Sages) point this out in their interpretation of the expression in verse 5, "and he laid wait in the valley":

"When the Holy One told Shaul, "Go and smite Amalek," he said: if the phenomenon of a single dead person causes the Torah to command us to bring a heifer as atonement (the mitzva of "egla arufa," Devarim 21:1-9), how much more so for all these souls. Perhaps the people have indeed sinned, but what about the animals? Perhaps the adult have sinned, but what about the children?" (Yoma 22b)

This inappropriate mercy for Amalek cost Shaul his kingship, as we

read in the concluding verses of the haftora. This mercy shows that Shaul did not fulfill the mitzva of remembering the deeds of Amalek as required, and had not properly internalized the memory of Amalek's deeds and cruelty. The command to destroy the memory of Amalek was meant to remove every last remainder of that fundamental evil symbolized by Amalek. It is specifically Shaul's failure that gives emphasis and weight to what precedes the destruction ϕ the mitzva of remembrance.

c. The timing of the mitzva

On the other hand, the haftora teaches that in order for this "wiping out of Amalek" to be fulfilled there must first be an explicit Divine command, from a prophet. The timing of the mitzva is stipulated clearly in the Torah: "and it shall come to pass when G-d your Lord gives you rest...", but the decision that that time has come must apparently come from Above, as is evidenced by the prophetic declaration with regard to the time in the haftora: "NOW go and smite Amalek". Indeed, among the later commentators there are those who learn from this that a war against Amalek requires a command from a prophet. It would seem that this fateful decision ϕ to wage a war that is not defensive, but rather to wipe out the memory of an entire nation ϕ cannot be made by humans, but rather must rely on an explicit Divine command. Rabbi Yehoshua rules in the Mekhilta on the end of parashat Beshalach that "[only] when the Holy One is seated on His throne...then, at that time, G-d will be at war with Amalek."

d. "Remember" vs. "I have remembered"

The parasha opens with the words, "Remember [zachor] what Amalek did to you," while the haftora begins with "So says the Lord of hosts, I have remembered [pakadeti] what Amalek did to Israel." The word "pakadeti" here means the same as "remembrance," as translated by the Targum Yonatan. This teaches us that corresponding to the command to Bnei Yisrael to remember, the Holy One also remembers Amalek's evil. For the evil that Amalek did to Israel lay not only in a one-time event against the nation, but rather was meant as an attack, as it were, against the rule of G-d, and as a result "G-d is at war with Amalek" (end of parashat Beshalach). G-d's rule cannot be fully recognized until the memory of Amalek is erased. And Rashi accordingly quotes Chazal in his commentary on the end of parashat Beshalach as follows:

"For G-d has sworn by His throne - G-d has raised His hand to swear by His throne that he will be at war and hostility with Amalek forever...G-d has sworn that His name will not be complete, nor His throne complete, until the name of Amalek is entirely erased, and when his name is erased then G-d will be complete and His throne will be complete."

[RABBI JONATHAN SCHWARTZ] From jschwrtz@ymail.yu.edu
Subject: Internet Chaburah -- Parshas Vayikra/Zachor/Purim

Prologue: What is Man? The Rov ztl. (Address Erev Yom Kippur, 1976) noted that man is a sinner. The concept of man and the concept of sin go hand in hand according to the Rov. Hakadosh Baruch hu, in his infinite Chessed, offered us many different ways to return to him through Kappara. One such manner was the bringing of Korbanos. During the Bayis Sheni, a person who had committed a sin was able to bring a Korban to the Bayis HaMikdash and recite the Vidui there over that Korban. The man's Kappara came through his Ma'aseh HaKorban (See Rambam Hil. Teshuvah Chap. 1 and Ramban VaYikra 1:9). But the means to this road, the rules of Kappara through Korban are clear cut and defined. A Korban cannot be blemished. It must be whole. If it is found to contain the slightest imperfection (ala Gm. Bechoros) it is Pasul as a Korban. Kappara through Korban cannot come with a Korban that is not Shalem and Chashuv.

Maran Harav Elazar Menachem Man Schach shlita pointed out that there is one exception to the rule of "no blemishes on Korbanot." The exception is the one that comes from within oneself ("Adam Ki Yakriv MIKEM Korban). When man is Makriv his soul to Hashem, even the most broken of spirit can be found to be in Hashem's favor. In fact, the Talmud (Sotah 42a) notes that this is the preferred way

for one to present himself before the King of kings (bent, shattered and humbled). For when the broken man presents himself before the king, his physical parts may be broken but the man (the ADAM) inside of him is certainly pure (Tamim). This is the power of Korbanos HaGuf. Despite being broken on the outside, the person accepts his broken status with love making him a bigger believer in the wondrous ways of Hashem.

The time of Purim too, was a period when Kappara was granted as the Jews faced the challenges of annihilation and broken spirit. It was the broken spirit, the Sackcloth and ashes on the outside that led to the new rededication to Hashem and his Torah on the inside as the Jews moved forward and defeated their foes. We commemorate this day with many recognitions of Simcha and recognize our friends and those less fortunate, the broken spirited, among us. This week's chaburah examines the extent one must go to fulfill the requirements of Shalach Manos and Matanos L'Evyonim. It is entitled:

GIFTS TO THE RICH AND/OR THE POOR?

When defining the Mitzva of Shalach Manos, the Talmud Yirushalmi explains that one cannot fulfill his obligation unless he sends his friend a portion that is significant to him ("Manna Hachashuva Lo") specifically. Without this qualitative requirement, the individual sending the gift does not fulfill his Mitzva. The Chayei Adam (cited by the Biur Halacha in 694) Paskins this way L'Chumra based on the Yirushalmi.

This mysterious Yirushalmi opens a lot of interesting insight into the Mitzva of Shalach Manos. The yirushalmi (Megilla 1:4) notes that Rav Yudan HaNassi sent Rav Hoshia Rabba a thigh and a pitcher of wine. Rav hoshiah who was poor explained that Rav Yudan had fulfilled the Mitzva of Matanos L'Evyonim but not of Mishloach Manos. At that point, Rav Yudan sent a more expensive package and Rav Hoshiah informed him that he had fulfilled the obligation of Mishloach Manos Ish l'rayahu.

The Rach (Megilla 7b) seems to hold like that Yirushalmi and holds that a rich man must send a more expensive package worthy of a man of his stature or risk only fulfilling Matanos L'Evyonim but not Shalach Manos.

Now, when coming up with that Chumra, we are already aware that one needs two foods to be included in the packaging. Do both need to be Chashuv or is it enough to have the sum total in the package be Chashuv?

Also, there is a well-known discussion among the later Achronim as to the nature of the Mitzva of Shaalch Manos. Some hold that it is a means of demonstrating kinship. Others say it is to slightly spread the wealth during the Seuda. How does the second side of this debate fit with the Yirushalmi? If the Mitzva is to spread the wealth, the value of that wealth shouldn't be determined by the giver rather by the receiver? Unless one assumes that the package of Shalach manos needs to be Chashuv to both the giver and the receiver (see moadim U'Zmanim VI:107). Now in terms of the Mitzva of Matanos L'Evyonim, the Ritva (Megilla 7b) explains that a Peruta is enough for the Mitzva. This opinion is quoted L'Halacha (Mishna Berura, 694:2). How can the Shiur of Matanos L'Evyonim be different than that of Shalach Manos and less? Rav Moshe Sternbruch (ibid) suggests that in fact, the Mitzva of Matanos L'Evyonim does not require a literal transferring between two people (a nesinah which implies Mi'Yad L'Yad). Rather it speaks of a Matana (B'Seiser). Since the giver and the taker aren't necessarily aware of each other, they cannot be insulted by the size of the gift. Still, ideally the Matanos L'Evyonim should be greater than the Mishloach manos (See Maharsha).

The interesting part of this whole discussion is that the source for this Chiddush is a different Girsra in that same Yirushalmi. It appears as a Sheiltos (Parshas VaYakel. There the story is told that the original gift was sent by the poor Rav Hoshia to Rav Yudan the Nasi. Rav Yudan returned the gift with one of greater size. Rav Hoshia responded that Rav Yudan was Mikayem the Mitzva of Matanos L'Evyonim with his gift as well. Rav Yudan was not sure if he had fulfilled the Matanos L'Evyonim aspect of his gift. Although his gift was Chashuva, Rav Yudan wondered if a Nasi needs to give more for Matanos L'Evyonim due to his stature. To that Rav Hoshia put him at ease and told him that although to be Yotzai the Mitzva of Matanos L'Evyonim the poor person doesn't have to know who the giver is, it is still incumbent upon the Giver to be sure that his gift is Chashuv (as clearly Rav yudan was worried) to which Rav Hoshia responded that it was.

This concept can also explain a strange Rosh. The Rosh is of the opinion that one cannot merely trade meals at the Seuda and have that count for Shalach Manos. He interprets the Gemara which implies that one can, as referring to being Yotzai the Mitzva of Matanos L'Evyonim in the switch. Why not use the example of Shalach manos? According to the Ritva, this is not a question because Shalach Manos has a Shiur much higher than the minimum requirements of Matanos L'Evyonim and merely trading food is not enough to be Yotzai Manna Chashuvah. However, even without this idea, Shalach Manos needs to demonstrate Reiyos.

Switching one's meal does not show the extent of the brotherhood on Purim to the face of others. Therefore, it doesn't meet the Shalach Manos requirement.

Battala News

Mazal Tov to Mr. And Mrs. David Greenstone upon the birth of a baby boy.
Mazal tov to Mr. and Mrs. Noam Eisenberg upon the birth of their daughter, Tzippy.

From: Jeffrey Gross [SMTP: jgross@torah.org]

WEEKLY-HALACHA

BY RABBI DONIEL NEUSTADT

A discussion of Halachic topics related to the Parsha of the week. For final rulings, consult your Rav.

THE REQUIREMENT OF CHALAV YISRAEL

In order to protect the inadvertent consumption of non-kosher milk, the Rabbis enacted a strict ordinance: The milking of every [kosher] animal must be supervised(1) by a Jew(2) in order for the milk to be kosher. The Rabbis' fear was not that one might mistakenly drink non-kosher milk, since horse or camel's milk looks altogether different from cow's milk(3), but rather that a non-Jew might mix a small, undetectable amount of non-kosher milk into the cow's milk rendering it non-kosher for the unsuspecting kosher consumer. While the Rabbis realized that such an occurrence is unlikely, they were still concerned about it even as a remote possibility(4). Thus, they prohibited drinking all unsupervised milk(5).

The prohibition against unsupervised milk, known as chalav akum, is a Rabbinical prohibition like any other: Thus: It is prohibited to drink chalav akum even when no other milk is available or when supervised milk is very expensive(6). A utensil in which chalav akum was cooked is prohibited to use unless it undergoes a koshering process(7).

A utensil in which cold chalav akum is stored for twenty-four hours is prohibited to use unless it undergoes a koshering process(8). Chalav akum is nullified, bateil, if it is inadvertently mixed into a permitted food or liquid that is sixty times greater in volume(9).

QUESTION: Is chalav akum ever permitted?

DISCUSSION: Several hundred years ago, the Pri Chadash ruled that it is permitted to drink unsupervised milk if there are no non-kosher milk producing animals in the entire vicinity. His argument was that since there is no reasonable possibility that a non-Jew could mix non-kosher milk into the kosher milk - supervision is no longer required. Several other poskim also agreed with this ruling(10).

But almost all of the poskim who followed the Pri Chadash disagreed with his view(11). They all reached the consensus that the ordinance against drinking unsupervised milk is the type of a decree which can be classified as a "permanent ordinance", which, once enacted, can never be abrogated. There are two schools of thought as to why this ordinance remains in force even when there is no non-kosher milk to be had:

Some explain that since the rabbinical decree was issued originally only because of a remote possibility, since hardly ever was non-kosher milk mixed with kosher milk, the fact that no such milk is available in the vicinity is of no consequence. Milk can be certified as completely kosher only if it is supervised(12).

The Chasam Sofer(13) explains that the ban on unsupervised milk was pronounced irrespective of the availability of non-kosher milk. Even if it could be ascertained beyond all doubt that there was no possible access to non-kosher milk, it is still prohibited to drink unsupervised milk. Only milk which comes from animals whose milking was supervised by a Jew is exempt from this ban.

Whether for the first or the second reason(14), it is agreed by almost all of the poskim(15) that the Pri Chadash's leniency cannot be relied upon. Some poskim add that even if the halachah were to be decided according to the Pri Chadash it would be of no consequence, since it has already been accepted by all Jews as binding custom - which has the force of a vow - not to drink unsupervised milk even if there are no non-kosher milk producing animals in the entire vicinity. One must, therefore, be stringent in this matter(16).

In more recent times, another argument for leniency was advanced by several poskim(17). They argued that since government authorities in the United States and other developed countries closely monitor the dairy industry and strictly enforce the law against mixing other milk with cow's milk, government regulation should be tantamount to supervision(18). According to this argument, the fear of being caught by government inspectors who are empowered to levy substantial fines serves as a sufficient deterrent and may be considered as if a Jew is "supervising" the milking. Based on this argument, several poskim allowed drinking "company milk", i.e., milk produced by large companies, without supervision(19).

But many others oppose this position as well: Based on the aforementioned

view of the Chasam Sofer, who maintains that the rabbinical ordinance against unsupervised milk applies even when there is no possible access to non-kosher milk, there is no room for leniency just because of government regulation. Nothing short of actual supervision by a Jew renders milk kosher(20).

Some poskim argue that government regulation does not totally and unequivocally preclude the possibility of non-kosher milk getting mixed into cow's milk. This is because dairymen can, if they wish, cheat or bribe the government inspectors. Some may choose to risk getting caught and pay a minimal fine rather than conform to the law. While it is highly improbable that this would happen, it has already been ruled upon by all authorities, unlike the Pri Chadash, that the rabbinical ordinance applies even for remote possibilities(21).

What is the practical halachah? Years ago, when supervised milk was hardly available [or was of inferior quality] and it was truly a hardship to obtain chalav yisrael, many people relied on the leniency. Some people continue to rely on this lenient opinion even nowadays when supervised milk is readily available(22). Indeed, many kashruth organizations in the United States confer kosher certification on dairy products (and milk) that contain no non-kosher additives or ingredients, but which are produced from unsupervised "company" milk".

Many others, however, no longer rely on this leniency, since conditions have radically changed and chalav yisrael is so readily available. It is important to note that while Harav M. Feinstein agreed in principle with the lenient ruling and permitted drinking "company milk" according to the basic halachah, he himself would not rely on the leniency and advised scrupulous individuals, ba'alei nefesh, and bnei Torah(23) to refrain from drinking unsupervised milk. He recommended that schools strain their budgets in order to purchase chalav yisrael. The following letter(24) gives us an idea of how he felt on this issue (free translation):

"Regarding the milk of government regulated dairies in our countries, there are definitely grounds for permissibility to say that they are not included in Chazal's prohibition, as we see that many are lenient in this due to dochak (pressing circumstances) in many places. However, in a place that chalav yisrael is obtainable, even though it requires a bit more effort or is a bit more expensive, it is not proper to be lenient in this. One should purchase chalav yisrael."

In recent years, a question has arisen concerning the kashruth of some milk-producing cows due to surgical procedures performed on their stomachs for various reasons. According to the available information, many chalav yisrael companies are now using only cows which do not undergo this procedure.

FOOTNOTES: 1 "Supervised" means either watching the actual milking or standing guard outside the milking area to make sure that no other milk is brought in from the outside; Y.D. 115:1. 2 Even a minor over the age of nine may be the supervisor; Aruch ha-Shulchan 115:8. [Nowadays, when the chance of mixing non-kosher milk into cow's milk is remote, even a non-believing Jew may be trusted with the supervision since only non-Jews were included in the original decree; Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:46; 2:47.] 3 Cow's milk is pure white, while non-kosher milk is greenish; Avodah Zarah 35b. Some hold that they taste different as well (R' Akiva Eiger on Shach Y.D. 118:8), while others hold that they taste the same (Beis Meir, ibid.) 4 As explained by Chochmas Adam 67:1. 5 Powdered milk, too, was included in this ordinance; Chazon Ish Y.D. 41:4; R' Yonoson Shteif 159. See, however, Har Tzvi 103-104 who is lenient, and his ruling is followed by the Israeli Chief Rabbinate which certifies unsupervised powdered milk as chalav yisrael (Daf ha-Kashrus, December 1997). Most chalav yisrael chocolate manufacturers, however, do not rely on the Har Tzvi's leniency, and use only powdered milk made from supervised milk. Note that almost all milk chocolate products are made of powdered milk; liquid (fluid) milk is usually not used to make milk chocolate. 6 Darkei Teshuvah 115:6. 7 Rama Y.D. 115:1. 8 Taz Y.D. 115:7. 9 Shach Y.D. 115:17; Chochmas Adam 67:5. 10 See Teshuvos Radvaz 4:74 and Pri Toar 115:2. 11 See Pischei Teshuvah 115:3, Aruch ha-Shulchan 115:5 and Darkei Teshuvah 115:6. 12 Beis Meir Y.D. 115:1; Chochmas Adam 67:1; Avnei Nezer 103; Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:49. 13 Teshuvos Y.D. 107, quoted by Pischei Teshuvah 115:3. 14 Some additional arguments against this leniency are: 1) There are hardly any locales, especially in rural areas, where such animals do not exist; Beis Meir, ibid. 2) Chazal did not always divulge all of their reasons for any particular edict; sometimes even when the obvious reason does not apply there are other, concealed, reasons which may apply; Aruch ha-Shulchan 115:6. 15 The view of the Chazon Ish 41:4 is somewhat unclear on this. 16 Chochmas Adam 67:1; Chasam Sofer Y.D. 107; Birkei Yosef Y.D. 115; Igros Moshe Y.D. 1:46. 17 Chazon Ish 41:4; Harav Y.E. Henkin 2:57; Igros Moshe Y.D. 47,48,49. 18 As mentioned earlier, "supervision" also includes standing guard outside the milking area so that no non-kosher milk is being brought in from the outside. 19 This became known colloquially as chalav stam ("plain milk"), which refers to its status as being neither expressly prohibited chalav akum nor expressly permitted chalav yisrael. Note that only large milk companies are included in this leniency; there is no leniency for milk that comes from small farms, etc. 20 Zekan Aharon 2:44; Minchas Elazer 4:25; Har Tzvi 103; Minchas Yitzchak 10:31-15; Kinyan Torah 1:38 quoting Harav Y.Y. Kanievsky. 21 Chelkas Yaakov 2:37,38. 22 Even today there are situations where chalav yisrael is not available, e.g., business travelers or hospital patients. They may rely on the lenient opinion; Harav Y. Kamenetsky (Emes L'Yaakov Y.D. 115:1). 23 Igros Moshe Y.D. 2:35. 24 Dated 5716 and printed in Pischei Halachah, pg. 107. For unspecified reasons, this responsum was not published in Igros Moshe.

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From:Mordecai Kornfeld[SMTP:kornfeld@netvision.net.il]

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Yevamos 103b RECEIVING BENEFIT FROM A "RASHA" QUESTION: The Gemara mentions that Yael had relations with Sisera in order to make him weary. The Gemara asks how could she do such a thing, deriving pleasure from doing an Aveirah? The Gemara answers that any good or pleasure received from Resha'im is abhorred by Tzadikim. The Gemara cites proof for this from the verse in which Hashem warned Lavan not to speak to Yakov "neither good nor bad" (Bereishis 31:24). Why, asks the Gemara, was Lavan warned not to say anything *good* to Yakov? From here the Gemara proves that even the good words of Resha'im are bad to the Tzadikim.

The Gemara proceeds to ask what "bad" would Yakov have to endure if Lavan would speak good things to him? The Gemara answers that perhaps Lavan would mention the name of an Avodah Zarah while speaking to Yakov. The Gemara then asks what "bad" was there in the pleasure of the act that Yael did with Sisera? The Gemara answers that "he infused her with Zuhama" (a form of spiritual contamination).

RASHI explains that the reason why any good of a Rasha is bad for a Tzadik is because the Tzadik hates Resha'im, and the Tzadik's sensitivities are disgusted by any benefit that he receives from a Rasha. Therefore, the benefit is not at all pleasurable to him.

Why does Rashi say this? The Gemara itself gives completely different reasons for why the good words of Lavan would be bad for Yakov, and why the pleasure of the act with Sisera was abhorrent to Yael. The Gemara does not say, as Rashi says, that even Lavan's good words, and even the pleasure from Sisera, were bad for Yakov and Yael respectively because they were disgusted with the Resha'im! Why does Rashi say this? (CHESHEK SHLOMO)

ANSWER: RASHI was bothered by the wording of the Gemara. Rabbi Yochanan says that "all of the good [given by] the Resha'im is bad for the Tzadikim." He was clearly stating a general rule and not referring to any specific case. What is the reason that in *every* situation of a benefit provided by a Rasha for a Tzadik, the benefit is bad for the Tzadik? If, as the Gemara says, it is because the Rasha might mention the name of an Avodah Zarah, or the Rasha might infuse the Tzadik with "Zuhama," those reasons will not apply to many situations -- such as when a Rasha gives a present to a Tzadik without talking to him and without having any other interaction with him! Why, then, in *all* cases should the good of a Rasha be bad for the Tzadik?

It must be that there is a more general reason behind this statement. Rashi informs us that the reason is because Tzadikim are so disgusted by Resha'im that any good that they receive from the Resha'im is abhorrent to them. (See also IYUN YAKOV.)

However, according to this, why does the Gemara ask what bad was there in the case of Lavan and in the case of Yael? According to Rashi's words, it is obvious why Yakov did not want to receive any good from Lavan, and why any pleasure derived from Sisera was not pleasurable to Yael!

The answer is that Rashi's logic only explains why the Tzadik *does not derive pleasure* from any benefit received from a Rasha. However, the Tzadik's disgust does not actually cause him pain; it just causes him not to experience pleasure from what is given to him by a Rasha. As Rashi puts it, because the Tzadik abhors receiving benefit from a Rasha, "Lav Hana'ah Hi," he does not derive pleasure from it.

The Gemara's question is why did Hashem have to command Lavan not to speak even good to Yakov. If Yakov will simply not derive pleasure from the good that Lavan does for him, then what harm will from that? Why did Hashem have to warn Lavan not to do it? The Gemara answers that the harm involved, in this case, was that Lavan might mention the name of an Avodah Zarah and thereby disturb the Tzadik by causing him to hear the name of an Avodah Zarah.

But in the case of Yael, why does the Gemara ask what detriment there was in the act with Sisera? Who says that Yael suffered some detriment; perhaps she simply did not enjoy the act, but she also did not suffer from it?

TOSFOS (103a, DH v'Ha) explains that when the Gemara asks how could Yael derive pleasure from an Aveirah, it is referring to the Gemara in Nazir (23b) which lists Yael's act as a classic example of an "Aveirah performed Lishmah." The Gemara here is asking that if Yael derived benefit and enjoyed the act that she did with Sisera, then it cannot be called entirely Lishmah!

Consequently, when the Gemara answers that Sisera infused her with "Zuhama," the Gemara means that if Yael merely had not had any pleasure from the act with Sisera, it would not have been an act done Lishmah. Her act would not have been anymore Lishmah than any other act done for a positive purpose. What made it Lishmah was that not only did she not have pleasure, but she even *suffered* from the act and was still willing to do it for the sake of saving the Jewish people. How did she suffer, the Gemara wants to know. It answers that she suffered from the "Zuhama" that the Rasha infused into her.

There is still another question, though. If, in the case of Lavan, there was a detriment to Yakov because Lavan might mention the name of an Avodah Zarah, then how could the Gemara prove from Lavan that *all* benefits of Resha'im are bad for Tzadikim? Perhaps it is only a benefit such as Lavan's that is bad for Tzadikim, where the Rasha might mention the name of an Avodah Zarah!

The answer is that if Yakov Avinu would have enjoyed a benefit that Lavan did for him or

gave to him, then even though Lavan might also mention the name of an Avodah Zarah, the benefit would have offset the detriment of hearing the name of an Avodah Zarah. As such, Hashem would not have commanded Lavan not to do or say something good to Yakov. It is because Yakov would *only* be hurt by any benefit from Lavan that Hashem warned Lavan not to speak "good or bad" with Yakov. Accordingly, we can prove from there that the Tzadik is indeed disgusted by any benefit given to him by a Rasha and he does not enjoy it. (M. Kornfeld)

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From: owner-bais-medrash@torah.org[SMTP:owner-bais-medrash@torah.org] Subject: Bais-Medrash V2

Bais-Medrash Volume 02 : Bais-Medrash is an open forum for discussion among those with a solid Jewish education. Opinions and Halachic positions represented herein are not necessarily those of anyone but the writers of the respective posts, and have not been checked or verified in any way by Project Genesis.

From: j g <better@juno.com>
Subject: BORO PARK EIRUV

I was recently in Boro Park, Brooklyn, and wherever I went I encountered arguments about the Eiruv recently implemented. I also saw many signs and leaflets thrown around the streets. Can anyone enlighten us EXACTLY what are the two sides arguing about? moish@juno.com
Date: Thu, 10 Feb 2000 12:55:12 EST From: ESTEEY@aol.com Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

I am not an expert on Hlichos Eiruvim but I believe part of the issue is this, When Rav Moshe Feinstein ruled (I think his ruling is about 20 years old, I will check) that Boro Park was unfit for an Eiruv his ruling stood. Today, many experience great Tircha and inconvenience because of the fact they cannot carry. Therefore several Bnei Torah and Rabbanim reviewed the necessary Halachos and based on today's facts (as to buildings and structure of modern day Boro Park) allowed for an Eiruv to in fact exist. That is not to say Rav Moshe was wrong because when he poskened the fact was these situations did not exist (I will try and find out more details for next time).

Unfortunately some people were insensitive and ridiculed Rav Moshe in the process of overruling his psak, others were angered that someone would have chutzpa to overrule Rav Moshe, etc. In short there is now a Machlokes. I have been told by Rabbanim in the Chasidic community that the Eiruv is Kosher. I have no doubt that it is, but the unfortunate way in which some have disgraced Rav Moshe z"l is unacceptable.

May he who makes peace above do the same below. Amen, Tal Moshe

Date: Thu, 10 Feb 2000 22:35:51 EST From: SAK2120@aol.com Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

If I remember correctly Rav Moshe Feinstein, Ztz"l, believed that Brooklyn was too large an area and had too great a population to make kosher eiruvim in. It seemed as if there was a real possibility of carrying on Shabbat d'Orayta (from the Torah). Brooklyn may be a true reshut harabim. This is not true for communities in LI, Queens, Staten Island, NJ etc. Nowadays there seem to be people who don't agree with Rav Moshe's stance including some Chasidic Rebbe's. I asked a talmid muvhak of Rav Moshe and he said the prohibition still stands. Nothing changed since then. I asked him why didn't some people of stature accept this stance. He said (tongue in cheek) it was too quiet. People don't like things too peaceful and quiet.

Best wishes, Samuel Kosofsky

Date: Sun, 13 Feb 2000 18:23:34 -0500 From: Alan Davidson <perzvi@juno.com>
Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

What the proponents of the Eruv argue is Rav Moshe didn't discuss the issue where one has a community with more than 2 natural mechitzos around it -- as Boro Park (broadly defined) arguably has -- what opponents of the Eruv basically argue is a gezera is a gezera and who are we to change things -- after all the original reasons for yomtov sheini no longer apply in a wired universe -- in addition to the usual issues of chinuch, maaris ayin etc. which go along with use of an eruv.

Date: Tue, 15 Feb 2000 20:07:28 -0500 From: M. Shulman <mshulman@ix.netcom.com>
Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

My understanding is that most if not all of the Rabbanim concur that one 'can' make an eruv. There is a tshuva from the Munkatcher Rov that he gave out to his kehillah on that. Those who are not allowing it is based on there not being a kehillah organization that can assure it will always be maintained. The Rabbi who has made it is one who no one can question his erlichkeit. However those who forbid do so because of the lack of a Rabbani body to watch over things like this. The old Voideslover Rov ZTL wrote that when he came to America he saw places where people carried, where there was no kosher eruv, because they remembered that at one time there had been, but there was no organized kehillah to insure that it would be maintained. M. Shulman mshulman@NOSPAMix.netcom.com

Date: Fri, 18 Feb 2000 12:36:56 -0500 From: Gershon Dubin <gershon.dubin@juno.com>
Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

M. Shulman <mshulman@ix.netcom.com> wrote: <<My understanding is that most if not all of the Rabbanim concur that one 'can' make an eruv.>>

Rav Moshe Feinstein said that no eruv can be made in Brooklyn. Do you have sources that

state otherwise?

<<Those who are not allowing it is based on there not being a kehillah organization that can assure it will always be maintained.>>

Do you have sources for this? Rav Moshe was quite clear on the prohibition and on the reasons, and this was definitely not even a factor, much less the main reason. Gershon

Date: Fri, 18 Feb 2000 14:54:36 -0500 From: M. Shulman <mshulman@ix.netcom.com>
Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

At 12:36 PM 02/18/2000 -0500, Gershon Dubin wrote: <<Rav Moshe Feinstein said that no eruv can be made in Brooklyn. Do you have sources that state otherwise?...Do you have sources for this? Rav Moshe was quite clear on the prohibition and on the reasons, and this was definitely not even a factor, much less the main reason.>>

I am talking about NOW. I have not seen a single letter or anything saying that it was not 'theoretically' possible. Those discussing why it is not allowed base it on other issues. M. Shulman mshulman@NOSPAMix.netcom.com

Date: Sat, 19 Feb 2000 21:37:13 -0500 From: Gershon Dubin <gershon.dubin@juno.com>
Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

M. Shulman <mshulman@ix.netcom.com> writes: <<I am talking about NOW. I have not seen a single letter or anything saying that it was not 'theoretically' possible. Those discussing why it is not allowed base it on other issues.>>

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I am talking about NOW. I have not seen a single letter or anything saying that it was not 'theoretically' possible. Those discussing why it is not allowed base it on other issues.>>

Date: Sun, 20 Feb 2000 00:14:17 -0500 From: "Hillel (Sabba) Markowitz"
<sabbahillel@owings-mills.aim-smart.com> Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

Samuel Kosofsky <SAK2120@aol.com> wrote: <<...Nowadays there seem to be people who don't agree with Rav Moshe's stance including some Chasidic Rebbe's. I asked a talmid muvhak of Rav Moshe and he said the prohibition still stands. Nothing changed since then. I asked him why didn't some people of stature accept this stance. He said (tongue in cheek) it was too quiet. People don't like things too peaceful and quiet.>>

Some people there claimed that the proposed eruv avoids the area that Rav Moshe held caused the problem. As a result, it would not be subject to his original psak. Other people claim that the area does include the area that could make it a reshut harabim midoraisa. I prefer the Baltimore eruv situation. It was not built until everyone rav in Baltimore agreed (something that seems impossible in New York). Hillel (Sabba) Markowitz

Date: Sun, 20 Feb 2000 12:17:34 -0500 From: M. Shulman <mshulman@ix.netcom.com>
Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

At 09:37 PM 02/19/2000 -0500, Gershon Dubin wrote: <<... Who cites the lack of a kehila as having been the reason for not allowing an eruv?...>>

One of the statements I saw in Satmar mentioned this from the Voideslover Rov ZL. The old Klausenberger Rov ZTL forbade it even though according to halacha he held that it was possible to make an eruv. (His reasoning was that a single Rov could posit the eruv if he lived within it and didn't hold by it's validity.)

<<...How do those who permit the eruv (or those who do not based upon the reasoning you describe) explain away Rav Moshe's very clear explicit prohibition?>>

The Chasidisher rabbanim did not always hold like Reb Moshe. There is a difference between greatly respecting someone and following his views. I have to get the tshuva from the Munkatcher Rov Shlita, where he is matir it. He may touch on the inyan. (What I always found interesting is that Reb Moshe was matir an eruv in Queens, which I could never understand. I fail to see the difference between Queens and Brooklyn, since the only real difference is a line on a map.) M. Shulman mshulman@NOSPAMix.netcom.com

Date: Sun, 20 Feb 2000 12:23:05 -0500 From: M. Shulman <mshulman@ix.netcom.com>
Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

SAK2120@aol.com wrote: <<If I remember correctly Rav Moshe Feinstein, Ztz"l, believed that Brooklyn was too large an area and had too great a population to make kosher eiruvim in. It seemed as if there was a real possibility of carrying on Shabbat d'Orayta (from the Torah). Brooklyn may be a true reshut harabim...>>

What were the case, then how could women be allowed to go out with jewelry in a reshut harabim, which is an issur d'oreisah? M. Shulman mshulman@NOSPAMix.netcom.com

Date: Sun, 20 Feb 2000 16:39:06 -0500 From: Gershon Dubin <gershon.dubin@juno.com>
Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

M. Shulman <mshulman@ix.netcom.com> writes: <<The Chasidisher rabbanim did not always hold like Reb Moshe. There is a difference between greatly respecting someone and following his views. I have to get the tshuva from the Munkatcher Rov Shlita, where he is matir it. He may touch on the inyan.>>

My question is why this came up now. No changes that I know of have taken place in the metzius in BP (or Williamsburg for that matter) in the last 30 years. There were chasidish poskim of great renown then; why didn't they make an eruv?

<<(What I always found interesting is that Reb Moshe was matir an eruv in Queens, which I could never understand. I fail to see the difference between Queens and Brooklyn, since the only real difference is a line on a map.)>>

It is not all of Queens. The area he was matir was a special case due to the geography. He was also matir Seagate, so Brooklyn also can have exceptions. For an excellent review, may I highly recommend Rav Yosef Gavriel Bechofer's book on Contemporary Eiruvim. Gershon

Date: Sun, 20 Feb 2000 18:40:43 -0500 From: M. Shulman <mshulman@ix.netcom.com>
Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

At 04:39 PM 02/20/2000 -0500, Gershon Dubin wrote: <<My question is why this came up now. No changes that I know of have taken place in the metzius in BP (or Williamsburg for that matter) in the last 30 years. There were chasidische poskim of great renown then; why didn't they make an eruv?>>

There has always been talk. A few years back someone tried to make an eruv, but used some heterim that were weak. Now there is a Rov whose father had wanted to make an eruv, and he has done it.

<<It is not all of Queens. The area he was matir was a special case due to the geography. He was also matir Seagate, so Brooklyn also can have exceptions. For an excellent review, may I highly recommend Rav Yosef Gavriel Bechofer's book on Contemporary Eiruvim.>>

Seagate is much different as it has an actual wall around it. There was no need for a Tzeras HaPesach. I don't think that applies to the one in Queens. M. Shulman
mshulman@NOSPAMix.netcom

Date: Sun, 20 Feb 2000 21:40:10 -0500 From: Gershon Dubin <gershon.dubin@juno.com>
Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

M. Shulman <mshulman@ix.netcom.com> writes: <<There has always been talk. A few years back someone tried to make an eruv, but used some heterim that were weak. Now there is a Rov whose father had wanted to make an eruv, and he has done it.>>

You have not really answered my question. When there were great chasidische poskim, nobody made an eruv. Now suddenly they woke up.

<<Seagate is much different as it has an actual wall around it. There was no need for a Tzeras HaPesach. I don't think that applies to the one in Queens.>>

I did not mean to say they were the same. I meant to bring out that in limited cases Rav Moshe also admitted the possibility of an eruv. The geographic setup in that neighborhood in Queens was unique; in Seagate it was the wall. Gershon

Date: Sun, 20 Feb 2000 22:32:41 -0500 From: M. Shulman <mshulman@ix.netcom.com>
Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

Gershon Dubin wrote: <<You have not really answered my question. When there were great chasidische poskim, nobody made an eruv. Now suddenly they woke up.>>

I cannot say. There were always those who wanted to make an eruv.

<<I did not mean to say they were the same. I meant to bring out that in limited cases Rav Moshe also admitted the possibility of an eruv. The geographic setup in that neighborhood in Queens was unique; in Seagate it was the wall.>>

One of the Rabbanim who was matir used the sevorah for Queens for Boro Park. I am curious what the reason was for Queens. It is nothing like Seagate. M. Shulman
mshulman@NOSPAMix.netcom

Date: Fri, 18 Feb 2000 14:21:51 +0200 From: Jonathan Chipman
<yonarand@internet-zahav.net> Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv
jg <better@juno.com> asked (BM V2 #8) about the dispute in Boro Park, Brooklyn, about the recently implemented Eiruv. <<Can anyone enlighten us EXACTLY what are the two sides arguing about?>>

I will try my best, although I must begin with a disclaimer and state that the laws of Eruv are extremely detailed and technical, and what I say here is for general information and not le-halakhah.

Basically, the dispute revolves around a pesak halakhah issued by Rav Moshe Feinstein ztz"l some twenty years ago, saying that one cannot make an eruv in Manhattan or, by extension, presumably in other places where similar conditions apply.

The type of eruv familiar to us -- i.e., a series of wires enclosing a certain area, each wire being attached to a horizontal cross-piece attached to a pole (korah velehi, or tzurat hapetah) is based on the premise that the area so encompassed is not a "reshut harabim," a public domain where one is prohibited from carrying any objects on Shabbat deoraita, but a "carmelit," an open public that is only prohibited derebbanah. This is based on the classic model of an eruv surrounding wells on the way up to Jerusalem, in an area described as "karmelit," as described in Mishnah Eruvin 2.1.

These two types of domain, plus two others: the "reshut hayahid," or private domain, and "makom patur," an exempt domain (referring to small, vest-pocket-like spaces), are defined in brief, almost laconic terms in Shabbat 6a. Hence, the crucial issue of where it is and is not permissible to make an eruv of the type described, depends upon the exact definition of reshut harabim.

The problem is that there are two different definitions in halakhic literature. The classical sugya mentioned above describes as reshut harabim any "mavoy mefulash" -- an open public thoroughfare, that does not come to a dead-end but goes through to the end of the city -- provided only that it be at least 16 amot ("cubits"), i.e., about 8 meters, wide. This would definitely include such broad avenues as Kings Highway in Brooklyn, Queens Boulevard in Queens, Broadway and Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, etc. The second definition, which provides the "out" allowing for the construction of most eruvim in modern cities, is based on an important Rashi in Eruvin, which adds the stipulation that a reshut harabim must also have at least 600,000 people passing through it every day -- presumably, along the selfsame thoroughfare, or possibly, even more narrowly defined, passing by one given point along this road.

In practice, most authorities, certainly when paskening for the community at large, use the second definition. As there is virtually no single point in even the most crowded cities where 600,000 people pass by during the course of one day, the reshut harabim becomes in practice a dead letter and one can make an eruv just about any place. Some pious and learned individuals may take upon themselves the humra (stringency) of not relying upon this ruling, in deference to many rishonim who don't accept this Rashi, and in deference to, for example, an important

teshuvah by the Mishkenot Ya'akov, but by and large the more permissive interpretation has been accepted.

R. Moshe Feinstein's ruling represents an in-between position, based upon an unusual reading of the sources. He held that the 600,000 people referred to by Rashi, and the 16-cubit wide thoroughfare, need not be at one and the same place. As I understand it, so long as there are 600,000 people residing within the area enclosed by the eruv as a whole, or even in the contiguous urban area, and if in addition there is a mavoy mefulash of the requisite width, etc., in that same area, than the area as a whole is considered a reshut harabim de-oraita, and it is impossible to make an eruv in such a place. Those who object to the Boro Park eruv (and possibly also the Flatbush eruv) rely upon this opinion.

Needless to say, there were and are other Torah giants who allow the making of an eruv. Among those who supported an eruv in Manhattan during the early post-war years were Rav Henkin and Rav Menahem Kasher, who in turn based themselves on a ruling given by Rav Hayyim Ozer Grodzinski for Paris, which was also supported by the Hazon Ish and Rav Zvi Pesach Frank, one of the major poskim of Yerushalayim two generations ago. In prewar Warsaw there was an eruv under the aegis of Rav Meir Shapira of Lublin. The present Boro Park eruv was put up and maintained, I believe, under the guidance of Rav Menashe Klein, who is himself a major posek.

One comment about Tal Moshe's letter. He wrote that <<Bnei Torah and Rabbanim reviewed the necessary Halachos and based on today's facts (as to buildings and structure of modern day Boro Park) allowed for an Eiruv to in fact exist. That is not to say Rav Moshe was wrong because when he poskened the fact was these situations did not exist... Unfortunately some people were insensitive and ridiculed Rav Moshe in the process of overruling his psak, others were angered that someone would have chutzpa to overrule Rav Moshe, etc.... I have no doubt that it is, but the unfortunate way in which some have disgraced Rav Moshe z"l is unacceptable.>>

As I understand it, the new Eruv is not the result of any change in the reality. The avenues are not any narrower, and the population of Brooklyn has not decreased. There is always room in halakhah for mahloket, for differences of opinion. One (I refer here to a qualified rav, not any person) may disagree with even the greatest gedolim, provided that, a) one has solidly based arguments for doing so; and b) it is done respectfully. This is especially so where it comes in response to a felt need of the Jewish public, and is based upon a long-standing tradition of pesak. It doesn't mean that one person was right and one was wrong; both interpretations become a part of Torah.

Before Rav Moshe, the mainstream of pesak was to rely upon the heter of 600,000 (Orach Hayyim 345.7), and the Be'er Heiteiv there adds that "the world is accustomed today to accept that there is no reshut harabim... Therefore, the mahmir should be strict for himself, and not protest against those who follow that majority opinion."

Rav Yehonatan Chipman, Ish Yerushalayim
Date: Thu, 24 Feb 2000 09:11:23 -0500 From: Gershon Dubin
<gershon.dubin@juno.com> Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

M. Shulman <mshulman@ix.netcom.com> wrote: <<...One of the Rabbanim who was matir used the sevorah for Queens for Boro Park...>>

Interesting that he used Rav Moshe's sevara on Queens while rejecting his position on Brooklyn. Gershon Dubin gershon.dubin@juno.com

Date: Thu, 24 Feb 2000 16:00:36 -0500 From: "michael fragin" <mfragin@diginexus.com>
Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

With regard to the eruv in Kew Gardens Hills, Queens it is honestly not understandable why Rav Moshe Feinstein was matir while still holding that the rest of the city was a reshut harabim d'oraysa. Kew Gardens Hills has a major street, Main Street, that runs right through the middle and also leads directly into a major highway, the Van Wyck, with no real barriers. Seagate is really not comparable since it is a closed private community that is enclosed by the sea on three sides and a wall with gates on the fourth. The case can really be made that Seagate is not a reshut harabim. According to what Rav Moshe Feinstein said about Manhattan and Brooklyn it is hard to understand why he was matir Kew Garden Hills. He seems to indicate that he felt that that neighborhood was isolated and out of the way. My real question would be if anyone knows whether Rav Moshe actually toured Kew Gardens Hills when the eruv was put up and saw its proximity to the other areas that he described as reshut harabim d'oraysa. I have spoken to people who say that he did and others who say that he did not.

As far as Boro Park is concerned, Rav Moshe held Brooklyn and Manhattan to be a reshut harabim d'oraysa and thus there is no possibility of an eruv in those Jewish communities. It has nothing to do with there being no kehilla structure to maintain the eruv. However, we must allow that there are many who do not hold like he did among the chasidish and among the litvish. Those poskim can also establish eruvim and that it what is happening in Boro Park. There are communities that established eruvim without the haskama of Rav Moshe.

An interesting note is that I heard from a cousin of mine that there is an eruv in the Beverly Fairfax community in LA that was established by a single Rav. The other Rabbanim, who did not accept the original one, were considering a community wide accepted eruv in the area until one shabbos the current eruv went down and the rav of one of the other shuls saw that there were people who still carried. He decided that he would not support any eruv in the neighborhood since if there was no eruv no one would ever carry mistakenly. Even though this is only anecdotal it is the rationale that many rabbanim use when considering whether to support use of an eruv. It is an awesome responsibility that one's mispallelim may be mechallel shabbos c"v because of that decision. moshe fragin

Date: Thu, 24 Feb 2000 20:22:10 EST From: Kenneth G Miller
<kennethgmiller@juno.com> Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

Last week a friend showed me an article about many of the pros and cons of this new eruv. Unfortunately, the author wrote it anonymously, so I don't know how reliable it is. But much of it was reasonable and made sense. I will share some of what I remember:

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One of the points made by that article was that whereas most people consider this 600,000 minimum to refer to a specific road (such as Broadway) or to a specific point on the road (such as Times Square), the article's author claims that it actually refers to the city as a whole, and that the city limits are determined by geography, not by political boundaries. The author explains that many cities in Europe have had eruvs over the centuries, but that their populations stayed well below 600,000. He gave one example (sorry, I forgot which city) where the population was over 600,000, but a major river went through the city, and each side was counted separately; he claims that when the population of the Jewish side of the river grew to over 600,000, many people stopped using the Eruv.

The author claims that this is what makes Manhattan and Brooklyn unique in Rav Moshe Feinstein's eyes. Those cities have no natural borders to break them up, and their population is in the millions. The author claims Rav Moshe's permission for the Kew Gardens Hills eruv is the exception which proves this rule, since Kew Gardens Hills has natural borders on three sides, isolating it from the rest of Queens. Looking at a map, I see how Flushing Meadows Park and Forest Park Cemetery might be two of those borders, but I don't know what the third is.

Several posters have pointed to the Seagate area of Brooklyn as having an actual wall around it, which similarly isolates it, making it an independent city of *under* 600,000 residents, and eligible for a kosher eruv.

Articles in the Jewish Press (in the "Mac hberes" column) during recent months have claimed that there is now an actual physical wall around three sides of the Boro Park area, which is what makes today different than when Rav Moshe said that Brooklyn could not have an eruv. But I have searched those articles in vain for some description of where those three walls might be, or what they are made of.

Akiva Miller

Date: Thu, 24 Feb 2000 21:23:57 EST From: SAK2120@aol.com Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

Gershon Dubin wrote: <<If that were the case, then how could women be allowed to go out with jewelry in a reshut harabim, which is an *issur d'oreisah*?>>

I believe that wearing tachsitin (jewelry) is not considered carrying and observant women do wear jewelry where there is no eruv. Best wishes, Samuel Kosofsky

Date: Thu, 24 Feb 2000 21:29:45 EST From: SAK2120@aol.com Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

Some writers gave the impression that only Seagate in Queens has a kosher eruv. In fact there are kosher eruvim in Forest Hills, Kew Gardens Hills, Hillcrest, Jamaica Estates...in fact in almost every neighborhood that has a sizeable community. Many of these eruvim are contiguous with each other and allow carrying from one area to another. I've never heard of anyone "passeling" any of them.

B'kavod, Samuel Kosofsky

Date: Fri, 25 Feb 2000 15:28:13 -0500 From: "Hillel Seltzer" <hss5@po.cwru.edu>
Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

M. Shulman <mshulman@ix.netcom.com> wrote: <<My understanding is that most if not all of the Rabbanim concur that one 'can' make an eruv.>>

Gershon Dubin <gershon.dubin@juno.com> responded: <<Rav Moshe Feinstein said that no eruv can be made in Brooklyn. Do you have sources that state otherwise?>>

Could someone please clarify the following information for those of us who are not in NY or do not know all the details of the situation:

Is the eruv currently under debate around just Boro Park, or does it extend over other communities as well?

I was under the impression that Rav Moshe's ruling was given in regards to an eruv around all of Brooklyn, not around a single community within Brooklyn like Boro Park.

I asked about the Brooklyn and Queens eruv situations when I was in yeshiva. I was told that the psak for Brooklyn was that no eruv could entirely encompass Brooklyn because each community within Brooklyn considers itself a separate community from the others. There is no way to consider all of Brooklyn as a single kehila. I believe this is the "lack of a kehila" in Brooklyn that Rav Moshe stated. The deciding factor was that in general, when a person from Brooklyn is asked, "Where are you from?" [in a situation where Brooklyn is not automatically assumed, such as if both people talking are in a foreign location] the answer is "Boro Park," or "Flatbush," etc. and not "Brooklyn." Each neighborhood thinks of itself like a separate city.

I was told that the Queens eruv did not have this problem.

I tried the experiment in yeshiva of just paying attention to where students said they were from. Speaking to people not from NY, those from Brooklyn always said the name of the neighborhood. Those from Queens answered first "Queens," and then said the name of the community only when asked, "Where in Queens?" Anyone on the list in a yeshiva or similar opportunity outside of NY should try it.

I think that if several of the rulings quoted on both sides were put in this perspective, there may not be as much of an argument as was assumed. ---Hillel

Date: Thu, 24 Feb 2000 14:46:56 -0500 From: j g <better@juno.com> Subject: Re: Boro Park Eiruv

M. Shulman <mshulman@ix.netcom.com> writes: <<I am talking about NOW. I have not seen a single letter or anything saying that it was not 'theoretically' possible. Those discussing why it is not allowed base it on other issues.>>

The Bobover Dayan stated NOW that it is Assur! Also, wasn't the Bobover Rebbe Shlita one of the main people who signed against it not too long ago?!!

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