



במערכובא אמרי

B' MAARAVA

AMREI

*Torah ideas from  
Bais Torah U'Tefilla,  
West Hempstead*



**PURIM 5781**

Volume 2



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**PURIM 5781**

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**B'Maarava Amrei**

Bais Torah U'Tefilla

Volume 2, Purim 5781

**Bais Torah U'Tefilla**

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## In Memory Of

דב בן דוד  
חיה ליבה בת זאב וואלף  
שרגא פייוול בן דוד בנימין  
ריבה בת משה צבי  
אליהו בן יעקב הלוי  
שרה בת אברהם משה  
זאב דוד בן דב

Dedicated by  
David and Ariella Kesselman

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## Editors' Preface

It is with a great sense of gratitude that we present במערבא אמרי, Volume 2 to the members and friends of our *kehilla*, Bais Torah U'Tefilla. Within, seventeen *lamdanim* gather to present Torah ideas crafted in honor of Purim, 5781. We thank David and Ariella Kesselman for continuing their partnership with BTU by generously sponsoring this volume. Hashem should bless the Kesselman family that they always be counted among the givers, and that the Torah remains with them and their children for all time.

The Purim story turns on the axis of אחדות.<sup>1</sup> Haman's wicked decree emphasized the Jewish people's apartness<sup>2</sup>:

יִשְׁנֹו עַם אֶחָד מְפֹרָד וּמְפֹרָד בֵּין  
הָעַמִּים בְּכָל מְדִינֹת מְלְכוּתְךָ  
*There is one nation scattered  
and separate amongst the  
nations in all of the countries  
of your kingdom*

And the salvation came when the Jewish people in Shushan gathered in אחדות for fasting and tefilla<sup>3</sup>:

לְךָ כְּנוּס אֶת כָּל הַיְהוּדִים הַנִּמְצָאִים בְּשׁוּשָׁן  
*Go, gather all the Jews in Shushan*

One senses echoes of the first great אחדות we experienced at the foot of Har Sinai<sup>4</sup>:

וַיָּסְעוּ...וַיָּבֹאוּ...וַיַּחֲנוּ...וַיַּחַן שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֹגֵד הָהָר  
*And they traveled...and they  
arrived...and they camped...  
and (he) Yisroel camped  
opposite the mountain.  
פרש"י: כאיש אחד בלב אחד  
Like one man with one heart*

The common factor is that both at Har Sinai and in Shushan אחדות culminated in the Jewish people's acceptance of the Torah.

At Bais Torah U'Tefillah, under the leadership of Rabbi Lesser, we gather in אחדות as a community of friends unified by our commitment to Talmud Torah and Avodas Hashem. And the goal of this journal, במערבא אמרי, is similar: create a printed space for friends to share Torah ideas to enhance the experience of the upcoming ימים טובים. It is my sincere hope that במערבא אמרי will live up to its mission and promote אחדות, spirited Torah discussions, and enhance your Purim experience.

But why במערבא אמרי?

<sup>1</sup> עיין עוד בזה בפניני הלכה (טז:ב) לר' זלמן מלמד שליט"א  
<sup>2</sup> אסתר ג:ח

<sup>3</sup> אסתר ד:טז

<sup>4</sup> שמות יט:ב ורש"י שם

The title translates to *In the West They Say*. In the Talmud Bavli, the term מערבא, the west, refers to Eretz Yisroel which is due west from Bavel. As residents of West Hempstead, we do not yet live in Eretz Yisroel, but spending time as a community with the portable Eretz Yisroel, our Torah, is a core value at BTU. Additionally, we live in *West* Hempstead, so in some sense we can consider our divrei Torah as emerging from the מערבא.

Hashem should give the BTU chevra the opportunity to gather together in happiness, health, and friendship for many years to come.

**Warmest Wishes,**

**The Editors**

# The Real Secret of Purim

Rabbi Uri Lesser

The Vilna Goan writes that Yom HaKippurim is a day like Purim (יום הכיפורים = יום כפורים). This means that Yom Kippur is similar to Purim but ultimately not on the same exalted level or madreigah as Purim itself. This is one of the most puzzling statements about Purim that has ever been made.

Rav Hutner zt"l points out in Pachad Yitzchok that if the Vilna Goan said it then he meant it. But what does the Vilna Goan's analogy mean? How can any comparison be made between Purim and Yom Kippur? They seem to be opposites! Yom Kippur is a day of fasting and davening, void of all physical pleasures as the Torah states: "V'Inisem Es Nafshoseichem." Purim, on the other hand, is a day filled with eating, drinking, singing, and dancing. Although these activities can and should be done with a Torah mindset, how is Purim at all comparable to Yom Kippur?

The truth is that there are several comparisons that can be made between Yom Kippur and Purim. Yom Kippur is a day of Tefilla and so is Purim. Yom Kippur is a day of Kabalos Hatorah (on Yom Kippur we received the second set of Luchos) and so is Purim. But is it really possible that Purim is greater? It certainly doesn't seem that way. How can we understand this statement from

the Goan and gain a deeper insight into Purim?

Rav Hutner zt"l (Pachad Yitzchok), Rav Chaim Volozhon zt"l (Nefesh Hachaim) and other great B'alei Machshova all concur that the Vilna Goan is 100% correct. Yom HaKippurim is only K'Purim, it is like Purim, but Purim is the greater day. The fact that we see things oppositely is itself the secret of Purim and what makes Purim so great and magnificent.

The mishnah in Avos teaches us that there are three main components to Yiddishkeit: Torah, Avodah, and Gemilas Chasadim. When all three are present within a person's Avodas Hashem and are complementing each other, it brings a person to shleimus and fulfillment in their lives. Although a person who only focuses on one or two of these components cannot be considered a bad person, there will be something lacking in the ultimate shleimus of such a person.

There is a tremendous focus on Torah and Avodah on Yom Kippur. It is the most intense day of Avodas Hashem of the entire year. We spend the entire day in heartfelt Tefilla to Hashem, asking and begging for selicha and mechilah. In addition, although there is not much

time to learn Torah on Yom Kippur, it is a day of Kabalas HaTorah, the day that Moshe received the second set of Luchos, which are the ones we live with today. Giving the Luchos on Yom Kippur was Hashem's way of giving us permission to learn his beautiful Torah.

However, there is one thing lacking on Yom Kippur: Gemilas Chasadim. Not to say that a person can't do chessed on Yom Kippur. There are certainly many ways and opportunities to help out another person. But the concept of Gemilas Chasadim doesn't enter the framework of the Avodas Hayom. Why not? If Yom Kippur is the holiest, most intense day of Avodas Hashem, why wasn't chessed incorporated into the avodas hayom?

Perhaps the reason is as follows. On Yom Kippur, Hashem commands us to be like malachim, and not like people. We don't eat, we daven all day, we wear white - we are supposed to act and feel like a malach on Yom Kippur. As far as I know, a malach's job relates to his direct service of Hashem but not to other malachim. Malachaim do not have responsibilities Bein Adom L'Malach, they don't engage in acts of chessed. As such, it is sensible that on Yom Kippur, that element of Avodas Hashem is not woven into the fabric of the day.

Purim, on the other hand, has all three elements, albeit in abbreviated versions. We spend time focusing on Tefilla because Chazal tell us that "Kol HaPoshet Yad Noshim Lo" and Hashem

answers tefillos on Purim more than many other times during the year. We know the importance of learning Torah on Purim because there was a new Kabalos Hatorah on Purim, "Kimu V'Kiblu Ha'yehudim, Kimu Mah Sh'Kiblu Kvar." Finally, we understand that Purim is a day of Gemilas Chasadim, as evidenced by the mitzvos of Mishloach Manos and Matanos Le'evyonim.

Now we can start to understand what the Goan is saying. Yom Kippur and Purim are similar because they both focus on Torah and Avodah,. However, Purim has the added element of Gemilas Chasadim which can concretize the sheleimos of a person and make him into an Adom - which is *even greater* than a malach.

The question, however, is that even though this pshat makes sense "on paper" can we honestly say that we believe Purim is greater than Yom Kippur? We know what feelings and emotions go into Yom Kippur. We feel connected to Hashem. We feel like Malachim! How can Yom Kippur be compared to a day of running around, dressing up, eating, drinking and more? Purim is such a busy day many people don't have any time to think about Avodas Hashem at all. Hours are spent delivering Shalach Manos, going to and having a Seudah, and making sure everyone in the house hears the Megillah. Purim flies by so quickly. What is the real essence of Purim?

Here lies the secret of Purim. Purim is so precious to Hashem. He had to (no pun intended) "mask" it to the world. For most people, Purim is a nice joyous day with family and friends having a good time, doing many mitzvos, and then the day ends before you really know it. But if you look carefully at the day with the right perspective, it is the most powerful day of the entire year.

Purim is the greatest day of the year for Tefilla. It's the day when ANY person can Daven to Hashem and have his tefillos accepted. Chazal tell us that Esther's tefilla to Hashem before she entered Achasveirosh's inner chamber was more powerful than Moshe Rabeinu's Tefilla of "V'Eschanon El Hashem".

Purim is also the greatest day of the year for Torah. Klal Yisroel accepted the Torah on Purim on a higher level than even at Matan Torah! The Kabalos Hatorah of Purim was with Ahavah while the acceptance at Matan Torah was with Yirah. Any time we carve out of our super busy day to learn reflects this tremendous Ahavas Hashem that we have for the Torah. We are proclaiming that despite the many, mitzvos that need to be done on Purim, Torah learning will still be there as well, even if it's just for a few minutes.

Finally, Purim is also the greatest day of the year for Bein Adom L'Chaveiro. The mitzvos of Mishloach Manos and Matonos Le'vyonim, bring a person to

the level that a malach can't even reach. Caring for someone is what makes us special. It makes us even greater than malachim, and it makes Purim superior even to Yom Kippur.

Part of the secret is that when you have all these three components in place, you don't need to spend a lot of time on them. To be a malach takes a whole day of davening, because we are not really malachim. But becoming an Adom can be done relatively quickly. We don't need hours of davening or learning, and we don't need all day fasting either. All we need is to be a complete person: davening a little, learning a little, and doing chessed a little as well - all while running around, getting dressed up and having a lively Seudah.

It's very simple as long as you pay attention to what you are doing - and the things you are doing, do them right. Try to daven with kavana, try to learn l'shma just for Hashem, and do chessed to truly help others. If you do that, then you will have a Purim like no other! A Purim greater than Yom Kippur!

Ultimately, Hashem created us as people, and he wants us to be the best people we can be. Purim is the day which shows us how to be an Adom. Our mission is to take this lesson with us, even after the sun sets and the day is behind us. Purim really is greater than Yom Kippur

# They're Acting Like Clowns

Avi Appleman

Purim is one of my favorite times of the year with a hidden message. There's a lot of food, loud music, alcohol, gifts, charity and peace offerings being given between people who weren't getting along as a gesture to let bygones be bygones. Everyone gathers to hear the ancient story of how Esther and Mordechai saved the entire nation from destruction, drowning the memory of Haman with unusually loud but permissible and expected noise all while wearing hilarious costumes. To the untrained eye it is by far the most ridiculous thing we do all year, but to the astute observer it's an opportunity to soak in the real meaning. Much like the megillah itself, there's an explicitness that can be taken at face value but there are heavy implications surrounding what is going on. With the help from Rabbi Ilan Ginian and his awesome book "*The Navi Journey, Megillas Esther*", the depths of the megillah are brought out in an easy and fun way. I'll attempt to incorporate (or just outright plagiarize) pieces from his book here and I hope to convey that once the hidden messages are unearthed, they're easily tied together with other concepts in the Torah.

One particular facet that can be tied with another concept of Torah is when Mordechai learned about the decree and

went to the middle of the city to mourn bitterly, *ויצא בתוך העיר, ויזעק זעקה גדולה ומרה*. Mordechai was the Gadol Hador and Av Beis Din. He was well respected by all and when he put on sackcloth the rest of the *tzibbur* started doing the same. They joined him in mourning and when Esther heard she tried giving him normal clothing. When he rejected them, she became frightened and sent a messenger to ask why he was doing this. The megillah says, *ויגד-לו מרדכי, את כל-אשר קרהו*, he told her everything that was happening to *him*. Why should he say that everything is happening to him when the decree by Haman applied to all the Jews? Mordechai had a high position and being the Gadol Hador he felt spiritually responsible for the *tzibbur*. The usual way of human nature is to blame the general people if trouble befalls them. Mordechai, on the other hand, saw himself as personally responsible for the trouble facing the Jews<sup>5</sup> and as a result, he was in pain. He then did teshuvah<sup>6</sup> in hopes that his actions could reverse the decree.

This ties in with what the Gemara in Makkos teaches regarding the mothers of the Kohen Gadol. The Torah requires that the *עיר המקלט* remain in the *רוצח* until the Kohen Gadol dies. As a result, the Kohen Gadol's mother would bring

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<sup>5</sup> The Navi Journey, Megillas Esther chapter 4

<sup>6</sup> Chut Shel Chessed 4:7

meals to the people in the ערי מקלט so that they wouldn't pray for a quicker death of the Kohen Gadol. Why should the Kohen Gadol be a target when he probably never met this person? Why should he be held responsible for a blunder he probably was never aware about? We learn from here that people with a spiritually higher place in the *kehillah* are spiritually responsible for a section of the *kehillah* - whether they are consciously aware of what is going on in the *kehillah* or not. This responsibility forces them to do whatever they can to avoid a catastrophe. If for some reason there are people within the *kehillah* doing what they shouldn't be doing (even without the knowledge of the Rav), it may cause trouble to befall the *kehillah*. Once the troubles materialize, the Rav will feel responsible for not attempting to prophylactically change the ways of his *tzibbur*. Mordechai was in the highest position in his *kehillah*, so he felt the responsibility to do teshuvah on behalf of the *kehillah* to save them from catastrophe. Luckily, everyone else also realized the severity of their situation once Mordechai went to the middle of the city and wore sackcloth and they then followed the lead of their Rav and repented as well.

Sometimes it isn't enough to take the first step. After Haman left Esther's first party, there were 22,000 students gathered around Mordechai learning

and fasting.<sup>7</sup> It says וּכְרֵאוֹת הַמֶּן אֶת-מֶרְדֵּכָי בְּשֵׁעַר הַמִּלָּה, וְלֹא-קָם וְלֹא-יָעַ מִמֶּנּוּ--וַיִּמְלֵא הַמֶּן עַל-הַמָּה מֶרְדֵּכָי, חָמָה Haman became infuriated with what he saw and told guards to shackle the students. He said that they would be killed first and then Mordechai would be hung. The mothers of these students ran to them with bread and water to feed them so they at least wouldn't be killed while hungry. They told their mothers that they made a vow that they wouldn't eat or drink and so they would die while fasting. They all burst out in tears and their cries rose to heaven, causing Hashem to judge the *kehillah* from the *kisei harachamim* instead of the *kisei hadin*.<sup>8</sup> Two hours into that night, Hashem heard the cries of the children and at that moment, He took the decrees that He had written to punish the Jews and tore them up.<sup>9</sup> It wasn't enough for the *kehillah* to just "approve" what the Rav was doing, but rather the *kehillah* had to accept upon themselves the yolk of teshuvah as well for their sincere cries to reach Hashem.

There are many other facets of the Megillah that can be opened and learned from. We can at least hopefully take from this facet the spiritual responsibility we all have to each other and to be *zocheh* to be *mesakain* any *gezaryos ra'os* that face us as a *kehillah*.

Freilichen Purim!

<sup>7</sup> Eitz Yosef – Esther Rabbah 9:4

<sup>8</sup> The Navi Journey, Megillas Esther chapter 5

<sup>9</sup> Esther Rabbah 9:4, Yalkut Shimoni

# עַד דְּלֵא יָדַע: The Sobering Truth of Not Knowing

Jesse Asher

In a religion that emphasizes knowledge and that encourages us to constantly grow in our learning and in our understanding of תורה, we run the risk of forgetting the essential “not knowing”. This “not knowing” is the inescapable existential situation of human beings as well as the very fuel of the religious quest and of all religious experience and growth. אֵל reawakens us to our “not knowing” and, in doing so, helps to reset the entire framework of our עבודת ה'.

As we read the מגילה, we relive the experience of the Jews of שושן ה': ה', Hashem where are You? What is Your plan? What is Your רצון? With all the events going on around me, what is the common thread? How does all the weaving become a tapestry of ה' כבוד ה'? Even after the resolution and upon further reflection, we are left with unanswered questions: Why did it have to happen this way? Is there really a resolution when אסתר remains in the palace of אהשוורוש? The questions are humbling and unsettling.

Similar questions confront us as we reflect on the events of our own lives: Where were You, ה', in that moment, in

that event, and where are You in this moment? Why did You bless me or him or her with that experience? Where is your רצון and כבוד?

We know that people offer answers, often explaining world or personal events in the guise of a rational argument or appealing to suprarational principles that can be plugged into a formula to provide a solution. But the questions originate in our personal experience and continue to burn in the quiet of our consciousness. The answers don't satisfy the questions. Even the notion that ה' is bound by rationality is itself subject to debate. The tension simply won't be remediated by anything external, and to artificially quell or subdue the turmoil is to extinguish the wonder of living and the thirst/fuel for Divine encounter.

(Our sociocultural situation adds further complication: The information age and the supremacy of science and technology with the emphasis on measuring, collecting data, ready access to information and immediate answers reinforces the illusion of human omniscience and control and limit the

amount of time we sit with questions. "Not knowing" becomes a problem to be solved, an intolerable interference rather than the stark existential reality of humankind, immutable and irrevocable.)

Our "not knowing" is not a problem or an accident, and the purpose of religion is not to relieve existential tension but to direct and deepen it, to channel it. The moment we honestly confront our "not knowing" we touch infinity and the potential for powerful growth: We encounter ה'.

This truth is beautifully encapsulated in a few words that appear in many ספרים (at times, ספר בחינת עולם, is referenced as the source – see פרק יג'), in a variety of formulations: תכלית הידיעה שלא נדע: The aim/climax of knowledge is [the awareness] that we do not know. The as פר' תרומה (תרנ"ב) expresses it in שפת אמת: "תכלית הידיעה שנדע שא"א לידע": The aim/climax of knowledge is to know that it is impossible to know. (Though sometimes this notion is discussed in the more limited context of negative theology, we are discussing a more expansive application.)

This kind of "not knowing" is not a pedagogical technique, e.g., stimulating a question to invite and contain an answer, and is not merely intellectual humility. Rather, this is an existential "not knowing" associated with ענוה in

relation to one's knowledge and one's 'עבודת ה', in general:

...ואז שורה עליו ההכנעה הגדולה  
והשפלות לידע שלא עבד עדיין  
מאומה וזהו תכלית הידיעה בו ית"ש  
(ערבי נחל פר' בהר)

This humbling awareness is ultimately associated with אמונה:

כי תכלית הידיעה שלא נדע וְשָׁם  
עֵקֶר הָאֱמוּנָה

(לקוטי הלכות - ראש חדש ו:ג)

ומ"מ גם אחר ההתבוננות צריך  
שוב לחזור לאמונה פשוטה שהרי  
לא יוכל להשיג כל עומק הדברים עד  
תכליתם וכמאה"כ אמרתי אחכמה  
והיא רחוקה ממני עמוק עמוק מי  
ימצאנה ותכלית הידיעה הוא שלא  
נדע

(בית הלוי על התורה פר' כי תשא)

The בית הלוי is describing a cycle: Gaining knowledge, resuming the stance of אמונה/achieving the awareness that one is empty of knowledge, and then proceeding to increase knowledge (remarkably similar to the process described by ר' נתן – see the entire paragraph in לקוטי הלכות cited above). In the words of the משמואל:

ותכלית הידיעה אשר לא נדע, וישוב  
הכל לאמונה, ובשביל האמונה יבוא  
להשגות עוד יותר גדולות ויבין וידע  
יותר שעדיין לא התחיל לידע ויבוא  
עוד יותר לאמונה וחוזר חלילה עד  
בלי שיעור ותכלית, אבל סוף כל  
סוף היא האמונה

(פסח עמוד קה')

The *אמונה* described here is not an intellectual awareness of *ה'*'s existence, but an experiential encounter with *ה'*'s presence. That vulnerable moment of “not knowing” is characterized by the awesome and quieting experience of *ביטול* (i.e., the absorption of one’s soul into *ה'*) – and it is that moment that allows us to grow to higher levels of knowledge and *עבודה*. The *ערבי נחל* continues:

וביטול מציאות וזהו עצמה .  
התכללות קצת במקורו ועי"ז צומח  
ומתגדל ועולה מעלה מעלה עד רום  
...מעלה

We approach *ה'* and the taste of *ביטול*, of being included in *ה'*, in the Source, is what enables us to grow in knowledge and, more broadly, in *עבודת ה'*. In the metaphor the *ערבי נחל* presents, it is the decomposition of the seed in the soil that allows it to receive the vitality and energy it needs to grow. Similarly, it is when we become vulnerable and naked that we can be invigorated in our *עבודת ה'*. In the words of *חז"ל*:

דא"ר יוסי בר' חנינא אין דברי תורה  
מתקיימין אלא במי שמעמיד עצמו  
ערום עליהן שנאמר אני חכמה  
שכנתי ערמה. ר' יוחנן אמר אין  
דברי תורה מתקיימין אלא במי  
שמשים עצמו כמי שאינו שנאמר  
והחכמה מאין תמצא. (סוטה כא.)

When I become aware of my “not knowing,” I become aware that I am seeking, and that my soul is always seeking and yearning to reconnect with *ה'*, its Source. That perpetual movement *is* *אמונה*, the ever-prayer of the soul (see the beginning of Rav Kook’s *עולת ראייה*), and, once I am conscious of it, I activate *ביטול*, when, for just a moment, the flame of my soul becomes absorbed in the fire of *ה'*, refueling and reigniting my drive to climb higher in my *עבודת ה'* – to reach higher levels of *תורה* and *עבודה* – and, in turn, higher levels of “not knowing.”

The intoxication of *עד דלא ידע*, the *פורים*, carries a sobering truth: We become aware that we don’t know. May we be blessed to reach higher and higher levels on “not knowing,” *אמן*.

# On Megillah Reading שהחיינו

Elie Bashevkin

We read Megillas Esther twice on Purim; first at night and then again by day. The Gemara (מגילה ד.) presents the source for our practice:

ואמר רבי יהושע בן לוי: חייב אדם לקרות את המגילה בלילה ולשנותה ביום, שנאמר אלהי אקרא יומם ולא תענה ולילה ולא דמיה לי. סבור מינה: למקרייה בליליא, ולמינתא מתניתין דידה ביממא. אמר להו רבי ירמיה: לדידי מיפרשא לי מינה דרבי חייא בר אבא: כגון דאמרי אינשי: אעבור פרשתא דא ואתנייה.

*And Rabi Yehoshua Ben Levi said, a man is obligated the read the Megillah at night and reread it by day, as the pasuk states<sup>10</sup>, "My God, I will call out by day and You will not answer, and at night I will not be silent. They thought to read [the Megillah] at night and study its Mishnayos by day. Rabi Yirmiya said to them, it was explained to me from Rabi Chiyya Bar Abba, [Rabi Yehoshua Ben Levi meant] as*

*people say I will read over this section and review it.*

Rabi Yehoshua Ben Levi quotes a pasuk which hints to the Purim story and highlights petitioning Hashem repeatedly.<sup>11</sup> The upshot of the citation is to read the Megillah twice on Purim; once at night and once by day. The Netziv explains that the objective is to pre-read the Megillah at night in order to reread the Megillah by day with greater attention and comprehension.<sup>12</sup>

What about the שהחיינו? Reading the Megillah is an annual mitzvah which certainly warrants the recitation of ברכת שהחיינו.<sup>13</sup> The only question is whether to recite ברכת שהחיינו before the night and day Megillah readings or only before the nighttime Megillah reading. The Rambam rules that ברכת שהחיינו is recited only before the nighttime reading<sup>14</sup> and Rabbeinu Tam rules that ברכת שהחיינו is recited before both the daytime and nighttime readings.<sup>15</sup>

Rabbeinu Tam's ruling is striking. Why should we recite ברכת שהחיינו before performing the same mitzvah twice? Would anyone consider reciting ברכת

<sup>10</sup> תהלים כב:ג - וזה פרק 'למנצח על אילת השחר'. ואיתא בגמ' יומא כט. ומגילה טו: שאסתר אמרה ונאמרה עליה

<sup>11</sup> ע"פ רש"י מגילה ד. ד"ה אקרא וד"ה יזמרח כבוד. ועיין ספר הררי קדם חלק א' סימן ריז לביאור מחודשת בלימוד זה

<sup>12</sup> הקדמת הנצי"ב להעמק דבר

<sup>13</sup> מגילה כא: ועיין תוס' סוכה מו. ד"ה העושה (הב') דתקנו ברכת שהחיינו על "מצוה שיש עמה שמחה...[ו]דאיתי מזמן לזמן"

<sup>14</sup> פרק א הלכות מגילה הלכה ג

<sup>15</sup> תוספות מגילה ד. ד"ה חייב מביא שיטה זו בשם ר"י ובשאר ראשונים מובא בשם ר"ת

on the first two nights of Chanukah?<sup>16</sup>

One suggestion is the two ברכות שהחיינו play different roles. The Meiri suggests the nighttime ברכות שהחיינו relates to reading the מגילה and the daytime ברכות שהחיינו relates to the holiday of Purim.<sup>17</sup> The פני יהושע suggests the opposite: the nighttime ברכת שהחיינו relates to the holiday of Purim and daytime ברכת שהחיינו relates to the mitzvah of reading the Megillah.<sup>18</sup> However, the Meiri rejects this general approach because ברכת שהחיינו is recited only on a holiday which kiddush is recited, and Purim has no kiddush.

A popular answer is that Rabbeinu Tam's ruling presumes the two Megillah readings are not identical. Since the two Megillah readings are distinct, the ברכת שהחיינו is recited on both readings.

Tosfos<sup>19</sup> brands the daytime reading as distinctly עיקר for three reasons:

1. The primary פירסומי ניסא is accomplished during the day. Therefore, the עיקר Megillah reading is during the day.
2. Rabi Yehoshua Ben Levi's pasuk first mentions אקרא יומם before

ולילה ולא דמיה לי which implies the daytime Megillah reading is primary.

3. The words נזכרים ונעשים form a היקש linking Megillah reading to the other mitzvohs of Purim.<sup>20</sup> Just as the other mitzvohs of Purim are performed during the daytime,<sup>21</sup> so is the Megillah reading.

The Rashba<sup>22</sup> brands the daytime reading as distinctly עיקר for two additional reasons:

4. Mishnayos<sup>23</sup> present one list of mitzvohs which are performed by day and a second list of mitzvohs which are performed at night. Megillah is only present on the daytime list.
5. Small villages were permitted to read Megillah in the large towns on the market day preceding Purim.<sup>24</sup> It is clear this permission refers to only the daytime reading. The villagers were never required to arrive at the market town one evening earlier in order to read the Megillah at night.

<sup>16</sup> דמיון זה שמעתי מהרב ברוך סימן שליט"א

<sup>17</sup> בית הבחירה מגילה ד. ד"ה חייב

<sup>18</sup> פני יהושע מגילה ד. תד"ה חייב

<sup>19</sup> תוספות מגילה ד. ד"ה חייב

<sup>20</sup> מגילה ב. ושם יז. - נזכרים = קריאת המגילה, ונעשים = שאר מצות היום

<sup>21</sup> מגילה ז: אמר רבא סעודת פורים שאכלה בלילה לא יצא ידי חובתו

<sup>22</sup> מגילה ד. ד"ה חייב

<sup>23</sup> מגילה כ. כ-כ:

<sup>24</sup> מגילה ב.

Following this line of reasoning, the Nodeh B'Yehuda brands the daytime Megillah reading as דברי קבלה (a mitzvah based upon words in נ"ך and, in some respects, carrying the weight of a מצוה (דאורייתא) and the nighttime reading as simply דרבנן.<sup>25</sup> Similarly, the Binyan Shlomo<sup>26</sup> asserts that during the time of the Mishnah the Megillah was only read during the day and it was only at a later date that the nighttime reading was enacted by Rabi Yehoshua Ben Levi.<sup>27</sup> Accordingly, the Aruch HaShulchan nearly rules that a person who has only one chance to read the Megillah on Purim should choose the daytime reading because it is עיקר. However, he concludes to choose the nighttime on account of המצות על המצות.<sup>28</sup>

What about the Rambam's ruling? Since the two Megillah readings are clearly distinct, why is ברכת שהחיינו not repeated?

The Biur HaGra explains the Rambam is supported by the Gemara (סוכה מו.) which permits a person to recite ברכת שהחיינו on a Sukka and Lulav before Sukkos. The Gra reasons that certainly reciting ברכת שהחיינו on Purim but before the time of the Megillah reading would be encouraged as well.<sup>29</sup>

The Shulchan Aruch<sup>30</sup> rules to say one ברכת שהחיינו at night like the Rambam. This is the common Sefardic practice. The Rama rules to say two ברכות שהחיינו like Rabbeinu Tam. The Ashkenazic communities are יוצאים ביד רמ"א.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>25</sup> שו"ת נודע ביהודה מהדורא קמא - אורח חיים סימן מא וז"ל נלע"ד דקריאת הלילה לאו מ"ע דדברי הקבלה רק קריאת היום דבמגילה ימים נזכרים ונעשים כתיב ולא לילות. ועיין בתוס' בדף ד' ע"א בד"ה חייב וכו' ומה שאמרו חייב לקרות בלילה היינו מצוה דרבנן אבל לא נרמז במגילת אסתר.

ועיין בתשובה מהגאון הרב שכטר שליט"א שמביא דעת החולקים שמקרא מגילה אינו מדברי קבלה ודן בזה הלכה למעשה:

<https://www.yutorah.org/lectures/lecture.cfm/987942/rabbi-hershel-schachter/piskei-corona-58-inyanei-purim>

<sup>26</sup> הרב שלמה בכהן זצ"ל (1828-1905) היה אב"ד בוילנא ומגיה של ש"ס דפוס ווילנא. ושמעתי מהגאון הרב שכטר שליט"א שדיבר עם קרובי משפחה שלימדו בYU שהבנין שלמה היה מגיה הש"ס בעל פה.

<sup>27</sup> וז"ל בשו"ת בנין שלמה ס' נח - ועוד נ"ל והוא העיקר לפענ"ד בזמן המשנה עדיין לא היה התקנה לקרות המגילה גם בלילה דהא במגילה לא הוזכר רק ימים ורק דבימי ריב"ל התקינו שיהו

קורין גם בלילה וסמכו אקרא דאלהי אקרא יומם ולא תענה ולילה ולא דומיה לי. ...אלא וודאי דלא נתקנה בזמן המשנה כלל

ולכאורא זה הוא ג"כ דעת הגר"א, דעיין בביאור הגר"א או"ח סימן תרצב ד"ה וי"א שמציינ תוספתא מס' מגילה פ"ב להסביר שיטת ר"ת דקריאת היום הוא העיקר מעל קריאת הלילה. וז"ל הגר"א: קראה בלילה לא יצא ידי חובתו אמ' ר' יוסי מעשה בר' יוחנן בן נורי שקראה בצפורי בלילה אמר לו אין שעת סנה ראייה עכ"ל. ועיין פירוש מנחת ביכורים על התוספתא שם שמציינ ב' פירושים בתוספתא. פירוש אחד - דאיירי במי שקרא מגילה פעמיים בלילה, ופירוש שני - כמו שו"ת בנין שלמה. ולב' פירושים אלו בתוספתא רק פירוש הב' מסביר שיטת ר"ת.

<sup>28</sup> ערוך השלחן או"ח תרפז סעיף ג

<sup>29</sup> ביאור הגר"א או"ח סימן תרצב ד"ה וביום

<sup>30</sup> שולחן ערוך או"ח תרצב סעיף א

<sup>31</sup> ע"פ שמות יד:ח

# Achashverosh Unmasked

Jordan Fabian

The Purim story is a deceptively simple one, well-known to children and adults alike. However, upon closer examination many elements of the Purim story are not easily understandable and even contradictory. The actual role of Achashverosh, the interplay between Esther and Mordechai, and the reason that Achashverosh suddenly turns on Haman, his erstwhile conspirator, are all difficult to fully explain. Even the opening scene in the Megillah, which is about Achashverosh's party that the Jews attended, and which was the cause of the initial decree against the Jews, is somewhat problematic.

The Midrash explains that Achashverosh had calculated that the 70 years of Jewish exile that the Navi had prophesied had passed and yet they were still in exile. The party was a celebration that the Jews were not being redeemed. Against the directive of Mordechai their leader, the Jews attended that party knowing exactly what they were celebrating!

There are other aspects to the Purim story that are equally puzzling at face value. The role of Achashverosh as understood in a basic reading of the Megillah is that of a bumbling stooge. However, even a slightly more rigorous analysis shows the difficulties with that approach. The Gemara gives a parable to explain the interaction between Haman

and Achashverosh when Haman requested permission to kill the Jews. One (Achashverosh) is compared to a man with a deep hole on his property, and one (Haman) is compared to one with a surplus pile of dirt. When the man with the pile of dirt offered to pay the man with hole to take the dirt, the man with the hole replied, "pay me? I have a hole and you have the dirt!" Achashverosh was just as much, if not greater, an enemy to the Jews than Haman. However, Achashverosh was more cunning than Haman, better understood the process by which Hashem runs the world and attempted to take advantage of it. Achashverosh's role in the story is deliberately obscured, because at the end of the day, he was still king and the Megillah, the letter written to publicize the miracle, was written and disseminated during his reign.

In order to fully understand the entire picture, it is necessary to appreciate the timeline of the story, as well as the historical background. The Megillah opens with the reign of Achashverosh and the party that he made during his third year on the throne. It was this party that the Jews of Shushan attended - against the advice of Mordechai and the Sanhedrin - which set the events of the Purim story into motion. It was not however, until nine years later that the

consequences of that decision occurred. Namely, the decree of Haman against the Jews.

The Gemara in Megillah (12b) discusses two different opinions regarding the language in the Megillah about the genealogy of Mordechai who descended from the tribes of Benyamin (his father) and Yehuda (his mother). One opinion is complimentary where both tribes claim credit for producing the leader who saved the Jewish people, and one opinion is decidedly not so. In the latter opinion, the average person blamed the tribe of Yehuda, for King David not killing Shimei (an ancestor of Mordechai), although Shimei was liable to the death penalty. In consequence, Mordecai was born, against whom Haman was jealous, leading Haman to issue a decree against all the Jewish people. The complaint against the tribe of Benyamin referred to the fact that Shaul, who was from the tribe of Benyamin, did not kill the Amalake king Agag immediately, thereby allowing children to be born from him, eventually resulting in Haman, who caused suffering to the Jewish people. It is clear however, from this second opinion that the Congregation of Israel, or the average Jew blamed Mordechai for the situation that they found themselves in. If not for the fact that Mordechai had gone out of his way to antagonize Haman, or if his ancestors had done what they supposed to do, we would not be in this situation! It seems that far from accepting responsibility for the original sin, the

majority of people viewed Mordechai as being wrong then - for telling people not to go to the party - and wrong now for antagonizing Haman. From the perspective of the Jews at the time, the distance between one event and the other made it impossible to see the linkage. In their view, Mordechai (who had been wrong about the party) was wrong yet again. It is only from our vantage point, where we can see the entire story from beginning to end, that we can understand what is really going on behind the scenes.

Once Achashverosh's actual role as an arch-villain becomes clearer, this leads to other questions. The climax of the Megillah is undoubtedly the scene where Esther masterfully plays Haman and Achashverosh against each other until she finally accuses Haman of planning to kill her and her people. Yet it is difficult to understand Achashverosh's surprise in light of the fact the Achashverosh knew all along about Haman's plot and was an active participant. In fact, the Gemara says that Esther's initial reaction was to point her finger at Achashverosh when he asked her who was the one who plotted against her. To prevent this, an angel pushed her finger towards Haman. Knowing this, how can we understand Achashverosh's reaction?

As king, Achashverosh had no real claim to the throne, he worked his way up to power and this was one source of contention between him and his first wife Vashti. Vashti never let him forget that *she* was the one with the royal

lineage. In addition, Achashverosh's hold on the kingdom itself was tenuous, as the Midrash says that he had lost control over areas of it. A ruler in such a situation lives in constant fear of plots and machinations against him, and for Achashverosh, this increased after he executed his only connection to royalty: his wife Vashti. This feeling was even further established after Mordechai revealed the assassination conspiracy of Bigsan and Seresh. A ruler in this state of affairs relies on his ability to either convince people that they're better off with him than against him or the ability to sniff out plots before they come to fruition. With this understanding of the environment of the Purim story, it is possible to explain the previously mentioned questions.

Achashverosh knew exactly what he was doing. He was a Rasha of the most dangerous kind, in the mold of Bilam and Pharaoh. He understood the basic rules by which Hashem runs the world and attempted to use them as a tool to attack the Jewish people. When Haman came up with his plan Achashverosh was overjoyed. However, he was still a king with a country to rule, and in that role he made a mistake. When Mordechai alerted him to the plot, Achashverosh never rewarded him! If a king wants to convince people that they're better off with him in charge and that it's worth it to stick your head out and get involved, then the king better make it clear that whoever does help him will be

handsomely rewarded. Achashverosh forgot this basic rule of palace intrigue.

Later, when Esther risked her life to visit the king unannounced, Achashverosh assumed that only a critically important reason would prompt her to risk her life. The obvious explanation was that there was some time sensitive information, regarding a threat to the king that she needed to tell him. But all Esther did was push off the revelation of that information to a later date, and at the same time hint to the king that Haman was involved. Why else would Haman be invited to a private party with the queen? After the party when Esther still didn't tell Achashverosh, he was more convinced than ever that this was vitally important information that he needed to know. But why wasn't Esther telling him? Achashverosh assumed that it must be that she was unconvinced about whose side to support. This is why the king couldn't sleep that night. Why was no one telling him about this impending plot? What was going on?

The book that the king was reviewing, contained a list of favors given, and people who could be expected to support the king. It was at this point that the King realized his mistake and at the same time increased his suspicion of Haman, whose son was reluctant to reveal that the king owed a favor to Mordechai, and whose own suggestion as to how the king could reward someone, indicated royal ambitions. At the same time however, he loved Haman's suggestion, because it was exactly what he needed to do:

publicly announce in the most obvious manner possible, “this is what I do for people who support me”.

At the party immediately after, Achashverosh’s suspicions of Haman (who was possibly plotting with Esther) were still strong. As a result, when Esther dramatically accused Haman of plotting, Achashverosh lost control of his emotions and left the room to calm down. At that point when Haman began to plead for his life and it appeared that he had actually assaulted the queen, it was too late. Achashverosh was forced to execute Haman and rescind the decree against the Jews.

One of the lessons that we should take away from Purim is the difficulty of living in the physical world and still comprehending the bigger picture. It should be clear that we are unable to fully grasp the ramifications of our own actions, much less pontificate on the proper course of action for countries and nations as a whole. The importance in following Daas Torah and accepting what our rebbeim and teachers say is part of this as well and should be something that we focus on constantly, especially during the events of today’s day and age.

## חיוב נשים במקרא מגילה

Dovi Flug

The Gemara in Megillah 14b, in its discussion of who is חייב in the מצוה of מגילה, says that women are חייב because of the law of אף אף, they too [women] were part of the miracle of פורים. From this דין, we see that women can be מוציא men in מגילה because they are both חייב in the מצוה.

תוס' also tries to infer from the fact that women are מחויבות that we should allow women to be מוציא men in מגילה. However תוס' quote the opinion of the בה"ג who holds that women can only be מוציא other women but not men. ערכין תוס' also quotes the בה"ג as saying that the rule of אף אף says that women are only חייב in קריאה but not in שמיעה.

The שולחן ערוך (אורח חיים תרפ"ט סעיף א-ב) writes the following הלכות:

**א** הכל חייבים בקריאתה אנשים ונשים וגרים ועבדים משוחררים...  
**ב** אחד הקורא ואחד השומע מן הקורא יצא ידי חובתו והוא שישמע ממי שהוא חייב בקריאתה לפיכך אם היה הקורא חרש או קטן או שוטה השומע ממנו לא יצא וי"א שהנשים אינם מוציאות את האנשים:

**א**) All are obligated in reading [the מגילה]: men, women, resident aliens, and freed slaves...

**ב**) Whether one reads [the מגילה themselves] or hears from someone else who reads - he has fulfilled his חיוב. Provided that he has heard the

מגילה from someone who is obligated in reading it. Therefore, if the reader was a deaf-mute, or a minor, or mentally infirm, one who hears from him does not fulfill [his obligation]. And there are those who say that women do not fulfill the obligation for men.

It would seem that according to the יש אומרים the שולחן ערוך is saying that the reason why women cannot be מוציא men is because women are not obligated in קריאה like men, but rather only in שמיעה. It would seem from the שולחן ערוך's language that in order to be מוציא somebody else the קורא must be obligated in קריאה. This יש אומרים which the מחבר quotes would seem to be the שיטה of the בה"ג.

According to this, the משמעות of the בה"ג, that a woman can be מוציא other women, is puzzling. How can a woman be מוציא other women in their חיוב of מגילה if the woman who is reading herself is only חייב in שמיעה and not in קריאה - thereby rendering her קריאה invalid for fulfilling others' obligations in מגילה?

The מרדכי writes in the name of the רמ"א:

וי"א אם האשה קוראה לעצמה מברכת לשמוע מגילה שאינה חייבת בקריאה [מרדכי פ"ק דמגילה]:

*There are some who say, if a woman reads for herself, she says a ברכה of "to hear the megillah," because she is not obligated in reading.*

Perhaps we can infer from the language of the רמ"א (from the fact that in the רמ"א's text of the ברכה mention "...וצונו לשמוע..." we are commanded in hearing alone) that according to the רמ"א there are two entirely separate מצוות in the category of מצות מגילה which have no connection to one another whatsoever. The first is the מצוה of מקרא מגילה, and the second is the מצוה of שמיעת מגילה. While men, according to the בה"ג, are מחויב in both מצוות of מגילה, women are only חייב in the second one. We see from here a concept that even though the woman is not commanded in the actual קיום of קריאת מגילה-- and no actual קיום מצוה is accomplished by her "מעשה קריאה"-- nevertheless, her קריאה can still be used as a "הכשר מצוה" to enable her to fulfill her obligation of שמיעת מגילה. In other words, because of her obligation to hear the מגילה, her קריאה attains stature as a הכשר מצוה (ie. a proper קריאה).

With this we can begin to understand why the בה"ג would allow women to read for other women as well. Since the מעשה קריאה of a woman comes to serve as a הכשר מצוה we can consider her קריאה a מוציא קריאה for the purpose of being מוציא other women (whose מצוות מגילה in חיוב).

also does not include the מצוה of קריאה in their שמיעה מצוה. Nevertheless, because the קריאה of a woman is not an inherent מצוה קיום, it would not be sufficient to be מוציא a man.

Perhaps we can bring out this concept more clearly from the חיי אדם. The חיי אדם suggests a different נוסח הברכה for a woman who reads מגילה for herself:

...אם אין לה מי שיקרא לפנייה  
תקרא היא לעצמה במגילה כשרה  
ומברכת יאקב"ו לשמוע מקרא  
מגילה".

*If [a woman] does not have a man to read [מגילה] for her she can read to herself and recite the following ברכה, ... who commanded us to hear the **reading** of מגילה.*

It would seem (לעני"ד) that the חיי אדם holds that the woman's commandment is surely one in שמיעה alone. However, says the חיי אדם, this קיום of a woman's שמיעה is not limited to a שמיעה of a קריאה performed by a man, but rather any מקרא מגילה which is accessible to a woman can be viewed as a קריאה כשירה for the woman to be מחויב her מקיים of-- the מצוה of שמיעה. Therefore, the חיי אדם holds that the ברכה for a woman who reads מגילה to herself is not simply "לשמוע מגילה" but rather, "... who commanded us to hear any קריאה which can enable our קיום מצוה of שמיעת מגילה.

# Pirsumei Nisa, a Cheresh and the Megillah

Yossi Goldman

An important aspect of the mitzvah of Mikra Megillah is that it is not just a remembrance of the *nes* that Hashem did for the Jews during the times of Mordechai and Esther, but also to publicize the *nes* or *pirsumei nisa*. The Shulchan Aruch (Siman 690 Sif 18) writes that one is supposed to hear the megillah with a minyan of ten people for *pirsumei nisa*. In fact, the idea of *pirsumei nisa* is so important that the mitzvah of Mikra Megillah takes precedence over almost any other mitzvah, and according to some achronim even a mitzva deoraisa that is *overes*. This would mean that according to those achronim, if one only has the opportunity to hear the Megillah when it is almost the zeman for Krias Shema he should hear the Megillah and miss the mitzva deoraisa of saying Shema!

On the surface it would appear that despite the importance of *pirsumei nisa* it is not a meakev in the mitzvah of Mikra Megillah. The Rema, quoting the Bais Yosef, paskens that if one missed a minyan for megillah he may read it on his own and is not required to gather a minyan to hear the megillah with him. He explains that the *pirsumei nisa* was already accomplished with the public

reading and is no longer necessary for his personal reading.

Reb Moshe Feinstein in the Igros Moshe (Orach Chaim Chelek Daled Siman 105) explains that despite its importance, *pirsumei nisa* is only a hidur mitzvah and not an integral chelek which is meakev the mitzvah. Rav Moshe extends this idea to the mitzvah of ner Chanukah and paskens that when one is unable to light the menorah in a way that will accomplish *pirsumei nisa* he is still required to light and may even recite a beracha.

The source for these halachos is the Gemara Megillah (daf 5) that presents a machlokes between Rav and Rav Asi if one is required to read the Megillah with a minyan. Rav says that it's not required while Rava Asi says that it is. In this case, the halacha follows Rav and there is no requirement to hear the megillah with a minyan. Interestingly, Rav agrees with Rava Asi in a situation when one is reading the megillah before the zeman on the 12th or 13 of Adar.

There is a related discussion about whether a cheresh, in this case referring to one who cannot hear but can speak, is obligated to read the Megillah. The Rambam (Perek 1 of Hilchos Megillah)

paskens like the Mishnah in Megillah (daf 19) that states that one may not be yotzei Mikra Megillah by hearing a cheresh, (can speak but can't hear), shotah, or katan read the megillah. The Rambam's interpretation is that because they are not chayav in megillah themselves they cannot be motzi someone else. There is much discussion as to the source of this halacha, but the Achronim (Kesef Mishna, Lechem Mishna) explain that because a cheresh cannot hear the words of the Megillah reading he cannot fulfill the mitzvah of Mikra Megillah. They explain that although for other mitzvos like krias shema, birchas hamazon, other berachos etc. one is not required to hear the words come out of his mouth, when it comes to megillah it is a requirement because of the inyan of pirsumei nisa. Pirsumei nisa cannot be fulfilled properly if one cannot hear the words being read.

Aside from the difficulties of how this halacha is compatible with the Gemara's understanding of the Mishnah, the Rambam seems to be saying that pirsumei nisa is a full-blown requirement in the mitzvah of megillah. This seems completely incompatible with the aforementioned halacha that one is not required to hear the megillah in public at all. Why would a cheresh be patur from megillah because he cannot fulfill pirsumei nisa if pirsumei nisa is not even a requirement?

To try to understand this better, we can suggest an approach in Rashi's explanation of Rav Asi's position that one is required to read the megillah with a minyan even on Purim itself. Rashi says that Rav Asi would agree that if one had no option of reading with a minyan he would still be required to read it without a minyan and Rav Asi only meant that there is a mitzvah to read it with a minyan. The implication is that Rav Asi holds that there is a mitzvah requirement for a minyan for pirsumei nisa which is in addition to the basic mitzvah of reading the megillah. It is not just a hidur mitzvah it is a chiyuv. But despite it being a chiyuv the minyan for pirsumei nisa is not essential to the basic mitzvah of megillah, it is an additional chiyuv on top of the basic mitzvah. Aside from the halacha that Rashi mentioned, another nafka mina would be what would happen if one thought that they would not have a minyan so they read it by themselves and then he was able to find a minyan. In this case Rav Asi would say that one is required to read the megillah again. Rashi explains Rav's opinion who says that a minyan is not required on Purim itself for mikra megillah, that one is yotzei pirsumei nisa in a small way by reading himself because by each person reading the megillah even by themselves, the result is that the nes is well publicized and in a way, he is yotzei the requirement of pirsumei nisa.

We see from Rashi that there is an aspect of *pirsumei nisa* even when reading the megillah alone. By using this idea one can suggest that even Rav holds that *pirsumei nisa* is really a *miakev* requirement that one can fulfill even when reading the megillah without a minyan. This could explain how the Rambam who says that the requirement of *pirsumei nisa* disqualifies a *cheresh* can be consistent with the halacha of Rav.

However, Rashi likely did not mean that the *pirsumei nisa* in Rav is essential to the basic mitzvah of megillah. We know that in Rav Asi's opinion, Rashi said that the *pirsumei nisa* of reading with a minyan is an additional *chiyuv* on top of the basic mitzvah of mikra megillah so there's no basis to say that the *pirsumei nisa* of each individual reading in their home is an essential requirement in Rav. Additionally, if Rashi holds that *pirsumei nisa* can be essential, why would he assume that reading in public is not essential in Rav Asi too? The most logical conclusion, therefore, is that Rashi holds that *pirsumei nisa* is never an essential *chiyuv* in the mitzvah. This, however, will not help us completely understand the Rambam who implies that a *cheresh* is completely *patur* from reading the megillah.

It appears that the Biur Halacha understood the Rambam this way. He asks on the Rambam that although a *cheresh* cannot be *motzi* others because

he cannot fulfill *pirsumei nisa*, why wouldn't he be *chayav* to read the megillah himself? The only way to understand this question is if he holds that *pirsumei nisa* is a secondary additional *chiyuv* on top of the basic mitzvah which a *cheresh* is not *chayav* in while they would be *chayav* in the basic mitzvah of mikra megillah.

To understand the Rambam we can look at the gemara in Megillah daf 19. The gemara at first compares the halacha of the mishna that says that a *cheresh* cannot be *motzi* others in mikra megillah to a *machlokes* whether or not one can be *yotzei* the mitzvah of krias shema if they do not hear the words they are saying. The basis for this requirement by shema is based on the word "shema" the words should be "heard". Chazal use the idea of being misaken the mitzvah of megillah "k'ain deoraisa" and also require the words to be heard. The gemara makes similar comparisons between shema and birchas hamazon and other berachos as well. Based on this comparison the gemara suggests that the mishna is not consistent with the halacha which *paskens* that one is *yotzei* shema even without hearing his words. This seems difficult according to the Rambam who says that the reason a *cheresh* is not *chayav* in megillah is because of *pirsumei nisa*. Seemingly there is no comparison to Shema at all.

I'd suggest that there are 2 inherently different types of dibur or speech. One type is a basic expression through speech while the other is an announcement or proclamation that is intended to be heard and understood by the one hearing it. "Shema" means that the words should be proclaimed to be heard and understood by those hearing the proclamation. The proclamation does not necessarily have to be made to someone else; it can even be to one's self. Shema may not just be a dibur, it may be understood as a proclamation of Hashem's oneness. A beracha may be understood as a proclamation of Hashem's goodness and Megillah may be understood as a proclamation of Hashem's miracles.

With this idea one can say that the idea of *pirsumei nisa* is not just that the miracle should be publicized by public readings of the megillah, it defines what type of *kria* or *dibur* is required when reading the megillah. The idea of publicizing the *nes* requires that the megillah be read in a way that is not merely a *dibur* but rather a proclamation that can be heard. So while actually publicizing the miracle by reading in public may not have been made a requirement, proclaiming the miracle in private is a requirement.

The Rambam understood the gemara's conclusion to be that even though we *pasken* that by *shema* there is no requirement of hearing the words, or a

proclamation, and there is no *k'ain deoraisa*, *chazal* were still able to be *mesaken* that by megillah one is required to hear the words because of the idea of *pirsumei nisa*. This allows the mishna that exempts a *cheresh* from megillah to be consistent with the accepted opinion that by *shema* there's no requirement to hear the words.

In conclusion, the idea of *pirsumei nisa* is an important *inyan* in the mitzvah of *mikra megillah*. Whether it is just a *hiddur mitzvah* like Reb Moshe suggests, a secondary *chiyuv* as Rashi implies, or it is even the very understanding of the way we read the megillah as was suggested for the Rambam. There are many reasons why *pirsumei nisa* is so important but certainly one of them is based on the gemara that explains the words "*keimu v'kiblu hayihudim*" that the Jews at the time of the Purim miracle reaccepted the Torah. The gemara goes so far as to say that this *kabalas hatorah* which was from the *simchas hanes* was an even greater *kaballas hatorah* than the one on Har Sinai because it was completely out of the *ahavas hashem* that they felt. There certainly was *ahavas Hashem* and *simchas hatorah* at Har Sinai too. It is hard to imagine a greater *simcha* than they had at Har Sinai with their incredible closeness to Hashem yet apparently it didn't compare to the *simcha* and devotion that they

experienced through the miracles of Purim. It is also incredible that the greatest spiritual growth that Klall Yisrael experienced was not through the yisurim and scare of Haman's decree. No doubt that they achieved great levels of teshuvah as the gemara says "Achashveirosh giving his ring to Haman accomplished more teshuva than

all 48 neviim" but apparently experiencing the miracle of redemption propelled them to even greater heights of teshuvah and kaballas Hatorah.

May we all be zoche to experience a great aliyah this Purim.

# Holy Instincts

Aryeh Gottlieb

Simcha and drinking wine are common themes that run through many of our yomim tovim. Purim, however, is unusual because it has a unique feature of becoming intoxicated from drinking wine. This is based on the Gemara in Maseches Megillah (7b) that quotes רבא who says מיחייב איניש לבסומי בפורי'א עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי. Most Rishonim understand from this Gemara that there is a mitzvah to become intoxicated on Purim<sup>32</sup>. This is troubling because the תורה and נביאים mention the pitfalls of becoming intoxicated in many places. We need not look any further than Parshas Noach to see what terrible things can happen from drinking too much. If that is the case, why would Chazal institute such a mitzvah on Purim?

The רבה אליה says the reason for this unusual mitzvah is because all of the miracles that occurred in the Megillah came through drinking. All of the events that ultimately led to the Jewish people being saved were preceded by משחה. This answer requires further analysis. Normally we shouldn't drink but because Shushan was full of parties we should celebrate by drinking also?

I heard from my Rebbe, Rav Eliyahu Soloveichik Shlit"a, that in order to understand this we need to analyze the personality and behavior of אחשוורוש. We see from the numerous events of the Megillah that אחשוורוש was a very impulsive person who was driven by momentary whims. He is described as a טוב לב, a person who didn't consider the repercussions of his actions. He made decisions based on what appealed to him in the moment and what his instincts drove him to do. אסתר understood this about אחשוורוש, and knew that if she could get him angry at the המן even for one moment, he would kill him.

In general, one's intellectual faculties inhibit a person from following his impulses and enables him to make sound judgment. When one drinks wine, however, his intellectual faculties are diminished, and he acts based on his instincts and impulses. The Gemara in Maseches Eiruvim (65b) says בשלשה דברים אדם ניכר בכוסו ובכיסו ובכעסו. If you want to see who a person really is, see how he acts when he is under the influence of wine. Throughout the year, we are supposed to demonstrate that we can control our impulses in order to serve

<sup>32</sup> למרות זאת עיין בחיי אדם (קנ"ה:ל) וז"ל: ולכן חייבו חכמים להשתכר ולפחות לשתות יותר מהרגלו כדי לזכור הנס הגדול ואמנם

היודע בעצמו שיזולזל אז במצוה מן המצוות כנט"י וברכה וברהמ"ז או שלא יתפלל מנחה או מעריב או שינהוג קלות ראש מוטב שלא ישתכר וכל מעשיו יהיה לשם שמים.

properly. But it isn't enough to just serve Hashem with our intellect. We not only have to control our impulses and instincts, but we also have to sanctify them. We have to train our instincts to be impulsively directed to serve Hashem. When someone drinks wine, it reveals his impulses. Purim is a special day where we demonstrate that we are impulsively

and instinctively committed to serving Hashem.. עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי means that a person should not just intellectually know the difference between המן and מרדכי, but instinctively know the difference between them. This is how we react to the miracles of Purim. We demonstrate that we are the exact opposite of אהשורוש and that we have instincts of קדושה.

# Simchas Purim

Rabbi Ariel Greenberg

Part of Purim is being happy. How do we become happy? Are we supposed to be happy? Is there even a mitzvah in the Torah to be happy? The answer is Yes!

Once a year, farmers bring bikkurim to the Beis Hamikdash. Bringing bikkurim is a mitzvah which shows our thanks and appreciation to HaKadosh Boruch Hu for His gifts to us. But that's not all. There is also a mitzvah to make a verbal declaration of hakoras hatov:

דברים כו:ה - עֲנִיתָ וְאַמַּרְתָּ לְפָנָי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ...

שם:יא - וְשִׂמְחָתָּ בְּכָל הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ

Isn't it enough to bring bikkurim to Yerushalayim? Why must we make a verbal statement too?

The Sefer Hachinuch<sup>33</sup> explains that just bringing bikkurim is not enough. We must make a speech as well because speech affects how we think and act.

So what are we saying in this verbal declaration? What's so special about it?

Rabenu Bechaye explains that this declaration has us remember the bad old days. When I was on the verge of annihilation and subjugated to slavery

<sup>33</sup> ספר החינוך - מצוה תרו - מצות קריאה על הבכורים: משרשי המצוה, לפי שהאדם מעורר מחשבותיו ומצייר בלבבו האמת בכח דברי פיו. על כן בהיטיב אליו השם ברוך הוא ובברכו אותו ואת אדמתו לעשות פירות, וזכה להביאם לבית אלהינו, ראוי לו לעורר לבבו בדברי פיהו ולחשוב כי הכל הגיע אליו מאת אדון העולם. ויספר חסדיו יתברך עלינו ועל כל עם ישראל דרך כלל וכו'

and intense torture. Then I prayed for help and Hashem saved me. Then Hashem brought me to Eretz Yisrael and gave me land to farm. It's only after going through all that, did I get these gifts from You, Hashem.<sup>34</sup>

The pesukim say the recognition that my life wasn't so good in the past, and any present good exists only after much davening as a gift from You Hashem, will bring us to simcha. Bikkurim is the source of the mitzvah to be happy. And Rabbenu Bechaye teaches us that this obligation really always applies.

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So let's try to figure out the process.  
How do I make myself happy?

דברים כו:יא - וְשִׂמְחָתָּ בְּכָל הַטּוֹב אֲשֶׁר נָתַן לְךָ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ

REAL Jewish Simcha is not empty simcha based on chas veshalom feeling an external "high" or just accidentally being in a good mood.

דברים כח:מז - תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא עֲבַדְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוֹב לֵבָב מְרַב פֶּלַ

<sup>34</sup> רבנו בחיי על דברים פרק כו פסוק ה: הכוונה במליצת הפרשה הזאת שיתחייב האדם לתת אל לבו בזמן מעלתו ושלותו, זמן הירידה והשפלות שהיה לו. וכן אמר קהלת (ז, יד) ביום טובה היה בטוב וביום רעה ראה. ביאורו ביום טובה ראה ביום רעה, וזה כדי שיתבונן ביתרון שיש לו ואז יודה על זה לשם יתעלה הטוב והמטיב לו:

Nor is it based on having external comforts, which keep us from facing the challenges that will require us to develop true simcha.

Simcha is a state that requires developing an attitude. It's a process that requires work.<sup>35</sup> It's facing challenges and still appreciating the good. Seeing the silver lining in every black cloud. It's based on context and meaning and not based on emptiness.

A child's moods can fluctuate from minute to minute. One moment he feels his needs are met; the next moment he cries that his needs are not being met. And at a young age he can't create stability.

We adults are lucky! We adults can plan our happiness. We can choose to decide that our needs are already being met. I can plan to be happy for an hour. I can plan to be happy for a day or for a week. Of course, our plans don't always succeed, but we certainly can develop an attitude and a habit for the long term. We are much better off!

That attitude of happiness is built by focusing on what we didn't have in the past and are lucky to have now.<sup>36</sup>

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What other mitzvos require simcha?  
Through what other mitzvos can we feel

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<sup>35</sup> רמב"ם יד החזקה הלכות לולב פרק ח הלכה טו: השמחה שישמח אדם בעשיית המצוה ובאהבת האל שצוה בהן עבודה גדולה היא.  
<sup>36</sup> על דרך הרמז: השורש "שמח" בנוי מתוך 'שימת המח'. והוא להתבונן "ש" יצאתי "מ" עבדות ל "ח"רות.

and develop true simcha every single day?

### 1) Growth in Torah:

מסכת אבות ו: ו - וְהִתּוֹרָה נְקִיּוֹת  
בְּאַרְבָּעִים וְשָׂמוּנָה דְבָרִים, וְאֵלּוּ הֵן...  
בְּשִׂמְחָה.

תהילים יט: ט - פְּקוּדֵי ה' יִשְׂרָיִם מְשִׂמְחֵי לֵב.

Acquiring Torah requires simcha and learning Torah is a behavior of simcha. We need to acquire simcha to acquire the Torah. That simcha must also be based on something.

I heard many times from Rav Wolbe ZT"l that Torah learning connects us to Hashem. Hashem is telling us something out of love. The act of connecting to Hashem is a natural state of a Jew with a neshama - a chelek of Hashem.<sup>37</sup> Connecting to Hashem is connecting to true simcha.<sup>38</sup>

Learning Torah, means developing ourselves as Torah people and imitating the middos and actions of Hashem. That is a fulfillment of our true nature which will bring us to simcha.

### 2) Making a parnassah:

Making a parnassah to support ourselves and our families in our personal avodas Hashem is also a mitzvah. We and our families need food, clothing and shelter

<sup>37</sup> פסחים דף מט ע"ב: תורה צוה לנו משה מורשה - אל תקרי מורשה אלא מאורסה.

<sup>38</sup> דברי הימים א' פרק טז פסוק כז: עוז וחדווה במקומו.

to serve Hashem. <sup>39</sup>And that requires simcha too.

Zevulun and Yissachar were commanded to be happy - each in their own Torah mandated roles of Torah and parnassah.

דברים לג:יח - שְׂמַח זְבוּלוֹן וַיִּשַׁחֲרָה יִשְׂשַׁכָּר בְּאֵהָלָיִךְ:

Our attitude makes all the difference!

### 3) Tefilla:

Believe it or not tefilla requires simcha!

שו"ע אורח חיים סימן צג סעיף ב -  
לא יעמוד להתפלל אלא באימה  
והכנעה, לא מתוך שחוק וקלות ראש  
ודברים בטלים ולא מתוך כעס, אלא  
מתוך שמחה.

משנה ברורה סימן א ס"ק י -  
התורה והתפלה יהיה בשמחה:

<sup>39</sup> שו"ע אורח חיים - סימן קנו: ילך לעסקיו, דכל תורה שאין עמה מלאכה סופה בטלה וגוררת עון, כי העוני יעבירנו על דעת קוננו . רמב"ם יד החזקה הלכות דעות פרק ג הלכה ב-ג: (ב) צריך האדם שיכוון לבו וכל מעשיו כולם לידע את השם ברוך הוא בלבד. ויהיה שבתו וקומו ודבורו הכל לעומת זה הדבר. כיצד כשישא ויתן או יעשה מלאכה ליטול שכר, לא יהיה בלבו לקבוץ ממון בלבד, אלא יעשה דברים האלו כדי שימצא דברים שהגוף צריך להם מאכילה ושתיה וישיבת בית ונשיאת אשה... (ג) על ענין זה צוו חכמים ואמרו וכל מעשיך יהיו לשם שמים. והוא שאמר שלמה בחכמתו בכל דרכיך דעה והוא יישר אורחותיך: (משלי ס"א ג' ו) שו"ע אורח חיים - סימן רמח סעיף ג: יש אומרים כל מקום שאדם הולך לסחורה או לראות פני חברו חשוב הכל דבר מצוה.

<sup>40</sup> ספר חסידים - סימן יח - שורש התפלה, שמחת לב בהקב"ה, שנאמר (דהי"א טז י) התהללו בשם קדשו ישמח לב מבקשי ה'. ולפיכך ה' דוד מלך ישראל מנגן בכנור על כל תפלותיו וזמירותיו, כדי למלאות לבבו שמחה באהבתו של הקב"ה. (וכן פירש הרד"ק בתהילים קה - ד.)

<sup>41</sup> כף החיים על או"ח סימן צג סעיף ב. לא יעמוד להתפלל אלא באימה והכנעה. אין ר"ל שיתעצב אל לבו דהא אמרו שם בגמרא

The Sefer Chassidim (Rishon from 1200's Ashkenaz) says that at the root of tefilla is simcha!<sup>40</sup> He brings an explicit pasuk for this:

דברי הימים א' טז:י - ישמח לב מבקשי ה'

But what is the simcha of tefilla? I thought tefilla is about being sad and heartbroken, about focusing on asking Hashem to fulfill my needs!?!

The Kaf HaChaim (the parallel to the Mishna Berurah for Sefardim) writes a person should be extra happy during davening. He should feel as happy as a servant lucky to serve his master with overflowing happiness.<sup>41</sup>

The Kaf HaChaim brings out a dichotomy in tefilla. I'm lucky to be a servant of the Master and Creator of the universe who has everything. This is a great job! This is the dream job anyone

דף ל"א ע"א לא מתוך עצבות ולא מתוך עצלות. אלא הכנעה שיש בה שמחה שיזכור אשר הוא עפר ואפר רמה ותולעה. ואפילו הכי זכה המקום ברוך הוא להתפלל לפניו, אשר הוא רם ונשא גדול ונורא אש אוכלה מלא כל הארץ כבודו. אשר כמה מלאכים קדושים מתאווים להקדישו ולהעריצו באימה וביראה בקדושה ובטהרה. והוא בן אדם עפר מן האדמה, נתן לו רשות לומר כמה שירות ותשבחות, ודברי תפילות, ועל ידי זה ירבו לו השמחות.

[ז] שם. אלא מתוך שמחה וכו'. וז"ל שער הכוונות דף א' ע"ב אסור לאדם להתפלל תפלתו בעצבון. ואם נעשה כך אין נפשו יכול לקבל האור העליון הנמשך עליו בעת התפלה. אמנם בעת שמתודה הוידוי ומפרט חטאיו, אז טוב להתעצב בלבד. אבל בשאר התפלה נמשך לו נוק נפלא גדול על ידי עצבותו. אבל צריך להראות לפניו יתברך הכנעה גדולה באימה ויראה. אמנם תהיה בשמחה יתירה וגדולה בכל האפשר כדמיון העבד המשמש את רבו בשמחה יתירה, ואם משמשו בעצבות עבודתו נמאסת לפניו. וכמעט שעיקר המעלה והשלמות והשגת רוח הקודש תלויה בדבר זה, בין בעת תפלתו ובין כשעושה איזה מצוה משאר המצוות. וכמו שאמרו בגמרא ברכות דף ל' ע"ב מההוא דהוה קא בדה טובא וכו' ואמר תפילין קא מנחנא, ואל תבוז לענין זה כי שכרו גדול מאד עכ"ל.

would be jealous of! I'm in the luckiest position!

But there's a conflict. I own nothing. I get no salary at all. I can't provide for my own needs on my own. I have to be totally dependent on Hashem. But I'm very lucky. I'm totally dependent on my father the king who wants to give me all I need.

Hashem just asks for one thing—make a relationship; recognize His love and care for me! When I have a relationship with the Master of All and the Giver of All, then I really do have everything.

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Purim is a special day for simcha. Not just actions of simcha but attitudes of simcha as well.

Purim is a special day for tefilla. Klal yisrael was saved through tefilla.<sup>42</sup>

אסתר ט:לא - וְכִאֲשֶׁר קִיְמוּ עַל נַפְשָׁם  
וְעַל זֶרְעָם דְּבָרֵי הַצְּמוּת וְזִעְקָתָם:

מדרש רבה אסתר י:ט - ומניין שעשו  
תפלה? הדא הוא דכתיב "שק ואפר  
יוצע לרבים." ומה תקנה לשק ואפר  
בלא תפלה!

We are encouraged to take advantage of Purim for tefilla. The Shulchan Aruch writes:

שו"ע אורח חיים - סימן תרצד סעיף  
ג אין מדקדקים במעות פורים אלא  
כל מי שפושט ידו ליטול נותנים לו.

The drush explanation is, on Purim whoever asks is given his wishes. Let's plan for it and make it a great day. Let's continue through Pesach and all year.

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<sup>42</sup> סוף מנין המצוות לרמב"ם שבסוף ההקדמה למשנה תורה - שהנביאים עם בית דין תקנו וצוו לקרות המגלה בעונתה, כדי להזכיר שבחיו של הקדוש ברוך הוא, ותשועות שעשה לנו וְהִנֵּה קָרֹב לְשׁוֹעֵינוּ, כדי לברכו ולהללו. וכדי להודיע לדורות הבאים

שאמת מה שהבטיחנו בתורה כי מי גוי גדול אשר לו אלהים קרובים אליו כה' אלקינו בכל קראנו אליו.

# נשים בקריאת מגילה

Chaim Asher Kramer

The Gemara in דף ד' quotes R' Yehoshua ben Levi:

נשים חייבות במקרא מגילה שאף הן היו באותו הגם

The simple reading of this halacha indicates that women are obligated in the mitzvah of Megillah on the same level of a man. Therefore, women should be able to read the Megillah for a man. Tosfos (ד"ה נשים), proves to this conclusion from a Gemara in ב' דף ב':

הכל פשרים לקרא את המגילה ומסיק הכל פשרים  
לאתווי מאי ומשני לאתווי נשים

Then Tosfos challenges this ruling from a Tosefta:

אנדדוגינוס מוציא את מינו ואין מוציא את שאין מינו

This Tosefta rules, someone who may be a man or woman (it is biologically unclear) may not be motzei a man. Presumably, this is because this person might be a woman. This ruling indicates that a woman may not be motzei a man! In fact, Tosfos quotes the הלכות in דף ג' בה"ג in מגילה:

נשים ועבדים וקטנים פטורין מקריאת מגילה אלא  
שחייבין במשמע

The ערכין in דף י"ג interprets the Gemara in דף ג' בה"ג which states a woman may read the Megillah, to mean that a woman may

read for another woman, but not for another man.

This ruling of the בה"ג seems very difficult to understand. Why should a woman's obligation be different than a man's? Many Acharonim are bothered by this question and various explanations are offered.

Turei Even (מגילה דף ד'): The obligation of a man is from the Neviim and the obligation of a woman (היו באותו הגם), is only Miderabanan. Being that the woman's obligation is on a "lower level", she can't be motzei a man.

Avnei Nezer (סימן תקיא) and Marcheshes (סימן כב): There are 2 aspects to the Mitzvah of Megillah. A - publicizing the miracle of salvation B - remembering what Amalek did to us. Being that women are not obligated in the Mitzvah of Zechiras Amalek (according to the Sefer Hachinuch מצוה תרג), a woman may not be motzei a man.

Marcheshes (his second explanation): According to Rav Nachman on דף י"ד, the reason why we do not say Hallel on Purim is because קרייתא זו הלילא. We fulfill our obligation of Hallel through reading the Megillah. Being that women

do not have an obligation to say Hallel, a woman may not be motzei a man in the Megillah reading.

However, these explanations are problematic:

Question 1: The wording of the בה"ג is "Women are exempt from *reading* but are obligated to *hear*". This does not seem to fit well with any of the 3 approaches offered. Even according to the Turei Even, a woman's obligation is a lower level, not a difference in the nature of the obligation. And according to the Avnei Nezer/Marcheshes, women and men have the same obligation of Megillah, but men have an additional obligation: Amalek or Hallel.

Question 2: A woman should be able to read the Megillah for a man at night. According to the Turei Even, men and women's obligation to read the Megillah are both only Rabbinic at night! Similarly, according to the Marcheshes's second approach, since there is no mitzvah of Hallel at night men and women's obligations are on equal footing.<sup>43</sup> Yet the בה"ג does not make any distinction between night and day!

Question 3: (on the third approach) It would seem that if a man only has the

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<sup>43</sup> It should be noted that the Marcheshes himself makes this point, although, not as a problem.

ability to hear the Megillah from a woman, he should do so and just say Hallel!<sup>44</sup> Yet the בה"ג makes no mention of this Halacha.

Question 4: According to all 3 approaches, why would the Gemara in ערכין ever think that a woman can't be Motze another woman? Yet according to the בה"ג, this is exactly what this Gemara is coming to teach us!

I would like to suggest a new understanding of the בה"ג.

The Brisker Rav (חידושי הגרי"ז ערכין דף ג) has a Chakira how to understand the concept of a woman's obligation from אף הן קיי באותו הַגָּס.

A- אף הן קיי באותו הַגָּס removes the problem of the Mitzvah being time-bound and therefore puts them on in the same obligation of a man

B- אף הן קיי באותו הַגָּס can't simply remove the problem of being time-bound, rather it creates a *brand new obligation* for a woman.

(This second way of understanding would probably only make sense if the sevara of אף הן קיי באותו הַגָּס is

<sup>44</sup> It should be noted that this last point is a Machlokes between the Chida (ברכי יוסף סימן תרצג) and Ksav Sofer (סימן ק"ם)

Medarabanan, which is a machlokes Rishonim)

The Korban Nesanel (מגילה דף ד אות מ) and the Magen Avraham (סימן תרפט ס"ק ה) mention that it would be זילא ביה מילתא (inappropriate) for a woman to be Motze a man. Perhaps, if we can combine the second side of the Brisker Rav's chakira with this idea, we can explain the בה"ג.

The way אף הן הוּוּ בְּאוֹתוֹ הַגַּס functions, is to create a brand new obligation. Once the Chachamim are creating a new obligation, it would stand to reason that

they would shape it in a way that would be optimal and take in all considerations (such as זילא ביה מילתא). That is why they would make a woman's entire obligation to *hear and not read* so as never to be put in a situation of זילא ביה מילתא. This also explains why the Gemara in ערכין had a Hava Amina that a woman can't even be Motze another woman, because her entire obligation is to *hear!*

(The Maskana would be that a woman would have an obligation to read when it is not a situation of זילא ביה מילתא)

# Politics for Jews

Yaacov Levy

Politics is unfortunately everywhere and all-encompassing in the present days. The news is constantly telling us about the latest political drama, and more and more things are becoming political issues. I would like to try to explore the issue of how we as Jews view the political arena. This essay is in no way meant to be an authoritative or complete study of the issue, only some of the sources that I found that may shed some light on the matter.

## Should Jews Enter Politics?

The first issue to explore is whether Jews should enter politics at all. The Gemara in Megillah (ז:ט) tells us:

כי מרדכי היהודי משנה למלך  
אחשורוש וגדול ליהודים ורצוי לרוב  
אחיו. לרוב אחיו ולא לכל אחיו.  
מלמד שפירשו ממנו מקצת סנהדרין

Incredibly, Mordechai who just saved the Jews from destruction was shunned by some members of the Sanhedrin! We look to Rashi (ד"ה שפירשו ממנו) who explains:

לפי שבטל מדברי תורה ונכנס לשררה

Apparently, some of Mordechai's colleagues thought that his time would have been better spent in Torah study and that his pursuit of politics was folly. In fact, the next line of the Gemara says:

אמר רב יוסף גדול תלמוד תורה  
יותר מהצלת נפשות, דמעיקרא  
חשיב ליה למרדכי בתר ארבעה  
ולבסוף בתר חמשה.

So, even though Mordechai had been working on behalf of the Jewish people and had saved lives, it was still not the proper thing for him to continue in politics, and according to some fellow members of the Sanhedrin he should have been engaged in Torah study instead. From these sources we could reasonably conclude that Jews should not be entering politics at all.

Yet this is not so clear cut, as this must be squared with the fact that there have been great Jews who have entered politics. In fact, the Yalkut Shemoni (שמות פ"ב רמז קסח) tells us:

וילכוד משה את העיר בחכמתו  
ויושיבוהו על כסא המלוכה וישימו  
והימים אשר...כתר מלכות בראשו  
מלך על בני כוש ארבעים שנה

Upon fleeing from Egypt Moshe Rabbeinu became a general in the army of Cush and went on to become the king of Cush for many years! Other great personalities who entered secular politics include Yosef Hatzadik, Shmuel HaNagid, the Abarbanel as well as Rav Meir Shapiro and Rav Hirsch who both served in the parliaments of their countries. Although there were thousands of rabbanim who did not

become political, in hindsight we accept that these gedolim made the proper decision.

It may be that Jews throughout the ages who have either entered politics or who have been supportive of other Jews entering politics hold like the other members of the Sanhedrin who did not shun Mordechai and did not look askance at what Mordechai was doing. Maybe only a minority opinion held that what Mordechai did was incorrect, but the majority opinion was that the path chosen by Mordechai was correct.<sup>45</sup>

### **Distrust of the Government**

The next issue to consider is how Jews should relate to the government in general. What should be our innate level of trust or mistrust? We first look towards the well-known Mishna in Pirke Avos (א:א) which tells us:

וְשָׂנֵא אֶת הַרְבָּנוּת, וְאֵל תִּתְמַדַּע לְרִשׁוּת

We should hate positions of authority and have distrust of people in those positions. The Rambam in his explanation writes:

ידיעת השלטון בימים הקדמונים  
וקרבתו רחוק היה מאד להנצל ממנה  
בעולם הזה והיא מפסד אמונתו כי  
לא ישגיח בדבר רק במה שיקרבהו  
אליו

The Rambam tells us that we will lose our trust in Hashem if we begin to place

trust in the government. This seems like an unequivocal view that we should be extremely wary of the government.

Yet on the opposite end of this is the Gemara in Shabbos (יא.) which seems to imply the opposite:

ואמר רבא בר מחסיא אמר רב חמא  
בר גוריא אמר רב אם יהיו כל הימים  
דיו ואגמים קולמוסים ושמים יריעות  
וכל בני אדם לבלרין אין מספיקים  
לכתוב חללה של רשות מאי קראה  
אמר רב משרשיא שמים לרום וארץ  
לעומק ולב מלכים אין חקר

And Rashi (ד"ה חללה של רשות) explains:

עומק לבם, שהוא צריך להיות לו לב  
לכמה מדינות, למס הקצוב ולכמה  
מלחמות ולכמה משפטים, והכל ביום  
אחד:

Apparently, we are to think that governments are full of very deep thinkers and the depths of their wisdom in unfathomable! This seems to be a very far cry from the innate mistrust of government that we are being told to have from Pirke Avos. Even more striking is the Meiri (שם) who writes:

לעולם יהא אדם מתפלל בשלומה  
של מלכות ולא יהרהר אחריהם אף  
על פי שראה לפעמים מצד  
פעולותיהם דברים שהם שלא כהוגן  
למראה עיניו אלא יהפך בזכותם  
ויכריעם לכף זכות כמה שאפשר לו  
שלא נתנה כונתם להיות נודעת  
לשעתה ודרך צחות אמרו אלו היו

<sup>45</sup> Although the Ben Yehoyada (מגילה טז:) rejects this interpretation:

הקשה הרי"ף למה לא דייק זה מדכתיב לרוב אחיו ולא כתיב לכל אחיו יע"ש...וילפינן מסברת הרבים ואיך ילפינן מדעת המיעוט, להכי מייתי מקראי דנכתבים ברוח הקודש, ודייקנן מנייהו שפיר, דהא רוח הקודש הסכימה גם כן כסברת המיעוט.

כל הימים דיו וכל האגמים קולמוסים  
 ושמים יריעות ובני אדם לבלרין אין  
 מספיקין לכתוב חללה של רשות  
 ר"ל עומק עצתם וכונתם והוא  
 שנאמ' ולב מלכים אין חקר:

הוא קִיָּה אֹמֵר, תְּכַיֵּב אֶדָּם שְׁנִבְרָא  
 בְּצִלְמֵ. חֲבִיבָה יִתְרָה נֹדְעָה לֹו שְׁנִבְרָא  
 בְּצִלְמֵ, שְׁנִבְרָא מֵרָאשִׁית (ט), כִּי  
 בְּצִלְמֵ אֱלֹהִים עֲשָׂה אֶת הָאָדָם.

Rav Yaakov Emden explains:

This is going even further, telling us not that the government has incredible depth of thought, *but moreover we need to constantly be giving the government the benefit of the doubt*<sup>46</sup>!

שהבבא הראשונה ודאי אינה מדברת  
 מישראל ביחוד. גם לא על אומות  
 העולם בפרט, היתה כוונת האומר.  
 אבל על אדם הראשון הוא המכוון  
 בעצם. אף אם הכתוב נאמר בבני נח.  
 גם לאדם נודעה לו חבה זו מקדם.  
 שנתפרשה אחר כך לבני נח  
 להזהירם עוד משפיכות דמים.  
 להיותם כולם בני אדם יציר כפיו של  
 אלהים. העשוי בצלמו.

I am unsure how to reconcile these two Gemaras. One tells us we should never trust the government, and the other that tells us to give governments a tremendous amount on benefit of the doubt. A possibility may be that the Mishna in Pirke Avos is referring to politicians specifically, and it is politicians who should never be trusted on an individual level, while the Gemara in Shabbos may be referring to the entire body of the government, which may be more trustworthy.

Rav Emden is saying, *בְּצִלְמֵ אֱלֹהִים* refers to אדם and all of his progeny, Jews and non-Jews. It is because people are created in the image of Hashem that בני נח are also forbidden from killing anyone.<sup>47</sup> Now once we understand that the non-Jewish society we live in is composed of people created in the image of Hashem we can understand an interesting Gemara and Midrash.

### Relating to the General Society

A third issue is how we as Jews should be relating to the non-Jewish society in which we live. Chazal teach us in the Mishna in Pirkei Avos (ג:יד) that all people are created in the image of God:

The Gemara in Shabbos (לג:) tells us, after רבי שמעון בר יוחאי was saved from the Romans he wanted to show his appreciation by helping the townspeople where he lived. רבי שמעון בר יוחאי found precedent for such action from Yaakov Avinu who established some sort of

<sup>46</sup> As an interesting side note, it seems that this incredible benefit of the doubt would not apply to contemporary democratic government. The Ben Yehoyada writes there:

שם אין מספיקין לכתוב חללה של רשות. נראה לי שזה נאמר על מלכים הראשונים אשר היו כל ענייני מלכותם מסורה בידם ובהנהגת דעתם שהכל נעשה ונגמר בבחירתם ובידיעתם, ולכן בשביל תיקון העולם היה נותן להם הקב"ה לב רחב עד אין חקר

כדי לסבול ולהכיל בו כל ענייני הממשלה הצריכה לעולם, מה שאין כן עתה כל העניינים מבית ומחוץ מסורת ביד שרים פקידים איש איש על פקודתו וחלוקים לכמה מחלוקות, לכן אין ברוחב לבם חידוש נפלא מאד

<sup>47</sup> On a personal note, when I asked Rav Kelemer once what the source was for the issur to be a racist he pointed to this **לחם שמים**.

public works projects for the people in his society:

אמר הואיל ואיתרחיש ניסא איזיל  
אתקין מילתא. דכתיב ויבא יעקב  
שלם ואמר רב שלם בגופו שלם  
בממונו שלם בתורתו. ויחן את פני  
העיר אמר רב מטבע תיקן להם  
ושמואל אמר שווקים תיקן להם  
ורבי יוחנן אמר מרחצאות תיקן  
להם.

The Midrash (מדרש רבה בפרשת וישלח פרשה) goes even further and says that the reason for Yaakov's actions were his thankfulness towards the greater society in which he lived:

"ויחן את בני העיר (בראשית פרק  
לג פסוק יח.) - חנן את פנים שבעיר,  
התחיל משלח להם דורות. ד"א  
ויחן את פני העיר - התחיל מעמיד  
הטליסין ומוכר בזול. הדא אמרת  
שאדם צריך להחזיק טובה למקום  
שיש בו הנאה ממנו, עכ"ל.

We see from here that our general lens with which we view society at large should be one of thankfulness. This idea is said most eloquently by Rav Hirsch in his 19 letters, where he writes:

הרדיפה וההגבלה בדרך החיים אינן  
בעצם תנאי הגלות, ונהפוך הוא  
חוב מוטל עלינו לפי היכולת  
להאחז במדינה אשר תקבל אותנו  
לגור בה; להשתדל להוציא לפועל  
את מטרת המדינה ותועלתה  
ובדרשנו את טובת עצמנו, עלינו  
לדרוש גם את שלומה וטובתה

*To be pushed back and limited  
upon the path of life is,  
therefore, not an essential  
condition of the Galuth,*

*Israel's exile state among the  
nations, but, on the contrary,  
it is our duty to join ourselves  
as closely as possible to the  
state which receives us into its  
midst, to promote its welfare  
and not to consider our well-  
being as in any way separate  
from that of the state to which  
we belong.*

A similar posture towards our host state in galus is expressed by the Gra (ישעיה ט:יב), who says:

והעם לא שב וגו': רצה לומר  
כשהקב"ה משעבד את ישראל תחת  
יד איזה אומה הראוי לקבל באהבה  
ולהכניע את עצמו תחת יד האומה  
ההיא כמ"ש עבדו את מלך בבל וחיו  
ומכח השעבוד ההוא ראוי לשום על  
לב ולדרוש אל ה' בכל לבבם

Rav Moshe Feinstein writes in a letter published in 1984:

*Upon reaching the shores of  
the United States, Jews found  
a safe haven. The rights  
guaranteed by the United  
States Constitution and the  
Bill of rights have allowed us  
the freedom to practice our  
religion without interference  
and to live in this republic in  
safety.*

*A fundamental principal of  
Judaism is hakaras hatov—  
recognizing the benefits*

*afforded to us and giving expression to our appreciation. Therefore, it is incumbent upon each Jewish citizen to participate in the democratic system which guards the freedoms we enjoy. The most fundamental responsibility incumbent on each individual is to register and to vote.*

*Therefore, I urge all members of the Jewish community to fulfill their obligations by registering as soon as possible and by voting, by this, we can express our appreciation and contribute to the continued security of our community.*

Of the three issues discussed in this article, two seem to be complicated, and one seems to be more straight forward. Whether Jews can or should enter politics and how we should relate to the government seem to be multidimensional issues with sources on both sides. Thankfulness towards the society that we live seems clearer cut in the affirmative.

I would like to end by noting that in his last drasha before he was niftar, Rabbi Kelemer told his audience how upset he was with the current toxicity of politics. Moreover, on the local level we need to be even more cognizant of how we speak to each other. Just because the entire world has become so involved in politics doesn't mean we have to or even should be drawn in, and certainly to the same fever pitched degree.

# To Live Up To the Letter

Rabbi Josh Rohr

The *sefarim hakedoshim* make it clear that Purim is an extremely holy, special day in which a person can reach great heights in *avodas Hashem*. Personally, I have often found it difficult to identify and tap into this special *kedushas hayom*. Hopefully, a brief analysis of some of the *halachos* of Purim and other sources will help identify exactly what the *avodas hayom* is supposed to be and how we can tap into it.

The Rishonim argue as to whether the *bracha* of *שהחיינו* is recited again before the reading of the Megillah during the day. The Rambam (and the Mechaber *paskens* this way) holds that the *bracha* is recited only before the night reading, but Tosfos (and the Rema) holds that it should be repeated during the day as well because the daytime reading is the main one. The Magen Avraham quotes from the Shelah that while reciting the *שהחיינו* during the day (according to the *psak* of the Rema) one should have in mind the other *mitzvos hayom* as well because they don't have their own *brachos*. The Pri Megadim adds that even according to the Rambam and Mechaber, who don't obligate you to recite a second *שהחיינו* during the daytime, you should have the other

*mitzvos hayom* in mind during the recitation of *שהחיינו* at night- even though you can't fulfill those *mitzvos* at that time! Seemingly, this opinion of the Pri Megadim is difficult (as the Biur Halacha points out) because what's the point of thinking about the other *mitzvos* at a time that they can't be fulfilled? How does that help?!

Additionally, the final set of *halachos* in Rambam's *Sefer Zmanim* is הלכות מגילה והנוכה. Although he is setting out to delineate the laws of both holidays- Purim and Chanukah- within this one section, he titles the laws of Purim as הלכות מגילה, with the focus being on the object of the *mitzvah*, and the laws of Chanukah as הלכות חנוכה, with the holiday itself being the focus. Why the inconsistency within one set of הלכות? Additionally, he writes at the beginning of the section that there are only שתי מצות עשה מדברי סופרים (i.e. reading the Megillah and lighting the candles). We know that there are four *mitzvos* that must be done on Purim, so why is he only referencing one of them?

The אברהם אור ספר answers that really:

גדר כל מצות הפורים היינו לקיים  
את אגרת הפורים, והיינו דעיקר  
יסוד הפורים הוא המגילה, אלא  
דמצות המגילה מתחלקת לשני  
חלקים, דהיינו קריאתה וקיומה.

In other words, the essence of the day of Purim is singular- לקיים את אגרת הפורים -<sup>48</sup> to fulfill that which is written in the Megillah - however the practical fulfillment of that obligation manifests in multiple ways. He explains, therefore, that the Rambam titling these set of laws as הלכות מגילה is alluding to the fact that the essence of the day is to fulfill the Megillah and everything else that we are obligated to do are just specific ways to do that. In reality there is only one *mitzvah* on Purim- fulfill the Megillah - and the specific actions we engage in during the day in order to accomplish that include reading the Megillah, giving *mishloach manos* and *matanos l'evyonim*, and having a *seudah*.

Perhaps with this understanding of the holiday we can explain the Pri Megadim as well. Since the essence of the day is the fulfillment of the Megillah, upon reading the Megillah at night we have begun fulfilling the *mitzvas hayom*. As such, even though the specific obligation of *mishloach manos* and *seudah* can't be

fulfilled at this time, it is still appropriate to have them in mind during the nighttime שהיינו because the underlying essence and obligation of those mitzvos have already begun.

Although the אברהם אור explained the Rambam, his idea itself requires explanation. Why is it that the essence of the day is to fulfill the Megillah? What does that even mean? Where does that come from? As quoted above, the Megillah refers to itself as an אגרת, a letter. My Rebbi, Rav Eliyahu Soloveichik shlit"א, explained that the אגרת element of the Megillah adds an experiential aspect to its reading. We not only read the Megillah to gain the intellectual knowledge of the story and receive a list of commandments that must be performed, but also to be moved emotionally by its contents and to be inspired to act and feel a certain way. I understand that to mean that we are supposed to interpret, internalize, and fulfill the ideas of the Megillah in such a way as if it was addressed directly to us. When we fulfill the *mitzvos* contained within, it is not because we were commanded to do so, but rather because we ourselves are reliving the experience that the Jews had at that time. Fulfilling that which is written in the Megillah, as the אברהם אור explained, means reading

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<sup>48</sup> אסתר ט:כט

the Megillah in a way that we feel it speaking to us and inspiring us. It means being moved to act and live in the way that Mordechai and Esther intended when they wrote us this letter all those years ago. Which brings us to the question- what lesson *did* Mordechai and Esther want to teach us when they sent us this letter? The Rambam<sup>49</sup> explains that the purpose of Purim is:

כדי להזכיר שבחיו של הקב"ה  
ותשועות שעשה לנו והיה קרוב  
לשועינו כדי לברכו ולהללו וכדי  
להודיע לדורות הבאים שאמת מה  
שהבטיחנו בתורה 'כי מי גוי גדול  
אשר לו אלקים קרובים אליו כה'  
אלקינו בכל קראנו אליו'.

After the miracles of Purim, the Jews throughout the kingdom of אחשוורוש realized that they had never been alone and that Hashem had really always been there. To ensure that future generations would never forget that, Mordechai and Esther wrote a letter describing what had happened. When we read that letter, we should think about what they thought and feel what they felt. The Jews in that generation engaged in the *mitzvos hayom* as a natural outgrowth of the love that they felt from Hashem<sup>50</sup>. When we read the Megillah we should feel that love as well and pay it forward like the Jews did בימים ההם בזמן הזה.

With this idea, perhaps we can explain one more aspect of Purim as well as its source in the Gemara. The Gemara (Megillah 4a) quotes רבי יהושע בן לוי teaching his students that חייב אדם לקרות את המגילה בלילה ולשנותה ביום, the Megillah must be read at night and repeated during the day. The word he uses to describe the required repetition – לשנותה – is uncommon and unclear, so much so that even his students originally misconstrued his intention and thought he was requiring them to learn the משניות of מסכת מגילה during the day until he corrected their mistake. Why did he use that word? What message was he trying to convey? I believe he was trying to teach his students this exact idea we have been suggesting. The essence of the day is to fulfill and carry out, to live and to learn the lesson of the Megillah. In order to enhance the clarity of that lesson, the Sages required that the main reading of the Megillah (i.e. the reading during the day) follow a reading at night<sup>51</sup> so that we have time to process what we read. When we then come to read it again

<sup>49</sup> סוף הקדמה למנין המצות

<sup>50</sup> ע' שבת פה. רש"י ד"ה הדר "מאהבת הנס שנעשה להם"

<sup>51</sup> I want to thank R' Elie Bashevkin for pointing out the קדמת העמק נצי"ב who has a similar way of learning the statement of רבי יהושע בן לוי.

during the day (after having slept on it<sup>52</sup>) and fulfill the *mitzvos* it obligates us in, it will be a review (שינון) and the lesson will be learned with greater clarity. The fact that Hashem is always there protecting us and listening to our *tefillos* will be louder and clearer. We will feel

Hashem's love even more strongly and be even more inspired to come close to Him. May we all merit to connect to and internalize the lessons of the Megillah on Purim and truly tap into the awesome *kedushas hayom!*

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<sup>52</sup> Perhaps this idea itself mimics the Megillah because we are told that the Jews fought on י"ג and only celebrated on י"ד after resting (נחו מאויביהם). Why didn't they celebrate as soon as the war was over? Why the emphasis on י"ד? Perhaps the idea is that of course they celebrated

as soon as they were victorious, however, it was only upon "sleeping on it" did they come to the realization that the entire story was miraculous and so the celebration on י"ד was focused on the spiritual celebration.

# Will the Real חרבונה Please Stand Up?

Matt Saunders

Many of the main Purim characters jump right out of the Megillah so clearly that we all feel as if we know them. Whether it's the impulsive King Achashveirosh, the pure evil Haman, Mordechai the Tzaddik, or the heroic Esther, we can imagine them standing right in front of us. However, there is one character that we barely get to know at all, but he acts as the lynchpin for the end of the story. He remains a mystery to us at first glance and as we will see, and he becomes even more mysterious upon further exploration. This character is one of the advisors to the king, Charvona.

The first time Charvona is mentioned is in Megillas Esther (א:י):

ביום השביעי כטוב לב-המלך  
בגין אמר למהומן בזתא חרבונא  
בגתא ואבגתא ותר וכרפס שבעת  
הסריסים המשרתים את-פני  
המלך אחשורוש:

The possuk introduces Charvona as one of the king's many advisors. This introduction is at the beginning of the Megillah narrative, and he does not get mentioned again until ט:ז.

ויאמר חרבונה אהד מן-הסריסים  
לפני המלך גם הנה-העץ אשר-  
עשה המון למרדכי אשר דבר-טוב  
על-המלך עמד בבית המון גבה

חמשים אמה ויאמר המלך תלהו  
עליו:

We see that he is referred to the same way as in the previous possuk, but with a subtle difference; the spelling of his name has changed. The **ס** is replaced by a **ה**. Why would the spelling of a person's name change within the same sefer? We will come back to this question.

The Ibn Ezra posits, possibly based on a Midrash in Esther Rabbah (ט:י), that when Charvona is mentioned at the end of the Megillah, he is actually אליהו הנביא in disguise. According to Chazal, this is the reason we refer to Charvona by the moniker זכור לטוב at the end of שושנת יעקב (the song sung at the conclusion of each Megillah reading) just as we refer to אליהו הנביא. The connection between Charvona and אליהו הנביא is so strong, according to the Shulchan Aruch (סימן תר"צ סעיף טז), one must say the phrase חרבונה זכור לטוב.

So now we have demonstrated that Charvona, in the latter mentioning, is actually אליהו הנביא. But what is the significance of changing the spelling, and with the specific letters that are changed? The Etz Yosef, based on the above Midrash, teaches us that changing the **ס** specifically to a "ה" is hinting to the 5 letter name of אליהו. It is also noted by

Chazal that "ה" would denote a spelling more in-line with Hebrew grammar (אליהו being a Jew), as opposed to א, which is more in-line with a non-Hebrew/Aramaic spelling. Further proof to this assertion is that in שושנת יצקב, we spell the name with א and ה conclude with זכור לטוב, thereby denoting אליהו's

appearance and intervention in instigating the king to hang Haman on the very gallows meant for Mordechai. This matches the Megillah's narrative that אליהו is the true persona of Charvona. May we again soon experience the intervention and appearance אליהו הנביא, and everything will be לטוב.

# The Hidden Purim Mitzvah

Daniel Simon

For Jews all over the world, the *mitvos hayom* of Purim take up a good deal of time. Even after *mikra Megillah* is a distant memory and the *seudah* is still hours away, one can easily find himself spending the bulk of his remaining day distributing *misholach manos* and *matanos l'evyonim*. While this is certainly a reasonable way to spend one's Purim, there are other particularly important *mitzvos* that often get overlooked in all of the celebratory excitement.

One such mitzvah, is the all-important Limud HaTorah. Because we are all so entrenched in the above-mentioned *mitzvos hayom* and the many beautiful *minhagim* that we've adopted over time (wearing costumes, visiting our rebbeim & family), we often don't set aside the proper time to pick up a sefer and learn a little bit. While the Rama likely did not have to juggle delivering elaborately themed *misholach manos*, individual visiting hours for each child's morah and rebbi and figuring out the most proper time to put on his costume, he was still very much aware of the damage that the busy day could wreak on one's learning schedule. It is for that reason that he reminds of the integral relationship between Purim and Limud HaTorah and exhorts us to make time for the same before beginning the *seudah*. In תרצה סעיף ב' the א"ר writes the following:

טוב לעסוק מעט בתורה קודם שיתחיל הסעודה וסמך לדבר ליהודים היתה אורה ושמחה ודרשינן אורה זו תורה

The Rama here is making two important points. First, the Rama is well aware of what happens to a person on Purim and specifically directs us to sit down to learn before our *seudah* because if we don't do it then, there's a very good chance that we will either run out of time to learn or not be in the right mindset to learn by the time our *seudas* are done. Second, the Rama reminds us of the Gemarah's derasha (מגילה טז עמוד ב) which tells us that the word אורה in the pasuk of (אסתר ה, טז) (ליהודים היתה אורה) refers to Torah.

Rav Ovadiah Yosef ז"ל, in his Chazon Ovadiah (מדיני מצות שמחת יום הפורים דף קפא), uses a very similar lashon to that of the Rama. He writes "נכון ללמד תורה שעה אחת" קודם הסעודה או בתוך הסעודה". He feels exactly the same way as the Rama that the only way we are going to get any learning done on Purim is if it's done before we get completely engrossed in the seuda. He goes on to quote the same Gemara that אורה זו תורה but then goes on further to show how important learning on Purim is. He quotes the famous Gemara (א"ה ע"שבת דף פ) "וַיִּתְּצְבוּ בְּתַהֲתִית הַקָּהָר" The Gemara explains, when the Bnei Yisrael were standing beneath Har Sinai, Hashem overturned the mountain and said if they accept the Torah great, but if not "שם תהא"

קבורתם.” We all know that Bnei yisroel did in fact accept the Torah but it’s the next few lines of the Gemara that Rav Ovadiah mentions that are of extreme importance,

הַדּוֹר קִבְּלוּהָ בַיּוֹם אֲחֻשְׁרוּזָא, דְּכָתִיב: “קִיְמוּ וְקִבְּלוּ  
הַיְהוּדִים” — קִיְמוּ מֵהָ שְׂקִיבְלוּ כְּבָר,

Then Rav Ovadiah adds this point: since we are all “טרוד” in all the *mitzvos hayom* on Purim we need to make time to learn because the only way the world can survive is if we learn torah.

We see from all of this that it was on Purim itself that we reaffirmed our commitment to Torah learning. As a result, it is crucial that we make the time to learn on Purim because that is really what the day is all about.

Unfortunately for many of us, this Purim will not be like most of the Purims that we’ve experienced in the past. Many of us won’t be visiting our family or rebbeim this year or having the large *seuda* with family and/or friends that we’ve grown so accustomed to. I can say personally that Purim is one of the few

days a year that I circle on my calendar counting down the days until I can get into that super geshmak zone that I can only seem to achieve on Purim. I definitely will not be able to achieve that this year like I have in the past. And while it makes me a bit sad knowing that this is the reality this year, I do believe that there is something beautiful that can come about from the pandemic that we all find ourselves in. I think for many of us the “אורה” on Purim is the seudas Purim, the singing dancing & drinking that brings us to another מדריגה. But perhaps this year we can enhance our Purim by really being “ליהודים היתה מקיים” אורה ושמה” by truly understanding that אורה זו תורה, and by making a conscious effort to learn this year better than we ever have. By doing this hopefully bring out a different type of geshmak this year that will put an end to this מגיפה and hopefully bring us closer to a geula sheleima bekarov.

# Obliterating עמלק In Our Times

Jeff Thurm

When we read the section of עמלק each year, both on שבת זכור and on פורים morning itself, the question dawns upon all of us; how is this powerful חיוב דאורייתא of מחיית עמלק, one that both men and women must reiterate every year, practical for our time? Clearly, no section of the Torah can ever be 'outdated.' Indeed, the החינוך ספר writes that this obligation is everlasting. So how can we fulfill the directive of obliterating עמלק, wiping a nation of the earth from all manner of existence, even in the modern world in which we live? What can we do, practically speaking? Are we supposed to be physically killing people? Even if we wanted to, סנחריב comprehensively scrambled the nations via mass migrations after conquering their respective territories, so how could we ever know who עמלק even is? In lieu of that reality, but still wanting this mitzvah to involve a physical act, some have the minhag to write עמלק on a piece of paper and then actually erase it. Or, can we suggest, as many do, that in תשפ"א, this mitzvah is transformed into a powerful mental exercise, a profound mindset of the modern Jew, and if so, what exactly is our obligation?

The שפת אמת offers a timeless explanation that applies to each and every one of us, every second of every day.<sup>53</sup> To

understand our obligation, we must first understand עמלק, and what exactly was their crime. The פסוק says "אֲשֶׁר קָרָהּ בְּדָרָהּ וַיִּגְעוּ וְלֹא יָרָא וַיִּזְגַּב בָּהּ כָּל־הַגְּחֹשָׁלִים אֲחֵרֶיהָ וְאֶתֶּהָ עָנָף וַיִּגְעוּ וְלֹא יָרָא כָּל־יִשְׂרָאֵל הָיָה" "happened" upon עמלק on their route and cut off all the stragglers at the rear when they were tired and weak, and they didn't fear Hashem. That's who עמלק is and what they did. That is the source of our hatred for them.

The word "קָרָהּ" (they happened upon עמלק) is interpreted by Chazal in many places as being from the lashon of "קר" / cold, in that עמלק 'cooled off' כלל when they were on their spiritual high right after ים סוף and the communal song of אז ישיר. Specifically, at that momentous time, in the aftermath of the greatest miracle of all time, עמלק had the audacity, due to their lack of יראת שמים to attack עמלק, as the pasuk says, "ולא ירא אלקים." Even though עמלק indeed won that war, this brazenness and chutzpah permanently traumatized כלל ישראל, that at such a moment of exhilaration, they were still vulnerable to attack.

The Gerrer Rebbe takes this notion a step further. The lashon of "קָרָהּ" is the same שרש of the word "מקרה" / chance, happenstance. עמלק, by yielding a blow to עמלק at that time not only 'cooled them off,' but even worse, introduced

<sup>53</sup> שמות פרשת זכור [תרל"ב] ויקרא ופ' זכור

doubt into their collective mindset. They began to think that maybe Hashem doesn't guarantee their invincibility, maybe this existence is one of happenstance and chance where the elation of a relationship with HKBH could indeed be shattered at a moment's notice. Perhaps this world is a place of "might makes right" and being a genuine Jew does not necessarily guard against the mighty עמלק of this world, and perhaps Hashem is not fully orchestrating this show.

Indeed, the גמטריא of עמלק (= 240) is the same גמטריא as 'ספק'/doubt. עמלק made כלל ישראל think. They sowed doubts deep within our spirituality and tempted us to consider the possibility that all this רווחניות, all these miracles, all this חיזוק, were perhaps a little leaky, and a little fool-hearted. Could our very existence be the product of chance(?), a world where debased idol worshippers can ultimately prevail?

This toxicity was the crime of עמלק, against which our generation still fights today. To חס ושלום embody a mindset that life is random or the product of chance, to sow deep ספקות over whether Hashem is real or if He truly cares about us, or if our lives have any real meaning to them - no phenomenon could be more dangerous to a Jew. That is why Hashem commands us in no uncertain terms to wipe this out. That is why this is such a transcending, and monumental חיוב דאורייתא for men and women alike until this day. To be clear - מחיית עמלק is the

eradication of the biggest fallacy of all time; that the world is random, that השגחה פרטית is a myth and that Hashem doesn't love each and every one of us on the deepest of levels.

As the שפת אמת writes, "מחיית עמלק שלא" – "לעשות שום דבר דרך עראי" – the obligation of eradicating עמלק in our times behooves us to never think about life in a casual way, a way of מקרה, of happenstance, that the world just blows back and forth with the breeze, all by itself.

This is also the יסוד of פורים. Haman ha'Rasha, the physical descendant of the nation of עמלק, wished to destroy כלל ישראל in the same manner of his ancestors. How so? פורים is, as the Megillah notes, "על שם הפור" – he wanted to destroy through a lottery, a game of chance, embodying the technique of his ancestors who 'cooled off' כלל ישראל at their highest of highs by spreading the toxic notion that the world operated via chance, and Hashem wasn't as all-encompassing as they thought. Haman thought this too would be our downfall.

So how do we rectify this? How do we destroy the attack of Haman, and the attack of עמלק? The answer is simple. We destroy it with פורים, the single greatest day of pure unadulterated exuberance of the entire year. פורים is a day where we burst with passion and joy, reminiscent of the same passion and joy as we sang אז ישיר ים סוף by the ים סוף. That's the ideal. That's the reaction and the attitude of a Jew befitting the ultimate truth of this

world, that Hashem loves us and השגחה פרטית governs every second of our time here. So, per our original question, indeed מקרה' in our times is a mental exercise, to not be 'cooled off' by the forces of 'מקרה,' but it could not be of greater importance. In the modern, enlightened, secular world we live, this mitzvah is as it's always been - essential to our survival.

ה' בעזרת ה', this year we should be זוכה to finally eradicate this treacherous מחלה of

עמלק and make our lives full of passion and אמונה. The שפת אמת adds – “ ועיקר פי' – ”זכירה הוא פנימיות החיות עיקר of remembrance, of שבת זכור and פורים, is to live lives of passion and vibrancy, where frumkeit is not just something we do, but something that we love. If we do that, we should all bear witness soon to the ultimate truth of this world – that 'מקרה' is simply a rearranged version of רק מה' - only from Hashem.

הג פורים שמח

# Purim: Why So Many Dates?<sup>54</sup>

Steven Toplan

Since the destruction of *Bayis Sheini*, we have two Rabbinic holidays that have been observed for centuries: Chanukah and Purim. If you look at the starting date for Chanukah, there is no longer any question of when it starts and how long the holiday lasts. Purim, on the other hand, is not so simple.

The simple reading of *Megillat Esther* indicates that the ensuing holiday should be celebrated on the 14<sup>th</sup> or 15<sup>th</sup> of Adar, depending on where the person lives, as a one-day celebration, short and simple. But the very first *mishna* in *Mesechet Megillah* (2a) throws a wrench into the formulation of the text's one-day celebration. The *mishna* states emphatically that *Megillat Esther* can be read starting on 11 Adar through the 15<sup>th</sup>. And the other mitzvot that are associated with Purim, *Taanis Esther*, saying *Al-Hanisim* in our *tefillot*, the *seuda*/festive meal, *matanos levyonim*/gifts to the poor, and *m'shloach manot*/gifts of food, can potentially get spread out over many

days (especially this year for those in *Yerushalyim* where *Purim Meshulash* is observed<sup>55</sup>). Notwithstanding the *derashot* of the *p'sukim* through the *braitot*, etc., the question at the heart of this essay is, why did *Chazal* take a one-day holiday and potentially spread the *mitzva* observances over so many days not in keeping with the simple reading of the *Megilla*?

The *Mishna* and *Gemara* (largely 2a, 2b, 4a, 4b) discuss the various permutations of what should happen if the 14<sup>th</sup> of Adar falls on a particular day of the week. Within this discussion, however, the *Gemara* (4a) provides an admittedly lenient answer that is rooted in geographical, economic, and sociological factors: "Rabbi Chanina said: The sages were lenient with regard to the villagers..." If you are a city-dweller, you need the villagers who live outside the city to provide fresh food for the holiday. But, if you are the villager, you would be hard pressed to listen to the *Megilla* and

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<sup>54</sup> This is a digested summary based on <https://www.yeshiva.co/midrash/7249> by Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff. Please see the entire article for more detailed information or speak with your LOR. Special thanks to Rabbi Yitz Rosenblum for clarifying some of the ideas presented below.

<sup>55</sup> *Purim Meshulash* 5781:

13 Adar (Thursday): *Taanis Esther*, *Machatzis HaShekel* at mincha  
14 Adar (Friday): Hear the *Megilla*, distribute *matanos l'evyonim*  
15 Adar (Shabbos): Insert *Al-Hanisim* into our *tefillot* and bentching  
16 Adar (Sunday): *Seuda* (albeit without *al-hanisim*), *m'shloach manot*

enjoy your own *seuda* if you are busy trying to transport and sell your food.

And, *Chazal* didn't want the *evyonim*/poor to suffer either! On 4b, Rav Yosef adds an additional reason for not reading the *Megilla* on *Shabbat*. He says, "Because poor people anxiously await the *Megilla* reading [in anticipation of receiving the gifts that are normally allocated when the *Megilla* is read.]" (*Artscroll* translation)

These technical answers, however, are somewhat bewildering (Purim pun intended). On no other holiday or fast day, do we find *Chazal* instituting or establishing an early *mitzva* observance. If there is a perceived conflict with the special day, the special day gets observed on the actual day (e.g., *Asara b'Tevet* – if it could fall on Shabbos, we would fast on Shabbos) or it gets pushed ahead (e.g., If *Tzom Gedaliah* or *Tisha b'Av* falls on *Shabbat*, we fast on Sunday). Also, if ensuring the availability of fresh food for a *seuda* is a critical issue, why didn't *Chazal* approach Purim similarly to the *Shalosh Regalim*, which all require fresh food? If Shavuot falls on Sunday night/Monday, the previous market day (Thursday) would have to suffice for *Shabbat* and *yom tov* (or the villagers would be inconvenienced to make a special market day on Sunday). To paraphrase a common *Pesach* refrain, *Mah nishtana hachag hazeh?* What makes Purim different than all other holidays?

A possible answer is also geographic, economic, and sociological, but in

essence shows how much *Chazal* used their authority because they wanted to reach out and include all economic classes within the Jewish community and emphasize an important message about Purim: *Chesed*-Kindness. The problem with the above *yom tov* comparison is that both the city-dwellers and the villagers lose out if the dates of Purim were inflexible like a *d'orayta yom tov*. The city-dwellers didn't have an easy way to preserve food over many days so *yom tov* food was not necessarily fresh or enjoyable by Monday afternoon. And, the villagers lose a market day (Monday) which means they lose sales and sellable inventory due to spoilage. Therefore, when given the opportunity to avoid such problems, *Chazal* used their authority to expand the *mitzva* observance to be as inclusive as possible. Yes, the expansion of the dates was constrained by *p'sukim* from the *Megilla*, but why stretch the beginning from the 14<sup>th</sup> all the way to the 11<sup>th</sup>? It seems Mordechai and Esther, and by extension *Chazal*, wanted to not only ensure more people would actually hear the *Megilla*, but also to teach a lesson and foster an experience for the ages about Purim.

According to Rabbi Ari Kahn (*Emanations*, p. 308-315), as one reads the *Megilla*, it is easy to sense the inner turmoil Esther faces when Mordechai asks her to approach Achashvarosh in an attempt to save *Bnei Yisrael*. Esther surely knew the famous dictum that a Jew is supposed to sacrifice one's life before violating any of the three cardinal sins

(*avoda zara*/foreign worship, murder, forbidden sexual acts) (Sanhedrin 74a). Her approaching Achashvarosh willingly meant she would be violating part of this dictum and losing her *chelek* in *Olam Ha-Ba*. The conundrum Esther faced was that sacrificing her life instead of violating part of this cardinal halakhic dictum, in this case, wouldn't work either because Haman's plot could go forward anyway, and it would teach the wrong lesson (that the sacrifice of all *Bnei Yisrael* is a desired outcome). Here, however, Esther understood the flexibility of the rabbinic authority interwoven in this dictum: she was no longer an individual faced with a dire situation, but she was representative of *Bnei Yisrael* and the cardinal sin she faced didn't apply to the *klal*.

So, motivated by Esther's love of Hashem to adhere to *mitzvot* and her love of *Bnei Yisrael*, Mordechai agreed to support and enact her plan to institute a three-day fast coinciding with Pesach. Essentially, her message to Mordechai was, "What good would Pesach be with no Jews to celebrate it?" The fast had Esther's desired effect and joined all *Bnei Yisrael* together with a loving devotion to Hashem in *teshuva* and to each other – *chesed* at its best! Rabbi Kahn summarizes the situation in the *Megilla* by stating (p. 314) "...only after Esther taught us how to love, taught us how to perform *chesed* for others, could the Temple be rebuilt." By extension, the *mitzvot* established by Mordechai and Esther (*m'shloach manot* and *matanot l'evyonim*) and enacted by

the *Anshei Knesset HaGedola*, were an ongoing reminder to **practice** love and *chesed*.

So, referring back to the original questions, How could *Chazal* continue to teach love and *chesed* if one group suffers because of the needs of the other? Would city-dwellers 'win' if their villager co-religionists weren't performing their Purim *avoda la'Hashem*? Would the villagers 'win' if the city-dwellers didn't have appropriate food for a *seuda*? Would anyone 'win' if the poor suffer? Hence, Mordechai, Esther and the *Anshei Knesset HaGedola* developed and established a specific scenario where everyone from anywhere could fully participate in the *yom tov* of Purim. And the only way this could work out, within the constraints of the *p'sukim*, was to act as leniently as possible and start the *mitzva* observance as early as the 11<sup>th</sup> of *Adar*. Mordechai, Esther and *Chazal* made sure that no matter where and when anyone lived throughout the centuries, they would be able to fully participate in the various Purim *mitzvot* and thereby increase their love of Hashem and love for each other.

This year, especially, please be extra mindful of those in our community and elsewhere that are in quarantine or homebound and would enjoy food delivered, prepared, errands ran, participate in a Zoom *seuda*, etc. May Esther's message of love and *chesed*, which lead to the building of *Bayit Sheini*, lead us to the building of *Bayis Shlishi*, speedily on our days!

# Appreciating Gratitude

Evan Twersky

The *yeshua* of Purim took place ever so slowly. When we look back at the megillah we see the small pieces coming together with drama and suspense, one after another until Haman is hanging from the gallows. That is the point where we generally exhale and the drama seems to end. However, even after Haman was dealt with, the Jews still had to go out and fight to secure their victory. I'd like to explore a possible explanation for why their deliverance from this threat had to be dealt with in this way.

The Ibn Ezra<sup>56</sup> asks, why was it that at the time of סוף ים קריעת Bnei Yisrael felt backed into a corner? Was it really so unthinkable that 600,000 men could fight off their Egyptian pursuers? The Ibn Ezra also tries to deal with the fact that when Amalek attacked, Bnei Yisrael did in fact end up going to battle.

The Ksav Sofer<sup>57</sup> offers an answer that may shed some light on the events of the megillah. He brings the Ramban in Parshas Vayeshev<sup>58</sup> on the words ויעזב Yosef left his clothing in the

hands of the wife of Potiphar. Why didn't he grab them back? He must have had the strength advantage in that fight, so why not remove the physical evidence from the scene? The Ramban writes that he did this out of respect for her. This major issue between her and Yosef notwithstanding, she and her husband had taken Yosef in and elevated him to a high status within their estate. That acknowledgement that Yosef had that he was required to have a sense of gratitude towards her prevented him from fighting back. The Ksav Sofer uses this to explain the Yalkut in Tehillim<sup>59</sup> which says ראה וינס, מה ראה ארונו של יוסף אמר הקב"ה, ינוס ראה מפני הנס דכתיב וינס ויצא החוצה The Medrash Tanchuma<sup>60</sup> teaches similarly that when Yosef ran out of the house (וינס ויצא החוצה), Hashem praised Yosef and said אתה נסת "you fled and ran outside, so too the sea will run from your aron", as it says in Tehillim הים ראה וינס. As the Miztriyim approached, the yam was sitting waiting for Bnei Yisrael to fight. Then it saw the aron of Yosef and was reminded of the

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<sup>56</sup> שמות יד:יג "התיצבו וראו את ישועת ה' "

<sup>57</sup> שמות יד:לא "איתא בילקוט"

<sup>58</sup> בראשית לט:יב "ויעזב בגדו בידה"

<sup>59</sup> תהילים קיד:ג

<sup>60</sup> פ' וישב סי' ט

hakaras hatov that Yosef displayed at his וינט moment. How could Bnei Yisrael fight the very people who hosted them until then? Granted, they weren't the most hospitable or welcoming by any stretch, but they were hosts nonetheless. How could they fight and show ingratitude? At that moment the sea cleared the way for Bnei Yisrael to pass. However, when it came to battling Amalek, there was no such sentiment and no reason not to engage in battle.

It seems that this may go a bit deeper. Could it be a mere coincidence that this contrast in the area of hakaras hatov involves Amalek? The Mechilta in Beshalach<sup>61</sup> labels Amalek a nation of kfui tovah. It's brought down that the root of Amalek's ingratitude is Hashem's promise to Avraham of גר יהיה זרעך בארץ לא להם ועבדום וענו אתם. This was intended for all children of Yitzchak but it was only the Bnei Yaakov who suffered in a foreign land and in essence "took one for the team". Bnei Esav should have been makir tov to Bnei Yisrael for shouldering this burden for them. Instead, they were the ones who attacked Bnei Yisrael immediately after Bnei Yisrael had completed doing them this "tovah". The Medrash in Shemos Rabbah<sup>62</sup> compares the sin of ingratitude with kefirah b'ikar. One who is ungrateful towards his

fellow man will ultimately become ungrateful towards Hashem as well. It is said in the name of the Alshich that this also explains the juxtaposition and contrast of the mention of Amalek at the end of Ki Seitzei and the theme of gratitude in the Parshas HaBikkurim of Ki Savo. I would add that this may be also alluded to in the well known remez of the Imrei Emes that the sofei teivos of רַק רַע כָּל הַיּוֹם<sup>63</sup> (referring to the thoughts of man being fully evil leading up to the Mabul) is עמלק. We start to get an idea of how evil and abominable Amalek is and at the root of it is the middah of kfui tov! It would appear that this contrast of, on the one hand, not fighting mitzrayim but, on the other hand, fighting Amalek is showcasing **both** the loftiness of hakaras hatov and at the same time the absolutely shameful nature of kfui tovah.

Circling back to the megillah, the theme of hakaras hatov vs. the kfui tovah of Amalek is certainly alluded to during the story. We have Haman's ingratitude encapsulated in the phrase וְכָל זֶה אֵינָנוּ שׂוֹהֵי. The turning point of the yeshua<sup>64</sup> comes from the act of hakaras hatov of none other than Achashverosh. (This also may be why we make a point of including honorable mention for Charvona in Shoshanas Yaakov. We want to thank anyone and everyone who

<sup>61</sup> מכילתא - שמות יז:ח

<sup>62</sup> שמות רבה א:י

<sup>63</sup> בראשית ו:ה

<sup>64</sup> אסתר ה:יג

played a role). But in case we might have missed it, the megillah cements it in by reminding us that victory couldn't have come to us passively. We needed to fight to fully eradicate Amalek. In other words, it's not just enough to say ברוך מרדכי, we also must say ארור המן. When it comes to this middah of hakaras hatov, it's not enough just to reciprocate when we are makir tov, we have to also fight to eradicate the middah of kfui tovah since it can have such devastating consequences, even sometimes resulting, chas veshalom, in kefirah beikar.

What better way to recognize this yeshua than with קיימו מה - <sup>65</sup> קיימו וקבלו היהודים

שקיבלו כבר <sup>66</sup> When it comes to kabolah hatorah, Rashi asks, why at מעמד הר סיני did Hashem reference yetzias mitzrayim when identifying Himself? Wouldn't it have been more fundamental to emphasize that Hashem is the Borei Olam? Rashi<sup>67</sup> answers that the message being conveyed is that the gratitude you should have to Hashem for freeing us from Mitzrayim is sufficient on its own to obligate us in serving Him. The entire kabolah hatorah is predicated on hakaras hatov! Let us take this as a reminder that while ingratitude can lead all the way to כפירה בעיקר, proper gratitude can take us to the heights of מעמד הר סיני.

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<sup>65</sup> אסתר ט:כז

<sup>66</sup> מס' שבת פח:

<sup>67</sup> שמות כ:ב "אשר הוצאתיך מארץ מצרים"







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