

Shalom Chaverim!

At first appearance, Purim is a day all about physicality. However, Yom Hakippurim, the day that is often defined as the most spiritual point of the year, translates as 'the day like Purim'! We are forced to look deeper to reveal the spirituality that underpins this seemingly materialistic festival. I hope that this short selection of Divrei Torah will enhance your Purim experience and bring an added level of holiness to your festivities. Purim Sameach!

Chana Be'eri, Chinuch Worker

HIDDEN AND REVEALED NADIA GOLDMAN | SHEVET MORASHA



The name of this book – Megillat Esther – reflects the dynamic relationship throughout the Megilla between the hidden and revealed. The name אסתר is associated with the word *nistar*, 'hidden',

as her identity remained a secret in the story of Purim. And yet Purim celebrates a miracle, a revelation of Divine providence. The word *megilla* is associated with the word *megaleh*, 'reveal', perhaps relating to the time that it became necessary for Esther to reveal her true identity as a Jew in order to serve the important purpose of her standing up to the violence of Haman. Thus, the words 'Megillat Esther' can literally be translated as 'the revelation of the hidden'. When we come to celebrate Purim, we too hide our identities as we dress in costumes and mask our faces yet reveal our faith and gratitude during this joyous time.

Megillat Esther is the only book in the Tanach in which Hashem's name is absent of any explicit mention; the closest reference to God is when Mordechai says to Esther that redemption for the Jews will come from *makom aher*, "another place". (Esther 4:14) Additionally, the sages do tell us that there are many hints of God's presence throughout the Megilla. The Midrash states that when the Megilla says, the King', and not specifically, 'King Achashverosh', the text is referring to the 'King of Kings', God (though the explicit absence of God is rather atypical of Scripture). This is a prime example of how Hashem acts in a concealed manner when performing miracles for Bnei Yisrael. The incredible concept of *Hester Panim* (lit. hiding face) teaches us that Hashem is continuously involved in the world and guiding us despite the fact that He transcends the envisioned categories of human

thought. We live in a time of concealment, where Hashem's presence is not clearly revealed to us but our *emunah* (faith) is strengthened when we don't necessarily need overt miracles in order to learn that Hashem is continuously involved in the world, revealed or hidden. Through Purim we learnt the importance of developing a deeper connection with God as we assert a matter of faith, that he orchestrates events behind the scenes hidden from the human eye.

This theme of concealment and revelation is highlighted by the miracles that take place. There are two kinds of miracles performed by God: those that are obvious and revealed, when God changes the laws of nature, e.g. the miracles performed at the Exodus from Egypt, and those miracles that are hidden, not easily discernible, where the laws of nature are not changed, as with the story in Esther. The miracle of Purim was concealed, signifying how God is there even if He is not named, and He is on our side to save us from calamity even if we don't witness any supernatural act in support.

In a discussion in the Talmud in Megillah 6b as to when Purim is to be observed should there be a leap year when there are two months of Adar, the month wherein lies Purim, Rabban Gamliel held we celebrate the holiday within the second Adar, "to bring one period of redemption (Purim) close to another (Pesach)." Also, just as Esther spent years inside a king's palace before her destiny was revealed and fulfilled, so did Moshe spend time in a pharaoh's palace before he was chosen to lead his people out of Egypt and to the Promised Land, Israel. The two consequent holidays of Purim and Pesach teach us that when something can't be seen it doesn't mean all may be lost, things may turn around completely, because God has already created the remedy which you may only see after it has been revealed.

NADIA WAS A MADRICHA ON ALEPH WINTER MACHANE 5780.

THE PURIM-PESACH PARALLELS: THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

DANIEL ROSS | SHEVET MORASHA



When thinking about their respective stories, it is interesting to note that both Purim and Pesach share a similar theme. Both stories possess a happy ending: the Jews are saved and redeemed, Am Yisrael go from *galut* (exile) to *geula* (redemption). Of course, the notable difference between the redemptions is the visible presence of Hashem. Bnei Yisrael left Mitzrayim amidst miracle after miracle whereas Megillat Esther famously features no mention of Hashem's name. I believe that from the similarities and differences between these stories and chagim we can learn a great deal.

The Gemara teaches (Megillah 6b) that in a leap year, when there is Adar Aleph and Adar Bet we celebrate Purim in Adar Bet in order to "juxtapose *geula* to *geula*" according to Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel as explained by Rabbi Tavi. However, the means of this *geula* was incredibly different: in Mitzrayim the presence of Hashem was undeniable; in Shushan it was easy to overlook. In the events of Purim we know that Mordechai and Esther played a vital role, however in the tefilla of *Al Hanissim* which we add into benching and the Shemona Esrei on Purim their names are mentioned only as an indication of the period during which the events transpired. "In this respect," Rav Soloveitchik writes, "the liturgy is creating a resemblance between Purim and another event in which human action is not mentioned - the Exodus from Egypt, Yetziat Mitzrayim. On Pesach night we read the Haggada, but we emphasise

that Moshe played no role." The reason that Mordechai and Esther's roles are not mentioned in davening despite the *geula* being the work of their hands is explained by Rav Soloveitchik: "When there is a physical menace or the threat of physical destruction, God uses the human hand as an instrument of his will. He recruits man...But Judaism has said that in this case, the man who is the messenger of God should not be credited with the salvation."

This is not to undermine in anyway the efforts of Mordechai and Esther; indeed it is quite the opposite. Rav Soloveitchik

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believed that any book included in the Tanach was a source of Torah knowledge. Hence, when asked what was to be learnt from Megillat Esther, Rav Soloveitchik replied: "The central Halacha in Megillat Esther is the duty of the individual to sacrifice his life, if the destiny and the

future of the community is at stake." This is something that Bnei Akiva as a movement is so incredible at: the madrichim, bogrim, Hanhalla and Mazkirut all give up so many hours for the future of our community. Bnei Akiva is a destiny-directed movement, working towards the destined future of 'Am Yisrael, b'Eretz Yisrael, al pi Torat Yisrael' - the people of Israel in the land of Israel according to the Torah of Israel. As we reach ever closer to the actualisation of this destiny we must appreciate and truly realise the value of our actions.

Purim Sameach!

DANIEL IS ON TORANI 5780 AND IS STUDYING AT YESHIVAT HAKOTEL.

UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL – HOW PURIM CHANGES US

AVI CLEMENTS | SHEVET OROT



One of the most striking elements of the Megilla is that God's name is not directly mentioned in it; there are nevertheless allusions to Him. The Midrash (Esther Rabbah) informs us that: *"Where the*

*Megilla states "To King Achashverosh," the scripture is exclusively referring to King Achashverosh. However, where the Megilla states "To **the King**" without specifying the King's name, it may also be alluding to Hashem."*

This Midrash is telling us to pay careful attention to the word 'Hamelech' (the King) as at these points we can find Hashem in the Purim story. This adds an extra dimension to many pesukim and provides a radically different way of viewing Purim as a whole. We are being challenged to 'find Hashem' and listen to the hidden messages of the Megilla. For example, Esther 3:8 states: *"And Haman said to King Achashverosh: there is a particular people, **scattered and dispersed** among the peoples of all the provinces of your kingdom, and their laws are different from all the other peoples; and **they do not obey the King's laws, and it is not in the King's interest to tolerate them.**"* If we take it that 'the King' refers to not just Achashverosh but also to Hashem, then which of His laws specifically are not being obeyed, and in what way are the people both scattered and dispersed?

Achashverosh ruled from 485-465 BCE. The events of the Megilla occurred during the third year of his reign (482 BCE), at which point only a minority of the Jews exiled during the destruction of the First Temple had returned to the Land of Israel after Cyrus the Great (Achashverosh's maternal grandfather) allowed them to return. Despite Yirmiyahu's prophecy that the exile would only last 70 years, and so would end 34 years before the Purim story, the Jews of Shushan overwhelmingly decided to remain in exile. In doing so they neglected their identity, choosing Shushan over Yerushalayim and Achashverosh over God. It is for this reason that the Megillah describes the Jewish people as "scattered and dispersed", both in a physical and spiritual sense. The Jewish people were plagued

by a separateness that tore them apart and prevented them from achieving their destiny, to return to Israel, with Hashem's Divine Presence in their midst. Perhaps, tragically, it was the sense of threat that eventually united the Jewish people back together.

In Megilla 14a, the Gemara describes the removal of Achashverosh's signet ring (and the handing of it to Haman) as *"greater than the forty-eight Jewish prophets and seven Jewish prophetesses... for they [the prophets] were all unable to return the Jews to the path of righteousness"*. The Talmud is essentially saying that it was Haman's decree, stamped with the King's seal, that caused the Jews of Shushan to come together and pray to God for salvation, and it had a far greater unifying effect than the prophets could have achieved. In this instance it is also interesting to suggest that God Himself (verse 3:10 says *"and **the King** removed his signet ring"*) gave Haman His seal of approval to put forward the decree, as He knew that it would create the conditions for the return of His people to the path of righteousness.

The Megilla is not merely the story of the Jews surviving genocide and temporarily defeating Amalek; it is the story of the reunification of a "scattered and dispersed people", the reclamation of their identity, and the revival of the spiritual connection between Am Yisrael, Eretz Yisrael and Hashem in the face of adversity. On reflection, it is arguably somewhat sad that it took the threat of Haman's decree to bring us together. Perhaps a lesson that we can learn from Purim is to find ways to act as a united people, in good times as well as challenging ones. The Mitzvot of Purim invite us to do precisely this – through giving charity, giving our friends food packages and sitting down with friends and family to eat...maybe the challenge then is to give charity to a broader circle than you might usually do, give Mishloach Manot to a friend who wouldn't expect such a gift and invite someone to your Seudah outside of your close friendship circle, to further unite the Jewish community.

AVI IS A SCAN AT KINLOSS SVIVA.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Questions on Megillat Esther to discuss at seuda

Perek 1

Why does the megilla describe the materialistic splendours of Achaverosh's party in such great detail?

What did Achashverosh hope to achieve with his royal decree?

Perek 2

What can we learn about Esther's personality from this perek?

What caused Bigtan and Teresh's anger and who were they angry with?

Perek 3

Why did Mordechai refuse to bow to Haman?

Why was Achashverosh so willing to listen to Haman without questioning him?

Perek 4

What conflict was Esther faced with when Mordechai instructed her to plead with the king?

Why did Esther instruct the Jews to fast when we were told earlier in the perek that they were already in mourning?

Perek 5

Why does Esther invite the king and Haman to a second feast instead of making her request immediately?

Perek 6

Was Achashverosh aware of Haman's relationship with Mordechai when he sought his advice?

Why did Zeresh change the advice she gave to Haman at the end of the previous perek?

Perek 7

Why was Haman's reaction to Esther's declaration to prostrate himself upon her couch?

Perek 8

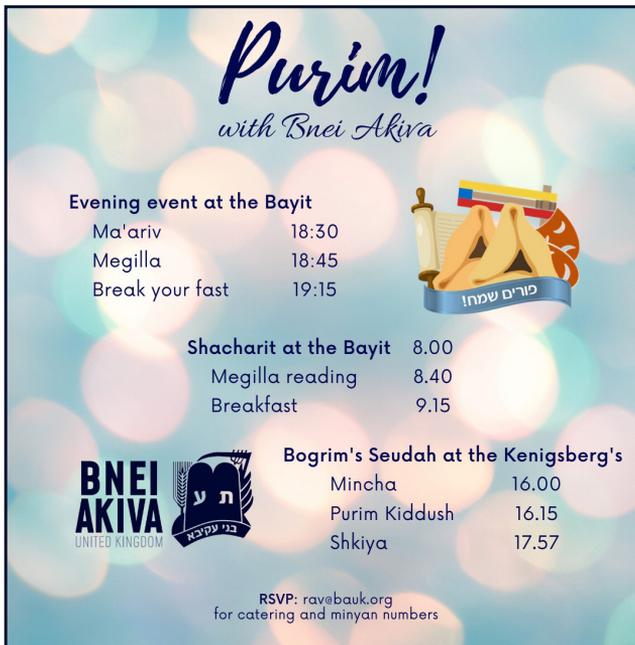
What change in the status of the Jews is implied in pasuk 9?

Perek 9

Why is our observance of Purim based on the Persian tradition of holding a feast?

Perek 10

Why does the megilla end with an account of a new tax?



Purim!
with Bnei Akiva

Evening event at the Bayit

Ma'ariv	18:30
Megilla	18:45
Break your fast	19:15



Shacharit at the Bayit

Megilla reading	8.00
Breakfast	8.40
	9.15

Bogrim's Seudah at the Kenigsberg's

Mincha	16.00
Purim Kiddush	16.15
Shkiya	17.57

BNEI AKIVA
UNITED KINGDOM



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for catering and minyan numbers