



## Avoiding Hamanism

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hanoch Teller

The Gemara in Chullin says that Haman is hinted to in the Torah in the verse, "*Hamin haeitz asher zivisi...*," Hashem asked Adam, "Did you eat from the tree which I forbade you to eat?" Haman had everything a person could want; status, wealth, grandeur, and honor. Yet when he saw Mordechai refusing to bow, he said, "It's all worth nothing to me." Likewise, Adam and Chavah were permitted to eat of everything in Gan Eden except for one tree. They could not contain their desire and sinned. In life we do this too. Hashem gives us so much yet if one thing doesn't work out, we get all bent out of shape. That's Hamanism.

We must learn to focus on what we have. It's not how much you have but how much you appreciate. Making *brachot* with intention reminds us to be grateful for all the good Hashem has given us. The greatest key to happiness is being grateful. Human nature is to appreciate what you have when it's taken away. We must appreciate what we have when we have it. That's how you become a joyful person. Our commitment on Purim, the holiday of "*kimu v'kiblu*," should be not to submit to Hamanism. Let's not let one thing break us.

It says about Amalek, "*Asher karcha b'derech*,"

Everyone was frightened of the Jews after they left Egypt. Amalek jumped in and cooled it off for the other nations by creating doubt and accusation. Rav Nissan Alpert once related a story of a Rebbe who took his chassidim to the top of a hill. When they looked down below they saw that the lake had frozen and that there was a cross etched out. The Rebbe then said, flowing water purifies, it is only when it is frozen that it can contain impurity. A Jew must never let his *avodat Hashem* become cold and apathetic. He must stoke his heart with the fiery passion of Torah and *mitzvot*. Only then will he have the strength to overcome all the evils of this world.

## The Essence of Purim

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

The Torah recounts how at *Maaseh Meriva* the Jews asked, "*Hayesh Hashem bikirbeinu im ayin*" Is Hashem among us or not? Immediately Amalek came to attack them. Rav Wolbe asks, obviously after experiencing the awesome miracles of the exodus and the splitting of the sea, *klal Yisrael* knew that Hashem was with them. What did they mean? He explains that the Jews were really asking, does Hashem interact with us on a level of *yesh* where we can understand him somewhat, or on the level of *ayin* where we cannot comprehend him. It was a purely intellectual question, and although there was nothing technically wrong with it, it showed a certain apathy in their relationship to Hashem. They were missing that *kirvat Elokim li tov*, that closeness to Hashem. Therefore Amalek, the nation that signifies coldness, was able to attack them. In Refidim they lost their enthusiasm for Torah and *mitzvot* and brought the *kelipot* (forces of impurity) of Amalek upon them. Likewise, in the *megilah* we read how Haman told Achashveirosh, "*Yesh no am*

*echad mefuzar u'mefurad bein hamim...*" -There is one nation spread out among the nations. The Gemara reads *yesh no as yeshno*. They were sleeping in their *avodat Hashem*. Therefore Haman was given the power to plot their destruction.

Rav Pincus explains the verse in Divrei Hayomim, "*Lecha Hashem hagedula...ki kol b'shamayim u'varetz*." The *rasha* says that Hashem is up in heaven while he's down on earth and the two shall never meet. A *tzaddik* believes the opposite. His mission is to connect heaven to earth in all his thoughts and actions. A Jew always walks with his Creator. *Klal Yisrael* deserved destruction because they stepped out of the realm of Hashem and enjoyed the feast of Achashveirosh for its own sake. Their punishment was a consequence of their actions. It was as if Hashem said, "Perhaps you haven't sinned, but you've cut yourself off from me." Purim celebrates the creation of a new relationship with Hashem. It's about feeling that closeness and joy in

*avodat Hashem*.

Chazal say that when Mashiach will come all the holidays will be nullified except Purim. All the other *yomim tovim* came about because of an *isarusa d'leilah*, an arousal from above. Purim was an *israrusa d'latata*, an arousal from below. We weren't worthy to be saved but our prayers, *teshuva*, and *bitachon* awakened Hashem's compassion. In fact the Arizal says the core miracle was not the salvation, but the *rachamim* that Hashem showed us. Every year on Purim, the gates of heaven are open once again. The Nesivos Shalom teaches that Purim is greater than Yom Kippur. It's a day of incredible mercy. After the reading of the *megilah*, it is an auspicious time to pray. The *seudah* too is an intense time to ask for personal and national *yeshuot*.

May we merit to tap into the awesome power of compassion and love that flows down to us on Purim and may all our tefilot be answered *l'tova*.



## Megilat Esther: Luxurious Exile #1

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

There is a mystical correlation between Shevat and Adar that relates to the hidden presence of Hashem in our lives. On Tu B'shevat, the water begins to rise from the ground and the trees start to blossom, although we cannot see it. Shevat's astral sign is a bucket. You cannot see the water flowing into the bucket, unless you look down into the well. So too Adar is about Hashem's constant Divine intervention although it may be hard to discern sometimes.

The purpose of exile is to make us yearn to be who we can be by seeing who we don't want to be. During the Babylonian exile the Jews confronted the frailty and emptiness of power. Instead of being inspired to return to Hashem, they sunk deeper. In the Persian exile, the Jews faced the challenges of excess and materialism. They joined in the feasting of Achashveirosh, instead of rejecting its frivolity and hollowness.

The *megilah* begins with the word *vayehi* which connotes something negative. Conversely, the word *vahaya* conveys something positive. *Vayehi* contains two *yuds* and one *heh* while *vayaha* contains two *hehs* and one *yud*. *Heh* is the symbol of Hashem's presence in this world, while *yud* signifies His presence above us. *Vayaha* connotes the physical world of concrete reality. It's seeing the happy ending and the reason for the sequence of events. *Vayehi* connotes that something is happening beyond our comprehension. One day we will understand that it was all for our good.

The beginning of the Purim story seems inexplicable. Why did someone like Achashveirosh gain such power? The commentators say that he was *ach v'rosh*. He was like a brother, but he impoverished everyone. He would befriend people and then use them. When he ascended to the throne, it coincided with the first possible way of counting the seventy years to the end of the exile. He threw a party to celebrate that the Jews had not been redeemed. The Gemara says Esther merited to rule over 127 countries in the merit that Sarah lived 127 years. A flame that is lit in

a dark room is much brighter to the human eye, than one that is lit in a lighted room. Giving Achashveirosh so much power and grandeur made the ultimate flame of repentance kindled by Esther that much brighter.

Achashveirosh established his throne in Shushan. Shushan is related to the word *shoshana*, a rose. In Shir Hashirim the Jews are compared to a rose surrounded by thorns. In order for our beauty to be preserved, we have to face opposition. At the feast, Achashveirosh wore the garments of the kohen gadol. He wanted to show his mastery over something that wasn't his. Each garment reflected the ability of the garments of the soul, (thought, speech, and action) to be refined in a different way. The garments had the power to bring atonement for specific lacks and sins. Creating an imbalance of *gashmiut* and *ruchniyut* leaves *ruchniyut* powerless which is what Achashveirosh wanted to accomplish.

Whenever it says *hamelech* in the *megilah*, without mentioning Achashveirosh, it refers to Hashem. We read in the *megilah*, "When these days were full, the king made a feast." When a person's days are over in this world, Hashem makes a feast for him in the World To Come. Achashveirosh attempted to make materialism appear more vivid and superior than spirituality. If we choose to live that way, we will have to confront that choice in *olam habah*. What we become down here will determine our ability to partake in the feast above.

At Achashveirosh's celebration, thousands of people were given their own unique settings. On a deeper level this means that in this world each person is given different vessels through which their soul filters through. "And the royal wine was poured in great amounts as only a king could provide." Hashem provides everything, not just the receptacle, but the wine that flows into it. *Yayin* (wine) has the same numerical value as *sod-secret*. Everyone's life contains hidden vitality and beauty. We all have buried capacities that come forth depending on the way we use the abilities Hashem gives us. "Everyone drank according to his own will..." A person has outer

and inner will. He can be as great a *tzadik* as he wants to be, by using the unique capacities given to him by Hashem.

The Maharal says that Vashti comes from the root word *shtayim*, two. She saw everything in terms of separateness from Hashem. Therefore she wanted to assert herself. Achashveirosh in turn sought to degrade her and put her in her place. He commanded her to come to him wearing only the royal crown. On a deeper level, this refers to Hashem bringing forth all the possible forces that make it look as though he alone doesn't rule. He creates this to challenge us, to make us see how in the end of all these forces are really subservient to Him. It says that Vashti grew a tail. If you view the world externally and superficially all you see is an animal with a tail. Vashti experienced a moment of truth where she recognized who she really was and therefore she refused to go to Achashveirosh.

Achashveirosh saw that Vashti's disobedience could foment total discord. Not only did she wrong the king, but all the national hierarchy. When a husband doesn't care to provide for his wife and the wife doesn't try to build with what her husband does give, the natural result is rage and imbalance. *Memuchan* (Haman), a descendant of Amalek, stepped up and offered his advice. *Memuchan* means the one who Hashem prepared. This is the evil inclination, the angel of death, and the *satan*, whose function is to create doubt, accusation, and destruction. Our response must be to rebel against it.

The king did according to *Memuchan's* advice and killed Vashti. Letters were sent to all the people stating that each head of the family should have control of his house. *Memuchan* put a touch of corruption into this. His purpose was to turn giving into control and receiving into taking. There are couples who could want what's right and do what's wrong. The *yetzer hara* confuses our will. Our mission is to rise above that and see the clarity inherent in Hashem's will.