

## Purim and Geula

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The real end of the Purim story isn't told in the *ellermegilah*. It climaxes when Daryavesh, the son of Ester and Achashveirosh, gave permission to resume building the second *Beit Hamikdash*. Achashveirosh's career began with stopping the work. The story of Purim eventually led to the reconstruction.

There's a disagreement between the Rambam and other commentators what the purpose of the *Beit Hamikdash* was. Rambam says it was meant to be a place where sacrifices could be offered. The Ramban and others maintain that it was meant to be a dwelling place for Hashem in this world. In fact, both reasons are correct because the *Beit Hamikdash* is called the place of union between the Jewish people and Hashem.

Exile brings about division, the kind that happened on the second day of creation when Hashem separated the higher waters from the lower waters. The lower waters are the physical source of this world and the higher waters are the spiritual source of these waters. We should ideally see these two as one. If we could look at a glass of water and see *Elokut* (divinity), it's as it should be. Eating too, is meant to be an act of faith. But we often see the physical world as separate from its spiritual source. This happens when our passion and ability to know Hashem is dulled by our involvement in this world.

During the first *Beit Hamikdash*, the Divine Presence was very clear and observable. There were continued miracles. During the second *Beit Hamikdash* this stopped. Chazal say that the fire that went up from the altar was in the shape of a dog. Chazal note that the Torah commands us to throw non-kosher

meat to the dogs because they didn't bark when the Jews went out of Egypt. Even they had some capacity to stand in reverence. The second *Beit Hamikdash*, although at a lower level, still had great holiness. It was a consequence of the Purim story, the struggling and the yearning in the midst of profound darkness.

In the *Mishkan*, which was meant to be a miniature picture of the world, the shulchan was on the north side, the place of least light. This signified that finding Hashem from a place of prosperity is the hardest of all challenges. The *nisayon* (test) at the beginning of the *megilah* was the feast of Achashveirosh where the Jews ate for the sake of enjoyment. Achashveirosh presented it in a way where spirituality was secondary and materialism was primary. He wore the clothing of the high priest and took out the vessels of the *Beit Hamikdash*. He used spirituality for the sake of making physicality more significant. He wanted to eradicate *emunah*.

Achashveirosh was a fool. A fool is someone who can't control his emotions by tempering them with logic. Emotions will always tell you that physicality is superior to spirituality because it's more available and tangible.

The source for Haman in the Torah is, "*Hamin ha'etz... achalta*," (Did you eat of the tree?) Haman wants us to doubt what we really want. Do we desire to drown ourselves in temporal things or to attach ourselves to *Elokut*? Adam ate of the *etz hadaat* with the intent to conceal Hashem. The Baal Haleshem says he failed because at that point he had not yet chosen good over evil enough times for it to be totally take away its glamor. It still had the power to

seduce him. Exile is a part of redemption. The only way we can figure out who we want to be is to know clearly what we don't want to be. *Bayit sheni*, the dwelling place of yearning, came from a conscious decision to reject the evil we encountered in exile.

The heroine of the megila is Esther. In the Torah she's hinted at, "*Haster astir et panai bayom hahu*," I'll hide my face on that day. Hester creates longing. But if we don't let it take us to where we're meant to go, it is a tragedy. Esther never had parents. The emptiness within her could have easily been filled with negativity. Instead she chose to fill it with *Elokut*. She was called Hadassah to suggest the inconspicuous but beautiful aspect of a plant. Esther's essence was modesty. When a person seeks to be conspicuous, it is because on some level their sense of esteem is related to other people measuring their worth. When a person has a strong consciousness of the divine, they see themselves as part of something far bigger than themselves. Hadassah was a statement of capacity for *bitul* (self nullification) that came from mystic union with Hashem. The *hadassah* plant is green and the gemara says that Esther was green. Green, a mixture of yellow and blue, lies between the hot and cool colors. It is the center, which corresponds to *tiferet*. The gemara says about Esther that she was *beinonot*, average. She didn't idealize uniqueness or separateness but rather unity, closeness, and simplicity. She looked for the *Elokut* in every person and in that way found a common bond with them.

May we merit to celebrate this Purim with passion, gratitude to Hashem, and everlasting joy.



## Tefilla: Proactive Response

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

The Gemara writes that *tefila* is *avoda she'balev*, work of the heart. We know that all *mitzvot* require proper *kavana* (intention). Why did *chazal* specifically emphasize intent in the *mitzva* of prayer? The Sichot Avodat Hashem tells a parable of a king who had an only son. One day, he summoned his son and said, "It's time I start training you to be a ruler. I will put you in charge of a province." The prince felt torn. On the one hand, he would now have the chance to develop his abilities and serve his father faithfully. On the other hand, he was sad that he would have less time to speak to the king. Then the king said, "As part of your job you will come to me three times a day and report what is going on." The prince was relieved. Not only would he report on his business affairs, but he would share his daily joys, challenges, doubts, and hopes. It was a fresh chance to bond with his father.

Similarly, in heaven the soul enjoys a close relationship with Hashem. When it comes

down to the world, it is happy to have the opportunity to serve its Creator but it is sad that it will no longer have the same connection with Him. So Hashem gives us the special gift of prayer. Three times a day we have the opportunity to pour out our inner yearnings, joy, and frustrations to Hashem. Prayer is not only about pleading for help and salvation in a time of need. It's about coming close and feeling the presence of Hashem in one's life moment by moment.

Rav Salomon asks, why didn't Mordechai wait to decree the fast after Pesach? When suffering comes it's as if Hashem takes us off his shoulders. It is as if Hashem is saying, "I'm with you, but it's been so long since I've heard from you." Hashem wakes us up because He wants us to connect. Mordechai immediately decreed a fast because he understood that if Hashem had sent the suffering he wanted the Jews to be aroused at once. This is one of the fundamental lessons of Purim. Taanit Esther

comes a day before Purim because an essential part of the holiday is fasting and crying out. Aside from the *mitzvot* of the day, it is an auspicious time to pray. The doors of heaven are open. Even if a decree was stamped with the signet ring it can be rescinded.

On Purim, the outpouring of mercy that facilitated the miracles returns. There's an aura of love and kindness. Don't let the opportunity slip away. While waiting to deliver *shalach manot*, say a chapter of Tehilim. During the Purim meal, slip in a silent plea for Divine assistance. The gates are open during the reading of the *megilah* and immediately after. When the reader says the words, "*Mah sh'eilatech v'yinaten lach*," (What is your wish and I will grant it,) we should envision Hashem standing before us. It's a time of favor and closeness when the One Above says, "I will give you your heart's desire."

## Accentuating The Acceptance

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The Gemara says that at Har Sinai, Hashem lifted the mountain over the Jewish people's head and forced them to accept the Torah. How then were they held responsible for it? Rashi explains that they re-accepted the Torah out of love after the Purim miracle. How do we understand that they didn't accept the Torah willingly at Sinai? Didn't they experience countless supernatural events with the Exodus, the splitting of the sea, the falling of the *mohn*, and the Clouds of Glory? What was so special about the miracle of Purim?

Rav Edelstein explains that prior to receiving the Torah, the miracles didn't have the capacity to change them. The Rabbeinu Yonah adds that although the Jewish people were on a lofty level at Har Sinai, during the Purim story when they repented they attained

a much more profound level. "*Layehudim hayta orah*." The renewed *deveikut* engendered by their re-acceptance of Torah led to the joy of Purim. Love and light stand out a lot more starkly amid gloom and darkness than bright sunshine on a glorious day. It is specifically in a time of strict judgment that we find Hashem's love. On Purim the Jews felt Hashem's presence even though He was concealed. They knew that if He had saved them, in spite of their sins, His care was real.

At Sinai, the Divine revelation was so clear that they were seemingly forced to accept the Torah. But during the Purim miracle, under a guise of concealment, they chose to see Hashem's hand. Therefore, their acceptance of the Torah was deeper and more meaningful. When you can say, "What I see is limited, but I

know Hashem is there and I want to make Him part of my emotional and spiritual reality," a transformation happens. Purim is about embracing Hashem every day of our lives. It's more difficult to be reminded of faith when doing something ordinary, but once reminded it becomes extraordinary. Mordechai wanted the sages to designate the day as a regular *Yom Tov*. But Klal Yisrael argued that they could have holiness on a regular day. They could bring spirituality into the physical world and connect it to Hashem. And in fact the *kabbalists* teach that Yom Kippur is *yom k'Purim*, a day comparably lower than Purim. When we can transcend materialism and uplift it for Hashem, we can experience the true *simcha* and sanctity of the day.