



Purim, Prayer & Providential Perspective

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles
Summary by Channie Koplowitz-Stein

It is customary, after the reading of the Megilah to recite the liturgical poem *Shoshanat Yaakov*. Why do we say it both morning and night? How does the rose symbolize Bnei Yisroel? Why the rose of Jacob and not of Israel? Why is there such joy at the techeilet/royal blue of Mordechai? Is there a difference between *netzach*/eternity and *dor vador*/all the generations? Why is shame mentioned?

Rabbi Strickoff explains, when Yaakov prays to Hashem after returning from Lavan he says, "*Hatzileini na me'ad...*/Save me from the hand of my brother, from Esau." The initials of the first three words are Haman. Yaakov prophetically saw that the descendant of Esau would try to destroy his own descendants, and he prayed both for himself and for future generations. Therefore, when we celebrate Purim, we remember the prayer of Yaakov.

The rose is a dominant symbol in *Shir Hashirim*, the metaphoric love song between Hashem and *Bnei Yisroel*. The *Chazon Lamoed* says, the delicate rose, although it is blown in many directions, and is constantly stung by thorns, is still focused upward toward the heavens. Similarly, although we are pushed in all directions in exile, and pricked and hurt in so many ways, we still yearn for Hashem and keep our faith in Him. Esther, at the entrance to Achashveirosh's throne room, prayed to Hashem. She is the symbolic Morning Star of Psalm 22, alone, with only the King of kings to protect her. Similarly, the name Mordechai alludes to the myrrh in the spice offering. Mordechai stays in prayer mode continuously, until the decree is rescinded.

Be'er Chaim cites the *Midrash* that when the decree was issued, Eliyahu Hanavi awoke the Patriarchs to plead to Hashem. Being unsuccessful, he approached Moshe who advised finding a *tzaddik* to pray below while he would pray from above. Between them they were successful in annulling the decree. As *Kedushas Halevi* writes, even a decree that was sealed can be overturned through the power of prayer. Therefore, on these two days of *Taanis Esther* and Purim, in the merit of Mordechai and Esther, our prayers are extremely powerful. Rambam instituted that we read the *Megilah* both at night and by day as they cried night and day.

Rav Biederman notes that the sparks of light that descend to earth during *Kedushah* on *Yom Hakippurim* are sparks that also come down and remain with us throughout Purim, making our supplications to Hashem even more potent. When we trust so strongly in Hashem, we will not be ashamed by our prayers.

Ohel Moshe notes that the rose is soft and fragile, and therefore subject to change. The name *shoshanah* alludes to *shinuy*/change. *Bnei Yisroel* feared that their re-commitment to *Torah* and *mitzvot* might wane with the passage of time. But when they saw the permanence of the royal blue robes on Mordechai, they were reinvigorated and knew that their commitment would last, as the royal line of Rachel Imenu was manifest in Yosef Hatzaddik and revived in Mordechai and Esther. Their connection to Hashem would never be severed. *Techeilet* is the special blue used in *tzitzit* and in the color of royal robes. All of *Bnei Yisroel yachad*/together, as one,

recognized that the royal blue robes Mordechai wore as the salvation was unfolding were to remind them of Hashem above working to save them. Just as they were united in their vision at Sinai, so were *Bnei Yisroel* united here in their commitment to Hashem. But they as we, were still in exile, and the name of our Patriarch associated with exile is Yaakov. Hence, it is the rose of Yaakov, but the commitment and connection is *lanetzach*/eternal.

With this faith, *Bnei Yisroel* would never be embarrassed to call out to Hashem as their forefathers had done. We are joyous because it was our faith that was the catalyst for our redemption. Like the rose, *Bnei Yisroel* turned upward and saw the spiritual aspect of their salvation. They understood their role as the catalyst through prayer.

Moda Labinah explains, they saw the techeilet of the royal robe, the symbol of worldly politics, intertwined with Jewish destiny as the blue thread of the *tzitzit* was wound around its white threads. *Berotam yachad*/They saw them together, as one unified whole. All the white, the background of history is for the purpose of the *techeilet*, the sapphire stone of the Almighty's throne.

As Rabbi Mordechai Ezrachi notes, each scene appears disconnected. Only in retrospect can we see that this salvation was already set, *teshuatam hayita lanetzach*, prepared in the past, from the beginning, to be brought to fruition in the present. Thus, Purim gives us this strength *lanetzach*/forever. We know that Hashem is orchestrating all the events and we have hope for the future.

An Unlikely Heroine A Study on Megilat Esther

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dr. Esther Shkop

Megilat Esther is unique among all the books in *Tanach* in that it doesn't contain the name of Hashem. It was written in a covert style due to Persian censors and there are clues and hidden messages woven between the lines. Achashveirosh was not born into a royal family. He rose to power after a series of

military victories and it took three years for him to assert his position so that he could celebrate his inauguration. Rav Avraham Rivlin says, Achashveirosh made the party for nobility as well as the commoners to flaunt his wealth. This doesn't indicate the strength of a new king but rather his weakness. People who

are well off don't need to buy people's support.

Achashveirosh wanting to legitimize his reign, married Vashti, the granddaughter of Nevuchadnezzar. On the 7th day, when Achashveirosh was inebriated he asked his servants to bring Vashti. Chazal tell us he

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wanted to turn her into a thing in front of all the princes, thereby indicating he no longer needed her. It was a scheme to take a limited monarchy and turn it into an absolute monarchy. If she would capitulate all would be well. If not, Haman would turn it into a national security crisis and they would get rid of her. And that's what happened. Then absurd letters were sent out to all the nations that every man should be a ruler in his own household. This was the hand of Hashem so that further letters wouldn't be taken seriously, and they would wait for explicit instructions.

The *Megilah* tells us, "*Ish Yehudi hayah... Mordechai ben Yair* ... Mordechai was a descendant of King Shaul who failed to kill Agag. Now generations later, that moment of weakness came back to haunt the Jews. Esther was taken on the 10th of Tevet, the day of the breaching of the wall to the palace of the king. When the decree became known and Mordechai asked Esther to go to Achashveirosh she was afraid. He then told her, "If you remain silent, salvation will come- *m'mokom acher*. *Makom* refers to Hashem. Chazal say Esther was a reincarnation of King Shaul and

she was charged with completing the mission he had not completed. "On the third day, Esther dressed in royalty..." The Zohar says the *Shechina* dressed itself in her. She became the means by which Hashem would bring salvation. She went to the king, prepared to give up her soul for her people.

Amalek stands for *mikreh* -happenstance. But the words can be read as- *Rak m'Hashem* -It's all from Above. And in fact, Esther's heroism was rewarded when son Daryavesh gave permission to rebuild the *Beit Hamikdash*.

Purim Today

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

In the story of Purim, we read about how Haman declared war against *Klal Yisrael*. Throughout history we've faced many wars. Wars between nations seem unrelated to us, but in fact they do have a connection. The Torah tells us about the first war in *Bereishit*. Wherever a topic is discussed the first time in the *Torah*, we find its essence and definition. The source for all wars began at *dor haflaga*. This world is a result of the will of Hashem. He had a plan and purpose for it. Hashem created man in His image which means we have divine powers. Rav Dessler explains that just as the will of Hashem created the world, the will of a human being can move mountains. Chazal say, "There is nothing that can stand in the way of the will of a person." Yet we know many times things we want don't happen. Rav Dessler explains that this is because there are other people who want the opposite, and being that there are two wills, one might overcome the other. However, if everyone will unite with one goal, we can accomplish great things. In *dor haflaga* all of mankind united with a desire to disconnect the upper realm from the lower realm. They wanted to forget about Hashem. Hashem saw the danger. The world would be left without a purpose. Hashem doesn't interfere in man's free will. But He will manipulate events to destroy corruption. Hashem dispersed *dor*

haflaga around the world and created different cultures and languages so that unity among the nations would no longer be possible.

It says in Yeshaya, "For the sake of *Tzion* I will not be silent, for the sake of Yerushalayim I won't be still." Rav Dessler explains based on the Targum that as long as Zion is not rebuilt, as long as we are still waiting for *Mashiach*, there will always be wars among nations. The nations are not interested in a life focused on spirituality and a relationship with Hashem. They are concerned with their own physical needs and desires and if they will unite, there is a danger that the world will lose its purpose. The war we are in the midst of now came from a desire for power and control. What should be our response? We have to pray and offer physical help.

When Haman wanted to convince Achashveirosh to kill the Jews he said, "There is one nation spread out and divided among the nations." ... The *Midrash* interprets one as referring to Hashem. Haman reassured Achashveirosh that their Creator was asleep and would not watch over them because they were divided. In fact, it was a time of concealment. But Chazal say Hashem told Haman- Although it appears as if I am asleep, I will wake up and save *Klal Yisrael*. Our mission is

to bring the world to its purpose and we can only do that when we are united. Rabeinu Yonah quotes *Mishlei*, separation comes from focusing on physical desires. As people are naturally different, the only way to unite is having a common spiritual goal. Chazal say the unity of *dor haflaga* was like that of a group of thieves. They are loyal to each other because they need each other, but they aren't really united. So, when we say *Klal Yisrael* were divided it means they were influenced by the physicality of the Persian exile. Hashem orchestrated the Purim story to bring them back. When all Jews unite to do the will of Hashem it has a tremendous power and can overcome all our enemies. Esther told Mordechai, "Gather all the Jews..." When we are united, we sanctify the name of Hashem and that is the beginning of the salvation.

The Gra quotes from the *Megilah*, "...*Nikhalu v'amod al nafshom*..." *V'amod* is in the singular. The key to the miracle of Purim was unity. On Purim, we give *mishloach manot* and share what we have with others. The unity engendered among us bring us closer to Hashem. Rav Gadol Eisner explains, number 1-9 are separate entities. When 1 and 0 nullify themselves to become ten, they rise to a higher level. It is only with *achdut* that we can overpower Amalek and bring *Mashiach*.