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Rabbi Eli Belizon

Rabbi Dr. David Horwitz

Rabbi Jonathan Schachter

Rabbi Robert Shur

Ms. Eliana Sohn

Rabbi Michael Zylberman



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500 West 185th Street, Suite 419, New York, NY 10033 • office@yutorah.org • 212.960.0074

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# Tick Tock the Purim Clock

**A**mong the many interesting aspects of Megilas Esther is the story of how an orphan becomes a leader of the Jewish people. The process by which Esther becomes a queen and leads Am Yisrael was a gradual one. The Megilla (4:11) points out Esther's fear and hesitation to lead and save the Jewish people from this crisis. After what seems to be a long struggle, Mordechai, however, successfully convinces Esther to forge ahead with a plan to save the Jewish people. He does this by striking a chord and appealing to Esther's judgment. This prompts Esther to request that all the Jews fast for three days prior to her approaching the King.

לך כגוס את כל היהודים הנמצאים בשושן וצומו עלי ואל תאכלו ואל תשתו שלשת ימים לילה ויום.

*Go and gather all of the Jews who are found in Shushan and fast for me. Don't eat or drink for three days night and day.*

**Esther 4:16**

The Jewish people were facing an extremely dangerous and precarious situation, which called for an extreme response. Nevertheless, the wording of Esther's instruction is a bit odd. Why did she need to phrase it as "three days night and day"? The Jewish people were aware that three days translates into night and day. In most areas of halacha, the night precedes the day.



## Rabbi Eli Belizon

Rebbe, Stone Beit Midrash Program

Rabbi, Young Israel of Fair Lawn

Isn't the emphasis on "*laila v'yom*" obvious?

I believe Esther was introducing something profound to the Jewish people with this peculiar statement. The key to this puzzle is found in an idea developed by Rav Meir Simcha from Dvinsk. At the end of the Megilla, the verse states

לָקִים אֶת יְמֵי הַפְּרִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּזִמְנֵיהֶם

*To fulfill these days of Purim in their times.*

**Esther 9:31**

After the Jews were saved, the holiday of Purim was publicized to all of the Jews who were told to keep this holiday "in their times." What does this phrase in "their time" mean?

Rav Meir Simcha, *Meshech Chochma*, Esther 9:31 explains that the story of Purim emanated from Haman's lottery which landed on the thirteenth of Adar. The Gemara, *Megilla* 13b, states that Haman was excited about this date since it was the month in which Moshe Rabbeinu died, and this must be a bad month for the Jewish people. He therefore became confident in

the success of his mission to destroy the Jewish people. The Gemara notes that Haman was unaware that Moshe Rabbeinu was born on the very same day, and therefore this month represents the beginning of the salvation of the Jewish people from exile. If Haman was so knowledgeable about Jewish history and he knew the day of Moshe's yahrtzeit, why did he neglect to realize that Moshe was born on the same day of the year? What was it about that event that escaped Haman's attention when studying the history of the Jewish people?

The Gemara, *Sotah* 12a, tells us that when Moshe was born, the house filled up with light. This must have been an indication that Moshe was born at night, at a time when illumination would have a significant impact. By contrast, the verse in Devarim (32:48) states that Moshe died "*be'etzem hayom*," in the middle of the day. Thus, even though the two events occurred on the same calendar day, Haman miscalculated and thought that these two events occurred on different days. The



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**Rabbi Meir  
Simcha  
Hakohen of  
Dvinsk  
(1843-1926)**

R. Meir Simcha was born in Butrimonys, Lithuania, to Samson Kalonymus, a local wealthy merchant. After marrying at age 17, he settled in Bialystok, Poland, where he was supported by his wife, who opened a business to support him while he continued his Talmudic studies. After 23 years in Bialystok, during which time he rejected many offers to become the rabbi of a city, he finally accepted the rabbinate of the Mitnagdim in the Latvian town of Dvinsk, now known as Daugavpils. He served in that position for 39 years until his death.

In Dvinsk, his counterpart was the Hasidic Rabbi Yosef Rosen, known as the Rogatchover Gaon or by his work *Tzofnath Paneach*. The two had a great respect for each other, despite the Rogatchover's legendary fiery temper, and on occasions referred questions in Jewish law to each other.

In 1906, a certain Shlomo Friedlander claimed to have discovered, and then published two tractates of the Jerusalem Talmud that had been considered to have been lost for hundreds of years. Rabbi Meir Simcha was one of the prominent rabbis who discovered that the work was a very clever forgery, and denounced it as such.

In Dvinsk, he received visitors from the whole region, and was frequently consulted on issues affecting the community at large, including Poland and Lithuania. He reputedly turned down offers for the rabbinate in various large cities, including Jerusalem, New York and Kovno.

Source: Wikipedia

non-Jewish calendar considers the night as part of the previous day. Therefore, according to Haman's calculation, Moshe was born at night on the sixth of Adar as opposed to the seventh. This is why the Gemara states that Haman didn't know that the date of Moshe's death was the very same day Moshe was born.

Rav Meir Simcha explains that the month of Moshe's death would have been a month of bad mazal if he had died on any day other than the date of his birth. However, if he died on his birthday, that would indicate that it wasn't a function of bad mazal, but rather a function of Moshe's righteousness. Haman's miscalculation led him to believe that Moshe was born on the sixth and therefore, Adar was a month of bad mazal for the Jews.

Haman's error was all based on the configuration of the day. Perhaps this is much more meaningful than simply a way of calculating dates on the calendar. There is a fundamental difference between the Jewish approach to the calculation of days and the secular approach. It reflects a major difference in the Jewish outlook on life. We as Jews have gone through many periods of struggle and persecution. Even on Purim, we refrain from reciting Hallel. The Gemara, *Megilla* 14a, explains that we are still slaves of Achashveirosh. Our salvation is incomplete, we still go through our lives with many moments of night and darkness, and endure much pain and suffering. Nevertheless, we continue on our mission and know that daybreak and the ultimate illumination following this difficult time is approaching. We look ahead toward the light of the future of

*yimos hamashiach* (redemption) that will be the daylight following this dark night. The purpose of our lives is not now but in the future.

לְהַגִּיד בְּבֹקֶר חֶסֶדְךָ וְאַמּוּנָתְךָ בְּלֵילוֹת.  
*To speak of Your kindness in the morning and your faith in the nights.*  
**Tehillim 92:3**

We believe at night and we will ultimately praise with clarity in the morning. Therefore, our days reflect this philosophy and demonstrate that the darkness of night is only the beginning; ultimately the light of day will follow in our glorious *yimos hamashiach*.

Esther is emphasizing this point to the Jewish people as she asks them to join her on a mission to save Am Yisroel from the terrible darkness of Haman. Her initial speech is a call to action and a declaration that demands a transformation in the way the Jewish people of her time look at life. Esther explains that we need to transform our mindset from that of the people around us. It is not sufficient to just fast for three days; instead, we need to do so according to a Jewish calendar day — with the clear understanding that by fasting we are helping to bring the daylight to follow this horrible darkness. Esther is also highlighting to her people that teshuva only assists us if it is done by totally detaching oneself from the hashkafa of the world around us. It must include an absolute commitment to Judaism. It is insufficient to fast and make a few changes; we must reprogram our clocks and change our entire outlook on the world. After the miracle of Purim, Esther and Mordechai sent word to all the Jewish people to mark the celebration of Purim every

year. The commemoration of our salvation must be *bizmanei hem*, in the right times according to the right calendar; otherwise we are not commemorating the miracle appropriately. If we keep the day on Haman's clock then we are missing the entire reason for our salvation.

Perhaps this explains another catastrophic episode in Jewish history. Our most disgraceful point in history was the cheit haegel. Klal Yisrael were instructed to wait for Moshe at Mount Sinai for 40 days. Chazal tell us that Klal Yisrael listened to Moshe, yet miscalculated the fortieth day. Chazal explain that Klal Yisrael included the day that Moshe ascended onto Mount Sinai. They were mistaken because Moshe meant 40 complete days, with each 24 hour period starting from the night. Therefore the first day, because it was already the daytime when Moshe ascended, could not be included. The first half of the day, which began the night before, was already over. Klal Yisrael were under the impression that the 40 days were complete based on their erroneous calculation, and impatiently began building the egel. How could this happen? Klal Yisrael were using the clocks of the world around them: the day begins during daytime and the night follows. However, Moshe Rabbeinu's instructions followed Jewish calendar days, which begin at nightfall. Therefore the 40-day period was not over. Adopting the clocks and the perspective of the world around us was the cause of the cheit haegel. With a shift in perspective and looking toward a better future, the cheit haegel could have been avoided. Thousands of years later, our nation is struggling with terrible darkness and significant challenges. The message of Esther is that in order to achieve daylight and salvation, we must distinguish ourselves as a nation, and change the way in which we view our world. We must view and approach the world through the Torah's perspective of looking for the light of the morning. All calculations and perspectives must be guided through the prism of Torah. This will ultimately bring about a Purim miracle in our time.



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Meet Shlomo Anapolle of Edison, New Jersey. When it comes to a love of Israel, few college students can match the Sabra passion of this Yeshiva University junior. A pre-med, biology major with plans to attend an Israeli medical school, Shlomo balances his time between neo-natal diagnostic research, intensive shiurim and a commitment to Israel advocacy.

Whether it's planning lobbying missions to Washington, D.C. with YUPAC or teaching English to teens in the Negev through Counterpoint Israel, Shlomo brings to bear his leadership skills for the sake of the Jewish people and homeland. He is proud to invite Israeli diplomats to YU to help his peers contextualize current events. Shlomo chose YU because, to him, Torah Umadda isn't merely the convergence of science and our mesorah—at Yeshiva University, it is the formula for a values-driven preparation for life. This is the essence of Torah Umadda and what sets YU apart.

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# Sefer and Iggeret: The Dual Nature of Megillat Esther

The Gemara in Talmud Bavli, *Megillah* 19a, states the following:

וא"ר חלבו אמר רב חמא בר גוריא אמר רב מגילה נקראת ספר ונקראת אגרת נקראת ספר שאם תפרה בחוטי פשתן פסולה ונקראת אגרת שאם הטיל בה שלשה חוטי גידין כשרה. *And R. Helbo said in the name of Rav Hama bar Gurya who said in the name of Rav, (the) Megillah [that is, Megillat Esther] is called sefer [book] (which implies that it must meet the requirements for a Torah scroll), and it is called iggeret [a letter], (which implies that it need not meet the requirements for a Torah scroll). It is called a book (to teach) that if it is sewn with linen threads it is invalid; yet it is called a letter (to teach) that if he stitched it with only three strands of sinew, it is valid (whereas a Torah scroll must be stitched along the entire connection of adjoining connections, except for a small area at the top and bottom).*

This passage can be more deeply understood if we examine it from both a philological/lexical perspective, and a halakhic/conceptual one, each of which reinforces and sharpen the insights that the other one gives.

## I.

Esther 9:32 states:

ומאמר אסתר קים דברי הפרים האלה ונקתב בספר

*And Esther's ordinance validating these observances of Purim was recorded in a sefer (book or scroll).*

On the other hand, Esther 9:26 states:



Rabbi Dr. David Horwitz

Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS

על כן קראו לימים האלה פורים על שם הפור על כן על כל דברי האגרת הזאת ומה ראו על ככה ומה הגיע אליהם.

*... In view, then, of all instructions in the said iggeret (letter) and of what they had experienced in that matter and what had befallen them.*

Moreover, Esther 9:29 states:

ותכתב אסתר המלכה בת אביחיל ומרדכי היהודי את כל תקרי לקים את אגרת הפרים הזאת השנית.

*Then Queen Esther daughter of Abihail and Mordecai the Jew wrote a second iggeret (letter) of Purim for the purpose of confirming with full authority the aforementioned one.*

Now the word **iggeret** does not exist in Classical Biblical Hebrew, and is termed a Late Biblical Hebrew word.<sup>1</sup> In the Hebrew of the Torah and subsequently of the earlier *sefarim* of *Nakh*, the term **sefer** is used in those cases where, in the Hebrew of the later *sefarim* and in the Rabbinic Hebrew of *Hazal*, **iggeret** would be used. In Classical Biblical Hebrew, **sefer** denoted *both* a book, that is, a formal literary composition on the one hand, and a letter or legal document on the other. Examples of this can be easily seen by comparing *pesukim* regarding royal/official letters in the earlier Biblical books of *Shmuel*

and *Melakhim* on the one hand; e.g., 2 Samuel 11:14, I Kings 21:8, and 2 Kings 10:1 (where the earlier form of **sefer** is used), and the late Biblical book of *Divrei Ha-Yamim*: 2 Chronicles 30:1 on the other (where the later form of **iggeret** is used). For example:

ויהי בבקר, ויכתב דוד ספר אל-יואב; וישלח, ביד אוריה. שמואל ב יא:יד

*And it came to pass in the morning, that David wrote a letter (sefer) to Joab, and sent it by the hand of Uriah.*

**2 Shmuel 11:14**

וישלח יחזקיהו על-כל-ישראל ויהודה, וגם-אגרות כתב על-אפרים ומנשה, לבוא לבית-ה', בירושלם--לעשות פסח, לה' א-לקי ישראל. דברי הימים ב ל:א

*And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the passover unto the LORD, the God of Israel.*

**2 Chronicles 30:1**

Moreover, various *Targumim* translate examples of the Biblical use of the word **sefer** with the meaning of letter with an Aramaic form of the word **iggeret**. An example of this is *Targum Neophiti* to Deuteronomy

24:2, the Biblical verse dealing with a bill of divorce. The Torah writes **sefer keritut** and *Targum Neophiti* (ad loc.) translates it as **iggra di-shivukin**. But the Aramaic translations of literary compositions such as a book are denoted in the *Targumim* with the term **sifra**. Similarly, in the Rabbinic Hebrew of Hazal, words denoting **letter** are invariably referred to with the term **iggeret**.

Besides the Mishnah in *Masekhet Gittin* (9:3), which also refers to a *get* as **iggeret shivukin**, another interesting example is the *Mekhilta* in *Parashat Yitro*, which records the opinion of R. Joshua that Yitro informed Moshe *by letter* that he was preparing to visit him, and writes, **katav lo be-iggeret**. On the other hand, the term in the Rabbinic Hebrew of Hazal for book is **sefer**.

In light of all this, the language in the Book of Esther, a book that has many other features of Late Biblical Hebrew, is quite striking. Both terms — **sefer** and **iggeret** — are used. Thus, one may, from a lexical point of view, explain the Gemara's question as follows: Which paradigm is Megillat Esther following? Apparently, it cannot be that of Classical Biblical Hebrew, which does not distinguish between **sefer** as denoting a book and **sefer** as denoting a letter, missive, epistle, royal letter, edict, etc., for the Megillah also uses the word **iggeret**, which is the Late Biblical Hebrew term for these items. On the other hand, if it is exclusively following the Late Biblical Hebrew paradigms, why does it use the word **sefer** at all? **Sefer** is no longer used for such items. It is *only* used for a book or literary composition. So, granting the premise that the terms **sefer** and **iggeret** in Megillat Esther are self-referential, that is, they teach us the type of document that the Megillah must be, what type of document is it?

The Gemara's answer then, is quite sophisticated. It tells us that following the pattern of Late Biblical Hebrew, in which **sefer** and **iggeret** denote two distinct entities, the legal status of the Megillah lies *in between* the legal status of the two aforementioned terms. On the one hand, granting that a formal **sefer** must be stitched with animal sinews (*gidin*) and linen stitching (*pishtan*) is unacceptable, linen stitching is also unacceptable for the *Megillah*. On the other hand, since the term **iggeret** for the *Megillah* is also used, Hazal derive that one need not adopt all the rules that are necessarily entailed with the term **sefer**, and one need not stitch the entire connection of adjoining sections. Rather, three strands of animal sinews are sufficient.



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## Megillah as an Iggeret

There are a number of laws and practices related to the Megillah's categorization as an iggeret:

- 1) The Gemara, *Megillah* 18b, states that if a Megillah scroll contains errors, it may still be used. Ramban, *Megillah* 17a, notes that although a sefer Torah containing even one error is invalid, a Megillah is valid even if it contains errors because it has the status of *iggeret*.
- 2) When a sefer Torah or other books of Nach are read, the parchment is read in a rolled position like a scroll. The Megillah however, is unrolled completely before it is read and it is folded because it is considered an *iggeret* (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 690:16).
- 3) When reading a sefer Torah, it is permissible to pause slightly between the verses. However, because the Megillah is considered an *iggeret*, the reader should not pause between the sentences (*Mishna Berurah* 690:52).
- 4) In a sefer Torah, a new section (*parsha*) sometimes starts on a new line (*petucha*) and sometimes starts on the same line with a space between the sections (*setumah*). Because a Megillah is an *iggeret*, all new sections are *setumot* and start on the same line (*Rama, Orach Chaim* 691:2 and *Mishna Berurah* 691:12).
- 5) The Gemara, *Megillah* 19a, states that if one reads from a scroll containing all of Ketuvim (including Megillat Esther), one does not fulfill the mitzvah. Rashi explains that such a scroll would not be considered an *iggeret*.

Torah To Go Editors

## II.

The preceding analysis still leaves some gaps in our full understanding of the halakhic parameters of what stitching is required by a **sefer** and what is sufficient to fulfill the requirements of an **iggeret**. Granting Rashi's explanation (*Megillah* 19a, ad loc.) that the point of mentioning **iggeret** is to teach that the Megillah used as a document with which one fulfills his obligation to read Megillat Esther need not have all the stringencies of a **sefer**, can we deduce what the *le-khat'hila* and *be-di-aved* requirements of a **sefer** are, and analogously, what the *le-khat'hila* and *be-di-aved* requirements of an **iggeret** are?

These issues were discussed by R. Chaim Aharon Torchin, *zt"l*, a *talmid* of the Brisker Rav, Maran Ha-Rav Yitzhak Ze'ev Soloveitchik, *zt"l*.<sup>2</sup> He argued that one should not take the Gemara to mean that the Megillah is a third entity, possessing neither the laws of a **sefer** nor the laws of an **iggeret**. [And certainly, the Gemara does not mean that one *be-di-aved* can fulfill his requirements with the *be-di-aved* definition of **sefer**, without any reference to **iggeret** at all.] Rather, the point of the Gemara must be that the Megillah halakhically contains elements of *both sefer and iggeret*. But if it is not a third distinct entity, how can that be?

Rav Torchin claimed that the Gemara posits that *be-di-aved*, it should be sufficient for a **sefer qua sefer** to possess only three stitching of sinews, for at the end of the day, the Megillah must (also) possess the characteristics of a **sefer**. The point of the Gemara can be understood that *le-khat'hila* every **sefer** needs animal stitching along the entire

connection of adjoining sections. The use of the term **iggeret** teaches us, then, that *vis-a-vis* Megillah, one *le-khat'hila* can adopt the *be-di-aved* law that three stitches are sufficient.

But now one can raise an analogous question regarding **iggeret**. Is it that **iggeret le-khat'hila** does *not* need a complete *tefirah* (of linen) at all, and three stiches of linen suffice, or does **iggeret** actually need a complete connection of linen stitches? If the second alternative is correct, the Gemara should have concluded that one indeed has to stitch the entire connection, but three of the stitches must be of animal sinews, and the remainder can be of linen. This way, one fulfills aspects of both **sefer** and **iggeret**! Why wasn't this the conclusion of the Gemara? R. Torchin responds to his own query by suggesting that based upon his previous point, the Gemara assumes a *qal va-homer*. If three stiches of animal sinews are sufficient *be-di-aved* to create a halakhic **sefer**, certainly three stiches would be sufficient *be-di-aved* to create a halakhic **iggeret**. But one can still assume that *le-khat'hila*, an **iggeret** needs complete stitching (of linen) as well. The point of the Gemara by using both terms is to teach us that *vis-a-vis* Megillah, here one may *be-di-aved* employ the *be-di-aved* definition of both terms.

But is there a *le-khat'hila* method of sewing the Megillah that would entail both aspects of **sefer** and of **iggeret**? Rav Torchin proceeds to analyze the Rambam, *Hilkhot Megillah* 2:11. Following the *Biur Ha-Gra* (*Orach Haim*, #691), he understands the Rambam as saying that *halakhah lema'aseh* one must *le-khat'hila* sew the *entire* connection

of adjoining sections. But since the Gemara has taught us that even *le-khat'hila* one does not need to sew the entire connecting sections with animal sinews (since use of the term **iggeret** alongside that of **sefer** in the Megillah teaches us that in *Hilkhot Tefirat HaMegillah*, one *le-khat'hila* may adopt the *be-di-aved* definition of **sefer**), perforce, the *le-khat'hila* method of sewing the remainder of the adjoining sections must be with linen! Moreover, he cites *Hagahot Maimuniyyot* in the name of *Rabbenu Simhah* (*Hilkhot Megillah Perek Bet, Ot Samakh*, a view that is cited in the *Ramoh* to *Orah Haim* 691:6), that it is preferable to sew the remainder of the adjoining sections (besides the three stiches of animal sinews) with linen than to leave that area without being sewn at all. How are we to understand that? Rav Torchin states that this is not just “good advice” but is a consequence of the understanding of the *din le-khat'hila* and *din be-di-aved* that he has been analyzing. Although the entire point of the Gemara *vis-a-vis iggeret* and **sefer** is to establish that one need not adopt the *le-khat'hila* definition of **sefer**, there is still a *le-khat'hila* notion that one *should* adopt the *le-khat'hila* definition of **iggeret** (with the additional stipulation that three stiches must be “**sefer** stiches,” made up of animal sinews, and not “**iggeret** stiches” made up of linen, for in the Megillah one must fulfill aspects of **sefer** as well as aspects of **iggeret**). Finally, R. Torchin admits

that although the classical *meforshim* of a relevant passage in the *Yerushalmi* of *Massekhet Megillah*,<sup>3</sup> the *Qorban Ha-Edah*, and the *Penei Moshe*, assume that **iggeret** even *le-khat'hila* does *not* need complete stitching at all (neither of animal sinews or of linen), the words of Rashi to *Megillah* 19a with which we began our discussion, in which he writes that the laws of **iggeret** are *not as strict* as those of **sefer**, can indeed fit with his *hiddush* (i.e., Rashi can agree that *le-khat'hila*, **iggeret** *qua iggeret* would need complete stitching, just not that of animal sinews, but of linen).

The Torah is “vaster than the sea.” Each perspective with which we learn Torah adds to our appreciation its manifold aspects. My we all grow in both our knowledge of and love of the Divine gift that is *Toras Hashem Temimah*.

#### Notes

1 For the following paragraphs, I am indebted to Avi Hurvitz, *A Concise Lexicon of Late Biblical Hebrew* (Leiden and Boston, 2014), *s.v. Iggeret*, pp. 25-27.

2 Rav Torchin, *zt”l*, was Rosh Yeshiva of the *Yeshiva la-Metzuyyanim* in Jerusalem. This analysis that I cite from can be found in his *sefer* titled *Qunteres Be-Inyan Megillah va-Hanukah* (Jerusalem, 1970, repr. 1992), *Megillah, Siman* 25, #33, pp. 113-14.

3 Talmud *Yerushalmi Megillah* 2:2, p. 73a (p. 759 in the edition published by Yaakov Sussmann).



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# What's in a name? A “LOT”!!!

According to the midrash,<sup>1</sup> when HaShem created Adam HaRishon, He endowed him with a level of wisdom that surpassed all of the other creations, including the angels. To demonstrate man's wisdom, HaShem asked both the angels and Adam to assign names to all of the animals. While the angels struggled, Adam was quickly able to name each animal in a way that accurately depicted its true essence. Upon completion of this task, Adam was given the task of naming himself, and was even asked to ascribe a title to God.<sup>2</sup> From this midrash, we see how choosing an appropriate name is by no means a simple act. It requires great insight and keen understanding, so that the name captures the essence of an object in just one word.

With that in mind, we must look into the name “Purim” (literally “Lots”) and wonder: How exactly does this name encapsulate the essence of the holiday? At first glance, the lots of Haman<sup>3</sup> were not a central part of the story. Their goal was merely to determine the date for the massacre of the Jews. The massacre itself was

Yom Kippur is indeed a fast day, but it is introduced by a day of feast. Purim, on the other hand, is a day of feast, but is preceded by Taanis Esther.



Rabbi Jonathan Schachter

Rebbe, Stone Beit Midrash Program

already set to happen in Haman's mind. Why didn't Mordechai and Esther choose a name that relates more to the essence of the story? For example, there were two letters concerning the Jews sent by Achashveirosh to his entire empire, the first calling for our demise and the second granting us permission to defend ourselves. Those letters appear to be much more significant than the lots cast by Haman, so why not call the holiday *Chag Ha'Igeres* — the Holiday of the Letter? Similarly, Achashveirosh hands over his signet ring on these same two occasions, first to Haman to permit him to write as he wishes,<sup>4</sup> and then to Mordechai and Esther, so that they could counter Haman's plans.<sup>5</sup> Why not call the holiday *Chag HaTaba'as* — the Holiday of the Ring? And perhaps the most accurate and obvious name for the holiday would be *Chag HaHipuch* — the Holiday of Reversal, for it would relate all of the various reversals that took place in the Megillah, including the two just mentioned, along with many others — Haman pulling Mordechai on the King's horse instead of the other way around; Haman hanging on the very gallows that he had prepared for Mordechai; the Jews of Shushan rejoicing on the day that was originally destined to be the day of their demise. And yet Esther and Mordechai chose

the name Purim over all of the other possibilities, just because Haman used “lots” to determine the date of our destruction?<sup>6</sup> What is the greater meaning behind these lots? How do they embody the essence of the holiday? We will return to these questions after we analyze an even more perplexing question about the name “Purim.”

Many are familiar with the play on words, going all of the way back to the *Tikunei Zohar* that Yom HaKipurim is a day that is like Purim — “*ke-Purim*.”<sup>7</sup> The difficulty in this comparison is readily apparent, as one would be hard-pressed to find two holidays more different from one another than Purim and Yom HaKipurim. Purim is a day of feast, Yom Kippur a day of fast. Purim celebrates our physical salvation from the hatred of Haman,<sup>8</sup> while Yom Kippur offers spiritual redemption and purity from our Father in Heaven. On Purim, we read the Megillah, which omits the name of God, while on Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol proclaims the *Sheim Hamephorash* ten times during his *avodah*.<sup>9</sup>

But as we take a closer look at these two holidays, we see that they do actually share some uncanny resemblances. Yom Kippur is indeed a fast day, but it is introduced by a day

of feast.<sup>10</sup> Purim, on the other hand, is a day of feast, but is preceded by Taanis Esther. Consequently, the 48-hour periods surrounding each holiday include both feast and famine.

Even the storylines of the two holidays have a common theme at their core. In the story of Purim, a representative of the Jewish nation (Esther) enters the king's inner chamber to plead on behalf of the nation, and the king responds by reversing an earlier decree, allowing the Jews to defend themselves. Similarly, on Yom HaKipurim, a representative of the Jewish nation (the Kohen Gadol) enters **The King's** inner chamber (the Kodesh Hakodashim) to appeal on behalf of the nation, and **The King** responds by reversing a decree of punishment and giving the nation a chance for a positive year.<sup>11</sup>

But perhaps the most unique common feature of both holidays is the “lots” that play a role in determining the fate of the Jewish Nation. We have already discussed how Haman relied on lots to choose the date for his planned massacre of the Jews. On Yom HaKipurim, it is the Kohen Gadol who makes use of lots to determine the fate of the nation's two he-goats, essential components for the nation's atonement. One goat draws the lot of “La'Shem” and is brought as a korban, with its blood sprinkled before the Aron Hakodesh in the Kodesh Hakodashim. The other goat, which draws the lot “La'Azazel,” is sent away from the Mikdash, on a journey through the wilderness, only to be thrown off a cliff. Regarding both lots, one can ask why the lots were really necessary. Why couldn't the Kohen Gadol forgo the lottery and instead determine on his own which goat was for HaShem and which was for Azazel? We also need to understand why Haman didn't want to simply choose his own date, rather than rely on a lottery.

Perhaps the meaning behind the lotteries of the two holidays is that in each case, there was a decision being made whose significance was too far-reaching for humans to make on their own, and input was needed from the heavens. On Yom HaKipurim, atonement is at stake, and atonement is something that belongs in the hands of HaShem alone. David Hamelech teaches us this in Sefer Tehilim (130:4): “*Ki im'cha ha'selicha, l'ma'an tivarei*” — “Forgiveness lies (only) with You, and this makes you revered.” It cannot be up to the Kohen Gadol to determine which animal is brought as a korban and which is thrown off a cliff because



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atonement belongs in the domain of HaShem. The Gemara<sup>12</sup> tells us regarding King Menashe — who was the epitome of evil for 22 years toward the end of Bayis Rishon — that when he attempted to repent while in captivity, the *midas hadin* (strict judgment) was unwilling to accept him favorably. However, HaShem dug for Menashe a secret tunnel so that his tefilos and teshuva could be received by HaShem alone, and no one else in the Heavenly Court would have a say in the matter. Conversely, when Moshe Rabbeinu davened at the end of his life to be granted permission to enter Eretz Yisrael, the midrash<sup>13</sup> says that Moshe's tefilos were so powerful that they caused the earth to quake and pierce through the Heavens as swiftly as a sword cutting through cloth. HaShem then issued a command to the angels to lock all gates to the Heavenly Courts, to ensure that Moshe's tefilos would not be received at all. Clearly, we cannot comprehend all that is at stake regarding forgiveness. How could Menashe's pleas enter through a secret tunnel, while Moshe Rabbeinu's supplications could not find any open gates? All we can do is proclaim "*Ki im'cha ha'selicha, l'ma'an tivarei.*" Perhaps this is what HaShem is teaching us by insisting that there be lots to determine the fate of the two he-goats of Yom Hakipurim and by extension, the fate of the nation and their atonement.

Just as the fate of the nation hangs in

the balance on every Yom Kippur, our fate was also hanging in the balance during the times of Purim. Haman was a descendant of Amalek, a nation whose mission was to annihilate the Jewish people. However, since the time of Shaul's conquering Agag Melech Amalek, and as long as the Jews were living in Israel, Am Yisrael was simply too powerful for Amalek to consider an attack. That changed with the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash and our exile, where we found ourselves without an army and unprotected. Haman also thought that he had an even more significant advantage with the Jews in exile. He thought that the Jewish God was also vulnerable at this point. According to the midrash,<sup>14</sup> when Haman presented his idea of a massacre to Achashveirosh, the king was at first terrified of the plan, out of fear that he would be made to suffer like Pharaoh or Sancheiriv at the hands of the Jewish God. But Haman convinced him otherwise with the argument that the Jewish God was old at this point and had already been defeated by Nevuchadnetzar. There would be no reason to fear. Perhaps this mentality will help us understand why Haman elected to use a lottery to determine the date of the Jewish downfall. Haman wanted to go out of his way to use a method that involved the Heavens, one that the Jews themselves used to use at times when God responded to their prayers, to demonstrate that this Heavenly

assistance was now gone. The lottery was a mockery of both the Jewish people and of God, showing everyone that the Jewish God was no longer in control of the fate of the Jewish people as He once was.

When God saved the Jewish people on Purim (albeit in a more hidden way than He had done on previous occasions), He proved to Haman that the fate of the Jewish people is *always* in God's hands. There will never be any signs of weakness or old age. In fact, according to the midrash quoted above,<sup>14</sup> when Mordechai himself had doubts as to whether the Jews would indeed be saved, he entered the beis midrash and asked three children to recite a verse that they learned that day. The third child's verse was "*V'ad ziknah ani hu, v'ad seivah ani esbol*" — "Through old age I am the same, and through elderly years I will endure."<sup>15</sup> When Mordechai heard this, his faith was reignited and he knew that there would be a future for the Jewish people. "*Revach va'hatzalah ya'amod la'Yehudim.*"<sup>16</sup>

The lots of Purim became the most significant part of the story because they represented Haman's attitude that God was no longer capable of protecting us, and God's response that He would always be there for us, even during our exile. In fact, as the Malbim explains, even the lots themselves had a hint from HaShem to Haman that He was very much involved in all that was transpiring. The lots were cast on

The lots of Purim became the most significant part of the story because they represented Haman's attitude that God was no longer capable of protecting us, and God's response that He would always be there for us, even during our exile.

the 13th of Nissan, and were first to determine a day of the month (with the 14th of the month being the first possibility), and then the particular month (with the current month of Nissan as the first option) for our demise. When the lots landed on the 13th of Adar, which is the 12th month of the year, this was the very last possible day out of the entire year that could have been selected. This was a clear message to Haman that Hashem was very much involved in the fate of His people.

The lots of Purim and the lots of Yom HaKipurim teach us an identical message — that the fate of Am Yisrael is always in the hands of HaShem. Even when we sin, He will dig tunnels for our prayers. And even when we are in exile, “Behold the Guardian of Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.”<sup>17</sup>

## Notes

1 Bereishis Rabbah 17:4.

2 Bereishis Rabbah, *ibid*: [God asked Adam] “What is your name?” He responded, “I would like to be called Adam

because I was created from the adamah (earth).” [God asked] “And what shall I be called?” He responded, “I would like to call You Ado-nai (my Master) because You are the Master of all Your creations.

ואתה מה שמך? אמר לו אני נאה להקרא אדם, שנבראתי מן האדמה. ואני מה שמך? א”ל לך נאה להקראות אדני שאתה אדון לכל ברייתך

3 Esther 3:7.

4 Esther 3:10.

5 Esther 8:9.

6 Esther 9:26.

7 Tikunei Zohar, Tikun #21:

Purim is named after Yom HaKipurim, which will one day be a day that is transformed from a day of affliction to a day of enjoyment.

פורים אתקריאת על שם יום הכפורים דעתידין לאתענגא ביה ולשנויי ליה מענוי לענג

8 See Mishna Berurah 670:6, who notes that Purim’s celebration focuses on physical enjoyment because Haman’s decree called for the physical annihilation of the Jews. By contrast, Chanukah celebrates salvation from a decree whose goal was to cause spiritual assimilation. As such, the celebration is of a spiritual nature — through the recitation of Hallel.

9 Three times in each viduy. Each viduy is recited three times. It is recited an additional time, when the Kohen Gadol announces “Se’ir

La’Shem.”

10 Pesachim 68b:

Anyone who eats on the ninth [of Tishrei], the Torah considers it as if one fasted on the ninth and tenth.

כל האוכל ושותה בתשעה בן, מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו מתענה תשיעי ועשירי

11 Tikunei Zohar, Tikun #21:

At that time, she adorned the clothing of atonement (a reference to the clothing of the Kohen Gadol), the verse states of her, “Esther adorned the clothing of royalty,” and with those clothes she entered the Inner Sanctum.

וכד אתקשטת קדמיה בלבושין שפירין, דאינון לבושי כפרה אתקרי, ציץ דיליה, מצנפת דיליה, אבנט דיליה, אייה כלילא מארבע בגדי לבן מסטרא דימינא, ומארבע בגדי זהב מסטרא דשמאלא, בההוא זמנא דאתקשטת באלין לבושין דכפרה, אתמר בה ותלבש אסתר מלכות ובהון עאלת לפני ולפנים, הדא הוא דכתב ותעמוד בחצר בית המלך הפנימית, ובהון נשאה חן בעיניו, ורוא דמלה “וראיתיה לזכור ברית עולם” ומיד “ה’ שמעה ה’ סלחה ה’ הקשיבה ועשה, אל תאחר

12 Sanhedrin 103.

13 Devarim Rabbah 11:10.

14 Esther Rabbah 7:13.

15 Yeshayahu 46:4.

16 Esther 4:14.

17 Tehillim 121:4.

## PURIM AT YESHIVA UNIVERSITY



# Selected Comments of the K'tav Sofer to Megillat Esther

וְהַשְׁתִּיחַ כַּדָּת אֵין אִנֶּס כִּי־כֹן יִסַּד הַמֶּלֶךְ עַל כָּל־  
רַב בֵּיתוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּרִצּוֹן אִישׁ־אִישׁ:

*And the drink was to each one's understanding, without any duress, for such was decreed by the king upon all the members of his household, to do the will of each and every person.*

## Esther 1:8

*Rava said: This means that they should do according to the will of Mordechai and Haman. Mordechai [is called ish] as it is written, "A Jewish man"; and Haman, [as it is written], "A man (ish), an adversary and an enemy."*

## Megilla 12a

Chazal have declared (*Megilla 7b*) that on Purim one is required to drink wine until reaching the point of not recognizing the difference between the cursedness of Haman and the blessedness of Mordechai. It seems to me that the reason they established a mitzvah to get drunk is because the start of the entire story of the miracle of Purim was when Achashveirosh and Vashti became drunk at their parties. With regards to the way the Gemara describes the level to which one must drink, it is possible that Chazal decreed to actually say "blessed is Mordechai and cursed is Haman" at the Purim meal, based on the drasha that Mordechai and Haman were both giving instructions at Achashveirosh's feast. Haman was encouraging the Jews at the feast to eat and drink prohibited items, while Mordechai was admonishing them to only eat and drink permitted



Compiled by

**Rabbi Robert Shur**

Director, Torah Projects, Center for the Jewish Future

items. As such, when we have our feast with permitted food and drink, we bless Mordechai for what he did and curse Haman for what he tried to do. However, the halacha states that if one is in a state where one derives absolutely no benefit from eating, and is actually repulsed by it (*achilah gasah*), then there is no (biblical) prohibition against eating non-kosher items. Therefore, we drink to the point where we absolutely can't eat anything, at which point we can't really differentiate between the wickedness of Haman and the righteousness of Mordechai, since their statements wouldn't be of any consequence to us anyway.

וַיִּבְזוּ בְּעֵינָיו לְשַׁלַּח יָד בְּמֶרְדֵּכָי לְבַדּוֹ כִּי־הִגִּידוּ  
לוֹ אֶת־עַם מְרֹדֵכָי וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הָמָן לְהַשְׁמִיד אֶת־  
כָּל־הַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־מְלָכוֹת אַחַשְׁוֵירוֹשׁ עִם  
מְרֹדֵכָי:

*And it was disgraceful [for Haman] to strike out at Mordechai alone, for he was told about the nation of Mordechai, and Haman wanted to wipe out the Jews, the nation of Mordechai, from all the lands of Achashveirosh.*

## Esther 3:6

The medrash describes Haman as a *bazui ben bazui* (disgraced, the son of a disgraced), similar to how the

Torah describes Esav as disgracing (*vayivez*) the birthright when he sold it to Yaakov. Why did Esav treat the birthright so lightly and declare that he had no use for it? Why didn't he care for the firstborn's portion in his father's inheritance? The Ramban, in his commentary on the Torah, explains that at that time, there was no rule of the firstborn getting a larger portion of the father's estate, and the only ramification of being a firstborn was that the younger children would need to treat the firstborn with respect. Even though it is clear that Esav had a tremendous ego, nevertheless he had no interest in getting respect from Yaakov because in his eyes, Yaakov was a disgraceful person who sat and learned Torah all day. He was not a warrior. Respect from him meant nothing, for respect is only as valuable as the worth of the person giving the respect. That is why Esav had no qualms about trading that status for a lowly bowl of lentils. The same principle applies to his spiritual son Haman. Even though it enraged Haman that Mordechai wouldn't bow to him, he couldn't react to that directly, since it would be beneath him to seek the respect of one who was so lowly in his eyes. Therefore, he had

to orchestrate a plan to wipe out the entire Jewish people in order to take his revenge on Mordechai.

Another interpretation is that Haman could have petitioned for Mordechai's death right away, but Haman in fact hated the entire Jewish people, and was looking for a way to justify killing them all. If he had killed Mordechai right away, then when he would have asked to kill the rest of the Jewish people, Achashveirosh would have accused him of only being angry at Mordechai and taking his revenge on his people. Achashveirosh would have denied his request. Therefore, he waited to strike at Mordechai until he was ready to wipe out the

The Gemara (*Megilla* 13b) writes that when the lot fell in the month that Moshe died, Haman rejoiced, but he did not know that it was also the month in which he was born. Why did he specifically rejoice that it was the month that Moshe died? Any month chosen by the lot would have commemorated the death of a tzadik.

This can be answered by recalling the episode of Moshe being told by Hashem that he wouldn't be entering the Land of Israel. This was because of the sin of the striking of the rock to produce water. Moshe prays to Hashem to be let in, and is told no. The Gemara records that Moshe's prayers took place on his final day,

him to merit entering the Land of Israel. Nevertheless, Haman assumed that Moshe was praying not to die earlier than originally determined and that his prayer was denied. Haman couldn't fathom that merit could override mazal. Therefore, Moshe's death was a sign of the negative mazal of Adar. If he had realized that Moshe was born in Adar, he would have understood that Moshe lived out the entire length of his life.

Another explanation mentioned by Chazal is that Achashveirosh was scared to attack the Jewish people because of the merit of their Torah and mitzvot, and Haman had to convince him that the Jews had lost their merit by not taking Torah and mitzvot seriously. Therefore, having the lot fall on the day that Moshe died was a good omen, because the day he died, 3,000 halachot were forgotten by the Jewish people, which Haman took as a sign that the Jews had in fact lost their merit.

## Why did Haman specifically rejoice that the lot fell on the month that Moshe died? Wouldn't any month chosen by the lot commemorate the death of some tzadik in Jewish history?

entire Jewish people at once. In fact, we see that Haman's downfall came from the fact that he couldn't wait to kill Mordechai, and erected a huge gallows for Mordechai even before the time designated for the destruction of the Jewish people. When Achashveirosh heard out about that, it was the final straw that caused him to order Haman's death.

בְּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ נִסָּן בְּשַׁנַּת שְׁתַּיִם  
עָשְׂרָה לְמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵירוֹשׁ הַפִּיל פּוֹר הוּא הַגּוֹרֵל  
לְפָנָי הָמֶן מִיּוֹם לְיוֹם וּמֵחֹדֶשׁ לְחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנַיִם-עָשָׂר  
הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר:

*In the first month, in Nissan, in the twelfth year of Achashveirosh's reign, [Haman] drew lots for the day and month, to the twelfth month, Adar.*  
**Esther 3:7**

when he reached 120 years. Clearly, Moshe was praying to be given a longer life in order to be able to enter the Land of Israel. Tosafot in *Yevamot* 50a, s.v. *Mosifin*, note that while the Gemara (*Moed Katan* 28a) writes that lifespan is based on mazal and not merit, an overwhelming merit could still be enough to be granted extra life. Therefore, even though Moshe was at the end of his life, if he had sanctified the name of Hashem in public by talking to the rock to produce water, that would have been enough merit to extend his life and enter the Land of Israel. The sin itself wasn't cutting his life short; he was dying at the proper time. However, he lost out on the opportunity that would have allowed

However, it was also the day that Moshe was born. Until that day, Pharaoh had ordered all male babies to be thrown into the Nile. Once Moshe was born, Pharaoh's diviners told him that they no longer needed to kill the baby boys. Therefore, the day of his birth is considered the very beginning of the salvation of the Jewish people in Egypt. Hashem orchestrated the lots in Shushan to fall during that month to invoke the merit of that original salvation.

That is why the Gemara records that if the year has two months of Adar, Purim should always be in the second one in order to be next to the month of Pesach. The salvation of Purim has its roots in the salvation of Pesach.

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהָמוֹן, הַכֶּסֶף נָתַן לְךָ; וְהָעָם, לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ.

*And the king said to Haman: "The silver is given to you, the people also, to do with them as it seems good to you."*

**Esther 3:11**

Shouldn't Achashveirosh have said, "and you can do to the people what you like," not "do with the people"?

Also, why do we say in Al Hanissim that Haman decreed to destroy us and that our money should be plundered? Once the Jewish people are destroyed, who cares if our money would also be plundered?

My father (the Chatam Sofer) suggested that part of the decree of Haman was that anyone who killed the Jews would be allowed to keep their money. The purpose was to motivate the people to fulfill the decree.

This would also explain why Haman offered money to the king in exchange for killing the Jews. If they are really worthy of destruction, as Haman claimed, why does he need to pay money? Rather, the Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 48b) says that someone who rebels against the king is killed and his money goes to the king. As such, all the money of the Jews should have gone to Achashveirosh. However, since Haman promised the money to anyone that would kill the Jews, he had to repay Achashveirosh for his losses.

Therefore, Achashveirosh replied to Haman that the people are yours to do with them as it seems good to you — the people of the kingdom are yours to help carry out your decree and you don't have to worry about the money; they can keep it.

וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ חַכְמָיו וְזֶרֶשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ, אִם מִזְרַע הַיְהוּדִים מְרִדְכַי אֲשֶׁר הִחְלוֹת לְנַפֵּל לְפָנָיו לֹא תוֹכֵל לוֹ כִּי נָפֹל תִּפּוֹל לְפָנָיו.

*Then said his wise men and Zeresh his wife to him: "If Mordechai, before whom you have begun to fall, be of the Jews, you shall not prevail against him, but (you) shall surely fall before him."*

**Esther 6:13**

R' Elazar Ashkenazi has a general principle that when someone is at the apex of their mazal, that is when they will begin to fall. Therefore, normally, if someone were to experience the mazal of Mordechai — to be led on the horse of the king in fine clothing and experience such greatness — that would be the peak of their experience and usually they would then start to fall. However, Mordechai was not a regular person. He was a descendant of Yehuda, who is suited for royalty. Therefore, Haman was being told that if Mordechai was from the tribe of Yehuda, don't expect him to fall at this point but rather Haman would fall before him.

כִּי נִמְכַרְנוּ אֲנִי וְעַמִּי לְהִשָּׁמֵד לְהִרוֹג וּלְאַבֵּד ... וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ וַיֹּאמֶר לְאַסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה מִי הוּא זֶה וְאֵיזָה הוּא אֲשֶׁר-מָלְאוּ לְבוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן:

*For we have been sold, me and my people, for destruction ... and Achashveirosh said to Queen Esther, who has done such a thing, who has the audacity?*

**Esther 7:4-5**

Did Achashveirosh so quickly forget that he was the one who agreed to Haman's request to destroy the Jews? The answer is based on the statement of the Gemara (*Megilla* 12b) that if not for the first proclamation Achashveirosh sent out after Vashti's death, the Jewish people would not have survived the second proclamation (that called for their

destruction). The first proclamation (Esther 1:22) stated that each man should rule his house and speak the language of his nation. This implied that men should only marry women from their nation, in order to be able to speak the language of their nation in their home. Therefore, Achashveirosh assumed Esther was a member of his nation — the king would obviously adhere to the



**The K'tav Sofer:  
Rabbi Abraham Samuel  
Benjamin Sofer  
(1815-1871)**

R. Shmuel Binyamin Sofer was a son of R. Moshe Sofer, the famed Chatam Sofer and he was also a grandson of R. Akiva Eger. After the death of his father, K'tav Sofer succeeded his father as rabbi of Pressburg, a position that he held for thirty years. His writings are titled K'tav Sofer and they include a multi-volume commentary on the Talmud, a multi-volume commentary on the Torah and multiple volumes of responsa.

proclamation as well. When she cried that someone had sold her nation to destruction, he assumed it was his nation that was being destroyed. When Esther said that it was Haman, Achashveirosh initially thought Haman wanted to destroy him and his nation. Even after he realized that Esther was from the Jewish nation, his initial anger and fury at Haman burned so strongly that he decided to kill him as a punishment, thus ending his evil decree against the Jews.

וּמֵרָדֵּכַי יֵצֵא מִלְּפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ, בְּלְבוּשׁ מַלְכוּת  
תְּכֵלֶת וְחֹוּר, וְעֵטְרַת זָהָב גְּדוּלָה, וְתִכְרִיךְ בּוּץ  
וְאַרְגָּמָן; וְהָעִיר שִׁשׁוּן, צָהָלָה וְשִׂמְחָה.

*And Mordechai went forth from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a robe of fine linen and purple; and the city of Shushan shouted and was glad.*

**Esther 8:15**

Why does the verse say that the entire city of Shushan was glad? Shouldn't it have said that the Jews of Shushan were glad?

The Gemara (*Megilla* 12a) says that Achashveirosh was foolish and fickle. Everyone in his kingdom realized this because at first he honored the Jews by inviting them to his feast, and only a short while later he was ready to destroy them. Everyone knew Achashveirosh was being manipulated by Haman. The people were worried because they realized that today the Jews were the victims, and tomorrow it could be them.

Therefore, when Mordechai emerged as the new second-in-command, everyone was happy, not just the Jews, because everyone recognized him as a good leader who only wanted to make sure that the Jews had religious autonomy and freedom. They knew that nobody was in danger anymore.

לְיְהוּדִים, הֵיטָה אֹרֶחַ וְשִׂמְחָה, וְשָׁשׂוֹן, וְיָקָר.  
*And for the Jews there was light, happiness, joy and honor.*

**Esther 8:16**

*Light refers to Torah, happiness is Yom Tov, joy is milah and honor is tefillin.*

**Megilla 16b**

What is the relevance of these specific mitzvos? Furthermore, once we are told about Torah, why mention the other mitzvot? Doesn't Torah imply all mitzvot? With regards to Yom Tov, the Gemara (*Megilla* 13b) says that one of the tactics Haman used to slander the Jews to Achashveirosh was a claim that the Jews were always trying to get out of having to do work for the king by saying that it was Shabbos or Yom Tov, and they were forbidden to do work that day. Therefore it is logical to assume that once he made that claim, the Jews were afraid to keep Yom Tov. They did not want to validate the claims of Haman. Once Haman was defeated, they were free to keep Shabbos and Yom Tov again.

With regards to milah and tefillin, the Gemara (*Megilla* 11b) says that Achashveirosh scheduled his feast based on his own calculation that the time for Hashem to return the Jewish people to Eretz Yisrael and rebuild the Beit Hamikdash had passed. He assumed that Hashem had given up on His promise and there was no danger to his rule over them. He therefore invited all the Jews to the feast in order to show them that although Hashem had given up on them (*kivyachol*), he would not. Achashveirosh treated them with the utmost respect in the hopes of getting them to completely reject the Torah and assimilate into the general society. Therefore, Hashem punished the Jews for attending the feast of

Achashveirosh. The whole point of the feast was to commemorate the fact that there would be no redemption and no rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash.

Rashi on the verse (Devarim 11:18) “you shall place these on your hearts,” — referring to tefillin and mezuzah (the second paragraph of Kriat Shema) — introduces the possibility of thinking that in the exile the Jewish people don't have to keep the mitzvot of tefillin and mezuzah. Why would one have such an assumption? Because tefillin, and by extension mezuzah, are symbols of the Jews being the chosen nation. The Gemara (*Brachos* 6a) says that the tefillin shel rosh is the glory of the Jewish people. The mezuzah is also a sign that the home is a Jewish home. Therefore, one might have thought that while in Eretz Yisrael, being a Jew is a glorious thing, but in exile it's not so glorious to be identified as a Jew. Perhaps it is even a chilul Hashem for us to so clearly identify ourselves as Jews while in exile because we are on such a low level. Therefore, the Torah tells us that even in exile we need to keep the mitzvot of tefillin and mezuzah because we need to believe that even in exile it is a glorious thing to be identified as a Jew knowing that one day, we will definitely be returned to Eretz Yisrael. The same concept can apply to the mitzvah of milah, which is the seal that identifies us as Jews.

Therefore, when the Jewish people were miraculously saved in the time of Achashveirosh, when it was abundantly clear that even in the exile, Hashem had singled us out as His nation, we were once again able to appreciate the mitzvot of milah and tefillin.

קִיְמוּ וְקִבְלוּ הַיְהוּדִים עֲלֵיהֶם וְעַל־זֶרְעָם וְעַל כָּל־הַנְּלוּיִם עֲלֵיהֶם וְלֹא יַעֲבוֹר לִהְיוֹת עֲשִׂים אֶת שְׁנֵי הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה כְּכַתְּבָם וְכַזְּמָנָם בְּכָל־שָׁנָה וְשָׁנָה:  
*The Jews accepted and upheld upon themselves and their future generations and those that joined with them, not to fail, to keep these two days as they were written in their times in every year.*

**Esther 9:27**

The Gemara (*Megilla* 7a) quotes Shmuel as saying this is the basis for the fact that *Megillat Esther* was written with Divine inspiration. The double phrasing of *kimu* and *kiblu* refers to the fact that in Heaven they fulfilled what was accepted on Earth, meaning a heavenly approbation of the establishment of Purim. Tosafot there ask: In *Masechet Shabbat* (88a), Rava says that the Torah was accepted at Sinai under duress. Hashem held a mountain over the heads of the Jewish people to force them to accept the Torah, and for a time, the Jewish people had a valid argument for not keeping the Torah. It wasn't until the time of Purim that the Torah was accepted out of joy. Rava's proof text

are the words *kimu* and *kiblu* found in our verse. How then can one use this verse to prove that Purim was accepted in Heaven? Isn't that an alternate interpretation of the verse?

As an aside, why is it that we find that after the destruction of the First Temple, the exile experience was relatively mild, with the Jews enjoying positions of power and luxury in their host countries (as we see with Esther and Mordechai), whereas the exile after the destruction of the Second Temple, including our current exile, is marked with suffering, destruction and wandering? The Rashb"a in a responsum suggests that even though the Jewish people only accepted the Torah under duress, and had a valid argument not to keep it, they were still required to keep the Torah while living in the Land of Israel because the Land itself cannot be inhabited by a nation that doesn't abide by the laws of Hashem. The Torah states that the ground would literally vomit out violators. We can only settle the Land of Israel on condition that we keep

the Torah. Therefore, when the Jews stopped observing the Torah during the period of the First Temple, they were only thrown out of the Land. There was no punishment upon them as a people. However, after the story of Purim, the Jews accepted the Torah willingly. Therefore, when there is a national laxity in Torah observance, it is no longer enough to be thrown out of the Land. The nation itself must be punished for not keeping the laws of the Torah.

Tosafot (*Shabbat* 88a) asks how it could be that the Jews had a valid argument not to keep the Torah? According to the Gemara (*Sotah* 37b) they willingly accepted it in the plains of Moab before they entered the Land of Israel at Har Grizim and Har Eval. The Mordechai (*Shabbat*, ad loc.) suggests that since the entrance to the Land of Israel was dependent on their acceptance of the Torah, it was another forced acceptance which they could rightfully argue against. The *Teshuvot Maharik* asks: in halacha, if someone forces you to sell



The Torah tells us that even in exile we need to keep the mitzvos of tefillin and mezuzah because even in exile it is a glorious thing to be identified as a Jew, knowing that one day, we will be returned to Eretz Yisrael.

something by withholding something of yours, that is considered a sale under duress, but if someone only withholds something they promised you, that is not considered a sale under duress. Therefore, this answer of the Mordechai depends on whether or not the Land of Israel had already belonged to the Jewish people like an inheritance. If so, Hashem was threatening to take away something that belonged to them if they didn't accept the Torah. However, if it was a gift that was yet to be given, then their acceptance of the Torah on these conditions was not considered duress. This is in fact a dispute in the Gemara (*Baba Batra* 119a). Shmuel is of the opinion that the Land of Israel was not like an inheritance. According to him, the acceptance of the Torah at Moab was not under duress. It is and was, in fact, a valid acceptance. Therefore he rejects Rava's interpretation of

At the time of the Purim story, when the Jewish people collectively accepted the Torah willingly, Mordechai established national feasting and rejoicing to show our joyful acceptance of the Torah.

*kimu* and *kiblu*. The acceptance of the Torah took place at Moab, not during the Purim story. As such, he assumes that *kimu* and *kiblu* must be a proof that the Heavens fulfilled what was accepted on Earth and Esther was in fact written with Divine inspiration.

Why did Mordechai establish days of joy and feasting in response to the miracle of Purim? Would it not have been enough to establish a requirement to thank Hashem? Perhaps the answer is based on the episode of the acceptance of the Torah in *Parshat Yitro*, where it is written that those on the mountain were eating and rejoicing. They did this to show they were accepting the Torah out of joy and not duress. The rest of the Jewish people, who did in fact accept the Torah under duress, did not eat or rejoice. Therefore, at the time of the Purim story, when the Jewish people collectively accepted the Torah willingly, Mordechai established national feasting and rejoicing to show our joyful acceptance of the Torah.

Even after the miracle of Purim, couldn't the Jewish people still argue that they only accepted the Torah at their time under duress, out of the fear of Haman? They were forced to keep the Torah to win favor in the eyes of Hashem and remove the threat that Hashem had brought to the Jewish people? Perhaps the two explanations of *kimu v'kiblu* can work together. We find that in general we are not supposed to rejoice at the fall of our enemies, so how can we establish days of rejoicing for Purim?

The joy of Pesach is not because of the destruction that befell the Egyptians, but rather to celebrate the giving of the Torah, which we recognize would not have happened if our enemies weren't wiped out. So perhaps we can rejoice at the downfall of Haman because that too allowed the Jewish people to begin keeping the mitzvot they were unable to keep under his rule of terror. However, if we were only keeping the mitzvot at that point because we were forced to, because we wanted to win Hashem's favor, it would be difficult to argue that we should rejoice at the opportunity to keep them; on the contrary, we would rather not have the opportunity and just be exempt from keeping them because of outside circumstances. The fact that we were able to establish days of rejoicing after our salvation, and that rejoicing was validated in the Heavens, proves that in fact the Jewish people were willingly committing themselves to keeping the entire Torah anew.



Find more shiurim and articles on Megillat Esther at <http://www.yutorah.org/Nach/Esther>

# The Vilna Gaon's Purim Blessing

On Purim, everyone is a little bit light-hearted, and even the Vilna Gaon stopped his normal learning to celebrate. His student, R. Chaim Itzkowitz (popularly known as R. Chaim Volozhiner), came to see him [on this auspicious day] and asked the Gaon, “Rebbe, give me a bracha (blessing).” [In response] the Gaon said, “You should merit to bring two *korbanot Tamid* (daily offerings) every day.” “But Rebbe,” said R. Chaim, “we don’t bring *korbanot* today.” The Gaon said, “open up the *Shulchan Aruch* — how does the [first section] *Orach Chaim* start off? *Shiviti Hashem lenegdi tamid* — I have set the Lord before me constantly. What are the last words? *V’tov lev mishte tamid* — A good-hearted [person] has a perpetual feast.”

as told by Rabbi Aaron Rakeffet-Rothkoff in the name of his teacher, Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, z”l in a lecture available at: [yutorah.org/lecture.cfm/739714](http://yutorah.org/lecture.cfm/739714).



## Ms. Eliana Sohn

Projector Coordinator, Leadership and Placement,  
YU School Partnership

In many ways, Purim is a day set apart. It revels in the faithful nation’s redemption from those who believed in blind, unguided fate. Through communal, familial, and individual acts, we reinforce the belief that G-d is always working for us, with us, and that when we take brave action as Esther and Mordechai did, miracles happen. It’s a one-day whirlwind in which all that we wish to be true is, indeed, so blatantly true — that good triumphs over evil, and that tears of sadness can, in a moment, turn to tears of gratitude and joy.

Yet on this day of intense joy, the Vilna Gaon blessed his student within the realm of the everyday — sharing the famous “signature” of R. Moshe Isserlis’ commentary on the first and last phrases of the *Shulchan Aruch*’s first section, *Orach Chaim*: “two daily offerings according to their order.” *Orach Chaim* intricately describes quotidian Jewish ritual life. From the way we pray to how we celebrate each Jewish holiday, every distinguishable detail is mentioned and analyzed. Its first and last phrases, as mentioned in the Vilna Gaon’s blessing, share one word, and in addition share the name of the twice-daily communal offering in the Temple — *Tamid* (meaning, “constant” or “consistent”). On a festive day like Purim, it’s easy to get

swept away in the euphoric spirit of the day, and as with any burst of inspiration, the grandeur and glory that stoke a deep sense of mission and purpose, eventually wane. The Vilna Gaon’s blessing describes how two commitments, if weaved consistently into the fabric of everyday life, can uncover the miracles within seemingly ordinary moments, and within ourselves.

### **A Bit of Background on the *Shulchan Aruch***

Though we might not always be cognizant of it, we’re constantly looking for ways to make our lives unique and purposeful. As social-work researcher Dr. Brene Brown says, “we are hard-wired for connection,” and this manifests not only in the way we relate to others but also in how we relate to ourselves. Without guidelines and goals though, we can lose sight of what we most want and how to achieve it — namely, a steady sense of contentedness in who we are and the way we live our lives. In an effort to make the intricate complexities of Torah observance accessible, Rabbi Yosef Caro (1488-1575) compiled the *Shulchan Aruch* (literally, “The Set Table”) in Safed, Israel. The inline commentary of R. Moshe Isserlis,

called *HaMapah* or “the Tablecloth” (1520-1572), is considered the central resource for Ashkenazic ritual practice.

## שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד Committing the Mind and Body

יִתְגַּבֵּר כְּאִרֵי לְעִמּוּד בְּבוֹקֵר לְעִבּוּדַת בּוֹרְאוֹ  
שְׂיֵהָא הוּא מְעוֹרֵר הַשְּׁחֵר: הִגָּה: וְעַל כָּל פְּנִים  
לֹא יֵאָחֵר זְמַן הַתְּפִלָּה שֶׁהַצְּבוּר מִתְּפַלְּלִין.  
(טור) הִגָּה: שְׂוִיֵיתִי ה' לְנִגְדֵי תָמִיד הוּא  
כִּלְל גְּדוּל בְּתוֹרָה וּבְמַעֲלֹת הַצְּדִיקִים אֲשֶׁר  
הוֹלְכִים לְפָנֵי הָאֱ-לֹקִים, כִּי אֵין יוֹשִׁיבַת הָאָדָם  
וְתַנּוּעוֹתָיו וְעִסְקָיו וְהוּא לְבָדוּ בְּבֵיתוֹ כִּי שִׁיבְתוֹ  
וְתַנּוּעוֹתָיו וְעִסְקָיו וְהוּא לְפָנֵי מֶלֶךְ גְּדוּל, וְלֹא  
דְּבוּרוֹ וְהִרְחֵבַת פִּיּו כְּרָצוֹנוֹ וְהוּא עִם אֲנָשִׁי  
בֵּיתוֹ וְקִרְוֵבָיו כְּדְבוּרוֹ בְּמוֹשֵׁב הַמֶּלֶךְ, כָּל שָׁכֵן  
כְּשִׁישִׁים הָאָדָם אֶל לְבוֹ שֶׁהַמֶּלֶךְ הַגְּדוּל הַקָּבֵ"ה  
אֲשֶׁר מְלֹא כָל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ עוֹמֵד עָלָיו וְרוֹאֶה  
בְּמַעֲשָׂיו.  
שְׁלַחַן עֵרוֹךְ אֹרַח חַיִּים א:א

*One should strengthen himself like a lion to get up in the morning to serve his Creator, so that it is he who awakens the dawn. Rem" a: At least, one should not delay beyond the time when the*

congregation prays (Tur). Rem" a: “I have set the Lord before me constantly” (Psalms 16:8); this is a major principle in the Torah and amongst the virtues of the righteous who walk before God.

### Shulchan Aruch OC 1:1

The *Shulchan Aruch* begins with the challenge we all face every day, no matter our status or stage in life — getting out of bed in the morning. Our first moment of consciousness is an opportunity to direct how we’ll conduct ourselves the rest of the day. Will the forces of nature awaken us, or will we be initiators and “awaken the dawn?” In his commentary, R. Isserlis strengthens this law with the words of the Psalmist, “I have set the Lord before me constantly” (Psalms 16:8). “This,” he assures, “is a major principle in the Torah and among the virtues of the righteous who walk before G-d.”

This “major principle” is more than philosophical prose, it is also a learned habit. From its first words, the *Shulchan Aruch* frames the critical importance of intentionally choosing one’s actions, down to the

very first thought upon awakening. To transform this ideal into reality, the practitioner must be committed to taking seemingly insignificant details and channeling them into intentional, meaningful acts. At first this can be incredibly challenging. Many self-help literature works share surgeon Max Maltz’s observation that it takes 21 days to adjust to a new behavior or situation. However, if a behavior is reinforced consistently, eventually it becomes what author Charles Duhigg calls a “habit loop”:

*First, there is a cue, a trigger that tells your brain to go into automatic mode and which habit to use. Then there is the routine, which can be physical or mental or emotional. Finally, there is a reward, which helps your brain figure out if this particular loop is worth remembering for the future.*

While it does take time to create a new habit over time, when we develop well established habits, it clarifies just how effective we are in determining the quality of our lives. We can outwit morning fatigue and use our energy to



From its first words, the *Shulchan Aruch* frames the critical importance of intentionally choosing one’s actions, down to the very first thought upon awakening. The practitioner must be committed to taking seemingly insignificant details and channeling them into intentional, meaningful acts.

reach higher levels of productivity and purpose. Good habits are the gateway to dignity.

The obstacle with habit, is that when we let them run on autopilot, we can lose sight of their purpose. In Judaism, being committed to habit comes with an additional facet — “setting the Lord before me constantly.” Nothing we do or accomplish is solely our own. We aren’t here simply to create lives for ourselves, but to create lives that honor the Giver of life. Commitment that is linked to a Greater Cause will stand the inevitable tests that follow any worthwhile endeavor.

However, for many of us, no matter how earnestly we want to see G-d’s guidance in everything we do, it remains a challenge. Balancing ambition with the overwhelming sense of dependency on G-d? It sounds like a task that only the religiously elite — who hear G-d calling them by name through the flames of covenantal offerings or burning bushes — can accomplish. The notion that recognizing G-d’s presence derives from external, mystical impetuses is inaccurate according to Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888) in his commentary on Tehillim (Psalm 16). Fostering this awareness begins within:

*There are those who labor under the delusion that G-d must be conceived of as Someone Who towers far above earthly affairs, and who thinks all things terrestrial to be far below Him. “But as for me,” says David, “my conception of Him is very different. I have perceived his presence on the level of my own earthly existence: I no longer seek Him in the heights but I have set Him before my*

*eyes in everything I do on earth. Nothing here is so small or insignificant that G-d would be indifferent to it. Whatever I am, whatever I wish to accomplish lies clearly before His eyes. I shall hold fast to this conviction, tamid, forever.*

G-d is not “up there” waiting for us to reach Him. Our intentionally-developed habits — how we choose to think and act — are where we meet Him in an empowering and lasting way. Once we internalize that we are not invisible — that we are constantly in the presence of the Being who knows who we are and our most cherished dreams — then we’ll see how even the moment in which we pick our heads off the pillow has the power to influence our destiny.

### טוב לב משתה תמיד Committing the Heart

While developing habits and mindsets that enable us to sense G-d is critical to seeing the miraculous in everyday life, there’s another dimension of our personal development that enables this perspective to thrive. This second facet is found in the laws of Purim, in the very last sentence of the *Shulchan Aruch*:

יום י"ד וט"ו שבאדר ראשון אין נופלים על פניהם, ואין אומרים מזמור יענף ה' ביום צרה, ואסורים בהספד ותענית; אבל שאר דברים אין נוהגים בהם; ויש אומרים דאף בהספד ותענית מתרים. הגה: והמנהג כסברא הראשונה. יש אומרים שחייב להרבות במשתה ושמתה בי"ד שבאדר ראשון (טור בשם הר"י) ואין נוהגין בו, מכל מקום ירבה קצת בסעודה כדי לצאת ידי המהמירם; (הגהות ממוני בשם סמ"ק) וטוב לב משתה תמיד (משלי ט"ו, ט"ו).  
שלוך ערוך אורה חיים תרצ"א:

*[In a leap year] on the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the first Adar, one should fall on his face [in supplication] and should not say the [twentieth] Psalm, “G-d will answer me on my day of distress.” On these days, bewailing or fasting is forbidden. However, other [Purim] matters are not practiced on them ... there are [authorities] who say that one is obliged to feast and rejoice most on the fourteenth day of Adar ... This is not the practice. Nevertheless, one should have a somewhat larger meal in order to meet the view of the authorities who are stringent [in this matter], “and a good-hearted [person] has a perpetual feast” (Proverbs 15:15).*

**Shulchan Aruch OC 697:1**

We’ve all met someone who has something about them that’s hard to put into words. Their good-heartedness is markedly palpable; we intuit it in the depths of our own hearts. What sets these individuals apart most is beautifully described by *New York Times* writer David Brooks: *[They] radiate an inner light [and]... seem deeply good. They listen well... You often catch them looking after other people and as they do so their laugh is musical and their manner is infused with gratitude.” They emote a mysterious, poised equilibrium that communicates a deep belief that life, even with its imperfections, is deeply good.*

Brooks goes on to explain that “deeply good people” aren’t necessarily that way because of external factors. They too know pain and adversity; they feel sorrow and loss. What makes them different is their focus. Rather than living for “resume virtues,” they put their energy into “eulogy virtues ... unfakeable inner virtue built slowly from specific moral and spiritual accomplishments.” For all that the good-hearted may accomplish in

the great wide world, their sense of purpose and mission comes from developing an honest and kind character.

There are a number of views on what outlooks and circumstances yield a good heart, such as appreciating one's portion in life (Rashi, Mishlei 15:15), being patient, and being blessed with a good wife (*Sanhedrin* 100b-101a). Each stands firmly on its own, yet a look at Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch's interpretation (Vayikra 7) of the *Shelamim* offering unites them into one:

*Shalem implies a state of completeness... [it] is a relative concept ... it describes a person in relation to the circumstances and surroundings in which he lives ... the state of [a person's] affairs: they are in harmony with him, since he is in harmony with them.*

This also translates into the relations between man and G-d:

*Shelamim symbolizes seeking G-d's closeness on account of a sense of contentment ... Not grief but joy is to form the bridge to G-d.*

The good-hearted person chooses to pursue *shleimut*, peace. Life doesn't always unfold as expected. Plans change. People change. However, despite the juxtaposition between expectations and reality, the good-hearted person sees good, not bad. Instead of finding faults, "they live with human foibles and see beyond the moment" (Rabbi Aaron Rakeffet). With all their capabilities, they invest in the most healthful, gratifying, and appreciated aspect of human nature — a happy disposition. Happiness is not simply joy, it is harmonious consistency between deeply treasured values and how they are expressed in our everyday life.

### **Another Purim Blessing**

Aside from being a day of community, remembrance, and charity, Purim is a day of tefillah, when we turn inward and assess what is truly worth wanting. Perhaps that is why the Vilna Gaon wished for his student, R. Chaim Volozhin, the insight and foresight to live each day, in mind, body, and heart, as it is the most

important day of all. Every day is an offering from G-d to us, and what we do with that day is an offering from us to G-d. May this Purim leave us with increased resolve to see G-d's constant guidance and do so with kind, happy hearts.

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### **Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch**

R. Samson Rafael Hirsch (1808-1888) was a German rabbi most well known for his "Torah im Derech Eretz" approach which advocated for combining Torah observance with engagement in the modern world. His many works of biblical commentary and philosophy focus on presenting Torah as relevant and appealing to the modern reader. R. Hirsch was born in Hamburg, Germany. He studied under R. Jacob Ettlinger. In 1830, he was appointed as the rabbi of Oldenburg, Emden and in 1851, he was appointed as the rabbi of Frankfurt Am Main, a position that he held until his death. R. Hirsch's writings continue to have a major impact on Jewish thought.

# The Converts of Shushan

Throughout most of Jewish history, conversion to Judaism was a relatively rare occurrence. As Jews were often persecuted, and conversion to Judaism was often illegal and potentially a capital offense, there was limited incentive to join the fold.<sup>1</sup> There were, however, notable exceptions in Biblical times. The Gemara (*Yevamos* 79a) derives from *psukim* in Melachim (I 5) that during the time of Dovid HaMelech 150,000 people converted to Judaism. Similarly, the pasuk in Megilas Esther (8:17) indicates that many converted during the time of Mordechai and Esther:

וּבְכָל־מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וּבְכָל־עִיר וָעִיר מְקוֹם  
אֲשֶׁר דְּבַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ וָדָתוֹ מֵגִיעַ שְׂמֵחָה וְשִׂשׂוֹן  
לְיִהוּדִים מִשְׁתָּה יוֹם טוֹב וְרַבִּים מֵעַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ  
מִתְיַהֲדִים כִּי־נִפְלְּ פַחַד־הַיְהוּדִים עָלֵיהֶם:

*In every province and in every city, wherever the king's commandments and decree reached, there was great gladness and joy for the Jews, a feast and a holiday. And many of the people of the land became Jews because the fear of the Jews fell upon them.*

The proper interpretation of this verse is a matter of dispute. Tosafos (*Yevamos* 24b s.v. *Lo*) are bothered by an apparent contradiction between two passages in the Gemara. The Gemara there quotes a *beraisa* that during the days of Dovid HaMelech and Shlomo HaMelech the Jewish people did not accept converts, as there was strong ulterior motivation to benefit from the economic prosperity that the Jewish people enjoyed at that time. Yet the Gemara that we quoted earlier refers to large numbers of *geirim* during the time of Dovid Hamelech. Tosafos suggest that the



## Rabbi Michael Zylberman

Rosh Chaburah, RIETS

Geirus Coordinator, RCA· Segan Menahel,

Beth Din of America

*geirim* of that time converted on their own and that the same was true of the converts of the time of Mordechai and Esther. That is the meaning of the term “*misyahadim*” — literally they “made themselves Jewish.” The implication of Tosafos’s language is that the subjects of Achashveirosh did not undergo a formal conversion process but rather conducted themselves as Jews. The Vilna Gaon in his commentary on Esther interprets this verse along these lines — they made themselves into Jews but were not in fact full Jews.<sup>2</sup>

Rashba and Ritva (*Yevamos* 79a) present a different resolution to this question, which reflects a different understanding of our verse. They answer that the *geirim* of Dovid HaMelech’s time (and presumably of Achashveirosh’s time as well) did convert, but they converted with a beis din of *hedyotot* (laymen) and not an authorized beis din. Such conversions, while not prospectively sanctioned, would have been valid post facto, based on the conclusion of the Gemara (*Yevamos* 24b) that conversions performed for ulterior motivations are still valid post facto.<sup>3</sup> According to this interpretation, *misyahadim* can mean that they literally and formally converted.

This answer of Rashba and Ritva is consistent with the words of the Rambam (*Issurei Biah* 13:14-15):

אל יעלה על דעתך ששמשון המושיע את ישראל או שלמה מלך ישראל שנקרא ידו ה' נשאו נשים נכריות בגיותן, אלא סוד הדבר כך הוא, שהמצוה הנכונה כשיבא הגר או הגיורת להתגייר בודקין אחריו שמא בגלל ממון שיטול או בשביל שררה שיזכה לה או מפני הפחד בא להכנס לדת, ואם איש הוא בודקין אחריו שמא עיניו נתן באשה יהודית, ואם אשה היא בודקין שמא עיניה נתנה בבחור מבחורי ישראל, אם לא נמצא להם עילה מודיעין אותן כובד עול התורה וטורח שיש בעשייתה על עמי הארצות כדי שיפרשו, אם קבלו ולא פירשו וראו אותן שחזרו מאהבה מקבלים אותן שנאמר ותרא כי מתאמצת היא ללכת אתה ותחדל לדבר אליה. לפיכך לא קבלו בית דין גרים כל ימי דוד ושלמה, בימי דוד שמא מן הפחד חזרו, ובימי שלמה שמא בשביל המלכות והטובה והגדולה שהיו בה ישראל חזרו, שכל החזור מן העכו"ם בשביל דבר מהבלי העולם אינו מגייר הצדק, ואעפ"כ היו גרים הרבה מתגיירים בימי דוד ושלמה בפני הדיוטות, והיו ב"ד הגדול חוששין להם לא דוחין אותן אחר שטבלו מכ"מ ולא מקרבין אותן עד שתראה אחריתם.

*One should not think that Samson who saved the Jewish people, and Solomon King of Israel, who is called “the friend of God,” married gentile woman who did not convert. Instead, the matter can be explained as follows: The proper way of performing the mitzvah is when a male or a female prospective convert comes, we inspect his motives for conversion. Perhaps he is coming for the sake of financial gain, in order to receive a position of authority, or he*

desires to enter our faith because of fear. For a man, we check whether he focused his attention on a Jewish woman. For a woman, we check whether she focused her attention on a Jewish youth. If we find no ulterior motive, we inform them of the heaviness of the yoke of the Torah and the difficulty the common people have in observing it so that they will abandon [their desire]. If they accept [this introduction] and do not abandon their resolve and thus we see that they are motivated by love, we accept them, as [indicated by Ruth 1:18]: “And she saw that she was exerting herself to continue with her and she ceased speaking with her.” For this reason, the court did not accept converts throughout the reign of David and Solomon. In David’s time, [they feared] that they sought to convert because of fear and in Solomon’s time, [they feared] that they were motivated by the sovereignty, prosperity, and eminence which Israel enjoyed. [They refrained from accepting such converts, because] a gentile who seeks to convert because of the vanities of this [material] world is not a righteous convert. Nevertheless, there were many people who converted in the presence of ordinary people during the era of David and Solomon. The Supreme Sanhedrin would view them with skepticism. Since they immersed themselves, they would not reject them, but they would not draw them close until they saw what the outcome would be. (Translation, Chabad.org)

R. Refoel Aharon Yoffen (footnote 758 to Ritva, *Yevamos* 77a, Mosad HaRav Kook edition) suggests that the crux of the difference between the answers in rishonim may be the status of conversions performed by a beis din of *hedyotos*. The Gemara (*Yevamos* 46b), based on the Torah’s usage of the term “*mishpat*,” or “judgment,” derives the requirement that the fundamental components of

*geirus* be performed in the presence of a beis din.<sup>4</sup> Tosafos (s.v. *Mishpat*) explain that based on the Gemara’s analysis, we would require a beis din of three “*mumchim*,” individuals who possess *semicha* handed down from generation to generation back to Moshe Rabbenu. Given that by the time of the Tosafos (and much earlier) formal *semicha* ceased to exist, Tosafos question how we are able to accept new *geirim* in our times.

Tosafos (*ibid.* and *Kiddushin* 62b, s.v. *Ger*) answer that our *batei din* are licensed to accept *geirim* based on the notion of *shlichusayhu*, or agency. The Gemara (*Sanhedrin* 2b-3a and *Gittin* 88b) explains that although certain monetary matters must be adjudicated in front of a beis din of three *mumchim*, the inability to settle such matters in a generation lacking *mumchim* would significantly restrict commercial activity. Rather, contemporary *batei din* operate though *shlichusayhu*, namely we view the *dayanim* of a beis din as the agents of the original *mumchim* and they are therefore authorized to adjudicate such matters. Similarly, in cases in which coercive measures may be warranted as part of a *get* process, *shlichusayhu* is operative. Tosafos explain that the same mechanism exists for accepting *geirim*.

Tosafos (*Kiddushin* *ibid.*) quote a second explanation in the name of Rabbenu Nesanel. According to the simple reading of this position, there never existed a requirement that a beis din for *geirus* consist of *mumchim*. The Torah’s use of the term “*l’doroseichem*,” “for your generations” in the context of conversion teaches us that *geirus* may be performed at any time in history, even when there are no *mumchim*.<sup>5</sup>

The approach of Tosafos that the non-Jews of the time of Dovid and Shlomo (and of the Purim story) did not legitimately convert assumes that *geirus* in principle requires a beis din of three *mumchim*, and absent that possibility we utilize the mechanism of *shlichusayhu*. When *mumchim* do exist, though, as in those earlier periods, there is no other option for performing *geirus*. Thus, given that the *batei din* of *mumchim* were unwilling to convert people during the time of Dovid and Shlomo due to suspect motivations, these people were unable to convert.<sup>6</sup> The answer of Rashba and Ritva that the converts of the time of Dovid and Shlomo did convert legitimately, albeit with a beis din of *hedyotos*, assumes either that there never was a requirement of *mumchim*, or that even when *mumchim* existed a *geirus* performed by non-*mumchim* could be valid at least post facto.

R. Zvi Pesach Frank (*Har Zvi*, *Yoreh Deah* 216) suggests a significant practical difference between whether contemporary *geirus* operates based on *shlichusayhu* or not. In the 1920’s the Jewish community of Buenos Aires, Argentina promulgated a communal edict not to perform conversions.<sup>7</sup> What would be the post facto status of conversions performed in Argentina at the time by ad hoc *batei din*, against the wishes of the community establishment? R. Frank argues that if contemporary *geirus* is predicated on *shlichusayhu*, a *beis din* cannot simultaneously flout the local edicts and claim to be a legitimate representative of *batei din* from previous generations. For this reason, in the particular case that he addressed, he recommended that the individual who had converted with an ad hoc beis din that was operating against the wishes of the established community

undergo another act of conversion with a more legitimate beis din.

A generation earlier, R. Meir Simcha of Dvinsk (*Or Sameach, Issurei Biah* 14:13) made a similar argument. According to R. Nechemia (*Yevamos* 24b), if an individual converts for the sake of marriage to a Jewish partner, the *geirus* is not valid. The Gemara concludes, however, that if such an individual did convert with the requisite steps and commitments of *geirus*, the *geirus* would be valid post facto.<sup>8</sup> R. Meir Simcha questions whether a beis din that converts someone whose motivation is for the sake of marriage could legitimately claim that mantle of *shlichusayu*. Since the act of *geirus* itself is performed in contravention to standard halachic protocol, we cannot view the members of that beis din as the agents of the original *batei din*.<sup>9</sup>

R. Moshe Sternbuch (*Teshuvos V'hanhagos* 1:610-611, 4:230) quotes the *Or Sameach* and assumes along similar lines that if a beis din converts people despite clear indications that the *geirim* will not lead an observant lifestyle, their conversions are invalid. Such a beis din may not tap into the authority of *shlichusayhu*. He argues further that once we establish that such a beis din may not invoke *shlichusayhu*, any conversion performed by that beis din, even in a situation of unquestionable commitment on the part of the convert, would be invalid. R. Sternbuch assumes that even if the authority to perform conversion nowadays does not stem from *shlichusayhu*, conversions performed by such a beis din would be invalid, as the dayanim are considered *reshaim* for participating in such a system. R. Avraham Sherman, a retired member

of the current Beit Din Hagadol, the Supreme Court of Appeals of the Israeli beis din system, accepts this analysis in a well-publicized decision of the Beit Din Hagadol.<sup>10</sup>

Taking a contrary position, R. Gedalyau Axelrod of the Rabbanut Beit Din in Haifa (*Migdal Tzofim* 3:39), claims that if the beis din believes that they are following accepted halachic standards, even if others may dispute their analysis, conversions that they perform on candidates who possess the requisite commitment are indeed valid. Erroneously following a mistaken halachic position does not in and of itself disqualify the dayanim. R. Sternbuch himself acknowledges the legitimacy of this approach. This latter position has been followed by much of the beis din establishment both in the United States and in Israel.

If we accept the validity of a conversion performed by a beis din of *hedyotos*, we must define the minimal knowledge base required of the members of such a beis din. In the context of a beis din for monetary matters, *Shulchan Aruch* rules (*Choshen Mishpat* 3:1) that a beis din of three may even contain *hedyotos*. Rema there adds that a beis din of three will invariably contain at least one member who is proficient in the relevant halachos; if none of the members of a beis din have such proficiency, that beis din is *pasul*.<sup>11</sup>

R. Moshe Feinstein (*Igros Moshe, Yoreh Deah* 1:159) assumes that the Rema's qualification in *Choshen Mishpat* applies to *geirus* as well. In principle, as long as one of the members of the beis din is a talmid chacham who is proficient in *hilchos geirus*, a *geirus* performed by that beis din would be valid. The presumption

## A Novel Approach to Drinking on Purim:

R. Chaim Zundel Maccabi, *Imrei Chaim* no. 52, suggests that the concept of drinking on Purim has its roots in the mass conversion that followed the defeat of Haman. While there were many who were interested in converting because they believed in the Torah, there were others who were not as sincere. Some were even tacit supporters of Haman. R. Maccabi suggests that Mordechai wanted to see which of these conversion candidates were sincere so he instituted that the celebration of Purim the following year would be a day of drinking wine. When one is drunk, one's inner feelings come out and therefore, through the drinking of wine, Mordechai was able to determine who was sincere and who was not. Since drinking wine was part of the original Purim celebration, it continued in subsequent years.

*Torah To Go Editors*

in such a situation is that the talmid chacham will explain to the other members of the beis din the details of the steps of *milah*, *tevillah*, and *kabbalas hamitzvos*.<sup>12</sup>

R. Moshe Wolfson (*Emunas Itecha* 1 p. 283, citing *Mara Deara'a Deyisrael*, the biography of R. Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld) relates that R. Isser Zalman Meltzer once asked R. Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld why he was so scrupulous about immersing in a mikveh. R. Zonnenfeld replied that if immersion in a mikveh can transform

a non-Jew into a Jew, then all the more so can it have a transformative impact on a Jew. R. Wolfson suggests that this is an important lesson of Purim. However we interpret the term *misyahadim*, the miracle of Purim had a major impact on the conduct of the nations of the world. Should it not at least have the same effect on us?

## Notes

1 See *Shu"t Siach Yitzchak* (R. Yitzchak Weiss), who lists 13 instances of *geirim* referenced in Shas.

2 See the commentaries of Ibn Ezra and Rabbenu Moshe Chalayo (in *Mikraos Gedolos Toras Chayim*) and Ralbag who understand the word "*misyahadim*" along these lines. *Manos HaLevi* (R. Shlomo Alkavetz) writes that the non-Jews of the time knew that they would not be able to formally convert, but they presented themselves as Jews and dressed as Jews. *Sfas Emes* connects this to the custom of dressing up on Purim.

3 While the Rashba only presents this explanation, Ritva prefers an additional resolution. He concludes:

ומסתברא דקושיא מעיקרא ליתא דההיא שלא  
קבלו גרים בימי דוד ובימי שלמה היינו בסתם  
דמסתמא הם אינם עושים אלא מפני פחד מלחמת  
דוד או לשלחן מלכים ועושר שלמה, אבל באלו  
הדברים הוכיחו שנתגיירו מפני מה שראו בזה  
קדושת התורה ויושר חוקיה ומשפטיה ולכן קבלום.

*It would seem that there is no question from the outset. When the Gemara states that they did not accept converts during the time of David and Shlomo, that was only by default. The assumption was that they were only doing so because of fear of the war of David or because of the wealth of Solomon. However, those who had proven their desire to convert because they saw the holiness of the Torah and the just measures of its laws and statutes were accepted as converts.*

4 There is a dispute among rishonim as to what components of *geirus* are invalid even post facto if not performed in front of a beis din.

Tosafos (*Yevamos* 45 s.v. *Mi*) assume that the presence of a beis din is only necessary even post facto for *kabbalas hamitzvos*, the formal acceptance of the binding nature of Torah and mitzvos and commitment to live an observant lifestyle. As long as this declaration was made in the presence of a beis din, even if the beis din did not observe the *milah* and *tevilah*, the *geirus* is still valid. Rambam (*Issurei Biah* 13:7), however, assumes that beis din is necessary even post facto for *tevilah* (and perhaps *milah* as well). *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh Deah* 268:3) quotes both of these opinions.

5 Rashba (*Yevamos* 45b s.v. *Mi*) explains within this opinion that *shlichusayhu* operates in financial matters, utilizing the mechanism of *hefker beis din hefker*, the authority of beis din to render someone's property ownerless, and in matters of marriage and divorce, based on the notion of *kol dimekadesh ada'ata derabbanin mikadesh* (people enter into marriage with the knowledge that their marriage may be regulated by rabbinic enactments). However, given that neither of these mechanisms exist for *geirus*, the theoretical power vested through *shlichusayhu* would not be sufficient to allow an individual who is non-Jewish by Torah law to marry a Jew. See, however, *Nesivos HaMishpat* (1:1) who argues that *shlichusayhu* operates on a Biblical level, and thus someone converted with such a mechanism would be considered fully Jewish by Biblical law.

6 Maharm Shik (*Shu"t Yoreh Deah* 248) assumes that even according to the explanation that conversions may always be performed based on *l'dorosaichem*, when *mumchim* exist they may only be performed by *mumchim*.

7 See R. Shaul David Sithon, *Shu"t Devar Shaul* (introduction and 2-6), who, as the rabbi of Buenos Aires, spearheaded this effort and received the blessing of R. Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook. R. Kook, in correspondence printed in that volume, offered that any serious conversion candidate could come to Yerushalayim and attempt to pursue conversion with the Beis Din of Yerushalayim. This edict was the forerunner to more expansive edicts later promulgated by Syrian Jews in the United States.

8 Many contemporary *batei din* take the following approach to converting individuals who seek to convert for the sake of marriage. If the beis din is convinced that the commitment of the prospective convert transcends the relationship with the Jew, such that if the relationship were to end the convert would continue to lead an observant Jewish lifestyle, the *geirus* need not be characterized as being done for the sake of marriage. See, for example, *Achiezer* 1:26 for a related approach.

9 See a similar analysis by R. Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook (*Da'as Kohan* 152). R. Moshe Feinstein (*Dibros Moshe, Yevamos* pp. 481-482) assumes that R. Meir Simcha's analysis is theoretically correct, but notes that common practice is to accept conversions performed for the sake of marriage.

10 *Ploni v. Plonit* 4 Adar I 5768 available at <http://www.rbc.gov.il/Pages/PiskeDin.aspx>.

11 This is based on Rosh (*Sanhedrin* 1:1) in distinction to the position of Ramah cited in *Tur* that requires three proficient members of a beis din. See also *Shach* (*Choshen Mishpat* 3:2).

12 R. Moshe assumes this to be the position of the Rambam (*Issurei Biah* 14:6), who does not use the term *talmidei chachamim* in describing the members of the beis din (although the Gemara, *Yevamos* 47 b, does use the term *talmidei chachamim*). R. Shmuel Eliezer Stern (*Geirus Kihilchasa* Chapter 7 footnote 4) quotes R. Gershom Hagozer (12th century Germany) in his *Klalei HaMilah* who writes that a beis din for *geirus* must consist of three *talmidei chachamim* or three "*chashuvei ha'ir*," distinguished members of the city (who are not necessarily *talmidei chachamim*).

See, however, Meiri (*Beis HaBechirah, Yevamos* 47a s.v. *Af al pi* and 47b *U'micheivan*) who requires three *talmidei chachamim*. Meiri appears to understand *hedyotos* as contrasting with *mumchim*, but not to the exclusion of *talmidei chachamim*. *Shu"t Mahram Shick* (*Yoreh Deah* 248) also requires *talmidei chachamim* for a beis din for *geirus*. See also *Shu"t Binyamin Ze'ev* 1:72.



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<b>Adath Israel Poale Zedek</b> Hampstead, QC	<b>Beit Kneset Feigenson</b> Beit Shemesh, Israel	<b>Bikur Cholim Machzikay Hadath</b> Seattle, WA	<b>Cong. Bais Efraim Yitzchok</b> Woodmere, NY	<b>Cong. Kehillath Jacob Beth Samuel</b> Peterson Park, IL	<b>Cong. Shevet Achim</b> Mercer Island, WA
<b>Agudath Shalom</b> Stamford, CT	<b>Beit Kneset Mitzpeh Ramot</b> Jerusalem, Israel	<b>Blake Street Hebrew Cong.</b> Melbourne, Australia	<b>Cong. Bais Torah</b> Suffern, NY	<b>Cong. Kehilath Jeshurun</b> New York, NY	<b>Cong. Shomrei Emunah</b> Baltimore, MD
<b>Ahavas Israel</b> Passaic, NJ	<b>Beit Kneset of North Woodmere</b> North Woodmere, NY	<b>B'nai David-Judea Cong.</b> Los Angeles, CA	<b>Cong. Beit Tikvah</b> Nepean, ON	<b>Cong. Keter Torah</b> Teaneck, NJ	<b>Cong. Shomrei Shabbos</b> Far Rockaway, NY
<b>Ahavas Torah: The Scottsdale Torah Center</b> Scottsdale, AZ	<b>Beit Midrash Kol BeRamah</b> Santa Fe, NM	<b>Bnai Torah</b> Toronto, ON	<b>Cong. Beth Aaron</b> Teaneck, NJ	<b>Cong. K.I.N.S.</b> Chicago, IL	<b>Cong. Shomrim Laboker</b> Montréal, QC
<b>Ahavas Yisrael of Edison</b> Edison, NJ	<b>Bet Kneset Shimon Hatzadik</b> Jerusalem, Israel	<b>Boca Raton Synagogue</b> Boca Raton, FL	<b>Cong. Beth Abraham</b> Bergenfield, NJ	<b>Cong. Kol Israel</b> Brooklyn, NY	<b>Cong. Shomrei Torah</b> Fair Lawn, NJ
<b>Ahavas Yisroel</b> Flushing, NY	<b>Beth Kneset Emek Refaim</b> Jerusalem, Israel	<b>Boca Raton Synagogue West</b> Boca Raton, FL	<b>Cong. Beth Abraham-Jacob</b> Albany, NY	<b>Cong. Machzikei Hadas</b> Ottawa, ON	<b>Cong. Sons of Israel</b> Allentown, PA
<b>Ahavat Achim Orthodox Cong. of Fair Lawn</b> Fair Lawn, NJ	<b>Beth Kneset Hanassi</b> Jerusalem, Israel	<b>Calabassas Shul</b> Calabassas, CA	<b>Cong. Beth El Atereth Israel</b> Newton, MA	<b>Cong. Magen David of West Deal</b> Ocean, NJ	<b>Cong. Sons of Israel</b> Cherry Hill, NJ
<b>Anshe Sholom B'nai Israel</b> Chicago, IL	<b>Beth Midrash Torani Leumi</b> Bet Shemesh, Israel	<b>Center for Jewish Life</b> Princeton, NJ	<b>Cong. Beth Hamedrosh</b> Wynnewood, PA	<b>Cong. Mogen David</b> Los Angeles, CA	<b>Cong. Tifereth Beth David Jerusalem</b> Cote St. Luc, QC
<b>Anshei Chesed Cong.</b> Boynton Beach, FL	<b>Beth Avraham Yoseph Of Toronto Cong.</b> Thornhill, ON	<b>Chabad of Richmond</b> Richmond, VA	<b>Cong. Beth Israel</b> Berkeley, CA	<b>Cong. Ohab Zedek</b> New York, NY	<b>Cong. Torah Ohr</b> Boca Raton, FL
<b>Avenue N Sephardic Cong.</b> Brooklyn, NY	<b>Beth David Synagogue</b> West Hartford, CT	<b>Chabad Of Richmond</b> Richmond, BC	<b>Cong. Beth Israel</b> Metairie, LA	<b>Cong. Ohav Emeth</b> Highland Park, NJ	<b>Cong. Torat Emet</b> Phoenix, AZ
<b>Ayin L' Tzion</b> Thornhill, ON	<b>Beth David Synagogue</b> West Hartford, CT	<b>Clanton Park Synagogue</b> Toronto, ON	<b>Cong. Beth Sholom</b> Lawrence, NY	<b>Cong. Ohav Sholom</b> Merrick, NY	<b>Cong. Zichron Yisroel</b> Thornhill, ON
<b>BACH Jewish Center</b> Long Beach, NY	<b>Beth David Synagogue</b> West Hartford, CT	<b>Community Synagogue of Monsey</b> Monsey, NY	<b>Cong. Beth Sholom</b> Providence, RI	<b>Cong. Ohr Hatorah</b> Phoenix, AZ	<b>Darchei Noam Cong.</b> St Louis Park, MN
<b>Bais Abraham</b> St Louis, MO	<b>Beth David Synagogue</b> Binghamton, NY	<b>Cong. AABJ&amp;D</b> West Orange, NJ	<b>Cong. Beth Yitzchok</b> Chicago, IL	<b>Cong. Ohr Saadya</b> Teaneck, NJ	<b>DAT Minyan</b> Denver, CO
<b>Bais Hamedrash Oneg Shabbos</b> Montréal, QC	<b>Beth Hamidrash Cong.</b> Vancouver, BC	<b>Cong. Adas Israel</b> Passaic, NJ	<b>Cong. BIAV</b> Overland Park, KS	<b>Cong. Ohr Torah</b> West Orange, NJ	<b>Daughters of Israel</b> West Orange, NJ
<b>Baron Hirsch Synagogue</b> Memphis, TN	<b>Beth Israel Synagogue</b> Omaha, NE	<b>Cong. Adat Yeshurun</b> La Jolla, CA	<b>Cong. Bnai Brith Jacob</b> Savannah, GA	<b>Cong. Or Torah</b> Skokie, IL	<b>Darchei Noam of Glenbrook</b> Northbrook, IL
<b>Bais Chaim Dovid</b> Lincolnwood, IL	<b>Beth Israel Synagogue</b> Edmonton, AB	<b>Cong. Adas Yeshurun</b> Chicago, IL	<b>Cong. Bnai Israel</b> Brooklyn, NY	<b>Cong. Rinat Yisrael</b> Teaneck, NJ	<b>DRS High School for Boys</b> Woodmere, NY
<b>Beis Medrash of Harborview</b> Lawrence, NY	<b>Beth Jacob Cong. Of Kitchener-Waterloo</b> Kitchener, ON	<b>Cong. Adath Israel</b> Elizabeth, NJ	<b>Cong. B'nai Torah</b> Springfield, MA	<b>Cong. Rodfei Sholom</b> San Antonio, TX	<b>EDOS</b> Denver, CO
<b>Beis Midrash of Bergenfield</b> Bergenfield, NJ	<b>Beth Jacob Cong.</b> Atlanta, GA	<b>Cong. Adereth El</b> New York, NY	<b>Cong. Brothers of Israel</b> Long Branch, NJ	<b>Cong. Schomre Israel</b> Poughkeepsie, NY	<b>Eitz Chayim of Dogwood Park</b> West Hempstead, NY
<b>Beis Midrash of Woodmere</b> Woodmere, NY	<b>Beth Jacob Cong.</b> Irvine, CA	<b>Cong. Agudath Achim</b> Bradley Beach, NJ	<b>Cong. Darchei Noam</b> Fair Lawn, NJ	<b>Cong. Shaar Hashomayim</b> Westmount, QC	<b>Elmora Hills Minyan</b> Union, NJ
<b>Beis Yosef D'ulem</b> Flushing, NY	<b>Beth Jacob Cong.</b> Oakland, CA	<b>Cong. Ahavas Achim</b> Highland Park, NJ	<b>Cong. Dor Tikvah</b> Charleston, SC	<b>Cong. Shaaray Tefila</b> Lawrence, NY	<b>Eretz Chemda</b> Katamon, Israel
<b>Beit Chaverim Synagogue</b> Westport, CT	<b>Beth Joseph Cong.</b> Phoenix, AZ	<b>Cong. Ahavat Achim</b> Portland, OR	<b>Cong. Eitz Chaim</b> Flushing, NY	<b>Cong. Shaare Tefilla</b> Dallas, TX	<b>Etz Chaim</b> Beit Shemesh, Israel
	<b>Beth Ora</b> St. Laurent, QC	<b>Cong. Ahavat Shalom</b> Teaneck, NJ	<b>Cong. Emek Beracha</b> Palo Alto, CA	<b>Cong. Shaare Tzedek</b> Englewood, NJ	<b>Ezra Bessaroth</b> Seattle, WA
		<b>Cong. Ahavath Torah</b> Englewood, NJ	<b>Cong. Ezras Israel</b> Chicago, IL	<b>Cong. Shaarei Tefillah</b> Newton Centre, MA	<b>Fifth Avenue Synagogue</b> New York, NY

<b>Fleetwood Synagogue</b> <i>Mount Vernon, NY</i>	<b>Keshet Israel Cong.</b> <i>Harrisburg, PA</i>	<b>Nusach Hari Bnai Zion</b> <i>St Louis, MO</i>	<b>SKA High School for Girls</b> <i>Hewlett Bay Park, NY</i>	<b>Yavneh Academy</b> <i>Paramus, NJ</i>	<b>Rochelle</b> <i>New Rochelle, NY</i>
<b>Forest Hill Jewish Centre</b> <i>Toronto, ON</i>	<b>Keshet Israel</b> <i>Washington, DC</i>	<b>NY Hospital - Queens</b> <i>Flushing, NY</i>	<b>South Fallsburg Hebrew Association</b> <i>South Fallsburg, NY</i>	<b>JLIC at Yale University Hillel</b> <i>New Haven, CT</i>	<b>Young Israel of North Woodmere</b> <i>North Woodmere, NY</i>
<b>Golf Manor Synagogue</b> <i>Cincinnati, OH</i>	<b>Kew Gardens Synagogue</b> <i>Kew Gardens, NY</i>	<b>Ohab Zedek</b> <i>Belle Harbor, NY</i>	<b>Spanish &amp; Portuguese Synagogue Of Montreal</b> <i>Montréal, QC</i>	<b>Yeshiva University Torah Mitzion Kollel of Chicago</b>	<b>Young Israel of Northridge</b> <i>Northridge, CA</i>
<b>Great Neck Synagogue</b> <i>Great Neck, NY</i>	<b>Kingsway Jewish Center</b> <i>Brooklyn, NY</i>	<b>Oheb Zedek Cedar Sinai Synagogue</b> <i>Lyndhurst, OH</i>	<b>Suburban Orthodox Synagogue Toras Chaim</b> <i>Baltimore, MD</i>	<b>Young Israel Of Baychester Traditional Synagogue</b> <i>Bronx, NY</i>	<b>Young Israel of Oak Park</b> <i>Oak Park, MI</i>
<b>Green Road Synagogue</b> <i>Beachwood, OH</i>	<b>Kneset Beth Israel</b> <i>Richmond, VA</i>	<b>Ohev Sholom Cong.</b> <i>Williamsport, PA</i>	<b>Synagogue of the Suburban Torah Center</b> <i>Livingston, NJ</i>	<b>Young Israel of Brookline</b> <i>Brookline, MA</i>	<b>Young Israel of Oceanside</b> <i>Oceanside, NY</i>
<b>HAFTR</b> <i>Lawrence, NY</i>	<b>Kneseth Israel Cong.</b> <i>Birmingham, AL</i>	<b>Ohr Shalom</b> <i>Bet Shemesh, Israel</i>	<b>The Beachwood Kehillah</b> <i>Beachwood, OH</i>	<b>Young Israel of Canarsie</b> <i>Brooklyn, NY</i>	<b>Young Israel Of Orange County</b> <i>Irvine, CA</i>
<b>Hebrew Institute of Riverdale - The Bayit</b> <i>Bronx, NY</i>	<b>Kohelet Yeshiva High School</b> <i>Bala Cynwyd, PA</i>	<b>Or Chaim</b> <i>Toronto, ON</i>	<b>The Frisch School</b> <i>Paramus, NJ</i>	<b>Young Israel of Century City</b> <i>Los Angeles, CA</i>	<b>Young Israel Of Ottawa</b> <i>Ottawa, ON</i>
<b>Hebrew Institute of White Plains</b> <i>White Plains, NY</i>	<b>Koschitzky Minyan</b> <i>North York, ON</i>	<b>Orot Hacarmel</b> <i>San Diego, CA</i>	<b>The Jewish Center</b> <i>New York, NY</i>	<b>Young Israel Of Chomedy</b> <i>Chomedy, QC</i>	<b>Young Israel Of Passaic-Clifton</b> <i>Passaic, NJ</i>
<b>Heichal Shiloh</b> <i>Rosh Ha'Ayin, Israel</i>	<b>KSY</b> <i>Beit Shemesh, Israel</i>	<b>Orthodox Union</b> <i>New York, NY</i>	<b>The Jewish Center of Atlantic Beach</b> <i>Atlantic Beach, NY</i>	<b>Young Israel of Deerfield Beach</b> <i>Deerfield Beach, FL</i>	<b>Young Israel of Queens Valley</b> <i>Flushing, NY</i>
<b>Heichal Shlomo</b> <i>Jerusalem, Israel</i>	<b>Lechu Neranana</b> <i>Ra'anana, Israel</i>	<b>Petah Tikva</b> <i>Toronto, ON</i>	<b>The Jewish Learning Initiative On Campus</b> <i>Toronto, ON</i>	<b>Young Israel of Flatbush</b> <i>Brooklyn, NY</i>	<b>Young Israel of Riverdale</b> <i>Bronx, NY</i>
<b>Herzlia - Adas Yeshurun</b> <i>Winnipeg, MB</i>	<b>Lido Beach Synagogue</b> <i>Lido Beach, NY</i>	<b>Queens Jewish Center</b> <i>Forest Hills, NY</i>	<b>The Kipa</b> <i>Be'er Sheva, Israel</i>	<b>Young Israel of Forest Hills</b> <i>Forest Hills, NY</i>	<b>Young Israel of Scarsdale</b> <i>Scarsdale, NY</i>
<b>Hildesheimer Shul</b> <i>Jerusalem, Israel</i>	<b>Lincoln Square Synagogue</b> <i>New York, NY</i>	<b>Rambam Mesivta</b> <i>Lawrence, NY</i>	<b>The Roslyn Synagogue</b> <i>Roslyn Heights, NY</i>	<b>Young Israel of Fort Lee</b> <i>Fort Lee, NJ</i>	<b>Young Israel of Sharon</b> <i>Sharon, MA</i>
<b>Hillel at Brandeis</b> <i>Waltham, MA</i>	<b>Lower Merion Synagogue</b> <i>Bala Cynwyd, PA</i>	<b>Rambam Shul</b> <i>Be'er Sheva, Israel</i>	<b>The Village Shul</b> <i>Toronto, ON</i>	<b>Young Israel of Hewlett</b> <i>Hewlett, NY</i>	<b>Young Israel of Skokie</b> <i>Skokie, IL</i>
<b>Hoshen Modiin</b> <i>Modiin, Israel</i>	<b>Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School</b> <i>Teaneck, NJ</i>	<b>Riverdale Jewish Center</b> <i>Riverdale, NY</i>	<b>Thornhill Community Shul</b> <i>Thornhill, ON</i>	<b>Young Israel of Hillcrest</b> <i>Flushing, NY</i>	<b>Young Israel of Southfield</b> <i>Southfield, MI</i>
<b>The Jewish Educational Center</b> <i>Elizabeth, NJ</i>	<b>Magen David Sephardic</b> <i>Wykagyl, NY</i>	<b>SAR High School</b> <i>Riverdale, NY</i>	<b>Tiferet Israel</b> <i>Toronto, ON</i>	<b>Young Israel of Holliswood</b> <i>Jamaica, NY</i>	<b>Young Israel of St. Louis</b> <i>St Louis, MO</i>
<b>JLI - The Johns Hopkins University</b> <i>Baltimore, MD</i>	<b>Margolin Hebrew Academy</b> <i>Memphis, TN</i>	<b>SCY High</b> <i>San Diego, CA</i>	<b>Torat Emet</b> <i>Columbus, OH</i>	<b>Young Israel of Hollywood-Ft. Lauderdale</b> <i>Fort Lauderdale, FL</i>	<b>Young Israel of Staten Island</b> <i>Staten Island, NY</i>
<b>JLIC at Queens College Hillel</b> <i>Queens, NY</i>	<b>Menorat Hamaor</b> <i>Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel</i>	<b>Sephardic Bikur Holim</b> <i>Seattle, WA</i>	<b>Touro Synagogue</b> <i>Newport, RI</i>	<b>Young Israel of Houston</b> <i>Houston, TX</i>	<b>Young Israel of Toco Hills</b> <i>Atlanta, GA</i>
<b>Joint Distribution Committee</b> <i>Jerusalem, Israel</i>	<b>Merkaz Modiin</b> <i>Modiin, Israel</i>	<b>Sephardic Institute Synagogue</b> <i>Brooklyn, NY</i>	<b>Ulpanat Orot</b> <i>Downsview, ON</i>	<b>Young Israel of Jamaica Estates</b> <i>Jamaica, NY</i>	<b>Young Israel of West Hartford</b> <i>West Hartford, CT</i>
<b>Kehilat Zichron Yosef</b> <i>Jerusalem, Israel</i>	<b>Mishkan Shilo</b> <i>Beit Shemesh, Israel</i>	<b>Sephardic Kehila Centre Synagogue</b> <i>Thornhill, ON</i>	<b>United Orthodox Synagogues</b> <i>Houston, TX</i>	<b>Young Israel of Lawrence-Cedarhurst</b> <i>Cedarhurst, NY</i>	<b>Young Israel of West Hempstead</b> <i>West Hempstead, NY</i>
<b>Kehillas Bais Yehudah Tzvi</b> <i>Cedarhurst, NY</i>	<b>Mizrachi Bayit</b> <i>Toronto, ON</i>	<b>Shaare Zedek Cong.</b> <i>Winnipeg, MB</i>	<b>University of Massachusetts JLIC Hillel</b> <i>Amherst, MA</i>	<b>Young Israel of Long Beach</b> <i>Long Beach, NY</i>	<b>Young Israel of West Rogers Park</b> <i>Chicago, IL</i>
<b>Kehillat Ahavat Zion</b> <i>Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel</i>	<b>MJE</b> <i>New York, NY</i>	<b>Shaarei Shomayim Cong.</b> <i>Toronto, ON</i>	<b>University of Pennsylvania Hillel</b> <i>Philadelphia, PA</i>	<b>Young Israel of Memphis</b> <i>Memphis, TN</i>	<b>Young Israel Ohab Zedek of North Riverdale</b> <i>Yonkers, NY</i>
<b>Kehilat Chovevei Zion</b> <i>Skokie, IL</i>	<b>Moledet</b> <i>Be'er Sheva, Israel</i>	<b>Shaarei Torah Orthodox Cong. of Syracuse</b> <i>Dewitt, NY</i>	<b>Viewmount</b> <i>Toronto, ON</i>	<b>Young Israel Of Montreal</b> <i>Montréal, QC</i>	<b>Young Israel Shomrei Emunah</b> <i>Silver Spring, MD</i>
<b>Kehillat New Hempstead</b> <i>Spring Valley, NY</i>	<b>Moriah Shul</b> <i>Ra'anana, Israel</i>	<b>Shaarey Yerushalayim</b> <i>Valley Village, CA</i>	<b>West Coast Torah Center</b> <i>Los Angeles, CA</i>	<b>Young Israel of Neve Aliza</b> <i>Karnei Shomron, Israel</i>	<b>YU High School for Girls</b> <i>Hollis, NY</i>
<b>Kehillat Ohel Ephraim</b> <i>Ariel, Israel</i>	<b>Moses Montefiore Anshe Emunah</b> <i>Baltimore, MD</i>	<b>Shaarey Zedek</b> <i>Valley Village, CA</i>	<b>Westville Synagogue</b> <i>New Haven, CT</i>	<b>Young Israel of New Hyde Park</b> <i>New Hyde Park, NY</i>	
<b>Kehillat Shaarei Torah Of Toronto</b> <i>Toronto, ON</i>	<b>Ner Tamid Cong.</b> <i>Baltimore, MD</i>	<b>Shalhevet High School</b> <i>Los Angeles, CA</i>	<b>Woodside Synagogue</b> <i>Silver Spring, MD</i>	<b>Young Israel of New</b>	
<b>Kehillat Shaarei Yonah Menachem</b> <i>Modiin, Israel</i>	<b>New Toco Shul</b> <i>Atlanta, GA</i>	<b>Shivtei Yisrael</b> <i>Ra'anana, Israel</i>	<b>Yagdil Torah</b> <i>Boca Raton, FL</i>		
<b>Kemp Mill Synagogue</b> <i>Silver Spring, MD</i>	<b>North Shore University Hospital</b> <i>Manhasset, NY</i>	<b>Shomrai Shabbos</b> <i>Toronto, ON</i>			
<b>Keneseth Israel Cong.</b> <i>St Louis Park, MN</i>					

