

With great joy it is my privilege to announce that the “The Torah To-Go®” series has been endowed by Rabbi Hyman and Ann Arbesfeld in loving tribute to Ann’s parents Benjamin and Rose Berger z”l. We gratefully recognize that their partnership makes possible the opportunity for Yeshiva to share Torah with tens of thousands of people both through the Abraham Arbesfeld Kollel Yom Rishon and Millie Arbesfeld Midreshet Yom Rishon and now through Torah To-Go. While a special tribute reflecting the lives of Benjamin and Rose Berger z”l and honoring the Arbesfeld family is being prepared for the Pesach issue of Torah To-Go, we are thankful for their support making this and future issues of Torah To-Go possible. May we continue to grow from strength to strength together!

The holiday of Purim and the Book of Esther have several unique features that make this book of *Tanakh* and this holiday distinct from all others:

1. The Book of Esther is the only book in *Tanakh* that does not have the name of God mentioned in it.
2. The Rambam writes in the Laws of Megillah and Chanukah (chap. 2: 18) the following:  
*All the Books of the Prophets and those of Ketuvim (Books and the Sacred Writings) will cease [to be part of the canonized text] during the messianic era except the Book of Esther. It will continue to exist just as the Five Books of the Torah and the laws of the Oral Torah that will never cease. Although ancient troubles will be remembered no longer, as it is written "The 'troubles of the past are forgotten and hidden from my eyes. (Isaiah 65:16), the days of Purim will not be abolished, as it is written: "These days of Purim shall never be repealed among the Jews, and the memory of them shall never cease from their descendants" (Esther 9:28).*
3. Many rabbinic masters translate *Yom ha-Kippurim*, the Hebrew name for the Day of Atonement, as a play on words. They suggest that the name means *Yom Ki-Purim* - The Day of Atonement should be like Purim (see the comments of the Vilan Gaon in *Likutei HaGra* (Warsaw) p. 308 and the writings of Rav Hutner in the *Pachad Yitzchak* (Purim, *inyan* 6:6, 8, 11, 21: 1). What is the connection between the Day of Atonement, the most solemn day of the year, and the day of Purim which is marked by joy, laughter, the exchange of food and drink, and the mandate to feast?

The Rambam gives special notice to the Book of Esther, recognizing that its role will continue even during Messianic times, for this book of the Bible is the key to bringing the Messiah. Nowhere in the Megillah do we see Mordechai or Esther receiving direct instructions from Hashem. Yet, their courage and tenacity is based on their commitment to the values of Torah; their actions are not predicated on inspirational prophecy but something more important: an inner conviction to the norms and mores of Judaism. What will bring the Messianic days and what will be celebrated in its eternal era? It is the capacity to transform reality through the inner voice of Torah ideals that the Jew must feel in his/her heart. The Book of Esther may not have God's name in it but the experience is so critical and so transformational that the Rambam suggests that it will be celebrated even after the coming of the Messiah. The spiritual connection between Purim and the Day of Atonement is not predicated on similar ritual practices but on the recognition that *Yom ha-Kippurim*, is a successful religious experience ONLY when the spiritual connection that the Jews in the Book of Esther were able to discover and act upon, a personal

and communal rendezvous with God, occurs on our High Holidays. The "at-onement" with God that happened in Shushan, the ability for the community to feel God's presence in their very beings is the same transformative experience that we wish for ourselves on the High Holidays.

It is with this spirit that we must engage in the reading of the Book of Esther, considered eternal for its precious message; as we each search for a purposeful life. As Mordechai tells each of us (Esther 4: 14), we dare not be silent in our lives for we have the wonderful opportunity to each shape our own destinies, that of the Jewish people, and the world community.

We at Yeshiva hope that the Torah found in this printed and virtual sefer will serve to enhance our Purim, inspiring us to integrate some of the holiday's messages into our daily lives.

Purim Sameiach,

**Rabbi Kenneth Brander**

*The David Mitzner Dean, Yeshiva University's Center for the Jewish Future*