

Purim Torah

Yeshiva University Torah MITZION Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

Parshat Tetzaveh/Zachor

9 Adar, 5775/February 28, 2015

Vol. 6 Num. 24

This issue of Purim Torah is not sponsored. What, you don't have \$180 to spare?

No Mere Coincidence

Rabbi Josh Guttenberg

Note: This article is real Torah, not Purim Torah. The same cannot be said for the rest of this issue...

Lotteries play an important role in several biblical stories. A lottery was used to determine which piece of land each tribe would receive in Israel. A similar process was used to establish that it was Achan who took spoils after defeating the city of Jericho. The lottery also features prominently in the Yom Kippur service in the *Beit haMikdash*: the *kohen gadol* drew lots to determine which goat would be sacrificed in the *Beit haMikdash* and which goat would be led to a cliff in the desert. The lottery is also significant in *Megillat Esther*. After receiving permission to annihilate and destroy the Jews, Haman drew lots to pick a day for the massacre. So significant was Haman's lottery, that the holiday of Purim is named after it (see Esther 9:24).

Although the process used by Haman was the same as that used in these other cases, the meaning behind them was quite different. Haman believed that drawing lots was a lucky way to pick a date that would be most successful for destroying the Jews. He wanted fate to decide the matter. However, the other lotteries were a way for the Jews to put the matter in G-d's hands. G-d determined where each tribe would receive their portion in Israel, informed the nation that Achan sinned and decided the fate of the Yom Kippur goats. The lottery was a means for G-d to communicate with us. As the Talmud (Yoma 39a) explains, the results of the lottery on Yom Kippur informed the Jews of their own behaviour. As long as the goat on the

right side was chosen for *Hashem* they knew that the nation was acting appropriately, but when the goat on the right side was chosen for *Azazel* they knew they had to improve their ways.

The different views held by Haman and the Jews regarding lotteries represent the eternal struggle between Amalek and the Jews, as expressed in the Torah. How did Amalek have the audacity to attack the Jews immediately following their defeat of the world's most powerful nation? Did they not hear about the ten plagues in Egypt, or the events surrounding the splitting of the Red Sea? Were they not afraid of experiencing the same fate?

Perhaps they were fully aware of everything that had occurred, but it left no impression on them. They believed everything was coincidence, and the Jews were fortunate to experience a series of good luck. Locusts happened to swarm upon the Egyptians' crops, a plague coincidentally killed the firstborns in Egypt and the winds were conveniently strong the day they stood at the edge of the Red Sea. But these events left no reason to fear the Jews or their G-d.

By attributing life's occurrences to mere coincidence, the Amalekites were ultimately denying G-d's existence. When they attacked the Jews it was also an attack on G-d. Amalek attacked both G-d and the Jews, and in response we both wage a war against them. This is highlighted by the different formulations the Torah uses to describe Amalek's destruction. The verse in *Ki Teitzei* (Devarim 25:19) states that the Jews have the responsibility to wipe out Amalek. But the verses in *Parshat*

Beshalach stress that G-d too is at war with them. G-d says "I will utterly destroy the remembrance of Amalek" (Shemot 17:14) and the Torah also says "G-d will have war with Amalek from generation to generation" (Shemot 17:16).

Their worldview is also hinted at in the Torah's formulation of Amalek's encounter with the Jews. The Torah states "*asher karcha bederech*" (Devarim 25:19), which means "how [Amalek] met you upon the way." The word "*karcha*" shares the same root as the word "*mikreh*", "coincidence" (See Rashi Devarim 25:18). Using this word to describe the encounter offers a deeper meaning for the struggle between the two nations.

Our goal in battling Amalek is to show and recognize G-d's role in this world. This is especially true regarding the Purim story. Despite G-d's apparent absence from the story, we recognize that it was G-d's guiding hand which led to our salvation. We look beyond the exterior to discover G-d's presence. Even though the sequence of events in *Megillat Esther* might seem like a coincidence, we attribute the events to G-d's presence behind the scenes.

jguttenberg@torontotorah.com

OUR BEIT MIDRASH

ROSH BEIT MIDRASH

RABBI BRIAN WILLIAMS

AVREICHIM RABBI DAVID ELY GRUNDLAND, RABBI JOSH GUTTENBERG, YISROEL MEIR ROSENZWEIG

COMMUNITY MAGGIDEI SHIUR RABBI ELAN MAZER, RABBI BARUCH WEINTRAUB

CHAVERIM DAR BARUCHIM, SHMUEL GIBLON, MEIR GRUNWALD, YOSEF HERZIG, BJ KOROBKIN, RYAN JENAH, JOEL JESIN, SHIMMY JESIN, AVI KANNER, YISHAI KURTZ, MITCHELL PERLMUTTER, JEREMY RIABOY, ARYEH ROSEN, DANIEL SAFRAN, KOBY SPIEGEL, EFRON STURMWIND, DAVID TOBIS



**YESHIVA UNIVERSITY
TORAH MITZION
BEIT MIDRASH**

**We are grateful to
Continental Press 905-660-0311**

Sefer HaPanim

Reb Mark Zuckerberg, co-authored by a couple of other people that no one pays any attention to anymore
First edition 2004

About the author

Reb Mark Zuckerberg, a native of White Plains, NY, is a hidden gem of Torah scholarship. Deeply immersed in Talmud, Rishonim, and Super Mario Cart for N64 from the tender age of 3 months, he refuses to accept *semichah* from anyone as he has already received *semichah* through an old Sears Catalog mail order form. Since the release of *Sefer HaPanim*, Reb Zuckerberg has been keeping busy with Talmud Yerushalmi, learning Mandarin, and knitting.

About Sefer HaPanim and why it is worth perusal

Sefer HaPanim is, at its foundation, the result of a night terror. Reb Zuckerberg awoke deep in the night, drenched in sweat. His heart pounding furiously, he wondered, 'How will I connect with my *chavrutot*, my *chaveirim*, my *rabbanim*... when we're apart?! There must be a way to overcome the isolation that 2AM brings upon me! 'Lo tov heyot ha'adam levado!'

The very next morning, Reb Zuckerberg set out to create a tool like no other in existence. Building upon Rabbi Al Gore's groundbreaking *HaInternet*, he found a way for people to connect with one another and, in doing so, express their unique identity in Torah through the digital realm ('*Kitvu lachem et hashira hazot*' proclaims Reb Zuckerberg!). Sefer HaPanim is the digital equivalent of those ubiquitous blank chiddushei Torah notebooks sitting on the shelves of seforim stores, except with the option of acquiring friends at the click of a button. Living in accordance with *Pirkei Avot* has never been so easy! And then there are the pictures! Now, instead of describing abstract cases of milk and meat admixtures, Reb Zuckerberg and others can post a picture of the dinner that they just treifed up for all of their *chaverim* to discuss in learning. The possibilities of increasing the splendour of the Torah are endless with Sefer HaPanim!

Influence of the Book

Sefer HaPanim has introduced a sea-change amongst the Jewish community and beyond. The ability to meet, communicate, and exchange information is formidable. The 'People

You May Know' feature has resulted in a record number of shidduchim. Plus, Sefer HaPanim is free, which only adds to its charms.

Caveats

Reb Zuckerberg, being the iconoclast that he is, most certainly pushed the envelope very far with Sefer HaPanim. Some *gedolim* have gone so far as to ban it outright, noting that it is an infraction of just about every prohibition in the Torah. Others acknowledge its positives, but are quick to criticize the addictive character of Sefer HaPanim. Reb Zuckerberg, in a rare interview, was quoted as having said that even he has forgotten to daven *maariv* on occasion as a result of becoming so engrossed in the secrets of *Sefer HaPanim*. Granted, there is some question as to the veracity of the quote given that he himself wrote the work, as well as the fact that he clearly believes that the Talmudic dictum, *tefilat aravit reshut*, means that he can choose whether or not to pray. Nevertheless, the song remains the same.

yrosenzweig@torontotorah.com

613 Mitzvot: #616: Assisted Suicide

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Vayikra 19:16 warns, "You shall not stand by as the blood of your friend is shed." From this verse, the Supreme Court of Canada *shli"t* derives the Torah's 616th mitzvah: To assist your friend in dying. This active commandment is an *aseh haba michlal lav*, a command derived from a prohibition: You must not stand by, but rather, you must act.

Writing in *Carter v. Canada* (Attorney General), 2015 SCC 5, the Supreme Court explained further that prohibitions against helping others to die are misguided, as they cause early death. They wrote, "[T]he prohibition deprives some individuals of life, as it has the effect of forcing some individuals to take their own lives prematurely, for fear that they would be incapable of doing so when they reached the point where suffering was intolerable." Therefore, the Court concluded, it is better to pledge to assist someone to end his life, so that he will live long enough for you to end it, and not kill himself earlier. [Note: This was not a Purim paragraph; this is part of their actual decision. You can look it up.]

The decision did not come without controversy. Rabbi Moshe L'chaim *shli"t* argued that the talmudic principle, "We do not sin in order to provide merit for another (Shabbat 4a)" should apply, since the killer here sins (murder) in order to prevent his victim from sinning (suicide). However, an *amicus* brief filed by the KFMI (Kosher Frozen Meals Industry) contended that assisting others in dying is a time-honoured religious practice, and it should be protected regardless of talmudic logic.

Scholars disagree regarding whether it is appropriate to recite a blessing when assisting at the time of death. *Igeret*

She'ol suggests that *m'chayeh hameitim* ("He who gives life to the dead") should be recited, since the assister has lengthened the life of his victim by killing him. In response, *Bila haMavet* argues that no blessing should be recited; the mitzvah of extending the victim's life has concluded, and therefore the blessing would not be recited *over la'asiyato* (preceding the mitzvah), as is required.

There is also considerable disagreement regarding the appropriate punishment for a physician who refuses to assist in ending a life. The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada favours lashes, but *Gesher haMavet* disagrees, because failure to assist is a *lav she'ein bo maaseh* (a prohibition violated via inaction), and therefore there is no corporal punishment.

Another question arises regarding the proper means of assisting. Per *Maavir Yabok*, it would be best to minimize one's assistance by using a *shinui* (an abnormal action), as well as *grama* (an action which does not directly cause the result). An example would be to place an obstruction in a breathing tube, then use the back of one's thumb to push a button which would cause carbon dioxide to vent into the tube (*shinui*), and then to remove the obstruction from the breathing tube (*grama*). However, Artscroll's *Laws of Assisting Death* contends that use of *grama* could invalidate the mitzvah. The Artscroll guide prefers direct administration of a poison pill, but it acknowledges some debate regarding the blessing the patient should recite upon the pill.

torczyner@torontotorah.com

Biography
Rabbi Yosef Dov
Soloveitchik zt"v
Reb Shlomo Carlebach zt"v

Yosele Ber, "The Rav"! *Gevalt!* Friends, let me tell you the saddest thing in the world! Some people say that the Rav was all head, but no heart. If you had a question on Rambam, the Rav was your guy, but if you had a question about your *neshamah*? So sad. I once overheard in a yeshiva in Israel that the Rav was to the Lithuanians what the Rebbe was to the Chassidim - and friends, nothing could be further from the truth. There was no bigger Rebbe than the Rav.

You see, everyone knows that the Holy Reb Eliyahu, the Gaon of Vilna, was against the Chassidim. Whether or not that is true is not the issue. But, even though he was against the Rebbes, the Holy Gaon was *mamash* the biggest Rebbe of them all. He was the Rebbe for all the *yidden* who couldn't connect to a Rebbe.

So, one time the Gaon was sitting and learning in the *Beis Medresh* and when he learned he was surrounded by fire - it was unbelievable! No one could penetrate because the learning was so deep! One time he was learning and a group of Cossacks bursts in. Everyone goes running to get away and when everyone is away they realize that the Gaon was sitting and learning and never ran. Then they heard screaming and all the Cossacks start running away also. So, the Yidden go back to the Gaon who is still there - learning like nothing happened. When they asked him he said, "Oh, they must have seen my *tefillin!*" *Gevalt*, have you ever heard something so Chassidish?

So, *nebuch*, there was one kid who heard this and next time he saw some Cossacks, he thought about his Rebbe, the Gaon. The poor kid puts on his *tefillin* and stands up to the Cossacks. Friends, *nebuch*, they beat him up to the edge of his life. When he asked the Gaon what happened, the Gaon said "it is the inside *tefillin* that really matter!"

So, you see what it is, the Rav was a Rebbe - it was all just inside!

dgrundland@torontotorah.com

Torah and Chassidish Translation
"And it was in the days of Achashverosh"
Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik zt"v
Translated by Reb Shlomo Carlebach zt"v

Megillat Esther commences with the phrase, *Vayehi Bimei Achashveirosh*, It was in the days of Ahasuerus. *Prima facie*, the phrase "*vayehi bimei...*" seeks to fix the time of an event and to answer the question of when that event transpired. However, the phrase "*vayehi bimei Achashveirosh*" is of explanatory significance as well. It determines the etiology of the event and responds to the inquiry of, "Why did that event occur?" Thus, the phrase "*vayehi bimei Achashveirosh*" not only answers the question of when the event occurred, on which date and at which time, but also contains an explanation of the background, of the causes, which brought about the that certain event, and of the entire etiology of that occurrence, and explains why those events occurred.

The Megillah tells us in a most lively and realistic fashion, in the finest and most beautiful prose, about paradoxical irrational events, which are both tragic and comical. It relates a story about a King who killed his beloved, beautiful queen, at the suggestion and upon the advice of his friend, Haman, and who later executed Haman upon the request and complaint of his beautiful Queen Esther. It is both a funny book and a sad book. About a King who, per se, was not very wicked nor cruel, who signed a decree to exterminate an entire people about whom he knew nothing and who later denied knowledge of the entire incident after Esther complained to him. The story tells us about a Commonwealth, an empire of many nations, of many races, who spoke a variety of languages, practiced many cults, observed an enormous amount of rituals, and which suddenly decided to exterminate an entire race of people solely because that race abided by regulations, statues and laws which differed from those of the other people.

"*Vayehi Bimei Achashveirosh*"
Everybody knows that the whole Megillah is all about the fixing of time. *Vayehi Bimei* - it happened in those days. What happened in those days? *Achashveirosh*. You see what it is; Purim isn't just a story that happened. If it was just a story, thank you very much, I'll read Shakespeare. Purim is all about the time that it happened - "*Vayehi Bimei Achashverosh!*"

So what was *Achashverosh* all about? What were those days? Friends, sometimes something happens to us and it is so unclear until afterwards why it had to happen. Seventy years ago we lost the six million and *gevalt*, it still isn't clear why it had to happen. Two thousand years ago, we lost the Holy *Beis Hamikdash*, and it still isn't clear why it had to happen. But at Purim "*Vayehi Bimei Achashverosh*" - it was the time of *Achashverosh*. Everyone knew what was happening and the timing of every event was so clear. The "why" was so clear! So, you see, most of the time, time goes on and we go with it, but at Purim, it was so clear that the time was going with us.

Now, open your hearts because this is the deepest depths that there is. *Achashverosh* wasn't such a bad guy - but he had no mind of his own, and so he was the worst guy in the whole world. As long as you had half an argument, you could convince him to do anything: His friend told him to kill his wife and he did. His friend told him to kill a whole nation and he said "Okay". His new wife told him to kill his friend and all his friend's friends, and he said "as long as you are the one doing it, that's okay by me".

Now all this is pretty bad, and that's about a guy who isn't so bad. But the worst part is that he never took any responsibility. Esther says "You did it" and *Achashverosh* says "Who me? I never hurt a soul." At Purim we read "*Vayehi Bimei Achashverosh*" and it becomes so clear that we *Yidden* are different and we have to take responsibility! So, at Purim, we're so happy, because we have a mind that everything is happening for a reason.

Bibi and Barack's Rap Battle

12 Adar is Tuesday

On January 21, 2015 (after notifying the White House), Speaker of the United States Senate John Boehner invited Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to speak before Congress on 12 Adar (March 4), 2015. The White House, via the New York Times, protested that this was a breach of protocol, as President Obama had not extended his royal sceptre, but PM Netanyahu announced that he would accept the invitation. This left President Obama with no way to save face, other than to challenge PM Netanyahu to the 21st century version of a duel: A rap battle on the floor of Congress.

Most of the lyrics are lost to history; a mysterious virus has deleted all copies from computers around the globe. However, we have been able to reconstruct some of the face-off based on Brian Williams' first-hand account.

President Obama started strong, attacking PM Netanyahu for his personal and domestic problems:

What's with your wife Sara, getting in trouble? Always in the papers, or on trial!
 Or that hideous combover and the way that you dress – man, you need to work on style.
 And now you're facing those charges of corruption – you seem like Ehud Olmert Part Two!
 Maybe the NSA ought to leak to the DA all that we've overheard about you.

President Obama sat down with a grin, but PM Netanyahu hit hard in return:

I get it, Barack, you're upset that I came, 'cause I *shterred* your *shidduch* with Iran,
 But I've got to make my own pitch for the *emes*; I'm sorry that you're not a fan.
 Biden said healthcare was a really big deal, but we've had *Kupat Cholim* forever;
 Your sovereign debt was downgraded by S&P? Can't say you're looking too clever.
 You claim that you got America to go back to work, but the evidence seems pretty scant.
 That slogan you rode in on said, "Yes we can," but on so much the answer's been "Can't"!

The President tried to shift to international issues:

They say you came here to talk politics, and on that I would love to debate,
 If I only knew just where you stood today – I can't keep track, is it one or two states?
 You say Iran's a big deal to you, well, let me just make myself clear –
 They won't have to nuke you, 'cause I'll do it first. Take that! Shalom, chaver.

But PM Netanyahu parried:

You haven't earned my respect, Barack the *Mashiach*, a lame duck sitting on his throne;
 Anyone know why they gave you a Nobel Prize? Maybe for *retzichah* with drones?
 You held a seminar on "extremist" attacks, insisting they are not about religion!
 Yes, I should admit one miracle you've achieved: You've made me long for a Clinton.

The jury is out on who won that battle; we only hope that Esther's Divine favour will win in this modern struggle with Persia.

flash@torontotorah.com

Weekly Highlights: Feb. 28 – Mar. 6 / 9 Adar – 15 Adar

| Time | Speaker | Topic | Location | Special Notes |
|--|--|---|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| שבת Feb. 27-28 | | | | |
| After Hashkamah | Yisroel Meir Rosenzweig | Meshech Chochmah | Clanton Park | |
| Before minchah | R' Mordechai Torczyner | Daf Yomi | BAYT | <i>Rabbi's Classroom</i> |
| 7:15 PM | R' Mordechai Torczyner | Gemara Avodah Zarah: Drawing the Stars | BAYT | <i>West Wing Library</i> |
| Sun. Mar 1 | | | | |
| 8:45 AM | R' Josh Gutenberg | Contemporary Halachah: The Mossad and the Megillah | BAYT | <i>Third floor</i> |
| 9:15 AM | R' Shalom Krell | Kuzari | Zichron Yisroel | with light breakfast |
| 9:30 AM | Dr. Albert Kirshen R' Mordechai Torczyner R' Ronald Weiss | End of Life Care: A Panel Discussion | BAYT | |
| 8:30 PM | R' David Ely Grundland | Gemara: Mind, Body, Soul | Shaarei Shomayim | <i>Beit Midrash</i> |
| Tues. Mar. 3 | | | | |
| 1:30 PM | R' Mordechai Torczyner | Book of Job: End of Round 1 | Shaarei Shomayim | |
| Wed. Mar. 4 <i>Fast of Esther</i> | | | | |
| 10:00 AM | R' Mordechai Torczyner | Sociology and the Synagogue | Beth Emeth | Week 2: Creating Trust |
| Fri. Mar. 6 <i>Shushan Purim</i> | | | | |
| 10:30 AM | R' Mordechai Torczyner | Advanced Shemitah | Yeshivat Or Chaim | Topic: Greenhouses |