



## MOSHE RABBEINU AND PURIM: ALWAYS YEARNING FOR MORE

**T**he Megillah recounts that Haman conducted a lottery to determine the month he would carry out his genocide of the Jewish people. Of course, the lottery fell on Adar and Haman was exceedingly happy. The Gemara (*Megillah* 13b) explains that Haman was elated because Adar was the month of Moshe Rabbeinu's passing. Moshe's passing indicated an ominous time for the Jewish people, which made Haman confident that his plot would be successful. We know, however, that Haman was uninformed, because he did not know that Adar was also the month that Moshe Rabbeinu was born, making that month, in fact, an opportune time for the Jewish people. This Gemara establishes a connection between Moshe Rabbeinu and the Purim story.

The Gemara (*Chullin* 139b) asks where in the Torah is there an allusion to Moshe. Now obviously, Moshe is all over the Torah. The Gemara is really



asking about an allusion to Moshe *before* his birth. After citing a verse in Parshas Bereishis (6:3), the Gemara goes on to ask where allusions to Haman, Esther and Mordechai are found in the Torah. The Maharsha (*Chullin* 139) says it must be that Moshe Rabbeinu is connected to the Purim Story. The question is, how and in what way?

R' Aharon Kotler (*Mishnas Rebbe Aharon*, Vol. 1, pg. 103-4) says we first need to look at one of the other

characters in the Purim story — Haman — and the *drasha* the Gemara utilizes to show the allusion to him in the Torah. The Gemara wonders where Haman is alluded to in the Torah and concludes that he is found in the context of Adam HaRishon and the sin of the Tree of Knowledge, where the Torah (*Bereishis*, 3:11) says, “*hamin ha'eitz asher tzivisicha lvilti achol mimenu achalta*” (did you eat from this tree about which I commanded you not to eat?). R' Aharon explains that Adam could do anything he wanted and could eat anything he wanted — except fruit of the *eitz hada'as*. Similarly, it says in the *Megillah* (5:9) “*Vayeitzei Haman bayom ha'hu samaech v'tov lev*” (Haman went out that day happy and satisfied). Chazal say that because Haman was getting a promotion, it was the first time he experienced real happiness. The king was elevating his status, yet this didn't satisfy him. Haman wanted more *kavod*. We know

Haman famously remarks (5:13), “*v’chol ze einenu shoveh li.*” All Haman had accomplished, all he had acquired, was of no value to him. Although everyone bowed to him, Mordechai did not, and this greatly distressed Haman. Nothing he had was of value, as long as Mordechai was there and would not bow. Adam and Haman had something in common: neither was fully satisfied with his lot.

If we take a step back, however, the Gemara could have made another, more intuitive *drasha*. The Gemara could have made a *drasha* based on *ha-man*, as in the manna. After all, phonetically, it’s more similar to Haman than “*hamin ha’etz.*” But in truth, this could not have been the *drasha*, because the manna represented everything that was the opposite of Haman. The manna represented having enough, being satisfied, and recognizing that everything comes from Hashem.

Chazal (*Taanis* 9a) teach us that there were three sustainers, or *parnasim*, for the Jews while we traveled through the desert. (1) The Jewish people were protected by the Clouds of Glory in the merit of Aharon. (2) The miraculous well that followed the Jews and provided them with fresh water was in the merit of Miriam. (3) And, for forty years, the heavenly manna fell in the merit of Moshe Rabbeinu. The manna represents having enough. The Torah (Shemos 16) even tells us how Hashem said he will “rain down the manna from the heavens and everyone will take what they need for the day...” They were told to “collect it according to one’s eating capacity...” The Torah tells us that the people did just that; some took a lot while others took less. Yet, those who gathered excessive portions of manna did not have leftovers, and those who gathered only

a little did not lack. Whatever amount of manna was gathered provided the perfect amount for each family.

While Moshe represented the notion of *histapkus*, being satisfied with what he had, this attribute pertained only to material matters. When it came to spiritual endeavors, Moshe was never satisfied. He always wanted more; whether it was to go into Eretz Yisrael to perform the mitzvos dependent upon the Land of Israel or setting up cities of refuge (*arei miklat*) on the east side of the Jordan River, even though they wouldn’t take effect until the cities of refuge in Eretz Yisrael were established. He always wanted more — but in spiritual matters. This is why the Gemara (*Makkos* 10a) says that “One who loves money is never satisfied” (Koheles 5:9) refers to Moshe Rabbeinu and his spiritual pursuits.

Perhaps this is the ultimate connection between Moshe Rabbeinu and Purim, since Purim is the day Klal Yisrael reaccepted the Torah. Many are familiar with the oft-cited, yet troubling Gemara regarding Kabbalas HaTorah. The Gemara (*Shabbos* 88a) cites the pasuk, “they stood at the bottom (*tachtit*) of the mountain” (Shemos 19:17). Rav Avdimi bar Chama explains that we learn from here that Hashem held the mountain over the Jewish people like a barrel. He said: If you accept the Torah, good, but if not, you will be buried there. Rav Acha bar Yaakov argues that if the Jewish people were under such duress, they have a legitimate defense against the enforceability of the Torah. Rashi explains that upon reaching the heavenly court, we could use the excuse that we were coerced into accepting the Torah altogether! However, Rava explains that this is no longer a concern because the Jewish people reaccepted the Torah in the

days of Achashveirosh, as it says “*kiymu vikiblu,*” *kiymu ma sh’kiblu kvar,*” they recommitted themselves to what they had accepted many years ago.

The question is, when, where, and how did we reaccept the Torah? How did Chazal learn that we accepted the entire Torah from the Purim story? The Maharal (*Gur Aryeh*, Yisro, 19:22) explains, based on the Gemara (*Shavuos* 39a, *Megillah* 14a), that by accepting the mitzvah of *mikra megillah*, the Jews reaffirmed their commitment to the rest of the Torah. We wouldn’t have “added” another mitzvah if we had not accepted all the others.

Today, we don’t simply celebrate miracles from yesteryear; we reexperience them. This is reflected in one of the berachos we say on the reading of the Megillah: ... *she’asa nisim lavoseinu bayamim haheim ba’zman ha’zeh.* Purim is when the Jews wanted more spirituality and reaccepted the Torah. Purim is the time for us to do the same, to accept the Torah anew.

How can each of us emulate the Jews of the Megillah and accept the Torah anew? While we cannot create new mitzvos or conjure up new rabbinic decrees, each of us can identify a specific mitzvah we can observe more carefully, with added meaning or excitement. We can learn the halachos on how to perform that mitzvah in the best way possible, and then practice what we learn. In that way, we, in essence, are showing a renewed commitment to the Torah and accepting the Torah anew, as did our ancestors in the days of Achashveirosh. Purim is our opportunity to affirm our legacy of Torah and spiritual renewal, leading to our ultimate redemption.