Eilecha Purim Digest

Four Essays to Help You Access the Inner Dimension of Purim

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The Amalek Within

The Gemara teaches, "*Hakorei Megillah l'mafreia lo yatza*", "*One who reads the Megillah backwards has not fulfilled his obligation.*"[1] R' Boruch'l of Mezhibozh taught that this line hints at an important message. A Jew must study the Purim story with the realization that it is not merely an ancient drama that happened thousands of years ago, but one which takes place inside each and every one of us, at all times. "He who reads the Megillah ***L'mafreia***", approaching the Purim story as if it is something that took place long ago and contains no relevance for today's generation, "*lo yatza*"; he has unfortunately missed the point.

In the same vein, the Kedushas Levi writes: "It is not just that the Jewish nation is commanded to battle Amalek, the descendant of Eisav, but that each member of the Jewish people must eradicate the portion of evil which is called by the name "Amalek" that is buried inside his heart."[2]

What is the internalized spirit of Amalek? How does this force manifest inside our hearts and affect our avodas Hashem? To answer, we must analyze the verses which deal with the battle against Amalek which took place before Matan Torah.

The Torah tells us that immediately before Amalek attacked, klal Yisrael began to question the very fundamentals of *yiddishkeit*, asking "*Hayeish Hashem b'kirbeinu im ayin*?";

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[1] *Megillah* 17b.
[2] *Kedushas Levi, D'rush l'Parshas Zachor*.

"*Is Hashem in our midst or not*?"[3] The moment this doubt crept into the hearts of the Jewish nation, Amalek pounced. The tzaddikim teach that this is the entire power of Amalek, their ultimate weapon: *doubt*. As is known, the word "*Amalek*" is numerically equivalent to the word "*Safek*", "Doubt" (240), the voice of sarcasm that asks, "is it really true?" We are commanded to remember what Amalek did to us on the way, "*Asher karcha baderech*".[4] The root of the word "*KaRcha*" is "*KaR*", cold. Amalek seeks to cool us off from our spiritual high; to pour icy water on our flaming souls.

It is well known that the story of Purim is bound up with Adam and Chava's sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge. The Gemara states that the source for HaMaN in the Torah is the verse "*HaMiN Haetz*", Hashem's asking Adam, "Did you eat from the tree?"[5]

What is the connection between Haman-Amalek and the sin of the *Eitz HaDaas*?

As we have learned, Amalek's weapon is his ability to cause us to doubt the existence of One G-d; to doubt the existence of a spiritual realm behind the physical appearance of reality. Why did Adam want to eat from the Tree? Because the snake convinced him that G-d had eaten from the tree, and if Adam would eat from it, he would become like Hashem. The whole motive behind Adam's eating from the Tree stemmed from a breach in the belief that G-d's unlimited powers are inherent, and that He did not need to be given anything He has

[3] *Shemos* 17:7.
[4] *Devarim* 25:18. See *The Story of Our Lives*, Chapter One.
[5] *Chullin* 139b.

by some other source. The sin of the *Eitz HaDaas* had "*Amalek*" written all over it.

When questioned by Hashem regarding her sin, Chava responded "*Hanachash HishiYani*", "The snake tricked me."[6] Fascinatingly, the *seforim hakedoshim* note that the word "***Hishiyani***" (הִשִּׁיאַנִי) is made up of the letters of both the words "***Hayeish***" and "***Ayin*** (**אַיִן** / **הַיֵּשׁ**), the terms used to express klal Yisrael's doubt immediately prior to the attack of Amalek - "***Hayeish*** *Hashem b'kirbeinu im* ***ayin***?"

But it goes even deeper. We know that there are two verses in the Torah. One verse is the famous "*Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu* ***Hashem Echad***", "Hear O Israel, Hashem our God Hashem is One."[7] The other verse states "*Lo Sishtachaveh l'****el Acher***", "You may not prostrate yourselves to another god."[8] In a Torah scroll, the last letters of these two phrases, the *Dalet* of "*Echa****D***" and the *Reish* of "*Ache****R***" are enlarged. The reason for this is that it is very easy to confuse the letters *Dalet* and *Reish* as they look very much alike and, in this context, confusing them could be blasphemous.

What is the difference between the letter *Dalet* and the letter *Reish*? The difference is that the letter *Dalet* has a little extra sticking out of the back called a "*Kotz*", a "*thorn*"[9].

Amalek's goal is to blur that thorn, to cause us to confuse between the letters *Dalet* and *Reish*, "*Hashem Echa****D***" and "*el*

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[6] *Bereishis* 3:13.

[7] *Devarim* 6:4.

[8] *Shemos* 34:14.

[9] See *Likutei Moharan* 10. In addition to that "*kotz*", that little thorn representing the *physical* difference between these two letters, it is also the *numerical* difference, as *Dalet* equals **4**, *Reish* equals **200**, the difference between **4** and **200** being **196**, the exact numerical value of the word "*kotz*".

*ache**R***". He causes us to get caught up in the views of a world which is so materialist, so far in its values and interests from the belief in anything deep, anything spiritual.[10] We live in the world predicted two hundred and fifty years ago by Rebbe Nachman of Breslov when he stated "In the coming generations great torrents of atheism will flood the world."[11] This is the force of Amalek at work.[12]

When Adam eats from the tree, he is cursed with having to work the ground to produce food: "*V'kotz v'dardar tatzmiach lach*"; "*Thorns and thistles will sprout for you.*"[13] But based on what we have learned, the tzaddikim teach that there is a deeper meaning as well. "***V'Kotz***"! Says Hashem. "You have allowed Amalek, doubt, to blur the little thorn which distinguishes between the belief in Hashem and ignorance of His Presence. Thus, "***V'dardar tatzmiach lach***" (וְקוֹץ **וְדַרְדַּר** תַּצְמִיחַ לָךְ), now you will have to battle this doubt - "**D**a**RD**a**R**"; *Dalet, Reish, Dalet, Reish*", "*Hashem Echa**d***" or "*el ache**r***" - until the end of time."[14]

When the Torah discusses the obligation to remember this attack, it states "Hashem will have a war with Amalek for all generations." Fascinatingly enough, the way the Torah refers to G-d's battle against Amalek in all generations is "*Milchamah*

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[10] See *Bereishis Rabbah* 53:5.

[11] *Sichos Haran* 39.

[12] Indeed, the word "Haman" in its expanded form with each of the letters spelled out (הה ממ נן) equals **196** – "*kotz*", the thorn which differentiates between the *Dalet* and *Reish*; Amalek's source. In addition, the Midrash teaches that Haman was hanged on a *thornbush*. (*Esther Rabbah*, 9)

[13] *Bereishis* 3:18.

[14] *Ben Ish Chai, B'nei Yissaschar, Megaleh Amukos.*

l'Hashem b'Amalek m'dor dor", [15]**"מִדֹּר דֹּר"** מִלְחָמָה לַה' בַּעֲמָלֵק". Here, once more, we find the letters *Dalet*, *Reish*, *Dalet*, *Reish*, a reference to Amalek's goal of blurring the difference between the *Dalet* and *Reish*, introducing *safek*, the thick cloud of suffocating doubt, within our hearts and souls.

What's the antidote? How can we fight off the Amalek within?

There is only one way: *Emunah*.

When Amalek attacks Klal Yisrael, Moshe Rabbeinu battles with his hands; when he holds them up, the Jewish nation prevailed. How did this work? The Mishna tells us that when Moshe lifted his hands in the air, it was the signal for the Jews to look heavenward; to realize that without G-d they had nothing, and that it was *Hashem*, and not their own efforts, Who was helping them win the war.[16] Thus the verse states "*Vayehi Yadav* ***emunah***"; Moshe's hands exuded the *emunah* necessary to battle Amalek.[17]

When the lots Haman drew for the time to carry out his plan to eradicate the Jews fell out in the month of Adar, he was excited because this was the month in which Moshe had died.[18] According to what we have learned, the reason for Haman's joy is now clear. As we have seen, Moshe represents *Emunah*, the only way to battle Amalek. Haman reasoned that the month in which this great teacher of the staunch belief in One G-d had died would surely be an auspicious time for Amalek to attack and inflict its poisonous message of doubt upon the Jews.

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[15] *Shemos* 17:16.
[16] *Rosh HaShana* 3:8.
[17] *Shemos* 17:12.
[18] *Megillah* 13b.

But here's what Haman didn't know. The Gemara says that although Moshe indeed passed away on 7 Adar, it was also the day on which he had been born. The Chasam Sofer teaches that Moshe's being born on the 7th of Adar refers not to his birth into this world, but rather to his *rebirth*, after his death, into each and every Jew of all future generations. Each of us would now contain a piece of Moshe, a portion of unwavering *emunah*, within. What Haman didn't realize is that in Adar we have *the greatest* capacity to battle Amalek, not the least. And indeed, the rest is history. The Megillah writes, "*Layehudim haysa* ***ohrah*** *v'simcha*", "*For the Jews there was light and joy*"[19], using the same wording as the Midrash which relates that after Moshe's birth, "*Nismaleh habayis kulo* ***ohrah***", "*The house filled with light*". The only way we can battle Haman-Amalek is by tapping into the rebirth of Moshe within our individual souls.[20]

Emunah begins where *daas*, knowledge sent by my senses to my brain, ends. *Emunah* is the belief in what lies beyond the physical world; to the underlying spiritual reality and the divine life-force which powers all of Creation every split second. *Emunah* goes *beyond* what my hands can feel, *beyond* what my eyes can see, *beyond* what my nose can smell, and *beyond* what my mind can grasp. Belief in Hashem stems from a place higher than the limited reach of the human mind. This is why on Purim, the day we engage in decimating the Amalek within, we drink

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[19] *Esther* 8:16.

[20] Perhaps this is why the moth in which Moshe both died and was reborn is called the month of אדר; on the one hand it has the power of Moshe's death represented by דר; Amalek's ability to blur the thorn between the *Dalet* and *Reish*, but also has the power of Moshe's rebirth represented by the א of "*Hashem Echad*", perfect *emunah*.

"***Ad d'lo yada***", to get to a place which is beyond our mind's grasp, to reach true *emunah* with which to battle the doubt, the "***D**a**RD**a**R***" of Amalek.

"*Shoshanas Yaakov*"! On Purim let us tap into the Rose of *Emunah*, the "*Shoshana bein hachochim*", the "*Rose among Thorns*"[21]; thorns of doubt; thorns of the spirit of Amalek inside our souls. Then, and only then, will we merit "*Tzahala v'sameicha*", true joy; as the *sefarim* say "*Ein simcha k'hataras hasfeikos*"; "*There is no joy as the joy of clarifying a doubt*." With absolute and unwavering faith, let us cry out, "*Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu, Hashem **ECHAD**!*"

[21] *Shir HaShirim* 2:2.

מהות חדש אדר

מבוסס על ספר 'בני יששכר': מאמרי חדש אדר, מאמר א'

בחינת החדש	הרחבה / מקורות	Further Explanation
א. צירוף שם הוי"ה לחדש: ה-ה-י-ו	סופי תיבות: עִוְרָה וְלַשְׁרָקָה בְּנֵי אָתְנוֹ (בראשית מט:יא) The Name begins with double ה, and ends with the letters (י-ו) that, in the *typical* spelling of Hashem's Name (י-ה-ו-ה), *precede* each ה. This **reversal** is a reminder of Hashem reversing the decree on Purim.	Unique formulation of Hashem's Name for this month; picture it in our minds when saying '*A-do-nai*' during the month, especially during *Mussaf* on Rosh Chodesh. *Pasuk* derives from Yaakov's *bracha* to Yehuda, promising an abundance of **wine**.
ב. אות: ק	ניסן: ה :5 אדר: ק :100 אֲשֶׁת חַיִל / אֲשֶׁת זנונים מַלְכוּתָא קַדִּישָׁא / מַלְכוּתָא דְּסִטְרָא אַחֲרָא כל **המוסיף** גורע (סנהדרין כט.) 100-5 = **95** אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה גִּדַּל **הַמֶּלֶךְ** אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ אֶת **הָמָן** (אסתר ג:א) **הַמֶּלֶךְ** = 95 / **הָמָן** = 95 Achashveirosh tried to **imitate** Hashem's kingship by promoting Haman – a perverted leader. **כִּסֵּא דָוִד** = 95 / כִּי־יָד עַל **כֵּס** יָ־הּ = 95 מִלְחָמָה לַה' בַּעֲמָלֵק	Zohar on Parshas Terumah: Letter ה relates to the אִשַּׁת חַיִל; letter ק relates to the אִשַּׁת זנונים (harlot). Both women profess love for their husband/lover, but the difference is akin to what separates a **קוף** / **monkey** and a human; the monkey can ***imitate*** a person, but it doesn't have the full range of human abilities. The monkey is a falsified version of a human; the harlot is fake love. ה & ק even *look* similar. In reality, they are very different, with ק merely 'imitating' ה. Achashveirosh (ק), through his reign as king and his edicts, tries to **add on to** and **mimic** Hashem's **authentic** *Malchus* (ה). We fight Amalek's 95 (כֵּס יָ-ה) with our own 95 - כִּסֵּא דָוִד. Nissan is a time for Hashem's kingship overtake the dreadful power of Amalek, בע"ה.
ג. חוש: **שחוק** 	לַיְּהוּדִים הָיְתָה אוֹרָה וְשִׂמְחָה וְשָׂשׂוֹן וִיקָר: (אסתר ח:טז) עֹז וְהָדָר לְבוּשָׁהּ וַתְּשַׂחַק לְיוֹם אַחֲרוֹן: (משלי לא:כה)	**Laughter** expresses unbounded joy. Darkness that turns into light provides this level of joy. A joke is when we *think* one thing will happen, but then **unexpectedly** *something else* occurs. When גאולה arrives, we'll look back, smile, and lovingly laugh at Hashem's grand plan.
ד. חלק גוף: **טחול** 	טְחוֹל שׂוֹחֵק (גמ' ברכות דף סא:) וְהַחֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר נֶהְפַּךְ לָהֶם מִיָּגוֹן לְשִׂמְחָה וּמֵאֵבֶל לְיוֹם טוֹב... (אסתר ט:כב)	**Spleen:** "The spleen **laughs**" – This line seems paradoxical, because the spleen (bile) is linked with "black humor" (*Shaarei Kedusha* 1:1:9), i.e., despair. In Adar, however, we can laugh off negativity and are also positioned to experience **transformations and reversals**; וְנֶהְפַּךְ הוּא.
ה. מזל: **דג** 	הַמַּלְאָךְ הַגֹּאֵל אֹתִי מִכָּל־רָע יְבָרֵךְ אֶת־הַנְּעָרִים וְיִקָּרֵא בָהֶם שְׁמִי...וְיִדְגּוּ לָרֹב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ: (בראשית מח:טז) הִנֵּה לֹא יָנוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל: (תהילים קכא:ד) כִּי הוּא חַיֶּיךָ וְאֹרֶךְ יָמֶיךָ... (דברים ל:כ)	**Fish**, under the sea, symbolize "**concealed** reality." Our true mazal is concealed, yet the Purim miracle subtly reveals that the final redemption, though now hidden, will come. Zohar: Fish have no eyelids; **Hashem never stops overseeing**, never closes His 'eyes' to us. Brachos 61b: R' Akiva says *nishmos Yisrael* are like fish that swim in the waters of the Torah; dependent on it and unable to live without it.
ו. שבט: **נפתלי** 	אמר רבא מיחייב איניש **לבסומי** בפוריא עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי (גמ' מגילה דף ז:) נַפְתָּלִי אַיָּלָה שְׁלֻחָה הַנֹּתֵן אִמְרֵי־שָׁפֶר: (בראשית מט:כא) נְפְתָּלִי שְׂבַע רָצוֹן וּמָלֵא בִּרְכַּת ה' יָם וְדָרוֹם יְרָשָׁה: (דברים לג:כג)	The name **Naftali** can be split into two words: נפת לי – "**sweetness** is to me". Drinking wine on Purim is meant to bring us such **joy and certainty** in *hashgachas* Hashem that we become **sweet-smelling, לבסומי, בוסם**. Naftali's "eloquent words" give rise to joy, sweetness, and satisfaction to all who hear.

Infinite Light, Eternal Love: The Inner Dimension of Purim

Believe it or not, it's that time of year again! Winter seems to be slowly losing its icy grip on the world as the days grow longer and the warmth of spring begins to cautiously emerge. Even the most stubborn snowdrifts are melting, soon to be forgotten by gleeful children whose parents have given up nagging them to put on a coat before heading out to play. The gravity of their Rosh HaShana a thing of the past, hopeful trees have begun to blossom, joyously bearing their bountiful new year's blessing to a thawing world. Channeling the deepest spiritual energies, nature is beginning to waken from her deep and tortured slumber. It's Adar! A month of joy and celebration. Adar! A month of new beginnings.

The character of Adar and its crowning glory, the *chag* of Purim, is absolutely unique. The tzaddikim teach that during these precious days, an enormous and unparalleled spiritual light is shining in the world, a light which has the ability to turn the darkest of situations around when accessed by the conscious soul. In this essay, I would like to explore one of the underlying themes activated during this exalted time period so we may channel its special energy into our lives.

In the deeper texts, Purim is related to the concept of *Netzach*, victory and endurance. On the simplest level, Purim represented a mighty victory over Haman, the embodiment of our nation's historical archenemy, Amalek. But because, like the tzaddikim so strongly stressed, our *chagim* are not merely

commemorations of past miracles but rather the *re-experiencing* of miraculous energies which become revealed again, year after year, in the same measure manifest in the original miracle we are celebrating, Purim must contain within it the theological strategy for defeating Amalek in our times as well. In order to understand this strategy for the purpose of allowing it to affect our outlook, we must first understand the scourge of Amalek and the role it plays in embittering our lives even today, so many centuries removed from the setting of the Purim story.

In the definitive characterization of Amalek as the enemy of Hashem and the Jewish nation, the Torah states, *"Ki yad al keis Kah, milchamah Hashem b'Amalek m'dor dor"*, Hashem swears that He will battle against Amalek in each and every generation.[22] Chazal note that the words *"keis Kah"*, the throne of Hashem, are truncated. Instead of *"Keis"*, the word should be spelled *"Kisei"*. Instead of *"Kah"*, the first two letters of Hashems name, all four letters of Hashem's Name should be spelled out, *Yud-Kei-Vav-Kei*. Chazal see a message hinted in the three missing letters, ***aleph*** of *"Kisei"*, and ***Vav*** and ***Hei*** of the *Shem Havaya*: All the while that Amalek is in the world, the Throne and Name of Hashem are incomplete.[23] In order to understand this awesome blemish, we must first discover the concept alluded to by both the Throne and Name of Hashem.

One of the foundational teachings of the Kabbalah is that the primary Name of Hashem, the *Shem Havaya*, encapsulates the entire structure and developmental chain of creation, from the very loftiest point of utter Godliness down to the most

[22] *Shemos* 17:16.
[23] *Tanchumah, Ki Seitzei* 11.

corporeal levels of dross and physicality. Each of the four letters – in descending order - corresponds to another of the spiritual "worlds" which serve as links in the creative chain of constriction through which Hashem reveals Himself within the physical creation. Generally speaking, the first two letters, *"Yud"* and *"Hei"*, relate to the transcendent realms of spirituality (*Atzilus* and *Beriyah*); creation in its earliest stages of formless and embryonic matter. The final two letters, *"Vav"* and *"Hei"*, relate to the lower realms (*Yetzirah* and *Asiyah*) in which creation takes on a definitive form and ultimately manifests in our physical world.

A primary implication of this deep and fundamental principle is that all of existence– even the lowliest element of the physical world, is part of Hashem's Name; enveloped in *"HaMakom"*, the Master of the world in Whose Infinite "Place" creation becomes possible.[24] The lower realms are vessels for the loftiest motivating force of Hashem's Thought; a demonstration of the capacity for limit within the Infinite, and Hashem's desire to reveal His glory specifically in a setting which represents the furthest possible extremity from His perfect holiness, a realm of extreme darkness and concealment.

Chazal teach that the initial motivating force of creation was the existence of the Jewish nation, *"Yisrael ala b'machshava techillah"*, "Klal Yisrael arose first in the Divine Mind."[25] Through utilization of their free choice to embody the Torah's ideals in thought, speech, and action, the Jewish nation was to be tasked with transforming both their lives and the

[24] *Bereishis Rabbah* 68:9.
[25] *Bereishis Rabbah* 1:4.

physical world around them into a *"dirah b'tachtonim"*, a dwelling place for the divine Presence.[26] *"Ki bachar Hashem b'tzion, ivah l'moshav lo"*, "Hashem chose Tzion, He desired it as a dwelling place for Him."[27] From this perspective, the entirety of creation, both the upper and lower realms, are absolutely unified by their singular premise; *"Sof ma'aseh b'machshavah techilah"* (*Lecha Dodi*), the final action – our physical reality, is bound up with the first thought – Hashem's desire for this world to be transformed into a Throne for His glory, at which point it will become clear to all that the lower realms which seem to be devoid of spirituality are in fact part and parcel of His very Name.

The spiritual force of Amalek (which, in addition to being embodied in a specific nation, takes many different forms - both external and internal - throughout history) has one primary objective: to render Hashem's Name and His Throne incomplete. In light of what we have learned, this means that Amalek battles against the notion that Hashem's light fills the lower realms. Amalek insists that Hashem's Name is limited to the first two letters, *"Yud"* and *"Hei"* alone, scoffing at the Torah's perspective on the world as part of Hashem's Name and, thus, His revelation. Refusing to believe that this world may be seen as Hashem's Throne, Amalek blemishes the *"aleph"* which alludes to the *"Alufo Shel Olam"*, Hashem, leaving the word *"Keis"*, "concealment".

But in order to facilitate the collapse of the creative-developmental chain, Amalek must first remove the common

[26] See *Likutei Amarim, Tanya*, chapter 31.
[27] *Tehillim* 112:13.

thread which holds the structure together, the *"breiach hatichon hamavriach min hakatzeh el hakatzeh"*[28]: the Jewish nation. In order to counter the perspective which sees this world as *"sof ma'aseh"*, part and parcel of a long and glorious process of Revelation, Amalek must eradicate the *"machshavah techilah"*, the Primordial Love of the Jewish nation.[29] This is because Amalek realizes that the Jewish nation is the key to Hashem's connection with and revelation within the physical world. Therefore, in a nefarious effort to banish Hashem from the lower realms of His creation, Amalek attempts to convince the Jewish nation that they have lost their intrinsic relationship with Hashem, that the unconditional and essential love of *"Machshava techilah"* has been terminated and the bond broken. By severing the rope of *"Yaakov chevel nachalaso"*[30], Amalek hopes to unravel the entire structure of *creation-as-revelation*. This is why the three letters which are blemished by Amalek, *Aleph*, *Vav*, and *Hei*, spell ***"Ivah"***, (**אוה**) the word used to describe Hashem's desire to dwell in the lower realms via His beloved nation, *"Ivah l'moshav lo"*. Amalek attacks this concept of *"Ivah"*, claiming that we have sinned to the point of losing our status as the nation Hashem desires; that His Original Love is no longer present in the lower realms and that the lower realms, in turn, have lost their connection to the higher elements of their identity. This is the spiritual strike led by Achashveirosh, Vashti, and Haman – the three nefarious characters of the Megillah whose names, not surprisingly, begin with the very same letters that are missing from Hashem's name

[28] See *Shemos* 26:28 and *Zohar*, *Terumah* 174b.
[29] See *Likutei Moharan* 52.
[30] *Devarim* 32:9.

and Throne, *"Ivah"*, *aleph*, *vav*, and *hei*. In fact, the Megillah reveals the underlying premise for the ensuing drama at the very outset: *"Vayehi b'y'mei Achashveirosh, hu Achashveirosh"* – "**הוא** אחשורוש" – it is all about the three letters Amalek seeks to blemish so as to sever the ties between Hashem and His Holy nation and banish His presence from the world.

Rebbe Nachman of Breslov teaches that Amalek is synonymous with rationalistic, philosophical speculation.[31] The inner Amalek puts forth well-sourced and convincing arguments as to why it is perfectly logical to assume that the Jewish nation's relationship with Hashem to has been terminated as a result of our many sins, both on a personal and national level *r"l*. He attacks the broken-hearted, *"kol hanecheshalim acharecha"*[32], seeking to drag them into the depths of despair and spiritual hibernation. In this vein, the Gemara[33] teaches that Haman's biblical source is rooted in the story of the *Eitz HaDa'as Tov V'Ra*, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil[34]. This is because Amalek utilizes *"da'as"*, the power of logic and distinction, to "prove" that the Jew has forfeited his connection with the Creator because of the frequency with which he chooses evil over good. "You have lost connection with your source in goodness, in holiness", Amalek posits in thesis after thesis. "It is preposterously illogical to assume that Hashem still has any interest in you. Hashem no longer desires your service at all." Sadly, this strategy often succeeds in a remarkable way – particularly in our generation. Even if the effects are not overt,

[31] *Likutei Moharan* 19.
[32] *Devarim* 25:18.
[33] *Chullin* 139b.
[34] "*Hamin ha'eitz*" – *Bereishis* 3:11.

the Jew's subconscious acceptance of this theory as truth causes a dimming, a cooling; *"Asher karcha baderech."*[35] Despair creeps in, leaving our engagement with Yiddishkeit a shell of its former self, a weak framework of rote observance plagued with a sense of hopelessness and disconnection.

But, as we know, whatever exists in the side of impurity must be balanced by an equal force in the side of holiness. In Hashem's great kindness, there are times in our national history and in the individual life of each and every Jew where Haman-Amalek meets his match: Mordechai HaYehudi, the true tzaddik.

In the place of Amalek's "rational" claim regarding the Jew's hopelessness, the tzaddik maintains an elevated perspective on the deeper reality of the Jewish soul, a perspective which looks beyond the external constructs of "right" and "wrong" to the essential core of holiness, the aspect in which each and every Jew is a *"cheilek Eloka m'maal mamash"*, a literal portion of the Living God[36]; ever connected and unconditionally loved. The tzaddik is constantly *melamed zechus* on the Jewish nation, unveiling their goodness and reminding them of their elevated status.

This deep contrast is hinted to by Chazal in a remarkable way. Commenting on the words *"La'asos k'rtzon ish v'ish"*, Chazal (*Megillah* 12a) comment that *"Ish"* refers to Mordechai *("Ish Yehudi")* and *"V'Ish"* refers to Haman *("Ish tzar v'oyeiv")*. The depth here is awesome. Haman, the embodiment of Amalek's theological assault, is associated with ***"V'Ish"***,

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[35] *Devarim* 25:18. See *The Story of Our Lives*, Chapter 1.

[36] *Likutei Amarim*, *Tanya* 2, *Nefesh HaChaim* 1:5, *Likutei Moharan* 260.

(**אישׁ**) whose letters also spell ***"Yei'ush"***, (**יאוּשׁ**) despair. Mordechai HaTzaddik, who counters this assault by constantly reminding the Jew of the essential holiness buried deep within his being and his unconditional relationship with Hashem, is associated with the word ***"Ish"***, (**אישׁ**) which may be seen as an acronym for ***"Ein shum yei'ush"***, (**אין שׁום יאוּשׁ**) Rebbe Nachman of Breslov's famous declaration of hope: "There is no despair in the world at all."

Chazal teach that the source for Mordechai's name in the Torah is the verse *"Besamim rosh"*, "choice spices", which the Targum renders as *"Mari dachi"*, "Mordechai".[37] The Berditchover Rav explains that this verse contains Mordechai's spiritual essence: ***"Besamim":*** The tzaddik looks beyond what the external senses perceive, using his sense of "smell", a deeper sense which is related to spirituality, to discern the deeper reality of ***"rosh"***, the ever-abiding Primordial Thought of *"Yisrael ala b'machshava techilah"* which continuously communicates Hashem's desire of our nation's service despite all failure and misdirection.[38] Mordechai, the true tzaddik, fights for the aspect of "Yehudi", the essential Jewishness which, despite its obscurity behind piles of spiritual rot, remains ever shining.

The story of Purim is all about discovering a deeper reality, a level of being which lies beyond the shallow surface. On a simple level, the miracle celebrated on this exalted day came about in the most mysterious, hidden manner; Hashem's Name is not even mentioned in the Megillah. Indeed, the very title of the book which records this miracle is *"Megillas Esther"*, which

[37] *Chullin* 139b.
[38] *Kedushas Levi, Kedushos L'Purim* 2:5.

may be read as "The revelation (*giluy*) of the hidden (*hester*)." But on a deeper level, the light of Purim emerges from the deep darkness of the void to eradicate the "rational" heresy of Amalek. On Purim, the light of *Netzach* is revealed, the deepest reality of our enduring bond with the Master of the world, *"netzach Yisrael lo yeshakeir"*.[39] When we drink *"ad* ***d'lo yada****"*, (*Megillah* 7b) we reach far beyond the *Eitz Ha**Da'as** Tov V'Ra* with which Amalek is so obsessed, to touch the *Eitz HaChayim*, the message of Hashem's incomprehensible love for each and every member of our holy nation. Purim is beyond explanation, beyond conception. It is the revelation of the aspect in which we are Hashem's *"am segulah"*,[40] a nation whose being chosen – much like a *segulah* – cannot be rationally explained.[41]

On this exalted day, the grace which our nation's collective soul finds in the eyes of Hashem is shining from one end of the world to the other*; "Vayehi k'ros HaMelech es Esther… nas'ah chein b'einav"*.[42] This *chein* is beyond comprehension, far too deep to be explained. It simply *is*, rooted in the deepest, unfathomable desire of our Father in heaven. When this awesome light of *penimiyus* is revealed throughout the day of Purim, it becomes clear to us that our many sins and mistakes, all of our failings in the area of *"tov v'ra"*, was merely the expression of an external, fleeting yetzer hara. In our super-consciousness of *"ad d'lo yada"*, we are able to attach ourselves to the *Eitz HaChayim* of our lives – a place where it becomes

[39] *Shmuel* I, 16:29.
[40] *Shemos* 19:5.
[41] See *Likutei Moharan* 21:9 and *Mei HaShiloach* Vol 1. *Yisro*.
[42] *Esther* 5:2.

abundantly clear that our truest, deepest desire is to foster a conscious relationship with our Father in heaven. The tzaddik gently guides us to the understanding that *"heim lo asu elah* ***l'fnim****"*[43]; all of our failures and baggage are external garments which can never do anything to extinguish our flame of holiness and yearning to live a life of closeness with our Creator. In this awesome moment of *"nichnas yayin yatzah sod"*,[44] we can whisper *"Baruch Haman"*, certain that behind the mask of our wickedness lies a fountain of blessing and essential, untouchable, goodness.

This Purim, may we merit to eradicate the spirit of Amalek in all its various forms - that voice of poisonous cynicism which champions the shallowest and most external view of the world and the Jewish soul. May we merit to open our hearts to the sweet declaration of *"Ish Yehudi"*, the true tzaddik who calls to us even as we feast from the table of Achashveirosh: "There is no despair in the world at all! If you believe you can break, believe that you can fix! Look deeper, friends! Look deeper!" May we be able to rise to the place of *"lo yada"*, where all "rational understanding" fades away and we are able to bask in the infinite *chein* shining forth from our souls, banishing the darkness with its eternal brilliance. Finally, may we merit to transform our lives into a Throne for Hashem to dwell in the lower realms, recognizing every particle of physicality as part and parcel of His exalted Name. *Gut Purim!*

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[43] *Megillah* 12a.
[44] *Sanhedrin* 38a.

Guide to a Fulfilling Purim

Dearest friends,

I thought I would sit for a while this erev Purim and compile a few thoughts on this glorious day in a concise and encompassing manner. I am certain that there are many things I am leaving out here, but I hope that this will be helpful nonetheless — for myself, and perhaps for others as well.[45]

MACHSHAVAH - THOUGHT

The deepest underlying spiritual energy revealed on Purim is essentiality, *etzem, penimiyus*; the most accurate definition of what things truly are, what their premise is, and where they will ultimately reach over the longest conceivable span of time.

A. Nature: Through the "natural" miracle of Purim, the essence of nature is revealed – Hashem's presence; not just in terms of "*hashkafa* - governance" but in actuality – Hashem is literally present in every particle of physicality, constantly breathing the wonder of existence into being. On Purim, aided by the wine and togetherness, let's try to enter into that mindset

[45] Some of these ideas have already been presented in the essays on Purim above. They are brought here again in a more concise form to allow for easy review.

of "*ein od milvado*" – attempting to feel Hashem's presence surrounding and filling our reality.

B. The Jewish Soul: Haman-Amalek, rooted in the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and synonymous with philosophical and logical/causal thinking ("***Reishis*** *goyim Amalek*"), attempts to sever the connection between the spiritual and physical realms by disqualifying the chosenness of our holy nation who forges that bond, claiming that we have sinned so badly that we no longer have any relationship to Hashem and that He no longer desires us. The victory over Amalek embodied in the Purim story activates the essential holiness of the Jew, the abiding grace which our collective soul finds in the eyes of Hashem – a grace that transcends understanding, reaching far beyond the Tree of Knowledge ("*ad d'lo yada*") to touch the Tree of Life; the unfathomable and unconditional bond each and every Jew constantly maintains with the Source of Life, Hashem Himself. On Purim, let's try to tap into this essential goodness, seeing ourselves for who we truly are – shining sparks of elevated holiness yearning for unification with our loving Source Who never, ever gives up on any Jew.

C. Harshest Difficulties Put into the Greatest Perspective: Purim is the light of *Netzach*, eternity - the ultimate context. Against this awesome backdrop, we are able to put our largest, most painful issues into the most expansive possible perspective which ranges from the Primordial Desire for a world until the furthest end of history, the *Yom She'Kulo Purim*. In this awesome light, even the most painful traumas, the most egregious errors, the most devastating mistakes, may be

seen as ultimately insignificant. Purim is beyond forgiveness, beyond the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, beyond error, even beyond rectification. On Purim, all complexity is reduced to nothingness in the awesome presence of the utmost simplicity - God's unfathomable and unconditional love for each and every Jewish soul, *"Yisrael ala b'machshava techilah"*. On Purim, let's try to adopt the incredibly broad perspective of *Netzach* so that, if only for a brief moment, we may see our troubles, failures, and mistakes for what they truly are – small, unessential, and ultimately insignificant.

DIBBUR-SPEECH

A. Tefillah: Based on the halachic phrase *"Kol haposheit yad nosnin lo"*[46], the tzaddikim teach that Purim is a phenomenal *eis ratzon* - whoever extends his hand to Hashem in prayer will have that prayer fulfilled. Let's try to set some time aside on this busy day to pour out our hearts in prayer before Hashem with a spirit of humility, openness, sincerity, and urgency. Let's express all of the yearning for holiness revealed by our Purim consciousness of essentiality, letting Hashem know just how powerfully we truly desire to live up to our spiritual ideals. I have found that the 22nd chapter in *Tehillim*, Esther's plea, is particularly useful. In addition, I try to make time to say the tenth prayer in *Likutei Tefillos* from Reb Nosson of Breslov, an awe-inspiring expression of yearning that grants us the words with which to express our deepest feelings to our Father in heaven.

[46] *Talmud Yerushalmi*, *Megillah* 5:1.

B. Loving Words: Purim is the day to express feelings we might feel uncomfortable expressing any other day of the year. As the wine works to enable our essence to emerge, breaking down all inhibitions, let's use these precious moments to express our deepest feelings toward the ones we love – our spouse, children, parents, family, students, teachers and friends. On Purim, a day elevated far above the calendar and the normal constructs of daily living, we have the ability to say all those things we never seem to get a chance to say, to let the souls with whom we share our lives know just how much they mean to us and just how much we love them.

C. Gratitude: Purim grants us the ability to stop and recognize the wonders constantly at work in our lives. Our Purim consciousness of essentiality enables us to realize that life itself is a wonder, a complete and utter miracle. This realization moves us to express our thanks and gratitude to Hashem for the unearned gifts with which He constantly showers us. In addition, we can use this opportunity to express our thanks and appreciation toward all of those who enhance our lives in any way; parents, family members, rabbanim, teachers, therapists, mentors, friends etc.

MA'ASEH – ACTION

The four special mitzvos of Purim - hearing the megillah, giving Shalach Manos, giving *Matanos L'evyonim*, and drinking – should be performed with intense joy founded upon a deep consciousness of the meaning encapsulated in these *mitzvos* and

what they are accomplishing in all the spiritual worlds. Very briefly, here are some ideas (based on the teachings of the tzaddikim) to keep in mind before and during the fulfillment of these mitzvos:

A. *Mikra Megillah*: One should have in mind that at the time of the Megillah reading, the message being read about Hashem's presence within nature becomes activated, purifying our perception of reality and revealing nature's spiritual source. Hashem takes tremendous pride in our reading the Megillah and the spiritual worlds erupt in rejoicing. This knowledge should fill our hearts with great joy and openness, bringing us to a state of ahavas Hashem and the desire to re-accept the Torah willingly, out of the greatest love and devotion.

B. *Shalach Manos*: Hashem is referred to as *"Ish"* and our holy nation is referred to as Hashem's "friends" (*"L'ma'an achai v'rei'ai"*[47]). When we give "*mishloach manos Ish l'reieihu*", we are causing tremendous portions ("*manos*") of sustenance and blessing to flow down upon am Yisrael. We send the portions instead of giving them face to face to demonstrate that our relationship with those we love reaches far beyond their physical presence, touching their very souls in an eternal bond.

C. *Matanos L'Evyonim*: During the rest of the year, a pauper feels that the person who gives him money is doing so for the sake of the mitzvah of tzedakah, with little feeling or personal investment. But on Purim, when everyone is occupied

[47] *Tehillim* 122:8.

with giving gifts to their friends, the pauper begins to think, "Maybe he is giving me money not because I am poor, but because I am his friend as well!" There are many Jews who feel as if, due to their actions and mode of living, Hashem sustains them in a way of charity – without any relationship or personal investment. On Purim, even such Jews begin to feel that maybe Hashem is giving them life, good health, *parnassah* etc. not in a way of pity, but because He is our Friend Who constantly seeks a personal relationship with every single Jew.

D. Drinking: "Wine goes in, and the secrets come out"[48] – drinking on Purim in a way and setting of holiness enables one to perceive the "secret" of living, the essential goodness of his soul, his circumstances, and the world at large. Drinking in proper measure tears down the external walls and allows one to enter into an elevated consciousness, enabling him to say *"Baruch Haman"*, expressing his faith that all of the negative elements of his life are truly for the best – Hashem's unfathomable kindness in a mighty disguise. The alcohol enables us to rise above our standard *daas*, the capacity of the mind to compartmentalize and differentiate, so we may perceive the utter unity that abides within a creation illuminated by Hashem's oneness.

E. Dressing Up: On Purim, an enormously lofty spiritual light is shining, a light which never descends throughout the rest of the year. In order for this light to come to expression, it needs to be clothed in a great many garments so as not to cause harm.

[48] *Eiruvin* 65a.

The internal manifestation of this light's emergence is manifest in our yearning for holiness pouring forth from the deepest depths of our souls, as mentioned above – when the wine goes in, the secrets come out. Disguising ourselves with strange garments is another way of reminding ourselves and others of the awesome light that is shining forth from our essential identity – a light that must filter through screens and garments in order to come to expression. In addition, we manipulate the external level to remind ourselves that Purim is all about the inside, the *penimiyus*: just as we must struggle to recognize our friend beyond the disguise, so must we work – on Purim – to recognize the essential goodness of our souls beyond the disguise of our mistakes and actions taken under the foreign influence of the yetzer hara.

F. Dancing and Clapping: In his glorious discourse on Purim, the tenth lesson in *Likutei Moharan,* Rebbe Nachman of Breslov teaches: "Know, that when there are harsh judgments upon the Jewish nation, dancing and clapping can sweeten all of these judgments." The lesson continues to describe the kind of dancing and clapping to which Rebbe Nachman refers. This is a dance of humility, founded upon the Jew's reliance on the Torah and the tzaddikim who draw the living spirit of the Torah into their students by way of their teachings. When we divest ourselves of all arrogance which stems from physicality and externality – identifying with the essential Jewishness deep within our soul, we are able to dance and clap in a way of *bittul*-nullification to the divine spirit that pulses within our hands and feet, moving gracefully in the presence of the Infinite One and His holy Torah. The Baal HaTanya teaches that this sense of

bittul and the spirit of *teshuvah me'ahava* with which it is naturally accompanied is the secret weapon for destroying the Amalekian spirit of doubt, cynicism, physicality, externality, and arrogance.

In *Sichos Haran* 131, Reb Nosson records that upon hearing his student repeat this lesson before him, Rebbe Nachman exclaimed, "Yes! That is what I said! There are now terrible decrees upon the Jewish nation. But the days of Purim are coming, and their dancing and clapping on Purim will sweeten all of the judgements."

The world is currently in a precarious state. While difficult to intuit exactly what Hashem is communicating to us or understanding His reasons for how He runs His world, one thing is certain: It is surely no mistake that this has intensified right around Purim time. More than two-hundred years ago, Rebbe Nachman of Breslov revealed that the day of Purim grants our nation an incredible opportunity to nullify harsh-decrees by dancing and clapping in way of humility and *bittul* before Hashem and the tzaddikim whose teachings enliven us each and every day. Dancing and clapping with great joy and holy intention is an extremely powerful strategy for combatting all harsh decrees.

In Conclusion

The depth and meaning of this exalted day of *penimiyus* and *yichud* is truly infinite, and this letter only begins to scratch the surface. But although there is so much more to say – which, *b'ezras Hashem*, we will have opportunity to explore in the years to come – I hope these brief thoughts and guidelines can

allow us to tap into the Purim experience on a deeper level so we may gather the treasures of this awesome day.

Wishing all of my brothers and friends an elevated, exhilarating, inspiring, joyous, uplifting, spiritual, and emotional chag filled with love, prayer, mitzvos, holy desire, and the ultimate revelation of essentiality – the light of Olam Haba. May all of our *tefillos* for ourselves and others be *niskabel b'rachamim uv'ratzon,* and may we merit to dance and clap our way to the final redemption *b'ruchniyus uv'gashmiyus*.

בס"ד

The Essence & Inner Messages of Avoda on Purim

Based on the writings of HaRav Yitzchok Mayer Morgenstern *shlit"a* – *'B'Yam Darkecha*, Purim'

Thought

Reading the Megillah

- The details of the Megillah reveal the light of Hashem, His conduct in nature, and that there is no reality other than Hashem.
- AriZaL: During Megillah, Hashem is revealed in this world without a covering. The Megillah is a *kli* (tool) to reveal the inner light of existence.
- Recognizing Hashem and feeling His Presence also in the physical world; **Godly revelation during times and in places of concealment**.

✓ I seek to feel this light, contemplate its great importance, infuse it in myself and delight in it.

✓ I can **unify with Hashem**, using the powerful truth that 'there is nothing but Hashem', and the clarity that all is sustained by His power.

Action, bonding, *bittul* (nullification)

Purim Seuda & Drinking Wine

- We take the Divine, spiritual light revealed during Megillah, and seek to **tangibly feel Hashem in a complete and sensory reality**.
- The *seuda* is enjoyed in a group to afford the opportunity to appreciate the **inner essence** of every Jew at the meal and **join** the souls as one.

✓ The Avoda of Eating: Clarifying that my enjoyment of the food I eat and the vitality it provides me is, in reality, delighting in *Elokus* – **enjoyment and light of the Divine life force**.

✓ The Avoda of Drinking Wine: **Complete *bittul*** to Hashem, blurring our senses and *da'as*. Through wine, we ascend above time and place; Divine enlightenment that is experienced and extends **beyond all typical boundaries**.

Practical, revealed expression of *bittul*

Mattanos L'Evyonim

- On Purim there is a concept that we give money to anyone who asks and "we don't examine" who is truly in need, because on Purim we are ***mevatel* entirely, even for external actions**.
- All year, in the normal course of the world, we must be responsible and act as a treasurer to check to whom we are giving charity; but on Purim, we simply give to whoever requests.

✓ I experience the enjoyment that accompanies nullifying myself completely, to the point that I give to people I don't know nor have connection to, without investigating their actual needs.

✓ This type of giving produces an acquired feeling in my soul, that can last for the entire year, of how to *mevatel* myself completely to Hashem.

Acts that are in sync with the will of the Creator

Mishloach Manos

- It is insufficient to merely think deeply about Hashem; my immense recognition of Hashem's existence inspires **me to do something active** to bring Him honor, as if He commanded me.

✓ I care for, love and want to bring joy to Hashem's children – children of the King; my own *bittul* doesn't cause me to neglect others.

✓ The 'concept' of omnipotence, merges with my 'choice' to act; inner *bittul* + outward actions.

✓ Though I have nullified myself to Hashem completely, **I am His messenger** (משלוח/שליח), to reveal Him in this world of concealment.

✓ Whether I succeed or fail in my missions, I remember that Hashem is behind everything, and only His is the true power in the world.

A Deeper Understanding of the *Mitzvos HaYom*

Mikra Megillah

1. Both men and women are obligated to read the Megillah on Purim, once by day and once by night. This obligation may be fulfilled either by reading the Megillah or listening to the megillah being read by someone who is similarly obligated in the mitzvah. The time for the reading the megillah at night is from *tzeis hakochavim* until *alos hashachar*.[49] If one missed the Megillah at night, it is not possible to make it up in the day. Therefore, from nightfall, one should not do work or take a nap before hearing the Megillah to ensure that one does not miss fulfilling this mitzvah.

When we study the laws of Purim, we find that the laws regarding every facet of the manner in which the Megillah is to be written, read, and listened to are even more numerous than the reading of the holy Torah itself. To explain this, we must first understand a basic and fundamental idea of the Kabbalah.

The great Kabbalists teach that when Hashem created the world, in order to allow for the existence of a seemingly separate, physical realm (which would still be powered by His Life-Force as necessary but in which His presence would be hidden so as to allow for free choice), Hashem constricted His

[49] *Mishnah Berurah* 687:3.

Infinite Light through a complex system of ten primary vessels and four spiritual worlds. In each subsequent world and level of this step-down system referred to as *"Tzimtzum"*, the process of constriction, Hashem's Infinite Light was further and further concealed until the point where the purpose of the entire process, the creation of the physical realm, could take place. In the upper worlds, Hashem's presence is revealed to a much greater degree due to the lesser levels of constriction in those realms. It is only at the end of the chain, our physical realm, where the Godly Light is constricted to the point that we can hardly sense His presence, allowing for freedom of choice.

The *Kedushas Levi* explains that the Torah is the blueprint for all of creation. The letters and words which make up its 613 commandments are vessels for the most elevated spiritual lights; the life-force which is hidden within all of physicality – as that life-force appears in the upper worlds. This is the level to which the ***Torah's*** letters and words correspond - the source of Life in its revealed form as it manifests **in the upper realms**. This is why Torah study fills a Jew with tremendous yearning composed of awe and love for the Master of the world, as it provides one with a glimpse into a spiritual realm above, where Hashem's presence is obvious and revealed.

On the other hand, the letters and words of the ***Megillah*** represent the hidden spiritual life-force which powers the physical realm as it manifests **within the laws of nature**, in accordance with the miracle of Purim which took place in a "natural" manner. The letters which make up the Purim story and its message of Hashem's presence within nature contain the divine Names which serve as vessels for the hidden Godliness powering every aspect of our physical reality.

This is why there are so many more halachic particularities regarding the manner in which the Megillah must be read than the reading of the Torah. Being as the Torah contains the pure, pre-constricted Godliness of the upper realms, spiritual elevation is experienced regardless of the manner in which it is read or studied. However, the inspiration granted by the story of Purim and its effect on the constricted spiritual life-force powering our physical reality can only be activated when read in the particular manner instituted by Mordechai and Esther.

2. The Gemara[50] rules that unlike tefillin, a kosher Megillah requires *sirtut* (the etching of lines on the parchment) just like *"Amita shel Torah"*, a reference to the Mezuzah which also requires *sirtut*. What is the function of this feature? The Gemara in *Gittin* (6b) rules that *sirtut* is required when copying any 3 or four words from Tanach. Why then, does tefillin not require *sirtut*? It appears there are two kinds of *sirtut*, each with its own function. The *sirtut* referred to in *Gittin*, which even tefillin would require, is for the purpose of neatness and precise penmanship. Thus, *Tosafos* comments that even etching a single line on the top of the page would be enough to ensure that the *sofer* would write the text neatly. According to the Ramban and Rashi, the other kind of *sirtut*, lines along the entire page which are required for a Megillah and mezuzah, is for an entirely different purpose – to convert the text from a mere "document" into a "book". Tefillin, which is not a *"sefer"* does not require this level of *sirtut*, nor does a *sefer Torah*, for a different reason: its very being reveals its nature; a *"sefer"* Torah!

[50] *Megillah* 17b.

But there is surely a deeper dimension as well. What is the spiritual relationship between the Megillah and the Mezuzah underlying this special requirement they share?

The *Kedushas Levi* explains with the following idea. In a very deep way, both the Megillah and Mezuza represent the drawing down of *chiyus*, spiritual life-force, into the physical world. We touched on the manner in which the Megillah embodies this idea in last week's column. The way this process is symbolized by the Mezuzah is that, as Chazal teach[51], a Mezuzah serves as a protection on the house. The fulfillment of this mitzvah causes a kind of spiritual shield to flow from the source of the Torah's letters above upon the lowest level of physicality, the inanimate house to which is affixed.

With this similarity in mind, we can now understand why both the Megillah and Mezuzah are referred to as ***"Amita shel Torah"***. As is well known, the word *"Emes"* (אמת) is made up of the first letter of the *aleph-beis* (**א**), the middlemost letter (**מ**), and the very last letter (**ת**). Thus, the word *"Emes"* represents the drawing of Divine sustenance from the loftiest spiritual realm (represented by the letter **א**) all the way down to our physical reality (represented by the letter **ת**). Since both the Megillah and the Mezuzah represent this process, they are referred to as *"Amita (**emes**) shel Torah"*.

The *Mekubalim* teach that while the letters of the Hebrew alphabet represent specific kinds of spiritual life-force, the lines of *sirtut* represent will and desire. Indeed, the great tzaddikim were able to discern a person's innermost will by glancing at the lines on his forehead. Hashem's deepest Will is for a world in

[51] *Avodah Zara* 11a.

which human beings can exercise freedom of choice to pull themselves away from the dross of physicality and focus all their energy toward serving Him. In order to maintain the world's existence, Hashem constantly sends animating *chiyus* to all levels of creation. Because the letters of both the Megillah and the Mezuzah represent the influx of spiritual life-force to our physical world, these two texts must be accompanied by *sirtut*, the etching of lines which correspond to Hashem's Will which motivates this process.

Mishloach Manos & Matanos L'Evyonim

Two of the four *mitzvos hayom* of Purim are *Mishloach Manos* and *Matanos L'Evyonim*. The Gemara[52] rules that in order to fulfill *Matanos l'Evyonim*, gifts of charity to the poor, one must give (at least[53]) **two gifts** (of at least one *perutah* according to the *Ritva* who is lenient, and five shekels according to other opinions like whom it is proper to be stringent[54]) to **two people**, while the obligation of *Shalach Manos*, "Sending food portions to friends" can be fulfilled by giving **two portions** of food (of different species or tastes; preferably a significant portion of food that is ready to eat) to only **one person**.

The *Kedushas Levi* reveals the inner dimension of this distinction based on his understanding of a different Gemara which states, "Greater are the actions of tzaddikim than the actions of Hashem, for the actions of Hashem are carried out

[52] *Megillah* 7a.
[53] *Mishnah Berurah* 694:3.
[54] *Yalkut Yosef* 694:1.

with one Hand while the actions of tzaddikim are carried out with two Hands."[55] When Hashem implements divine decrees in the world without taking the prayers of the tzaddikim into account, it is because His love for klal Yisrael is not currently at its full intensity. At such a time, His love is revealed only "with one hand", the hand of *Chessed,* in the form of subtle kindness to the Jewish people. However, when Hashem acts based on the will of the tzaddikim, at a time when His love for klal Yisrael is at full force, this love is revealed "with two hands", in two forms - *Chessed* to the Jews, and *Gevurah*, punishment, to the wicked enemies who are paining them.

This is the deeper meaning of the Gemara: ***"Greater are the actions of the tzaddikim":*** the love displayed by Hashem toward klal Yisrael by acting in accordance with the will of the tzaddikim is greater, ***"For they are carried out with two hands"***: this love takes two different forms, *Chessed* and *Gevurah*, while ***"the actions of Hashem":*** the love Hashem displays toward klal Yisrael when they are not doing His will, causing Him to act "alone", ***"are carried out with one hand":*** reveals itself as *Chessed*, kindness to the Jews, alone.

The giving of *Shalach Manos* represents the *prayers* of Mordechai and Esther which triggered ***"manos"***, portions of salvation, to be sent from ***"Ish"***, Hashem ("*Ish milchama*"), to ***"rei'eihu"***, His "friends", the Jewish nation *("L'ma'an achai v'rei'ai")*. This salvation involved the awakening of two Divine traits, *Chessed*-kindness toward klal Yisrael and *Gevurah*-punishment meted out to their adversaries. Therefore, *Shalach Manos*, which represents the prayers of Mordechai and Esther, is

[55] *Kesubos* 5a.

fulfilled using **two portions**, representing *Chessed* and *Gevurah*, **to one person**, representing the staunch faith of Mordechai and Esther – present even before the salvation had arrived - that the *Gevurah* for which they prayed was *unified in the spiritual realms* with the greatest *Chessed*, Hashem's overwhelming love for klal Yisrael and its leaders.

Matanos L'Evyonim, on the other hand, represents the *actual miracle*; the proliferation of spiritual bounty within the physical world which caused nature to assist klal Yisrael in the "natural" salvation of Purim. Thus, in order to fulfill this mitzvah, one must give **two gifts** to **two different people**. This relates to the idea that when the traits brought about by the prayers of Mordechai and Esther appeared in the world, they manifested as two separate *middos*; *Chessed* on one hand and *Gevurah* on the other. The Berditchover explains that this is why the verse in the Megillah discussing the *mitzvos hayom* places *Shalach Manos* before *Matanos L'Evyonim*: on a deeper level, *Shalach Manos* represents the prayers of Mordechai and Esther which were at an *earlier stage* than the actual miracle which is represented by *Matanos L'Evyonim*.

Besumei B'Puraya

The Mishna[56] states: "Rava said: A person is obligated to become intoxicated on Purim until he no longer knows how to distinguish between "cursed is Haman" and "blessed is Mordecai." Based on this teaching, most Rishonim learn that

[56] *Megillah* 7b.

one is obligated to drink until drunkenness on Purim. Rashi[57] and the Rambam[58] specify that one must drink wine and not other intoxicating beverages. *Kaf HaChaim*[59] and *Netei Gavriel*[60] codify this as halacha. However, sefer *Shalmei Todah*[61] quotes Rav Nissim Karlitz as saying that it's not *me'akeiv* to have wine specifically. Still, many later opinions hold that one should not get drunk but should rather drink a little bit more than one is accustomed to and then go to sleep. All agree that if drinking to the point of drunkenness will cause one to violate or degrade any mitzvah such as *Birchas HaMazon* or *tefillah*, one should not get drunk.

It is clear that, like all other mitzvos, there is tremendous depth underlying this seemingly peculiar commandment. What is the reason for this mitzvah, and why must one drink *"ad d'lo yada"*, to a point where the ability to differentiate between *"arur haman"* and *"baruch Mordechai"* is lost?

Purim celebrates the salvation of the Jewish people from the nefarious designs of the wicked Haman, who plotted to eradicate our nation in its entirety. This miracle took place in a seemingly natural course of events, without any overt divine intervention. This is demonstrated by the fact that Hashem's name doesn't appear even once in the entire Megillah! Haman walked around with pride and satisfaction, certain that his plan would come to fruition, while the Jews donned sackcloth and cried out to Hashem with broken hearts, terrified of what the future held. In

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[57] *Megillah* 7b, *"l'vesumei"*.
[58] *Megillah V'Chanukah* 2:15.
[59] 695:6.
[60] 73:2.
[61] P. 326.

the meantime, unbeknownst to all characters involved, an unlikely series of events had been set into motion which they couldn't possibly have begun to fathom, events that would turn the entire story around and radically alter the outcome in an astonishing way. It is to mark this miracle, says the Kedushas Levi, which took place beyond the this-worldly consciousness of cause and effect, that we drink on Purim *"ad d'lo yada"* – to a point of inebriation which demonstrates our lack of awareness of Hashem's master plan that is ever in motion, performing wonders to which we are completely oblivious.

But perhaps there is another element here as well. Looking closely at the Gemara's wording, we find that Rava doesn't say one must drink *"Ad **d'eino** yada"*, but rather "*ad **d'lo** yada"*. There is a subtle difference between the two. The wording of *"Ad d'eino yada"* would imply that one should become inebriated on Purim to the point of mindless folly, a state where all knowledge is removed and all intellectual constructs shattered. But *"ad d'lo yada"* implies something very different - not sub-knowledge but *super-knowledge*. The Torah intends for a Jew to drink on Purim in a manner of holiness to the point that he rises above the constraints of his wisdom - that remains very much structurally intact so that he may look upon it and respect it, and yet treasure the feeling of seeing it all from an entirely elevated perspective. It's a feeling of rising above the system of intellect and shaking with the other-worldly laughter of *"vatischak l'yom acharon."* Drinking on Purim should lift us to a level of elevated perception which challenges the limited experience of day-to-day life by revealing Hashem's presence within nature, the reality of "Ein Od Milvado", the hidden truth that even Haman is *"baruch"*; endowed, in some unexplainable

way, with a spark of Godly life-force. May we merit to fulfill all the *mitzvos* of Purim in their completion with holiness, and an elevated consciousness of Hashem's presence and overwhelming love. Wishing all Jews everywhere the most exalted, uplifting, joyous, and inspiring Purim!

About Eilecha

Journey to Authentic Connection

Beyond the great many observations that may be made about our generation, a single description bursts forth from beneath every surface: "*Zeh dor dorshav*" – this is a generation of seekers. In direct proportion with the unparalleled physical comfort of these remarkable times, a deep spiritual thirst has developed in Jews of all ages and backgrounds. People today are thirsting for connection, for elevated experiences, for a Yiddishkeit of depth, warmth, and passion that can alone combat the confused storm winds of a treacherous social climate. From our youth to our elders, across the demographic spectrum, there is a yearning to engage with avodas Hashem as an all-encompassing relationship with the Creator, to encounter the soul of the Torah and experience *emunah* as more than an intellectual exercise.[62]

It was with a deep awareness of this yearning and a finger on the pulse of our times that Rabbi Naftali Schiff, CEO of the Jewish Futures family of organisations, founded **Eilecha** along

[62] See *Tzav V'Ziruz* #9, *Tzidkas HaTzaddik* #2, and *Alei Shur* Vol. 2, introduction to the Second Gate (among many other sources) which discuss our generation's unique yearning to encounter the spiritual depth of our tradition.

with Rabbi Yaakov Klein, who moved to London with his family in August of 2022 to serve as founding director. In the six months since its inception, our events, chizzuk tours, shiurim, publications, programs, and content have impacted thousands of Jews in the UK and beyond, offering an accessible gateway to the inner world of Torah and avodah. With so many ways to engage with **Eilecha**'s message, it is our hope that, *b'siyata d'Shmaya*, many more seeking souls will join us on our journey to authentic connection.

Our Mission:

Eilecha's mission is to create opportunities for spiritual growth and experiential education in the local community and beyond. Through classes, content, events, trips, and experiences, **Eilecha** aims to foster an authentic Jewish experience that is deep, passionate, sincere, joyous, healthy, and eminently relevant, charting a course "Eilecha", toward a vibrant life lived in the warmth of Hashem's embrace.

Eilecha in a Snapshot:

- *"Eilecha Weekly"* parsha sheet
- Weekly sessions in London schools
- Monthly Manchester *chizzuk* trips
- Thursday night *Leil Shishi* learning programme
- Inspirational social media content
- Monthly musical hallel for Rosh Chodesh
- Educational experiences in partnership with local schools and shuls
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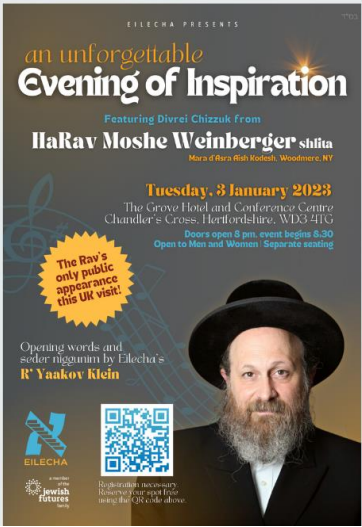
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