



זמני שבת

הדלקת נרות	6:46
הנץ	7:00
סוף זמן קריאת שמע	10:01
שקיעה	7:05
Ends שבת	7:47

זמנים for Lawrence N.Y.

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Time is of the Essence

The Megilla is filled with signs and portents. In this essay, I would like to examine some of these and see how we can apply them today in our daily lives. When the Jewish people were in danger of annihilation by Haman, Esther instructed the Jews to fast for three days in her merit. Afterwards, she walked into the inner chamber of the king, hoping that she wouldn't be sentenced to death for coming into the chamber unannounced. The king saw Esther walking into his chamber, and flattered by her, he stretched out his golden scepter so that she could receive it and thereby be saved from death by the king's courtiers. The mesmerized king then told Esther he would grant her every wish, up to half of the kingdom. Note how the king began his conversation with her, "mah lakh Esther - what is it Esther?" The king was shocked - both the king and queen knew the rules about coming to the king unannounced. Apparently, since Esther risked her life to come to the king, the king reasoned that she must have something important to tell him. Maybe she was coming to him like she came some time earlier to tell him that his life was in danger. Now was Esther's perfect chance. Now she could have told the king about Haman's plot.

**Rabbi Jonathan
Muskat
Rebbe**

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Who Gets The Credit?

Parshas Tzav introduces us to the Korban Toda, or thanksgiving offering (7:12), which, as the Rabbis explain, one was required to bring upon emerging safely from situations of danger. The Rabbis specified four situations that required the offering of a Korban Toda to express one's gratitude to the Almighty: recovery from an illness, leaving prison or captivity, safely traversing a desert, and emerging safely from the high seas.

**Aaron
Kattan
S.G.O. President**

Why are these four groups of people specifically obligated to offer a Korban Toda? What unique feature distinguishes these cases from other instances of life-threatening situations?

The Ben Ish Chai suggests that in these four cases, the individual is likely to attribute his salvation to other human beings, rather than to the Almighty. When a person falls gravely ill and then recovers, his immediate reaction is to thank his physicians and nurses for providing him with quality medical care. Similarly, a rescued prisoner will credit his release to the politicians or other men of influence who lobbied on his behalf and thereby secured his freedom.

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But no, she invited the king and Haman to a party and then at the first party she invited them to a second party and only at the second party she disclosed Haman's plot to the king.

When I think of this series of events, I have two fundamental questions regarding the story: (1) Why the rush and (2) why the delay? Why the rush to speak with the king and why the delay once his interest is piqued?

First, why the rush? Esther was willing to put her life on the line to meet with Achashverosh. Why didn't she wait until he summoned her. After all, the killings of the Jews weren't scheduled to take place for another year. We can be reasonably sure that Esther would be summoned at some point. By coming to the king unannounced, she might have put her life in jeopardy and then certainly there would be no Jew in the palace to save the Jews. What's the rush? The truth is that perhaps this is Esther's claim to Mordechai when he asked her to go to the king. She responded by telling him, "I haven't been called in 30 days." The Megillas SeSarim explains that she asked Mordechai, "Isn't it better to wait until I am summoned to the king?" The answer, said Mordechai, was an emphatic no. Mordechai told her to risk her life now. But why? Why the rush? It seems that Esther had a legitimate claim. We'll shortly return to this question.

Second, why the delay? Why did Esther not confront Achashverosh right away? Why did she invite the king to one party, then to a second party and only then tell him of how Haman's plans to destroy her people? Rashi's understanding of Esther's plan is that Esther wanted to make the king suspicious as to why she invited Haman to this party. Haman was very powerful and we know that there was already an attempt on the king's life which likely prompted the law that any unauthorized entry into his inner chamber would result in death. According to Rashi, Esther was playing on the king's sense of insecurity and wanted to create some distance between the king and Haman before she disclosed her identity. If Esther would immediately tell the king that Haman plotted against her, then it is likely that the king would have chosen Haman over Esther. After all, the king had killed his queen beforehand and Haman was his most powerful minister. Therefore, it was imperative that before Esther disclosed her identity, she should create some mistrust between the king and Haman.

In fact, Rashi's position seems to go hand in hand with the position of Rabbi Yehoshua ben Korchah in Maseches Megillah. He maintains that Esther thought that the king would believe that Esther and Haman were conspiring against the king and so the king would kill both of them, in which case she believed that Haman's evil decree would be canceled. Additionally, with Haman present, she could catch him off guard so he would not have time to think of a plan to counteract Esther's plea.

Perhaps, though, the answer as to why the rush and why the delay is the same. Perhaps, based on Ibn Ezra's commentary, this story is all about two heroes who search for a sign, find a sign and are strengthened by a sign.

Why the rush? After the decree to kill the Jews is put into place, Mordechai tried to convince Esther to come to the king immediately. When Esther hesitated, according to the Megillas Sesarim, she said, "Isn't it better that I wait until he calls me? It's been thirty days; he's bound to call me soon." Mordechai responded by saying "mi yodai'a im l'ait kazot higa'at lamaluchut." Ibn Ezra explains that Mordechai told her, "Maybe you only became queen for this particular purpose, so that you should save Yisrael."

Ever since Esther became queen, Mordechai was asking himself – why, why – Mordechai was searching for a sign. There must be a reason, there must be a reason why of all the women chosen, Esther was chosen. Finally, five years later, Mordechai saw the sign. This is the reason Esther was selected to become queen – to save the Jews. Once he found this sign, he truly believed that everything would turn out well and he forced the issue with Esther to go to the king immediately, perhaps so that the decree could be overturned before copies of the decree were sent out throughout all the lands. Once Mordechai saw the sign, he had faith. That faith strengthened him to act swiftly and decisively.

Why the delay? Why didn't Esther tell the king about Haman's plot initially? The Ibn Ezra believes that she was planning to tell the king at the first party, but she was waiting for a sign from G-d that G-d had heard her prayers and that G-d had seen the fasts of the people of Shushan. It is true that the king did not kill her when she approached him unannounced, but she needed a stronger sign that G-d was on her side.

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Time is of the Essence *continued*

What happened between the first and second parties? Haman was forced to lead Mordechai through the streets. After this event, Esther believed that Haman ultimately was going to fail and now she was ready to tell the king who she was at the second party, after she saw this sign of G-d.

As such, according to the Ibn Ezra, Esther, like Mordechai, searched for a sign, found her sign and was strengthened by that sign. She had the courage and faith to plead with the king at the second party that resulted in the downfall of Haman and the salvation of the Jews.

What is the story of Megillas Esther? It's a story of a world seemingly without any signs, where G-d seems to be absent. We don't find the name of G-d anywhere in the Megillah but, in fact, it tells a story of a hero and a heroine, each of whom, at different times, search for a sign, find their sign and is strengthened by that sign. On this holiday of Purim, let us look for signs. Perhaps G-d is telling those of us who struggle now in terms of health, financially or otherwise, to look for signs. Perhaps our signs are the members of our family who give us comfort, perhaps our signs are our good friends who are always there for us, perhaps our signs are the roofs over our heads that provide shelter for us. Let us look for our own signs of G-d's presence in our lives, let us be comforted by the signs, let us celebrate those signs on this holiday of Purim and let us utilize these signs to strengthen our relationship with HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

Our Sages tell us Mi'she'nikhnas Adar Marbim b'simcha, that when the month of Adar begins, we should increase our happiness. Sometimes it's not so easy to fulfill this mitzvah. Sometimes it's not so easy to be happy when we look around at what's going in our lives and what's going on in the world. Yet, our Sages command us to be happy. We must find ways to be happy at this time. Mordechai and Esther teach us the method – find the signs in our own lives and use them to appreciate goodness and be hopeful. Chag Purim samei'ach!

Who Gets the Credit? *continued*

And travelers who arrive safely at their destination instinctively feel grateful to the crew and security personnel who guaranteed their safe and successful passage through dangerous areas, be they deserts or oceans.

Of course, we may – and must – employ all natural means at our disposal to guarantee our safety and well-being. We are encouraged to seek the highest quality healthcare, to appeal to people of influence on behalf of fellow Jews in crisis, and to hire professional crew members and security guards to guarantee our safety during travel. And we must indeed feel and express gratitude to those people who help ensure our well-being. At the same time, however, the Torah demands that we view them all as but messengers of G-d. Ultimately, it is not the physician who heals or the security guard who protects, but rather the Almighty.

In these four situations there is a tendency not to look beyond the surface to recognize the true source of our salvation. Therefore, specifically in these cases the Torah requires an individual to bring a special sacrifice to express his debt of gratitude to G-d, to demonstrate that he gives the ultimate credit for his rescue to the Almighty, and not to anybody else.

In the dangerous world in which we live, many people place their trust in the government security agencies, relying entirely on these officials to guarantee our safety. In truth, however, placing one's trust solely in these people is a frightening prospect to consider. Devoted and hard-working as the security establishment may be, it is not possible for these officials to be everywhere at all times and guarantee every citizen's safety. At the end of the day, it is only G-d upon whom we can rely, and only by recognizing our ultimate dependence on Him can we truly feel safe and secure.

Reaching Out to All Levels

In Parshas Tzav, when the Torah explains how the Kohen was to remove the ashes from the Mizbeach, it states, “Then he shall take off his garments and put on other garments, and carry the ashes to a clean place outside the camp.” (6:11) Rashi explains that he did this because the garments used for cooking a dish for one’s master shouldn’t be worn while pouring the master a cup of wine. Meaning, that the Kohen should have garments for removing the ashes and garments for doing the other avodah.

**Aryeh
Shemelzman**
Sophomore

From the simple reading of Rashi it seems that he is giving two distinct reasons as to why the Kohen had to change his garments. One reason is that it is a law on the garment itself, as it shouldn’t get dirtied. Another is that it is a law pertaining to the Kohen’s avodah, that he should not wear the same garments for “cooking food for one’s master” as he does for a loftier service like “pouring the master a cup of wine.”

Rashi here is referring to removing the ashes as “cooking food” and all of the other avodah done as “pouring wine”. Why would one Kohen perform these two services? These services are usually done by their own distinct servant, the chef cooking the food, and the butler pouring the wine.

The fact that the same Kohen did both these jobs emphasizes the reality that we cannot judge the importance of a Mitzvah, and that all of them are equal. This also comes to teach us that we must prepare for a Mitzvah and do whatever is necessary for a Mitzvah.

The Gemara in Kesuvos tells us that Rabbi Chiya not only taught his students, but also made all the necessary preparations to teach them. He would also make all the preparations with equal dedication, similar to the dedication he showed when actually teaching his students. This teaches us a lesson we must apply in our spiritual service. A person might think that he only has to occupy himself with his type of people and not to go and reach out to every Jew. Although this person agrees that someone should reach out to them, he thinks that is the job for the Kohanim, and that his place is only the Beis Medresh or the Shul.

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Esther’s Moral Imperative and Ours

The Megillah is known to us as a “Megillas Esther”. The title indicates more than just a central character around which the plot revolves. The Gemara in Maseches Megillah (7a) states: “Rav Shemuel ben Yehuda said: Esther sent to the sages demanding, ‘inscribe me (my story) for all generations’.” Hence the obligation of recording and reading the Megillah would seem to arise from a direct request by Esther. However, the Megillah is a story which unfolds in the public arena. It is a story of an entire nation faced with the threat of genocide. To add to this, the Megillah contains other heroes, Mordechai among them. Yet, this Megillah is known not as “Megillas HaYehudim” or even “Megillas Mordechai”, but rather as “Megillas Esther.” This being the case, an accurate and thorough reading of the Megillah requires that we pay special attention to Esther’s personal story. Reading and understanding the Megillah requires that we understand what happened to Esther and take note of the various stages of her development. What lessons can we take from the Megillah when we read it from her point of view?

**Evan
Linder**
Senior

Esther’s development finds expression on two interrelated levels: Strength of character and moral awareness. We clearly see this development from the second chapter where we are introduced to Esther and the closing chapters.

Who is Esther who appears on the scene in the second chapter? She is, at first glance, a simple innocent girl with nothing special to offer besides her beauty.

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Reaching Out to All Levels *continued*

Rashi's lesson to us here is that the person who is going to "pour wine for his master" should also be the person reaching out to every Jew.

However, when one performs this service, he should wear more humble clothing, not the clothing he wears while serving on the "inside." He should dress in a somewhat similar manner of the person he is helping, in order to assist him and to reach out to him.

Indeed, this manner of service may actually require a very great descent, for it may very well be that all he is able to presently affect is not actual performance of Torah and Mitzvos, but only a preparatory state such as avoidance of evil and the like.

Nevertheless, specifically performing this manner of service enables the person to be considered a truly complete "Kohen," one who serves both on the "inside" and the "outside," one who "pours his master a cup of wine," and also "cooks the food" for him.

Let us use the Kohen's service as a directive to help and teach other Jews, especially those who are not yet comfortable with our Torah and traditions. In this merit all of Israel will unify and together we shall celebrate the coming of Mashiach in the near future.

Esther's Moral Imperative and Ours *continued*

She is devoid of any sense of independence. She is under Mordechai's control; He treats her as a daughter. "And everything Mordechai said Esther would do- just as when she was still in his home (2:20). What is equally apparent is her passivity. When she is at home she does whatever Mordechai wills and in the palace she does only "what she is told by Hegai, the king's officer, appointed over the women." She does everything according to orders, devoid of individual will. At the simple level, she is nothing more than a passive conformist.

Although there was a public significance to her entry into the royal palace there is really nothing that gives her national prominence. "Where does the Torah hint to Megillas Esther?" the Gemara asks, "from the words 'I shall surely hide my face (haster astir)'" mentioned in the Tochacha, or rebuke of Moshe to the Jews. At the beginning of the Megillah, Esther is hidden from us. "Esther did not mention her birthplace or her nationality" (2:20). There are no identifiable characteristics, no national identity, moral identification, no roots or background. This is the Esther of the opening perakim.

A glance further on reveals how this innocent girl displays initiative that we would never have expected of her. She takes on Achashverosh and Haman at their own game of duplicity and fraud. She leads Haman into a trap, simultaneously arousing the anger and passion of Achashverosh. Together with her personal initiative, her national and moral identities are also realized.

From here onwards Esther not only displays initiative in the sphere of political manipulations, but, brimming with self-confidence faces up to Haman. Her leadership is so outstanding towards the end of the Megillah that to some degree it overshadows even that of Mordechai. Once upon a time "whatever Mordechai said Esther would do." Suddenly Mordechai's own achievements stem from Esther's action. He possesses Haman's home through Esther. Who writes the Megillah asks the Gemara? "Queen Esther daughter of Avichayil wrote it."

The Esther of the end of the Megillah is clearly different than she was at the beginning. Therefore the question must be raised: What happened to Esther that changed her and when did this change occur? The answer is that the change occurred in four pesukim in the middle of the Megillah.

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After the royal decree to exterminate the Jews, messengers are sent out throughout the kingdom to publicize it. Upon hearing the terrible report, Esther begins to awaken slightly from her passivity. "The queen was greatly distressed" (4:4) However, Esther merely has an internal feeling that affects no change. What eventually gets her to act? Mordechai disturbs her when she hears that her uncle is wearing sackcloth, she can't bear it. "She sent clothing to clothe Mordechai and to remove the sackcloth from upon him, but he did not accept it" (4:4). Instead of trying to annul the decree she begs Mordechai to stop and merely accept the decree as it is and live with it. And despite everything this still represents progress. She no longer displays complete passivity.

Mordechai refuses Esther's request. She sends messengers a second time "To learn what this was and why this was" (4:5). What can be done? Mordechai sends back a clear message, a copy of the royal decree. Mordechai is telling Esther that the entire Jewish nation is in danger. This is the appointed date. Do something in your position of power.

She tells Mordechai that she cannot approach the king, it is again palace regulations. In essence there is the entire nation on one side of the scale and Esther on the other. The deciding issue is her personal problem. Her personal interest in her mind wins out over the death of her nation. At this point Mordechai sends her a message which, if read correctly should send a chill down the spine. "Mordechai said to reply to Esther: Do not imagine that you will escape in the king's palace from (among) all the Jews." Mordechai isn't calling Esther a coward for not doing anything. He isn't attributing it to weakness. He is attributing it to the fact that she doesn't care about her people. She would rather hide in the palace as part of the royal family rather than risk her life for her people. If she were to truly identify with the Jews she would answer the calling of her people.

Mordechai adds a further note: "for if you will remain silent at this time relief and salvation will arise for the Jews from somewhere else and you and your father's house will perish. Who knows, perhaps for the sake of a time like this you came to join the royalty?" (4:14). Mordechai is telling her that she is mistaken in her calculation. That just because she succeeded in winning the love of Achashverosh that doesn't mean she will succeed in escaping the genocide of her people. That is not how G-d runs this world. A person who runs from the cry of his people cannot survive for if the people are crying to him then it is his destiny to help. Mordechai stripped away all chance for excuses and left only the question: do I care or not? At this moment Esther realizes the dimensions of the threat, the potential tragedy looming over all of Klal Yisrael, including herself. She is no longer anonymous Esther: She is prepared to reveal herself. She is ready to stand together with her nation. Esther now understands that her destiny is not her personal matter but rather bound up with those of the nation as a whole.

The transition from Esther of perek bes and Esther of perek tes lies in perek daled. In the disagreement between Mordechai and Esther Where Esther chooses selflessness over selfishness. As mentioned earlier the Megillah is a story of development on two levels: strength of character and moral awareness. The two processes go hand in hand. When Esther finds the will to achieve an important end she finds the ability to do so as well. This is the essence of Mordechai's message- if there is a will there is a way. But first, you must truly will it.

This message is incredibly practical for the whole of Klal Yisrael today. The era we live is the "golden age of galus". We enjoy great freedom and comfort; however our enemies are still abundant and our fate still unsure. We have the luxury of having "a queen in the royal palace" so to speak because of our sovereign state. Therefore just as Esther had to ask herself "do I care?" so must we all. Hopefully the answer will be a resounding yes and through this recognition the Jewish people will be united in our own development as a nation and religion to grow towards each other and Hashem in unity.

Matanos Le'evyonim: The Greatest Satisfaction of All

Towards the end of the Rambam's codification of the laws of Purim he writes (Hilchos Megilla 2:17), "It is preferable for a person to be more liberal in his donations to the poor than to be lavish in his [preparations of the Purim] feast or in sending portions to his friends. For there is no greater or more exalted joy than bringing joy to the hearts of the needy, orphans, widows and foreigners – for one who brings joy the heart of these downtrodden people resembles the Divine presence, as it says [about the Almighty], "to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the spirit of the depressed." (Yeshayahu 57:15)

**Yedidya
Levy
Junior**

The Rambam clearly creates a hierarchy with regard to Mishlo'ach Manos, Seudah and Matanos le'evyonim, three of the mitzvos associated with Purim Day. The Rambam writes that the most significant Mitzvah of the three is Matanos le'evyonim, giving charity to the needy. Along with the significant practical application of this Halacha, it is very interesting to note the reason that the Rambam presents for this added emphasis on Matanos le'evyonim. Interestingly, the Rambam does not write that charity trumps personal satisfaction. Rather, the Rambam writes that charity is in fact the ultimate form of joy and thereby a greater means of self satisfaction than the Mitzvos of Seudah and Mishloach Manos.

The idea of giving to those in need and being inclusive of those that might regularly experience exclusion is fundamental to understanding the philosophy of the Rambam. The Rambam's comments in the above bring to mind his more famous remarks said with regard to Yom Tov (Hilchos Yom Tov 6:18), "And when a person eats and drinks, he is obligated to feed and give drink to the foreigner, orphans, widows and other despondent, poor people. But one who locks the doors of his yard and eats and drinks with his children and wife, without feeding and giving drink to the poor and the downtrodden – this is not the joy of a mitzva, but rather the joy of his stomach..."

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Purim: A Time to Remember

"Zachor es asher asah lecha Amalek – Remember what Amalek did to you" (Dvarim 25:17)."

This week, we read Parshas Zachor as it is the Shabbos before Purim. In Parshas Zachor, we are commanded to do three mitzvos: to remember what Amalek did to us, to wipe out its descendants, and to never forget what happened. The commandment to wipe out Amalek's descendants was even one of the three integral mitzvos Bnei Yisrael were commanded to do upon their arrival to the land of Israel.

The question arises as to what made the nation of Amalek special as opposed to other nations who went to fought with Bnei Yisrael that in regard to them we have three commandments? Bnei Yisrael were almost wiped out from Moav, were exiled by Assyria, and were enslaved for more than 200 years by Egypt, yet Amalek is the only nation we were commanded to destroy and never forget.

Furthermore, how do we carry out these mitzvos? We are commanded to remember what Amalek did to us, but how are we supposed to remember? Bnei Yisrael had just left Egypt, crossed the Yam Suf that Hashem split for them, and were feared by all other nations. Suddenly, the nation of Amalek attacks Bnei Yisrael. They lose, however they become the enemy of every Jew, causing these three mitzvos to be given.

A parable to explain the importance of this attack goes as follows. A community once had a very hot spring, naturally heated which nobody would enter because of its heat. One day, a man came by, jumped into the spring and left covered in burns. This man walked away defeated, yet he gave others the courage to jump in and try the water, unafraid of dying.

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**Binyamin
Wallin
Freshman**

Purim: A Time to Remember *continued*

Bnei Yisrael was so-to-speak “untouchable.” They were known as the children of G-d, who had miracles being preformed for them left and right. Amalek came and “tested the water” by attacking Bnei Yisrael. Although they were defeated, when the other nations saw that Amalek attacked, they themselves started attacking, all as a result of Amalek’s original battle.

The mitzvah of remembering what Amalek did to us is done through speech and thought. It is not a mitzvah that should be done once or twice in the year, rather at all times. In order to remember, one must listen to the reading of Parshas Zachor as we do this week. One must also hear it on Purim, because Haman was a descendent of Amalek, and reading Parshas Zachor here helps us remember. The mitzvah is for males only, because males go to war and defeat the enemy. The mitzvah applies always, and one who never remembered what Amalek did to us is not only over on the Aseh, but also the Lo Ta’aseh.

The mitzvah of wiping out Amalek is written in the pasuk as “Timcheh es zeche Amalek.” The mitzvah is to kill all of them, male and female, old and young. The mitzvah is not an easy one, as we see from the mistakes made by great Jews. Yoav ben Tzruyah read it as “Zachar Amalek,” and only wiped out the males. Shaul the great king was commanded to wipe out Amalek, but because he took pity on the king, the king escaped and left behind a woman bearing his child.

This mitzvah applies to all Bnei Yisrael, and was commanded among the other two mitzvos when Bnei Yisrael were entering Israel which were to appoint a king and to build the Beis Hamikdash. Whenever a Jew finds a descendent of Amalek, and doesn’t kill him (if it is in his power of course), he is over the Aseh.

“Lo Tishcach- Never forget.” We as Jews have enemies who stand up to us to destroy us. With Hashem’s help, we survive, and we make it through, but as we say in the hagaddah, “Bechol dor vador omdim aleinu lechaloteinu - In each generation they rise up against us to destroy us.” With Hashem by our side, we can make it through. With the Torah in our minds, we will survive. And as long as we live, at every moment of our lives, always remember to never forget.

Matanos Le-eyonim: The Greatest Satisfaction of All *continued*

Once again, the Rambam illustrates the importance and value of providing for the needy. Giving to the downtrodden is in effect a sanctification of the Yom Tov. May we all merit this Purim to experience the immense pleasure and satisfaction that is achieved through the Mitzvah of Matanos le’eyonim.

Hamasmid has been sponsored this week by Shirley Levy L'iyuluy

Nishmas her father, HARAV TZVI ben Asher HaLevi

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