**Brooklyn torah gazette**

**For purim 5781**

Volume 5, Issue 26 (Whole Number 226) 14 Adar 5781/ February 26, 2021

**Printed L’illuy nishmas Nechama bas R’ Noach, a”h**

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# Rav Avigdor Miller on Purim



 **QUESTION:** **Yaakov Avinu dealt with Eisav by sending him gift in order to appease him. Why in the time of Purim didn’t we try to do our hishtadlus by trying to bribe Achashveirosh? ﻿**

 **ANSWER:** Achashveirosh was so wealthy that you couldn’t bribe him. Haman offered him Ten thousand silver talents. Now a kikar is a talent, and a talent is a big amount of silver. Ten thousand heavy talents! And Achashveirosh said: You take it. They couldn’t bribe Achashveirosh – he was too wealthy.
TAPE # E-3

 **QUESTION: So why didn’t they follow the lesson of Yaakov and try to escape to another country?**

 **ANSWER:** In the ancient times you couldn’t just escape. Nobody was able to move around freely the way you imagine today. Every country had its ruler.

 Today in America, it’s somewhat easier. You just get into a car and you travel. But in those days you couldn’t just make a fast escape from the country. And therefore, they were caught in a trap with no way out.
TAPE # E-3

 **QUESTION: How are we really supposed to see the neis of Purim if it was a neis nistar that was hidden in the natural events?**

 **ANSWER:** The answer is that sometimes a thing can be so startling that you just can’t hide it. The American government is carrying out nuclear tests – nuclear explosions – and they’re trying to hide it, but the scientists who have the proper instruments know what’s going on, and they can tell you the details where it’s going on and when. And your mind is your instrument. With a little bit of thought, you see the hand of Hashem.

 You can’t hide certain things. And when Haman, who was the king’s favorite, is now not only not a favorite, but he’s wiped out – and not only that, but the one who took his place was the least likely person, so even the biggest dumbbell could guess Who is to blame for all this “The One who dwells in heaven is laughing.” Hakodosh Boruch Hu was playing the joke and everybody could see it.

 And therefore “All the ends of the world saw that it was a salvation from Hashem.” It was very clear to everyone. Only that if you don’t put your mind to it, you don’t see anything and you’ll remain the same person you were last Purim, and the year before that, and the year before that. But the wise person will use his Purim to see how Hashem is doing everything for the Am Yisroel, and he’ll fall in love with Hashem. Because the person who is the same person on the day after Purim as he was the day before Purim, has wasted a tremendous opportunity.
TAPE # 110

***Reprinted from the March 18, 2019 email of Toras Avigdor (Tape #E-3and 110)***

**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Purim - Tetzaveh 5781**



 In this year of 5781 here in Jerusalem, the Torah reading of Tetzaveh coincides with the day of Purim itself. There seems to be great similarities between this Torah reading and the reading of the book of Esther on Purim. Throughout the entire Torah, we find that the name of our great teacher Moshe (after his birth) is found in each weekly portion, with one lone exception. In Tetzaveh Moshe’s name never appears, even though we are aware that Moshe is the one who wrote this portion of the Torah and taught it to the Jewish people for all eternity. We are aware that Moshe is the hidden author, the director of events behind the scenes.

 There are many comments by the scholars of Israel over the ages who try to explain why this is so. But for the purposes of this short essay, it is sufficient simply to realize that Moshe is the teacher of the Torah par excellence, who is hidden from us. As we will soon see, we are made aware of the value of people and ideas remaining hidden, and not always exposed to the light of human inspection and society. The ability of Moshe to remain hidden and the benefit of his anonymity, is one of the blessings of his noble character and humble greatness.

 In the same vein, we also find that in the book of Esther the holy name of God is not there. There is no reference whatsoever made of the intercession and interference of Heaven in the events described in the written record of the story and miracle of Purim. The book of Esther reads as an exciting, completely rational and understandable story of political intrigue, of psychologically damaged individuals, unforeseen salvation and as an example of the twists and turns that make a mockery of human certainties and predictions.

 Once again, there is an unseen and unmentioned director of events that is controlling the narrative of this story. Purim is the holiday that commemorates this concept.  There is no flash of lightning nor roar of thunder, no volcanic eruptions or plagues of locusts that mark this miracle. Yet, it is obvious that when we piece the whole story together, the miracle of the event becomes obvious and revealed, no matter how hidden it was while it was being enacted (read the words of the Rabbis in the Al Hanisim prayer recited on Purim).

 Perhaps this is the reason why Purim is such a day of unmitigated joy because it represents the joy of thousands who have discovered and unraveled a mystery, the solution of which was not originally understood by many. It is the delight of the discovery of the hidden Director that fills us with both merriment and joy. When a hidden treasure is revealed, humans are usually overcome with a feeling of happiness and achievement.

 The great Chasidic master of Kotzk continually maintained that truth is always hidden from public view. He said that if it were revealed, it would be criticized, reviled, and discounted, for we live in a false world, to use the phrase that the Talmud chose to describe human existence. Ultimate truth can only be found within one's own self, and it takes an enormous amount of effort and searching to find it. Only the hidden eventually proves to be true, accurate, and eternal.

 Falsehoods are wherever we turn. It is not only ‘fake news’ that confounds us, but it is also that we live in an era where society is shaped by the opinions of others, with their human weaknesses. The Torah wishes to give us a direction as to where truth can be found. It hid the name of Moshe in this week's Torah reading, and hid the name of G-d, again, in the book of Esther.

 If one wishes to find G-d he or she needs to search within one's own self. The same is true of understanding and appreciating the Torah that Moshe wrote, gave and taught us. The Torah shows us that we are not that distant from truth. But it cannot be found on the surface, but only within our own souls. So be it.

*Reprinted from the current website of Rabbiwein.com*

**PURIM – The Joy of Life**

**Megillas Esther**

**By Rabbi Bentzion Shafier**

**Founder of TheSmuz.com**



 “*The Jews had light and gladness, and joy and honor*.” — Esther 8:16

 “Rav Yehudah said: Light refers to Torah, gladness refers to holiday, joy refers to circumcision, and honor refers to tefillin.” — Megillah 16b

 In the eighth year of Achashverosh’s rule, on the thirteenth of Adar, every Jewish man, woman and child was to be slaughtered. Young or old, wealthy or poor, they were counted as one, and on that fateful day, the Jewish people would cease to be. According to the ways of the world and according to the natural course of events, that is what should have happened.

 But it didn’t. In the greatest reversal of fortune, the tables were turned and the Jews were saved. In a heartbeat, they went from death to life, from despondency to hope, from being sheep led to the slaughter to having Mordechai HaTzaddik paraded through the streets of Shushan. The people had lived through an astonishing miracle, and they experienced great joy. “And the Jews of Shushan were jubilant and celebrated.”

 Yet, when the Gemara describes their elation, it seems to leave out the issue of life and death. Where the Megillah says, “The Jews had light and gladness, and joy and honor,” Chazal interpret it to mean, “The Jews had Torah, yom tov, milah and tefillin,” as if to say that the reason the Jews were celebrating was because they again had the opportunity to do these mitzvos. The issue of their being granted their lives doesn’t seem to weigh into the equation. It seems that the Gemara is saying that their entire celebration and their source of joy was that they were now once again able to perform these mitzvos.

 This is very difficult to understand. Granted, these might be additional reasons to celebrate, but isn’t life a much greater reason? They were going to die, and HASHEM saved them. Isn’t that the greatest cause for celebration and giving thanks to HASHEM?

 (Rashi makes this question even more difficult by adding his comment that Haman decreed against all of these mitzvos. But this is not true. Haman’s decree wasn’t against the keeping of religion at all. It was quite simply death to the Jews. There was no mention of mitzvos whatsoever. What does Rashi mean that Haman decreed against these mitzvos?)

 To understand this, let’s fast forward to a modern day, rags to riches story.

**Rags to Riches**

 Born in 1934, Sheldon Adelson was the son of Ukrainian immigrants. His father drove a taxi, and his mother ran a knitting shop. He grew up in one of the poorest sections of Boston. But even as a young boy, he showed great ambition, first selling newspapers on the street corner, and then running his first business at the age of twelve. He went on to build over fifty businesses, eventually owning the Venetian Sands Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. He became a very wealthy man.

 A funny thing, however, happened to Sheldon Adelson in 2003 when he took the Sands Corporation public. The stock skyrocketed, and his assets went from 1.4 billion dollars to 20 billion dollars in a year and a half. Forbes Magazine estimates that during this time, his wealth increased at a rate of one million dollars per hour.

 A million dollars an hour is a tidy sum of money. To illustrate what that means, imagine that during this time, he sat down to a nice leisurely lunch. When he got up and walked away, he was a million dollars richer. Or if he went for a dip in the pool, by the time he had dried his hair, he was seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars wealthier. If he took a nice Shabbos nap, by the time he woke up, another three million dollars were in his coffers.

 Extremely wealthy people describe getting rich as exhilarating — almost intoxicating. “It is one of the most pleasurable experiences on the planet.” It seems that having wealth is nowhere near as much fun as acquiring it. And here this man was gaining wealth at a dizzying pace. It is difficult to imagine the sense of excitement he must have felt. Wow!!! Life is awesome. More and more! This is indescribably great!

**The Answer**

 This seems to be the answer to the Gemara. When the Jews of Shushan were saved, they saw HASHEM taking care of them, orchestrating events, running the world. They saw behind the veil of physicality and recognized their Creator. But more than just seeing HASHEM, this experience changed their understanding of life.

 Someone who has had a near death experience is a changed man. His interests change. His value system changes. The pursuits that once gripped him lose their hold. Because he tasted death, he looks at life differently. And he questions. Why is life so precious? What is the tragedy of death? We all die anyway. Sooner. Later. What difference does it make?

 And the real answer is — no difference. Generations come; generations go. They seem so important at the time, and then they pass as if they never were, like dust in the wind. And really nothing matters — until you understand the purpose of life. Once you understand that HASHEM created us to grow, that HASHEM put us in this world to shape ourselves into what we will be for eternity, then you understand the value of life. Life is valuable because it is time — time to grow, time to accomplish, time given as the chance to acquire your World to Come. Once you understand that, you understand life, and then you understand the tragedy of death. Death is dreadful because it robs a person of that chance to grow.

 Rav Matisyahu Salomon, shlita, the Lakewood mashgiach, explained that this is what Rashi is telling us. When the Jews of Shushan celebrated, it was because they had reached a different understanding of life. A moment earlier, death was upon them. Yet, suddenly, inexplicably, it all turned around. As a result, they were a changed people. They no longer valued the things they once did; they viewed life from a dramatically different vantage point.

 And because it was so sudden and the change so complete, it catapulted them to a level of understanding that was unprecedented. It was all clear. And, they felt tremendous joy — but joy for a reason, happiness for a cause. They understood the reason that HASHEM put them on this planet. They recognized the extraordinary wealth they could acquire with one mitzvah. And this is what brought them happiness.

 This concept should be very relevant to us, as we, too, should be happy beyond description. Every moment of life is an opportunity to acquire wealth of unimaginable proportions — far more than a million dollars an hour. One word of Torah learning is a jewel that will last forever. Putting on tefillin once is an eternal treasure far more valuable than anything found in this world.

 When a person understands this, his perspective changes. He understands the great opportunity that HASHEM has given him: a chance to acquire eternity. He will be filled with happiness and joy, and he will take on life with a passion.

Reprinted from the website of Theshmuz.com.

**Special Megilla Esther Published**

**In Memory of Esther Horgen, Hy”d**

By Daniel Keren



 This week Jews around the world celebrate the joyous holiday of Purim that is preceded by the Fast of Esther. For the Horgen family, it will be a bitter sweet holiday as they continue to mourn their mother of six children – Mrs. Esther Horgen, hy”d who was brutally murdered on December 21st by an Arab terrorist while taking a jog near her Tel Menashe home in the Shomrim section of Israel.



**Esther and Benjamin Horgen**

 Mixed with their heartbreak, the family decided during the week of Shiva to honor the memory of their kadosh (martyr) by preparing a special Megilla Esther in time for this year’s reading of the Scroll of Esther on Purim. After all, we the Jewish people are called the People of the Book and this special project of the Israel Bible will offer Jews around the world to make sure that the memory of Esther Horgen is not forgotten.

 This Purim Megillah is geared specifically to English-reading religious Zionists. Edited by Rabbi Tuly Weisz of the Israel Bible project, it includes illustrations by Mrs. Horgen along with an introduction by her husband Benjamin Horgen (may he and his children find comfort amongst the mourners of Yerushalayim in the gates of Zion,) and special letter from both the Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu and President of Israel Reuven Rivlin.

 Like most traditional Megillah Esthers, this new edition contains the Biblical text in Hebrew along with an English translation. In years to come, long after that wretched murderer is long forgotten, this edition published in memory of Mrs. Horgen will according to the worlds of Prime Minister Netanyahu “serve as an eternal light for her memory.

 In his introduction to this special Megillah, Mr. Horgen writes:

 “It is impossible to summarize any person in a few sentences, much less such a complete and deep personality as my beloved Esther was.

 “A caring daughter, a cherished sister, the dedicated mother of our six children, the iconic grandmother of Ofek and Inbar, and last, but not least, my loving wife for more than 30 years.

 “But above all Esther was herself.

 “Full of life, lover of life – in all its expressions.

 “My Esther was blessed with a rare quality – she saw the good in everyone, every place and every moment. She was a deeply spiritual person, who like the Jewish Sages whose teachings had a profound influence upon her…”

 At the end of the Megillat Esther Horgen published The Israel Bible foundation was reprinted a special poem that Mrs. Horgen eerily published in memory of a young Israeli boy who was himself brutally and senselessly murdered by another Arab terrorist just a few weeks before his bar mitzvah.

 She writes:

 “For some people, the purposes of terror attacks is to awaken or to punish us. For others, G-d has lost control of the situation. Many others feel invaded by terror. What hides behind these fears? These fears were already present, terrorism merely externalized them.

 “We become aware of our fears, able to understand them and to draw personal conclusions. We know how to overcome fear of dying, after all, we drive in our cars every day. Where does this fear that has crept into so many of our hearts come from?

 “Fear reflects our lack of faith in ourselves, in life, in G-d. Even the knowledge that absolutely everything is under Hashem’s perfect control, and that there is never any loss of divine control, does not always soothe a troubled heart…”

 May the publication of this special book at the time of this joyous holiday of Purim bring comfort to the Horgen family and to all of those who were privileged to know and enjoy the unique personality of this special “Esther.” And in that merit may we all be worthy of seeing the coming of Moshiach soon with the complete geulah (redemption) from this long and bitter galus (exile) and may we soon find fulfillment in the words of the Megillah that declare that “the Jews had light and gladness and joy and honor.”

 This new edition of the Scroll of Esther in memory of Esther Horgen can be found in Jewish bookstores.

*Reprinted from the February 26, 2021 edition of The Jewish Connection.*