

A Guide to Purim



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Introduction

On the surface, the story of Purim is about an evil villain called Haman who tries to destroy the Jewish people. Esther and Mordechai, the two heroes of our story, stand up against Haman and defeat his evil plans.

Who is Haman, Esther and Mordechai in our lives? Why is God's name not mentioned even once in this incredible story? What are the unique mitzvot of Purim?

At Yeshivat Torah v'Avodah, we encourage our students to not only study the story of Purim as something that happened in the distant past, but also to relate it to our current struggles- both individually and nationally. Inside of Purim, there are many spiritual, political and personal messages for our life. Just as the Torah is a guidebook for life, so too, allow this booklet to be a spiritual guide for your Purim.

Who is this book written by? The rabbis and teachers of YTVA of Jerusalem. Who is this book written for? The past, present, and future students of YTVA, as well as any Jew who is seeking a more meaningful Purim.

May Hashem bless us all with a Purim where we not only celebrate the defeat of the ancient Haman, but also the destruction of our current enemies. Purim Sameach!

The Half-Shekel and the Eternity of Israel

- מאז ולתמיד -

Rabbi Shaul Feldman

The Gemara records a striking teaching of Reish Lakish:

"גלוי וידוע לפני מי שאמר והיה העולם שעתיד המן לשקול
שקלים על ישראל, לפיכך הקדים שקליהן לשקליו"
(Megillah 13b)

"It was revealed and known before the One Who spoke and brought the world into being that Haman would one day weigh out silver against Israel; therefore, God preceded his shekalim with theirs."

At first glance, this statement is difficult to understand. Haman's payment to Achashverosh was not a mitzvah, nor was it motivated by any moral or spiritual purpose. It was an act of pure evil, designed to enable genocide. Why, then, should it possess any spiritual significance that would require a prior response through the mitzvah of the half shekel?

We find in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 39b) that, at times, the moral achievements of the nations can serve as a "*kitrug*" a prosecuting force against Israel. When others act righteously, Israel is held to account. But Haman's act was entirely destructive. What possible spiritual "weight" could his silver carry?

Rav Kook's Fundamental Insight

In *Midbar Shur*, Rav Kook offers a profound explanation one that lies at the heart of Rav Kook's overall Torah!

Even the nations of the world, Rav Kook explains, recognize that Israel is protected by God as a people. Throughout history, our survival itself testifies to Divine providence. Haman therefore advanced a different and more subtle claim: once Israel entered exile, they ceased to exist as a nation. They were no longer a unified **ציבור**, but merely a collection of scattered individuals.

This idea already appears in Tehillim:

"אמרו לנו ונכחידם מגוי ולא יזכר שם ישראל עוד"

"They said: Let us erase them from being a nation, so that the name of Israel will be remembered no more."

(Tehillim 83)

The strategy is clear. First, remove Israel's status as a "*goy*" a nation. Only then can they be destroyed.

Haman expresses this very argument to Achashverosh:

"ישנו עם אחד מפוזר ומפורד בין העמים"

He begins by calling them "one people," but immediately undermines the phrase: they are scattered and divided. They may once have been a nation, but now they are merely dispersed individuals.

Here lies a crucial point: a nation can only be "purchased" or transferred by a king to another king. A sovereign people stands under sovereign authority. But individuals, lacking collective identity, can be bought, sold, and manipulated by anyone. Once Israel is reduced to isolated

persons, they become vulnerable to every power and every influence.

Therefore, Haman argues, having lost their collective identity, they can be “purchased” and eliminated.

Significantly, the decree concludes with the plural form “לאבדם” “to destroy them” because, in Haman’s view, there is no longer a single national entity to destroy, only isolated people.

Haman’s silver, then, was not merely a bribe. It was a theological accusation: Israel is no longer a nation.

The Half-Shekel: God’s Response

The mitzvah of *machatzit ha-shekel* is the Divine refutation of Haman’s claim.

The Torah describes this mitzvah as:

“לזיכרון לפני ה'”

“A remembrance before God.”

Every Jew gives exactly the same amount—rich and poor alike. No one gives more, and no one gives less. The half-shekel does not express individual achievement or personal greatness. It expresses belonging.

Furthermore, the communal offerings in Beit Hamikdash were purchased with these funds. Through the half-shekel, every Jew became a partner in the ציבור and in its service of God.

This mitzvah defines Israel not as a collection of private individuals, but as a single living organism.

Netzach: Eternity and Victory

The half-shekel embodies two inseparable ideas, both rooted in the same Hebrew root: נצח.

1. נצח – Eternity

The Jewish people exist as an eternal nation, regardless of exile, dispersion, or historical circumstance.

2. נצחון – Victory

Our ultimate triumph over forces like Haman does not come from political power or military strength, but from our essential unity.

These two meanings are one. Israel's victory flows from its eternity. Our eternity is expressed through our unity.

This is the meaning of שקליהם לשקליו God הקדים "preceded" Israel's shekalim to Haman's. The inner unity of Israel exists before, and beyond, any historical attempt to deny it. Long before Haman could claim that we were fragmented, God had already rooted us in collective responsibility and shared destiny.

Haman said: You are no longer a nation.

The half-shekel answered: You are, and always will be, one.

From Purim to Our Time

This idea reaches its climax in the words of Esther:

"לך כנוס את כל היהודים"

"Go and gather all the Jews."

Redemption begins when Jews rediscover their unity.
Purim is not only about physical salvation; it is about the
reawakening of our national soul.

And, ב'ה, we have witnessed this in our own generation.
Since 1948, we have seen with our own eyes the physical
and spiritual regathering of the Jewish people, the
rebuilding of our ציבור, and the renewed expression of
our collective חיים.

Despite dispersion, opposition, and challenge, Am Yisrael
lives not as isolated individuals, but as one eternal
people.

May we continue to strengthen that unity, and through it,
merit both נצח and נצחון eternity and victory for
generations to come.

The Party's Over: Megillat Esther and the Jews Who Stayed Behind

Rabbi Dr. Yehuda Seif

I. THE PARTY NO ONE TALKS ABOUT

The Megilla opens not with a crisis but with a celebration. Before there is any decree, any Haman, any Mordekhai sitting defiant at the palace gate, there is a party. A very, very long party. Achashverosh hosts a six-month banquet for the officers of his 127 provinces, capped by a seven-day feast for every inhabitant of Shushan. The text lingers over it—the white and blue linen, the silver and gold couches, the mosaic pavement. The wine flows according to the law: “ein ones”, there is no compulsion. Everyone drinks as they please.

And the Jews of Shushan are there. Eating. Drinking. Comfortable.

This is not an incidental detail. According to Chazal (Megilla 11a), Achashverosh had calculated that Yirmiyahu's seventy years of exile had elapsed and the Jews had not been redeemed. He was certain they never would be. To celebrate that certainty, he brought out the vessels of the Beit HaMikdash—the golden cups, the priestly garments—and set them on the banquet tables of Shushan. The Temple's sacred vessels became party props. And the Jews drank from them.

This opening is the Megilla's first provocation. Everything that follows—Haman's decree, the near annihilation of an

entire people—must be read against this backdrop. The question the Megilla is asking from its very first chapter is not “why does Haman hate the Jews?” The question is: what are the Jews doing here in the first place?

II. THE WORLD THEY LEFT BEHIND

To read the Megilla correctly, one has to situate it historically. Cyrus (Koresh) had already issued his famous proclamation—“Any among you of all His people, may his God be with him, and let him go up” (Ezra 1:3). Koresh had not merely allowed the Jews to return; he actively encouraged it, returning the Temple vessels and funding the rebuilding. Shivat Tzion had begun. Ezra and Nechemia describe a small, struggling Jewish community in the Land of Israel, battling opposition from neighboring peoples, unable to pay their taxes, some selling their children into indentured servitude just to survive.

While the Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel was struggling to exist, to survive, to build the Temple, the Jews of Shushan were sitting comfortably, enjoying the sumptuous feast organized by the Persian king for all the inhabitants of his capital. The contrast is stark and deliberate. On one side of the empire: Jews hauling stones, fighting hostile neighbors, mortgaging their futures to rebuild what Nebuchadnetzar destroyed. On the other: Jews reclining at Achashverosh’s banquet.

The opportunity to return had been real. Koresh made that explicit. And yet, only approximately forty thousand Jews responded to the call. The majority stayed in

Babylonia and Persia. They had built lives. They had positions. Mordekhai himself sits at the palace gate—a man integrated, respected, at home. His very name is the tell: Mordekhai almost certainly derives from Marduk, the chief Babylonian deity. No Jew in the land of Israel would have borne such a name. The name alone marks him as a product of the exile, shaped by it, embedded in it. The Megilla is not propaganda for the Diaspora. It is a prophetic indictment dressed in the clothing of a court drama.

III. WHICH CITY IS THE בִּירָה?

The Megilla's first verse calls Shushan the "bira"—the capital, the citadel. It is a word that appears exactly once elsewhere in all of Tanakh. In Divrei HaYamim (I 29:19), David prays for his son Shelomo: "And to Shelomo my son, grant a whole heart... and to build the bira which I have prepared." There, bira refers to the Beit HaMikdash itself.

The author of the Megilla knows this. The choice of the word is not innocent. By calling Shushan the "bira," the text is posing a pointed question to its readers: which city is the true royal capital? Where does God actually rule? The palace of Achashverosh, or the Temple Mount in Jerusalem?

The architectural parallel extends further. The Megilla describes the layout of Achashverosh's palace with unusual precision: an outer courtyard (chatzer hachitzona), an inner court, and an innermost chamber where entry without invitation means death. Chazal saw

the Mikdash in this structure immediately. The outer courtyard parallels the azara, where Israelites could stand. The inner court corresponds to the Heichal, where only kohanim entered freely. The innermost chamber, entry to which carries a death penalty, is the Kodesh HaKodashim, the Holy of Holies—accessible only to the Kohen Gadol, on Yom Kippur, once a year.

Not coincidentally, the Talmud (Megilla 12a) reports that Achashverosh wore the garments of the Kohen Gadol at his feast. The king of Persia has dressed himself as Israel's high priest. He sits in a room structured like the Temple. He drinks from Temple vessels. The message is almost too direct: Shushan has become a simulacrum of Jerusalem. The Jews of Persia have replaced the Mikdash with the palace, the service of God with the service of Achashverosh.

Rabbi Menachem Leibtag points out one more structural parallel that seals the point: The feast of Achashverosh—six months of banqueting followed by a seven-day celebration for all of Shushan—mirrors the construction of the Mishkan. The Mishkan took six months to build (from Yom Kippur to Rosh Chodesh Nisan), followed by a seven-day miluim ceremony of inauguration. Achashverosh's party is a dark mirror of the Mishkan's dedication. What was built to honor God is now being parodied in the service of a Persian king—and the Jews of Shushan are the audience, cheering it on.

IV. THE ISH YEHUDI WHO WASN'T IN YERUSHALAYIM

The Mishna in Megilla (2:3) records a debate about where one's reading obligation begins. Rabbi Yehuda says: from the words "Ish Yehudi hayah b'Shushan habira"—"There was a Jewish man in Shushan the capital." For R. Yehuda, this is the crux of the story. And if we read it closely, we can understand why.

An "ish Yehudi" is not just any man. The title in Tanakh carries covenantal weight. The ish Yehudi is, in the ideal, God's representative in the world—living in the bira of Yerushalayim, making God's name known to the nations. That is what it means to be a "ממלכת כהנים וגוי קדוש," a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Shemot 19:6). Instead, we find the ish Yehudi in the bira of Shushan. Wrong city. Wrong palace. Wrong king.

The exile was meant to be rehabilitative. Yirmiyahu's letter to the exiles in Bavel (chapter 29) is well known for its instruction to "seek the welfare of the city" and build homes and plant gardens—but this is often read without its conclusion. Yirmiyahu was explicit: after seventy years, God would bring the people back. The exile was not a permanent condition but a timed corrective. The Jews of Shushan, comfortable at Achashverosh's feast, had taken Yirmiyahu's pragmatic advice about surviving in exile and turned it into a theology of staying put.

Rav Leibtag draws out the pointed irony: Haman's appeal to Achashverosh to destroy the Jewish people directly echoes God's own threat in Shirat Ha'azinu (Devarim 32) to destroy Israel for violating the covenant. The same

language, the same logic. Haman is not simply a xenophobe who happens to hate Jews. Within the Megilla's literary architecture, he is a dark instrument of covenantal consequence, appearing precisely because the Jews have violated their end of the bargain by refusing to come home.

V. THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN—AND NOT QUITE RIGHT-SIDE UP

The Megilla's climax is the word "vehafoch hu"—"it was turned upside down" (9:1). Everything reverses. The day appointed for the Jews' destruction becomes the day they prevail over their enemies. Haman's gallows are used for Haman. Mordekhai wears royal garments. Esther, who risked her life to enter the inner court, now dictates policy to the king who once threatened to execute anyone who entered uninvited.

The turnaround is real and total on the political level. But the Megilla is quietly insistent that it is not a complete redemption. This is why we do not recite Hallel on Purim. The Gemara (Megilla 14a) offers a sharp formulation: "It is fine there [at the Exodus] to say 'the servants of God shall praise' and not the servants of Pharaoh. But here—shall we say 'servants of God shall praise' and not the servants of Achashverosh?! We are still servants to Achashverosh!"

This is a devastating observation. The salvation of Purim is incomplete because its beneficiaries remain in Persia. The crisis has passed but the underlying problem—Jewish life organized around Achashverosh rather than God, Shushan as bira rather than Yerushalayim—persists.

Vehafoch hu has turned the political situation upside down. It has not turned the Jews around.

The Megilla's chiastic structure makes this visible in the text itself. The Megilla is built around a series of perfect reversals: Achashverosh's banquet for all provinces is mirrored by a banquet for all the Jews of the provinces; the first seven-day feast is answered by a seven-day celebration of Jewish victory; Haman's letter dispatched throughout the empire is answered by Mordekhai's letter dispatched throughout the empire. Everything that happens to the Jews in the first half happens in reverse in the second. It is literary justice of extraordinary precision.

But notice what is not reversed. There is no letter proclaiming a return to Eretz Yisrael. There is no moment of national teshuvah that produces aliyah. The fast that Esther calls—three days, during Pesach, the festival of freedom from subjugation—is the pivot of the Megilla, the moment when the Jews of Shushan finally awaken to their vulnerability and their identity. Yet even this awakening does not produce the movement it should. The Jews celebrate. They send gifts. They feast again. And they stay.

VI. ESTHER AND THE HIDDEN GOD

God does not appear in the Megilla. This is not an accident of composition—it is the central theological statement of the book. The Talmud (Chullin 139b) connects the name Esther to the Torah's own phrase "haster astir panai," "I will surely hide My face" (Devarim

31:18). God's absence from the Megilla is itself a form of divine speech.

Megillat Esther is often described as the book of *hester panim*—of God's hidden face. But what does *hester panim* mean in context? In Devarim, God says he will hide his face specifically because the people have abandoned him and gone after foreign gods. The hiddenness is a consequence of faithlessness, not merely a feature of a particular historical moment. When God's face is hidden in the Megilla, it is not because God has become mysterious or inscrutable. It is because the Jews are sitting at Achashverosh's feast drinking from the Temple's vessels.

And yet—God acts. Hidden, unnamed, operating through coincidence and irony and human courage, Providence moves through the Megilla with unmistakable intentionality. Achashverosh cannot sleep on the night that matters most. The king asks for the chronicles to be read. Of all the records in the imperial archive, the account of Mordekhai saving the king's life is the one that happens to be read aloud. Haman arrives at court at precisely the moment the king is asking what should be done for the man who deserves honor, assuming the king means him. The whole story is a long chain of improbabilities that add up to certainty.

The Megilla presents this as a challenge of faith. To read the Megilla well is to learn to see God in a world where God does not announce himself—to recognize the hand behind the curtain of apparent coincidence. The reader who grasps this is rewarded with a vision of Providence

operating precisely in the conditions the Jews have chosen for themselves: exile, integration, a life organized around Achashverosh. God has not abandoned them. But he is not present in the way he would be if they were in Yerushalayim.

Esther herself embodies the tension. Her name means "hidden." She has concealed her Jewish identity—Mordekhai instructed her not to reveal her nation or her kindred (2:10). She is integrated, acculturated, the queen of Persia. And yet when the crisis comes, she is the one who acts. Her decision to go to the king uninvited—"ka'asher avadeti, avadeti," "if I am lost, I am lost" (4:16)—is the moral pivot of the entire Megilla. It is not Mordekhai who saves the Jews. It is the woman who finally stopped hiding, who chose her people over her position.

VII. THE YOSEF PARALLEL AND ITS DARK WARNING

The Megilla draws the reader into a comparison with Yosef HaTzaddik. Like Yosef, Mordekhai rises to power in a foreign court. Like Yosef's promotion under Pharaoh, Esther's success in the Persian court reflects a hidden divine Providence watching over the exile. The parallel is unmistakably drawn.

But the Yosef parallel does not only offer comfort. It also warns. The story of Yosef does not end with Yosef as vizier of Egypt. It ends with Bnei Yisrael enslaved in Egypt, building cities for Pharaoh, crying out under the lash. A new Pharaoh arose "who did not know Yosef" (Shemot 1:8). The protection of the previous regime, the goodwill

accumulated over generations of loyal service, evaporated in a single political transition.

The Gemara makes this explicit in explaining why Hallel is not said on Purim: even after the salvation, the Jews were still servants of Achashverosh. The message is: Jewish success in exile is always provisional. The higher you rise, the more you integrate, the more you allow yourself to feel at home in someone else's bira—the more devastating the next reversal will be. And there will always be a next reversal. Today Mordekhai sits at the gate in honor. In the next generation, someone who does not know Mordekhai may sit on that gate. A new Haman is always possible. So long as the Jewish people remain scattered, living by the grace of foreign kings, the story of the Megilla can repeat.

This is the Megilla's sharpest edge. It is not merely describing a historical crisis that was resolved. It is diagnosing a structural vulnerability that persists as long as its root cause goes unaddressed. The Jewish people, dwelling in someone else's empire, are always one decree away from Haman.

VIII. PURIM, KIPPURIM, AND THE MITZVOT THAT ANSWER ZECHARYA

Chazal noticed that the word Purim (פּוּרִים) rhymes with Yom HaKippurim. One reading of this resonance: Purim is a kind of ki-Purim, "like Yom Kippur." The most awesome day of the Jewish year and the most raucous share a structural kinship. On Yom Kippur, the Kohen Gadol entered the innermost chamber of the Mikdash, past the

point where death awaited anyone who entered improperly. On Purim, Esther entered the innermost chamber of the palace, past the point where death awaited the uninvited. Both are stories of dangerous approach to ultimate power—one in the service of God, one in the service of Jewish survival.

The special mitzvot of Purim are also not arbitrary. Rav Leibtag argues that the mitzvot Mordekhai instituted in his letters—*matanot la'evyonim* (gifts to the poor) and *mishloach manot* (sending portions to friends)—are direct responses to the prophecy of Zecharya, who had called on the returned exiles to help the needy (Zecharya 7:10) and to treat their neighbors with truth and kindness (8:16–17). These were the values Zecharya had preached as the conditions for national restoration. The Jews who stayed in Shushan had not heeded Zecharya's call to come home. But through Mordekhai's mitzvot, Purim becomes an annual occasion to practice the values of the Return—even in exile.

There are also the fast days. Zecharya's prophecy included a promise that the fast days commemorating the destruction of Jerusalem—the fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh, and tenth months—would one day become "joy and gladness and happy festivals" (8:19). Purim, as a day that turns from "*yagon l'simcha*," from mourning to celebration (9:22), may itself be the first installment of this promise—the prototype of the transformation Zecharya foretold.

Purim is thus not simply a celebration of survival. It is a rehearsal for redemption—enacted by a community that

is not yet redeemed, in a land that is not yet theirs, but which carries, in its mitzvot, the seeds of what redemption would require.

IX. READING THE MEGILLA IN OUR OWN TIME

The Megilla was written for a specific community in a specific historical moment. But its critique is not time-stamped. Every generation that has lived in comfortable exile has had occasion to hear it anew.

The Jews of Shushan were not bad people. Mordekhai was a hero. Esther was a heroine. They were faithful to their people when it mattered, courageous when courage was demanded. But they were also, before the crisis, at the feast—integrated, comfortable, content to build lives in someone else's bira. They had accepted, perhaps without ever quite deciding to, that Shushan was home.

The Megilla does not condemn them. It does something more unsettling: it shows them what that choice costs, and what it could have been instead. The bira of Shushan is splendid. But it is not the bira that David prayed for, that Shelomo built, that the returning exiles were bleeding to rebuild while Mordekhai sat at Achashverosh's gate.

Purim is celebrated with joy—mishteh v'simcha, feasting and celebration. But it is a joy with a shadow. We drink until we cannot distinguish Haman from Mordekhai, blessed from cursed—a blurring that may be, among other things, a commentary on how thin the line was between them. Mordekhai sat at the palace gate. Haman sat at the palace gate. One served Achashverosh because

he had no choice; the other served Achashverosh because Shushan had become home.

We still do not say Hallel on Purim. The Gemara's reason still holds wherever Jews organize their lives around the approval of foreign powers rather than the service of God in God's land. The salvation was real. The party is over. The question the Megilla leaves with every generation is whether, now that the decree is lifted, we will go home.

The Gift of Doubt

Rabbi Yair HaLevi

Purim, Purim, Purim, Purim, Purim, Purim, Purim. The dual question is: We love saying Purim, Good Purim, Freilichim Purim, Purim Sameach, all the different variations of Purim, but why is the "Pur"/the lot what we celebrate on Purim? What was so important about the "Pur"/the lot?

And the second question, if the lot was important, there was only one, as it says in the ninth chapter of Megilat Esther: "Ve'k'ulla yamima ele Purim al-shem ha'pu"-"For that reason these days were named Purim, after pur" (Esther 9:26). The language is singular, only one lot. And so, the question is: What is so important about the lottery, and why do we call the festival in the plural?

In truth, we must realize that the lottery is the essence of what the war was all about. Amalek comes and says:

*"Nothing is evident in the world, everything is chance.
Everything's a lot; it could go this way; it could go that way.
You Jewish people get all excited about the Torah- maybe.
You get all excited about your land- maybe you'll keep it.
You get all excited about leaving Egypt- maybe you'll
return."*

And these maybes cause tremendous self-doubt, tremendous self-deprecation; a lack of confidence about who we are, what we are. However, really Amalek is right. Everything in this world is 50-50. It could go this way and

it could go that way. Even the Torah says in Masechet Yoma Daf' Ayin Bet, the Torah can be a sama chayim/a medicine and it can be sama mavet/a poison. It could go both ways. So Amalek is right. The Torah, even the Torah, can go upwards, sama chayim, and it could become a tool that you use to belittle others; it could become terrible.

So we say to Amalek, in this holiday we're realizing that you're very strong, and that your ta'anot, your ideas, are very creative. Stop being confident in Hashem; stop being confident in the Jewish people; stop being confident in the land; stop being confident in the Torah. It all could not be what you think it is. And that's why it's called lots, because also we, on Yom Kippur, throw lots. With two caps, that 50-50, one is going to go to hell, to Azazel, and one is going to go to Kodesh Kodeshim, to the highest place. And they're identical, and they could go both ways.

But really, the whole idea for Amalek, is that we're in the lowest place. Amalek says, listen, just doubt yourself and give up. And we say we're in the lowest place, it's one side, but on the other side it could be the beginning of something new. We were in the lowest situation we could have been. We chose Galut. We mamash chose it. We stayed in exile.

On the other hand, we can also flip the coin. We can also look at it differently. We can also create a new perspective, a new idea, of realizing that the chances are what Hashem gave us as a gift. This is in order that we can participate and elevate the doubts of life; to become confident because of the actions that we do.

Jews Don't Bow

Rabbi Tzvi Wohlgelernter

There is a phenomenon referred to as "October 8th Jews¹." These are Jews whose connection to Judaism was very limited, if it even existed at all, prior to October 7, 2023. However, on October 8th, these Jews woke up to the reality that many of the people they thought were friends were actively supportive of their people's murderers. They had spent their lives dedicating themselves to whatever righteous causes their idols championed, only to find themselves utterly alone in their hour of need.

This phenomenon can, in many ways, be detected in the Purim story. One of the strange elements of Purim is the requirement to read the Megillah twice, once at night and again during the day. Every other megillah is read only once. Why the double obligation?

Rabbi Moshe Avigdor Amiel zt"l, the former rabbi of Tel Aviv before the founding of the State of Israel, provides a powerful answer. Mordechai refuses to bow; he will not nullify himself before evil in the form of the wicked Haman. The pressure must have been immense, as everyone was bowing. This was the "in" thing to do. Yet

¹ See Stephens, Bret (2024-10-04). "The Year American Jews Woke Up". *New York Times*. Stephens defined "October 8 Jews" in 2024 as "those who woke up a day after our greatest tragedy since the Holocaust to see how little empathy there was for us in many of the spaces and communities and institutions we thought we comfortably inhabited."

Mordechai would not sell his identity and dignity simply because it was popular.

In truth, throughout the generations Jews have refused to bow down to evil during dark times, often paying with their lives. This is our history, and it is our pride. For this reason, we read the Megillah at night, reminding ourselves that when things are dark and bleak, we still stand for our values.

However, this is not enough. What happens when things are not so bad for the Jews? Are we still willing to stand up against the popular evils of the time? Our track record during the good times is less encouraging. It is for this very reason that we read the Megillah again during the day. We remind ourselves that we Jews have our values, and we will not bow to the "idols" of our time, even when it is unpopular. We do what we do because it is right and just.

May we all have the strength to always stand for what is right and, like Mordechai, never submit ourselves to evil - no matter how fashionable.

Miracles Then, Miracles Now

Rav Daniel Thwaites

The Levush in his commentary on the Shulchan Aruch (ב"ח תרפ"א) discusses the Al Hanisim paragraph that we add to the Shemoneh Esrei on Purim and Chanuka. He notes that the phrase

על הניסים ועל הפרקן וכו' שעשית לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה

– ‘those wonders and miracles... that you did for our forefathers in those days at this time’ is a recognition of the miracles G-d performed for us in the past. We are thanking Hashem for enabling the historical triumphs of the Jewish people over both Haman and the Greeks, and as such, need to commemorate the miracles at the same point in the calendar in which these events took place.

However, the Levush, as explained by Rav Moshe Goldberg zt"l, also notes that there is a slightly different version of the Tefillah that radically changes its entire significance. According to this version you add only one letter, a single vav, before the word בזמן and therefore change the meaning of the entire phrase to thanking Hashem for the “miracles that you did for our forefathers in those days and at this time’.

According to this version, rather than just thanking Hashem for the historical events, this Tefillah now recognizes both the historical miracles and the miracles that we live through every day.

Hashem's miracles are not just limited to distant historical events- every single day the continued existence of the Jewish people is a miracle. The fact that we have rebuilt our land is a miracle. The fact that the Jewish people continue to grow and thrive is a miracle. We are surrounded and enveloped in a never-ending series of miracles, of which Purim and Chanuka are just two examples.

We can never forget the incredible wonders and salvations of the past, but nor can we ignore the miracles and wonders of the present as well. B'Ezrat Hashem our Purim should be filled with appreciation of both the miracles of the past and the ongoing miracles of the present day.

על הניסים ועל הפרקן וכו' שעשית לאבותינו בימים ההם
ובזמן הזה!

An Unfinished Essay for an Unfinished Holiday

Rabbi Eli Weinstein

The Medrash writes that even in the times of Moshiach, when most other holidays will become irrelevant, Purim will remain. This means that there is something about Purim which is uniquely connected to the end of days. We could say that Purim has a lot left in the tank; a whole part of its identity has yet to be unlocked. No idea about Purim therefore, is ever complete. Everything about Purim is only a half-baked experience, a lifetime in our days, and a radically new lifetime in the days to come. We therefore present below a few buds, a few beginnings, a non-finished essay with some potential for flowering. Each one could begin a conversation. None of them can end one.

- Fascinating that the megilla begins with an entire context, nothing to do with the Jewish people. Just a story about the Persians!
- The first section of the megilla is about domesticating women and ensuring that they listen to their husbands.
- Mordechai is called איש יהודי, the first and only person in Tanach to be called that. The man from Judea. He was in exile, yet his identity was of Israel. He was from Yerushalayim, in Judea. איש יהודי היה בשושן הבירה means that there was an Eretz Yisrael man outside of Israel in a

place called Shushan. His identity was one of exile from Yerushalayim. Who he was.

Esther's identity is beauty. Yerushalayim. כְּלִילַת יוֹפִי. She found beauty in everyone's eyes!

Haman is Amalek, the epitome of the anti-Israel. Hated Mordechai אֲשֶׁר הוּא יְהוּדִי. For having a separate identity. Tied to our land. Even when he wasn't there. Chosenness. Uniqueness, Identity. A threat to anyone that doesn't believe in the world's trajectory. That is why he saw Mordechai and wanted to kill everyone like him. Because they were different.

Mordechai the Judean never gives in.

- The response to Haman is davening, unifying, and using political connection to try and weasel out of the worst existential threat in history.

- The king of the free world gives Esther the nod, gives Yerushalayim his approval. Amalek hates Mordechai, but Achashveirosh, who represents the gentile powers of the world, falls in love with Esther. It is he who we charm with our beauty. And the scepter is bowed.

In fact, the gentile powers, Achashveirosh, ends up being disgusted by the hatred found in Amalek, revolted by it, and takes part in destroying Amalek! In the meanwhile however, our true beauty shines specifically due to the darkness of Amalek. Mordechai saves the gentile world by foiling the plot of Bigsan and Seresh. And then Amalek is forced to proclaim our greatness.

The king ends up giving us his ring. The powers of the world in the hands of the small Judea. The people with the vision and mission, teamed up with the power of humanity.

- We also seem to see that nekama is good. Revenge against our enemies brings glory to the Judean people.

- Mordechai ends up in the garb of the Mikdash, colorful, gold, beautiful. The glory of our nation restored, and the people return to fullness of joy. אז ימלא שחוק פינו ולשוננו רנה.

People around us want to be like the Judeans, and there is an air of awe around the nation.

- Purim seems to be established as a day of unity and joy over this wonderful story. It doesn't even appear to be a thank you to G-d, more a day of gratitude, of special irony, of love. And the story itself seems to be one focused on identity. Who we are. What do we stand for?

The End is Rooted in the Beginning

Rabbi Yotam Erlich

The famous Gemara in Taanit 29a states "When Adar enters, we increase in joy." Rashi notes that these are days of Purim and Pesach. One might wonder: Why does Rashi connect these two holidays together?

The Gemara in Megillah 13b explains that when Haman cast lots to determine when to destroy the Jewish people and the month of Adar came up, he rejoiced. He knew that Moshe Rabbeinu passed away in Adar and viewed it as a bad sign for the Jewish people. However, the Gemara adds that Haman failed to realize that Moshe was also born in that very same month.

Rabbi Yisrael of Ruzhin explains that Haman made a fundamental error rooted in his "Amalekite" worldview, which stands in total opposition to the Torah. Haman saw Adar—the twelfth and final month of the year—as the point furthest from the miracles of Nissan. To him, Adar represented exhaustion and bad luck.

What Haman missed is that while Adar is the furthest month from the past Nissan, it is the closest month to the upcoming Nissan! Rashi links the joy of Adar to Pesach to teach us that these days are intrinsically connected; the redemption of Purim is the prelude to the redemption of Pesach.

There are two conflicting worldviews:

Haman's attitude: There is no hope for the future. If greatness passed away in the past, it is gone forever.

The Jewish view: Never despair. Even the lowest point is merely the moment before the dawn of redemption.

Mordechai and Esther stood firm in this faith, knowing that Adar leads directly into the light of Nissan. Similarly, the Yerushalmi in Berachot 1:1 compares the redemption of Israel to the dawn—which breaks precisely after the darkest moment, furthest from the light of the previous day.

May we strengthen our faith and merit to see the great light of our generation, the generation of redemption.

The Uniqueness of Mordechai

Rabbi Chaim Kanterovitz

The main personality of the Purim story to me has always been Mordechai. To be sure Esther Hamalka is not to be dismissed but Mordechai seems to be the one who unites the Jewish people at this juncture of history.

The Midrash commenting on his title given to him by the Megilah itself "Ish Yehudi" says really it should be interpreted as "Ish Yechidi"- a unique and singular individual who alone would rectify and correct the assertion of the evil Haman.

Haman's intention to destroy the Jewish people was based on our lack of togetherness and unity. "There is one nation that is dispersed and divided" he tells the King. Yet Mordechai is the one who gathers the nation together "LeHikahel" uniting us again as one people. In fact, Chazal go so far as comparing Mordechai to Avraham Avinu the father of our nation.

Interestingly, when the Megilah traces Mordechai's lineage he is drawn back to "kish"- the father of King Shaul. The obvious question here is why does the Megillah not associate him with King Shaul himself but skips his name and only gives us his father Kish as our reference.

Perhaps, suggests Sefat Emet, it is out of deference to King Shaul who in failing to execute King Agag (the King of Amalek) had an indirect hand in Haman his descendant

succeeding in setting out a plan of extermination of the Jewish people.

Yet, Sefat Emet offers a mystical and Kabbalistic explanation as well. He quotes the great Kabbalistic liturgist Rabbi Shlomo Alkabetz, the author of the famed Lecha Dodi prayer we traditionally recite to usher in the sanctity of Shabbat. He teaches that the omission in the Megillah of Shaul HaMelech is because although he was the first Ben Kish the son of Kish, he failed in defeating the evil inherent in this world through Amalek and his descendants. Mordechai is in fact the owner of this name Ben Kish the son of Kish for He rectified the mistake of Shaul and in doing so becomes heir to Shaul's legacy. This not only unifies Am Yisrael but also brings about redemption and salvation for his people.

This lesson of unity and togetherness brought about through outstanding and singular leadership is what sets Mordechai out as the unique and profound leader underpinning the narrative of Geulah we read in the Megillah.

Who Should I Drink with on Purim?

Rabbi Ari Ze'ev Schwartz

Every year before Purim the same essential question returns again and again: Is drinking wine and alcohol a mitzvah on Purim? Or to ask it in an even more direct way: Does Judaism believe that alcohol is a spiritual tool to connect to one's soul, to God?

On the one hand, the Gemara states: *"Rava said: A person is obligated to become intoxicated on Purim until he does not know how to distinguish between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordecai"* (Megilah 7b).

In other words, the Gemara answers that yes alcohol is a mitzvah, a spiritual tool, that can help a person reach a higher level of consciousness. Normally, a person is stuck in the duality of good versus bad, holy and non-holy. Sometimes I feel that my life is so wonderful and blessed while at other times it feels so terrible and cursed. However, on Purim, through the spiritual tool of drinking alcohol, a person is able to reach the consciousness of beyond good and bad- Godliness and blessing can be found in everything, even in the evil plans of Haman.

The Danger of Drinking

While there is something truly powerful about this higher consciousness, there is also something dangerous and irresponsible about it. Boundaries are an essential part of a life of morality. Getting rid of the clear categories of

good and evil may cause more suffering than good. For this reason, the Gemara continues with the following honest story.

"The Gemara relates that Rabba and Rabbi Zeira prepared a Purim feast with each other, and they became intoxicated to the point that Rabba arose and killed Rabbi Zeira. The next day, when he became sober and realized what he had done, Rabba asked God for mercy, and miraculously revived Rabbi Zeira. The next year, Rabba said to Rabbi Zeira: Let the Master come and let us prepare the Purim feast with each other. Rabbi Zeira said to Rabba: Miracles do not happen each and every hour" (Ibid.).

In other words, this story describes a situation where two rabbis got so drunk on Purim that one rabbi accidentally killed the other rabbi. To use the above language, this story shows how alcohol succeeded in getting rid of the boundaries of good and bad, and as a consequence, one person overstepped the boundaries of basic morality and safety and killed the other person. According to the Meiri:

"We are not commanded to get drunk and degrade ourselves due to the happiness of Purim. Indeed, we are not commanded to have an empty and foolish happiness but rather a happiness that reaches a love of God and an appreciation for the miracles that were done to us. Now, regarding what it is written in the Gemara about getting so drunk until we don't know the difference between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordechai, there were already sages

who explained that the story in the Gemara that comes after about Rabba killing Rabbi Zeira comes for the purpose of rejecting the previous statement that praises drinking" (Beit HaBechira, Kiddushin 7b).

In other words, the Meiri explains that this story comes to teach us that the Gemara rejects the previous statement in the Gemara that speaks praiseworthy of drinking alcohol on Purim. The Meiri sees this story as a proof that despite the potential goodness of alcohol, in real life, alcohol causes more bad than good.

An Alternative Explanation

Allow me to offer an alternative explanation of the Gemara. In this story, it says that Rabba asks Rabbi Zeira if he will do a Purim meal with him next year: "Rabba said to Rabbi Zeira: Let the Master come and let us prepare the Purim feast with each other."

How does Rabbi Zeira respond to Rabba's invitation to have another Purim feast together? Does he say that he has learnt his lesson and will never drink alcohol again? Does he say that being almost killed on Purim has caused him to give up Purim celebrations? No. The Gemara states: "*Rabbi Zeira said to Rabba: Miracles do not happen each and every hour.*"

In other words, Rabbi Zeira says he does not want to drink alcohol on Purim with Rabba the following year because it would be a miracle to not get hurt again.

Rabbi Zeira has learnt his lesson: drinking alcohol with this specific person is foolish and not a good idea. However, Rabbi Zeira never says that he has ruled out the possibility that perhaps drinking alcohol on Purim with another person, a responsible person, may turn out differently. Rabbi Zeira has come to the conclusion that drinking with Rabba is like relying on a miracle, since it is so easy to get damaged in his company.

Who We Drink with Affects How We Drink

One of the main lessons we can learn from this story is that on Purim the question should not simply be: Should I drink alcohol or not? Rather: Who should I drink alcohol with? Indeed, the people we choose to surround ourselves with have a deep impact on the way we drink alcohol, and even the inner goals of drinking the alcohol.

When a person drinks alcohol on Purim with people who simply want to get drunk and use Purim as an excuse to let go of their higher values, then indeed this is against the spirit of Purim. However, when one chooses to surround oneself with spiritual seekers, people who long to connect to God, their soul, to the Jewish people, then drinking alcohol may indeed be a powerful spiritual tool to achieve this.

In general, this is a major principle in life: no matter how smart and wise a person is, one can never truly escape the influence of their surroundings. In the words of the Rambam:

"It is natural for a person's character and actions to be influenced by one's friends and associates and for one to follow their local norms of behavior. Therefore, a person should surround oneself with the righteous and be constantly in the company of the wise, so as to learn from their deeds" (MT, Hilchot Deot, 6:1).

Each Purim a person should ask themselves the following important and honest question: Who should I drink with this Purim? Who will have a positive impact on me as I search for the hidden face of God? Indeed, on Purim each person should ask themselves: How would I drink alcohol if I were sitting on a table with Moshe Rabbeinu, Rabbi Akiva, Rambam, the Baal Shem Tov or Rav Kook?

The main question should not simply be: Should I drink alcohol on Purim? But also: Who should I drink alcohol with?

ימי הפורים- ימי שמחה או תפילה?

הרב אביחי ברקוביץ

המשנה במגילה מצד אחד מבהירה שיש הבדל בין י"ד וט"ו לבין שאר הימים, שהרי רק מקדימים מהם ליום הכניסה. מאידך, כאשר המשנה מציגה את ההלכה, היא משווה בין כל הימים, מגילה נקראת (לכאורה לכתחילה!) ביא, יב יג וכו'...

גמ': יש דרכים רבות כיצד להבין את הדו שיח שמתקיים פה. רש"י, רשב"א וריטב"א כולם מציעים הסברים שונים, גם הרב יעקב בהתחלה הציע הסבר אחר בפשט.

נעבור שיטה שיטה:

רש"י: יש מח' בין שתי אנשים. שואל: מנלן? איפה יש ל"א מקור שמלמד שיש חובה לקרוא ב"א (קצת קשה בפשט המושג חובה שרש"י מכניס כאן, למרות שניתן להסביר שבפשט שהוא רק מחפש מקור לכך ש"א ו"ב חזו לקרייה כמו י"ד וט"ו)..ניתן להסביר את שיטת השואל כך, אני רואה במשנה שאין הבדל בין יא יב יד וטו, כך המשנה לכאורה מציגה את זה, לכן אני שואל, מנין שכן? איפה זה כתוב במגילה? (יש לשאול פה הרי צריך להיות ברור לו שזה לא נמצא במגילה..אז מה בדיוק הוא שואל..)

עונה הגמ': מנלן? (בתמיהה) הרי ברור לך שזה לא כתוב במגילה וממילא זה לא חובה, אלא תקנת חכמים!

לאחר מכן הוא מתקן את השאלה שלו ולפי רש"י זו הייתה כוונתו מההתחלה: לא ניתן לומר שתקנת חכמים היא מנותקת לחלוטין מן המגילה עצמה, ממילא איפה יש לזה אפילו רמז...יוצא שיש פה שתי דעות, שתי שיטות, דעה אחת שמחפשת את המקור ל"א במגילה, ושיטה אחרת שטוב לה שזה תקנת חכמים...ויש לדייק עוד(..)

הרשב"א, ריטב"א וראשונים נוספים מתמודדים עם קושיה שתוס' הקשו בזבחים (יש למצוא מקור), מנין היה השואל אמור לדעת שיש תקנת חכמים?! וכי הוא יודע את כל תקנות החכמים?! לכן בדיוק הוא שאל מנלן!

הרשב"א מסביר: שאכן אין פה דיון אמיתי של שאלה ותשובה, שזה הכל לשון האמורא שכתב את הדברים בלשון שנראית כדיון אמנם אין פה באמת דיון. לפי הרשב"א מה שחשוב לענייננו הוא שאין פה באמת שתי שיטות אלא שיטה אחת, כמובן צריך לשאול אם יוצא משהו מדברי הרשב"א..

הריטב"א מציע הסבר אחר ש"עוקף" את קושיית התוס', חשוב לומר שגם לפי ההסבר של רש"י לא בטוח שקושיית התוס' היא קושייה. צריך לקרוא את דברי הריטב"א- ממה שזכור הוא מסביר קרוב מאד לפשט, ושיש פה שתי דיעות. דעה אחת מקבלת את זה ש"א ו"ב זה תקנת חכמים, סוג של קולא, ומשאירים את זה כך.

דעה שניה מחפשת את המקור במגילה, המנלן הוא שאלה "חתרנית" שעניינה למצוא את ימי י"א ו"ב במגילה, אפילו ברמז, אבל העניין הוא לומר, שתקנת חכמים זו, אינה רק קולא, אלא היא נמצאת במגילה, זאת אומרת שהיא חלק מהמהות של פורים. כאשר חכמי כנסת הגדולה כתבו את המגילה, הם דיברו במהות על כך שיש להרחיב את פורים, לדאוג לכלול את כל עם ישראל במגילה, היכן זה נמצא?!

יש שתי דעות: רב שמן בר אבא א"ר יוחנן - לקיים את ימי הפורים האלה בזמניהם, כמובן יש לעיין בכל המהלך פה והדיון של הסוגיא ולהבין מה קורה בפרוטרוט, אבל כרגע, אנו נתבונן בצורה יותר כללית, על הפרק בו נמצא הפסוק אותו מביא רב שמן בר אבא, ואז נסתכל על הפרק אותו מביא ר' שמואל בר נחמני.

נכתוב את הדברים בראשי פרקים וארחיב בהמשך:
-רואים שמרדכי ואסתר ממש ניסו לקבוע את היום הזה בכל עם ישראל, שכולם יקיימו, וכן המגילה מדגישה כמה פעמים איך הימים האלה נעשים בכל דור ודור משפחה משפחה וכו'..רואים שהמגילה שמה דגש על כך שכוווללללםם נמצאים בפורים.

יש הבדל בין שתי הפסוקים שמובאים, הראשון מדבר על פורים כימי הודאה ושמחה, ואילו הפסוק השני מהאגרת של אסתר מדבר על פורים כימי הצומות וזעקתם, הם גם נקראים אצל אסתר ממש ימי הפורים, על שם הפור, בפסוק הראשון לא מפורש שהם נקראים כך.

הרב יעקב הוסיף שאין זה צירוף מקרים שהאגרת השניה
"התפילתית זעקתית" יותר נכתבת ונשלחת על ידי אסתר, שהרי
כאשר כל העם עצמו חוגג ונלחם אסתר צריכה עדיין לגור ולשכב עם
הערל והטמא אחשוורוש, וכי זוהי גאולה?! זו עדיין גלות שאין
כדוגמתה, ועם זאת שימי הפורים היו ימי שמחה והלל, הם גם היו
ימי תפילה, והכרה בכך שה' נמצא איתנו גם בתקופה זו, של גלות,
ולכן יש לנצל ימים אלו לא רק לשמחה והודאה, שכן כך אפשר
להשאר בגלות, אלא לימי תפילה ובקשה לגאולה!

בענין שרטוט דמגילה

הרב משה הלוי אברהם

א. סוגיות הגמרא בענין שרטוט

גרסינן במגילה טז: "דברי שלום ואמת". אמר רבי תנחום ואמרי לה אמר רבי אסי: מלמד שצריכה שרטוט כאמיתה של תורה. ומה 'אמיתה של תורה, כתב רש"י "כספר תורה עצמה". ומזה יוצא דגם סת צריך שרטוט. ואיתא תו (התם) יח: "והלכתא תפילין אין צריכין שרטוט מזוזות צריכין שרטוט". וא"כ אין לך דבר שאין צריך שרטוט אלא תפילין. וק"ק, דלא לייתי גמרא בהדיא למימר דס"ת בעי שרטוט. ועיין לקמן.

אמנם בגיטין ו: איתא "א"ר יצחק שתיים כותבין שלש אין כותבין במתניתא תנא שלש כותבין ארבע אין כותבין", והתם ז. (איתא נמי מעשה דמר עוקבא ור' אלעזר, ור' שרטוט וכתב וכו'. וא"כ קשה שתיים: א) למה אין משרטטין בתפילין, ב) למה נצרכה ג"ש לשרטוט דמגילה, כיון דבכל כתבי הקודש צריך לשרטט. תו איתא במנחות לב. "ספר תורה שבלה ותפילין שבלו אין עושין מהן מזוזת לפי שאין מורידין מקדושה חמורה לקדושה קלה", ואקשינן עלה (לב): "הא מורידין עושין? והא בעיא שרטוט! דאמר רב מניומי בר חלקיה אמר רב חמא בר גוריא אמר רב: כל מזוזת שאינה משורטטת פסולה. ורב מנימין בר חלקיה ידידיה אמר: שרטוט של מזוזת הלכה למשה מסיני." ומשנינן, תנאי היא. ואכתי קשה, הא אמרינן דמגילה צריך שרטוט כס"ת עצמה, וא"כ מאי קא קשה ליה לגמ' דבעי שרטוט, הא משורטטת וקאי.

ב. שיטת רבינו תם

על כן פירש ר"ת (ספר הישר גיטין ס" קכ, תוס' גיטין ו: ד"ה אמר רבי יצחק, מנחות לב: ד"ה מורידין, סוטה יז: ד"ה כתבה) דשרטוט הצריך בכל כתבי הקודש היינו שרטוט שורה ראשונה. ואסור לכתוב שום פסוק בלי זה, ותפילין בכלל. ומה שחדשה הלמ"מ במזוזת היינו שצריך שירטוט על כל השורות. והיינו דקאמר 'כאמיתה של תורה', דמזוזת היינו אמיתה של תורה, שיש בה קב 2 עול מלכות שמים ועוד דברים אחרים עיקריים. א"כ לשיטתו תפילין וס"ת אין צריך שרטוט

חוץ משורה ראשונה, מזוזה ומגילה צריכים בכל השורות. ובזה תירץ גמ' דמנחות, למה לא תירצו שם דמיירי בס"ת משורטטת – דס"ת אין צריך שרטוט כמו מז3 ה.בשיטה זו הלכו הראשונים – הרמב"ן והרשב"א בגיטין והמרדכי במנחות (הלכות קטנות).

ג. שיטת שאר הראשונים

ובריטב"א גיטין ו: ד"ה אמר רבי יצחק, ובר"ן על הרי"ף מגילה ה: ד"ה והלכתא, וברא"ש הלי' ספר תורה סי' ז' פליגי, וכתבו דס"ת צריכה שרטוט על כל השורות, ואמיתה של תורה היינו ס"ת עצמה כפירוש רש"י. ומה שלא פירשה הגמרא בהדיא דס"ת צריכה, פירשה בירושלמי (מגילה א:א) "רבי חלבו ר' יסא בשם ר' לעזר נאמר כאן דברי שלום ואמת ונאמר להלן אמת קנה ואל תמכור הרי היא כאמיתה של תורה מה זו צריכה סירטוט אף זו צריכה סירטוט".

ובמדרש (בראשית רבה כד:ז) "ר' תנחומא בשם ר"א ורבי מנחם בשם רב אמר כל האומניות אדם הראשון למדם מאי

1 עיין שו"ת הרשב"א סי' אלף רכ, שנשאל למה גט צריך שרטוט, ותירץ וז"ל "דע כי הטעם הוא משום דכתב ספר כריתות. וכל שנקרא ספר צריך לשרטט וכדאמרין גבי מגלה צריכה שרטוט כאמתה של תורה משום דאיקרי ספר". ואמנם כי אין זה משמעות הגמרא, אפשר לומר כמש"כ הר"ן על הרי"ף מגילה ה:, דכיון דנקרא ספר וגם איגרת, א"א לעמוד על איזה מהם עיקר בלי מקור. ודרשה ד"אמיתה של תורה" קא משמע לן דלזה נקרא ספר.

2 פירוש זה קשה לכל רואה, דכל מה שיש במזוזה יש בתפילין. ולשון 'אמיתה של תורה' לפי דבריו אינו מובן כלל, דלא מצינו שמזוזה נקרא 'אמת' יותר מתורה בכלל בשום מקום.

3 עוד כתב דאין לתרץ דמיירי דשרטט ואע"פ שאין צריך לזה, דכל הפטור מדבר ועושהו נקרא הדיוט. ובספר הישר שם כתב "ושטות ובורות הוא לשרטט תפילין דכל הפטור מן הדבר ועושהו נקרא הדיוט". אבל בס"ת מותר לשרטט אם אינו יכול לכתוב ישר, משום "זה א-לי ואנוהו".

ואני תמיה בפסק זה, דא"כ איבד מה שהרויח לתרץ גמ' דמנחות, דשפיר מורידין ומיירי בס"ת משורטטת משום זה א-לי

ואנוהו.טעמיה (ישעיה מד) וחרשים המה מאדם, מאדם הראשון, רבנן אמרין אפי' סירגולו של ספר אדם הראשון למדו, שנאמר זה ספר הוא וסירגולו. ומה שלא הקשה במחנות "הא מורידין, עושין", היינו דקשיא להו אתפילין, דקאמר "ספר תורה שבלה ותפילין שבלו אין עושין מהן מזוזה" דאין צריכין שרטוט, ולא אספר תורה שצריכה. וכ"כ רש"י עצמו שם ד"ה והא בעיא שרטוט.

ומה שתפילין אין צריכין שרטוט, ע"כ צ"ל דאין צריך כלל וכלל. והטעם כתבו כל הראשונים דכיון דנכרכים ומונחים בבתים, לא ניתנו לקראות ולכן אין צריך כתב מיושר. וא"כ מה זה שדרשה הגמרא דמגילה צריכה שרטוט מדכתיב 'דברי שללום ואמת', הא ודאי כל כתבי הקודש הנקראים צריכים שרטוט! אלא הטעם הוא משום דנקרא ג"כ 'אגרת', וה"א דמשום הכי אינה צריכה שרטוט.

ד. הלכה

והרמב"ם (לה' תפילין א"ב, ס"ת ז:טז) לא חילק בין ספר לספר, אלא הכל צריך שרטוט חוץ מתפילין (משום שמחופים), ולא חילק בין שורה ראשונה לשאר שורות, וממילא כל השורות צריכין. וכן פסק בה"ל מגילה ב:ט ובטור וש"ע ס"י תרצא:א. אלא דבבית יוסף שם כתב בשם אורחות חיים הלכות מגלה ופורים ס"י יא דבמגילה אין צריך שרטוט אלא שיטה ראשונה. וז"ל אורחות חיים:

וצריכה שרטוט כאמתה של תורה פי' ק"ש וי"מ ספר תורה עצמה. וכן דעת הירושל' ומפיק לה מגזרה שוה דכתיב הכא דברי שלום ואמת וכתב התם על התורה אמת קנה ואל תמכור... ושרטוט דקא אמרין בשטה ראשונה קאמרין, ודי לנו בזה ששטה ראשונה נעשית כשרטוט לשטה שניה ושניה לשלישית וכן כלן אבל ספר תורה באמת צריכה שתהיה משורטטת כלה: וכדבריו כתבו הלבוש תרצא:ב ומג"א שם ס"ק א'. ודבריהם תמוהים, דר"ת הוא שחידש שינוי בין שרטוט שורה ראשונה לשורות אחרות, והוא עצמו כתב דאמיתה של תורה הוא מזוזה, שצריך שירטוט בכל השורות. וא"כ אין מקום לומר דשירטוט דמגילה הוא שורה ראשונה. וכן הקשה בדרכי משה שם וכל נושאי כלי השו"ע. ובאמת כולי עלמא פליגי עלייהו בזה, ולא ראיתי מי שתירץ דבריה. וערי תשובה שם כתב דאפשר לסמוך עליהם בדיעבד.

ה. אגדה

עיין מהר"ל ספר אור חדש פרק ט' פסוק ל', שפירש הפסוק 'דברי שלום ואמת' ר"ל שמרדכי ואסתר בקשו מבני ישראל(והיינו שלום, שלא גזרו עליהם אלא בקשו מהם) לשמור ימי הפורים לשנה הבאה. ובקשו מהם, כלומר "האמת היא שדרך הישר הוא לעשות את ימי הפורים לשנה הבאה", אבל לא ציוו. ולפי פירוש זה, ימי הפורים נקראים 'דברי שלום ואמת'. אבל לפי דברי הגמרא, המגילה עצמה נקראת שלום ואמת, ועל כן דרשו ממנו שהיא צריכה שרטוט כתורה עצמה. ושני הפירושים איתנהו, שימי הפורים וגם המגילה הם שלום ואמת.

ולשיטת ר"ת דלעיל דכל כתבי הקודש אינם צריכים שרטוט אלא בשורה ראשונה חוץ ממגילה, יש לעיין מאי שנא מגילה דנצרכה לזה. ותירץ מהר"ל שם שהחסדים המוזכרים לבני ישראל בנביאים הם לפנים משורת הדין – אבל הצלת ישראל מכליון הוא דין עצמו בלי נטיה. וא"כ כמו שהתורה היא דין בלי סטיה צריך שרטוט כדי לישר הכתב כמו ישרות התורה, המגלה שנקראת 'אמת' צריכה שרטוט.

והנה לא דרשו כלום על המילה 'שלום', עתה באתי, ורווח הניחו לי. דאמרינן בסנהדרין ו: "אמת ומשפט שלום שפטו בשעריכם. והלא במקום שיש משפט - אין שלום, ובמקום שיש שלום - אין משפט. אלא איזהו משפט שיש בו שלום -הוא אומר: זה ביצוע." הרי דאמת ושלום ביחד א"א אלא ע"י ביצוע. על כן במגילה עצמה, שנקראה אמת וגם שלום.