

Understanding the Eternal Festival

Purim is a unique festival: the intense celebrations of the day, including dressing up in costumes, having festive meals with friends and family, and even becoming inebriated, all express an exuberance felt more than on all other festive days. In fact, Purim is such a happy day that it makes the entire month joyous: “When Adar arrives, we increase our joy” (Ta’anit 29a).

This great emphasis on joy seems to point to a deeper essence behind the festival. This class will explore this essence, delving into the nature of the day and its inner message.

- ❧ What is the secret behind the unique joy of Purim?
- ❧ Why do we get dressed up in costumes on Purim?
- ❧ Why is the name of God not mentioned in the Purim scroll?
- ❧ Against whom was the ideological struggle of Purim fought?
- ❧ Is there a connection between Purim and Nazi Germany?
- ❧ What is the connection between Purim and Yom Kippur?
- ❧ What is the unique dimension of reconnecting to the Torah on Purim?

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SECTION I. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF PURIM AND THE PURIM EVENTS

PART A. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The miracle of Purim occurred while the Jewish people were undergoing the first of two exiles that were foretold by the prophets. It was a seventy-year exile that was not characterized by great persecution until Haman's decree. Nevertheless, a spiritual decline began that was the catalyst to that frightful decree.

1. **Rabbi Mordechai Becher, Gateway to Judaism, Shaar Press, pp. 177-178 – A summary of the period leading up to the time of Purim.**

The Purim story begins about 900 years after the Exodus from Egypt. The Jews had been living in Israel continuously since they first entered with Joshua. For 410 years King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem had been the focal point of the Jewish spiritual and national life in Israel.

The first major tragedy that the Jewish people of this era experienced was the division of the country into the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judea. The northern kingdom was populated by ten of the twelve tribes. It was eventually invaded by the Assyrians under Sennacherib, who exiled the Jews. Sennacherib's policy of forced exile and assimilation directly caused the loss of the ten tribes to the Jewish people.

Less than a hundred years later, the Jews were dealt another terrible blow. This time, the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar invaded Israel, destroyed the Temple, and exiled almost all of the remaining tribes (Judah, Benjamin, the Priests, and the Levites) to Babylon (modern day Iraq – two weeks by camel, seven minutes by scud).

Jeremiah the prophet had warned that there would be destruction and exile but he also predicted that the Jews would return to Israel and rebuild the Temple and their homeland. Jeremiah even put a date on the return, declaring that the Temple would be rebuilt 70 years after its destruction. Nevertheless, there were many who did not believe that they would ever return to Israel, and felt that this exile signified the end of the special relationship between God and the Jewish people. The Jews quickly became acclimated to the conditions of the exile and built a well organized Jewish community in Babylon and neighboring Persia (modern day Iran).

2. **Ibid., p. 178 – The Persian Exile and Achashveirosh.**

The Persian Empire eventually took over Babylon, and a military leader by the name of Achashveirosh (Ahasuerus) usurped the throne and became the supreme ruler of the Persian Empire. Based on a miscalculation, he believed that the seventy-year deadline of Jeremiah's prediction had already passed, and that the Jews must therefore be doomed to remain in exile. Since the Jews had outlived all previous empires (Egyptians, Canaanites, Assyrians, and Babylonians) except that of Achashveirosh, he became convinced that his was the eternal empire. In his mind, the permanent exile of the Jews was an indication of his empire's immortality.

To celebrate his permanent victory, he threw a colossal party in classic sultanate style, using the holy vessels that Nebuchadnezzar had looted from the Temple in Jerusalem. Even more tragic than the party itself, was the fact that the Jews of the capital city, Shushan, also participated in Achashveirosh's celebration, over the strong objections of their religious leadership. The Talmud tells us that it was this sin that caused the subsequent, nearly fatal, threat to the Jewish people.

PART B. THE PURIM EVENTS

The following is a summary of the Purim events based on Megillat Esther (the Book of Esther).

1. Vashti is deposed as queen and Esther is chosen in her place.

King Achashveirosh of Persia rules the entire civilized world, including 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia. He holds a huge feast for all his subjects in the capital city of Shushan. At the feast, Achashveirosh asks Queen Vashti to parade undressed in front of his guests. She refuses. He gets angry and has her killed.

Against her will, our heroine Esther is chosen in a royal beauty contest to be the new queen. She is taken to the palace, but keeps her Jewish identity secret. Providentially, Mordechai overhears two guards planning to assassinate the king. He tells Esther, and the plot fails. Mordechai's act is recorded in the royal chronicles, yet the king does not know anything about it.

2. Haman enters the scene.

The evil Haman becomes the king's Prime Minister and decrees that everyone must bow to him. Mordechai refuses to bow; and Haman is enraged. Furthermore, when Haman finds out that Mordechai is a Jew, he seeks to destroy the entire Jewish people. Haman complains to the king: "The Jews keep their own laws and refuse to be like everyone else." Haman bribes the king, who is happy to take the money and let Haman issue a decree to destroy the Jews.

On hearing the news of the impending destruction of the entire Jewish people, Mordechai fasts and prays, trying to inspire them to repent. He informs Esther of the evil plan and urges her to plead to the king for mercy. Esther fears approaching the king without being called, for it is well known that one could be killed for doing so. Mordechai explains the seriousness of the situation and how it may be that God put Esther in this position just for this purpose. Esther agrees to risk her life and approach the king. She tells Mordechai to have the Jewish people fast and pray for three days.

Esther is received favorably by the king, who agrees to join her at a special banquet, at which she asks if he will come to a second banquet. The night following the first banquet, the king is unable to sleep, and spends the time reviewing the "royal chronicles," and for the first time becomes aware that Mordechai saved his life.

3. The fall of Haman.

Haman enters the palace area to talk to the king. Before he can speak, the king asks Haman: "What should I do in order to give someone great honor?" Assuming the king means him, Haman suggests having the person put on royal clothing, ride the king's white horse, and be led through the city in great glory. Achashveirosh likes the idea, and tells Haman to do everything he said ... for Mordechai! Mordechai is then paraded on horseback through the streets of Shushan, with Haman leading the way.

At the next banquet, Esther tells the king of her identity and the genocide plan. Outraged, the king demands to know who would dare threaten her people. Esther points to Haman! Haman is aghast. Realizing all is lost, he "falls all over" Esther, pleading for mercy. The king thinks Haman is accosting the queen and Haman is hanged on the same gallows he had prepared for Mordechai.

4. The great victory of the Jews and the establishment of Purim as a festival.

Since the original decree to annihilate the Jews was sealed by the king, by Persian law it cannot be

withdrawn. Instead, the king issues a new decree, giving the Jews the right to defend themselves. The Jews defend themselves, and their enemies cower in terror.

In the capital city of Shushan, the fighting requires two days to defeat their enemies. Outside of Shushan, throughout the kingdom, the enemies are defeated in one day. Purim is celebrated on the day they were victorious: in Shushan and in all other ancient walled cities (seventy-six in all, including Jerusalem today) they celebrated on the 15th of Adar. In all other places Purim was celebrated on the 14th of Adar.

Mordechai and Esther enact an annual holiday with feasting, giving gifts to the poor and food to friends, and reading the Megillah.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION I:

- ✎ Following the destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians, the Jews were exiled to Babylonia. The Babylonian Empire was subsequently conquered by the Persian Empire and the Jewish people acclimated to their new environment. A process of gradual assimilation began to befall the nation prior to the ascent of Haman to a position of influence in the court of King Achashveirosh.
- ✎ Haman was able to persuade the king to sign a decree to annihilate all the Jews in his domain. Queen Esther, who had succeeded in concealing her national origin until this point, invited Haman to a private banquet with the king where she revealed her Jewish identity and pleaded that the king revoke the decree.
- ✎ In a fit of rage the king ordered that Haman be hanged, and the Jews were authorized to defend themselves on the day the decree was to be implemented. They repelled their enemies on that day and celebrations were held by the victors throughout the empire on the following day. Mordechai and Esther instituted that these days be commemorated in all future generations.

SECTION II: THE ESSENCE OF PURIM AND THE HIDDEN FACE OF GOD

Remarkably for a book in Tanach, the Scroll of Esther does not mention the name of God even once. Rather, the scroll reads like an ordinary worldly tale or fable, a suspense story with a happy ending (of the Jewish people being saved from national doom by the heroics of Esther and Mordechai). Yet, it is the seeming absence of God's Presence, as demonstrated by the omission of God's name from the Megillah, which defines the character of Purim. The central theme of Purim is the Presence of God *behind the scenes*; though we may not see Him, His guidance is never absent from His people.

PART A. HOW DO WE SEE GOD BEHIND THE SCENES IN THE BOOK OF ESTHER?

The entire Megillah reflects God orchestrating the Purim events. The following sections highlight how God is present, guiding each event:

1. Esther 1:10-22 – Queen Vashti is deposed.
2. Esther 2:17-18 – Esther is chosen as queen.
3. Esther 2:21-23 – The plot to assassinate Achashveirosh is uncovered by Mordechai and is recorded in the royal chronicles.
4. Esther 3:1 – Haman, seeking to destroy the Jewish people, is elevated to the position of Prime Minister of Persia.
5. Esther 6:1-11 – Achashveirosh suffers from insomnia the night before Esther's momentous request to save her people and the king discovers that Mordechai was never rewarded for saving his life. At that instant, Haman appears requesting authorization to hang Mordechai. The king pre-empts Haman and asks how they should honor someone. Assuming the king means him, Haman suggests a grand plan. Ironically, Achashveirosh tells Haman to honor Mordechai in full public view!

PART B. THE HAND OF GOD IN THE “NATURAL WORLD”

What may appear at first glance as a series of mere coincidences in the Megillah is in fact indicative of a Guiding Hand. What do we learn from this message of Divine concealment?

1. **Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), Chulin 139b – The name “Esther” itself represents Divine concealment.**

Where is Esther alluded to in the Torah? As it is written, “I will surely hide [my countenance on that day]” (Devarim/Deuteronomy 31:18).

אסתר מן התורה מנין ואנכי הסתר אסתיר [פני ביום ההוא].

2. **Rabbi Shimshon Pinkus, Purim, Ch. 2 – Discovering God in the natural world.**

This is also the reason for which none of the names of God are mentioned in Megillat Esther. Since if His name would be written explicitly, this would constitute a departure from the natural into the supernatural – which is applicable to Passover. Purim, however, reveals that each aspect *within* nature is imbued with the love of God ...

Where does one find more intense love: in Passover or in Purim? On Passover God raised us over the entire world, but on Purim we discover God in every nook and cranny of the natural world.

(עמוד כ') זוהי גם הסיבה לכך שלא מוזכר בכל המגילה אף שם משמות הש"י, כיון שאם היה כתוב בגלוי שמו של הקב"ה היתה זו יציאה מגדר הטבע למעל הטבע, וזה כבר נוגע לפסח. אך פורים מגלה לנו שכל דבר בתוך הטבע החשוך זוהי פיסגת האהבה. ...

היכן רואים יותר אהבה בפורים או בפסח? בחג הפסח הרים אותנו הקב"ה מעל העולם, אבל בפורים אנו מגלים את הקב"ה בכל נקודה ונקודה של טבע.

3. **Ibid., Purim, Ch. 2 – Purim is named after drawing lots: the inner power of nature.**

This point is embodied even in the name and quintessence of the day of Purim – which is named after the drawing of lots (*pur*). On the face of it, there is nothing more natural than drawing lots, for one lot will always emerge from the

(עמוד כא') נקודה זו טמונה גם בעצם שמו ומהותו של יום זה – “פורים” על שם הפור. שלכאורה אין דבר טבעי יותר מגורל, שהרי לעולם יצא פתק אחד מתוך הגורל, וא"כ ניתן לכאורה לטעות ולטעון כי אך “במקרה” יצא פתק זה דוקא.

drawing. There is therefore room to claim, mistakenly, that this lot only came out by chance.

Yet, several examples in the Torah and the Prophets demonstrate that the drawing of lots is in fact a direct expression of the work of God. This is the reason for which the Land of Israel was divided according to lots. Initially, each tribe demanded the best land for itself, such as the land beside the sea, etc., until one of the tribes stated that it desired only the decision of God Himself. How was God's decision given? By the drawing of lots.

אולם מכמה דוגמאות מהתורה ומהנביאים אנו רואים כי אדרבה, גורל הוא ביטוי לפעולתו של הקב"ה בכבודו ובעצמו.

זהו הביאור שעל פי גורל נחלקה הארץ לשבטים, שהנה כל שבט ושבט דרש לעצמו את החלקים המובחרים כגון ליד הים וכיו"ב, עד שקם אחד השבטים ואמר אין אני חפץ בהכרעה אלא ע"י הקב"ה בכבודו ובעצמו. ומאי הכרעת הקב"ה בכבודו ובעצמו? הגורל.

4. **Ibid., Lots and the story of Purim.**

... This is the quintessence of Purim, named after the drawing of lots (*pur*) – and this is the first mitzvah of Purim, the reading of the Megillah, which reveals to us the inner nature of the world. The Maharal teaches (Tiferet Yisroel, Ch. 53) that when God sealed [the fate of] the Jewish nation for destruction, this was considered as if it had actually ceased to exist. God then created a new nation, with a renewed acceptance of the Torah.

The festival of Purim reveals not only the great love that is aroused at a time of danger, but even the inner nature of the world – the thoughts that we must think when we drink a cup of water and recite a blessing over it. Megillat Esther reveals the greatest closeness to God that is present in the world of nature; the power of Purim is in nature itself.

... זוהי המהות של פורים, על שם הפור. וזו המצוה הראשונה של פורים, קריאת המגילה שהיא מגלה לנו את המהות של העולם. המהר"ל אומר (תפארת ישראל ריש פרק נג) שכאשר הקב"ה חתם את עם ישראל למיתה הרי זה נחשב למיתה ממש. אחר כך ברא הקב"ה עם חדש עם קבלת התורה מחודשת.

חג פורים מגלה לנו לא רק את האהבה הגדולה שהתעוררה בשעת הסכנה, אלא את כל מהות העולם, את מה שכל אחד צריך לחשוב כאשר הוא שותה כוס מים ומברך "שהכל נהיה בדברו". המגילה מגלה את הקרבה הגדולה ביותר לקב"ה הקיימת בעולם הטבע. העוצמה של פורים נמצאת בטבע!

5. **Rabbi Yanki Tauber, Chabad.org – Costumes and the joy of Purim: when nothing is as it seems.**

Why do we disguise ourselves on Purim? Because on Purim nothing is as it seems. Was the banishment of Vashti simply one of those things that happen when a debauched Persian emperor gets drunk? Was it just coincidence that Mordechai happened to overhear a plot to kill the king? Did Achashveirosh choose Esther to be his queen because she happened to be the most beautiful woman in the empire? Was it plain bad luck for bad Haman that he happened to visit Achashveirosh just when the king was having Mordechai's heroic deed read to him? Was it Esther's charm and Achashveirosh's flippancy that made the king suddenly hang his favorite minister?

Purim was instituted because the Jewish people at the time understood that it was God Himself Who did all of the above, to save His people. He was just disguising Himself as a Persian palace soap opera.

When God took the Children of Israel out of Egypt on Passover, the entire neighborhood, from Giza

to Gaza and from Memphis to Mesopotamia, resonated with the miracles wrought by the God of the Hebrews. When a small jug of oil burned for eight days on Chanukah, the most skeptical Hellenist saw that it was an act of God. Purim (“lots”) is unique in that the most miraculous of salvations was shrouded in the garments of nature, luck and coincidence. God was hidden and remained hidden – His name does not once appear in the entire Megillah!

Purim is a masquerade. The Scroll of Esther (“I shall hide”) is scrolled up. Even the poppy-seed filling is barely peeking out of the folds of dough of the Hamantash (or is it prune?), not to mention the wholly concealed meat (chicken?) filling in the *kreplach*.

Not paradoxically, Purim is also the most joyous festival of the Jewish calendar. It's great to celebrate miracles, but how often does a miracle come your way? Far more exhilarating is the realization that nothing is as it seems, that God is *always* pulling the strings, even when things seem to be “just happening.”

6. Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner, Pachad Yitzchak, Purim, Ch. 34 –The “natural” salvation of Purim enables us to see God even when He is hidden.

Imagine two people are given the job of recognizing people at night. The first used a flashlight so that he could see the faces of the people and recognize them. The second did not have a flashlight, and therefore had to teach himself to recognize people's voices.

As to which one had a greater level of clarity – the first was superior to the second, since seeing a person's face is a clearer way of recognizing someone than hearing his voice.

On the other hand, the second person has an advantage over the first, in having developed the new skill of recognizing voices, which the first one has not.

In the morning, when the sun rises, the first one will turn off his flashlight, for it is of no use during the day. He will have gained nothing during the night which could help him during the day. The second one, however, will always be able to use the new skill of recognizing voices, which he developed in the dark, even during the day.

...משל לשני בני אדם שנצטוו להכיר אנשים בלילה.
האחד הדליק נר והביט בפני האנשים לאור הנר בכדי
להכיר את פניהם. לשני לא היה נר ומכיון שהיה מוכרח
להכיר את האנשים אמן את עצמו להכירם בטביעת
עינא דקלא.

ונמצא לענין הברירות והבהירות הראשון עדיף מן
השני, שהרי הכרת אדם בחוש הראיה היא יותר ברורה
מאשר הכרת אדם בחוש השמיעה.

אבל לעומת זאת יש להשני עדיפות על הראשון, שהוא
סגל לעצמו כשרון חדש של הקשבה לקולות בני אדם,
והראשון אשר נשתמש בנר חסר לו כשרון זה של
הכרה ע"י חוש השמיעה.

ונמצא דאחר כך לכשיעלה עמוד השחר והראשון יכבה
את נרו, דשרגא בטיהרא מאי אהני, כל הכוחות שנתנה
לו עבודתו בלילה לאור הנר מיותרים הם עכשיו.
אבל לעומת זאת השני, נהי דעכשיו גם הוא מכיר את
האנשים מ"מ כוחות השמיעה וההקשבה שיצרה בו
עבודתו בחשך לעולם נשארים קנין בנפשו.

In the parable cited we see two responses to the challenge presented by darkness. The person without the flashlight was forced to cultivate a heretofore unused faculty, attentive listening, that added a new dimension to assist him in recognizing people that he met. The Jewish people are compared to this individual developing the new ability to “listen” and perceive God in the “darkness.”

7. **Rabbi Meir Simchah HaKohen of Dvinsk, Meshech Chochmah, Devarim 33:4 – Because of Purim, the Jewish people grew confident of their ability to follow the Torah even at a time of concealment of the Divine Presence in the world.**

They attained the ultimate level of perception of Divine Providence [at Sinai] and acknowledged the truth of His existence and that the Torah upholds the Heavens and Earth ... and they declared: We are capable of fulfilling the Torah during a period when we possess the ultimate level of spiritual perception [as at Sinai], but when the Divine Presence is concealed within Nature we will be unable to abide by the Torah.

However, in the days of Esther when the Divine Presence was concealed and the Jews were the servants of Achashveirosh, the fact that they were prepared to give up their lives demonstrated their complete acceptance of the Torah [under all conditions].

דהוא שהשכילו תכלית ההשגה העליונה וראו כי הוא דבר הכרחי והתורה היא קיומו של מעשי שמים וארץ, וענין המודעה הוא דאמרו כשאנחנו בהשגה עליונה אז היינו יכולים לקיים, אבל כשההנהגה האלקית מסתתרת בטבע אז אין לנו יכולים להתנהג על פי התורה,

אמנם בימי אסתר כשההשגחה היתה מסתתרת וישראל היו עבדי אחשוורוש ובכל זאת מסרו נפשם הוי קבלה שלימה.

The Jewish people initially argued that only in the lofty spiritual climate of Sinai is it possible to follow the Torah, but not in the “mundane” world where God is hidden. On Purim they proved that even with God’s apparent absence it was possible to reach great spiritual heights.

The hidden miracle of Purim enabled us to rise above the need for supernatural events in order to perceive God.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION II:

- ☞ In contrast with the holiday of Passover that commemorates the supernatural events that occurred in the Exodus from Egypt, Purim is a celebration of God operating from within the confines of nature. The favorable outcome encourages us to concede God’s Presence in the world even though He appears hidden.
- ☞ The symbol of the holiday is the “*pur*” – the lot that seems completely random and coincidental. Indeed, the outcome of the lot is controlled by God, as is witnessed by the use of lots for other specified commandments. God is ever present in nature and we are never far from Him.
- ☞ Perceiving God behind the scenes of the natural world requires the Jewish people to develop a new sensitivity to apprehend God in the natural world and enables us to flourish.

SECTION III: THE ETERNAL FESTIVAL

The Sages teach that while other festivals defined by the Torah are destined to be annulled in the face of the even greater revelations of times to come, the festival of Purim – which is a rabbinic enactment – will last eternally. The secret of this surprising statement is that whereas a small light (the “light” of the festivals) is not perceived against a more powerful light (the “light” of the Messianic Age), the festival of Purim, which recalls the Presence and supervision of God *even in darkness*, is eternal.

1. Midrash, Mishlei (Proverbs) 9 – The days of Purim are eternal.

All the festivals are destined to be nullified [in the Messianic Era], but the days of Purim will never be nullified, as it is written, “These days of Purim will never leave the Jewish people and their memory will not be lost to its children” (Esther 9:28).

שכל המועדים יהיו בטלין, וימי הפורים לא יהיו נבטלין לעולם, שנאמר (אסתר ט, כח) וימי הפורים האלה לא יעברו מתוך היהודים וזכרם לא יסוף מזרעם.

2. Yimiyahu (Jeremiah) 16:14-15 – In days to come, the Exodus from Egypt (upon which Biblical festivals are founded) will no longer be mentioned.

Thus, behold, days are coming – the word of God – when it will no longer be said, “As God lives, Who took the Children of Israel out from the land of Egypt,” but rather, “As God lives, who took the Children of Israel out from the land of the north and from all the lands where He had scattered them; and I shall return them to their land, which I gave to their forefathers.”

לכן הנה ימים באים נאם ה' ולא יאמר עוד חי ה' אשר העלה את בני ישראל מארץ מצרים: כי אם חי ה' אשר העלה את בני ישראל מארץ צפון ומכל הארצות אשר הדיחם שמה והשבתיים על אדמתם אשר נתתי לאבותם:

3. Ramchal, (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto), Da'as Tevunos (The Understanding Heart), Section 54 – All actions of God in the world lead in a hidden way towards the world's destiny.

In every action that God performs in the world, there are two aspects, the revealed and the hidden ... the hidden aspect is the deep design inherent in all of what God does, to bring humanity to a general state of perfection ...

... בכל מודה ומודה שהוא ית"ש מודד לנו, נבחין שני עניינים, הנראה והנסתר ... והנסתר היא העצה העמוקה הנמצאת תמיד בכל מדותיו, להביא בהן את הבריות לתיקון הכללי ...

There is no action, great or small, whose inner purpose is not leading to this perfection ... In the future, God will let the Jewish people understand how even the afflictions they underwent were for the good and prepared them for the state of being blessed ...

שאיין לך מעשה קטן או גדול שאין תוכיות כוונתו לתיקון השלם ... כי יודיע דרכיו הקב"ה לעתיד לבא לעיני כל ישראל איך אפילו התוכחות והיסורין לא היו אלא הזמנות לטובה, והכנה ממש לברכה.

In our current time, God's actions are not understood by us at all, they can only be seen in a superficial way and their true essence is hidden. Their inner essence is all the same: they are all purely good without any bad whatsoever, and this is certainly not clear or understandable now.

... והנה עתה אין מעשי ה' מובנים לנו כלל, אלא שטחיותם הוא הנראה, ותוכיותם האמיתית מסתתרת, כי הרי התוך הזה שווה בכלם - שכולם רק טוב ולא רע כלל, וזה אינו נראה ומובן עתה ודאי.

However, in Messianic times we will at least be able to see and understand how these things stemmed from God's deep and wondrous plans for our ultimate benefit.

אך לעתיד לבא זה לפחות נראה ונשיג - איך היו כולם מסיבות תחבולותיו ית' עמוקות להטיב לנו באחריתנו.

We are often left with the impression that there is no one guiding the events that occur in the world, similar

to the way the Jewish people felt when Haman issued his decree. Nevertheless, the hidden miracle that followed allowed the Jewish people to view the hand of God in the previously incomprehensible events. Likewise, we are told that the guiding Hand of God throughout history will be discerned in Messianic times.

4. **Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, Siftei Chaim, Vol. II, p. 222 – Purim reveals how even evil can become part of the Divine revelation, a prelude to future times.**

Now we can understand the words of Chazal: “[In the times of Mashiach/the Messiah] all of the holidays will be nullified, but the days of Purim will never be nullified.”

The common denominator between the Messianic revelations and the revelations of Purim is the understanding of how evil served as a means to bring about the revelation of God’s Unity; that everything develops as God wills it to, despite the appearance of evil. This will be the revelation in the future, that everyone will understand retroactively how everything was leading to the Divine purpose. This is also the revelation of Purim: within the hidden actions, without overstepping the boundaries of natural events, the Divine plan was revealed.

“All of the holidays will be nullified.” This means that because the future revelations [of God] will be so much greater than any of the previous ones, consequently all the earlier revelations will pale into insignificance. However, the revelation of Purim is different, because it shares the same type of revelation as those of the future – which is the revelation of God’s Unity. [Therefore, Purim will never be nullified, as the verse says,] “And their memory will not be lost from its children” (Esther 9:28).

מעתה נבין היטב את דברי חז"ל: כל המועדים עתידין להיבטל אך פורים לא יבטל שנאמר "וזכרם לא יסוף מזרעם".

המכנה המשותף בין הגילויים לעת"ל והגילויים של נס פורים, הוא ההבנה איך הרע עצמו שימש כאמצעי להביא לגילוי יחוד השי"ת, והכל יצא כרצון השי"ת – למרות הרע – כדי לגלות יחודו ית', וכאמור זהו גילוי היחוד לעת"ל, שבינינו למפרע איך כל המעשים עצמם הביאו לגילוי היחוד. זהו גילוי היחוד של פורים; בתוך ההסתר, ללא חריגה כלל בהנהגת הטבע, התגלה יחודו ית'.

כל המועדים יתבטלו – היינו הגילויים לעת"ל יהיו נשגבים וגדולים יותר מהניסים שהיו עד עתה בכלל ישראל, ממילא כל הניסים יהיו טפלים לעומת הגילויים שלעת"ל. אבל הנהגה המיוחדת הזו של גילוי היחוד שהוא המכנה המשותף בין הגילויים של פורים לגילויים לעת"ל גילויים אלו יהיו עיקריים וניכרים גם לעתיד לבוא – "וזכרם לא יסוף מזרעם".

Purim heightens our ability to perceive God in the events that occur in this world. This will greatly enhance our appreciation of God’s Presence when He reveals Himself in the Messianic Age. Purim’s meaningfulness is therefore eternal.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION III:

- ☞ The prophets tell us that the miracles of the Exodus will one day be superseded by even greater miracles performed for the Jewish people. Nevertheless, Purim and the miracle that it commemorates will remain in place for all generations.
- ☞ The blueprint that world history follows is one where evil is ultimately overcome by the forces of good after serving as a means toward the triumph of good. Unfortunately, we are incapable of seeing the positive contribution of evil when we experience it. Nevertheless, just as the apparently negative developments in the story of Purim contributed to its successful outcome, so too in Messianic times we will understand the pattern of events that led to our redemption.

SECTION IV: THE GREAT ENEMY STRIKES AGAIN

Although Israel had encountered several enemies throughout history, including the Philistines; Amon and Assyria in Biblical times; and the empires such as Babylon and Rome, who exiled them in later periods; there is one nation that stands out as the ultimate archenemy of the Jewish nation: Amalek. Amalek first struck the Jewish nation on its route from Egypt to Sinai, an attack so brazen that it prompted a Divine instruction to wipe out the evil of Amalek.

The next assault of Amalek came at the time of the Purim story: Haman, who conceived of and orchestrated the attempted annihilation of the Jews, was an Amalekite. His eventual downfall and the triumph of the Jews is a symbol for the ultimate victory of good over evil that will come at the End of Days. More recently, though the lineage is hard to trace, the Nazi attempt to eradicate the Jewish people bears the fingerprints of Amalek.

What is the origin of the nation of Amalek?

1. **Rabbi Akiva Tatz, Worldmask, Targum Press, pp.94-97, based on Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin, – Uncovering the essence of Haman.**

The Gemara asks “*Haman min haTorah minayin* – Where is Haman’s name found in the Torah?” The meaning of the Gemara’s search for the name of Haman in the Torah is this: what Haman represents must have its root in the Torah; if we will locate his name in the Torah we will be able to grasp his essence, we will be locating his spiritual genes.

The Gemara finds Haman’s name close to the beginning of the Torah. After Adam eats from the forbidden fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, God appears in the garden and asks him “*Hamin ha’etz* ... – Did you eat from the tree ...?” Now the word “*hamin*” is Haman. Without vowels, as the Torah is written, the word is Haman.

“Did you eat from the tree?” What has this to do with Haman? The message being conveyed here must be most fundamental because it is located in the beginning of Creation. This is the beginning of transgression – what Haman is in the world must somehow be intimately connected with the root of transgression itself.

2. **Ibid., Distance from God, losing clarity, and the creation of doubt.**

This question which God asks man, “Did you eat ...” is an expression of the distance which has come between man and his Creator as a result of man’s transgression. Adam has become so blind to reality, so confused that he tells himself that he can hide from the One Who sees all. Only moments before he was in direct communication with his Creator; has he forgotten with Whom he is dealing? No; he knows God, and that is precisely why he is hiding! But he has entered the world of illusion, and in his guilt and shame before the Master of the World, he somehow thinks he can hide from Him.

Adam has lost his clarity; in moving away from the Creator, he has lost his vision and he has lost contact with the source of reality. But the consequence is much more bitter: God conducts Himself in the same way! Now that Adam is hiding, pathetic and ridiculous as that may be, God plays by those rules that Adam has set up – “Where are you?” As if to say that the Master of the Universe cannot see him. “Did you eat ...?” as if the Master of the Universe doesn’t know.

Doubt has entered the world. Perhaps it is possible to hide. Perhaps He does not see, perhaps He does not know that man has transgressed. A gap has opened between God and His creation; the gap, the chasm, of doubt. And the name of that gap, the name of that doubt is Amalek. The source of Amalek has entered the world; Haman has been born.

Amalek becomes a nation whose doubt of God evolves into the denial of God. Amalek therefore became the eternal enemy of the Jewish people immediately after the undisputed miraculous Exodus from Egypt.

3. **Devarim 25:17-19 – Following the Exodus from Egypt, Amalek attacked the Jewish people. We are commanded to remember the deeds of Amalek and to wipe out this nation.**

Remember what Amalek did to you by the way, when you came forth out of Egypt; how he happened upon you by the way, and struck at your rear, all who were feeble behind you, when you were faint and weary; and he did not fear God.

Therefore, it shall be, when the Lord your God has given you rest from all your enemies around, in the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance to possess it, that you shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven – you shall not forget!

זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק בדרך בצאתכם ממצרים:
אשר קרד בדרך ויזנב בך כל הנחשלים אחריך ואתה
עיף ויגע ולא ירא א-להים:

והיה בהגיה ה' א-להיך לך מוכל איביך מסביב בארץ
אשר ה' א-להיך נתן לך נחלה לרשתה תמחה את זכר
עמלק מתחת השמים לא תשכח:

Amalek represents the philosophy of chance: an atheism that deprives the world of all purpose. We are here by accident, and have the right to live how we please. Purim, which demonstrates the purposeful supervision of God over events that seem to be mere “chance,” is the greatest refutation of the Amalekite doctrine.

4. **Rabbi Zev Leff (address at Aish HaTorah) – The philosophy of Amalek.**

Before the advent of Amalek, there were two schools of thought. The nations believed that various powers ran the world – idols, demons, angels, etc. As an alternative, Abraham established the concept of monotheism in the world – a conviction that God controlled all events. Amalek introduced a third idea – belief in nothing! This is atheism, which posits that nothing special controls the world ...

Atheism is worse than idol worship. Idol worship is polytheism, the belief in many powers. It is possible to progress from many gods to belief in One God ... However, Amalek denies that any power runs the world. It's all blind, accidental, happenstance. As Rabbi Tzaddok says, they believe in nothing. From this position, it is most difficult to accept the Almighty God.

5. **Shmuel (Samuel) I:15:7-9 – Saul defeated Amalek, but its king remained alive and continued the Amalek lineage.**

And Shaul (Saul) defeated the Amalekites from Havilah to the approach to Shur, which is alongside Egypt. And he took Agag, the king of the Amalekites, alive . . .

ויד שואל את עמלק מחוילה בואך שור אשר על פני
מצרים: ויתפש את אגג מלך עמלק חי...

6. **Esther 3:1 – Haman was an Agagite, from the Amalek royal family. Befitting the Amalekite philosophy, Haman schemed to annihilate the Jews.**

After these things, King Achashveirosh promoted Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes who were with him.

אחר הדברים האלה גדל המלך אחשורוש את המן
בן המדתא האגגי וינשאהו וישם את כסאו מעל כל
השרים אשר אתו:

7. **Rabbi Dr. Joseph B. Soloveitchik, Kol Dodi Dofek, footnote 23 – Any nation that aspires to destroy the Jewish people assumes the status of Amalek.**

The Torah testifies that Amalek still exists in the world. This can be seen clearly by the verse which states, “God wages war against Amalek throughout the generations” (Shemot/Exodus 17:16). Therefore, it is impossible for Amalek to be obliterated from this world until the Messianic Age. But where are they? The answer I heard once from my father, my teacher [Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik], is that any nation that contrives to annihilate the Jewish nation assumes the halachic status of Amalek.

הכתוב מעיד, כי עמלק עדיין קיים בעולם. וצא וראה מה אמרה תורה: “מלחמה לה’ בעמלק מדור דור”, אם כן אי אפשר לעמלק להמחות מן העולם עד ביאת המשיחין כך אמרו חז”ל: “אין הכסא שלם ואין השם שלם עד שיימחה זרעו של עמלק”. אבל – היכן הוא? התשובה שמעתי פעם מפי אבא מרי זצ”ל, כי כל אומה המתנכלת לכלות את כנסת ישראל הופכת, על פי הלכה, עמלק.

Do we see Amalek even in our days?

8. **Adolf Hitler, quoted in Hitler Speaks, by Hermann Rauschning – The modern incarnation of Amalek.**

The Jews have inflicted two wounds on mankind – circumcision on its body and conscience on its soul. They are Jewish inventions ... I am freeing humanity from the shackles of the soul, from the degrading suffering caused by the false vision called conscience and ethics ... The struggle for world domination will be fought entirely between us, between the Germans and the Jews. All else is facade and illusion.

9. **www.shemaisrael.co.il/parsha/rosenzweig/archives/vayikra.htm (based on Aish HaTorah Discovery seminar) – The second hanging of the sons of Haman, 1946.**

1. In Megillat Esther, in the list of names of Haman’s sons who were hanged there are four unusual letters in the right column: a small ת, ש, ז, and a large ו.
2. The day after Haman and his ten sons were hanged, Queen Esther asked King Ahashveirosh, “If it shall please His Majesty, allow the Jews who are in Shushan to act tomorrow as they did today, and let Haman’s ten sons be hanged on the gallows.” A surprising request, since they were already hanged the previous day.
3. “... On the 7th day of the Sukkot (Tabernacles) festival, the judgment of the nations of the world is finalized. Sentences are issued from the residence of the King. Judgments are aroused and executed on that day” (Zohar, Vayikra 31b).
4. On the 7th day of Sukkot, in the year 5707, corresponding to October 16th, 1946, ten cohorts to Hitler were hanged after being found guilty of crimes against humanity at the Nuremberg trials. Newsweek magazine (October 28, 1946, Foreign Affairs Section, p. 46) ran a story on the hanging. Eleven were to be hung, but Goering committed suicide in his cell shortly before the sentence was carried out.
5. Only Julius Streicher went to the gallows without dignity. He had to be pushed across the floor, wild-eyed and screaming: “Heil Hitler!” Mounting the steps he cried out: “And now I go to God.” He stared at the witnesses facing the gallows and shouted: “Purimfest 1946”! (Newsweek)
6. Returning to the large and small letters in the names of Haman’s sons:
The large **vav** (equals 6) signifying the 6th millennium (from the years 5001 to 6000). The remaining 3 letters - **taf** (400), **shin** (300), and **zayin** (7) – equal 707 of the 6th millennium, or, the year 5707. Ten of Hitler’s aids were hung on the 7th day of Sukkot, in the year 5707, on October 16th, 1946.
7. Thus were Haman’s ten sons “hanged again” – on wooden beams, exactly as Queen Esther had requested.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION IV:

- ☞ The nation of Amalek is hinted at in the beginning of world history at man's fall in the Garden of Eden. By transgressing the Will of God, man distanced himself from Him. The result of this distance is that truth is no longer perceived as an absolute and man is now shrouded by doubt.
- ☞ Amalek became a nation whose doubt of God evolved into the denial of God. Amalek therefore became the eternal enemy of the Jewish people immediately after the undisputed miraculous Exodus from Egypt to prove that these miraculous events were just coincidental.
- ☞ Amalek represents the philosophy of chance: an atheism that deprives the world of all purpose. We are here by accident, and have the right to live how we please. Purim, which demonstrates the purposeful supervision of God over events that seem to be mere "chance," is the greatest refutation of the Amalekite doctrine.
- ☞ In later generations, we find great similarities between the psychopathic hatred of Haman – himself a descendant of Amalek – for the Jewish people and that of Hitler and his followers. If perhaps they were not the biological progeny of Amalek, the Nazis were certainly adherents of Amalekite ideology.

SECTION V: THE PURIM-YOM KIPPUR CONNECTION

The connection between Purim and Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, which is the most holy and austere day of the year, hardly seems likely. Yet, the Sages state that the name "Kippurim," the Torah name for the Day of Atonement, may be read *kePurim* – "like Purim." Despite the radically different atmosphere of the two days, they are in fact intimately related.

1. **Rav Tzadok HaKohen, Pri Tzaddik, Shemot – The only two everlasting festivals.**

In the Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni, Mishlei 9) it is written, "All of the festivals will eventually be nullified while the days of Purim will never be nullified, as the verse states, 'These days of Purim will not depart from the Jews and their memory will not cease to be remembered by their descendants' (Esther 9:28)." In addition, Yom Kippur will never be nullified, as the verse states "And this will be for you an eternal statute" (Vayikra/Leviticus 16:34).

אך הענין דאיתא במדרש) ילקוט, משלי סימן ט') שכל המועדים יהיו בטלין וימי הפורים לא יהיו נבטלין לעולם שנאמר) אסתר ט, כ"ח (וימי הפורים האלה לא יעברו מתוך היהודים וזכרם לא יסוף מזרעם אף ימי הכפורים אינן בטלין לעולם שנאמר) ויקרא ט"ז, ל"ד) והיתה זאת לכם לחוקת עולם.

2. **Rabbi Shimshon Pinkus, Purim, p. 99 – Both Purim and Yom Kippur pertain to the quintessence of life.**

The Maharal (Tiferet Yisrael, Ch. 53) explains that the reason these two days [Purim and Yom Kippur] will never be nullified is that both pertain to the very existence of Israel as a people. Were it not for Yom Kippur, transgression would overcome us, Heaven forbid (see Pirkei D'Rebbi Eliezer, Ch. 46), and likewise on Purim we were rescued from the terrible decree of "to destroy, to kill, and to wipe out all of the Jews."

ביאר המהר"ל (בתפארת ישראל ריש פ' נג) שמה שמחייב את אי התבטלות שני ימים אלו היא העובדה ששניהם נוגעים לעצם החיים של כלל ישראל: לולי יום הכפורים היו העבירות מכריעות אותנו ח"ו (ועי' בפרדר"א פרק מו), וכמו כן בפורים הצילנו השי"ת מהגזירה הנוראה "להשמיד להרוג ולאבד את כל היהודים".

Both the joy of Purim and the feeling of Yom Kippur are thus grounded in the essence of life itself. On Yom Kippur a person feels that he is being given a chance to live in the future, despite his [imperfect] past. The joy of Purim, on the other hand, is for life itself – the feeling of joy for life itself never fades, just as the joy a person feels on his birthday is never diminished since that is the day that his life was given to him.

It therefore emerges that the joy of Purim is not because of the past, on account of the great miracle that God performed for that generation, but rather for the feeling [of joy for life] that is renewed in each and every generation.

והיינו שהשמחה בפורים וההרגשה ביום הכיפורים שניהם ביסוד החיים עצמם הם. ביום כיפור מרגיש האדם שהנה ניתנת לו האפשרות להתקיים בעתיד על אף כל העבר. והשמחה בפורים היא על עצם החיים תחושת השמחה על החיים בעצמותיו לא מתבטלת אף פעם, כשם שהשמחה שאדם שמח ביום הולדתו אינה פגה כל ימי חייו, כי הרי החיים עצמם נתנו לו אז.

נמצא אפוא שהשמחה בפורים אינה על העבר על הנס הגדול שהקב"ה עשה לדור ההוא אלא על ההרגשה המתחדשת בכל דור ודור.

3. **Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner, Pachad Yitzchak, Purim, Section 21 – Purim and Yom Kippur are like two halves of a whole.**

We have already mentioned on several occasions the holy words of the Vilna Gaon, who explains the teaching of the Sages that Purim and the Day of Atonement [the “day like Purim”] are of the same nature. The Gaon explained that we find (Beitza 15b) concerning all festivals a teaching of “half for God and half for you” [festivals mandate us both to perform religious duties towards God and also to enjoy ourselves in physical ways]. In this sense, Purim and Yom Kippur are two halves of one complete entity, Yom Kippur comprising the “half for God,” and Purim being the “half for you”; two halves of one whole.

כמה פעמים הזכרנו את דברות קדשו של הגר"א המפרש את מאמר חכמים כי יום פורים ויום כ-פורים יש בהם משקל משותף, וכתב על זה הגר"א כי הלא מצאנו בענינו של יום טוב דינא של חציו להשם וחציו לכם. ובמהלך זה יום הפורים ויום כפורים מהווים שלימות אחד של מועד. דיום כפורים הוא החציו להשם ויום הפורים הוא החציו לכם, שני חצאים של שלימות אחת.

4. **Rabbi Shraga Simmons, Aish.com – The potential for spiritual elevation on Purim.**

... [Contrasting Purim and the Day of Atonement,] we would assume that Yom Kippur is the greater of the two days. But in one sense, Purim is even greater: It is easier to achieve spiritual elevation on a day like Yom Kippur, when we pray and have no time for forbidden activities like gossip or getting angry. By fasting, the soul achieves dominance over the body.

But on Purim, in our state of rambunctious drunkenness, it is much harder to maintain our human dignity. As Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov writes: “If one attains holiness through affliction, and another attains holiness through indulgence, who is the greater of the two? It may be said that the one who attains holiness through indulgence is greater, for the attainment of holiness through indulgence requires an infinitely greater degree of striving and effort.”

In this way, the challenge of Purim is greater. Literally translated, *Yom hakiPurim* is only “a day like Purim.”

According to Jewish thought, the last (and only!) people to see the world in a state of perfection were

Adam and Eve. The Garden of Eden means a perfect world. How did Adam and Eve fall from that state? By eating from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. That is, they pursued the world of illusion, in which the transcendence of the universe (good) is masked by seeming imperfection (evil).

If we approach Purim correctly, when we reach the tipsy state of no longer knowing good from evil, we actually realign our perspective by seeing the Transcendent as the source of all physical reality, thereby revealing its hidden perfection. Therefore, Purim at its peak is like a taste of Eden.

The potential for spiritual elevation on Purim is tremendous. As we're drinking and partying, we should keep this in mind and not let the opportunity fly by!

5. **Tikkunei Zohar, Tikkun 21 – Yom Kippur is “like” the day of Purim: in future times, Yom Kippur too will be a day of rejoicing.**

It is called “Purim” because of Yom HaKippurim [which can be read as “the day that is like Purim”], for, in the future, people will rejoice on Yom Kippur, and will transform its required afflictions to delight. Although the Divine Presence forbade the wearing of shoes on Yom Kippur, at that time people will quote the verse, “How beautiful are your footsteps in sandals, O prince’s daughter” (Shir HaShirim/Song of Songs 7:2), and pleasure, joy, and much good will happen on that day – this will be the case in the time of the coming Redemption.

פורים אתקריאת על שם יום הכפורים דעתידין
 לאתענגא ביה ולשנויי ליה מענוי לענג ומה דאיהי
 שכינתא אסור ביה נעילת הסנדל בהוא זמנא אתמר
 בה מה יפו פעמיך בנעלים בת נדיב וענוגא וחדוה וכמה
 טבין מזומנין לגבה ודא יהא בזמנא דפורקנא בעגלא.

The Zohar asserts that in the time of the Redemption, Yom Kippur will be transformed to a day that in many respects resembles Purim.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION V:

- ☞ Purim and Yom Kippur – opposites at first glance – are intimately related. Both days are eternal. Both represent the joy that one experiences when receiving the gift of life from God.
- ☞ Most festivals call for a balance between spiritual pursuits and festive celebration. Two holidays do not conform to this rule – Yom Kippur and Purim. Yom Kippur lacks the conventional festive meals and physical pleasures associated with holidays, while on Purim we enjoy eating and drinking in a manner well beyond the other festivals. In fact, Yom Kippur and Purim are two halves of a whole – the former focusing on the spiritual and the latter on the physical.
- ☞ The ability to achieve an elevated spiritual state when fasting and abstaining from the pleasures of the world is easily understood. On Purim we are challenged to achieve great spiritual heights when we are fully involved in the physicality of this world. The Zohar asserts that in the time of the Redemption, Yom Kippur will be transformed into a day that in many respects resembles Purim.

SECTION VI: THE REAFFIRMATION OF THE TORAH AND ACCEPTANCE OF THE ORAL LAW

There is another dimension central to the day of Purim. Like the festival of Shavuot that commemorates the Jewish people's acceptance of the Torah at Sinai, Purim is a day that marks a renewed acceptance of the Torah. At Sinai we entered into a covenant with God by accepting the Torah. Yet, the Sages teach us that there was something lacking in our initial acceptance that was only rectified years later on Purim. One idea is that the Torah in general was initially accepted under duress or fear due to the overwhelming experience of Mt. Sinai and was subsequently reaccepted out of love on Purim. The second idea is that the Oral Torah which was initially accepted under duress due to its intimidating breadth and depth was later reaccepted out of love on Purim.

PART A. REAFFIRMATION OF THE TORAH

The Torah was given by God to the entire Jewish nation of approximately 2.5 million Jews at Mount Sinai, however the Torah was initially accepted out of fear.

1. Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 88a – The acceptance of the Torah at Sinai was based on fear, in contrast to that of Purim.

“And they stood at the foot of the mountain” (Shemot 19:17)... this teaches that God suspended the mountain [of Sinai] above them like a barrel and said, “If you accept the Torah, good; and if you do not, here will be your death.” Rav Acha Bar Yaakov said, “From here there is a great excuse for [the Jews not having kept] the Torah (the Jews could contend that their acceptance of the Torah was under duress and therefore they would not be liable for not abiding by it – Rashi). Rabbah said, “Nonetheless, they later accepted it [willingly] in the days of Achashveirosh, as it says, ‘The Jews affirmed and accepted upon themselves’ – they affirmed what they had already accepted.”

ויתיצבו בתחתית ההר א"ר אבדימי בר חמא בר חסא מלמד שכפה הקב"ה עליהם את ההר כגיגית ואמר להם אם אתם מקבלים התורה מוטב ואם לאו שם תהא קבורתכם א"ר אחא בר יעקב מכאן מודעא רבה לאורייתא אמר רבא אעפ"כ הדור קבלוה בימי אחשוורוש דכתיב קימו - וקבלו היהודים קיימו מה שקיבלו כבר.

2. Rashi, *ibid.* – The Jewish people now accepted the Torah willingly due to the jubilation brought about by the miracle of Purim.

“In the days of Achashveirosh” – stemming from the love of the miracle performed on their behalf.

בימי אחשוורוש - מאהבת הנס שנעשה להם

3. Esther 9:27- The Festival of Purim is accepted by the Jewish people for all generations.

The Jews affirmed and accepted upon themselves and upon their progeny and upon all who join them that they should without fail celebrate these two days according to their writing and their time, every year.

קימו וקבלו (וקבלו) היהודים עליהם ועל זרעם ועל כל הנולדים עליהם ולא יעבור להיות עשים את שני הימים האלה ככתבם וכזמנם בכל שנה ושנה.

The words “*affirmed and accepted*” refer to the re-acceptance of the Torah out of love on Purim.

4. **She'iltot D'Rav Achai Gaon 67 – Purim is akin to the day that the Torah was given.**

And the days of Purim have a similar status to the day that the Torah was given [i.e. Shavuot].

ועדיף יומא דפוריא כיום שניתנה בו תורה.

For a further explanation of the common denominator between Shavuot and Purim cited by the She'iltot, see the comments of the Netziv on the She'iltot (Ha'amek Davar 6).

5. **Shemot 24:7 – At Sinai the Jewish people agreed to fulfill God's Will even before they heard His commandments, indicative of how enthusiastic was their acceptance of the Torah .**

And Moshe (Moses) took the Book of the Covenant and he read before the people, and they said, “Everything that God has said we will do and we will obey.”

ויקח ספר הברית ויקרא באזני העם ויאמרו כל אשר-
דבר י-הוה נעשה ונשמע.

This verse seems to contradict the passage in the Talmud Shabbat cited above. The explanation is as follows:

6. **Tosefot, Shabbat 88a – At Sinai there was only a limited degree of acceptance of the Torah.**

“[God] suspended the mountain [of Sinai] above them like a barrel.” Even though they had originally preceded “we will do” to “we will obey” [indicating an enthusiastic acceptance of the Torah at Sinai], nevertheless, [God now forced them to accept the Torah since] perhaps they would change their minds when they would see the great fire [of the Divine Revelation at Sinai], which would cause their souls to leave their bodies [from fear].

כפה עליהן הר כנגיית - ואע"פ שכבר הקדימו נעשה
לנשמע שמא יהיו חוזרים כשיראו האש הגדולה
שיצאתה נשמתן וכו'

Why was the original acceptance of the Torah out of fear?

7. **Rabbi Yechiel Yaakov Weinberg, Lifrakim, pp. 343-344 – Experiencing the Revelation at Sinai left no room for free choice.**

When the Jewish people arrived at Mt. Sinai they were overcome by experiences of such great magnitude that today are practically beyond our comprehension. The entire mountain was afire in a sea of leaping flames. The heavens thundered and sent forth lightning through the presence of the Clouds of Glory and the voice of God spoke to them from the wonders of nature – a great and mighty voice was heard across the expanse of the wilderness and the entire camp.

This was the first time since God created the Heavens and Earth that an entire nation heard with its human ears the voice of the Living God,

בשעה שבאה האומה הישראלית להר סיני תקפו עליה
רשמים במדת עוז וגבורה שכמעט אי אפשר לנו כיום
להשיג אותה. כל ההר היה בוער באש ועומד בתוך ים
של להבות מתלקחות. הרעימו השמים והבריקו ברקים
בתוך חשרת ענני כבוד וקול אלקים מדבר אליהם
מתוך פלאי תופעות הטבע הללו, קול גדול וחזק נשמע
על פני כל הישמוון ועל פני כל המוחה,

זה הפעם הראשונה בתולדות בני אדם, מאז ברא
אלקים שמים וארץ, אשר עם שלם שמע באזני אנוש
קול אלקים חיים ודבור יוצא מפי הגבורה, ואשר חזה

speech that went forth from the Almighty, and saw with eyes of flesh the wonders and might. Which person would not fear and be deeply affected in the midst of this spiritually charged atmosphere, and which person would not cling to his Creator and escape being influenced by speech emanating from the Almighty? Is it possible to imagine a human being who experienced an overwhelming event like this without being profoundly impacted? Who would refrain from joining to proclaim, “We will do and we will obey”? ... Clearly, this response [of “we will do and we will obey”] is as if it resulted from pressure and duress.

בעיני בשר עוצם הפנלאות והגבורה. ומי האיש ולא יהיה נפחד ונרעש בתוך אורה דתית זו, מי האיש ולא ידבק בקונו ומי יוכל להחליץ מהשפעת דבר יוצא מפי הגבורה? ואיך אפשר לדמות איש בן בשר ודם שמאורע עצום מעין זה עבר עליו לבלי רושם כביר ולא היה מצטרף לקריאת נעשה ונשמע? ... הרי שדומה תשובה זו כאילו באה מתוך כפייה ולחץ.

How did Purim produce a renewed acceptance of the Torah?

8. **Rabbi Avraham Phillips, Morasha – The gratitude of being saved miraculously by God resulted in a renewed acceptance of the Torah.**

Although the Jewish people were greatly appreciative of the great miracles that God performed for them in Egypt, they did not feel sufficiently indebted to willingly accept the Torah. The miracle of Purim was of a completely different nature. They were not merely faced with the threat of slavery as in Egypt but were in danger of complete annihilation as is expressed in the Talmud Megillah 14a where the rationale for the enactment of reading the Megillah is discussed. The Maharsha explains that if the appropriate response of the Jews at the Red Sea was to sing to God and tell of the great miracles that He performed for them during the Exodus from Egypt, how much more so were they obligated to publicize the miracle of God saving them from utter destruction – hence the enactment of reading the Megillah. Similarly, the miracle that saved them from a greater danger than they faced in Egypt produced a sense of gratitude on the part of the Jewish people that was expressed by a renewed acceptance of the Torah, this time out of their own willingness.

Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz further explains that the decree of Haman brought about a level of unity among the Jewish people that resembled the state of harmony that existed at Sinai (Sichos Mussar 5733 #9). This newly created unity enabled them to reach great spiritual heights and led to a renewed acceptance of the Torah.

9. **Ritva, Shabbat 88a – The acceptance of the Torah at Sinai was indeed under duress. Nevertheless, acceptance under duress is not grounds for exemption from accountability for the obligations they accepted.**

It is difficult to their understanding [i.e. of Tosefot], for if it is so, why were they held accountable for the Golden Calf ... and why were they punished [for other transgressions] thereafter if they only accepted [the Torah] out of duress? It appears to me that the statement of Rav Acha Bar Yaakov of “from here there is a great excuse for [the Jews not having kept] the Torah” was not meant in the literal sense, for the Torah testifies that they willingly accepted it ... Rather,

וקשיא להו א”כ למה נענשו עליו על עון העגל... וגם אחרי כן למה נענשו כיון דמוחמת יראה קבלו, ומה שנראה לי בכל זה דמה שאמר רב אחא מכאן [מודעה] רבא לאורייתא לאו בדרך האמת קאמר, כי התורה העידה שקבלוה בלב שלם ולא עוד אלא דאפי' שבועה באונס כי הוא, כיון שהיו פינו ולבנו שוין, וכבר נתחייבנו קודם לכן לשמוע ולעשות חייבים אנו בה... אלא הכי קאמר כי מכאן נותנים פתחון פה למינין שבדורות הללו לדחות וסבורים שמכאן יש להם מודעה רבה,

his intent is that this provides an opening for the heretics of those generations to reject [the Torah] and to assume that this was a declaration of consent under duress. However, we may respond that even according to their errant understanding their claim is unfounded since the Jewish people already accepted the Torah of their own volition [in the days of Achashveirosh.]

אבל אנו מחזירים ואומרים להם שאפי' לפי טעותם אין להם טענה בזה שכבר קבלוה כל ישראל ברצון נפשם בימי אחשוורוש דכתיב קיימו וקבלו עליהם קיימו מה שכבר קבלו.

The Ritva rejects the contention that consent under duress exempted the Jewish people from observing the Torah.

10. **Maharal, Ohr Chadash, Introduction – Furthermore, by instituting the additional mitzvot of Purim, the Jewish people demonstrated full acceptance of the mitzvot of the Torah that were given to them earlier by God at Sinai.**

The Talmud states, “Nonetheless, they later accepted it [willingly] in the days of Achashveirosh” (Shabbat 88), for when they added the mitzvah of reading the Book of Esther, this was like an addition ... For when one makes an addition, there is an implicit recognition that the principle part already exists.

ואמר (שבת פח') כי אף על פי כן הדר קיבלוה בימי אחשוורוש כי כאשר הוסיפו במצות מקרא מגילה ודבר זה כמו הוספה.... וכאשר יש כאן הוספה, אם כן העיקר קודם.

PART B. ACCEPTANCE OF THE ORAL LAW

There are also opinions that the reacceptance of the Torah on Purim refers to the Oral Law, which is described in the Midrash below as being initially accepted at Sinai under duress due to its intimidating breadth and depth.

1. **Midrash Tanchuma, Noach 3 – Although at Sinai the Jewish people accepted the Written Law willingly, they were compelled to accept the Oral Law.**

They only accepted the Torah after the Holy One, Blessed be He, suspended the mountain over them like a barrel ...

And if you will say he suspended the mountain over them regarding acceptance of the Written Law, did they not immediately respond unanimously “we will perform and we will obey” when God asked if they would accept the Torah? [Their response was positive regarding the Written Law] because there is no toil and difficulty [involved in learning it] and it is relatively small in size. However, regarding the Oral Law, He explained to them that it contains minutiae, exhausting logic, and “strong as death and hard as the grave is its zeal” (Shir HaShirim/

ולא קבלו ישראל את התורה עד שכפה עליהם הקדוש ברוך הוא את ההר כגיגית...

ואם תאמר על התורה שבכתב כפה עליהם את ההר והלא משעה שאמר להן מקבלין אתם את התורה, ענו כלם ואמרו נעשה ונשמע מפני שאין בה יגיעה וצער והיא מעט אלא אמר להן על התורה שבע"פ שיש בה דקדוקי מצות קלות וחמורות והיא עזה כמות וקשה כשואל קנאתה, לפי שאין לומד אותה אלא מי שאוהב הקדוש ברוך הוא בכל לבו ובכל נפשו ובכל מאודו.

Song of Songs 8:6), and only one who loves the Holy One, Blessed be He, with all his heart and all his soul and all his might can learn it. [Therefore, they had to be forced to accept it.]

The Midrash Tanchuma ascribes the coercion at Sinai not to the Written Law that the people accepted willingly, but to the highly challenging Oral Law.

Why did Purim result in a reacceptance of the Oral Law?

2. **Rabbi Avraham Phillips, Morasha – A great outpouring of gratitude ensued following their redemption that led to the inspiration to expend the effort necessary to understand and fulfill the Oral Torah.**

The rigorous demands of the Oral Torah were not willingly accepted until God redeemed them from the death sentence passed by Achashveirosh and Haman. A great outpouring of gratitude ensued following their redemption that led to the inspiration to expend the effort necessary to understand and fulfill the Oral Torah.

The material comprising the Oral Law is vast since it includes interpretation of all the laws found in the Five Books of Moses, laws that were given to Moshe that have no source in the Five Books of Moses, and later rabbinic enactments and customs, as summarized by the Rambam (Maimonides) below.

3. **Rambam, Commentary on the Mishnah, Introduction – The five categories of laws contained in the Oral Law.**

It emerges from the principles that I have set forth earlier that all the established laws of the Oral Law fall into five categories:

The first category comprises the explanations that were received from Moshe [directly from God] that are hinted at in the Scripture or that may be deduced using the hermeneutical principles [that God gave to Moshe to use to interpret the Scripture] ...

The second category comprises the laws that were received by Moshe at Sinai that have no [Scriptural] basis ...

The third category comprises the laws that [were not received by Moshe but] were learned [exclusively] by use of the hermeneutical principles ...

The fourth category comprises the laws that the Prophets and the Rabbis enacted in every generation for the sake of erecting a “fence” and for protection [of the Biblical Laws] ...

לפיכך היו חלקי הדינין המיוסדים בתורה על העיקרים האלה שהקדמנו נחלקים לחמישה חלקים.

החלק הראשון, הפירושים המקובלים מפי משה ויש להם רמז בכתוב וש אפשר להוציאם בדרך סברא...

החלק השני הם הדינים שנאמר בהם הלכה למשה מסיני ואין ראיות עליהם....

החלק השלישי הם הדינים שהוציאו על דרכי הסברא....

החלק הרביעי הם הדינים שקבעום הנביאים והחכמים שבכל דור ודור כדי לעשות סייג לתורה....

The fifth category comprises the laws that were adopted after much thought for the welfare of society ... or for the welfare of the religion, and these are what the Rabbis have referred to as enactments [for the well-being of society] and customs.

והחלק החמישי הם הדינים העשויים על דרך החקירה
וההסכמה בדברים הנוהגים בין בני אדם....או בדברים
שהם תועלת לבני אדם בדברי תורה וקראו אותם
תקנות ומנהגות.

Please refer to the Morasha classes for a full discussion of the Oral Law.

KEY THEMES OF SECTION VI:

- ☞ The Sages teach us that there was something lacking in our initial acceptance of the Torah at Mt. Sinai that was only rectified years later on Purim. One idea is that the Torah in general was initially accepted under duress or fear due to the overwhelming experience of Mt. Sinai, which reduced the people's free will, and was subsequently reaccepted out of love on Purim. The gratitude of being saved miraculously by God resulted in a renewed acceptance of the Torah. Furthermore, the decree of Haman brought about a level of unity among the Jewish people that resembled the state of harmony that existed at Sinai.
- ☞ The second idea is that the Oral Torah which was initially accepted under duress due to its intimidating breadth and depth was later reaccepted out of love on Purim. A great outpouring of gratitude ensued following their redemption that led to the inspiration to expend the effort necessary to understand and fulfill the Oral Torah.