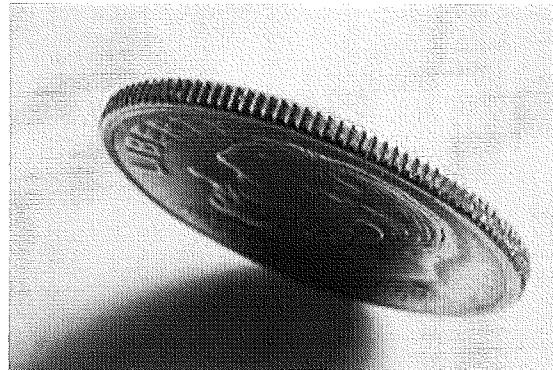


## Purim and Yom HaPurim: Two Sides of the Same Coin



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הַצְוֹרָה הַגְּדוֹלָה כִּי-אֵת לְעֵזֶל.

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## **The Duality of Purim**

I would like to try to develop a metaphysic of Purim, an understanding of the holiday's underlying principles. This endeavor sounds self-contradictory: Purim is a day of gaiety, while the development of a "metaphysic" is inherently serious. Purim and seriousness are, *prima facie*, mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, let us investigate Purim, beginning from the halakhic viewpoint.

## *The Dual Nature of the Megillah*

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said: One is obligated to read the Megillah in the evening and to read it a second time in the morning; as it is said (Ps. 22:3), "O my God, I call by day but You answer not, and at night and there is no answerer for me."

We have also learned: Rabbi Helbo said in the name of Ulla of Biri: One is obligated to read the Megillah in the evening and to read it a second time in the morning; as it is said (Ps. 30:13), "So that my glory may sing praise to You, and not be silent; O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto You forever" (*Megillah* 4a).

We have two identical rulings, but two contradictory reasons. Rabbi Joshua ben Levi and Ulla formulated the same law, but quoted two mutually exclusive verses.

Rabbi Joshua ben Levi quoted a verse from Psalm 22, the famous prayer of an individual in distress, forsaken and abandoned: "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" This psalm reflects the cry of total despair, the shriek of a frightened, lonely child who has suddenly discovered that his or her mother is gone. According to our tradition, Esther recited this psalm on her way to the inner court of Ahasuerus. In a word, it is the psalm of a person who has lost almost all hope and, out of the depths of despair, petitions the Almighty. From this psalm, Rabbi Joshua ben Levi inferred that one must read the Megillah at night as well as in the daytime, for the prayer of the lonely, forsaken person is without pause or stop. He cannot help himself but pray.

In other words, the reading of the Megillah was equated by Rabbi Joshua ben Levi with the offering of a prayer to the Almighty from the straits of distress, addressing a petition to Him from the depths of agony and misery.

Rabbi Helbo in the name of Ulla introduced a verse from Psalm 30, the jubilant psalm of dedication ("A psalm and song at the dedication of the house"). This psalm of thanksgiving, of a sick individual miraculously cured, overflows with gratitude: "Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning" (Ps. 30:6). He does not just thank the Almighty; he sings to Him an incessant hymn of praise, day and night. Therefore, Ulla concluded, one must recite the Megillah in the evening and also in the morning. In other words, Ulla identified the reading of the Megillah with the offering of praise and thanks to the Almighty. The Megillah, according to Ulla, is a great song of gratitude, for it is good to sing praise to the Lord. In fact, Rabbi Nahman's famous statement, "The reading [of the Megillah] is to be equated with the recital of *Hallel*" (*Megillah* 14a), confirms Ulla's opinion.

Of course, the question arises: what is the Megillah? According to Rabbi Joshua ben Levi, the Megillah is a book of human sorrow and misery, the cry of the lonely person to the Almighty. According to Ulla, the reading of the Megillah is a jubilant song of thanksgiving and praise, of a person cured and redeemed by the Almighty. Which one is the correct understanding?

The answer is simple: both characterizations are correct. The Megillah contains two stories: the story of human happiness and fulfillment, as well as the story of human misery and distress. The reading of the Megillah is a dialectical performance. We pray to the Almighty while we read the Megillah, because we are in distress; we thank God and relate His wonders while we read the Megillah, for we have found refuge in Him; He has saved us.

## *Two Facets of Purim*

Consequently, the whole character of Purim changes. It is not just, as people assume, a day of hilarious feasting, drinking, merrymaking, and gaiety to the extent of self-forgetfulness, a day associated with the famous statement in the Talmud, "One is obligated to become inebriated on Purim until he cannot distinguish between 'Cursed be Haman' and 'Blessed be Mordecai'" (*Megillah* 7b). Purim is also a day of meditation, introspection, and serious self-examination.

The mystics, speaking of the five letters of *Purim* which occur also in *Yom Kippurim*, say this signifies a common denominator between the two festivals. One day is the most hilarious and noisy, and the other is the most solemn, awesome, and inspiring. Yet a strange equation has been formulated by the mystics: *Yom Kippurim* = *Purim + Ki*. No wonder that some of the Geonim advised that the *Tahanun* prayer be recited on Purim, because Purim is a day of supplication and petition (*Seder Rav Amram Gaon*, II, 72).



וההשתן. אהבה, כירזת, היא מדונה על ידה לא שמייה לא אשר  
ושאהה, תחצאה מהכרת רישיה התחזק כלו, אף בתרן המלגות  
למעלה מה — ים הפורים, אנו מהריבים בו להקב"ה מחד אהבה  
ראא' החנוך, ראת הרמות — הכללות כלן באננה הדין).  
בחקב"ה, אם קרובך זו באח מחר עליון, אף בתרן המלגות  
עליה יתרכז מים מעלה פוריות, ואך משמע כי ממש עליה יתרכז  
בימים אלה בימי הזרע וצער זרים להתעלות לדבוקות  
מר' ר' הילאר'א ולסל זצ"ל מכח מאליהם ח'ב' עמ' 123) מארך מה פוריות  
מי גוללה בימי הזרע ונלה בגדול (יעי' תענית ז').  
עד כמה גוללה הוא גוללה פוריות, ואך משמע כי ממש עליה יתרכז  
הקדושים בשתת' ים הפליטרים, הוושווה במללו — לפוריות. למים אנו מכח  
הקדושים גוללה מירח' שחרי מכם אבו בספחים הנק' בשם הארץ"ל, ים הפליטרים — כפורים, והזינו חיים

As a matter of fact, the whole institution of the Fast of Esther rests upon this very dichotomy inherent in the festival of Purim, upon the paradoxical halakhic requirement that Purim be observed both as a day of prayer and as a day of joyous celebration. Since it is impossible to comply with this paradoxical requirement, the Rabbis advanced the observance of the prayer aspect of Purim to the thirteenth of Adar.

The serious, prayerful mood, the frequent cry or shriek accompanying the communal fast, the recital of *Selihot* or the reading of *Avinu Malkenu*—these belong, and are closely related, to the very observance of Purim. The Fast of Esther is not to be treated as an extraneous addendum to Purim. It is a genuine Purim day on which the words of the Psalmist are translated literally into a liturgical reality: “O my God, I call by day but You answer not, and at night and there is no surcease for me” (Ps. 22:3). There is a passionnal experience involved in the whole drama of Purim.

Then Esther the queen . . . wrote with all emphasis . . . To confirm these days of Purim in their times appointed, according as Mordecai the Jew and Esther the queen had decreed upon them, and as they had decreed for themselves and for their seed, with regard to the fastings and the order of lamentation (9:29, 31).

The decree to observe Purim in the manner in which Mordecai and Esther observed it entailed the acceptance of two commitments: to observe Purim with celebration and gaiety, and also to observe it as a fast day.

କୁଳାଙ୍ଗ ପୁଷ୍ଟିର ଅନୁଭବ ମଧ୍ୟ ଦେଖିଲାମ

נְאָלָה מִדְבָּרָה כֵּן אָמַר

הרביעי בינו כס נטהר לנש גילה

הנחלת התרבות אוניברסיטאית

אלה, אשר לא נרמזו.

ପାଦରେ କାହିଁ କାହିଁ କାହିଁ କାହିଁ କାହିଁ କାହିଁ କାହିଁ କାହିଁ କାହିଁ

של ים הכספיים! קבלת התנוחה זו שבא מתחן תשובה עילאית, במשן ארכובים ים של התעלות שבאייה לאחבותה כי וליראתה כי במדגרה עליונה, לדבקות העלינהו תרבותה בהשניה ע"ז ליבור המהדרשת של התנהה לולאות שנויות), היא היא הסיבת שירוב ג'פ הרים טרזה וכפירה על חלואות

יום המכיפורים – קבלת התורה מיראה

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ନେପାଳ ଦ୍ୱାରା (ନେପାଳ ଆଧୁନିକ ରାଜ୍ୟ) „ଶ୍ରୀମତୀ କର୍ଣ୍ଣାମ୍ବାଦୀ ଦେବି  
ପାଦର ତଥାରେ ନେପାଳ ରେଖାର ରାଜ୍ୟ ପାଇଁ

טבנין ור מארט.

"כל הפה שיד גותים נ"י"

କେତେମ ଗାଁ ଯାଏ ଯାଏମ ହାତେ ଲୁଣ କିମ୍ବା କାନ୍ଦିଲ