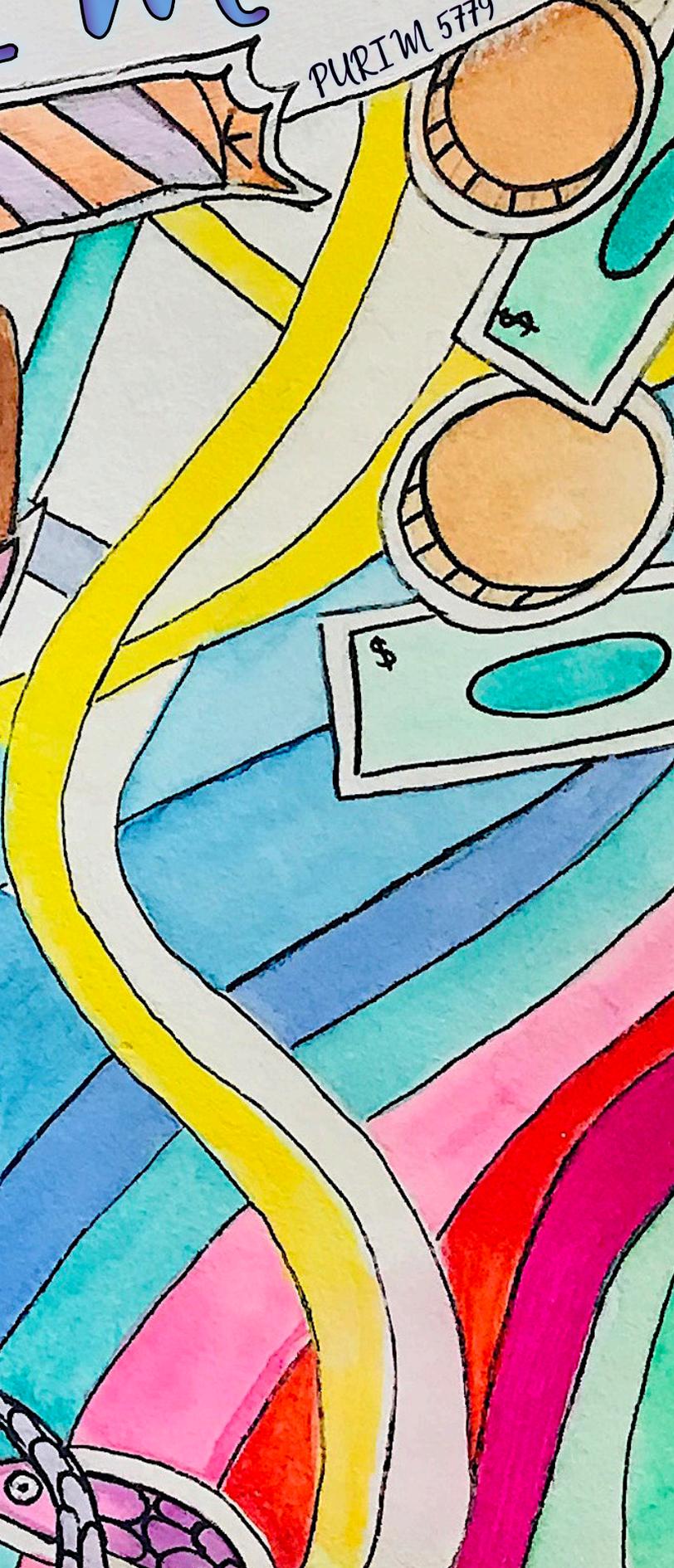


# MOADIM

PURIM 5779

MANHATTAN HIGH SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

# חנוכה



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# Message from the Menabeles

There are many lessons that can be gleaned through a careful study and analysis of מגילת אסתר. So many of our bedrock principles are present in the Megillah. Esther's צניעות and אמונת חכמים, Mordechai's absolute unwavering trust in Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Every action taken by Mordechai and Esther was deliberate, governed by the Torah and dictated by the desire to fulfill רצון ה'. Above all, however the resounding message that we extract is that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the Master of the Universe-however hidden His hand may be.

A world monarch acquiesced to take as his queen a woman who refused to divulge her lineage, ancestry, nationality, and religion. Rav Yechezkel Levenstein, the legendary Mashgiach, points out that ironically Achashverosh had recently sent out a decree declaring that each man should be the absolute ruler and dictator of his little kingdom-his household. What a powerful ruler-refused by his own queen! אין אסתר מגדת .

In honor of Purim, our students have presented various pieces of artwork, Divrei Torah, and articles, thoughtfully blending the profundity of Purim with its spirited joviality. We offer you in this magnificent edition the fruits of their labor.

With great appreciation to Rebbetzin Peshi Neuburger, a brilliant and talented editor who is devoted לב ונפש to our students and to Mrs. Sara Tandler, faculty advisor. Our talented student editors, Avigail P. Deutsch, Yehudis Haas, Yael Mehlman, Chani Shulman, and Bayla Weiner, as always have done a superb job compiling this edition of Moadim.

שמח פורים and happy reading!

Mrs. T. Yanofsky



Sari Dubin



Avigail Deutsch

# From the desk of the Editors

Purim would not be complete without spirited renditions of “*Shoshanas Yaakov*”, a *piyut* that carries us through the day. Yet the lines of this *piyut* are much deeper than the jolly festivities would suggest. Among the praises, we sing “*v’shuasam hayisa lanetzach*”; You have forever been their salvation.

The *Sfas Emes* explains that the miracle of Purim was one for generations. Obviously, if we had been wiped out as Haman desired, there would have been no Jewish continuity and no following generations. But the *Sfas Emes* elaborates that the miracle of Purim is a symbol of hope to all generations of Jews because the salvation of Purim did not come about through our own merit. It was out of His kindness that Hashem saved us from Haman’s decree, solely because we are His children. The events of this miracle should fill us with faith and *bitachon*, because we are still His children and His love for us hasn’t changed. No matter how far we’ve fallen in *galus*, and how unworthy we might feel, Hashem’s mercy knows no bounds.

When the Jews felt Hashem’s love through the miracles He had wrought for them, they were motivated to change. The way Hashem had manipulated the natural course of events for the benefit of the Jews, inspired them to redefine their own natures and accept the Torah with love. The *Sfas Emes* points out that the theme of Purim is to connect with Hashem in ways that seem to be unnatural. On Yom Kippur, we connect to Hashem through fasting and constant, intense *tefilla*. But on Purim, which *Chazal* understand to be a day *like* Yom Kippur, we have the ability, almost counter-intuitively, to reach the same holy levels through *simcha* and *seudos*, rejoicing and feasting.

We hope this edition of Moadim helps us reach the deeper meaning of the day so we can feel Hashem’s eternal love for us and connect to Him on the highest levels, all out of a sense of great joy. And may we soon be *zoche* to see Hashem’s salvation of “*bayamim habem, bazman hazeh*.”

*A Freilechin Purim,*

The Moadim Crew



Sara Safir

# What's My Role

Why is *Megillas Esther* named after Esther, as opposed to being called “*Megillas Hayebudim*,” “*Megillas Purim*,” or even “*Megillas Mordechai*?” It is true that Esther played a pivotal role in bringing about the hidden *neis* of Purim. There is, though, a more meaningful lesson we can derive from Esther herself, from each of her actions, and from her own growth as a person throughout the *Megillah*.

At the onset of the *Megillah*, Esther obeys everything that Mordechai commands her to do, including keeping her Jewish identity a secret. After being taken to the palace, she makes no special requests, but does exactly as she is directed by Haigai. Even after becoming the queen she continues to behave according to Mordechai's instructions. Her compliant nature is essential if she is to be in a position of power when her people need her.

But something changes in Esther when Mordechai tells her about Haman's plot to kill *Am Yisroel*. Up until this point, we see an Esther whose conduct is submissive; this behavior begins to change, though, as Esther's maidservants tell her that Mordechai is standing in the courtyard in sackcloth. She sends him better clothing, but Mordechai refuses to accept it. Mordechai sends a message back to Esther: “Do not imagine to yourself that you will escape in the king's house from among all the Jews.”

Mordechai assures Esther that *Am Yisroel* will be saved whether she gets involved or not, but stresses that it's up to her to decide if she wants to be part of that process. He demands that she choose between apathy and responsiveness; between self-interest and selflessness. Esther makes the decision to act. Strengthened by her new conviction, she now has the courage to take the actions necessary to save the Jewish people. At the same time, she has the insight to realize that while now is the time to act, she cannot save *Klal Yisroel* alone. She can play her part, but the Jewish people need to do their part as well. It becomes clear to her that her nation must unite as one in order to avert this catastrophe; only through unity can they be saved. With this in mind, the tables are turned. *She* now makes demands of *Mordechai*, and asks that the Jews fast for three days on her behalf. In so doing, she demonstrates that she has actively decided to accept Mordechai's challenge, and risk her life to save her people. She takes personal responsibility for the nation, yet she demands that all the Jews fast and daven, to highlight the truth that we are all responsible for one another. Recognizing the wisdom of her request, Mordechai carries out Esther's command.

Now we can understand why the *Megillah* is named after Esther. We learn a great lesson from Esther. She is no longer a passive player, merely taking direction from others. Instead, she becomes an activist, and with

Hashem's guidance plays a pivotal role in the redemption of *Klal Yisroel*. Esther teaches us that every person must choose between playing a passive or assertive part in the story of their own lives and the story of *Am Yisroel*. We each, in our own way, have an opportunity to impact our family, our friends, and our community; sometimes in the background and sometimes at the forefront. It takes wisdom to understand when one should play each role. The *Megillah* clearly shows us that both are of equal significance. And that a united nation brings greater force to our individual efforts.

May we all be blessed with the attributes that we see in Esther. May our MHS family continue to be contributors, either openly or in a more hidden manner. Let us remember that *Am Yisroel* united is one of our most powerful tools, and may Hashem grant us the strength and the wisdom to act in a way that will only unite, and never divide.

— Adielle Rosenblum



Becky Masar



Ayelet Wein

# Esther's Beauty

The *gemara* tells us that Esther was beautiful. There are opinions that dispute this. There are those who claim that Esther was not particularly beautiful or glamorous. The *gemara* in *Megillah* resolves the debate by explaining that Esther was beautiful because she had a strand of *chessed* wrapped around her. This is what created her beauty; this was the reason for her glamour.

Based on this explanation, we can answer another question.

In *Sefer Beraishis* we are told that when Avraham went down with Sarah to Egypt, he was afraid that he would be killed because of Sarah's beauty. He feared that Pharaoh would kill him in order to take his wife Sarah for himself. Rashi relates that as Avraham passed the water, he saw Sarah's reflection and realized that she was beautiful. This causes us to wonder how it is possible that Avraham married Sarah without seeing her? We know that this would invalidate a marriage!

Based on the insight in *Maseches Megilla*, we can understand what happened. While Avraham must have seen Sarah before their wedding, he understood that her beauty was a gift from G-d, a strand of *chessed* that was wrapped around her, like Queen Esther's. He assumed that when he took her down to Egypt, Hashem would remove the strand to protect him. It was an internal gift and not external, or so he thought. And as such, Sarah would, in essence, be stripped of her beauty. When he saw her reflection in the water he realized that she was indeed beautiful, both from within and without. For that reason he asked her to say that she was his sister, and thereby spare his life.

As young women living in the modern world, we are constantly being challenged with internal and external reflections. Our role models, *Sara Imeinu*, and *Esther Hamalka*, have helped define the true meaning of both internal and external beauty. May we be privileged to see the ultimate beauty of the *bais hamikdash*, *b'korov b'yamenu*.

— Anni Jacobowitz



Chayie Safran



Ayela Cweiber

# Hidden Codes

Hashem's role in the Purim story was so hidden that His name does not appear even once in the *Megillah*. Yet, as Rav Pinchas points out, the word *megillah* is derived from the word *meguleh*, or revealed, because the very essence of Purim is for us to seek out the hidden miracles that Hashem performed for us, and acknowledge that there is Divine Providence in the world. This task is so central to the day of Purim, that the *Maharal* is known to have said that if someone didn't listen to every single word of the *Megillah*, he did not fulfill his obligation. If he missed just one word, he didn't see the full picture, and therefore may have missed out on appreciating one of the miracles which Hashem performed for us.

Revealing Hashem's hidden messages is not limited to reading the *Megillah*; the Torah itself contains countless codes proving that it could only have been written by the all-knowing Creator of the world. The following 'code' was discovered by Rav Michoel Dov Weissmandl, known as the father of the Torah codes, and was retold by his student, Rav Yaakov Mordechai Greenwald, after he had visited his rebbe in New York, a short time before Purim in the 1950's.

"Did I ever tell you how many letters there are in *Megillas Esther*?" asked Rav Weissmandl.

"No," Rav Greenwald replied, "I have no idea."

"Well, I counted! There are 12,196 letters altogether." He said with a smile on his face.

"That's incredible. But what is the relevance?" Rav Greenwald asked, knowing that he had posed the exact question that his rebbe was waiting for.

Smiling, Rav Weissmandl said "Please bring me a *Chumash*. Start from the first time the letter "א" appears in the Torah, and count an interval equal to the number of letters in *Megillas Esther* (12,196). You will arrive at a "ט". If you continue another 12,196 letters, then you get to a "ת"; and if you keep going for another 12,196 you land on a "ך". All of which spells Esther! Amazing right?"

"It certainly is" Rav Greenwald answered enthusiastically, "but where is the connection to Mordechai?" "Try me again next year" was Rav Weissmandl's response.

The following year, Rav Greenwald again visited his rebbe, and before he could even say a word, Rav Weissmandl opened a *Chumash*. "You see here that the Torah writes the words "Mor D'Ror" meaning pure myrrh? Well, the *Gemara* writes that this is where Mordechai's name can be found in the Torah. Now, from the letter "מ" of "Mor D'Ror", count forward the number of letters in the *Megillah* (12,196) and you come to a "ך". From there, keep counting the 12,196 letters and you will get a "ד" and then a "כ" and then a "ו" - spelling out Mordechai!"

— Golda Schuster, Taken from "Short Vort" by Rabbi Moshe Kormornick



Leah Harris

# Our Choice, Part Two

The Talmud in *Megillah* 12a states that the near decimation of *Bnei Yisrael* in the time of Achashverosh was a punishment for participating in the royal banquet, where they prostrated themselves before Persian idols. But what led them to this terrible act of disloyalty?

The Jews believed that anti-Semitism was rooted in a xenophobic hatred of their distinct culture and religion. In fact, Haman offers this as an explanation for his malicious plans, “There is a certain people scattered and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom. Their laws are different from those of every people; neither do they keep the king’s laws.” (Esther 3:8)

In order to overcome this hatred, the Jews felt that it would be wise to adopt the customs and ways of their idol-worshipping neighbors. In order to demonstrate their allegiance to the Persian Empire, they attended the royal banquet and bowed down to the Persian idols. They soon discovered, however, that their efforts were unsuccessful. They were shocked to learn of Haman’s plot to demolish them, despite their best attempts at integrating into the local culture.

With the realization that assimilation was not the answer, and that their only true protection would come from Hashem’s watchful eye, *Bnei Yisrael* revived their commitment to the Torah and the observance of its *mitzvos*. This is the meaning of the *pasuk*, “They confirmed and accepted upon themselves” (Esther 9:27) — “they confirmed what they had accepted long before” at *Har Sinai* (*Shabbat* 88a).

The *Gemara* teaches that this renewed commitment to Torah completed and complemented the original acceptance of Torah at *Har Sinai*. What was missing at Sinai? The breathtaking revelation at that time had contained an element of coercion. Alone and helpless in the desert, *Bnei Yisrael* wouldn’t refuse any help they could get. When Hashem offered them the Torah, they welcomed it with open arms. The *Gemara* also points out their limited free choice, with Hashem’s threat to bury them beneath the mountain should they refuse to accept the Torah. In the time of Achashverosh, however, they were given the opportunity to embrace the Torah of their own free will, thereby completing their full acceptance of the Torah.

This may account for the unusual *mitzvah* of drinking alcohol on Purim. It is usually forbidden to become intoxicated, since without a clear mind we might lack the common sense needed to make responsible decisions concerning our behavior. But on Purim, *Bnei Yisrael* are blessed with a yearning to accept the Torah and embrace its teachings. For this reason, on Purim we demonstrate that even when in a drunken state we do not stray from the path of Torah, because we are naturally eager to be close to Hashem. May we continue to always have this yearning and eagerness to follow the Torah and its *mitzvos*, and to maintain a deep connectedness to Hashem.

— Mia Lubetski, Adapted from a *Dvar Torah* from *Olat Re’iyah*



Rivka Lax



Leora Lehrfield

# Adam, Haman, and Happiness

The *Gemara* in *Chulin* asks “*Haman Min HaTorah Minayin?*”- From where do we see an allusion to Haman in the Torah? A puzzling answer is offered: “*Ha-min ha-etz...*,” the opening words of the question which Hashem poses to *Adam HaRishon* as he confronts him with the consequences of his sin, “From the tree [that I commanded you not to eat - did you eat??]” Without vowels,

the words *Haman* and *ha-min* are the same. On a basic level this seems like a simple wordgame,

but the *Gemara* is suggesting something much deeper than that.

Our sages are telling us that Haman’s essence lies in the verse “*Ha-min ha-etz...*” Haman was an individual who wanted for nothing in the material world. He was second-in-command to the king, and had wealth and a large family. The only thing he lacked was the subservience of Mordechai, the Jew who wouldn’t bow to him. And as long as that continued, he said, “all of this is worthless to me.” [Esther 5:3]

Such a person will never be happy. Happiness comes from being satisfied with one’s lot and

Haman represents the opposite of this. He had virtually everything and was still unhappy.

Where in the Torah do we see a very similar idea?

Adam had everything. He enjoyed a physical life of luxury, and a rich spiritual existence in which all the *malachim* served him. The only thing missing was permission to



Noa Garfinkel

eat from the *etz ha-da’as*. Yet the temptation was too powerful, so he succumbed to sin and led us into the state of the world as it is today. He, too, demonstrated the character trait of being unsatisfied, even when he had almost everything.

It is a *mitzvah* to be happy on Purim, ‘*chayav adam li’vesumei*.’ One achieves happiness when he is *sameach b’chelko*, satisfied with his portion in life. We must remember to concentrate on what we have, and not on that which we lack. Only then, when we focus on everything Hashem has given us, can we be truly joyous on Purim.

— Rena Seidemann, Source: Rav Yissochar Frand

## The Hidden Meaning

What is Purim all about? Is it a time *legalos*, to reveal or discover, as suggested by the word *megillah*, or is it necessarily *nistar*, hidden, as implied by Esther’s name? In fact, Purim is a *chag* which highlights both; it is our job to uncover the many hidden presences of Hashem, in the Purim story and beyond, and in so doing to appreciate how much He does for *Bnei Yisroel* behind the scenes. An attentive reading of *Megillas Esther*, together with the associated teachings of *Chazal*, allows us to see clearly how Hashem pieced together all of the events in Shushan to eventually save the Jewish people. It is our job to apply this perspective to our own lives, and to look for the ways in which Hashem is right behind us, guiding us from one decision to the next. He is the Chess Master Who may appear to be moving all the pieces in a way that is uncoordinated and random, while, in truth, He is placing them all in the exact spots needed for an ultimate triumph.

— Dini Bell, Adapted from Rabbi Daniel Staum



Chedvah Lamm

# Esther's Dawn

“*La'menatze'ach Al Ayelet HaShachar Mizmor L'David*” (Tehillim 22:1)

David Hamelech wrote this *perek b'ruach hakodesh*, referring to events that would take place in the future, in the time of *Esther Hamalkah*. The phrase “*Ayelet HaShachar*,” generally translated as ‘the morning star,’ alludes to the dark times during which the Purim miracle took place. The *Vilna Gaon* notes that the word “*shachar*,” dawn, is related to the word “*shachor*,” black, or darkness. That is because just before dawn there is a period of intense darkness, when the brightness of the moon and stars has faded, but the sun has not yet risen. It is into this oppressive darkness that the sunlight breaks forth.



Chavi Golding

This is analogous to Esther's time, when the very existence of the Jewish nation was threatened. Although the future seemed bleak, that very darkness was proof that the light of their salvation was just around the corner.

History repeats itself. It is in our most overcast situations that we are moments away from relief. We should not despair, but rather find hope within the darkness, and merit to see the final *Geula* speedily in our days.

— Sara Nordlicht, Adapted from: *Artscroll Tebillim* by Rabbi Avraham Chaim Feuer

## The Protector of the Moadim

As we all know, Purim is not a *chag* mandated by the Torah. Rather, it was instituted by our *Chachamim* as a *Chag DeRabanan*. Why, though, was Purim given to us to include among the festivals which we refer to as our *moadim*?

The *Medrash Rabbah* on *Megillas Esther* relates the following thought-provoking story:

Haman said to Achashvarosh, “*Yeshno am ehad*,” there is one nation. This nation is made up of big spenders who control all the money in the country. They constantly celebrate *moadim*, during which they eat, drink, and ruin the economy. Haman explained that on the seventh day of each week they observe *Shabbos*; once a month they mark *Rosh Chodesh*; in *Nissan* they have *Pesach*, in *Sivan* they have *Shavuot*, and in *Tishrei* they have *Succos* and *Rosh Hashanah*. When Achashverosh explained that these are the dictates of their Torah, their tradition, Haman pointed out that the commemoration of Jewish festivals *in addition* to Persian holidays would be acceptable. The Jews, however, are ignoring, and therefore disgracing, the Persian holidays, and in so doing are not following the law of the king.

Angered by this incitement, Hashem reacted by saying “*Rashah atah*,”- “you, Haman, are wicked! You attempted to place an *ayin ha'ra* on their *moadim*, so I will grace them with an additional *moed* called Purim.”

This esteemed publication offers an appreciation of each of the *chagim*, including Purim, and is called *Moadim*, reminding us that we are privileged to live at a time when we are able to freely celebrate all of our precious *moadim*. Haman sought to use these *chagim* to discredit the Jewish people. Hashem, however, defended *Klal Yisrael*, and a situation that could have been disastrous was turned, instead, into a time of *sason v'simcha*: Purim was added to our list of *moadim*.

As long as we find ourselves in *galus*, we will be exposed to antisemitic sentiments and people who mock our Torah. It is important to remember that Hashem, through our beautiful *moadim*, gave us the strength to withstand the attacks we will inevitably endure. Therefore, it is vital that we stand strong, embrace *divrei torah*, and celebrate the gift of *moadim* that Hashem has given us, regardless of what the *umos haolam* may say.

— Tova Schwartz

## A Modern Day Queen Esther

*We all know the story of Queen Esther, who hid her true identity from King Achashverosh in order to save the Jewish people. A similar event took place in Persia in the late 19th century. I heard this story from my father, who learned it from his father, who learned it from his father-in-law, whose parents witnessed it.*

The Jews of Meshhed, Iran lived secret lives after they were forced to convert to Islam. For most of the 19th century, they outwardly pretended to be Muslim, but in hidden underground rooms kept all the *mitzvos* and learned Torah diligently. The danger to the community was not just in being discovered as Jews, but in being forced to make their children marry actual Muslims. For that reason, the Jews typically arranged marriages as soon as a daughter was born.

Over time, the Muslims grew to suspect the Jews of not observing the Islamic faith. One example of the difference between their customs is that Jews sew a burial shroud and Muslims do not. After a certain Jewish woman passed away, the Jews prepared her body for burial. Some Muslim women overhead the Jews discussing sewing the shroud. They told their husbands that the Jews had misled them and were not true to the Muslim faith. When the Jews brought the woman's body to the mosque an angry mob greeted them with shouts of "You are Jews and you will now die!"

The Jews denied the charges and insisted that they *were* Muslims. The Muslims demanded to see the woman's burial shroud to determine if it had been prepared according to Jewish or Islamic law. The Jews were in great danger of being discovered, and the lives of everyone in the community were at risk. However, the Muslim men were not permitted by their faith to look at the body, and the women were afraid to go near it.

One Muslim woman named Johar, a widow who had been married to the mayor of the town, stepped forward. She cursed the Jews calling them despicable and saying they were about to die. She went up to the coffin shouting "Let us see how the Jews sewed the shroud!" What few people knew was that Johar had been born to a Jewish family but forced to marry out of her faith. She reached under the sheet in the coffin and pulled out the stitches from the shroud so it would look like a Muslim burial garment. Then she announced "The woman is Muslim, come check." The woman was buried and the Jews were left in peace. As a result of this event, many restrictions against the hidden Jews were lifted and they were soon allowed to leave and settle elsewhere. My great great grandparents traveled through Israel, Turkey and France, and ended up in America 50 years later.

Even Johar managed to make *aliyah* to Israel. She passed away in 1911 and was buried on *Har HaZeitim*.

*Johar used her position of power as wife of the mayor of Meshhed to save the Jewish community of Meshhed, just as Esther HaMalka had many years before her.*

— Meira Notkin



וְיָחֵן הַמֶּלֶכֶת וְשָׂרֵי אֲבוֹת הַדָּבָר הַמֶּלֶכֶת אֵשֶׁר הָיָה  
הַיְרֵסִים וְיָקִים הַמֶּלֶכֶת מֵאֵד וְחִמְרוּ בַּעֲדָהּ הָיָה

Yehudit Cohen

# Thankful!

After writing the *megillah*, Mordechai and Esther requested of the sages - “קבעוני לדורות.” They sought to establish a *yomtov* for all future generation which would include a *mitzvah* to read *Megillas Esther* in commemoration of the *neis* of Purim. The *Chachamim* found themselves in a dilemma- how could they add another *yom tov*? Would it not be a violation of *בל תוסיף*? The *Gemara (Megillah 14b)* explains that the miracle of Purim was one in which *Klal Yisrael* faced annihilation and were, therefore, saved from *מות* to *חיים*. This *neis* seems greater than that of *yetzias Mitzrayim*, as a result of which the Jews were saved from *עבדות* to *חירות*. Therefore, if the Jews sang *shira* to Hashem in gratitude for *yetzias Mitzrayim* then, *קל וחומר*, certainly it would be appropriate to offer songs of thanksgiving for the miracle of Purim, which saved us from a far more devastating fate. The *Gemara*, however, explains that *hallel* is not recited for a *neis* that happened outside of *Eretz Yisrael* (after we conquered *Eretz Yisrael* with *Yeboshua*). The *mitzva* of *megillah* was therefore instituted to take the place of *hallel*, and it is used as a way of singing *shira* and expressing our *הודאה* to Hashem for the great salvation that took place in Shushan. Let us use this amazing opportunity of the *mitzva* of *mikrah megillah* to its fullest.

— Zahava Giloni, Adapted from Rebbetzin Twersky’s class

## Fluid Feelings: The Holocaust & Purim

When I heard that my grade was going to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum during our trip to Washington D.C., I was terrified. What would my first true glimpse at the horrors of the Holocaust be like? I wasn’t sure if I could stand the pain and grief and confusion that comes along with contemplating the tragedies that the Jews of Europe suffered at the hands of the Nazis. And so, I adopted a coping mechanism of sorts. I would numb myself, and look at the names and places and numbers and dates as mere curiosities. If they were just words and pictures, and nothing more, they couldn’t get to me.

The plan was working, until a classmate and I walked onto the bridge between the fourth and third floors. On the right was a glass wall several yards high, printed with the Yiddish names of towns and villages across Europe where Jews were killed. We read the names in silence.

“Ooh, look at all the random dots and lines on top of vowels,” I remarked.

“If each name here was a single person, it would be terrible,” my classmate said, turning to me. “But each name on this wall represents a whole town, with hundreds of Jews each, killed.”

She had refocused me, and I couldn’t ignore the meaning of what I was seeing any longer. These were not just towns with funny spellings, but lives upon lives, lost. I turned away from my classmate. I didn’t want her to see my eyes welling up.

As I walked to the third floor, I held back my tears. True, I had just been reminded that the feelings are essential to understanding what Jews experienced because of their Jewishness, but at the same time, overwhelming emotion probably wasn’t the best course of action either. In Mrs. Yanofsky’s *Mishlei* class, we learn that



one should not experience any emotion—even happiness—in excess. Instead, our primary mental state should be that of connecting to Hashem. We can choose our feelings, and we *should* choose them.

Navigating the complex spectrum of feelings is an essential part of the way in which we serve Hashem. Judaism is a religion full of nuances, a religion in which we embrace seemingly conflicting ideas at once. Even at a *chasunah*, we can transition from elation at the union of the *chassan* and *kallah*, to solemnity in remembrance of the *churban*. The Holocaust was a horrifying event, but the kindnesses of Hashem and the faith of His People are evident throughout. We are blessed with minds that are sophisticated enough to appreciate the many facets of this world.

Purim is undoubtedly joyous, yet as a day of *tefilah*, it is also imbued with seriousness. The “happily ever after” part of the Megillah takes a while to come about. As Mrs. Ferber chillingly reminded us, the narrative took place over nine long years. The Jews were faced with the threat of total annihilation and did not know if or how Hashem’s salvation would come. As we read the Megillah, we have to acknowledge both the fear *and* the eventual gladness in order to get a full understanding of the *neis* which Hashem performed.

Feelings have their measure, time and place. Esther poured out her heart and beseeched Hashem, then had to compose herself in order to speak in a dignified manner before the king. On a different scale, the same principle applies to how we maintain a proper approach throughout the busy day of Purim. It’s hard to know how to split our attention. We need to feel sensitivity to *ani'im* and friendship to our companions, concentration during the *Megillah* reading and love for relatives at the *seudah*. With Hashem’s help, we can focus on what matters, in the right ways and in the right circumstances, all ultimately to serve Him.

— Tamar Spoerri

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## A Tribute to...

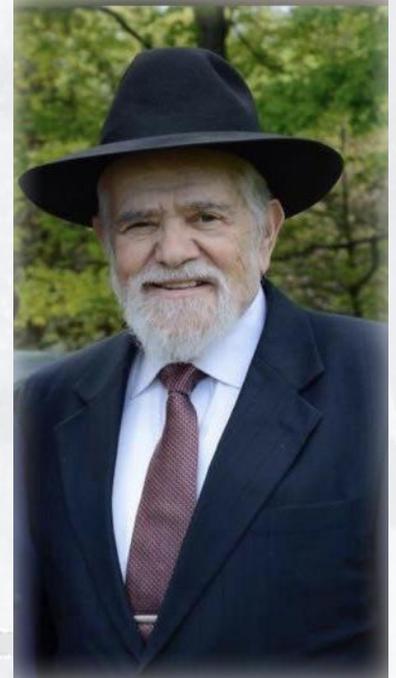
### Rabbi Yitzchok (Edwin) Katzenstein zt"l

Recently, my family suffered a shocking loss. After enjoying a Shabbos meal with my grandmother, and learning some *divrai Torah*, my grandfather, Rabbi Yitzchok (Edwin) Katzenstein, left this world.

Opa was a role model for me and my family. As a pillar of the Washington Heights community, his involvement in *K'hal Adath Jesburun* was all-encompassing; he was, at various times during his life: the *Rosh Hakobol*, head of the *Chevra Kadisha*, and the chairman of both the *Vaad Hakashrus* and Yeshiva R' Samson Raphael Hirsch. On a broader scale my grandfather contributed to *Klal Yisrael* by serving as an officer and board member of *Agudath Yisroel* of America, not to mention his renown as a prolific mohel- having performed over 6,000 *brissim*.

My grandfather also ran a business, but in his spare time he would often be found learning. He finished *Daf Yomi* and *Shas* numerous times, yet, each time it was with a new excitement for, and enjoyment of, the Torah. When I was lucky enough to spend *Yomim Tovim* with my grandparents, Opa would tell me to come and join him in his learning. We would sit together and he would share an idea and explain it in depth, allowing me to add my own thoughts if it was a topic that I had learned in school.

Opa’s *minbagim* were extremely important to him. He was so tied to his roots and knew the reason behind every *minbag*. Many people carry out their family’s *mesorah* by rote, not always understanding why each *minbag* is the way it is, but my



grandfather knew the origin and explanation for every custom, and it was always very meaningful to him. One *Shabbos Chanukah* in Washington Heights, Opa showed me the big beautiful menorah in shul, with special candles that would burn all Shabbos. Like his father before him, my grandfather had those candles made specially so that they would burn all through Shabbos, even during the day. It was so inspiring to see how precious it really was to him.

My grandparents are zocheh to head a very large family with many grandchildren and great grandchildren *baruch Hashem*. Even though I am one of many, I sincerely feel that I had a personal and unique bond with my grandfather. My grandfather never missed any family events; family *simchas* and Chanukah parties will not be the same without him. Even in a room with hundreds of people my grandfather had a presence. It wasn't just the warm and loving welcome that every grandchild received, but there was a certain air in the room when we knew that my grandfather was there.



One of my grandfather's many qualities was the ability to speak and engage with many different kinds of people. He could go from conversing with great *gedolim* to speaking to the police officers about the regulations for the community. At the *shiva*, one of the *gedolim* of the generation was sitting and crying, when 4 police officers walked in all with solemn expressions. They stood on the side until the great rav turned to them and said, "we both lost a friend." He truly was a friend to all and knew how to make everyone he spoke to feel good.

Opa was a part of so many lives and I feel so lucky that I had someone so great to learn from. Whenever we were together, Opa would *bentch* us- his children and grandchildren- before we parted, and I know that Opa was the perfect conduit for special blessing from Hashem. We will miss him so much.

— Ilana Katzestein

# A Tribute to...

## Rav Hillel Cweiber zt"l

Recently my family went through a period of loss after my uncle, Reb Hillel Zev zt"l passed away. I am honored to write about my uncle who in just 40 years accomplished so much. He was a great, learned man who had a tremendous love for Torah. As an 18-months-old toddler, whenever his father asked him to get any *sefer*, he would go to the shelf and pick the right one. Even though he was such a "gaon" he never expected to receive any kavod; whenever one of his *talmidim* would call him "Reb" he'd wave his hand in dismissal. My uncle was a special part of my family, and was someone who excelled in every *midah*. Although we are all very touched by this loss, it is clear that my uncle truly instilled in his children, *talmidim*, and everyone around him a love for the Torah and Hashem, and unbridled happiness, kindness, and appreciation for every single person.

— Ayala Cweiber





Chava Milo



Rivka Sabel



Channa Gelbtuch



Daniela Kestenbaum



Yehudis Haas



Tzophie Ulano



# What's in a Name?

The soul of the soul is one's name, as reflected by the presence of the word שם at the core of נשמה. As part of their יהדות course, the tenth grade embarked on an eye-opening research project on שמות, names. Each girl conducted a study of her own name as well as a Halachic issue relevant to names, completed a guided study on names in תנ"ך, and delved into מפרשים and מדרש to understand how the life and mission of an individual in תנ"ך was shaped by his or her name. Below are highlights from the research of our own Esthers, Hadassah, and Malka.

## Esther Izza Abittan

My name is Esther Izza. I was named Izza for my father's paternal grandmother. She grew up in Morocco. Izza is a Moroccan, Arabic, Jewish name. It means "little woman from the south" or "grateful." I was named Esther after *Esther HaMalka*.

I chose to look at Esther and learn the meaning of her name and how it connected to her life. This gave me more insight into my own name and its meaning. The simple meaning of Esther is 'hidden.' When Esther was brought to the palace she hid her Jewish identity. She hid her connection to Mordechai from Achashveirosh. She is even hidden in the Torah. In *Sefer Devarim*, Hashem tells us of difficult times to come: "V'anochi bastir astir panai ba'yom ha'hu" - "I will surely hide my face on that day." Esther lived in a time of *galus* during which there was such *hester panim*. Hashem was hidden but through Esther He was revealed, and everyone saw His greatness. Another meaning of Esther is *istabar-beautiful*. She was called *Istabar* by the world because she was beautiful. In *shamayim* she was also called *Istabar* because she was a **star of light**. Esther was the star in the darkness for *B'nei Yisrael*, who were about to be annihilated, but were saved through her efforts.

*Esther Bas Avichayil* was orphaned at birth. She was chosen to go against Haman, who came from Amalek, who descended from Eliphaz, the son of Eisav, who performed the *mitzvah* of *Kibbud Av Va'em* very carefully. Esther spent her life mourning for parents she never knew. This is an extraordinary level of *kibbud av va'em*, perhaps even surpassing that of Eisav, and as a result she is the only one who earned enough merits to be able to defeat his children.

Esther's other name was *Hadassah*, which means 'myrtle'. Most trees lose their leaves in the winter but a myrtle tree keeps its leaves throughout the year. Esther was as righteous when she lived in Achashverosh's palace as she had been in Mordechai's home.

Following are some interesting excerpts from Essie's research on the Sephardic custom of naming for a living person. Her paternal grandfather was Sephardic, but her grandmother is of Ashkenazic descent, which explains Essie's interest in the development of both *minbagim*.

*Ashkenazim* do not name for the living. There is a long-standing *minbag* from the time of the *gemara* to name after a deceased relative. Rabbi Chanina died on the same day that his son was born, and his son was named for him (*Moed Katan*). *Rabbi Yebudah HaChasid (Sefer Chasidim)* was the first not to *allow* naming for the living. The *Ashkenazim* believe that when you name for somebody you receive a part of their soul. If the person is still alive, you will have to share the *neschama* and as a result the person might live a shorter life. They believe that by naming after a person who is still alive, it is as if you are saying you are waiting for them to die. Another reason *Ashkenazim* do not name for their living parents is because, as a gesture of respect, we don't call our parents by their first names. If our child were to be named for one of them, we would be using our parent's name on a daily basis.

*Sephardim*, on the other hand, believe it is a huge *zechut* and *kavod* to have somebody named for you when you are alive. They believe it is a *bracha* for *arichas yamim*, or longevity. Another reason that *Sephardim* name for the living is so that the person is never forgotten. The *Sdei Chemed* writes that it is a fulfillment of *kibbud av va'em* to name after a living parent or grandparent.

Rav Ovadia Yosef ז"ל writes in *Yabia Omer* (Volume 5, *Yoreh Deyah, Siman 21*) that there are those who are *makpid not to* name for the living, while there are those who are *makpid to* name for the living, because this is *derech kavod* and *chashivut*, as suggested by the words of *Shlomo HaMelech*, “*Ateres Zkeinim B'nei Banim*,” ‘the crown of the elders is grandchildren.’ (Mishlei 17, 6).

There are many important people throughout Jewish history who have named for living relatives. In the second *perek* of *Divrei HaYamim*, Rashi comments that Calev ben Yefuneh’s grandson was named for him in his lifetime. The *Kohen Gadol* dynasty from 332-165 BCE named for the living, alternating between the names Onias and Shimon. Hillel’s family also switched between the names Gamliel, Yehudah and sometimes Shimon and Hillel. According to *Seder HaDorot*, *Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel* called his son *Rabban Gamliel* in honor of his father, *Rabban Gamliel HaZaken*, who was still alive. *Rabbi Yehudah HaLevi*’s grandson was named Yehudah. The *Rambam* and *Ramban*’s families both named for the living.

There are those that extend the *minbag* beyond family, and name after important *rabbanim*. If a Rabbi helped them or gave them a *beracha*, they show their *bakarat ha'tov* by naming for the *Rav*. The *Chida* writes of a time that he was the *sandek* at a *bris* and they named the child Yosef Chaim, after him.

There have been some unusual exceptions, when *Ashkenazim* named for the living. Most notably, Rav Elyashiv ז"ל had an elderly widowed neighbor who did not have any children. One time, she mentioned to his wife that when she passes away, it would be an honor if they would name a child of theirs for her. At the time, Rebbetzin Elyashiv was pregnant, and she and the *Rav* decided that if this baby were to be a girl, they would name her for the woman, though she was still alive. Indeed, it was a girl, and it is said that when they named her for this lonely woman, it helped revive her from her great pain.

Overall, if you are *Ashkenazi* you should name for the deceased and it will be an *aliyah* for the *nesbama*. If you are *Sephardi* then you can do a huge amount of *kibbud av va'em* by naming for a parent who is alive.

## Malka Hirsch

In commenting on *David HaMelech*’s words, “*Ki chazu mif'alos Hashem asher sam shamos ba'aretz*” (*Tehillim* 46:9), which are generally understood to mean “Behold the works of Hashem Who has made desolations in the land,” Rabbi Elazar suggests an alternate translation: ‘Do not read it as *shamos* (desolations) but rather as *shaimos* (names).’ It is from this reading of the pasuk that *Chazal* understand that the name of a person reveals his destiny and his essence.

The essence of Esther HaMalka can be learned from her name.

One root of the name ‘Esther’ is the Persian word *istabar*, beauty, and is defined by Rashi as “like the moon which is beautifully white.” The *Megilla* states “*v'banaara yifas to'ar v'tovas mar'eb*” (2:7). The *Ibn Ezra* explains that “the beauty of each individual limb, as well as her overall appearance were pleasing to the eye”. Esther was beautiful. This is clear because she outshined all the other women in the pageant. According to the Talmud, Esther is actually considered one of the four beauties of the world, along with Sarah, Rachav, and Avigail (*Megilla* 15a).

In Judaism, externalities are usually not important. *Shlomo Hamelech* writes in *Mishlei*, “charm is false, beauty

is vain, a woman who fears Hashem, she should be praised". This seems to render beauty as irrelevant. One may wonder, then, why the *Megillah*, along with so many statements of *Chazal* and *mefarshim* focus on the beauty of Esther to such a great extent.

Rabbi Yaakov Reischer, known as *Shvus Yaakov*, offers an answer to this question. He explains the quote in *Mishlei* to mean that if a woman does indeed fear Hashem, even her beauty can be praised (*Iyun Yaakov 46:1*). And so, when the sages of the Talmud praise Sara, Rachav, Avigayil, and Esther for their beauty, they are also, and more importantly, praising them for their *yir'as shamayim*. One can conclude, therefore, that the *Megillah's* description of Esther's beauty is meant to convey her G-d fearing character.

Another root of Esther's name is *nistar*, or 'hidden,' which symbolizes her characteristic of *tznius*, or 'modesty.' This can be seen in her lack of interest in taking a position of royalty and being in the public eye: "*U'vehagia tor Esther, lo biksha davar*" (2:12). Unlike the other women, Esther did not ask for anything with which to beautify herself, hoping that she would *not* find favor in the king's eyes, and *not* be forced her into a position of power. Rabbi Shlomo Halevi Alkabetz in his *Manos Halevi* explains that rather than achieve royal status, she wanted to return home to Mordechai. Another example of the *tznius* of Esther is her insistence on concealing her nationality (2:12). The *Mabaral* explains that the Jewish idea of modesty is hiding something precious to keep it special (*Ohr Chadash Al Megillas Esther*). Esther hid where she came from to protect that which was special to her.

## Dassi Mayerfeld

My full Hebrew name is Hadassa Tamar. Hadassah comes from the word *badas* which is a myrtle. A myrtle is the type of branch which is used with the *esrog*, *lulav*, and *aravos* on *Sukkos*. Tamar was Yehuda's wife and she was the mother of *malchus*. The word '*tamar*' means a date palm, and is used in *Tehillim* as a metaphor for a righteous person, "*Tzaddik ka'tamar yifraach*" - "a *tzaddik* should sprout, grow and be fruitful like a palm."

I was given the name Hadassa, because I was born on *Shushan Purim... Esther Hamalkah*, whose name was also Hadassa, was "*noseis chein b'einei kol ro'eha*", and was someone who was beautiful both on the inside and on the outside. When Esther was given the choice to identify herself as a Jew or to hide in the palace, she took responsibility and saw her *tafkid* clearly. Esther revealed her nationality and risked her life to save *Am Yisroel*. Esther is a role model for us in *galus*. Many times, we try to blend in, but it is important to recognize our missions in life, to take responsibility and to realize that everything is from Hashem. Throughout the *Megillah*, Esther sets an example for us of how to connect to Hashem in a time of *hester panim*. Esther shows us the *koach* of *tefillah*. When she is in the palace of Achashveirosh, she davens, "קלי קלי למה עזבתני," "My G-d, my G-d. why have You forsaken me??" She then continues to cry out by comparing herself to *Sarah Imeinu*. "Sarah was taken for one night, and You punished Paroh and his household with a plague ...and I have been taken by Achashveirosh for years and You have done no miracle for me?! If I don't have the *zechus*, save me to sanctify Your name. Women have three *mitzvos*: menstrual laws, separating dough of challah, and lighting shabbat candles, and I have kept them all even in the palace!" (Shocher Tov 22:16) And Hashem answers her prayer (22:3,6).

My parents named me after Esther because of her strength during *galus* and her deep connection to *Am Yisroel*.

*Shem L'fi Shlichuso*

Esther uses the *kochos* of both of her names, Hadassa and Esther, to become the person that she was destined to be, and to save *Am Yisroel*.

True to the meaning of the name 'Esther,' 'hidden,' Esther HaMalkah is modest. Modesty was a trait passed down to her from her ancestors. *Rachel Imeinu* was rewarded for her modesty in giving over the signs to Leah, by having *Shaul Hamelech* descend from her. Shaul was rewarded for his modesty in not bragging about his future kingship, by having Esther descend from him. Esther shows her *tznius* when she does not ask for anything to make her appear more beautiful. And when she remains silent about her origins for years in the palace. It is because of this modesty that she is poised to bring about the *yeshuah* for the Jewish people.

Esther also uses the *kochos* of her name Hadassah. The *midrash (Esther Rabbah 6:5)* compares Esther to a myrtle: “מה הדסה ריחה מתוק וטעמה מר כך היתה אסתר מתוקה למרדכי ומרה להמן”. “Just as a myrtle has a sweet smell and a bitter taste, so, too, Esther is sweet to Mordechai and bitter to Haman.”

In addition, *Yeshaya HaNavi* foretells that “הנעצוץ יעלה ברוש ותחת הסרפד יעלה הדס והיה לה לשם לאות עולם לא יכרת” תחת. “Instead of the briar, a cypress shall rise, and instead of the nettle, a myrtle shall rise, and it shall be for the Lord as a name, as an everlasting sign, which shall not be discontinued.” (*Yeshayahu 55:13*) This *pasuk* can be understood as referring to the *Purim* story. Haman is compared to the *נעצוץ*, a briar with thorns, since he attaches a *pesel* to his clothes and makes himself into an object of worship. Mordechai is compared to the *רוש* since he is the head of all *tzaddikim*. Vashti is compared to the *סרפד* since she is the granddaughter of Nevuchadnezer who burned (*saraf*) the *Bais Hamikdash*. Esther is compared to the *הדס* since she is called Hadassa. Therefore, this *pasuk* can be read as: “Instead of Haman, Mordechai shall rise, and instead of Vashti, Esther shall rise.” Next, *והיה לה לשם* is referring to *מקרא מגילה*, and *לאות עולם לא יכרת* is referring to the holiday of *Purim (Megillah 10B)*. Another way to understand *והיה לה לשם לאות עולם לא יכרת* is that Esther is a sign that Hashem's name will endure forever.

## Esti Schreiber

The origin of my name is *Esther HaMalka* from the Purim story, the Esther that we all know and admire. My personal *pasuk* from *Tehillim* is “*Eileh va'rechev v'eileh va'susim va'anachnu b'shem Hashem Elokeinu nazkir*,” meaning, ‘some call upon chariots, and some upon horses, but as for us, we call upon the name of Hashem our G-d.’ How fitting a *pasuk* this would have been for the original Esther HaMalka, who fought against unthinkable odds with her *tefila* and *emunah!* The fact that my *pasuk* clearly refers to a time of war is very meaningful. *Mekhilta d'Rabbi Yishmael* points out that war was the time when Hashem revealed himself to *Bnei Yisrael*. This idea is introduced in *Sefer Shemos*, where we are told, “*Hashem ish milchama Hashem shemo*.” *Midrash Tanchuma* offers us insight into why Hashem's presence was so strongly felt when we waged war with other nations. Whenever their enemies overpowered them, *Bnei Yisrael* would break out into prayer. This often brought about a turning point. For example, in *Sefer Shoftim* we learn, “*Vayehi ki za'aku B'nei Yisrael el Hashem odos Midyan*”. When the Jewish people cried out to Hashem regarding the oppression of Midyan, Hashem sent Gid'on to help them. We can learn from here that whenever we are in a tough situation, struggling with our own individual battles, we can always turn to Hashem in davening, and tell him all that is bothering us.

Esther was a descendant of Sara who lived for 127 years; interestingly Esther ruled over 127 provinces. This is not a coincidence and is noted by the *midrash*. According to Rav Nisson Alpert, the *midrash* is telling us that she was able to rule over 127 provinces, by not letting them influence her, just as *Sarah Imeinu* remained the same Sarah throughout her 127 years, despite the many challenging situations she faced.

