

A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

This weekly sheet is brought to you by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman of Northwood United Synagogue in conjunction with Shapell's/Darché Noam

PARSHAT KI TISSA

DVAR TORAH: SCATTERED AND UNITED

Haman managed to put a finger on the Jewish weak point; he describes the Jews as *מפוזר ומפורד בין העמים*, we are scattered and separated among the nations (Esther 3:8). Therefore, he tells Achashveirosh, they are vulnerable and we have an opportunity to erase them.

But, says the Sfas Emes (Purim 5661), there is a big difference between *מפוזר*, scattered, and *מפורד*, separated.

The scattering of the Jews, their dispersion, their *פיזור*, had two positive goals. First, all over the world, all over the 127 provinces of Achashveirosh's kingdom, they would be able to publicize God. The world could see first-hand what God's people were like and hear about His message. There was a second, lofty Divine goal, the Jews were needed to elevate sparks of holiness scattered throughout the world.

But the Jews' flaw was that they were not only scattered, but also divided. Haman correctly located the chink in the armor – divisiveness, *פיירוד*.

This very point became the secret of the Purim victory. Esther commanded *כנוס את כל היהודים*, gather all the Jews in Shushan (Esther 4:16), and they succeeded. The war took place throughout the kingdom, but the Jews fought as a unit – *נקהלו ועמדו על נפשם*, they collectively mobilized and protected themselves (Esther 9:16), and were victorious. They were nationally unified despite their dispersion – and perhaps their unity was all the more powerful because they were scattered. Inner unity transcended geographical dispersion. We can reinterpret Haman's own words (Esther 3:8): *ישנו עם אחד מפוזר ומפורד*: we remain one nation despite being scattered and we can overcome our division.

The Sfas Emes points out a hint: When reading the word the Megillah uses for the Jews accepting Purim we pronounce it as the plural "kiblu" but the letters actually written in the scroll are *קבל*, the singular (Esther 9:27). We accepted Purim as one cohesive unit.

Love of Israel, *אהבת ישראל*, brought about through the reawakening of that generation under the leadership of Mordechai and Esther became the basis of the second Temple period – but when it unraveled the second Temple was destroyed.

But that national unified moment of Mordechai and Esther's generation was perpetuated through the mitzvot of Purim. We gather all to read the Megillah, give *mishloach manot* gifts and *matanot laevyonim*, bringing the poor into the celebration. That generation taught us that unity is possible and Purim gives us the opportunity to make it happen once again.

SOURCE GUIDE: HEARING THE MEGILLAH, SEEING THE CANDLES

This source guide is built on a selection from Yitav Panim (written by the Harav Yekutiel Yehudah Teitelbaum of Sighet, grandson of the Yismach Moshe) on Parshat Ki Tissa who develops a theme that plays itself out in Chanukah and Purim.

Flaw and Repair

Adam and Chavah sinned through their eyes and ears:

<p>1. Bereishit 3:6, 17 (6) The woman saw that the tree was good to eat ... (17) And to the man He said, "Because you listened to the voice of your wife and ate of the tree ...</p>	<p>בראשית ג:ו,יז (ו) וַתִּרְאֵהָ אִשָּׁה כִּי טוֹב הָעֵץ לִמְאֹכֵל ... (יז) וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל אָדָם כִּי שָׁמַעְתָּ לְקוֹל אִשְׁתְּךָ וַתֹּאכַל מִן הָעֵץ ...</p>
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Mankind's hearing and vision was flawed, but had potential to be rectified. The need to repair this flaw led to Israel's descent to Egypt and their slavery there. Moshe and Aharon began the process of repair:

<p>2. Shemot 4:29-31 (29) Moshe and Aharon went and gathered the elders of the Children of Israel. (30) Aharon said all the words God had said to Moshe and he did the signs before the eyes of the nation. (31) The nation believed and heard that God had remembered the Children of Israel and that he saw their affliction and they bowed and prostrated themselves.</p>	<p>שמות ד:כט-לא (כט) וַיֵּלֶךְ מֹשֶׁה וְאַהֲרֹן וַיֹּאסְפוּ אֶת כָּל זְקֵנֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: (ל) וַיְדַבֵּר אַהֲרֹן אֶת כָּל הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה וַיַּעַשׂ הָאֵתֹת לְעֵינֵי הָעָם: (לא) וַיִּאֱמַן הָעָם וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ כִּי פָקַד ה' אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְכִי רָאָה אֶת עֲנִיָּם וַיִּקְדּוּ וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ:</p>
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By the time Israel reached Mount Sinai our eyes and ears, our vision and our hearing, were purified:

<p>3. Midrash Rabbah Bamidbar 7:1 Said Rabbi Yehudah quoting Rabbi Simon ... How do we know that there were no deaf people [among the Jews accepting the Torah at Mount Sinai]? It says, "[We will do and] we will listen" (Shemot 24:7). And how do we know that there were no blind people among them? It says, "The entire nation saw the sounds" (Shemot 20:15).</p>	<p>מדרש רבה במדבר ז:א א"ר יהודה א"ר סימון ... מנין שלא היה בהן חרשין שנאמר "[נעשה] ונשמע" (שמות כד:ז) ומנין שלא היה בהן סומיין שנאמר "וכל העם רואים את הקולות" (שמות כ:טו) ...</p>
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Unfortunately, the people of Israel lost the high level they had attained through the sin of the golden calf, causing a flaw, once again, to vision and hearing. There is once again a national need to repair these two powers.

Eyes and Ears: Above and Below

Furthermore, a sin below causes a flaw above. In some way, a human sin causes a flaw in the Divine revelation. Our sources even speak about the Divine eye and ear:

<p>4. Avot 2:1 Know what is above you, a seeing eye and a hearing ear.</p>	<p>משנה מסכת אבות פרק ב דע מה למעלה ממך, עין רואה ואזן שומעת.</p>
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We also pray that God hear and see us:

<p>5. Daniel 9:18 Incline Your ear, God, and hear, open Your eye and see.</p>	<p>דניאל ט:יח הטה אָזְנוֹךָ אֱלֹהִים וּשְׁמַע פְּקֹחַ עֵינֶיךָ וּרְאֵה...</p>
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<p>6. Tehillim 34:16 God's eyes are to the righteous, and His ears to their cry.</p>	<p>תהילים לד:טז עֵינֵי ה' אֶל צְדִיקִים וְאָזְנָיו אֶל שׁוֹעֲתָם</p>
<p>7. Kedushah for Shacharit of Shabbat Our eyes should see Your Kingdom ...</p> <p>Kedushah for Musaf of Shabbat Let us hear, in Your mercy, once again, before the eyes of all life ...</p>	<p>קדושה לשחרית של שבת ועינינו תראנה מלכותך ...</p> <p>קדושה למוסף של שבת וישמיענו ברחמיו שנית לעיני כל חי ...</p>

Purim and Chanukah

A cryptic Midrash hints that Esther prayed that Israel should be able to restore the flaw of vision and hearing:

<p>8. Midrash Pliah When Israel became depressed and poor, Esther said, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?" (Tehillim 22:2).</p>	<p>מדרש פליאה כיון שנעשה ישראל מך ורש (ראשי תיבות ראייה שמיעה) אמרה אסתר קלי קלי למה עזבתני (תהילים כב:ב).</p>
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The Hebrew word רש alludes to vision – ראייה – and hearing – שמיעה. Esther saw how Israel had degenerated, how their vision and hearing had become flawed through sin, and called out to God.

God answered her prayers, and we merited two great miracles that begat two great holidays. Each holiday enables the people of Israel to focus on elevating one of these two senses.

Chanukah focuses on **vision**:

<p>9. Haneirot Halalu We are not permitted to use them (the Chanukah candles), only to look at them.</p>	<p>הנרות הללו ואין לנו רשות להשתמש בהם אלא לראותם בלבד.</p>
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The Gemara says that someone who only **sees** Chanukah candles – even though he does not light them himself – makes the blessing "She'asah nissim laavoteinu" – "You did miracles for our ancestors."

Purim focuses on **hearing**:

In order to fulfill the mitzvah of reading the Megillah the reader's voice must be audible, even if one is reading the Megillah for himself (Beit Yosef quoted in Mishneh Berurah 689:5). A deaf person is invalid as the public Megillah reader (Mishnah Megillah 2:4). Hearing is essential for the mitzvah of reading the Megillah. The first Mishnah in Shekalim hints that when Adar comes we should start repairing our sense of hearing: On Rosh Chodesh Adar we begin announcing (literally, making **heard**) the need to bring Shekalim (the yearly obligation to contribute a half shekel towards public sacrifices). In Hebrew: **משמיעין על השקלים**.

How does one repair and elevate his hearing and seeing?

<p>10. Yitav Panim Ki Tissa The root of this reparation is to tie seeing and hearing with the master of the universe, that one's eyes should constantly look to God, and to hear His voice, to cling to Him, may He be blessed.</p>	<p>יִיטב פָּנִים כִּי תִשָּׂא ושורש התיקון לקשר בחינת ראייה ובחינת שמיעה אל אלופו של עולם, להיות עיניו תמיד אל ה' ולשמוע בקולו לדבקה בו יתברך.</p>
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SIMCHAH! BY RABBI YITZCHAK HIRSHFELD

Simchah! Capture that elusive sensation. How can we rejoice when the world around us abounds with personal tragedy and national danger?

Purim is the key; at no time in our history was our future bleaker. However, Chazal predicted many centuries ago a repetition of the Purim story. The final redemption comes through teshuvah; and if we do not respond, then G-d will bring upon us a king as dangerous as Haman, who will threaten us with decrees as destructive as Haman's and then we will do teshuvah. Can a Jew be joyous knowing that in all likelihood we are headed for our own Purim test?

Purim was an act of *techiat hameitim* – resurrection of the dead. The Gemara in Megillah, seeking justification for the institution of Purim as a holiday, (after all, the Prophets are not able to create something totally new) offers a *kal v'chomer*: if our emergence from bondage to freedom was sufficient cause for the holiday of Pesach, how much more so should we celebrate the transition from death to life. The fact is – at the time of Purim we were dead.

What brought about his decree of death? The Gemara teaches, because they enjoyed the feast of Achashveirosh; and others say, because they were weak in their dedication to Torah study. Torah is the Source of Life; weakness in Torah is a weakening of connection to that source; enjoying the feast of Achashveirosh is a foolish and futile attempt to connect to another source, another kind of "life". When a Jew chooses the latter over the former, he is choosing death over life.

Our teshuvah is none other than that of our forefathers. The Jewish People rededicated their lives to Torah – *kiymu mah shekiblu kvar*. They were able to penetrate to the core of their existence and detach themselves from the fleshpots of Persia. Torah does that. Drinking the real thing makes all other drinks flat and tasteless. Their experience will be our own experience, their success our success.

In fact, Purim gives us the strength not to have to wait for the king as dangerous as Haman. Today, here, we can experience *techiat hameitim* by disconnecting from the values of the world around us, which so insidiously infiltrate our own and by reconnecting to Torah – the Source of Life. And this will bring resurrection – redemption – simchah.

*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples' programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at www.darchenoam.org +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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