

Women’s Learning Event

23 Adar I, 5784/ March 3, 2024

A WORD ABOUT THE NATURE OF YOMIM TOVIM

Each Jewish holiday recalls the unleashing of particular spiritual forces into our physical world. The power of freedom and becoming Hashem’s People was revealed on Pesach. On Shavuot, receiving the Torah and thereby connecting more deeply to Hashem, etc. Those forces are more accessible to us on the anniversary of their original revelation.

Thus, the main focus of any Jewish holiday is NOT simply remembrance of events in the past. Rather, they are special opportunities to tap into the spiritual meaning of each Yom Tov. The only catch is that we have to take action to connect to the real meaning. The mitzvos of each Yom Tov are intended as tools through which to connect to the deeper meaning of the Yom Tov. However, there, too, we are better served if we have the proper intentions, which comes from understanding what was achieved spiritually on the Yom Tov.

Purim has many, many layers of spiritual meaning, and tonight we will focus on only one. But it is a biggie.

We begin tonight’s learning with a Pasuk in the Megilla. It is Haman’s pitch to Achashverosh that the Jews are worthy of annihilation.

Esther 3:8

Haman then said to King Ahasuerus, “There is a single nation, scattered and dispersed among the other peoples in all the provinces of your realm, whose laws are different from those of any other people and who do not obey the king’s laws; and it is not in Your Majesty’s interest to tolerate them.

אסתר ג:ח

**וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן לַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ
יֵשְׁנֵנו עַם־אֶחָד מְפֹזָר וּמְפֹרָד
בֵּין הָעַמִּים בְּכֹל מְדִינֹת
מְלְכוּתְךָ וְדַתֵּיהֶם שְׁנוֹת
מִכְּלֵעַם וְאֶת־דַּתִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינָם
עֹשִׂים וְלַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינֶנּוּ
לְהִנָּחֵם:**

The Gemara, **Tractate Megilla Page 13b** makes the following comment about Haman’s pitch:

Rava said: There was none who knew how to speak Lashon Hara like Haman.

”יֵשְׁנֵנו עַם אֶחָד”, אָמַר רַבָּא: לֵיכָא דִידָע לִישְׁנָא בִישָׁא כְהָמָן.

It is no small matter to be rated as the GLOAT! (Greatest Lashon-Hara-Speaker Of All Time!) And let’s not forget that, by definition, Lashon Hara is a statement which is true. (If it is false, it is called Motzi Shem Ra, slander.)

Thus we must ask the following...

Questions for Thought!

1. What uniquely brilliant bit of truth did Haman share with Achashverosh to earn this distinction?
2. How was this truth such powerful Lashon Hara that it could lead to Haman’s goal of destroying the Jews?



DO NOT TURN THE PAGE UNTIL YOU CONSIDER WHAT YOU THINK THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS MIGHT BE!

To answer the above questions, Rabbi Chaim Friedlander (1923-1986) in his Sifsei Chaim, refers us to a **Medrash (Esther Rabba 7:12):**

“Haman said to King Achashverosh: There is [yeshno] one people” – the one of whom it is stated: “The Lord is one” (Deuteronomy 6:4); He is asleep [yashen] towards His people.

וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן לְמֶלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ יֵשְׁנו עִם אֶחָד (אסתר ג, ח), אוֹתוֹ שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר בּוֹ (דברים ו, ד): ה' אֶחָד, יֵשֶׁן לוֹ מֵעַמּוֹ.

This still begs the question: how was Haman’s great LHP (Lashon-Hara-Prowess) demonstrated by his strange claim that Hashem is “sleeping?” Needless to say, as Jews, we will answer this question by asking another question: Why does Haman use the term “Echad - One,” in his claim that Hashem is asleep? There are many ways for Haman to refer to Hashem. Why “Echad?”

R’ Chaim finds the answer to these questions in a **Gemara in Brachos 6a:**

The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Israel: “You have made Me a single entity in the world, and because of this, I will make you a single entity in the world.”

(The Gemara explains:) You have made Me a single entity in the world, as it is stated: “Hear, Israel, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One” (Deuteronomy 6:4). And because of this, I will make you a single entity in the world as it is stated: “Who is like Your people, Israel, one nation in the land? (Divrei Hayamim I, 17:21)”

אָמַר לָהֶם הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְיִשְׂרָאֵל: אַתֶּם עָשִׂיתֶנִי חֲטִיבָה אַחַת בְּעוֹלָם, וְאֲנִי אֶעֱשֶׂה אֶתְכֶם חֲטִיבָה אַחַת בְּעוֹלָם. אַתֶּם עָשִׂיתֶנִי חֲטִיבָה אַחַת בְּעוֹלָם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: “שָׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ ה' אֶחָד”, וְאֲנִי אֶעֱשֶׂה אֶתְכֶם חֲטִיבָה אַחַת בְּעוֹלָם”, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר “וְיָמִי כַעֲמָךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל גּוֹי אֶחָד בְּאֶרֶץ”

Questions for Thought

1. What does it mean that the Jewish People “make” Hashem into a single entity? Is His Essence as Singular something which needs to be “made” by a people which He created?
2. What does it mean for the Jewish People to be made into a “single entity?”
3. Why does it use the term, “In the world?” What would either of the sentences be lacking without that descriptive phrase?



DO NOT TURN THE PAGE UNTIL YOU CONSIDER WHAT YOU THINK THE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS MIGHT BE!

In a word, R' Chaim's answer to all of the above is **ACHDUS**.

When we declare Hashem's unique Oneness to the world, Hashem responds by giving us the unique gift of Achdus.

What is Achdus?

Most would translate it as "unity," but, while not a complete mistake, that definition is definitely lacking in the true depth of what Achdus is.

The Oxford dictionary defines unity as: "the state of being joined as a whole." Meaning, unity is when you take disparate items or people and join them.

That is not what Achdus is. The Zohar teaches:

The People of Israel, the Torah, and the Holy One, Blessed is He, are one.

**ישראל ואורייתא וקודשא
ברוך הוא חד הוא**

In other words, we don't NEED to be "joined together." We are, at our spiritual core, one singular entity. Spiritually speaking, all of our neshamos are part of one single whole.

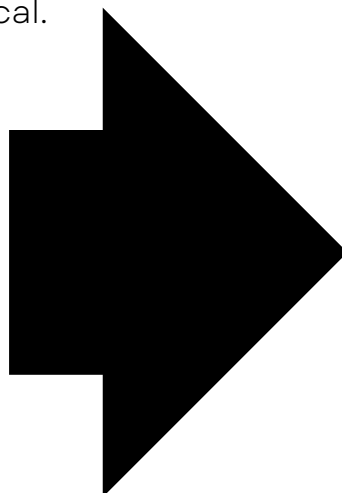
That is true in the real world, the spiritual world. In the fake world in which we have been placed, the physical world, there is actually no such thing as true Achdus. In this world we are disparate beings, and there are disparate objects and forces which are the antithesis of singularity. This is expressed in a Pasuk in Mishlei (18:1)

When one seeks (one's own) desires, s/he is divided. לתאוה יבקש נפרד

The physical world is finite. My needs are often contradictory to your needs. It is impossible to have true singularity in a physical world.

However, the spiritual world is accessible too us. The more we declare the existence, and unique singularity, of Hashem, the more we are bringing the spiritual into the physical.

**Bottom Line:
R' Chaim's
explanation of the
Gemara from the
previous page
(Brachos 6a)**



Thus, Hashem says, "If the Jewish people make me a single entity in the physical world, I will attach the Jewish people more to the spiritual world, and you yourselves can manifest your true spiritual essence, wherein the entire Jewish people are, in fact, one single unit."

Haman's LHP

Haman's brilliant Lashon Hara was in his understanding of the essence of the power of the Jewish people. Our power lies in declaring Hashem's Essence to the world, which then triggers the manifestation of the spiritual essence of the Jewish People, Achdus.

But the Jews at that time weren't getting the job done. They weren't B'Achdus. Haman saw that, and sought to exploit it. And he would have gotten away with it too if it wasn't for that pesky...

Esther

Esther knew that the lack of Achdus was the problem. That's why she instructed Mordechai (Megillas Esther 4:16):

Go, gather all the Jews who live in Shushan, and fast in my behalf; do not eat or drink for three days, night or day..."

לְךָ כְּנוֹס אֶת־כָּל־הַיְהוּדִים
הַנִּמְצְאִים בְּשׁוּשַׁן וְצוּמוּ עָלַי
וְאִל־תֹּאכְלוּ וְאִל־תִּשְׁתּוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת
יָמִים לַיְלָה וַיּוֹם ...

There are several words in this Pasuk which R' Chaim points out as indicating the deeper meaning of Esther's instructions. But instead of me spilling the beans, let's have some fun...

Question for Thought

- If Esther's wasn't telling Mordechai that Achdus is the key, what would she have said differently? (You'd better really think about this one, I'm not giving you the answer.)

The Result

In fact, it was the Jews' renewed commitment to Achdus which led to their salvation. There are many indications to this in the Megilla, and I invite you to look for them in the Megilla. In the interest of time, I will only share one with you.

Actually, this is not technically in the Megilla, but in the paragraph which we say after the Megilla.

The Rose of Jacob was exultant and joyous when they, together, saw the royal clothes of Mordechai.

שׁוֹשַׁנַּת יַעֲקֹב צָהֳלָה וְשִׂמְחָה
בְּרֹאוֹתֵם יַחַד תִּכְלַת מְרֹדֵכִי:

The Rose of Jacob is a reference to the Jewish people, who celebrated when they saw Mordechai lifted to a position of prominence.

There are many ways of referring to the Jewish people. Why is the term "rose" used in this particular context?

The Sifsei Chaim explains that the beauty of a rose does not lie in the individual petals, but rather in the intricate shape that is formed by the multiple petals of the rose. This is the perfect description of the Jewish people, who, on Purim, revealed our true essential beauty because we clung together as one, with one exalted purpose.

Purim: A Call to Action

It is not hard to see the message of Achdus in the unique mitzvos of Purim. However, it is very easy to get lost in the technicalities of those mitzvos and lose focus on the goal. We have a tremendous opportunity on Purim, and it is up to us to maximize the opportunity to grab on to the special power embedded in this day to the fullest extent that we can.

It would be impossible to list every single way that we can do this, but here are some thoughts shared by the Sifsei Chaim:

Matanos L'evyonim: Don't "just" give money. Take a moment to feel the responsibility we have to our fellow Jew, because we are all one unit. It is like the responsibility which your hand has to take care of your foot!

Mishloach Manos: Look at these powerful words from the Pele Yo'eitz:

The mitzvah of sending portions of food. Fortunate are the Jewish people who fulfill this mitzvah more than the absolute requirement. However, how wonderful it is to send to someone who will be honored by it, like a great person to a lesser person, or to one who has hard feelings against you, to gladden the hearts of the downtrodden and to increase love, brotherhood, peace and friendship.

ומצות משלוח מנות איש לרעהו, אשריהם ישראל מקימין אותה יותר מהחייב, אבל מה טוב לשלח למאן דאיתיקור מתיקר בה כגון גדול לקטן, ולמאן דאית לה קפידא עלוה כדי לשמח לב אמללים ולהחיות לב נדכאים, ולהרבות אהבה ואחוה שלום ורעות.

These are just two thoughts; each person can, and must, decide for themselves how they will seize the opportunity for Achdus on Purim.

IN THAT Z'CHUS, MAY WE MERIT THE THE TRUE DECLARATION
OF HASHEM'S EXISTENCE, WITH THE COMING OF MOSHIACH.
AND IN THE SPIRITUAL WORLD HE WILL INAUGURATE, WE
WILL FINALLY, TRULY, MANIFEST WHO WE ARE:
ONE PEOPLE.