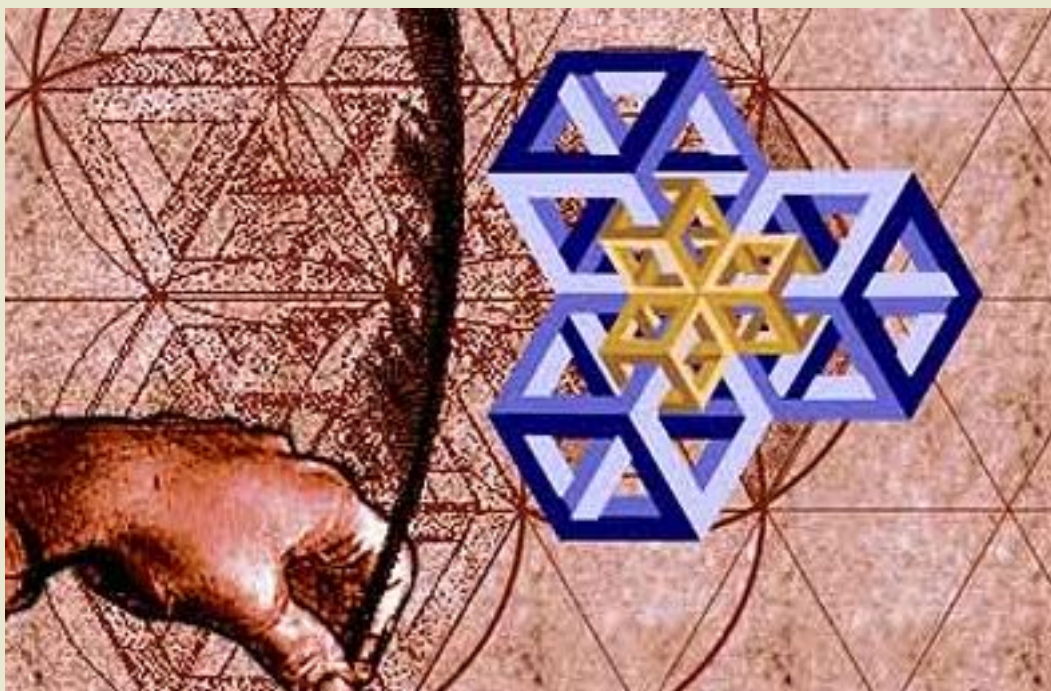


FrameWorks SpiralNotes Series
Purim

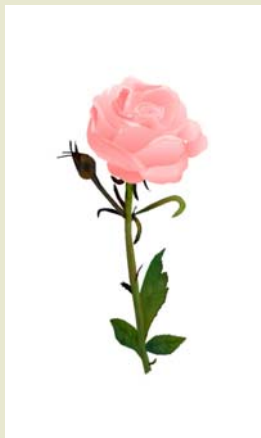


The Green Roots of Coincidence

transcribed and edited by **Geoffrey Dworkin**
based on a series of shiurim to Yeshivat Hakotel, 1992

Part One

***In this essay, we introduce the central players and concepts
of the most revolutionary of Jewish holy days: Purim.,***



פּוּרִים: Preparation and Chance

The notion of time, זמן, includes within it a meaning of being prepared, as in מזומן, literally, getting something ready. And this has a lot to do with how we relate to our ימים טובים in general, because as opposed to treating them as mere celebrations, there is a specific job, an עבודה, which needs to be done for each holiday. Holidays are understood by חז"ל as periods in which it is more applicable for us to achieve whatever it is that the time was provided for us to achieve.¹ Accordingly, there is a great deal of preparation which is necessary before a holiday in order to get an understanding of what it is that is to be achieved for the holiday and to best exploit the opportunity it provides.² Now it happens to be that פּוּרִים, more than any other holiday, is intimately related to this idea of preparation.

פּוּרִים is essentially the only holiday which impacts the entire month in which it appears in. Usually, the דינים of the holiday are localized, specific to the day. But on פּוּרִים, we say משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה.³ In fact, the preparations for this holiday take place even further in advance with the introduction of the די פרשיות, announcing both the giving of the שקלים and the זכירה of עמלק:

באחד באדר, משמעין על השקלים ועל הכלאיים. בחמישה עשר בו, קורין את המגילה בכרכים, ומתקנים את הדרכים ואת הרחובות ואת מקוות המים; ועושין כל צורכי הרבים, ומציינין על הקברות, ויוצאין אף על הכלאיים. (שקלים א:א)

On the first day of Adar, we announce regarding the shekalim and kelayim. On the fifteenth of [the month], we read Megilat Esther in the cities [that have a wall], renovate the thoroughways, streets and water

¹ Torah envisions time as our contact with reality, as the definer of our environment and spiritual attitudes and moods, the basis of the events which comprise our history and our individual lives. Commemoration is more than memory: it is a temporal *re-living* of those aspects in time which created events, feeling anew the associated moods and sensations. (See "Prelude" pgs. 36-44, *Patterns in Time: Chanukah*, Rabbi Matis Weinberg, Feldheim Publishers, Ltd., 1988)

² Indeed, preparation is itself demanded by the הלכה as expressed in the dictum: משה תיקן להם לישראל שיהיו שואלין ודורשין בענינו של יום הלכות פסח בפסח הלכות עצרת בעצרת הלכות חג בחג (מגילה לב.)

³ See תענית כט. though as will be discussed, another, quite related, period of time in the Jewish calendar shares this unique distinction of impact.

baths, address any public matters, whitewash grave sites, and actually take out kelayim.

So much is this related to the month per se, that there is an opinion in the Talmud that if the parasha of Shekalim (or any of the “Four Parashot”) is read during Adar I in a leap year, despite the fact that it would then be sixty days before the need for new Shekalim, no re-reading would be required. Not to mention that, according to Yerushalmi,⁴ reading the Megilla *any time during the whole month of Adar* would be acceptable in a pinch. After all, the Megillah refers to Adar as *The month that was transformed...* (9:22)

Beyond the feeling of joy that the month imparts, the preparations for פורים begin from a practical standpoint at the beginning of אדר with the giving of the שקלים. The שקלים, out of which the קרבנות are brought, are donated at the beginning of אדר. The relationship of these שקלים to פורים is amazingly expanded on by the גמרא:

ועשרת אלפים ככר כסף וגו' אמר ריש לקיש גלוי וידוע לפני מי שאמר והיה העולם שעתיד המן לשקול שקלים על ישראל לפיכך הקדים שקליהן לשקליו והיינו דתנן באדר באדר משמיעין על השקלים ועל הכלאים (מגילה יג:)

“10,000 talents of silver.” Reish Lekish said: it was revealed and known before He who said ‘let there be a world’ that Haman would eventually set aside silver against the Jewish people, therefore, he preempted [his shekels] by having them advance their own shekels over his, as it was taught in a Mishnah, On the first day of Adar, we announce regarding the shekalim and kelayim.

Further, according to the תוספות, if one converts the number of שקלים that were donated by Yisrael in the desert into unconsecrated shekel values, they equal 10,000 – the exact number of שקלים that המן wanted to dedicate to the king in order to pay for the expenses necessary to destroy all of the Jews.⁴ Because of this, the גמרא says that המן wanted the שקלים for the משכן to precede those of המן.

פְּתֻשָּׁן הַכְּתָב לְהַנָּתֶן דָּת בְּכָל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה גְלוּי לְכָל-הָעַמִּים-לְהָיוֹת עֲתִידִים, לְיוֹם הַזֶּה. (אסתר ג:יד)

The copy of the writing, to be given out for a decree in every province, was to be published to all people, that they should be ready for this day.

Even more striking is that the פורים story itself reflects a great deal of planning because the whole thing comes about through letters which were sent out in advance that say “לְהָיוֹת עֲתִידִים, לְיוֹם הַזֶּה” – “be ready for this day.” The letters didn’t specify anything, they just told the people to *be prepared*.

בְּחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן, הוּא-חֹדֶשׁ נִסָּן, בְּשָׁנָה שְׁתִּים עָשָׂרָה, לְמֶלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרֹשׁ: הַפִּיל פֹּר הוּא הַגּוֹרֵל לִפְנֵי הַמֶּן, מִיוֹם לְיוֹם וּמִחֹדֶשׁ לְחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנַיִם-עָשָׂר-הוּא-חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר. (אסתר ג:ז)

⁴ See Tosafot, Megilla, 16a, ד"ה ודחי. See also ב"ה and בנין ציון.

In the first month, which is the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Achashveirosh, they cast pur, that is, the lot, before Haman from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, which is the month Adar.

המן, who is the centerpiece of the story, has another name – ממוכן, meaning preparation. And he relates to the month of אדר very much the same way as we do. Because when he cast his lots, he didn't cast his lots for a specific day, rather he chose the month first, then the day. Meaning, he relates to אדר as a general time that is auspicious for his needs, and then he chose a day that was even more specific. And curiously, he also relates to it with a sense of שמחה, just as we do:

כיון שנפל פור בחודש אדר שמח שמחה גדולה (מגילה יג):

When it fell out on the month of Adar he relished a great joy.

Now there is another time in which a holiday impacts an entire month: אב, as it says, משנכנס אב ממעטין בשמחה.⁵ There, too, we have a gradual introduction and preparation to get us to the holiday, with the three weeks, nine days and then the יום itself. It is very much the same idea that we have by פורים in that we are מכין, we prepare.⁶ Indeed, the two are mirrored:

שם שמשנכנס אב ממעטין בשמחה, כך משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה (תענית כט).

So, oddly enough, the two times during the year when there is a stress on הכנה and preparation, we are lead to the same point – the בהמ"ק.⁷ In אב the הכנה takes us towards the בהמ"ק's destruction⁸ while here in אדר, preparations are being made for the rebuilding of the בהמ"ק.⁹

⁵ תענית כו:

⁶ In fact, the בהמ"ק itself relates to this type of הכנה, as the מקום itself literally means planned – כוננו actually translates ר' סעדיה גאון). תבאמו ותשעמו בהר נחלתך מכוון לשבתך פעלת ה' מקדש ה' כוננו קדיך (להזמין).

⁷ Note also that just as in אדר in אב the reason we are sad is not because we are relating to the חורבן, rather, חורבן came because we were sad (לבב מרב כל); while conversely, the rebuilding came with the happiness inherent in אדר.

⁸ See:

פסל לך, אימתי ירד משה מן ההר, אמר רבי יהודה בר שלום ק"כ יום עשה משה אצל הקב"ה כיצד בחדש השלישי לצאת בני ישראל וגו' בששה בחדש נתן להם עשרת הדברות וכתוב בו ומשה עלה אל האלהים ועשה שם ארבעים יום כ"ד מסיון וי"ו מתמוז הרי מ' יום, ירד ב"ז בתמוז ראה את העגל ושב ואת הלוחות ורדה את הסרוחין י"ח וי"ט, וחזר ועלה בעשרים שנאמר ויהי ממחרת ויאמר משה אל העם אתם חטאתם חטאה גדולה ועתה אעלה אל ה' וגו' וכתוב וישב משה אל ה' ויאמר אנא חטא העם הזה חטאה גדולה וגו' עשה שם עשרה מן תמוז וכל חדש אב הרי ארבעים יום, עלה בר"ח אלול כשא"ל פסל לך והיה נכון לבקר וגו' ויפסול וישכם משה בבקר ויעל, עשה שם אלול כלו ועשרה מתשרי וירד בעשור והיו ישראל שרוים בתפלה ותענית ובו ביום נאמר לו למשה סלחתי כדברך וקבעו הקב"ה יום סליחה ומחילה לדורות שנאמר (ויקרא טז: ל) כי ביום הזה יכפר עליכם לטהר, ומיד צוה לו למשה ועשו לי מקדש, פסל לך והיה נכון לבקר כך בראשונה והיה ביום השלישי בהיות הבקר וגו' וכאן וגם איש אל ירא. (מדרש תנחומא (ורשא) פרשת כי תשא סימן לא).

⁹ פורים is directly related to the rebuilding of the בהמ"ק because first, the story takes place at the end of the 70 year גלות period; and second, "עד חצי המלכות" says this means the בהמ"ק, and third, the child of אסתר built בהמ"ק – כורש.

Related to the *בהמ"ק*, the *אריז"ל* observes¹⁰ that פורים reminds us of another holiday: *יום הכפורים*, literally, "a day like פורים," suggesting that פורים is the primary day while *יום הכפורים* is only a day like פורים. And really, both days are fundamentally related. The original *הר סני* had a problem – it did not work. There was an *עגל הזהב* which resulted in the shattering of the *לחות*, which were re-presented to *בני"י* on *יום הכפורים*.

But then there was an additional problem, as identified by the *גמרא*:

ויתיצבו בתחתית ההר (שמות יט) 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 (אסתר ט) קימו וקבלו היהודים קיימו מה שקיבלו כבר. (שבת פח.)

'And they stood under the mountain.' R. Abdimi b. Chama b. Chasa said: This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, overturned the mountain upon them like an inverted cask, and said to them, 'If you accept the Torah, it is well; if not, there shall be your grave.' R. Aha b. Jacob observed: This furnishes a strong protest against the Torah [as it provides an excuse for non-observance, since it was forcibly imposed in the first place]. Said Raba, Yet even so, they re-accepted it in the days of Achashveirosh, for it is written, '[the Jews] confirmed, and took upon them' [i.e.,] they confirmed what they had accepted long before.

There was always a good excuse for not keeping the *תורה*. *בני"י* could always say that they were forced into it. There was a sense of a lack of commitment to *תורה*, particularly when it came to issues relating to *תשב"י*, as the *מדרש* explains,¹¹ though *בני"י* said *נעשה ונשמע*, they pulled back, because *בני"י* thought they'd have constant revelation. But when *בני"י* found out that there would be a *תשב"י*, with more questions than answers, *בני"י* didn't want that. So, the *גמרא* says, indeed, there was a problem, but it was a problem only until פורים. Once פורים came along, the Jewish people accepted the *תורה* wholeheartedly, including the *תשב"י*.¹² As the *גמרא* explains, *קימו וקבלו היהודים קיימו מה שקיבלו כבר*. That even though *בני"י* accepted the *תורה* at *הר סני*, on פורים it was a true *קיום*, an absolute acceptance of the *תורה*. So we see these two days, פורים and *יום הכפורים*, are quite interrelated as they both are times during which *בני"י* recommitted itself to *התורה*.

But there is another aspect of *יום הכפורים* that is similar to פורים, something that violates all of the norms of the Temple service: both holidays are interrelated conceptually as they are both defined by *פור*, lots: *פור הוא הגורל (אסתר ג:ז)*. פורים is called such for the lots *המן* drew. With respect to *יום הכפורים*, normally when a *קרבן* is brought, it is dedicated and defined at the outset. But, on *יום הכפורים*, the *קרבת* are defined by lots: *וַיִּתֵּן אֶהָרֹן עַל-שְׁנֵי הַשָּׁעִירִים, גִּרְלוֹת-גּוֹרֵל אֶחָד לַה' וְגּוֹרֵל אֶחָד לַעֲזָאזֵל*.¹³ So

¹⁰ See *תיקוני זוהר תכ"א (נו, ב)*.

¹¹ *Midrash Tanhuma, Noach, 3*

¹² Note that the development of *תשב"י* begins after פורים. The whole *מסכת אבות*, which deals with the *מסורה*, begins essentially with *אנשי כנסת הגדולה*, who came to be at the time of פורים.

¹³ *ויקרא טז:ח*

that on יום הכפורים, there is a special קרבן that can only be brought through the creation of a lottery in which it is ה' who will determine which is the שעיר לעזאזל and which is לה'.

But something is a bit strange. If both of these days are named for chance, then it is curious that the ultimate day of chance, פורים, is the day that we *prepare* for the most. One would think that “chance” and “preparation” make strange bedfellows!



פורים: fulfillment of משה רבנו's Life

Now of course, if המן was happy about אדר, then we ought to be careful how we're happy, because it is clear that one can have different kinds of happiness in אדר, not all of them necessarily positive! And it is important to figure out what the difference is. Because if the preparation for our פורים is defined by our Adar happiness, and the preparation for our פורים also comes out of happiness, then the difference in what creates the happiness may be the whole point of פורים. That is, if one really wants to understand what is it about the world that עמלק sees that would give him the sense of happiness in אדר and what is it that בני"י sees that gives them the sense of happiness in אדר, then the place to look for it is in trying to figure out what really catalyzes the happiness of המן in terms of אדר. Why should he be שמח גדולה? Now the truth is, the גמרא does tell us one reason as to why המן was happy, but it's not so clear how it is relevant.

הפיל פור הוא הגורל תנא כיון שנפל פור בחודש אדר שמח שמחה גדולה אמר
נפל לי פור בירח שמת בו משה ולא היה יודע שבשבעה באדר מת ובשבעה
באדר נולד (מגילה יג:)

'They cast pur, that is, the lot,' It was taught: when the lot fell out on the month of Adar, he relished a great joy and said, 'the lottery came out for me in the same month that Moshe had died in!' but he was unaware that though he died on the seventh of Adar, he was born on the seventh of Adar as well.

The reason המן was happy was because משה רבנו died in אדר. What does that mean? On the surface, it is not a very useful clue. But, was he wrong to be happy? Not entirely – משה רבנו certainly had died in אדר; but, המן was unaware that משה רבנו was also born in אדר. So though he thought it to be an auspicious month, it turned out to be auspicious indeed—but in a way contrary to what he expected. If we take this seriously, then we need to understand the relationship of משה רבנו to all of this.

"והיה, כאשר ירים משה ידו-וגבר ישראל . . ." (שמות יז:יא), וכי ידיו של משה
עושות מלחמה או ידיו שוברות מלחמה: אלא כל זמן שהיו ישראל מסתכלין
כלפי מעלן, ומכוונין את ליבם לאביהם שבשמיים-היו מתגברין; ואם לאו, היו
נופלים. (ראש השנה כט.)

'And it was when Moshe lifted his hands that Yisrael prevailed...' Could it be that Moshe's hands could make or break a war? Rather, whenever

Yisrael would gaze heaven-ward and direct their hearts to their father in the heavens, they prevailed. But if they did not, then they were felled.

It is true that משה רבנו suffered by the hands of עמלק when עמלק attacked בניי after they had left Egypt. But, there is a more curious interrelationship of Purim to Moshe. The גמרא in חולין analyzes the names of the all of the people that appear in the פורים story:

משה מן התורה מנין (בראשית ו:ג) בשגם הוא בשר המן מן התורה מנין (בראשית ג:יא) המן העץ אסתר מן התורה מנין (דברים לא:יח) ואנכי הסתר אסתיר מרדכי מן התורה מנין דכתיב (שמות ל:כג) מר דרור ומתרגמין מירא דכיא (חולין קלט:)

Where, (on a meta-level), is there some reference to Moshe in the Torah? As it says, 'as he is flesh' (which in numerology equals 120, the same as Moshe's name). Where, (on a meta-level), is there some reference to Haman in the Torah? As it says 'from the tree...' (a pun on the name Haman). Where, (on a meta-level), is there some reference to Esther in the Torah? As it says 'and I will surely hide...' (a pun on the name Esther). Where, (on a meta-level), is there some reference to Mordechai in the Torah. As it says 'flowing myrrh' which in Aramaic is 'flowing myrrh,' (Mor-Dror' a pun on the name Mordechai).

The גמרא is discussing all of the characters of the פורים story here – but what relevance is there to משה רבנו in that context? Maybe there is a connection here, a connection that המן apparently keyed into.

On some level, we can say that פורים is the fulfillment of משה רבנו's life. As mentioned, there was a failure with התורה:

ויתיצבו בתחתית ההר (שמות יט:יז) 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 אחשורוש דכתיב (אסתר ט:כז) קימו וקבלו היהודים קיימו מה שקיבלו כבר (שבת פח.)

'And they stood under the mountain.' R. Abdimi b. Chama b. Chasa said: This teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, overturned the mountain upon them like an inverted cask, and said to them, 'If you accept the Torah, it is well; if not, there shall be your grave.' R. Aha b. Jacob observed: This furnishes a strong protest against the Torah [as it provides an excuse for non-observance, since it was forcibly imposed in the first place]. Said Rabah, Yet even so, they re-accepted it in the days of Achashveirosh, for it is written, '[the Jews] confirmed, and took upon them' [i.e.,] they confirmed what they had accepted long before.

What this means, is that at the time of פורים, something changed in בניי's perception that enabled them to accept the תורה without כגגית את ההר עליהם. In that sense, it is certainly true that משה רבנו's life is fulfilled only with פורים.

There is another curious interrelationship. *מי מריבה* died because of *משה רבנו*, which was in *קדש*,¹⁴ the same place *עמלק* first appears (Bereishit 14:7). Indeed, *עמלק* later initiates Yisrael's struggle with them in terms of Torah: *ויבא עמלק וילחם עם ישראל*. So, the primal *עמלק* connection to *בניי* is specifically through Moshe and Torah and it is because of that water in *קדש* that *משה רבנו* finds his end. So maybe *המן* is onto something here. Since this is the time of *משה רבנו*'s death, and the only reason *עמלק* wasn't capable of destroying *ישראל* in the first place is because *משה רבנו* was around, and in the second time in *מי מריבה*, *משה רבנו* met his death as a result of hitting the stone, maybe *המן* is right on target! In which case, the death of *משה רבנו* would be associated with the prevailing of *המן*, who was from the family of *עמלק*.¹⁵ So perhaps we should examine and analyze what happened in *מי מריבה*. In other words, if the reason that *עמלק* is capable of hurting us is because of whatever it is that hurt *משה רבנו*, then apparently we could then understand what it is we accomplish on *פורים*--which is what *משה רבנו* should have done, but didn't!

משה רבנו of קל וחומר The

מקדש שם ה' died because he was not *משה רבנו*:

וַיָּמָת, בְּהָרָא אֲשֶׁר אָתָּה עֹלָה שָׁמָּה, וְהָאֶסֶף, אֶל-עַמִּידָ: כְּאֲשֶׁר-מָת אַהֲרֹן אֶחֱידָ, בְּהָרָהָרָ, וַיֵּאָסֶף, אֶל-עַמּוֹ. עַל אֲשֶׁר מָעַלְתֶּם בִּי, בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּמִי-מְרִיבַת קָדֵשׁ, מְדַבֵּר-צֵן-עַל אֲשֶׁר לֹא-קִדְשְׁתֶּם אוֹתִי, בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. (דברים לב:ג-נא)

And die at the mountain where you will ascend, and be gathered unto your people as Aaron your brother died at Mount Hor, and was gathered unto his people. Because you trespassed against Me in the midst of the children of Israel at the waters of Meribath-kadesh, in the wilderness of Tzin; because you did not sanctify Me in the midst of the children of Israel.

על אשר לא קדשתם אותי - גרמתם לי שלא אתקדש אמרתי לכם (במדבר כ:ח) ודברתם אל הסלע והם הכוהו והוצרכו להכותו פעמים ואילו דברו עמו ונתן מימיו בלא הכאה היה מתקדש שם שמים, שהיו ישראל אומרים ומה הסלע הזה שאינו לשכר ולא לפורענות אם זכה אין לו מתן שכר ואם חטא אינו לוקה כך מקיים מצות בוראו אנו לא כל שכן (רש"י שם).

Because you did not sanctify Me – that is, you caused it that I should not be sanctified. I said to you 'and you shall speak to the rock' and they had to hit it, and two times to boot! And had they spoken with it and it gave forth its water without being hit, then the name of God would have been sanctified, since Yisrael would have said, just as this rock, which does not receive reward or punishment – if it does well it receives no reward, if it deviates, it is not hit – so too should we [have this attitude] in the fulfillment of the commandments of the Creator. (Rashi)

¹⁴ See Rashi Bereishit 14:7, *ד"ה עין משפט וד"ה שדה עמלקי*.

¹⁵ Indeed we attribute the entire *משה רבנו* to *גלות*, because had *משה רבנו* taken us into *א"י* we never would have been exiled.

Because בני didn't learn this valuable lesson, משה רבנו had to die and therefore we had to go into exile and have all of the problems with גלות? But this קל וחומר is nonsensical. ה' says that despite what it "does," the stone does not get reward and it does not get punishment. But of course not, it doesn't have choices! So it is ridiculous to say a stone that doesn't get reward, if it does good and doesn't get punished, if it does bad..., or "does what it supposed to do" – well of course it does, that's what it is programmed to do! Why would a person conclude that he should all the more so be like a stone? That's ridiculous. That would be like a computer programmer who tells his kids to go to bed and when they don't listen to him, he gets angry and says, "I don't understand, the computers I work with always execute my instructions, and you, I'll give you a lollipop if you listen to me or a beating if you don't and you still don't do as I say, you're dumber than the computer!" Well of course the children don't listen to Dad the Geek, they are people and do as they choose, not as they're programmed.

And this isn't an isolated occurrence, rather the קל וחומר is so central and fundamental that just before משה רבנו dies, he gathers all of בני around and attempts to teach them this lesson one last time:

הַעֲדַתִּי בְּכֶם הַיּוֹם, אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ-הַחַיִּים וְהַמָּוֶת נָתַתִּי לְפָנֶיךָ, הַבְּרָכָה וְהַקְלָלָה; וּבַחֲרָתָ, בַּחַיִּים-לְמַעַן תַּחְיֶה, אֶתָּה וְזַרְעֶךָ. (דברים ל:יט)

I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life, so you may live, you and your children.

הַעֲדַתִּי בְּכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ - שֶׁהֵם קִיּוּמִים לְעוֹלָם וּכְאִשֶּׁר תִּקְרָה אֶתְכֶם הָרַעָה יִהְיוּ עֵדִים שְׂאֵנִי הִתְרַתִּי בְּכֶם בְּכָל זֹאת. דָּבָר אַחֵר הָעִידַתִּי בְּכֶם הַיּוֹם אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וּגּוֹ' אָמַר לָהֶם הַקַּב"ה לְיִשְׂרָאֵל, הִסְתַּכְּלוּ בַשָּׁמַיִם שֶׁבִּרְאִיתִי לְשֹׁמֵשׁ אֶתְכֶם, שְׂמָא שֵׁנו אֶת מִדְּתָם שְׂמָא לֹא עָלָה גִלְגַּל חֲמָה מִן הַמְּזֹרָח וְהָאִיר לְכָל הָעוֹלָם, כַּעֲנִין שְׂנֵאֲמַר (קֹהֶלֶת א:ה) זֹרַח הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ וּבֹא הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ, הִסְתַּכְּלוּ בָאָרֶץ שֶׁבִּרְאִיתִי לְשֹׁמֵשׁ אֶתְכֶם, שְׂמָא שִׁנְתָּה מִדְּתָה, שְׂמָא זָרַעְתָּ אוֹתָהּ וְלֹא צִמְחָה, אוֹ שְׂמָא זָרַעְתָּ חֲטִים וְהִעֲלָתָה שְׁעוּרִים, וְמָה אֵלּוֹ שֶׁנַּעֲשׂוּ לֹא לְשֹׁכֵר וְלֹא לְהַפְסֵד אִם זֹכִין אֵין מִקְבְּלִין שֹׁכֵר וְאִם חוֹטְאִין אֵין מִקְבְּלִין פּוֹרְעֵנוֹת, לֹא שֵׁנו אֶת מִדְּתָם, אֶתְּם שְׂאֵם זִכִּיתֶם תִּקְבְּלוּ שֹׁכֵר וְאִם חֲטֵאתֶם תִּקְבְּלוּ פּוֹרְעֵנוֹת עַל אַחַת כַּמָּה וְכַמָּה. (רש"י שם)

I call heaven and earth to witness against you – they are everlasting, so that when the evil befalls you, they will be witnesses to the fact that I warned you that of all of this. Another interpretation: Said the Holy One, blessed be he, to Yisrael, 'take a look at the heavens that I created to serve you, did you ever see them change their nature, that the sun might not rise and light up the world? Take a look at the ground that I created to serve you. Did it ever change its physical nature so that maybe you once planted and nothing grew, or that you planted wheat and barley came up? Just as these [natural processes], when they do [as expected] there is not reward or punishment, so that if they do as expected they are not rewarded or if they deviate are not punished, and yet they still do not

change their nature, so too you, who if you do as expected are rewarded or fail to do so are punished, so do all the more so. (Rashi)

משה רבנו kept trying to give this message over, so clearly it was a fundamental lesson. Apparently this is important enough to define everything, including the need for פורים!

Now, it's true that משה רבנו was responsible for giving the תורה, but he was also responsible for providing the environment in which the people could conceive of the תורה, to have the time to learn the תורה and to absorb it the first time around. Because though he wasn't successful with the water part, he was successful with providing the food, the bread for בניי in the desert. And in providing that environment, he also allowed קבלת התורה because it says לא ניתנה תורה לדרוש אלא לפני ה' למשמרת לדורותיכם. כאשר צוה ה' אל-משה; ויניחהו אהרן לפני העדת, למשמרת. (שמות טז:לג-לד) I.e. if it hadn't been that משה רבנו brought the מן, then there could not have been a קבלת התורה, because people who are involved in the needs of mortal lives, can't really reach קבלת התורה. And that was given in the merit of משה רבנו.

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל-אַהֲרֹן, קַח צִנְצֻנַת אֶחָת, וְתֵן-שָׁמָּה מֶלֶא-הָעֶמֶק, מִן וְהִנֵּחַ אֹתוֹ לִפְנֵי ה', לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת לְדֹרֹתֶיכֶם. כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה ה' אֶל-מֹשֶׁה; וַיִּנְיחֵהוּ אֶהֱרֹן לִפְנֵי הָעֵדֻת, לְמִשְׁמֶרֶת. (שמות טז:לג-לד)

And Moshe said to Aaron: 'Take a jar, and put an omerful of man in side it, and lay it up before the Lord, to be kept throughout your generations.'
As God commanded Moshe, so Aaron laid it up before the Testimony, to be kept.

The reason that the צנצנת המן was kept next to the ארון, and when the ארון was hidden,¹⁷ it was hidden with it, is to emphasize this point. So apparently what משה רבנו did achieve in this area was central to the קבלה.

המן – mr. Preparation

Now, so how is it that the people in the time of פורים were able to do something that they couldn't do at the time in the מדבר, where it says, לא ניתנה תורה לדרוש אלא למן, and yet these people were able to accept the תורה anew without that? The answer is simple: המן – לא נתנו התורה אלא לאכלי המן. Now, though this seems to be just a pun, note that the word מן means, preparation:

וַיֵּרְאוּ בְנֵי-יִשְׂרָאֵל, וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל-אָחִיו מִן הוּא--כִּי לֹא יָדָעוּ, מֶה-הוּא; וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה, אֲלֵהֶם, הוּא הַלֶּחֶם, אֲשֶׁר נָתַן יְהוָה לָכֶם לֶאֱכֹלָהּ. (שמות טז:טו)

And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another: 'What is it?' – for they knew not what it was. And Moshe said to them: 'It is the bread which God has given you to eat.'

מן הוא - הכנת מזון הוא, כמו (דניאל א:ה) וימן להם המלך (רש"י שם)

¹⁶ מיכלתא פרי בשלח

¹⁷ משנגנו ארון נגנו שמן המשחה וצנצנת המן (הוריות יב).

What is it – it was prepared food. Like the following usage, 'And the king prepared for them a daily portion of the king's food.'

So the word *מן* means *הכנה*, and *המן* was *ממוכן*, so they are all interrelated. *המן*'s two names weren't different – they meant precisely the same thing – Mr. Preparation. The *מן* that was eaten in the *מדבר* seems to strangely relate to *המן*. And the wildest thing of all is that the *מן* stopped falling with the death of *משה רבנו*. But it lasted from the time of his death to as long it was necessary to bring the *עומר* so that they could eat the new grain, which was the sixteenth of *ניסן*, the very same day on which *המן* was hanged! Indeed *מרדכי* even hints at this to *המן*, as he was learning the *דנים* of the *עומר* when *המן* passed by him. *המן* walked by and said, what are you learning. *מרדכי* responds, the *דנים* of the *עומר*. And *המן* retorts, well that *עומר* just blew away my 10,000 שקל.¹⁸

Even more so, there are *הלכות* that are learned out of this. When describing how *נִהְיָה בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁשִׁי וְהַכִּינּוּ אֶת אֶשֶׁר-יָבִיאוּ*, *פסוק* says, *מן*, the *מן* went to get the *מן*, *בני* From this, the *רבה* learns the *הכנה* of *רבה*:

וקסבר רבה כל ביצה דמתילדא האידנא מאתמול גמרה לה ורבה לטעמיה דאמר רבה מאי דכתיב (שמות טז:כב) והיה ביום הששי והכינו את אשר יביאו חול מכן לשבת וחול מכן ליום טוב ואין יו"ט מכן לשבת ואין שבת מבינה ליום טוב. (ביצה ב.)

Rabah explained that any egg which hatched today completed its formation a day earlier. And Rabah is consistent with his own opinion for he said, why is it written 'and it was on the sixth day and they prepared that which they brought' to teach that a weekday may prepare for a Sabbath and a weekday may prepare for a festival but a festival may not prepare for a Sabbath and a Sabbath may not prepare for a festival.

The striking thing is that there is a law that anything unprepared is unsuitable for use on a holiday. One is not allowed to have something which wasn't prepared in advance on the holiday itself. This *דין* is learned from the *מן*. So *פורים* needs preparation, and that there is something central about getting prepared for *פורים*, which is deeper than any other holiday. The center of the story is this concept of *ממוכן* which only appears incidentally in terms of all the other *מועדים*, is central when it comes to the terms with *פורים*.

¹⁸ As extracted from the following dialogue:

אמר להון: הדין עמרא ממאי הוה דדהב או דכסף? אמרו לו דשעורין, אמר להון: וכמה הות טימי דידה בעשרה קנטרין? אמרין לה: סגין בעשרה מנין, אמר להון: קומו, דנצחו עשרה מנכון לעשרת אלפים קנטרין דכספא. כיוון דשמעת אסתר כן אפקת כרוז בכל מדינתא ואמרה: לא יפתח בר נש חנות בגו שוקא כל עמא יפקון להון, פרטי (מנהיג) דיהודאי בעי למצטלבא! (שכן היא סברה שמרדכי הולך ליהרג) כיוון דחסל מן מצלי אמר המן למרדכי: לבוש הדין פורפירא, והב הדין כלילא על רישך וסק רכוב הדין סוסיא. אמר לה: שוטה שבעולם, לית את ידע דאנא מן שקא ומן קטמא!! אית בר נש לבש פורפירא דמלכא דלא סחי!! מה את בעי לבזויה למלכותא? אזל בדיל בלנאי ולא אשכחה. מה עבד? אסר מטי וסתה ועל מזגה וקנחה ועל אסחה. כיוון דחסל לבש פורפירא, אמר לה: הב הדין כלילא דמלכא בראשך! אמר לה: אית בר נש יהב כלילא דמלכא ברישה ולא מספר? מפני מה את בעי לבזויה למלכותא? אזל בגין ספרא ולא אשכחה. מה עבד? אפיק מאני ספוריה ויתב ומספר לה, עד דהוה יתב ומספר לה שרי מתנח. אמר לה: מה לך? אמר לה: וי לה לההוא גברא מה אתא עלוי? מאן דעביד קומוס בגרון, מאן דעביד קומוס קלטור, מאן דעביד מגסטאר פלטיין, אתעבד בלנאי וספר! אמר: ולנא חכם לאבוא דההוא גברא שחיק טמיא בכפר קרינוס בלנאי וספר? ואלין אנון מאניא ספוריה, כיוון דחסל מספרא לה אמר לה: קום רכוב על הדין סוסיא. אמר לה: לית בי כח, דאנא גבר סב... כיוון שרכב על הסוס התחיל מקלס להקב"ה ואמר (תהילים ל:ב-ד) 'ארוםמך ה' כי דיליתני ולא שמחת אויבי לי, ה' אלוקי שועתי אליך ותרפאני ה' העלית מן שאול נפשי' (ויקרא רבה פרשה כח' אותה)

Why was this guy called ממוכן?

ויאמר ממוכן תנא ממוכן זה המן ולמה נקרא שמו ממוכן שמוכן לפורענות
(מגילה יב:)

'And Memucahn Said.' It was taught, Memucahn was Haman. He was called Memuchan (meaning prepared) because he was prepared for destruction.

המן was set up. Everything he prepared for the sake of others, ultimately was prepared for himself. Initially he was a nobody, but eventually, he rose to the top, politically.¹⁹ It was he who comes up with the idea of getting rid of וּשְׂתִי. He tells אחשוורוש:

אִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב, יֵצֵא דְבַר-מַלְכוּת מִלְפָּנָיו, וְיִכְתֹּב בְּדִתִּי פָּרֶס-וּמָדִי, וְלֹא יִעֲבֹר: אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תָבוֹא וּשְׂתִי, לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁירוּשׁ, וּמַלְכוּתָהּ יִתֵּן הַמֶּלֶךְ, לְרַעוּתָהּ הַטּוֹבָה מִמֶּנָּה. (אסתר א:יט)

If it please the king, let there go forth a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes, that it be not altered, that Vashti come no more before king Achashveirosh, and that the king give her royal estate to another that is better than she.

And the גמרא explains that he recommended that a decree of the king should not be subject to the Supreme Court. Because אחשוורוש said I can't do this myself, I need to go to the חכמים. And המן says, nonsense, you can do this your self, it's a holdover from the Babylonians – you should be an absolute monarch. And the reason המן suggested this is because he wanted to take over himself eventually. But this is his first step. In the course of this first step, he gets rid of וּשְׂתִי and installs the woman he thinks is a pushover, but who ends up being the one who kills him. And he is killed because he is the one who had that law passed at the outset that a king can do as he wishes without going to court. *Immediately* he was killed. He puts himself in the position to be the only one invited by the king at the time אסתר is there, which is exactly what takes him down. He has a tree set up so that the guy who had done good for the king, מרדכי, made sure that the king would not know about it at the time, so that the only time the king finds out about it is at the moment the gallows are ready to take המן down. So that the very tree he sought to use to kill מרדכי with is the one from which he is hanged: לוֹ—לוֹ הָכִין! And finally, when he sends out the letters of war, they are the very letters that allowed the Jews to fight, since the letters couldn't be returned. So all the letters needed to do was be redefined (as the גמרא elaborates). All you said was be ready, well they were ready indeed—to take down all the Jewish enemies! This is the whole meaning of וְנִהְפַךְ – the whole thing became inverted. He was a man who was set up alright, but it was all set up in a way in which he was destroyed through his own actions. And so, ממוכן fits his name very well.

¹⁹ See:

ויאמר ממוכן תנא ממוכן שמו ממוכן שמוכן לפורענות אמר רב כהנא מכאן שההדיוט (מגילה יב:)

There is a מדרש that expresses this notion succinctly. The מדרש says²⁰ that the world is really like a horse and ה' is its rider. So that you think the horse is going where it wants and putting forth all the energy. But if you want to know מי נהג את מי, who guides whom, ה' הרוכב נהג את הסוס – the rider guides the horse. This is a deep insight into the world because as much as we think we're putting out – and we're putting out – everything we're putting out, and our plans, they're real. Indeed the horse might think it's putting out and going where it wants, despite this, really ה' is taking it where it needs to go. המן thought he was making these plans, but through them he created פורים.²¹ Indeed, this notion is highlighted when the king asks המן what should be done to the man the king wants to honor and המן says, give him the horse that the מלך rides on (ה' here being מלך). המן saw himself not as the horse but the rider, where in essence, as ממוכן, he ends up being the horse.

So we understand even through המן's name alone that this whole time period must have something to do with משה רבנו. Because what did משה רבנו try to tell בניי. He said, you think you are different than the computer, and that's why this קי"ו makes no sense. But you're wrong, because in terms of your plans and goals, yes you're different than the computer. But if you think that ultimately the direction of history is going to be defined by you, you're wrong. In precisely the same way the sun is going to rise in the morning, and in precisely the same way the rock does what it's programmed to do, the universe is going to do what it's supposed to do as well. If you do everything in your power to do the exact opposite of what you think you're

²⁰ This מדרש is one of the most fundamental מדרשים which plays in many locations including זוהר and Chassidut, among various other texts. The simplest formulation is as follows:

ויפגע במקום ר"ה בשם ר' אמי אמר מפני מה מכנין שמו של הקב"ה וקוראין אותו מקום שהוא מקומו של עולם ואין עולמו מקומו מן מה דכתיב (שמות לג: כא) הנה מקום אתי הוי הקב"ה מקומו של עולם ואין עולמו מקומו א"ר יצחק כתיב (דברים לג: כז) מעונה אלהי קדם אין אנו יודעים אם הקב"ה מעונו של עולמו ואם עולמו מעונו מן מה דכתיב (תהלים צ: א) ה' מעון אתה הוי הקב"ה מעונו של עולמו ואין עולמו מעונו א"ר אבא בר יודן לגבור שהוא רוכב על הסוס וכליו משופעים אילך ואילך הסוס טפילה לרוכב ואין הרוכב טפילה לסוס שנאמר (חבקוק ג: ח) כי תרכב על סוסך. (מדרש רבה בראשית פרשה סח פסקה ט).

To get an idea of how many guises this מדרש assumes, consider:

ובבראשית רבה אמרו, בפרשם למאמרו ית', "מעונה אלהי קדם" - אמרו, "הוא מעון עולמו ואין עולמו מעונו"; וסמכו לזה אמרם, "הסוס טפלה לרוכב ואין הרוכב טפלה לסוס" - הדא הוא דכתיב, "כי תרכב על סוסך" "זוה הוא לשונם, והסתכל בו ותבין, איך בארו יחסו ית' לגלגל, ושהוא כלי לו אשר בו ינהיג המציאות. כי כל מה שתמצא ל'חכמים ז"ל, כי השמים הפלוגיים בהם כך וכך והשמים הפלוגיים בהם כך וכך, אין ענינו - שבשמים הגשמים אחרים בלתי השמים אבל ענינו - שהכוחות המהוות הענין הפלוגי והשומרות סידורו יבואו מן השמים ההם. והראיה על מה שאמרתי לך - אמרם, "עברות" - שבו צדק וצדקה ומשפט, וגנוי חיים וגנוי שלום וגנוי ברכה, ונשמותן של צדיקים ונשמות ורוחות שעתידים להבראות, וטל שעתיד הקב"ה להחיות בו המתים" - ומבואר הוא, שכל מה שמאווהו הנה, אין מהם דבר שהוא גשם, שיהיה במקום (כי ה'טל' אינו טל כפשוטו). והתבונן איך אמרו בזה, 'שבו' - רצוני לומר, שהם ב'עברות' - ולא אמרו שהם עליו - וכאלו הגידו, שאלו הדברים הנמצאים בעולם אמנם הם נמצאים מכוחות, יבואו מ'עברות', האלוה ית' שמהו התחלה להם ונטעם בו, אשר מכללם - 'גנוי חיים' - וזה הוא הנכון והאמת הגמור, כי כל חיים נמצאים בחי אמנם הם מן החיים ההם, כמו שאזכור אחר זה. והתבונן איך מנו, 'נשמותן של צדיקים ונשמות ורוחות שעתידים להבראות' - ומה נכבד זה הענין למי שיבינהו! כי ה'נשמות' הנשואות אחר המות אינם ה'נשמה' ההוא באדם כשיתחיה - שזאת ההוה בעת התחיותו היא כח ההכנה לבד, והדבר הנבדל אחר המות הוא הדבר המגיע בפועל; ולא ה'נשמה' גם כן ההוה היא ה'רוח' ההוה - ולה מנו בחוות, 'נשמות ורוחות'; אמנם הנבדלות הם דבר אחד לבד. וכבר בארנו שיתוף 'רוח' ובארנו עוד, בסוף ספר מדע, מה שנפל באלו השמות מן השיתוף. (ספר מורה נבוכים - חלק א פרק ע).

וזהו לססתי ברכבי פרעה דמיתך רעיתי. ר"ל כמו בסוסי רכבי פרעה שהיה היפך מנהגו של עולם שהרוכב מנהיג לסוס. ובפרעה וחילו הסוס הנהיג את רוכבו כמשרז"ל. כן דמיתך והמשלתך רעיתי ע"י האופן ממש. שאף שאני רוכב ערבות עכ"ז כביכול את מנהיג אותי ע"י מעשיך. שענין התחברותי כביכול להעלמות הוא רק כפי ענין התעוררות מעשיך לאן נוטים. וזש"ה רוכב שמים בעוזך. וכן משרז"ל העבודה צורך גבוה. (נפש החיים - שער א - פרק ט).

²¹ The commentators suggests that המן knew about the possible advent of פורים. Why did he only provide one day for destruction? Because he didn't want the Jews to have a seven day celebration should they win!

supposed to be doing, that's precisely what you're supposed to be doing. Just like המן. As the גמרא puts it:

תרתי כושאי דהוו קיימי קמי שלמה (מלכים א:ד) אליחרף ואחיה בני שישא סופרים דשלמה הוו יומא חד חזייה למלאך המות דהוה קא עציב א"ל אמאי עציבת א"ל דקא בעו מינאי הני תרתי כושאי דיתבי הכא מסרינהו לשעירים שדרינהו למחוזא דלז כי מטו למחוזא דלז שכיבו למחר חזיא מלאך המות דהוה קבדח א"ל אמאי בדיחת א"ל באתר דבעו מינאי תמן שדרתינהו מיד פתח שלמה ואמר רגלוהי דבר איניש אינן ערבין ביה לאתר דמיתבעי תמן מובילין יתיה (סוכה נג).

There were two Ethiopians who held positions before Shlomo, 'Elichoreph and Achiah sons of Shisha are scribes.' One day Shlomo saw that the Angel of Death was looking sad. He said to him, 'why are you so down?' He replied, 'Because I am looking for these two Ethiopians who are here.' [Shlomo immediately had these men] sent to Mechuza to Luz. [The Angel of Death] found them there and killed them. The next day, [Shlomo] saw the Angel of Death looking all happy and said, 'what's perking you up?' So he said, "I tell you, I had this job to do, I had to kill these guys but I couldn't, unless they were at Mechuza of Luz and sure enough, they were right there." Immediately, Sholmo said, 'A man's feet are his own guarantors; where it is he's supposed to be, that's where they lead him'

"A man's feet are his own guarantors; where it is he's supposed to be, that's where they lead him." And that's very much what happens here. The משה רבנו of ק"י is actually recreated by the whole פורים story in a way in which everyone could see. Everything that was being done was being done with the precise opposite intent of what it eventually achieves, with meticulous planning and with excellence in execution. Nonetheless, it was achieving exactly what it was meant to achieve, just as the sun rises the next morning. And this is what משה רבנו originally intended to define by the ק"י. So, there really is a connection between the two.

We have spoken about the value of preparation. But now let's consider פורים from the point of view of the various protagonists of פורים. We have already identified who they are in the גמרא in חולין:

משה מן התורה מנין (בראשית ו:ג) בשגם הוא בשר המן מן התורה מנין (בראשית ג:יא) המן העץ אסתר מן התורה מנין (דברים לא:יח) ואנכי הסתר אסתיר מרדכי מן התורה מנין דכתיב (שמות ל:כג) מר דרור ומתרגמין מירא דביא (חולין קלט:)

Where, (on a meta-level), is there some reference to Moshe in the Torah? As it says, 'as he is flesh' (which in numerology equals 120, the same as Moshe's name). Where, (on a meta-level), is there some reference to Haman in the Torah? As it says 'from the tree...' (a pun on the name Haman). Where, (on a meta-level), is there some reference to Esther in the Torah? As it says 'and I will surely hide...' (a pun on the name Esther). Where, (on a meta-level), is there some reference to Mordechai

in the Torah. As it says 'flowing myrrh' which in Aramaic is 'flowing myrrh,' (a pun on the name Mordechai).

Unbelievably, they included משה רבנו, but the other protagonists, מרדכי, אסתר, and המן, need to be examined as well. These are the people who we need to look at in terms of understanding פורים properly. We had some insights into משה רבנו, so we will now turn our attention to המן.

The interesting thing is that when it comes to פורים, it turns out, whenever we have a concept, it seems that המן was there before us. Whatever it is that we're going to achieve in terms of our understanding of the meaning of פורים and its related issues, it always turns out that המן understood it better than we did. We have already seen this theme on some level. For instance, the first person in history to appreciate אדר as a propitious month was המן. The first person to appreciate אדר as a time of שמחה was המן. We didn't have a clue that משה רבנו was related to פורים but, המן did – this was the reason he was שמח. And this is just the beginning of a long string of that which the מגילה calls ונהפך הוא. ונהפך הוא implies that פורים itself is a type of mirror image. So that whatever is happening in terms of עמלק and the enemies of בני ישראל, it is achieved subsequently in a way that is consistent with what בני ישראל is.

What this means is that we need to appreciate and actually understand the events from the point of view of המן, of all people, because he is the one who sets it up and is the one who will give us our insights. המן was drawn to פורים and specifically to its relationship to משה רבנו's death. And apparently he felt that it was because משה רבנו had died that it would be possible for עמלק to prevail over בני ישראל. Now, as we have discovered, משה רבנו had died because of his failure to communicate the קל וחומר of the stone. And this inability to demonstrate the קל וחומר relates directly to המן, to this individual who is ממוכן, because he was someone who was set up, an individual whose entire life was dedicated to a sense of planning, to being able to achieve the destruction of Israel with his own rise to power – and despite that, every last step of his plan turned out to be absolutely essential, but it was all ונהפך הוא, it was all used against him. And in that sense, he ends up discovering that he was indeed working, but he was not the rider – he was the horse, he was putting out the energy but there was someone else who was guiding him. We even found a hint to this in the מגילה in that המן walks in and insists on riding the horse that the king rides.

So, on the surface, we have on the one hand המן, who thinks he can achieve his own ends, and on the other end, we have בני ישראל who believes that ultimately, God's will is going to be achieved in the course of creation. Except, of course, it turns out that המן is there ahead of us again. Because the truth is, that the biggest believers of השגחה פרטית is in fact עמלק. Let's consider the whole meaning of the use of lots. Why is he drawing lots?

ישנו עם אחד אמר רבא ליכא דידע לישנא בישא כהמן אמר ליה תא ניכלינהו
אמר ליה מסתפינא מאלהיו דלא ליעביד בי כדעבד בקמאי אמר ליה ישנו מן
המצות אמר ליה אית בהו רבנן אמר ליה עם אחד הן. (מגילה יג.)

Said Rava: There was no man who could calumniate so well as Haman. He said to the king: Let them be destroyed. And he answered: I am afraid of their God, lest he act toward me as toward others that did evil to Israel. Then Haman replied: They no longer observe their God's commandments. Then the king said: But there are among them rabbis, who observe them. Then he rejoined: They are one people, all are the same, no one observes.

It is obvious that המן took very seriously the whole concept of השגחה פרטית and whether God was going to protect the Jews or not, so it is ridiculous to suggest that the difference between עמלק and the Jews is that one believes in השגחה פרטית while the other doesn't. Because the truth is, it is the exact opposite. The ones who, during פורים, were quoting השגחה פרטית all along, whether in terms of the פור, per se, or in terms with the שמחה of אדר or this discussion between המן and אחשוורוש, were עמלק, not בני ישראל. Obviously, with the ונהפך הוא, this is not the case, but it totally redefines what it is that the ונהפך הוא is telling us, if at the outset, we see a certain commitment to השגחה פרטית on behalf of עמלק.

Let's look into this in a little more detail by reexamining the reason for משה רבנו's death. It wasn't that he struck a stone, because the first time at משא ומריבה, when עמלק originally appears, he does strike the stone and everything is fine. So there is nothing wrong with hitting the stone, per se.²² But even more confounding, what is the practical difference between the two actions – can't one learn from hitting a stone which ends up doing the will of God that one must listen to the word of God? We need to understand the difference between the hitting and the speaking, and that clearly has nothing to do with the question of השגחה פרטית. The main point, then, seems to be, the difference between the need for השגחה פרטית or the direct response of the stone. The difference between hitting and speaking is that hitting suggests the need to impose one's will on something. You are intractable; I am going to bend you to make you do what I want. Speaking, on the other hand, implies that the fact that this is my will is sufficient that this is the way it is going to be without me exercising any interference whatsoever. This is the way I want it and that is sufficient.

If this is the difference, then we get closer to the difference between עמלק and ישראל. Because, consider for a moment that the source of every filthy thing in the world is the belief in the need for השגחה פרטית. This is so because what it is saying is that wherever God is *not* involved in the world and brining down his hand into the world and changing things, that whole area is worthless. And in that area you deal with real טומא, real impurity and darkness. And that is what עמלק set out to do and take advantage of. When they went out to attack בני ישראל, they did not go after everyone, they went after the stragglers:

כל הנחשלים אחריו - חסרי כח מחמת חטאם שהיה הענן פולטן.
(רש"י, דברים כה:יח)

²² Indeed, at the second time, it almost seems like a trap to tell him "Take your staff...", because the first time he was asked specifically to hit the rock!

'All of the weak ones on your tail-end.' The ones who were lacking strength because of their own sins, since the cloud had spit them out.

They went after the people who were not under the purview of God. עמלק says that if you can get the bums, then you have won, because the idea isn't to prove who is stronger. Of course God is stronger. What they want to achieve is the clear-cut recognition that when God is busy doing something then it is worthless to interfere; but where he isn't busy, where he isn't involved, then *there* is a place where people can do as they please. And that's why it is important for המן to say, ישנו עם אחד. He said, of course we know that if God protects the Jews then we have no chance – I am not attempting to attack those people because I am a stern believer in God's השגחה פרטית on the world. But, if I can find an area where God is not present, then let's take advantage of it. Now's he mad at them, they are sleeping, ישנו, גלות, חו. Let's look to exploit this. They have started to build a בהמ"ק, but it has stopped. The seventy years have passed and still no response. There are good grounds to believe that God had forsaken the Jews. And this was exactly what was so great and pleasing to המן. Identifying this idea of a place where God is not present indicated to המן that the more one needs God to interfere in the course of events, the more he is open to the attack of עמלק.

And therefore, the difference between hitting the rock and speaking to the rock is critical to bringing home this crucial difference. It shows that it isn't necessary to bang on things in order to make them work. That if God has created a world that is the embodiment of His will and purpose, then you will be ממוכן just as המן was, without His needing to interfere. And the more you try to work, the more everything that you do will, *ipso facto*, be utilized in precisely the way it is supposed to be going. And that was exactly the point of speaking to the rock. Says God, משה, it isn't necessary to bang on the rock, just speak to it. But the moment that they saw that the rock needs to be banged on, then they lost the whole idea because then they say, if God threatens us or punishes us or insists that he will do so, only then we'll do his will; but, the crucial insight into the nature of reality as being the essence of expressing God's being – that they didn't gain.²³

We see, then, that no matter what one does, everything ends up working out precisely the way things needed to work out. So that in speaking to a stone, you are simply indicating that this is the direction, this is the will and everything is ok. And to make this profound difference between people and objects is wrong, says ישראל to המן. You think that there isn't a distinction, that there is a difference between stones and people and that only "things," which are programmed, end up doing what they have to do because the program forces them. But that's a mistake. Programs don't force you. The idea over here is that Creation determines the nature of existence, that it is going to work out this way. So ישראל says to המן, there is nowhere that you will find נפלטת העין, there is no place that there is something that is not part of what needs to be taken into consideration. So you are wasting your time in trying to outwit it.

²³ Consider Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* series, where this whole idea in terms of psycho-history, that one can look back and figure out that there was no possible way things could have been any other way, is illustrated so well.

This seems to be the way how פּוּרִים brings out the קל וחומר of משה רבנו. Consider the following analogy to illustrate this better. A line of children are waiting to get a vaccination. They all have to get the vaccination. Some children tense up while others accept their fate. So it is announced to the children that everyone, no matter what, will get the vaccination. There is no escaping it. But the ones who fight it will be painfully injected while the others who accept it will get a candy. So that how the child is treated – that's up to him – but nothing is going to change about him receiving a vaccination. And that is what the קל וחומר is trying to bring out. Nothing is going to change. In precisely the same way that stone is going to bring out water, you will think that you are having your way in the world, but in the end, your life is going to work out in the same way as the fate of the stone. And that's what we see from המן. So we see he is the ultimate ממוכן, that everything he is doing is actual, pure existential השגחה – reality of the will of God.

Now the question is, was המן ahead of us on this too? He most certainly was because what he was looking for was פור. He wanted lots. Why would he want these? What do these have to do with anything? To understand where he comes from and what it is that he was looking for, let's use Carl Jung's analysis of coincidental events – what he called *synchronicity*, the temporally coincident occurrences of acausal events. Put plainly, synchronicity is the experience of two or more occurrences (beyond coincidentally) in a manner that is logically meaningful – but inexplicable – to the person or persons experiencing them. It differs from mere coincidence in that synchronicity implies not just a happenstance, but an underlying pattern or dynamic that is being expressed through meaningful relationships or events. So perhaps, this is what המן was interested in. He didn't want specific information; but, he said, I am not naive enough to fight against the general tendencies of the world, so my אחד עם argument is for people like אַחְשֶׁרֶזֶשׁ but for me, I will use a lottery. Let's see the way things are proceeding in life and if it looks like a good idea then we'll do it. Therefore, when things came out in אדר, he said that's great, this is a great time to wipe out the Jews because משה רבנו also died during the month – synchronicity.



צניעות and myrtles – אסתר

Let's turn our attention now to אסתר. Now the truth is, already in רפידים, the first appearance of עמלק versus Yisrael, there is already a רמז to פּוּרִים, because it says there, ²⁴ *כתב זאת זכרון בספר*. So the גמרא explains ²⁵ that this is a רמז to אסתר.

²⁴ שמות יז: יד

²⁵ See:

אמר רב שמואל בר יהודה: שלחה להם אסתר לחכמים: קבעוני לדורות! שלחו לה: קנאה את מעוררת עלינו לבין האומות. שלחה להם: כבר כתובה אני על דברי הימים למלכי מדי ופרס. רב ורב חנינא ורבי יוחנן ורב חביבא מתנו. בכוליה סדר מועד כל כי האי זוגא חלופי רבי יוחנן ומעיל רבי יונתן: שלחה להם אסתר לחכמים: כתבוני לדורות. שלחו לה: (משלי כ"ב) הלא כתבתי לך שלישים, שלישים ולא רבעים. עד שמצאו לו מקרא כתוב בתורה (שמות י"ז) כתב זאת זכרון בספר, כתב זאת - מה שכתוב כאן ובמשנה תורה, זכרון - מה שכתוב בנביאים, בספר - מה שכתוב במגילה. כתנאי: כתב זאת - מה שכתוב כאן, זכרון - מה שכתוב במשנה תורה, בספר - מה שכתוב בנביאים, דברי רבי יהושע. רבי אלעזר המודעי אומר: כתב זאת - מה שכתוב כאן ובמשנה תורה, זכרון - מה שכתוב בנביאים, בספר - מה שכתוב במגילה (מגילה ז).

Apparently, then, at that moment where רפידים first arrives, there is already a רמז to אסתר. Indeed, there is even a more direct relationship. The זכרון here is also a reference to our מצוה of עמלק את זכר עמלק.²⁶ So, it would appear that the issue of memory and permanence has something to do with the very basis of what עמלק did. In other words, in the same way that we found that פורים will never be forgotten²⁷ – the זכור will never disappear – it can't be coincidental that we also have a מצוה of זכור specifically in that issue of פורים, or that the way פורים is remembered is through a בספר בזכרון. So that there must be something essential about the connection between זכירה and that which עמלק did and that all somehow relates to אסתר as well. As if to say, that part of the fashion by which we destroy עמלק is in fact the act of זכירה itself and that אסתר somehow engaged in this act.

Might there be some connection between this and the קיימו וקבלו we discussed above? In the תוש"פ of קבלה, there is something special about זכירה. After all, the essence of תוש"פ is that you must *remember* it, that's what בעל פה means. Even the מוצה of עמלק is זכרת עמלק – you must *speaking* it out.²⁸ In fact, very central things having to do with memory are discussed in מסכת מגילה. מנצפ"ך was forgotten, תרגום was forgotten, לא-גסוף מזרעם, נזכרם לא-גסוף מזרעם. So, memory per se has something to do with פורים. Which is striking, because this time was the only time that we ended up *writing* a book of שבכתב. It's weird in that we turned something that was a מצוה of זכירה into something that was written down. But maybe in that there is another, deeper relationship to יום הכפורים, because that was the day when the second לוחות were given.²⁹ And the לוחות have everything to do with שכחה. For example, one has to continue to give כבוד זקן because the לוחות and שברי לוחות were both placed in the ארון.³⁰ This may not seem relevant, but as says ערובין in הלכות, if the לוחות were not broken, there would never be any forgetting:

ואמר רבי (אליעזר) (מסורת הש"ס: [אלעזר]) מאי דכתיב (שמות לב: טז) חרות על הלחת - אלמלי לא נשתברו לוחות הראשונות לא נשתכחה תורה מישראל. רב אחא בר יעקב אמר: אין כל אומה ולשון שולטת בהן, שנאמר חרות אל תיקרי חרות אלא חירות. (עירובין נד.)

And R. Elazar said: Why is it written 'hewn on the tablets?' Had the first set of tablets not been destroyed, the Torah would not be forgotten by

²⁶ The מצוה of עמלק את זכר עמלק is a special מצוה. It does not mean that we should remember to do מחיה. Rather, if you see the מצוה as discussed by רמב"ם, he discusses the מחיה before even discussing the זכור:

להכרית זרעו של עמלק, שנאמר "תמחה את זכר עמלק" (דברים כה: יט). לזכור מה שעשה עמלק תמיד, שנאמר "זכור, את אשר עשה לך עמלק" (דברים כה: יז) (ספר המצוות, קפח-ט)

זכור is a special מצוה – we are to remember what it is that עמלק did. This is unusual, because there is a certain level of paradox in the מצוה, as we'll see later on. We are supposed to be עמלק את זכר עמלק, wipe out the memory of עמלק. And then the תורה tells us remember עמלק. If we didn't remember them, there would be no need to wipe them out.

²⁷ נזכרם, לא-גסוף מזרעם

²⁸ מגילה

²⁹ See note 8 above.

³⁰ See:

כדאמר להו רבי יהושע בן לוי לבניה: אשלימו פרשיותיכו עם הצבור שנים מקרא ואחד תרגום, והזהרו בורידין כרבי יהודה; דתנן; רבי יהודה אומר: עד שישחוט את הורידין; והזהרו בזקן ששכח תלמודו מחמת אונסו, דאמרינן: לוחות ושברי לוחות מונחות בארון. (ברכות ח:)

Yisrael. R. Acha b. Yaakov said: it means that no nation or peoples could rule over them, as it says 'hewn' which should be read as 'free' (a pun on the word hewn) not 'hewn.'

לוחות, then, comes with breaking of ³¹.

The whole issue of עמלק's coming (as said, אין כל אומה ולשון שולטת בהן, if not for that breaking) is related to the breaking of the לוחות. There is a מדרש תנחומא that explains why the לוחות were broken. The first time that the תורה was given, it was done so publicly, with fanfare. But the second time, after the לוחות were broken, the תורה was given only to משה רבנו privately, בצניעות:

הלוחות ראשונות על שנתנו בפומבי לפיכך שלטה בהם עין הרע ונשתברו וכאן א"ל הקב"ה אין לך יפה מן הצניעות שנאמר (מיכה ו:ח) ומה ה' דורש ממך כי אם עשה משפט ואהבת חסד והצנע לכת. (מדרש תנחומא (ורשא) פרשת כי תשא סימן לא).

The first set of tablets, because they were presented publicly, an evil eye rested on them and they were broken. Here (at the giving of the second set) the Holy One, blessed is he, said to [Moshe] there is nothing better than modesty, 'what does God expect from you? Only to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk modestly.'

Now it so happens that the paradigm of צניעות occurs on פורים – אסתר. The essence of צניעות is embodied in אסתר, and that she is the culmination of generations of selective breeding for צניעות.

בשכר צניעות שהי' בה ברחל זכתה ויצא ממנה שאול ובשכר צניעות שהיה בו בשאול זכה ויצאת ממנו אסתר (מגילה יג:)

As a reward for the modesty demonstrated by Rachel, she merited having Shaul as a descendent; as a reward for the modesty demonstrated by Shaul, he merited having Esther as a descendent.

³¹ And this is not just for תורה. The מדרש says the breaking of לוחות introduced mortality into the world, and the יצה"ר. And, as it explains in ערובין, no one would have ruled over us. So forgetting has a lot to do with death. Forgetting leaves us partially alive because we don't have a complete relationship with what it is we are. If יצה"ר and מלך המוות and שולט over us, then we're not completely there. Those things which ought to live on don't – loss of memory is a small death. So שכח here doesn't mean you won't have good memories, it's a totally different relationship to memory overall. It means that we no longer view our lives as being completely alive. The moments of our lives can disappear into a black hole as if they never were. That is a small death. This may have something to do with the fact that breaking of the לוחות are associated with עמלק. And this might be because when כלל ישראל came to be מקבל the תורה, they left רפידים and came to סני. In any event, the point clearly is that if it hadn't been for the destruction of the לוחות, there would have been no way that עמלק could be שולט over us ever again, as the גמרא showed – אין כל אומה ולשון שולטת בהן. Another consideration are the עדיים that allowed כלל ישראל to be שולט over every nation that came. The מדרש says that the עדיים were swords that enabled them to always destroy enemies. ראשית גוים. עדי – עידי אבד. This is the only other time that we see this לשון of עדי. עמלק, ואחריתו עדי אבד. Which has the double hint of being the acronym for עד דלא ידע!

What we're talking about here is a woman who represents the height of a whole idea of צניעות, which begins with the אומה – רחל, and reaches its height with אסתר. Now, if the thing that went wrong with the לחות is the fact that they were given שלא בצניעות, and that the only way we can have לחות שניים is through צניעות, then it would seem that אסתר actually makes it possible to have a תורה where we will still forget, a תורה which demands a completely different relationship to תושׁי״פ. Our relationship to לחות שניים is different than that with the first לחות. Originally, the תורה was essentially our own meeting with ה', and a continuous revelation with משה רבנו. The לחות שניים meant that first of all, we did not meet ה', he didn't speak directly to us and second, we don't remember it, we learn it and forget it. And it demands not a continuous revelation but a connection to תורה שבעל פה and where we need understand things on our own.

צניעות is profoundly connected to ideas of צניעות. First of all, her name implies צניעות. There is a מחלוקת in the גמרא as to what her name really was, אסתר or הדסה. If הדסה was her name, then she was called אסתר, from the root סתר, meaning *hidden*, because she constantly hid herself and her origins. If her real name was אסתר, she was called הדסה because she is like the צדיקים who are ההדסים, amongst the myrtles. But the thing that is unique and important about the הדס, so important that if it doesn't have this particular quality it is not kosher for סכות, is that its leaves have to completely cover the עץ. That is, it has to be something which is totally covered so that the stem is not exposed. So her name already implies a sense of צניעות and הסתיר.

But this is also expressed in everything that she did. She refused to say who she was. And as the גמרא explains it, this made אחשורוש agitated. So מרדכי suggested to him that he have a second pageant and select another woman, which should get אסתר to talk. But this was to no avail – she still refused to say who she was. And he gives presents and a tax break in her honor, and she still refuses to say who she was. Even when she initially came out to see the king, לא בקשה דבר, she didn't ask for anything. She is the essence of צניעות. The woman who is so central to this story, then, has everything to do with the concept of זכרון and שכחה. The שכחה which comes because of the loss of צניעות at the time of the ראשונות is somehow made up for by an אסתר who is very צנוע. Yet she is the one that turned this זכרון into תורה שבכתב, because the חכמים didn't even want to write it down. She insisted that the story be written down forever:

אמר רב שמואל בר יהודה: שלחה להם אסתר לחכמים: קבעוני לדורות! שלחו לה: קנאה את מעוררת עלינו לבין האומות. שלחה להם: כבר כתובה אני על דברי הימים למלכי מדי ופרס. רב ורב חנינא ורבי יוחנן ורב חביבא מתנו. בכוליה סדר מועד כל כי האי זוגא חלופי רבי יוחנן ומעיל רבי יונתן: שלחה להם אסתר לחכמים: כתבונא לדורות. שלחו לה: (משלי כ"ב: כ) הלא כתבתי לך שלישים, שלישים ולא רבעים. עד שמצאו לו מקרא כתוב בתורה (שמות י"ז: יד) כתב זאת זכרון בספר, כתב זאת - מה שכתוב כאן ובמשנה תורה, זכרון - מה שכתוב בנביאים, בספר - מה שכתוב במגילה. כתנאי: כתב זאת - מה שכתוב כאן, זכרון - מה שכתוב במשנה תורה, בספר - מה שכתוב בנביאים, דברי רבי יהושע. רבי אלעזר המודעי אומר: כתב זאת - מה שכתוב כאן ובמשנה תורה, זכרון - מה שכתוב בנביאים, בספר - מה שכתוב במגילה (מגילה ז).

Said R. Shmuele b. Yehudah: Esther sent to the sages – 'Establish me for the generations!' They replied to her, 'You are going to engender a certain amount of jealousy amongst the nations.' She retorted, 'I'm already written about in the Persian and Median history books.' Rav, R. Chanina, R. Yochanan and R. Chanina from Tanu, (throughout the Order of Mo'ed when referring to this group, change R. Yochanan to R. Yonatan) said Esther said to the sages, 'Write me up for the ages!' They responded to her, 'have I not written about you as a trilogy?' A trilogy and not four parts. (This was their contention until) they identified a passage written in the Torah, 'Write this as a memory in a book' 'Write this' refers to this and that which is written in Deuteronomy, 'a memory' refers to that which is written in the prophets and 'in a book' refers to the Megillah. Like the Tanaitic argument, 'Write this' refers to that which is written here, 'a memory' refers to that which is written in Deuteronomy and 'in a book' refers to that which is written in the Prophets. These are the words of R. Yehoshua. R. Elazar the Modainite says, 'Write this' refers to this and that which is written in Deuteronomy, 'a memory' refers to that which is written in the prophets and 'in a book' refers to the Megillah.

Even more so, אסתר was נישאת חן, she comported herself with a natural ingenuousness and amiability. As the gemara teaches, anyone who met אסתר was convinced that she was the girl next door. What this implies is a tremendous amount of flowing with whomever she meets. Everyone believes אסתר is whatever he wants her to be, and that's what she becomes. Even more so, with respect to אחשורוש, at times he perceived her as an experienced woman and at others an innocent maiden:

ויאהב המלך את אסתר מכל הנשים ותשא חן וחסד לפניו מכל הבתולות. אמר רב: ביקש לטעום טעם בתולה - טעם, טעם בעולה - טעם. (מגילה יג.)

'And the king loved Esther more than any of the other woman and she carried a certain favor and kindness over the other virgins.' Said Rav: When he wanted to have the [sexual] experience of a virgin, he did; when he wanted the [sexual] experience of an experienced woman, he did.

Basically she was whatever אחשורוש imagined her to be. She was malleable – became what anyone wanted her to be. She had a total lack of assertiveness and simply became whatever her environment demanded of her.

Moreover, it is significant that it is particularly a woman who comes to undo the damage of the שכחה that is caused by עמלק. This is curious because if the מצוה is for memory, זכור, then it is odd that a נקבה who accomplishes that. For there seems to be an important but mysterious connection between זכור and זכוּר, as the גמרא relates:

רב דימי מנהרדעא אמר: מותבין דדייק ולא גריס, שבשתא כיון דעל - על; דכתיב: (מלכים א' י"א: טז) כי ששת חדשים ישב שם יואב וכל ישראל עד הכרית כל זכר באדום, כי אתא לקמיה דדוד, אמר ליה: מאי טעמא עבדת הכי?

אמר ליה, דכתיב: תמחה את זכר עמלק. אמר ליה: והא אנן זכר קרינן! א"ל: אנא זכר אקריון. אזל שייליה לרביה, אמר ליה: היאך אקריתן? אמר ליה: זכר. (בבא בתרא כא.)

R. Dimi from Nehardea on the other hand said that we appoint the one who goes slowly but makes no mistakes, for once a mistake is implanted it cannot be eradicated. This can be shown from the Scripture. It is written, For Joab and all Israel remained there until he had cut off every male in Edom. When Joab came before David, the latter said to him: Why have you acted thus [i.e. killed only the males]? He replied: Because it is written, Thou shalt blot out the males [zekar] of Amalek. Said David: But we read, the remembrance [zeker] of Amalek? He replied: I was taught to read zekar. He [Joab] then went to his teacher and asked: How didst thou teach me to read? He replied: Zeker.

It certainly seems that they are related on some level. And the reason this is particularly significant is because עמלק were the definitive male chauvinists. In דברים, we are provided with insight as to how עמלק interacts and conducts its warfare, and רש"י gives three interpretations regarding these actions, all having something to do with maleness:

זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק בדרך בצאתכם ממצרים: אשר קרך בדרך ויזנב בך כל הנחשלים אחריך ואתה עיף ויגע ולא ירא אלהים: והיה בהניח ה' אלהיך לך מכל איביך מסביב בארץ אשר ה' אלהיך נתן לך נחלה לרשתה תמחה את זכר עמלק מתחת השמים לא תשכח (דברים כה: יז- יט)

Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came forth out of Egypt; how he happened upon you on the way, and smote the hindmost of you, all that were enfeebled in thy rear, when you were faint and weary; and he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord your God has given you rest from all of your enemies around you, in the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance to possess it, that you shall wipe out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; you shalt not forget.

רש"י:

אשר קרך בדרך - לשון מקרה.

דבר אחר לשון קרי וטומאה, שהיה מטמאן במשכב זכור.

דבר אחר לשון קור וחוס, צננך והפשירך מרתיחתך, שהיו כל האומות יראים להלחם בכם ובא זה והתחיל והראה מקום לאחרים. משל לאמבטי רותחת שאין כל בריה יכולה לירד בתוכה, בא בן בליעל אחד קפץ וירד לתוכה. אף על פי שנכוה, הקרה אותה בפני אחרים:

ויזנב בך - מכת זנב, חותך מילות וזורק כלפי מעלה:

קרי, male seminal emission, טומאה – קרי

male oriented, even in terms of their homosexual relationships. – משכב זכור

“tales”, the literal meaning of the Latin *penis*. “Cut and threw them to heavens.” – מכת זנב

Everything עמלק does³² is associated with maleness. So it is somewhat ironic that ultimately, it is a נקבה who pays them back.³³ All of this indicates some kind of זכור association.

Also related to this is the nature of the entire story, which, to a great extent, revolves around the degradation of women. First, this business of המן who sends out these letters that say that the man should be the master of the home.³⁴ But even more so are the actions and attitudes of אחשורוש:

ביום השביעי כטוב לב המלך ביין אטו עד השתא לא טב לביה בחמרא אמר רבא יום השביעי שבת היה שישראל אוכלין ושותין מתחילין בד"ת ובדברי תשבחות אבל אומות העולם שאוכלין ושותין אין מתחילין אלא בדברי תיפלות וכן בסעודתו של אותו רשע הללו אומרים מדיות נאות והללו אומרים פרסיות נאות אמר להם אחשורוש כלי שאני משתמש בו אינו לא מדיי ולא פרסי אלא כשדיי (מגילה יב:)

'On the seventh day when the king's heart was glad with wine...' only at this point was he drunk with wine? Said Rava, the seventh day was Shabbat, when all of Israel eat, drink, engage in words of Torah and praise. The other nations, however, though they eat and drink, they only engage in frivolous words and so was the [feast] for that particular wicked man. These would say the Maddai women are the prettiest, and these would say the Persian women are the prettiest until Achashveirosh got up and said the vessel I fool around with is neither a Maddain or Persian, but a Casdian and she is the finest!

אסתר dreams of having a person who is a כלי, a vessel for his use, and אחשורוש played this role.³⁵

³² Consider again the גמרא in חולין המן. המן comes from העץ. This is a weird location to find המן, but the implication is that המן himself has something to do with the roots of all of our problems because he goes all the way back to our eating of the fruit from the עץ הדעת. Now, you'll notice there is a very curious parallel to the elements of the story of פורים to the story of גן עדן. First of all, women play a central role in both, particularly naked women. Wine is a factor at the party of אחשורוש and the fruit of the tree was a grape. Then, there is the curious connections relating to clothing. Clothing plays a continuous part as well. אסתר's clothes, all the women's outfits, מרדכי's clothes, wearing the kings clothes and back in גן עדן, the lack of clothes is an issue they were naked and not ashamed. So let's examine this relationship further. Originally, in גן עדן, a lot of the problems come about because of what a woman did that eventually destroyed that world. Now consider the incredible stress of women from beginning to end in פורים. From ושת, the beauty pageants to אסתר. So that we have a pattern of coming from העץ המן – גן עדן – and everything that comes out of the actions of one woman to a תקון that comes about through a woman. Finally, the snake's sin is identified as הרע לשון הרע and the גמרא indicates that no one spoke as harshly as המן, so we see that these issues are curiously interrelated, particularly the dynamic of maleness vs. femaleness.

³³ Note the further irony in how שמואל eventually kills אגג:

ר' יצחק אמר סירסו כאשר שיכלה נשים חרבך כך / כן, תשכל מנשים אמך (שמואל א' ט"ו), אמר לו כשם שעשית לישראל במצרים כך עשיתי לך (שהייתי) מסרס אותם ומושיב את נשיהם עגונות. (פסיקתא רבתי (איש שלום) פרשה יב ד"ה זכור אמר)

³⁴ אסתר says people laughed and said, if he needs to send a letter, apparently he has own difficulties at home.

³⁵ This is why אסתר was so scared to go in and make a request, because if she did so, then she would have been seen as manipulative all along. It wasn't just some sort of fairy tale like scene of "oh no, I'm scared to go to the king!"

So, in terms of male/female stereotypes, we can possibly say that עמלק is very male, very זכר oriented, like the rider of the horse, taking an aggressive stand, trying to move history into the direction they want, to get to go the way they want – this is a very male trait. And on the other hand, we can say that אסתר in her צניעות is very נקבה oriented, she allows things to flow and is unaggressive.

The only problem with this characterization, of course, is that the whole end of the story is the exact opposite. אסתר, who went out of her way to look so dependent on people, so dependent on מרדכי that he had to nurse her,³⁶ so dependent on אחשורוש, she did a complete turn around. Little by little she becomes more aggressive. She tells מרדכי that כלל ישראל need to fast. מרדכי pleads that פסח is in the way. She says, never mind just listen. Then she tells אחשורוש what she wants. Then she argues with the חכמים that she wants the story to be written.³⁷ She does everything. She has all of כלל ישראל fasting for her – not that they be saved, but for her (צומו עלי). This is not the אסתר from the beginning. So, it seems that to understand her צניעות and her victory in terms of צניעות as “unassertive” is completely wrong. There is also another problem to assume that the idea of פורים is to be unassertive and to not be aggressive, then we would have been left with the impossible situation: because one of the difficulties of the קיי of משה רבנו is that you can ask yourself what is the point of doing anything. That is, if everything is supposed to work out and everything is programmed, then what is the significance of human action? Why bother? Just be careful not to go to גהינם and get עוה”ב and that’s it. But Purim insisted that the opposite was true, and that she needed to act! It’s not that אסתר was willing to go along with things and it didn’t matter, because then פורים would mean the exact opposite of what it is supposed to mean.

In fact, we need to reorganize our thinking to understand what צניעות really is.

בשכר צניעות שהי' בה ברחל זכתה ויצא ממנה שאול ובשכר צניעות שהיה בו בשאול זכה ויצאת ממנו אסתר ומאי צניעות היתה בה ברחל דכתיב (בראשית כט: יב) ויגד יעקב לרחל כי אחי אביה הוא וכי אחי אביה הוא והלא בן אחות אביה הוא אלא אמר לה מינסבא לי אמרה ליה אין מיהו אבא רמאה הוא ולא יכלת ליה אמר לה אחיו אנא ברמאות אמרה ליה ומי שרי לצדיקי לסגויי ברמיותא אמר לה אין (שמואל ב כב: כז) עם נבר תתבר ועם עקש תתפל אמר לה ומאי רמיותא אמרה ליה אית לי אחתא דקשישא מינאי ולא מנסיב לי מקמה מסר לה סימנים כי מטא ליליא אמרה השתא מיכספא אחתאי מסרתינהו ניהלה והיינו דכתיב (בראשית כט: כה) ויהי בבקר והנה היא לאה מכלל דעד השתא לאו לאה היא אלא מתוך סימנין שמסרה רחל ללאה לא הוה ידע עד השתא לפיכך זכתה ויצא ממנה (מגילה יג:)

...What example do we have of Rachel's modesty? ...[When Yaakov proposed to Rachel she warned him of her father's deceit.] About what will he attempt to cheat me?" asked Yaakov? 'I have an older sister' she answered, "and he will not marry me off before her.' Yaakov provided her with passwords to ensure her identity. When the wedding night arrived

³⁶ ויהי אמן את הדסה

³⁷ See note 25 above.

[and Leah was substituted for Rachel], Rachel exclaimed that, 'now my sister will be shamed!' So she gave over the passwords to Leah...

What do the סימנים have to do with the צניעות? Explains רש"י that the giving over the signs was the צניעות. Because if she hadn't given over the סימנים, then everyone would have found out that רחל gave יעקב the סימנים. So, it was an expression of צניעות because she did not want it public knowledge that יעקב had given her passwords. What this is saying is that צניעות is related to exposure – רחל did not want her intimate relationship exposed. Not because she was embarrassed by it, but because it's too meaningful to be exposed. Just like when we have something important that we care about. We don't discuss it in public because if there are those who won't appreciate it, then it cheapens it if we were to share. The idea of צניעות is the sensitivity to the specific and personal, the sense of vulnerability of things that mean a lot to us. צניעות, then, is the notion of not sharing those things that are especially yours, especially unique, except to people who especially care.

Indeed, this may have to do with the way אסתר manipulates things for מרדכי. אסתר is the person we celebrate for doing all these things for כלל ישראל. Yet when מרדכי tells her to act, she tells him that she's worried. But what does מרדכי say to her? He essentially tells her what she wants him to say. What she explains to him is that if he thinks that survival of Yisrael depends on her success to succeed to go into the king, then she can't do it for him. She must hear from מרדכי that he and כלל ישראל accept that she isn't needed! – רון והצלה יעמוד ליהודים ממקום אחר. ומי ידע. Who knows, maybe this was the whole point of you becoming the queen in the first place. What does this mean? If he's saying this is your mission in life and that's why ה' put you here to save ישראל, then that's what he should have said. Why does he say that things will work out just fine without you, that רון והצלה יעמוד ליהודים ממקום אחר? Because he is explaining to her the idea of את ובית אביך תאבדו. In other words, she could tell him, מרדכי, if you truly believe רון, then let someone else do it, let המן just get a heart attack or be crushed by a falling piano. Why are you telling me תאבדו if I don't go in? What מרדכי is telling her is that this whole thing is crazy when you think about it, unless this is a moment designed especially for you. Everything has conspired to give you a *personal* opportunity to act in a particular situation. And if you don't act and seize that opportunity, then you're destroying yourself. So that means your whole sense of צניעות, your whole unwillingness to be exposed except at the moment, for the instant, and for that relationship that demands exposure – this is that instant. There is a moment that it is all for. And in these words, we touch upon the difference between maleness and femaleness.

The primary difference between male and female with respect to the mode of reproduction is in the very meaning of the words – נקבה עלי שחר. נקבע it. קובע means daughter. It's the name of a measurement and it means to stay over in one place. The difference between a male and female is that a male takes chances with reproduction. He doesn't have a particular cell that will reproduce. He takes chances with millions of possible cells that could reproduce, whereas a נקבה is קבוע, there's precisely that particular ovum or ova that may now be fertilized. The זכר, by definition, engages in wastefulness. As a matter of fact, the קרך בדרך, the word קרי, which is used for wasted semen, is also based on the word, as מקרה, which means "chance," because all of male reproduction is based on chance and

wastefulness. צניעות's אסתר is the idea that there is an instant and a point in which things make sense. The whole idea of the עמלק approach to things is what's the difference, things are מקרה. Things aren't meant to make sense, things work out, if they do, they do; if they don't, they don't – it's a world of chance. In that sense, the whole עמלק approach is different. As רש"י also says, קרד is a לשון of קר, cold, that there is a coldness in a world that doesn't care. When things don't make any difference in how it is they occur. This idea of מקרה is very much the opposite of צניעות. When things matter and they are particularly mine, they demand the protection of צניעות for they are unique and precious. When they don't make any difference anyway, and wastage is of no meaning, then they are קרי, מקרה, טמא.

מקרה – the world's greatest expert in בלעם

Now it happens to be that in this idea, עמלק is helped by the world's greatest expert in מקרה – בלעם. The מדרש says that עמלק went to בלעם who asked what it is they should do about ישראל. בלעם discovered that God acts arbitrarily.

ואמר רבי יוחנן משום רבי יוסי: מנין שאין מרצין לו לאדם בשעת כעסו - דכתיב: (שמות לג: יד) פני ילכו והנחתי לך; אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה: המתן לי עד שיעברו פנים של זעם ואניח לך. ומי איכא רתחא קמיה דקודשא בריך הוא? - אין, דתניא: (תהלים ז: יב) ואל זועם בכל יום. וכמה זעמו? - רגע. וכמה רגע? - אחד מחמשת רבוא ושמונת אלפים ושמנה מאות ושמנים ושמנה בשעה, וזו היא רגע, ואין כל בריה יכולה לכזין אותה שעה, חוץ מבלעם הרשע, דכתיב ביה: (במדבר כד: טז) ויודע דעת עליון. השתא דעת בהמתו לא הוה ידע - דעת עליון הוה ידע? אלא: מלמד, שהיה יודע לכזין אותה שעה שהקדוש ברוך הוא כועס בה, והיינו דאמר להו נביא לישראל: (מיכה ו: ג) עמי זכר - נא מה - יעץ בלק מלך מואב וגו'. מאי (מיכה ו: ה) למען דעת צדקות ה'? אמר רבי אלעזר: אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא לישראל: דעו כמה צדקות עשיתי עמכם שלא כעסתי בימי בלעם הרשע, שאלמלי כעסתי - לא נשתיר משונאיהם של ישראל שריד ופליט; והיינו דקאמר ליה בלעם לבלק: (במדבר כג: ח) מה אקב לא קבה אל ומה אזעם לא זעם ה', מלמד, שכל אותן הימים לא זעם. וכמה זעמו? - רגע. וכמה רגע? - אמר רבי אבין ואיתימא רבי אבינא: רגע כמימריה. ומנא לן דרגע רתח? - שנאמר: (תהלים לו: א) כי רגע באפו חיים ברצונו. ואי בעית אימא, מהכא: (ישעיהו כו) חבי כמעט רגע עד יעבר זעם. (ברכות ז.)

R. Yochanan further said in the name of R. Yosi: How do you know that we must not try to placate a man in the time of his anger? For it is written: My face will go and I will give thee rest. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moshe: Wait until my countenance of wrath passes away and then I shall give you rest. But is anger then a mood of the Holy One, blessed be He? — Yes. For it has been taught: A God that has indignation every day. And how long does this indignation last? One moment. And how long is one moment? One fifty-eight thousand eight hundred and eighty-eighth part of an hour. And no creature has ever been able to fix precisely this moment except the wicked Balaam, of whom it is written: He knows the knowledge of the Most High. Now, he did not even know the mind of his animal; how then could he know the mind of the Most High? The meaning is, therefore, only that he knew

how to fix precisely this moment in which the Holy One, blessed be He, is angry. And this is just what the prophet said to Israel: O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab devised, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him ... that you may know the righteous acts of the Lord. What means 'That ye may know the righteous acts of the Lord'? — R. Eleazar says: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: See now, how many righteous acts I performed for you in not being angry in the days of the wicked Balaam. For had I been angry, not one remnant would have been left of the enemies of Israel. And this too is the meaning of what Balaam said to Balak: How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? And how shall I execrate, whom the Lord hath not execrated? This teaches us that He was not angry all these days. And how long does His anger last? One moment. And how long is one moment? R. Abin (some say R. Abina) says: As long as it takes to say Rega'. And how do you know that He is angry one moment? For it is said: For His anger is but for a moment [rega'], His favor is for a lifetime. Or if you prefer you may infer it from the following verse: Hide thyself for a little moment until the indignation be overpast.

בלעם found that there are certain moments when ה' gets angry for no reason whatsoever, "just because." And בלעם could hone in on and sense these moments and exploit them to get ה' to do as he wished. So he waited until such a moment and cursed, and got ה' to do as he desired. So the תורה says that בלעם becomes שתום העין, he becomes blinded. Now why is this so?

דרש רבי אבהו: מאי דכתיב (במדבר כג:י) מי מנה עפר יעקב ומספר את רובע ישראל - מלמד שהקב"ה יושב וסופר את רביעיותיהם של ישראל, מתי תבא טיפה שהצדיק נוצר הימנה. ועל דבר זה נסמית עינו של בלעם הרשע, אמר: מי שהוא טהור וקדוש, ומשרתיו טהורים וקדושים יציץ בדבר זה? מיד נסמית עינו, דכתיב (במדבר כד:טו) נאם הגבר שתום העין. והיינו דאמר רבי יוחנן: מאי דכתיב (בראשית ל:טז) וישכב עמה בלילה הוא - מלמד שהקב"ה סייע באותו מעשה, שנאמר (בראשית מ"ט: יד) ישכר חמור גרם - חמור גרם לו לישכר. (גדה דף לא.)

R. Abbahu also gave this exposition: What is the implication of the text, 'Who has counted the dust of Jacob, or numbered the stock of Israel?' It teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, sits and counts the semen of Israel. 'When [He wonders] will appear the drop from which a righteous man could be fashioned?' Moreover, it is for this reason that the eye of the wicked Balaam was blinded. He said, 'Would He who is pure and holy and whose ministers are pure and holy look upon such a thing?' His eye was forthwith blinded, for it is written, And the saying of the man whose eye is closed. This is in line with what R. Yochanan stated: What is the implication of the text, And he lay with her in that night? It teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, assisted in that matter. For it is said, Issachar is a large-boned ass; it is the ass that has caused the birth of Issachar.

Because the גמרא explains, בלעם was told that ה' sits and waits, as it says מי מנה עפר ישראל because he's interested in knowing who the צדיק is. So בלעם wonders, someone who is so holy and pure should he be involved in such things? Immediately he became blind! Clearly, what we have over here is a description of a world based on מקרה. That unless ה' goes out of his way to make things work, they don't work and those meaningless moments can be taken advantage of. The whole idea of פורים and the whole idea of ק"י, is that ה' does not "go out of His way" to *make* anything work – God created a world that works. And that in the same way the sun comes up, you are going to do what precisely needs to be done as well. Now this means that there is in fact מקרה in the world but it doesn't make it less, it makes it more....



With this introduction of the central players and concepts of Purim, we conclude Part One of these Purim SpiralNotes. To be continued...

¹ Megilla, 1a