

Purim and The Hidden Agenda

As we approach Purim each year, we sometimes do so in the same exact manner as in previous years; we approach it with no new thoughts and no new insights. This year I would like for us to approach Purim with perhaps a new perspective. There is a concept known as *Nistar*, being hidden, which is very apropos when discussing Purim and the Megillah. Usually, we discuss the link between Nistar and Purim in the context of costumes and the absence of Hashem's name in the Megillah. However, I would like to approach it from a slightly different angle than we may have in the past, analyzing why we don't recite Hallel on Purim.

While discussing when Hallel should be recited, the Gemara in both Megillah (14a) and Eirachin (10b) asks why we do not recite Hallel on Purim despite the fact that Purim is a commemoration of the Jews being saved throughout the Persian Empire. In both places, the Gemara gives three answers. The first answer, recorded anonymously in Megillah and sourced to Rabbi Yitzchak in Eirachin posits that such salvations merit the recitation of Hallel only if they occur within the confines of Israel, whereas Purim primarily happened in Shushan. Rav Nachman Bar Yitzchak challenges this position by noting that we recite Hallel on Pesach even though the miracle occurred in Egypt. The Gemara defends this position by stating that the rules of where miracles merit Hallel changed after the land of Israel was sanctified during the conquering that began forty years after Yetziat Mitzrayim. Rav Nachman¹ gives a second answer, explaining that the reading of the Megillah is a fulfillment of the recitation of Hallel; his answer reads *Kriyata Zu Halila* (literally "its [the Megillah's] reading is its [Purim's] praise," where Halila is linguistically related to Hallel). Rava gives a third answer, explaining that the salvation of Purim was incomplete, as the Jews did not finish as a sovereign nation but as subjects of the Persian Empire; as such, the salvation is not complete enough to merit the recitation of Hallel.

Rav Yosef Tzvi Rimon in his sefer on Purim (*Halacha MiM'korah, Koren Pub. 2016, pg 191*) writes that really Hallel is not fitting for Purim. Hallel is meant for open and revealed miracles (*Nigleh*). If that is so, then reciting Hallel on a Purim, which at its essence is about God's hidden involvement in the world (*Nistar*), is not the appropriate response. Through reading and studying the Megillah, one will discover the hidden miracles that took place. This is precisely the correct goal of Purim. This fits nicely with what Rav Nachman says. Reciting Hallel and reading the Megillah are fundamentally similar. Both are ways in which we acknowledge Hashem's involvement in the world and thank Him for intervening to save the Jewish people. Both Hallel and the Megillah are forms of Halila that differ only in what type of miracle they address.

¹ Usually, when the Gemara says Rav Nachman without any qualifiers, it is Rav Nachman Bar Yaakov. It is unclear if in this instance it is Rav Nachman Bar Yaakov or Rav Nachman Bar Yitzchak (who challenged the position of Rabbi Yitzchak). Rava, who gives the third answer, is a Talmid of Rav Nachman Bar Yaakov and the teacher of Rav Nachman Bar Yitzchak.

When codifying the Halacha, the Shulchan Aruch (OC 693:3) states that Hallel is not recited on Purim, without giving any reasons.² The Magen Abraham (ibid), Aruch HaShulchan (OC 693:4), and Mishnah Brurah (693:7) give the reason given by Rava.³ We don't recite Hallel because we weren't fully *Ovdei Hashem*; unfortunately, we were still *ovdei Achashveirosh*. Reciting Hallel therefore isn't appropriate as we weren't fully dedicated to Hashem and serving Him.

Now we understand the 'hidden agenda' of Purim and what we can learn from both of these answers. We need to uncover Hashem's presence and make it *Nigleh* and not *Nistar*. We need to say thank you to Hashem and have *hakarat hatov* for all the everyday miracles Hashem does for us. By being *Ovdei Hashem*, we are able to truly express our profound gratitude to Him. When we are constantly *Ovdei Hashem*, we will find that we see Hashem in everything. Through being *Ovdei Hashem*, we finally will have brought to light what Hashem wants from us.
⁴Hashem wants us to return to his Torah, Mitzvot, and Land.

May we be zocheh to uncover and reveal Hashem's *ratzon* in this world, return fully to Hashem, and to be *Ovdei Hashem* and not *ovdei Achashveirosh*!

² In the Beit Yosef he quotes both Rav Nachman's and Rava.

³ The Meiri (Megillah 14a) discusses the practical difference between the explanations of Rav Nachman and Rava.

⁴ Perhaps this is what the Gemara means when it says (Shabbat 88a) '*Kimu v'kiblu mah shekiblu kvar*'.