



Jewish Calendar II Women and Purim Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

The garments of the soul are thought, speech, and action. These activities appear on the outside. We don't really know our core self. We know the core of other people even less, and we certainly cannot comprehend the essence of Hashem. Hashem lets Himself be recognized and addressed through His names. Indeed, the Torah is one long divine name. Every aspect of the Torah reflects Hashem's will in some own way.

In the creation narrative, we read how Hashem created man in His image. Our bodies were given to us so that we could let our will be known. This in turn reflects something of Hashem. Our relationship to Hashem can be expressed in two ways, as symbolized by the hand and the leg. The hand signifies revelation, while the leg, which is usually hidden by clothing, represents concealment. The hand represents the more visible way of doing Hashem's will. The leg, which makes contact with the earth, takes a person where he wants to go.

The hand and leg parallel man and woman in their *avodat Hashem*. Men are like the hands. They give and receive. Women are feet. They bring Hashem into the world. The feminine energy comes in contact with physicality and seeks to elevate it.

Purim was not so much a victory over Haman but a victory over Amalek and idol worship. Amalek is the national personification of doubt that stems from the physical world.

Before creation, Hashem's presence was infinite. He began a process of reducing His presence by creating worlds, until finally he created our world where evil could exist.

Esther, whose name connotes concealment, personified *tzniyut*. Her direct and deep confrontation with the forces of evil

was hidden from the human eye. In contrast, Mordechai's struggle took place in the capital of the nation, in the king's court. His struggle was revealed.

Which is greater, the force of *niglah*-revealed or *nistar*-hidden?

In the physical world, Hashem's Divine Presence is displayed with great grandeur because it's so far from what He is. Lighting a candle in a dark place has more impact than doing the same in a lighted room.

Esther was the candle in a dark place. The first Temple was compared to the sun while the second Temple was likened to the moon. The second Temple had none of the miracles and grandeur of the first. It was built in the merit of our forefather Yitzchak, who was the pillar of prayer. Prayer is hidden and eternal, which are attributes that the second Temple signified.

Originally, the sun and moon were created as equals. The moon purposely diminished itself to demonstrate Hashem's *malchut*, that there is only one king. This is less attractive than *chochma*, the brilliance of knowing and illumination.

We find later in the Torah that the Jewish people are obligated to bring a sin offering on Rosh Chodesh. Rashi quotes the Gemara that says Hashem tells the Jews that He owes them a sin offering for making the moon smaller.

Allowing us to think that something done in a selfless, hidden, way is less attractive than that which is revealed leads to constant tragedies in *avodat Hashem*. The world is meant to be a place where candlelight can be seen specifically where it's darker.

Esther's son, Daryavesh, brought about the building of the second Temple. Externally, the first Temple seemed holier. There was no *aron*, prophecy, or *ruach hakodesh* during the second Temple. We needed to

reach Hashem and perceive His brilliance without light from the outside. Our hearts had to be our *menorah*. In that sense, the second Temple was holier. *Olam haba* is acquired by bringing light into a dark place. From this perspective, Esther's role was as essential as Mordechai's.

The Bnei Yissachar asks why Mordechai commanded Esther to go to Achashveirosh rather than praying for him to just die? Mordechai knew that the Jewish people's attachment to idol worship and superficiality hadn't been totally rectified yet. Therefore Ester had to spend time in Achashveirosh's palace in order to be a living example of bringing light to a dark place. The megilla is called Megillat Esther because she discerned Hashem when He was least revealed.

Women are obligated to hear the megilla. It is their voice. Women function mostly in the world of physicality where Hashem is concealed.

When you hear the word "*Hamelech*" in the megilla you should try to summon up the same inner awe as on Rosh Hashana. On Rosh Hashana Hashem is revealed, while on Purim He is concealed. The Gemara says that originally Mordechai wanted Purim to be a Yom Tov with *issur melacha*. However Esther objected because she saw the importance of elevating the physical acts of feasting and rejoicing as a way of making Hashem King.

We need to remember this in every situation in life where Hashem is concealed. We can reflect Hashem in our life and make him *Melech*.

The *simcha* of Purim is the actualization of freedom. It is showing love to one another and experiencing a higher consciousness towards Hashem. May we merit to feel true *simcha* this Purim.