

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



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Purim-Tetzave

The Mishnah:

Purim is celebrated on the 14th of Adar (in unwalled cities) or on the 15th of Adar (in cities that were fortified since the time of Yehoshua ben Nun). Yet the opening Mishnah of tractate Megillah discusses other valid dates for the reading of the Megillah. “The Megillah is read on the eleventh, on the twelfth, on the thirteenth, on the fourteenth, or on the fifteenth of the month of Adar...” (Megillah 2a)

These earlier dates accommodate those who live in smaller villages, who would travel to larger towns on specific days to supply food and water. These villagers were permitted to advance or delay their hearing of the Megillah to those market days, so they would not have to make another trip to the cities to hear the Megillah. (Megillah 4b)

But why would the Mishnah first enumerate the dates that are mere accommodations (“the eleventh, on the twelfth...”) for the

villagers, and not begin with the day of Purim itself, the fourteenth?

The Basic Explanation:

By enumerating these dates first, the Mishnah means to assert that they are not just non-ideal accommodations for those who cannot hear the Megillah on the “proper date.” Rather, these dates are themselves valid and proper dates for the Megillah to be read. This is evident from the Talmudic discussion which clarifies that it was the Men of the Great Assembly themselves who enacted all the dates for the reading of the Megillah, both the 14th and 15th, and the earlier dates of “accommodation.”

The Deeper Explanation:

This notion, that days which are not considered to be part of the Purim holiday, are nevertheless considered to be legitimate and proper days for reading the Megillah, expresses the essential theme of Purim.

The composition, canonization, and content of Megillas Esther are highly atypical. Unlike

other books of Tanach whose composition was Divinely directed, the Megillah was written and canonized only at Esther's initiative. Also unusual is that the Megillah does not mention the essential name of G-d, or any other diminutive.

Chassidus explains that the absence of G-d's name alludes to the presence of G-d's essence which cannot be articulated or expressed. In the miracle of Purim, G-d was seemingly "hidden" because it was His essential, unknowable self at work.

Thus, the Megillah was not composed by Divine command, nor does it include G-d's name, because it is a communication of His essence which cannot be defined or captured in a Divine name, or in a Divine instruction. The essence of G-d can be found, paradoxically, in a place devoid of illumination, in a place of concealment, in human initiative, and in a text that obscures His name.

This is the spiritual allusion in the opening Mishnah as well: The fortified towns, powerful cities with defined borders, allude to a divine service propelled by the intellect. The larger, urban towns allude to advanced emotional service of G-d. The small, farming village alludes to the hard work of serving G-d out of a sense of commitment, without emotional or intellectual appreciation.

The theme of Purim is that the essence of G-d can be found in the simplicity of the villager's devotion, more than in the sophisticated heart and mind of the urban dwellers.

Thus the Mishnah begins with the reading of the villages on the eleventh of Adar, because it expresses this theme of the relationship between G-d's essence and the unadorned, simple Jewish devotion.

This also relates to parshas Tetzaveh which is sometimes read on the eleventh of Adar, the first possible day for the villagers to read the Megillah.

Tetzaveh is the only portion where Moshe's name does not appear (after his introduction in Shemos). Just like the absence of G-d's name indicates His essence, so, too, the absence of Moshe's name alludes to the fact that his essence is present in this portion. It is through Moshe's essence that he enables the Jewish people to "connect — tzavsa," with G-d.

The above also provides explanation for the relevance between the reading of remembering Amalek on this Shabbos, with the day of the 11th of Adar. The numerical value of the last two letters of G-d's name is 11 [vav (6) hei (5)]. Amalek represents the division between the first two letters of G-d's name which allude to intellect and emotion, and the second half which alludes to practical implementation. Amalek divorces the theoretical from having influence on one's personal life. The answer to Amalek, then, is the service of the villager who reads the Megillah on the "11th." His simple dedication is the response to Amalek's cynicism.
