



Likkutei Sichos

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Light and More Light

Translated by Rabbi Y. Eliezer Danzinger

Edited by Rabbi Eliezer Robbins

A note on the translation: Rounded parentheses and square brackets reflect their use in the original *sichah*; squiggly parentheses are interpolations of the translator or editor. The footnotes in squiggly parentheses in this translation are those of the translators or editors, and do not correspond to the footnotes in the original. Great effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the translation, while at the same time striving for readability. However, the translation carries no official authority. As in all translations, the possibility of inadvertent errors exists. **Your feedback is needed — please send all comments to: info@projectlikkuteisichos.org**

1.

THE STORY OF ESTHER: INCREMENTAL RECOGNITION

In tractate *Megillah*, the Talmud relates:¹ “Esther petitioned the Sages: Establish me for posterity.” Meaning, Esther asked the Sages to designate the fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar “as a festival on which to read {the story}, לקריי, for my renown.”²

Then the Talmud relates a different teaching on this subject: “Esther asked the Sages: **Record** me {my story} for posterity.” Esther requested that they **write** the *Megillah*, which was called by her name, and to include this written account “in the sacred Writings.”³

In other words,⁴ at the outset she asked only to “establish me for posterity” — “as a festival on which to read {the story}.” That is, the story of Purim should be recounted every year but not necessarily read from a sacred text {in the biblical canon}.⁵ Later, she asked that the *Megillah* should be recorded for future generations and be incorporated into *Kesuvim*.⁶ Therefore, we were obligated to read the *Megillah* from a written scroll, “and one who recounts the narrative from memory {even verbatim} does **not** discharge his obligation.”⁷

2.

ESTABLISHING PURIM AS A HOLIDAY

In the Talmud *Yerushalmi*,⁸ it says: “Mordechai and Esther sent a message to the Rabbis. They {Mordechai and Esther} asked the Rabbis, “Take it upon yourselves to establish these two days, every year...” In other

¹ 7a.

² Ibid, Rashi ad loc, s.v. “קבעוני.”

³ Rashi on *Esther* 9:32; see *Chidushei Aggados* of the *Maharsha*, ad loc.

⁴ *Turei Even* on *Megillah*, loc cit.

⁵ This idea is expressed in *Turei Even*, ibid. Put a little differently: The need for the story to be written was only for the purpose of reading it (but not for the purpose of including it in Scripture).

⁶ {Lit., “the Writings,” this is the third section of the *Tanach*.}

⁷ *Mishnah* in *Megillah*, beg. ch. 2.

⁸ {I.e., the Jerusalem Talmud, as opposed to the Babylonian Talmud (Talmud *Bavli*), to which tractate *Megillah*, cited above in the text, belongs.}

words, both Mordechai and Esther (wrote to the Sages and) petitioned to have Purim commemorated. This version in the *Yerushalmi* differs from the version in the Talmud *Bavli* cited above. The *Bavli* states that Esther *alone* sent the request: “**Esther** sent a request... establish **me**... record **me**.”

Conceivably, the *Bavli* and *Yerushalmi* do not disagree (about the facts) whether Esther submitted the request alone, or whether Esther and Mordechai submitted it together. Rather, the *Bavli* and *Yerushalmi* discuss distinct points:

The *Bavli* speaks about the edict to read the *Megillah*. [Therefore, Rashi interprets the phrase, “establish {for} me {a day},” as meaning, “(not only) as a festival (but also) on which to **read** {the story}.” Because the main point of **Esther’s** request — “establish **me**” — “for my renown,” focused on the reading of the *Megillah* (which was to be called by her name).] Also, the *Bavli* speaks about (afterward) incorporating the *Megillah* into the *Writings* — “record me.” Esther alone made **these** two requests (without Mordechai).

In contrast, the *Yerushalmi* only speaks about the **core** of the enactment, to establish the days of Purim as “days of feasting and joy; the sending of food gifts between friends; and the giving of presents to the poor” every year. This request to the Sages⁹ was made by **both** Esther and Mordechai together [as can be inferred readily from the *Yerushalmi*: “Take it upon yourselves {to establish} these two **days**, every year...”].

⁹ Seemingly, this point requires further analysis, considering that the reply of the Sages to Mordechai and Esther’s request in the *Yerushalmi* is the same reply found in the *Bavli* regarding Esther’s request to “establish me.” (Similarly, Mordechai and Esther’s response to the Sages in the *Yerushalmi* is the same response made by Esther to them recorded in the *Bavli*.)

Possibly, we may posit that Esther’s request to “establish me” was made simultaneously with the request (of both Mordechai and Esther) to “take it upon yourselves {to establish} these two days.” This scenario seems to be supported by Rashi who interprets “establish me” as implying (not just a request to enact a “reading” of the story, but by) a request to enact a “festival.”

3.

THREE DISTINCT REQUESTS

[So the three requests made were: (a) “Take it upon yourselves to establish these two days”; (b) “establish me”; (c) “record me.” The first request was made by Mordechai and Esther *together*, while the last two were made by Esther *alone*.] These three requests, and the differences between the first one and the last two, are expressly alluded to in the *Megillah*:

When we are told how the Jews accepted upon themselves¹⁰ “to observe these days of Purim,” the *Megillah* adds,¹¹ “as **Mordechai** the Jew and Queen **Esther** had obligated them to do.” The following verse says,¹² “And the ordinance of **Esther** validated these observances of Purim, and was transcribed in a scroll.” These two verses refer to the three above points:

The first verse discusses the enactment of the days of Purim (as days of feasting and joy, etc.), as implied by the phrase, “to observe these **days** of Purim.” It corresponds to what the *Yerushalmi* says, “Take it upon yourselves to establish these two **days**.” That’s the reason why the verse mentions both of them: “Mordechai the Jew and Queen Esther,” as this edict was enacted as a result of their joint¹³ petition, as explained above.

The second verse, in contrast, speaks of the edict to read the *Megillah*¹⁴ and how to write it. The verse, “And the ordinance of Esther validated (**these**) **observances of (Purim)**,” alludes to the edict to read the *Megillah*. Therefore, it says, “*observances of*, דברי, Purim” (and not

¹⁰ After the second letter was distributed, as only then was the festival established as obligatory throughout the world (*Megillah* 7a; Rashi, ad loc.).

¹¹ *Esther* 9:31.

¹² *Ibid.*, v. 32.

¹³ The verse mentions Mordechai first, because in this respect, Esther was subordinate to him.

¹⁴ It is noteworthy that the *Megillah* is not read specifically on “these days of Purim,” since the *Megillah* is (also) read on the 11th, 12th, and 13th of Adar — *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 688, par. 1, and in the *Ramah* — beginning from Rosh Chodesh Adar.

“*days of Purim*”), which denotes (at least by allusion) **speech**¹⁵ — to speak about and narrate the story of the Purim miracle — “...on which to *read* {the story}.”¹⁶ The phrase, “transcribed in a scroll,” connotes that the story of Purim, the *Megillah*, was recorded in a {sacred} text and added to the “*Kesuvim*,” כתובים (“record me,” כתבוני).

Accordingly, in alluding to these {innovations about the reading and writing of the *Megillah*}, the verse says, “And the ordinance of **Esther**,” and doesn’t mention Mordechai, because only Esther had petitioned for these two enactments.

4.

QUESTIONS ON THE EXPLANATION

Still, we need to clarify:

- a) How could Mordechai have requested the Sages to establish only the days of Purim as a holiday but **not** the reading and writing of the *Megillah*?
- b) Moreover, Mordechai was a member of the Sanhedrin, and among the sages who had **consented** to Esther’s request to “establish me” and to “record me.” Accordingly, he should have certainly joined together with Esther in making this request.

We must posit that Mordechai functioned in two capacities: (i) As his own individual, and from this perspective, there was no need to “establish me” or to “record me”; therefore, he was not a party in Esther’s requests; (ii) Mordechai’s role as a member of the Sanhedrin; from this perspective, it was reasonable to grant Esther’s request to “establish me,” and to “record me.”

¹⁵ {In Hebrew, “דברי” (translated here as “observances of”) is cognate to the word, “דיבור,” meaning, “speech.”

¹⁶ Cf. *Rif on Ein Yaakov, Megillah 7a* (s.v. “she sent... establish me.”)

- c) Every aspect of Torah is absolutely precise. As such, presumably the fact that Esther’s request to “establish me for posterity,” and “record me for posterity” is found only in the Talmud *Bavli* (and not in the Talmud *Yerushalmi*), and conversely, Mordechai and Esther’s joint request to “take it upon yourselves to establish these two days” is found only in the Talmud *Yerushalmi* (and not in the Talmud *Bavli*) — is all absolutely deliberate.

5.

ESTHER IS LIKE THE DAWN

To understand the two functions of Mordechai, we need to first clarify that the composition of the *Megillah* (“record me”) was not simply an additional detail and facet of the Purim miracle. Rather, it was connected to the miracle’s main theme.

This key connection {of the *Megillah* to Purim} can be adduced also from a passage in tractate *Yoma*:¹⁷

“Why was Esther likened to the dawn? To teach us that just as the dawn marks the end of the whole night, {the miracle of} Esther marked the end of all the miracles.”

True, the *Gemara* explains, “there was {the miracle of} Chanukah,” which occurred after the Purim miracle. Nonetheless, Esther’s miracle is regarded as “the end of all miracles,” because it was “given to be transcribed.”¹⁸ Meaning, the miracle of Esther was the final miracle to be **written** (in Scripture, in *Tanach*).

Put differently, the miracles that were recorded {and canonized} comprise a **distinct** class of miracles. With Esther’s miracle, **this** class was closed. [Therefore, specifically (because the story of her miracle was “given to be transcribed,”) Esther can be compared to the “dawn... the end of the whole night,” sharing the same characteristic as “dawn.” Were her story not

¹⁷ 29a.

¹⁸ {*Yoma*, *ibid.*}

written {and included in Scripture}, this comparison would not be possible.]

6.

ESTHER WAS LIKE THE DAWN

The following is the explanation. The obvious difference between Mordechai and Esther in their respective roles in nullifying Haman's decree was that Mordechai was involved mainly in inspiring the Jews to repent for the sins responsible for Haman's decree. Although it was Esther who had instructed Mordechai to "go... assemble the Jews... and fast...,"¹⁹ Mordechai was the one who **implemented** this plan.

In contrast, Esther exerted herself and undertook several initiatives, in a natural way, to manoeuvre **Achashverosh** to nullify Haman's decree. Since she lived in the the royal palace (not among Jews), and "it was for such a time that you became **queen**"²⁰ — "you ascended to royalty only to intervene in such a crisis, to rescue the Jewish people,"²¹ she was uniquely positioned to do so. So she approached Achashverosh uninvited, and organized several banquets for him and Haman, etc.²²

Put differently: Mordechai was busy (primarily) in dealing with the spiritual part in squashing the royal decree — taking action to have the decree rescinded from Above. To that end, Mordechai's involvement was with (and among) the Jews. For her part, however, Esther was taking (mainly) natural steps (by which the abolishment of the decree Above would be achieved on this plane **below**, acting entirely) through Achashverosh. She continued her efforts until Achashverosh finally

¹⁹ *Esther* 4:16.

²⁰ {*Ibid.*, v. 14.}

²¹ *Ibid.*, *Ibn Ezra*, ad loc; cf. also *Esther Rabbah*, and Rashi, on *Esther* 2:11.

²² Similarly, when the Jewish people {after their departure from Egypt} fought Amalek in the desert, Moshe's role was analogous to Mordechai's. Moshe raised his arms and inspired the Jewish people to subjugate their hearts to their Father in Heaven (*Mishnah* in Rosh Hashanah, end of ch. 3). Yehoshu'a task was to actually engage Amalek in battle (*Shmos* 17:9-13).

nullified the decree; and moreover, “the tables were turned, and the Jews overpowered their enemies.”²³

7.

THEIR DIFFERENCE VIS-À-VIS THE MIRACLE

Just as Mordechai and Esther fought on different fronts to revoke the decree, similarly, they **emphasized** different facets of the novelty introduced by the miracle of Purim.

For Mordechai, the main element of the Purim miracle was the **spiritual** “victory” of the Jewish people. Their *teshuvah* was such that “they confirmed what they had accepted long before,”²⁴ and “they reaccepted the Torah in the days of Achashverosh.” With their *teshuvah*, they eliminated “a good excuse” {for irreligiosity, based on how the Jewish nation had been “compelled”²⁵ to accept the Torah} at **Matan Torah**. [Therefore, Mordechai had wanted work²⁶ to be forbidden on Purim, similar to Yom Kippur, the {biblical} day of repentance on which Hashem had given the **second Luchot**. Mordechai had wanted Purim to be a holy day devoted to matters of the **soul**.]²⁷

In contrast, Esther underscored the miraculous deliverance of the Jewish people from Haman’s decree “to exterminate and annihilate all the Jews”²⁸ — the rescue of the {physical} **bodies** of the Jews {from the threat of imminent death}. As the *Levush* puts it,²⁹ “The decree was to destroy and kill their bodies... not their souls...; therefore, when they were saved...”

8.

THREE WAYS OF REMEMBERING: THOUGHT, SPEECH, ACTION

²³ *Esther* 9:1.

²⁴ *Shabbos* 88a.

²⁵ {The awesome and overwhelming revelation of G-d at Mt. Sinai made refusal of the Torah impossible.}

²⁶ See *Megillah* 5b. {The same sort of “work,” *melachah*, biblically forbidden on Shabbos.}

²⁷ See *Megillas Sesarim* {by R. Yaacov Lisa (1770-1832)} on *Esther* 9:19 (near the end).

²⁸ *Esther* 3:13.

²⁹ *Orach Chaim*, sec. 670, par. 2; his opinion is cited by *Taz*, *ibid.*, sub-par. 3.

In light of the above explanation, we can clarify why, when it came to **commemorating** the miracle, Mordechai and Esther requested “establish these two **days**,” whereas only Esther made the requests “establish me” and “record me.” The reason is because these three requests correspond to three different ways of commemorating the miracle of Purim:

Establishing “**days** of Purim,” although linked to **action-oriented mitzvos** of “feasting and rejoicing, sending gifts of food... and presents to the poor,” serves as a **means** to promote the **mindful** and soulful remembrance of the miracle by the Jewish people.

With {the objective of Esther’s request} “establish me”... “**read** {the story},” the miracle is remembered verbally, and “movement of the lips is an action.”³⁰ Nonetheless, speech is only “a **minor** action.”³¹

Afterward, through fulfilment of Esther’s request to “record me,” the miracle would be remembered by a “major action.” The story of the miracle was transcribed using *tangible* ink, on *tangible* parchment.³²

Consequently: Since from Mordechai’s perspective, the main facet of the miracle was the spiritual victory, therefore, what was most important to commemorate the miracle was to remember it, thereby engaging the spiritual side of a person. And as noted earlier, this would explain why Mordechai had wanted work, on Purim, to be forbidden.

In contrast, from Esther’s perspective, the main facet of the miracle was the simple salvation of the Jews, saving their **physical** lives. As such, cognitively remembering the miracle was insufficient. Rather,

³⁰ The opinion of Rabbi Yochanan, *Bava Metzia* 90b; *Sanhedrin* 65b; and this is the decisive view. See *Tanya*, ch. 37, 38, 53.

³¹ *Sanhedrin*, *ibid.*

³² Even according to what was cited earlier, in fn. 5, that in order to read the *Megillah* (“establish me”), it was necessary to write it, this was not writing, *qua* writing (or an *action*). Rather, it was a prerequisite (*hechsher*) or a detail of the reading (speech). At this stage, the writing was similar to what is explained in the text regarding “the days of Purim.” Namely, the *mitzvos* of Purim were enacted to serve as a means through which a person would reflect on the memory of the miracle.

remembrance of the miracle needed to be expressed mainly through “action” (a “minor action,” and then afterward, a “major action”).

9.

MORDECHAI’S DUAL VIEWS

When Mordechai had requested {together with Esther} only, “Take it upon yourselves to establish these two **days**” (not “establish me” or “record me”), this expressed Mordechai’s own, individual quality. This was the plane from which he perceived **his generation** (the generation over which he was the leader and of which he was the patron). From him, the people drew their spiritual sustenance,³³ commensurate to {the level of} their **souls** and **spirituality**. To remember the miracle from their spiritual station, it sufficed to do so in thought. There was no need to commemorate the miracle in action, as explained above.

The Sanhedrin, however, was the place where difficult questions were brought to be resolved and the judges were responsible to decide the law in actual **deed**. To accomplish this required the judges to lower themselves to the people, and discern their **material** situation as it related to their **bodily** lives. (The rendered decision was carried out in **deed**.) As a member of the Sanhedrin, Mordechai therefore looked at the Jews in their physical bodily state. From this perspective, commemoration of the miracle needed to be expressed in tangible action, for only in this way would the message completely suffuse the corporeal **body**.

³³ See *Tanya*, ch. 2.

10.

THE PURIM MIRACLE — LIGHT AND VESSELS

The explanation of the subject according to Chassidus:

The difference between the level of Mordechai and Esther is as follows: The essence-character of Mordechai was “*Yesod Abba*,” {lit. “Foundation of Father.” From the vantage point of *Abba* (the *sefirah* of wisdom {*chochmah*}), “**light**” {*Or*}³⁴ is of primary importance. In contrast, Esther embodied the *sefirah* of sovereignty {*malchus*}, and as this *sefirah* itself has descended into the spiritual worlds Creation {*Briah*}, Formation {*Yetzirah*}, and Action {*Asiyah*}. [This association is alluded to by her name *Esther*, אסתר, connected to the verse,³⁵ “I will **utterly hide**,³⁶ הסתר אסתר...” — extreme cover-up and concealment.] From the perspective of the *sefirah* of *malchus*, “**vessels**” {*kelim*} are imperative.

From the vantage point of *Or* and of *kelim*, the Purim miracle is understood and sensed differently:

The miracle of Purim, being one of the miracles vested in nature, incorporates two extremes: On the one hand, since the miracle was performed **within** nature in a manner that “nothing of it could be visibly be seen as supernatural,”³⁷ understandably, the miracle was connected to the Divine Light as it is clothed within the world.

On the other hand, since what happened was clearly a miracle and a **revelation** of G-dliness (such that ‘all could see empirically the supernatural orchestration of events’), understandably, the miracle was rooted in the Divine Light that is beyond nature. Moreover, the very fact that the miracle could be clothed within nature proves that the source of this miracle was more sublime than the source of even overt miracles. For

³⁴ {**Oros & Keilim**: Lit. “lights and vessels”; in [Kabbalah](#), the *sefiros* (divine attributes) consist of “lights” or divine emanations, channeled through “vessels” that define and qualify their effect upon creation.}

³⁵ *Devarim* 11:15.

³⁶ *Chullin* 139b.

³⁷ *Torah Or*, 93c, 100a.

this reason, the miracle was not “limited” by the restriction of having to be supernatural. It {could be and} was en clothed in nature itself.

In light of the above, we can understand the difference between the miracle of Purim as perceived from the aspect of *Or*, and as perceived from the aspect of *kelim*: *Or* precipitates “revelation” and the **miraculous**, the presence of a miracle as found in the miracle’s source and origin. The makeup of *kelim* is to **lower** the miracle into the concealment and obscurity engendered by the garments of nature. This {descent} expresses the miracle’s purpose: to transform the concealment of nature so that we can see how Hashem Himself conducts nature.

11.

MORDECHAI — LIGHT; ESTHER — VESSELS

This is the difference between Mordecai and Esther:

From Mordecai's perspective, the perspective of *or*, the main point of Purim was not the **purification of nature** but the revelation of light. Through the Purim miracle, the boundlessness of God was revealed, descending below into the conduct of nature

Consequently, also when commemorating the miracle, there is no great need for action. It suffices for the remembrance of the miracle to be expressed through the practical *mitzvos* of Purim. However, remembrance of the miracle itself can remain intellectual and spiritual.

[Therefore, we find **this** concept addressed in the Talmud *Yerushalmi*, which in the realm of Torah is predicated on the idea of “light.” In it, we are presented immediately with the conclusion {of a halachic debate} and with the correct solution {to a difficulty}, and so forth, like a person who sees {everything clearly} in a well-lit room.

In contrast, from the perspective of Esther, who represented the idea of *kelim* {as alluded to by the verse}, “I will utterly hide, אסתיר אסתיר...,” the

main idea of the Purim miracle was that it transformed the concealment and darkness of nature. As such, when commemorating the miracle, it was also important to do so in the **sphere of action** — by reading and writing {the wondrous story of Purim}. For specifically in this way would the miracle’s goal be achieved, i.e., **nature itself** would radiate light.

[Accordingly, this perspective is adopted by the Talmud *Bavli*, {whose mode of analysis is} alluded to by the verse,³⁸ “He made me dwell in deep darkness...,”³⁹ since the *Bavli* focuses on the “purification of the darkness” (as this process applies within Torah itself).]

12.

ESTHER — THE END OF ALL MIRACLES

In light of all the above, we will better appreciate the comparison of “Esther” to the “dawn”: “Just as the dawn marks the end of the whole night, {the miracle of} Esther marked the end of all the miracles.” We will also appreciate how this simile is related to Esther’s story being transcribed and included in Scripture.

The Gemara draws an equivalence between the “end of the whole **night**” and “the end of all **miracles**” even though, seemingly (as *Maharsha* asks),⁴⁰ a miracle and the night’s end are conceptual opposites. The equivalence is valid, however, because as mentioned above (end of section 10), the purpose of a miracle is to alter **nature** itself. Meaning, nature, which is innately emblematic of “night” and darkness, should sense Divine light and revelation.

Esther was “the end of all **miracles**.” Her miraculous story was the culmination and the purpose of all miracles, which is the telescoping of the miracle and G-dly revelation into the fog and murkiness of the world. For

³⁸ {*Eicha* 3:6.}

³⁹ *Sanhedrin* 24a; see *Rabbeinu Chananel*, ad loc.

⁴⁰ *Chidushei Aggados*, on *Yoma*, loc cit.

she impacted (not only the darkness of the world that was linked to (proximate to) “Or,” the more refined elements of this world), but also the “**end** of the night,” the culmination of the darkness and concealment foretold by the verse, “I will utterly hide, אסתיר אסתיר...” of this world. This extreme darkness is totally unrelated to light. [This {spiritual darkness in the world} is {metaphorically} comparable obviously to the darkness prevalent at “the end of the whole night,” because before dawn, the darkness of the night is more intense than any other time during the night.]

In this context, we can understand why specifically those miracles that warranted to be written {and included in the Holy Writings} are analogous to “night,” and in particular, to “the **end** of the whole night”: These miracles were commemorated in “writing” and in deed, which in this world {and level} itself, belong to the {lowest} class of **inanimate** entities, representing the **end** of all the levels in the world of *Assiah*, since the purpose of these miracles was to transform the “night,” and especially, to transform “the end of the whole night.”⁴¹

13.

DAWN AND ESTHER — THE LIGHT DERIVED FROM DARKNESS

In this context, we can better appreciate why Esther is compared to the dawn: The light of dawn that splits the darkness at “the end of the whole night,” symbolizes the light that “**emerges specifically from the preceding darkness**” — the transformation of darkness itself into light. This idea is alluded to in the Hebrew word for “dawn,” שחר. This word is related to שחרות, blackness, and to murky and dark.

The same relationship applies to the *sefiros*: “*Ayeles* of the שחר,⁴² refers to the Congregation of Israel,”⁴³ the *sefirah* of *malchus*. Since “the dawn is the end of the whole night,” understandably, the {Zohar’s}

⁴¹ For this reason, possibly, the miraculous story of Chanukah was not written because the Chanukah miracle relates (mainly) to a Jew’s soul and spirituality. See *Levush, Taz on Orach Chaim*, sec. 670, par. 2.

⁴² {*Tehillim* 22:1.}

⁴³ *Zohar* vol. 3, 21b; *ibid.*, 25b.

reference is not to *malchus* as it is found in its {original} place in *Atzilus*, or even as *malchus* egresses into *atik* of *Briah*, where the quality of *malchus* is revealed. The reference, however, is to *malchus* as it slides under the cover and concealment of the worlds of *Briah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*, doing so in order to transform the concealment there into light, as discussed earlier concerning Esther.

14.

IN ESSENCE, ESTHER IS UNAFFECTED BY CONCEALMENT

Esther ability to **transmute** the concealment in the world, despite her essence-character itself being related to concealment, **הסתר אסתר**, did not only avail itself of Mordechai's strength (since Mordechai's essence-character was *Or* and revelation, as elucidated above), but also emanated from Esther herself, since inwardly, she **transcended** concealment completely.

This is the deeper meaning of the verse,⁴⁴ “**Hadassah, also known as Esther**”: As she (also) descends into the world's cloaking and concealment (“אסתר”), the aspect of “Hadassah” (“these are the righteous”)⁴⁵ persists. This aspect is the inwardness of *malchus*, which remains united with the *sefiros* above it.

This is also the lesson to be gleaned and applied to everyone's *avodah*: Even when a Jew finds himself in a situation of spiritual darkness in which G-dliness is concealed, one should not be intimidated. On the contrary, since inwardly a Jew stands on high ground above the fog, a Jew has the fortitude not only to remove the concealment but also to transform it into light.

⁴⁴ *Esther* 2:7.

⁴⁵ *Megillah* 13a.

15.

THE HINT IN *SHULCHAN ARUCH*

As often explained, all the ideas found in the mystical dimension of Torah can be found, at least as hints, in the Torah's revealed dimension. This holds true in the subject under discussion:

The above lesson for one's divine service — how a Jew, inwardly, stands higher than “concealment”⁴⁶ — is alluded to by the Alter Rebbe in his *Shulchan Aruch* (in the second edition). At the beginning of the laws concerning “Arising in the Morning,” there is a pertinent clue in the ruling that states,⁴⁷ “I awaken the dawn, the dawn does not awaken me.”

The above point also has a bearing on a baffling difficulty found in the remarks of the *Turei Zahav*,⁴⁸ and on a discrepancy between the wording found in the first and second editions of the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch*. Both these issues can be resolved in light of the deeper explanation (presented in section 13) of the spiritual level that “dawn” represents.

16.

TWO APPROACHES — “I AWAKEN THE DAWN” OR “THE DAWN AWAKENS ME”

In *Tur* (in the first section of “*Orach Chaim*”), it says:⁴⁹

A person must be courageous as a lion and arise in the morning to serve his Creator... The person should awaken the dawn; the dawn should not awaken him. As King David, may peace be upon him, declared..., implying, “I awaken the dawn, and the dawn does not awaken me.”

⁴⁶ As *Tanya*, end of ch.24, puts it, “(even during a sinful act) a person remains faithful to Him,” similar to what is said about Esther (*Esther* 2:20).

⁴⁷ The phrasing of the Alter Rebbe, based on *Tur*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 1. This ruling conforms with what is stated in Talmud *Yerushalmi*, *Brachos*, ch. 1, par. 1; *Midrash Tehillim*, *Ps.* 22, 108, et al; cited by Rashi in his commentary on *Tehillim* 57:9.

⁴⁸ {A halachic work known by the acronym, *Taz*, written by Rabbi David HaLevi (1586-1667).}

⁴⁹ {Rabbi Jacob Ben Asher - (circa 5029-5100; 1269-1340).}

In contrast, in *Shulchan Aruch*, the author {*Mechaber*}⁵⁰ references only the beginning of this passage {in *Tur*}, “a person should awaken the dawn,” but doesn't reference the conclusion (“the dawn does not awaken me”).

The author of the *Turei Zahav* explains:⁵¹ The word “*shachar*,” dawn, alludes to the Congregation (sanctity) of Israel, to the holiness residing in the Jewish people. In this relationship, there are two approaches: I awaken the dawn, which means an arousal from **below** in order to reach the “dawn.” Alternatively, “the dawn awakens me,” an arousal from **Above**, stemming from the level of “dawn.”

This is what King David had in mind when he declared, “and the dawn does **not** awaken me”: “His arousal from below was so extraordinary that an assisting arousal from Above was not needed.” Since this level is appropriate only to someone of King David's spiritual stature, the *Mechaber* does not cite this part in *Shulchan Aruch*.

Seemingly, this is puzzling: How can anyone not possibly need support from Above? It says, after all,⁵² “If the Holy One, blessed is He, would not help a person, he would not be able to prevail against his evil inclination.” And isn't every Jew, even a righteous person, cautioned not to be overly self-confident, “Do not be sure of yourself”?⁵³

⁵⁰ {Rabbi Yosef Caro, 5248-5335 (1488-1575 CE).}

⁵¹ {The substance of what *Taz* explains in paraphrased in this paragraph,}

⁵² *Kiddushin* 30b; *Sukkah* 52b.

⁵³ *Avos* ch.2, *mishnah* 4; *Brachos* 29a.

THE WORDING OF THE ALTER REBBE IN THE SECOND EDITION

The Alter Rebbe, in the first edition of his *Shulchan Aruch*, also cites (similar to the *Mechaber*) only that “a person should awaken the dawn.” In contrast, in the second edition, the Alter Rebbe writes: “A person should awaken the dawn, as it says,⁵⁴ ‘I awaken the dawn.’ {This implies that} I awaken the dawn; the dawn does not awaken me. This is the approach suitable for the average person.”

We need to clarify: Since the second edition is also part of the Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, equally germane to everyone, why does the Alter Rebbe make note of the idea that “the dawn does not awaken me,” since it speaks to a spiritual level suited only to King David and to those of his calibre?

What is even more puzzling: From the flow of what the Alter Rebbe writes, it is clear that the statement, “This is the approach suitable for the **average** person” was said —

[not in a general way just regarding the ruling that a person should arise before “the light of morning” (for those who cannot fulfil the teaching, “It is appropriate for every G-d fearing person... to arise at **midnight**”).⁵⁵ Rather, this statement was said]

also regarding the matter {of the lofty *avodah* alluded to by phrase}, “the dawn does not awaken me.” In other words, this law {and the *avodah* it entails} is not just pertinent to exceptional individuals. On the contrary, it is “suitable for the **average** person.”

⁵⁴ *Tehillim* 57:9; 108:3.

⁵⁵ *Shulchan Aruch*, loc cit., par. 2.

18.

TWO APPROACHES — “I AWAKEN THE DAWN” OR “THE DAWN AWAKENS ME”

In light of what was explained above, that the level of *dawn* refers to the Congregation of Israel (*malchus*), as it descends into the concealment and hiddenness of the world, we can say as follows: When the *Taz* writes that a person “does not need an assisting arousal from Above,” he meant that the assistance coming from the level of **dawn** was not required. However, assistance from an **even more sublime**⁵⁶ level of G-dliness is still needed.⁵⁷

The explanation: Regarding assistance from Above, in general, there are three levels:

- a) There is the support afforded to people to prevent them from indulging in **forbidden** desires, G-d forbid. **This** divine aid comes from the level of *dawn*, as *malchus* descends into “the end of the whole night,” the nadir of concealment in this world.
- b) There is the support given to help someone from indulging in a permissible desire. This support comes from the level of *malchus* as it functions in its role of *atik* of *Briah*. Still, this level is also “night,” as it represents the descent of *malchus* {from *Atzilus*} into the {lower, created worlds of} *Briah*, *Yetzirah*, and *Asiyah*. Thus, its influence in one’s *avodah* is to prevent a person from indulging in **desires**. However, since it is not “the **end** of the whole night,” its influence helps a person to eschew **permissible** desires.
- c) Help is given a person to enable him to ascend from one level to the next in the realm of sanctity itself. This Divine assistance originates from *malchus* of *Atzilus*, as *malchus* is found in its {proper} place in *Atzilus*. Then, *malchus* is called “day.”

⁵⁶ As the nuanced wording of our sages, “If the Holy One {הקדוש}, blessed is He, would not help....” {This Divine name alludes to a sublime level of G-dliness that is removed, קדוש, from the world.}

⁵⁷ It is readily understood that the divine assistance needed upon rising from sleep at the beginning of the day is not comparable to the assistance that a person receives after his prayers and petitions for this assistance during the course of that day’s *avodah*.

WHY THE VARIANCE IN WORDING BETWEEN THE TWO EDITIONS

These three levels parallel, in a general way, the three levels in Divine service: the *avodah* of a righteous person {*tzaddik*}; an *intermediate* person {*beinoni*}; and a wicked person {*rasha*}, as explained in *Tanya*:

A *tzaddik* is not connected **at all** to desires arising from the animal soul.⁵⁸ His *avodah* consists of ascending continually in the levels of holiness itself. For a *beinoni*, transgressing is absolutely precluded. As *Tanya*⁵⁹ puts it, “He has never sinned... nor in the **future will he ever sin.**” However, he has to constantly struggle to refrain from indulging in permissible desires. For his part, a *rasha* has to fight not to stumble over a prohibition. Accordingly, he needs help from Above from the level of “dawn.”

We may posit that the aforementioned also clarifies what it says in the Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*:

According to the **revealed dimension** of Torah, a *beinoni* is one who has a 50/50 split of merits versus transgressions. Someone who has more than half — “a **majority** of merits” — is deemed to be a *tzaddik*.⁶⁰ Accordingly, in the first edition, which conforms with the viewpoint of the Gemara and the legal codifiers,⁶¹ the Alter Rebbe omits the point that “the dawn does **not** awaken me” (that there is no need for assistance of the “dawn” in order for a person to eschew transgressions {because a *beinoni* of this sort *does* need assistance; he does need to be “awakened by the dawn”}).

However in the second edition, the Alter Rebbe decides in favour of the mystics.⁶² According to what is explained in the inner dimension of Torah, the *beinoni* also has no need to fight {with his evil inclination} to

⁵⁸ *Tanya*, ch. 10.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, beg. ch. 12.

⁶⁰ See the commentary of Rashi and *Tosefos* on *Rosh Hashanah* 16b; see *Tanya*, ch. 1.

⁶¹ See Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 25, par. 28.

⁶² {In the Hebrew original, “*mekubalim.*”} See *Shaar HaKolel*, at the beginning.

refrain from transgressing. As such, he does not need Divine assistance from Above from the level of “dawn.” Consequently, in the second edition, the Alter Rebbe also mentions the idea that “the dawn does not awaken me.” He concludes, “This is the approach suitable for the **average** person {*beinoni*},” alluding to the rank of a *beinoni*.

This is the viewpoint that the Alter Rebbe establishes as the *halachah*, of equal relevance to everyone. For after the Alter Rebbe publicized the true spiritual personality of a *beinoni*, **this** became “the rank that is attainable by **every** man; each person should strive after it, for every person can, at any time or hour, be a *beinoni*.”⁶³

20.

INWARDLY, A JEW TRANSCENDS CONCEALMENT

The Alter Rebbe demands a person to demonstrate this trait as soon as he arises in the morning, even before reciting the “*Modeh Ani*” prayer. Meaning, even before a person’s soul radiates its light, when the person still finds himself in “darkness,” he is told to “overpower his {evil} inclination as a lion.”⁶⁴ This {subjugation of his inclination} should be done such that support from Above is not needed for the person to avoid succumbing to sin, Heaven forbid. (“The dawn does not awaken me.”)

How can we expect a Jew to reach such a plane and spiritual state? The explanation is as follows: When a Jew finds himself in a situation of darkness, this is only the external reality. Inwardly, a Jew **transcends** the concealment (as explained in section 14, concerning the verse, “Hadassah also known as Esther”).

On the contrary, the situation of “concealment” calls forth the inwardness of a person’s soul {so that it reveals itself} more powerfully and more forcefully. In turn, this gives expression to a person’s self-sacrifice, a power possessed by every Jew. And as transpired in the days of Esther,

⁶³ *Tanya*, beg. ch. 14.

⁶⁴ The wording of the Alter Rebbe in the second edition, loc. cit.

throughout the entire year {that followed Haman’s genocidal decree}, the Jewish people exhibited literal self-sacrifice at every moment of every day, because self-sacrifice suffuses a person **totally**. Self-sacrifice permeates all of a person’s faculties and “even {the soul’s} external garments.”⁶⁵

Similarly, in every person’s *avodah*: A situation of “darkness,” in particular, elicits the **core**⁶⁶ of a person’s soul even more so than a situation of “revealed light.” In turn, this expresses itself in one’s disciplined obedience {*kabbalas ol*}, a demonstration of the soul’s essence, which suffuses the person completely. As a result, “at any time or hour, every person can be a *beinoni*.”

-Based on talks given on Purim, and on Shabbos *parshas Sisa*, 5724 (1964)

⁶⁵ *Tanya*, end of ch. 19.

⁶⁶ {In the Hebrew original, “*pnimius nafsho*.”}