

## פרשת תצוה ופורים

Although the name of Moshe Rabbenu is noticeably absent from this week's Parshas Tetzaveh<sup>1</sup>, his presence is not absent in the least bit.

The very first word of the Parsha, ואתה – and you – tells us that this week's section has a particular focus upon him. And that is not the sole focus upon Moshe Rabbenu in the first Posuk of our Parsha.

The verse reads (Sh'mos Perek 27/Posuk 20):

וְאַתָּה תְּצַוֶּה אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְיִקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ שֶׁמֶן זַיִת זָךְ כְּתִית לְמָאֹר לְהַעֲלֹת נֵר תָּמִיד:

*You* [Moshe] should command B'nei Yisroel and they should take for *you* pure, crushed olive oil for the light to raise for the eternal lamp.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ba'al HaTurim writes to this verse:

ואתה תצוה. לא הזכיר משה בזה הסדר, מה שאין כן בכל החומש, שמשעה שנולד משה אין סדר שלא הזכר בה. והטעם משום שאמר מחני נא מספרך אשר כתבת (שמות לב/לב) וקללת חכם אפילו על תנאי באה (מכות יא א), ונתקיים בזה. ועוד דזו הפרשה מדברת בטכסיסי כהונה וממשה היתה הכהונה הגדולה לצאת, אלא על ידי שסירב לילך בשליחות המקום נטלה ממנו ונתנה לאהרן (זבחים קב א). לכן לא נזכר שמו של משה בפרשה זו מפני עגמת נפשו.

*You shall command* – Moshe is not mentioned in this Parsha, unlike the rest of the Torah. From when Moshe was born there is no Parsha in which he is not mentioned.

The reason that he is not mentioned in Parshas Tetzaveh is because he said to Hashem at the incident of the *Eigel*, 'Erase me, please, from Your book that You wrote. [And even though Moshe predicated this statement on Hashem's statement that He would destroy Israel], the curse of the *Chacham* is fulfilled, even if it was conditional [even when the condition wasn't fulfilled]. That request was fulfilled in our Parsha where we find that his name was 'erased'.

Another reason is that this Parsha talks about the procedures of the Kohanim and Moshe was to have been selected to be the Kohen Godol. However, because of Moshe's refusal [at the *sneh*] to accept the mission upon which Hashem wanted to send him, the Kehuna Gedolah was taken from him and given to Aharon. Therefore, Moshe's name is not mentioned in this Parsha because of the sorrow that he had regarding the Kehuna Gedolah.

We will approach the absence of Moshe Rabbenu's name from a different perspective.

Let us consider the context in which Moshe receives such direct emphasis. After all, in principle there was no need to bring the olive oil directly to him. He did not deal with it. He did not prepare the oil; he did not light the Menorah. That was the function of the Kohanim.

Perhaps to understand this better, we should learn the uniqueness of the oil that was used in the Menorah.

In Massechet Menachos the Mishnah teaches us about the various grades of oil-producing-olives that came from various locations. We read there (85 b):

תקוע אלפא לשמן, אבא שאול אומר: שניה לה רגב בעבר הירדן. כל הארצות היו כשרות, אלא מיכן היו מביאין. אין מביאין לא מבית הזבלים ולא מבית השלחים ולא מן מה שנזרע ביניהם, ואם הביא - כשר.

From *Tekoa* one gets grade 'A' oil. Abba Shaul says, 'the second highest grade is from *Regev* on the eastern side of the Jordan. The olives from all lands are *kosher*, but they brought the oil from olives from there. Olives should not be brought from fertilized fields or from irrigated fields and not from fields that had grain sown in them. But if the olives were brought from these places, it is kosher.

However, even in the locales that produce the best olives, there are different grades of quality of the oil that are contained in each olive.

And that is what Rashi explains at the outset of our Parsha when he comments on the word כתית which we translated as 'crushed'.

We read:

כתית - הזיתים היה כותש במכתשת, ואינו טוחנן בריחים, כדי שלא יהו בו שמרים, ואחר שהוציא טפה ראשונה מכניסן לריחים וטוחנן, והשמן השני פסול למנורה וכשרה למנחות, שנאמר כתית למאור, ולא כתית למנחות:

*Crushed* – the olives were crushed in a crusher but not ground in a mill in order that there should not be any sediment in the oil. After they took out the first drop of oil from the olive, they put the olive in a grinder and ground it.

The 'second' oil that comes out of the olive is unfit for the Menorah but fit as part of the meal-offering, the *Korban Mincha*.

We learn this from the first that says, 'crushed for the light'. Chazal said, 'it must be crushed for the light, the Menorah, but not for Korbonos.

The oil for the Menorah is superior in all aspects. Choice olives are sought and the choicest and least polluted and most unadulterated of their oil is used for the Menorah.

And that is how our Parshas Tetzaveh places Moshe Rabbenu in its very center. He is addressed in the 'second-person': you. The olive oil is brought to 'you': אליך.

Why is the uniqueness of Moshe Rabbenu given emphasis specifically with this oil that comes from olives?

Certainly, we would note that such is fitting. The Menorah represents wisdom and Moshe Rabbenu was wisdom.

The oil used to light the Menorah was as unadulterated as possible; the wisdom of Moshe Rabbenu was as unadulterated as possible.

The Menorah represents wisdom as we learn in Masseches Bava Basra (25 b):

הרוצה שיחכים – ידרים

One who wishes to pray, should turn towards the south where the Menorah was located.

Unlike wealth which is finite and limited, wisdom approaches infinity and limitlessness.

One who shares one's wealth with others sees that his wealth has diminished. One who shares one's wisdom finds that his wisdom does not diminish whatsoever. In fact, often the result is that by sharing wisdom, the wisdom that one possesses grows.

And thus, the Menorah with the light that it sheds becomes a very relevant model for a person to direct his aspirations and prayer.

That is what we learn in Masseches Shabbos (122 a):

נר לאחד נר למאה.

The same lamp that gives light to one gives light to one-hundred.

However, unlike the light of the lamp that even though it doesn't decrease when shared with others, it does not increase when it is shared with others, wisdom is unique.

We read in Masseches Taanis (7 a):

הרבה למדתי מרבותי ומחבירי יותר מרבותי, ומתלמידי יותר מכולן.

Much I learned from my teachers. From my peers I have learned more; from my students I have learned than from all of them.

Students challenge their teachers. An unclear explanation that often means that the subject was not understood completely draws requests for repetition, clarification and exactitude. When the teacher cannot provide that clarity it is an indication that his knowledge was not up to par. He will revisit the subject and study it better. He will then speak again, this time with clarity and precision. His wisdom has increased by virtue of sharing it with others.

And Moshe Rabbenu had wonderful students who kept him occupied all day long as we read in Parshas Yisro (Sh'mos Perek 18/P'sukim 13, 16):

וַיְהִי מִמָּחָרֶת וַיֵּשֶׁב מֹשֶׁה לְשֹׁפֵט אֶת הָעָם וַיַּעֲמֵד הָעָם עַל מֹשֶׁה מִן הַבֹּקֶר עַד הָעָרֶב:  
כִּי יִהְיֶה לָהֶם דְּבַר בָּא אֵלַי וְשִׁפְטֹתַי בֵּין אִישׁ וּבֵין רֵעֵהוּ וְהוֹדַעְתִּי אֶת חֻקֵי הָאֱלֹהִים... לִקְרִים  
וְאֶת תּוֹרֹתַי:

It was on the morrow Moshe sat to judge the people; the people stood next to Moshe from the morning until the evening.

[Moshe said], 'When they have a matter they come to me and I judge between a person and his friend and I make known the statutes of G-d and His laws.

And thus, consistent with the fact that a person learns more from his students, we have instances where Moshe Rabbenu's students raised questions for which he did not have an answer.

We read this in Parshas B'haalosecha (B'midbar Perek 9/P'sukim 6-8):

וַיְהִי אֲנָשִׁים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ טִמְאִים לְנֶפֶשׁ אָדָם וְלֹא יָכְלוּ לַעֲשׂוֹת הַפֶּסַח בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וַיִּקְרְבוּ  
לִפְנֵי מֹשֶׁה וּלְפְנֵי אֶהֱרֹן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא: וַיֹּאמְרוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים הַהֵמָּה אֵלָיו אֲנַחְנוּ טִמְאִים לְנֶפֶשׁ

אָדָם לָמָּה נִגְרַע לְבַלְתִּי הַקְּרִיב אֶת קֶרְבֵּן ה' בְּמַעַדוֹ בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם  
מֹשֶׁה עֲמְדוּ וְאַשְׁמְעָה מִה יֵצֵא ה' לָכֶם:

There were men who were impure because of contact with the dead and they were unable to make their Korban Pesach on that day [of the 14<sup>th</sup> of Nissan] and they approached and came before Moshe and before Aharon on that day. These men said to him, 'We have become tomei because of contact with dead people; why should we be lesser than the others to not bring the Korban of Hashem at its set time among B'nei Yisroel.'

Moshe said, 'stand and stay here and I will hear what Hashem will command to you.'

Further on in Sefer B'midbar in Parshas Pinchos (Perek 27/P'sukim 3-5) we read of the claim of *B'nos Tzlofchod*:

אָבִינוּ מִת בַּמִּדְבָּר וְהוּא לֹא הָיָה בְּתוֹךְ הָעֵדָה הַנוֹעֲדִים עַל ה' בְּעֵדַת קָרַח כִּי בְחָטְאוֹ  
מִת וּבָנִים לֹא הָיוּ לוֹ: לָמָּה יִגְרַע שֵׁם אָבִינוּ מִתוֹךְ מְשֻׁפְחָתוֹ כִּי אֵין לוֹ בֵּן תָּנָה לָנוּ אַחֲזָה  
בְּתוֹךְ אַחֵי אָבִינוּ: וַיִּקְרַב מֹשֶׁה אֶת מְשֻׁפָּטָן לִפְנֵי ה':

Our father died in the wilderness and he was not among the congregation that met together against G-d in the congregation of Korach. He died for his sin and he had no sons.

Why should the name of our father be lessened from amongst his family because he has no son; give us an inheritance among our father's brothers.

Moshe brought their judgment before G-d.

It is certainly fitting therefore that the Menorah which symbolizes wisdom should be particularly associated with Moshe Rabbenu, the utmost fountain of Torah wisdom.

And thus we have an entrée into understanding the uniqueness of Moshe Rabbenu.

However, if it was the Menorah alone that was associated with Moshe Rabbenu, then perhaps our explanation would have been sufficient. But, in fact, the Menorah is not even specifically mentioned in our Posuk or in our Parsha. The emphasis of our Posuk is the oil that is used to light the Menorah.

And that oil which must be a product of an olive is the subject of a Midrash at the beginning of our Parsha.

The Midrash Sh'mos Rabba (Parshata 36/1) teaches:

ואתה תצוה, הדא הוא דתימא (ירמיה יא/טז<sup>2</sup>) זית רענן יפה פרי תואר קרא ה' שמך, וכי לא נקראו ישראל אלא כזית הזה בלבד והלא בכל מיני אילנות נאים ומשובחים נקראו ישראל, בגפן ותאנה שנאמר (תהלים פ/ט<sup>3</sup>) גפן ממצרים תסיע, תאנה שנאמר (הושע ט/י<sup>4</sup>) כבכורה בתאנה בראשיתה, כתמר שנאמר (שיר השירים ז/ח<sup>5</sup>) זאת קומתך דמתה לתמר, כארז שנאמר (תהלים צב/יג<sup>6</sup>) כארז בלבנון ישגה, כאגוז שנאמר (שיר השירים ו/יא<sup>7</sup>) אל גנת אגוז ירדתי...

---

<sup>2</sup> The entire verse reads:

זֵית רַעֲנָן יִפֶּה פְּרֵי תֹאֵר קָרָא ה' שְׁמֶךָ לְקוֹל הַמּוֹלָה גְדֹלָה הִצִּית אֵשׁ עָלֶיהָ וְרָעוּ דְלִיּוֹתֶיהָ:  
The fresh and beautiful of form olive, Hashem has called your name; the voice of great noise and confusion; He ignited a fire upon it and destroyed its branches.

<sup>3</sup> The entire verse reads:

גִּפֶן מִמִּצְרַיִם תְּסִיעַ תִּגְרֹשׁ גּוֹיִם וְתִטְעֶנָּה:  
You shall cause the vine to travel from Egypt; you banish the nations and plant it.

<sup>4</sup> The entire verse reads:

כַּעֲנַבִּים בַּמִּדְבָּר מְצֵאתִי יִשְׂרָאֵל כְּבִכּוֹרָה בְּתֵאֵנָה בְּרֵאשִׁיתָהּ רָאִיתִי אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם הֵמָּה בָּאוּ בְעַל פְּעוֹר וַיִּנָּזְרוּ לְבִשְׂת וַיְהִיו שְׁקוּצִים כְּאֵהָבִים:  
Like grapes in the wilderness I found Israel, like the first figs in its beginning; I saw your fathers; they came to *Ba'al Pe'or* and they separated themselves for the disgrace of idolatry; they became detestable as they loved the Moabite women.

<sup>5</sup> The entire verse reads:

זֹאת קוֹמַתְךָ דְּמַתְּהָ לְתִמְרָה וְשִׂדִּיךָ לְאַשְׁכְּלוֹת:  
This is your height, etc.

<sup>6</sup> The entire verse reads:

צַדִּיק כְּתִמְרָה יִפְרֹחַ כְּאֶרֶז בְּלִבְנוֹן יִשְׁגֶּה:  
The *Tzaddik* will flower like the palm tree, will flourish the cedar in Lebanon'.

<sup>7</sup> The entire verse reads:

אֶל גִּנַּת אֶגּוֹז יֵרְדֹתִי לְרֵאוֹת בְּאֵבִי הַנֶּחַל לְרֵאוֹת הַפְּרוּחָה הַגָּפֶן הַנִּצּוֹ הַרְמַנִּים:  
To the garden of the walnut I descended to see the beginning of the river, to see if the vine flowered, if the pomegranates blossomed,

*You should command* – That is what you say, ‘The fresh and beautiful form of the olive, Hashem has called your name.’ Was Israel called ‘olive’ only? Is it not that many pretty and fine trees were called ‘Israel’. The vine and the fig were called Israel – as it says, ‘You shall cause the vine to travel from Egypt’. The fig was called Israel, as it says, ‘like the first fruit of the fig at its beginning.’ Grapes were called Israel, as it says, ‘You shall cause the vine to travel from Egypt.’ Israel was likened to the palm tree, ‘This is your height; you are comparable to the palm tree. Israel was likened to the cedar as it says, ‘It shall flourish like the cedar in Lebanon’. Israel is like the walnut as it says, ‘To the garden of the walnut I descended.’

ובא ירמיה לומר זית רענן יפה פרי תואר אלא מה הזית הזה עד שהוא באילנו מגרגרין אותו ואחר כן מורידין אותו מן הזית ונחבט, ומשחובטין אותו מעלין אותו לגת ונותנין אותו במטחן ואחר כן טוחנין אותו ואחר כן מקיפין אותו בחבלים, ומביאין אבנים ואחר כן נותנין את שומנן כך ישראל באין עובדי כוכבים וחובטין אותם ממקום למקום וחובשים אותן וכופתין אותם בקולרין ומקיפין אותן טרטיוטין ואחר כן עושין תשובה והקדוש ברוך הוא עונה להם, מנין שנאמר (שמות ב/כג<sup>8</sup>) ויאנחו בני ישראל, וכן (דברים ד/ל<sup>9</sup>) בצר לך ומצאוך, כי א...ל רחום ה' א...ל'קיר, הוי זית רענן יפה פרי תואר.

And Yirmiya came to say, ‘The fresh and beautiful of form olive’?

But the olive was chosen because when it is on the tree it is pitted and then they take it down from the tree and they hit it. When they finish hitting it they put it in the olive press and grind it. Then they wrap it with ropes and bring heavy stones to weigh upon it and then the oil is produced.

---

<sup>8</sup> The entire verse reads:

וְיִהְיֶה בַיָּמִים הָרַבִּים הֵהֱם וַיָּמָת מֶלֶךְ מִצְרַיִם וַיָּאֲנֹחוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן הָעֲבֹדָה וַיִּזְעְקוּ וַתַּעַל שׁוֹעֲתָם אֶל הָאֱלֹהִים לִקְרֹא מִן הָעֲבֹדָה:

It was in those many days that the king of Egypt died and B'nei Yisroel sighed from the work and their cries went up to G-d from the work.

<sup>9</sup> The entire verse reads:

בְּצָר לְךָ וּמְצָאוּךָ כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים וְשָׁבָתָה עַד ה' א...ל'קיר וְשָׁמַעְתָּ בְּקוֹלִי:  
When there will be distress from you and all of this [bad] things find you at the end of days; you shall return to Hashem your G-d and you will listen to His voice.

So it is with Israel. The idolaters come and beat them from one place and another and they imprison them and they bind them and tie them up.

And then Israel repents and Hashem responds to them. How do we know that? As it says, 'B'nei Yisroel sighed.' Similarly, 'When you are distressed and all the bad finds you... because G-d is merciful'. That is, 'The fresh and beautiful of form olive.'

דבר אחר מה ראה ירמיה למשול אבותינו כזית אלא כל המשקין מתערבים זה בזה והשמן אינו מתערב אלא עומד כך ישראל אינם מתערבים עם העובדי כוכבים שנאמר (דברים ז/ג<sup>10</sup>) ולא תחתן בם,

Another explanation as to why Yirmiyahu saw fit to speak of Israel as an olive is that all liquids mix together but oil does not mix. Rather it remains separate. So it is with Israel – they do not intermingle with the idolaters as it says, 'do not marry them'.

דבר אחר כל המשקים אדם מערב בהם ואינו יודע איזה תחתון ואיזה עליון אבל השמן אפילו אתה מערבו בכל המשקין שבעולם הוא נתון למעלה מהן כך אבותינו בשעה שהיו עושים רצונו של מקום נצבים למעלה מן העובדי כוכבים שנאמר (דברים כח/א<sup>11</sup>) ונתנך ה' א...ל'קיר עליון, הוי זית רענן יפה פרי תואר... (ישעיה ס/ג<sup>12</sup>) והלכו גוים לאורך, לכן נקראו אבותינו זית רענן שהם מאירים לכל באמונתם, לכך אמר הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה ויקחו אליך שמן זית זך.

Another explanation –when a person mixes various liquids together, he does not know which liquid will go to the bottom and which to the top. But oil, even if you mix it with all of the liquids, the oil will be at the top. And so it

---

<sup>10</sup> The entire verse reads:

וְלֹא תִתְחַתְּנֵן בָּם בְּתֵךְ לֹא תִתֵּן לְבָנוּ וּבִתּוֹ לֹא תִקַּח לְבָנֶךָ:

Do not marry them; do not give your daughter to their son and their daughter do not take for your son.

<sup>11</sup> The entire verse reads:

וְהָיָה אִם שָׁמַעַתְּ שְׁמֵעַתְּ בְּקוֹל ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְשָׁמֵר לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת כָּל מִצְוֹתַי אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי מְצַוְךָ הַיּוֹם וְנִתְּנָךְ ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ עֲלֶיךָ עַל כָּל גּוֹי הָאָרֶץ:

It will be if you surely listen to the voice of Hashem, your G-d to guard, to do all that I command you today and I will place above all the nations of the earth.

<sup>12</sup> The entire verse reads:

וְהָלְכוּ גוֹיִם לְאוֹרְךָ וּמְלָכִים לְנֹגַהּ זְרָחֶךָ:

The nations will go by your light; kings by the brightness of your shine.

was with our fathers: when they did G-d's will they stand above the idolaters as it says, 'Hashem your G-d will place you above.' That is, 'the fresh olive, a fruit of beautiful form.'

The nations will go in your light. That is why our forefather were called a 'fresh olive' because they enlighten all with their faith in G-d.

That is why Hashem said to Moshe, 'take for you pure olive oil.'

Even though Israel is symbolized by many parts of nature, there was a specific reason for Yirmiya to choose the olive in his verse and thus a specific reason why the olive is used in our Parshas Tetzaveh.

The olive is rich in symbolism. Part of that symbolism provides a dire warning for Israel. Suffering is foretold; abuse and cruelty is their fate until they return to G-d.

The Midrash reminds us to recall the words of Bil'am when he said (B'mibar Perek 23/Posuk 9):

כִּי מֵרָאשׁ צִרִים אֶרְאֶנּוּ וּמִגְבְּעוֹת אֲשׁוּרֵנוּ הֵן עִם לְבַדָּד יִשְׁכֵּן וּבְגוֹיִם לֹא יִתְחַשְּׁב:

I will see them from the top of the mountains; I will view them from the hills; behold they are nation that dwells alone; they are not counted among the nations.

But even that separate existence does not meant that Israel is ignored. When they are in the company of the nations, the superiority of Israel is remarkable. They cannot be ignored; they are not ignored.

All this is the olive and the oil that it produces and that G-d said that it is for 'you', Moshe. Hashem did not address Moshe by name.

Perhaps the reason that Moshe is addressed as 'you', and not as Moshe, is so we do not think that this was a prophecy for Moshe Rabbenu's time alone, for his era and the duration of his four-decade rule.

Rather, Hashem addresses 'you', unnamed to say that such will be the history of Israel through the generations and we are part of that 'you' as well.

There will be suffering, calamitous situations and events. Those calamitous situations and events are not for naught. They have a purpose – Israel is able to return to G-d and He will accept us.

The challenge is mitigated by the nature of the olive. It remains separate and it is always ascendant.

The history of Israel testifies to its uniqueness. It is not as difficult to commit oneself to HaKodosh Boruch Hu when the evidence is plainly before us as when that evidence is hidden. We are provided with historical testimony that is clearly visible in each and every generation. The distinctiveness of Israel has never been doubted!

And what is the goal of taking that olive oil and kindling it? The final clause of our verse explains:

לְהַעֲלֹת נֵר תָּמִיד:

To raise for the eternal lamp.

Rashi writes:

להעלות נר תמיד - מדליק עד שתהא שלהבת עולה מאליה:

*To raise for the eternal lamp – One kindles it until the flame arises by itself.*

That is, it is not sufficient to place the match on the wick and make an insubstantial flame that may catch or may not catch. The requirement is to keep the match upon the wick until that the wick has completely become inflamed and has no need for an external kindling any longer.

The olive oil that is to be kindled must be empowered to produce its own light and its own energy. It must have a level of independence that allows its flame to go upward on its own.

Lighting the Menorah of olive oil is an act of empowerment.

And that act of empowerment has no better focus than on the holiday of Purim, as we learn in Megillas Esther.

There is a Name missing in the Megillah just like there is a name missing in Parshas Tetzveh.

The absence of the Name in the Megillah is far more grave and concerning than the absence of the name in Parshas Tetzaveh.

In Parshas Tetzaveh the name that is missing is that of Moshe Rabbenu.

In Megillas Esther the name that is missing is that of HaKodosh Boruch Hu!

And unlike Parshas Tetzaveh where Moshe Rabbenu's presence is clearly indicated by the *ואתה*, *and you*, with which the Parsha begins as well as the *אליך*, *to you*, with which that very first verse of the Parsha continues, the Megillah is bereft of reference to Hashem in a clear manner.

And what do we see about Am Yisroel in Megillas Esther in which the absence of G-d's Name which is indicative of the *הסתר פנים*, G-d's removal from our perception, as was foretold in Sefer D'vorim?

We read in Parshas Nitzavim (Perek 31/Posuk 18):

וְאֲנֹכִי הַסְתֵּיר אֶסְתִּיר פָּנַי בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא עַל כָּל הַרְעָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה כִּי פָנָה אֶל אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים:

I Hashem will certainly hide My Face on that day because all of the evil the Israel did, because Israel turned to other gods.

And we read at the end of Masseches Chullin (139):

אסתר מן התורה מנין? ואנכי הסתר אסתר

From where do we know about *Esther HaMalka* in the Torah? [From the verse,] I will certainly hide My face.

Now, we are aware of the disastrous effects of *Hester Ponim*. If G-d's Presence isn't palpable, how are we protected? If Am Yisroel is vulnerable in any case, what hope could there be for Israel when G-d's Face is hidden from us?

And yet, we read a remarkable dialogue in Megillas Esther (Perek 4/P'sukim 5-16) between Mordechai and Esther regarding the possibility of averting the terrible decree of Achasveirosh.

וַתִּקְרָא אֶסְתֵּר לְהַתֵּךְ מִסְרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר הֶעֱמִיד לְפָנֶיהָ וַתְּצַוֶּהוּ עַל מְרַדְכֵי לְדַעַת מֶה זֶה וְעַל מֶה זֶה: וַיֵּצֵא הַתֵּךְ אֶל מְרַדְכֵי אֶל רְחוּב הָעִיר אֲשֶׁר לְפָנֶי שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיִּגְדּוּ לוֹ מְרַדְכֵי אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר קָרָהוּ וְאֵת פְּרִשְׁת הַכֶּסֶף אֲשֶׁר אָמַר הֵמָּן לְשִׁקוּל עַל גִּנְזֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּיְהוּדִים לְאֲבָדָם: וְאֵת פְּתִשְׁגָּן כְּתָב הַדָּת אֲשֶׁר נָתַן בְּשׁוֹשָׁן לְהַשְׁמִידָם נָתַן לוֹ לְהִרְאוֹת אֶת אֶסְתֵּר וּלְהַגִּיד לָהּ וּלְצַוּוֹת עָלֶיהָ לְבֹא אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהִתְחַנֵּן לוֹ וּלְבַקֵּשׁ מִלְּפָנָיו עַל עַמָּהּ: וַיְבֹא הַתֵּךְ וַיִּגְדּוּ לְאֶסְתֵּר אֶת דְּבָרֵי מְרַדְכֵי: וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לְהַתֵּךְ וַתְּצַוֶּהוּ אֶל מְרַדְכֵי: כָּל עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְעַם מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ יוֹדְעִים אֲשֶׁר כָּל אִישׁ וְאִשָּׁה אֲשֶׁר יְבֹא אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל הַחֲצַר הַפְּנִימִית אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִקְרָא אַחַת דָּתוֹ לְהִמִּית לְבַד מֵאֲשֶׁר יוֹשִׁיט לוֹ

הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת שָׂרְבִיט הַזֶּהָב וְחָיָה וְאֲנִי לֹא נִקְרָאתִי לְבוֹא אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ זֶה שְׁלוֹשִׁים יוֹם: וַיִּגִּידוּ לְמֹרְדֵכָי אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֶסְתֵּר: וַיֹּאמֶר מֹרְדֵכָי לְהָשִׁיב אֶל אֶסְתֵּר אֵל תְּדַמֶּי בְּנִפְשָׁךְ לְהַמְלִיט בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ מִכָּל הַיְּהוּדִים: כִּי אִם הִחַרְשׁ תִּחְרִישִׁי בְּעַת הַזֹּאת רוּחַ וְהִצְלָה יַעֲמֹד לַיְּהוּדִים מִמָּקוֹם אַחֵר וְאֶת וּבֵית אָבִיךָ תִּאֲבֹדוּ וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ אִם לָעַת כָּזֹאת הִגַּעַת לְמַלְכוּת: וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לְהָשִׁיב אֶל מֹרְדֵכָי: יְיָ כִּנּוֹס אֶת כָּל הַיְּהוּדִים הַנִּמְצְאִים בְּשׁוּשָׁן וְצוּמוּ עָלַי וְאֵל תֹּאכְלוּ וְאֵל תִּשְׁתּוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים לִלְיָהּ וַיּוֹם גַּם אֲנִי וְנִעַרְתִּי אֲצוּם כֵּן וּבִכֵּן אָבוֹא אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לֹא כֹדֶת וְכֹאֲשֶׁר אֲבֹדְתִי אֲבֹדְתִי:

Esther called to *Ha'soch*, one of the servants of the king that the king gave to stand before her and she commanded him regarding Mordechai to know what this decree was and about it.

*Ha'soch* went out to Mordechai, to the street of the city that was before the gate of the king. Mordechai told him all that happened and the separating of the money that Homon said to pay to the treasury of the king regarding the Jews, to kill them. And the letter of the written decree that was given in Shushan to destroy them, he gave to him to show Esther and to tell her and to command upon her to come to the king to plead to him and to ask about her people from him.

*Ha'soch* came and told Esther the words of Mordechai. Esther said to *Ha'soch* and she commanded him regarding Mordechai: 'All of the servants of the king and the people in the countries of the king know that any man or woman who was not invited and who comes to the king, to the inner courtyard – there is one penalty – death, except for one to whom the king extends his golden scepter and he will live; but I have not been invited to the king these thirty days.'

Mordechai said to respond to Esther: 'Do not imagine to yourself that you will be able to escape from the house of the king, different than all of the other Jews. Because if you will be very silent at this time, expanse and salvation will come for the Jews from some other place and you and your father's house will perish. Who knows, if it was for this time that you came to royalty?'

Esther said to reply to Mordechai, 'Go and gather all of the Jews who are found in Shushan and fast for me and do not eat and do not drink for three days, night and day, and also I and my maidservants will fast the same way

and with this I will come to the king, against the law, and when I will perish, I will perish.'

From where did Mordechai HaYehudi receive his assurance that 'there will be salvation from some other place'?

What happened to Esther that she changed her mind and acquiesced to the command she receive from Mordechai and dared to go to the king when she wasn't invited?

Esther knew the stakes. She said, 'when I perish, I will perish'.

And Esther did not sense anything other than *Hester Ponim*.

Chazal attribute the twenty-second Perek of Tehillim of Dovid HaMelech to refer to Esther as she entered the palace of Achashveirosh. We read (P'sukim 1-4):

לְמַנְצֵחַ עַל אֵילַת הַשַּׁחַר מְזִמּוֹר לְדָוִד: אֲ... לִי אֲ... לִי לְמָה עֲזַבְתָּנִי רְחוּק מִשׁוּעָתִי דְבָרִי  
שָׁאֲגָתִי: אֲ... לִקִּי אֶקְרָא יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה וְלַיְלָה וְלֹא דוֹמִיָּה לִי: וְאַתָּה קְדוֹשׁ יוֹשֵׁב תְּהִלּוֹת  
יִשְׂרָאֵל:

For the conductor regarding the morning star<sup>13</sup>, a psalm of Dovid. My G-d, My G-d – why did You forsake me? My words that are crying out are distant from my salvation. My G-d, I call in the day and You do not answer me, at night, is it not silent for me? You Hashem are holy; You sit to receive the praises of Israel.

As Rashi writes, based on the Gemara in Masseches Megillah (4 a):

ורבותינו דרשוהו באסתר

Our Rabbis interpreted it to refer to Esther.

'G-d has abandoned me', Esther cries out. She is bereft; she feels alone.

What occurred to bring about this change – the instructions that Mordechai gave and the heroic response of Esther?

---

<sup>13</sup> The commentators offer alternative explanations to אילת השחר.

Even at times of *Hester Ponim*, when His Shechinah is not visible, HaKodosh Boruch has not forsaken us. Even when His Name is absent from the unfolding of history, He is there. From where do we learn this?

When Moshe Rabbenu is addressed in our Parshas Tetzveh as 'you', and not as Moshe, it is as if the 'you' is addressed to each and every one of us. Hashem told Moshe to take the literal olive oil.

But, Hashem is telling us to take the figurative olive oil and all it represents as we saw in the Midrash.

'Do not think', the Ribbono Shel Olom teaches us, 'that the events that will occur to Israel throughout the ages are random, without meaning and without reason. Even from My state of hiddenness, I G-d direct the world.

You may feel abandoned, and the events of history give support to that feeling, but objectively it is not true. I Hashem am the Director of History.'

Mordechai learned that lesson from our Parsha in which the hidden name of Moshe Rabbenu is an opportunity for all of us, individually and collectively. We are to learn the lesson of the olive and the oil. Embedded within Mordechai's words to Esther was that very same message that was spoken to all of us.

That is the message of this week's Haftarah of Parshas Zachor. Davka in the presence of Amalek, Sh'muel HaNovi gives a message to Israel for all generations, whether they be ones of *Gilui Ponim*, Revelation, or *Hester Ponim* (Sh'muel I Perek 15/Posuk 29):

וְגַם בְּצַח יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יִשְׁקַר וְלֹא יִנָּחַם כִּי לֹא אָדָם הוּא לְהִנָּחֵם:

The Eternal One of Israel will not speak falsely and will not regret; He is not man who regrets.

G-d's promise to Israel is eternal.

And so the Talmud Yerushalmi in Masseches Yoma (Perek 3/Halachah 2) teaches us:

דלמא רבי חייא רובה ורבי שמעון בן חלפתא הוו מהלכין בהדא בקעת ארבל בקריצתא ראו אילת השחר שבקע אורה אמר רבי חייא רובה לרבי שמעון בן חלפתא כך היא גאולתן של ישראל בתחילה קימעא קימעא כל שהיא הולכת היא הולכת ומאיר

מאי טעמא [מיכה ז/ח<sup>14</sup>] כי אשב בחשך ה' אור לי. כך בתחילה. [אסתר ב/כא<sup>15</sup>] ומרדכי יושב בשער המלך ואחר כך [שם ו/יא<sup>16</sup>] ויקח המן את הלבוש ואת הסוס וגו' ואחר כך [שם ח/טו<sup>17</sup>] ומרדכי יצא מלפני המלך בלבוש מלכות ואחר כך [שם טז<sup>18</sup>] ליהודים היתה אורה ושמחה.

An event: Rabi Chiya the Great and Rabi Shimon ben Chalafta were walking in the Arbel valley immediately prior to daybreak. They saw the *Ayelet HaShachar* – the morning star as its light pierced the sky. Rabi Chiya the Great said to Rabi Shimon ben Chalafta, 'Such is the redemption of Israel. At the beginning it comes little by little and it continues and then gives light. Why is this? It is as is written, "When I sit in darkness, Hashem gives light to me"'.  

---

<sup>14</sup> The entire verse reads:

אַל תִּשְׂמַחַי אִיבְתִּי לִי כִּי נָפַלְתִּי קָמְתִּי כִּי אֶשֶׁב בַּחֹשֶׁךְ ה' אֹר לִי:  
Do not be happy, you who became my enemy; I fell and I arose; when I will sit in darkness, Hashem gives me light.

<sup>15</sup> The entire verse reads:

בְּיָמִים הֵהֵם וּמָרְדֳּכָי יָשָׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ קֶצֶף בְּגִתָּן וְתֵרֶשׁ שְׁנֵי סְרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁמַרְי הַסֶּף וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ לְשַׁלַּח יָד בַּמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ:  
In those days, Mordechai was sitting at the gate of the king, Bigson and Teresh, two of the servants of the king, the guards of this threshold, who wished to assassinate the King Achashverosh.

<sup>16</sup> The entire verse reads:

וַיִּקַּח הֶמָּן אֶת הַלְּבוּשׁ וְאֶת הַסּוּס וַיַּלְבֵּשׁ אֶת מָרְדֳּכָי וַיַּרְכִּיבֵהוּ בְּרוּחוֹ הָעִיר וַיִּקְרָא לִפְנָיו כָּכָה יַעֲשֶׂה לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חֹפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ:  
Homon took the garments and the horse and he dressed Mordechai and he sat him upon the horse and led him riding in the city's street; he announced before him, 'So should be done for the man that the king desires his honor.

<sup>17</sup> The entire verse reads:

וּמָרְדֳּכָי יָצָא מִלְּפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּלְבוּשׁ מַלְכוּת תְּכֵלֶת וְחוּר וְעֶטְרַת זָהָב גְּדוּלָה וְתִכְרִיךְ בּוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן וְהָעִיר שׁוֹשֶׁן צְהֵלָה וְשִׂמְחָה:  
Mordechai went out from before the King with royal garments, beautifully colored and with a great golden crown and a linen and purple cloak; the city of Shushan was joyful and happy.

<sup>18</sup> The entire verse reads:

לְיְהוּדִים הָיְתָה אֹרָה וְשִׂמְחָה וְשִׂשׂוֹן וְיִקְרָ:  
For the Jews there was light and happiness and gladness and honor.

So in the beginning, “Mordechai sat only by the gate of the king” and then “Homon took the clothing and the horse” and then “Mordechai went out from before the king with royal garments” and then “there was light and happiness to the Jews”.

The revelation of the ‘King’ in Megillas Esther truly being HaKodosh Boruch Hu, as the Vilna Gaon explains, comes through the revelation of Parshas Tetzveh that teaches us to take the olive and use its oil to kindle and eternal light within us that will bring light on its own even when that light’s source is temporarily hidden.

When there are two months of Adar, not this year of course, there is a dispute in Chazal (Megilla 6 b) regarding in which month of Adar the Megillah is to read.

We know that Halachah is that it is read in the second Adar. However that Halachah conflicts with the principles of

מצוה הבאה לידיך – אל תחמיצנה

If a Mitzvah comes to you, don’t let it spoil [by postponing its fulfillment].

אין מעבירין על המצוות

One does not pass by a Mitzvah without fulfilling it.

Why then is the Megillah read during Adar Sheini? The Gemara responds:

מסמך גאולה לגאולה עדיף

To place the redemption of Purim next to the redemption of Pesach has precedence.

When we appreciate the redemption of Purim, when we see the Guiding Hand of the Master of the Universe and see our own hand in overcoming the challenges that confront us, we move ever closer to the גאולה שלימה.

Shabbat Shalom

Purim Sameach

Rabbi Pollock