



# PURIM

*POCKET TORAH*



Inspiring the Jewish Future



**DARE** TO BE DARING:  
WHEN **CHUTZPAH** IS A  
GOOD THING

Chutzpah has always been a Jewish characteristic. Our parents might not like it, but sometimes we need chutzpah to get what we want.

**Queen Esther's chutzpah is what saved the Jews on Purim.** The rule in Persia was that NO ONE may approach the king unless the king called them first. But Esther was desperate. Her people were in danger. The entire future of the Jewish people was resting on her shoulders. So she took the plunge.

This type of chutzpah is called **“holy chutzpah.”** Chutzpah means overstepping your boundaries. If Esther would have stayed meekly within her boundaries, she would never have succeeded in saving the Jews. But **her willingness to be daring** is what saved her entire Jewish nation from death.

We, too, need to tap into our “holy chutzpah” to get what we need. We cannot accept our spiritual realities passively; rather, we must take initiative and insist on making the changes and steps toward growth that we hope to see.

So be bold and ask G-d for whatever you need, even if you're not sure you deserve it. Or take that first step to forge a relationship with a mentor who can help you grow. **The only way to achieve greatness is by pushing yourself beyond your limits.**



SPIRITUAL IN THE  
**MORNIN'** SPIRITUAL  
IN THE **EVENIN'**  
SPIRITUAL AT  
**SUPPER TIME.**

**Purim** is a day of food, joy, and parties. **Yom Kippur** is a day of fasting and serious contemplation. The two days are as different as night and day.

In an unexpected twist, the Vilna Gaon points out that Yom Kippur is called “Yom Kippurim” which can be translated as, “**A day like Purim.**”

What on earth? How is Yom Kippur like Purim? They seem like total opposites!

Yom Kippur is a day when we can focus on spirituality for 25 hours straight. There is no eating, no drinking, no wearing comfortable shoes. Just a single-minded focus on prayer, teshuva, and spirituality.

But Judaism is not about being holy on just one day a year. Rather, G-d wants us to inject holiness into **every single day of lives** by talking to G-d on a frequent basis, treating our friends with respect, and doing mitzvos whenever we can. On Purim, we practice this by using physical, mundane things (food, money, and gifts) to fulfill G-d's will **Purim and Yom Kippur are both days of total spirituality.**

On Yom Kippur, we act spiritual by avoiding the physical, whereas on Purim we act spiritual by using the physical (food and money) to fulfill G-d's will.



Like

LIFE IS NOT A  
**POPULARITY** CONTEST.  
YOU CAN'T  
WIN 'EM ALL.

Mordechai, the leader. The savior of the Jews. An exceedingly righteous man. Who wouldn't love Mordechai?

At the very end of the Megillah, it says: "And Mordechai the Jew was second-in-command to King Achashveirosh... and pleasing to **most of his brothers.**"

**Most?** Why not all? Didn't Mordechai just save the entire Jewish people? How could anyone NOT like Mordechai?

Our Rabbis say the Megillah is teaching us an important lesson here: **You can't be loved by everyone.** There's always going to be someone who finds fault with you, no matter how hard you try to avoid it. Even the nicest guy on the block will have people who get annoyed by him or are jealous of him sometimes.

You can't please everyone.

Just keep doing your best to be friendly and sensitive to other people, but realize that ultimately, winning people over is simply out of your hands. Do your best to be nice, and if some can't appreciate it, don't sweat it too much.



TOGETHER AS **ONE**

When Haman convinced Achashveirosh to agree to wipe out the Jewish people, Haman described the Jews as “Muzar U'Meforad - scattered and separate.”

The Sfas Emes says this was an indictment of our people - **we weren't as united as we should have been.**

The remedy comes later on in the Megilla, when Esther directs Mordechai, “Leich K'nos Es Kol HaYehudim... - Go and **gather all the Jews**, and ask them to fast on my behalf.”

In order for G-d to save us from Haman's evil decree, we had to first learn the lesson of **unity**. Indeed, in the merit of the Jews gathering together in prayer and fasting, Haman's evil plot was thwarted, and the Jewish people were saved.

Today, when we celebrate Purim, we make sure to remember this important lesson about unity by giving gifts to our friends. The whole point of shalach manos is to **increase friendship and unity**. The power of our unity can bring about our ultimate redemption from our current exile, too, just as unity was what saved us from Haman's decree in the times of Purim.



**MISPLACED MERCY  
IS ACTUALLY  
CRUELTY**

The Purim story could have been avoided hundreds of years before it happened.

King Shaul, the first king of Israel, was commanded by G-d to wipe out the entire nation of Amalek, the sworn enemies of the Jewish people. **But in a burst of mercy, King Shaul decided to spare the life of Agag, king of Amalek.**

Fast forward a bunch of years, and the descendant of Agag - named Haman - is very nearly successful in destroying the nation of Shaul's descendants - the Jewish people. For this mistake, Shaul loses the kingship and is replaced by King David.

**Misplaced mercy is actually cruelty.**

Holding yourself back from rebuking a child who steals will allow him to grow up to be a dishonest person. Being “merciful” to a murderer by letting him go free from jail might just enable him to kill more people.

It's great to be nice, as long you keep your head on straight. A “big-picture” perspective is important in making the right decision.



GOOD OR BAD?

**FLIPPING** IT

UPSIDE-DOWN.

Esther is taken to the palace: **BAD**. But ultimately, Esther's position as queen is what lets her save the Jewish people: **GOOD**. Haman builds gallows to hang Mordechai: **BAD**. But ultimately, Haman is hanged on those very same gallows: **GOOD**. Haman chooses 13 Adar as the day to annihilate the Jews: **BAD**. But ultimately, the 13th of Adar is switched to a day when the Jews defeat their enemies: **GOOD**. What's going on?

The story of Purim is trying to teach us a vital lesson: **Events or life circumstances that seem bad, might actually turn out to be good.** You can't look at life's circumstances in a vacuum. Good takes perspective and time to be realized.

In fact "Baruch Mordechai" (Blessed is Mordechai) and "Arur Haman" (Cursed is Haman) have the same gematria (numerical value) in Hebrew. Because in truth, **they are the same**; the "bad" events and "good" events all come from the same one G-d. A G-d who knows what's best for us, and can manipulate world events such that even the most terrifying events can be turned upside-down for our benefit.

This is the theme of Purim that we know as **V'Nahafoch Hu.**



APPRECIATING  
**DIFFERENCES:**  
YOUR **UNIQUE**  
PATH TO SUCCESS

Purim is a holiday of unity. We collectively defeated Haman and we recognize the role of unity by giving each other shalach manos and supporting the poor in our community.

Strangely, however, the first Mishna in Megillah explains that the holiday of Purim was celebrated on different days, depending on whether you lived in the city or in the suburbs. Even now, Purim is celebrated on a different day in Jerusalem than in the rest of the world.

Why would a holiday highlighting unity be celebrated on different days? **Wouldn't it be more fitting if we celebrated the holiday of unity together?**

Unity, Purim reminds us, is not about conformity. **Unity requires celebrating our differences.** We can celebrate this holiday of unity on different days because unity demands that we recognize the unique strengths and differences of every individual. **Every person has their own path in life.** We don't all celebrate Purim on the same day to emphasize that unity allows for different expressions and paths. The unity of Purim is a celebration of everyone's individual path through life.



FIND YOUR  
INNER **FRAGRANCE**

One of the most interesting ideas on Purim is to drink wine. In the Gemara, it says that you have to “**besumei**” - meaning “drink wine” - until you don’t know the difference between Blessed is Mordechai and Cursed is Haman. But “besumei” could actually mean something else.

In more commonly-used hebrew, **Boh’sem means fragrance** (related to the sweet-smelling “besamim” we smell at Havdallah). According to that translation, the Gemara is actually telling us to “**apply fragrance**” until we don’t know the **difference between Mordechai and Haman**. What does that mean?

When something doesn’t have a smell or even smells bad, applying some kind of perfume is a common way to make it smell better. If you continue to spray something, eventually it’ll smell fantastic, even if it didn’t before. One of the most important ideas on Purim is to connect to a sense of inner confidence and spirituality - even if we’re not used to it. **Even if you feel like you’re the worst Jew out there, Purim is the time to see ourselves in a new light.** If we start today and add perfume... Torah... prayer... then regardless of who we think we might have been, we can smell... and feel great.



**HAMENTASHEN AND  
THE SECRET OF THE  
COVERED FILLINGS**

Why do we eat Hamentashen on Purim? You may have heard about Haman's triangular hat... or Haman's ears... but what does it all really mean?

If you would look at a regular cookie with a topping like icing, it looks circular and you can clearly see what's on top. But if you would pinch the sides and turn the circle into a triangle, you could suddenly **cover up the good stuff on top.**

In the first Temple, the Jews witnessed **open miracles** on a daily basis which proved to them that G-d was constantly in their midst. (For example, the Lechem HaPanim bread stayed fresh for the entire week and didn't go stale.) When the first Temple was destroyed, the Jews no longer saw these daily open miracle, which made it harder to believe in G-d.

Then the Purim story happened. The Jews were miraculously saved... but there were no open miracles at all. It all kind of seemed... natural. **No open miracles were performed** to make Esther the queen, or to hang Haman. The Hamentashen remind us that even when we only see the regular boring old cookie... on the inside, there is a delicious filling hiding. **G-d is always running miracles behind the scenes.**



WE CAN BE **SAVED** BY  
**UNITY** THAT KNOWS  
NO BOUNDS

Can you imagine a world where all the Jews agree to do the same thing all at once? What if that thing we all did was unimaginable, even according to the Torah?

We learn in the Megillah that as part of their repentance process back in Persia, **the entirety of the Jewish people fasted for 3 days - including the first days of Pesach!** It is a huge mitzvah from the Torah to eat matzah on the first day of Pesach, and the Jews missed that opportunity.

If that happened, they must have been REALLY convinced that they had a lot of work to do to build their spirituality back to a proper level.

Can you imagine if **all** the Jewish people at once would admit that we have to work on ourselves as people? As friends? As children of Hashem? If we could find some way to have such a **sweeping, collective feeling of brotherhood and agreement**, then we'd reach the true joy of Purim.



**HIDE AND SEEK:**  
**REVEALING**  
**THROUGH HIDING**

What's the best way to introduce yourself?

G-d introduced himself to the Jewish people at Sinai with the words, "**Anochi** Hashem Elokecha - **I am** G-d, Your Lord." Seems like a typical introduction.

There's another time in Tanach where "Anochi" is used. When describing the suffering that will befall the Jewish people if they don't keep G-d's commandments, G-d says, "V'**Anochi** Hasteir Astir Panai Bayom Hahu - I will hide My Face on that day."

On Purim, G-d revealed Himself by hiding. G-d didn't do any open miracles in the Purim story, and yet, when you look closely at the events in retrospect, you can see that the Hand of G-d was guiding the story all along.

Sometimes we can find lost objects by turning on the lights. **On Purim, we found G-d by seeing through the darkness.** And a vision that can pierce darkness can never be obstructed. The vision of Purim can see no matter the circumstance, no matter the eclipse. Such a vision lasts forever.

On Purim, we learned to see G-d even when He is hiding.

The image features a teal background with two white hands reaching towards each other. One hand is positioned higher and further to the right, while the other is lower and further to the left, creating a sense of upward and outward movement.

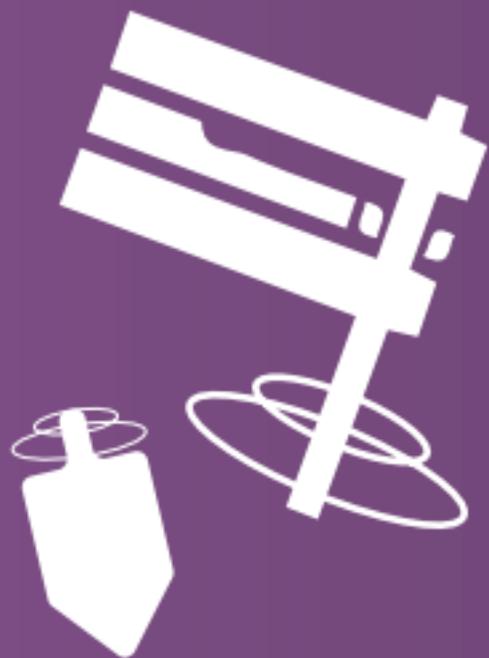
PURIM IS THE BEST  
TIME TO **REACH THE  
KING...** AND FOR THE  
KING TO **REACH BACK**

Esther ended up being the Queen of the Persian Empire, and yet was not as close to the king as we'd expect. If you even LOOKED at King Achashveirosh in the wrong way, you could lose your head!

In order to save the Jewish people, Mordechai told Esther that she had to work up her courage and trust that Hashem had put her in that position ONLY to be able to make a difference. She went into the King's chambers and put her life at risk... and to her tremendous relief, **Achashveirosh listened and accepted her request!**

On Purim, we have an obligation to give charity to ANYONE who reaches out their hand and asks for it. The Amshinover Rebbe teaches that this is because just like Esther made requests from King Achashveirosh, **our King in Heaven (G-d) is willing and ready to listen to our requests, and fulfill them, especially on this special day of Purim.** G-d is eager to reach out and give us whatever we want.

So grab the opportunity. Reach out to your King and ask for whatever your heart desires.



GROGGERS ARE SPUN  
FROM **BELOW** AND  
DREIDELS ARE SPUN  
FROM **ABOVE.**

There are two concepts in life that are hard to combine: How is it that G-d can know everything, and yet we have the ability to choose our own path? This is one of the hardest ideas in Judaism to comprehend, which is why we only focus on them one at a time.

On **Purim**, we spin noise-making **groggers** – holding them from below – to remind ourselves that our lives and the **decisions** we make play an important role in the evolution of spirituality in the world. I am important and I can make a difference.

On **Chanukah**, we consider the opposite message: We spin **dreidels** from their tops to remind us that no matter what happens in life – it's all for the absolute good with great care and lovingness from Hashem.

There is one thing, however, that can be spun from **both above and below** – and that's a **Torah scroll**. Torah is the guide that can help us understand in our lives how both of these things can be true – that Hashem has a meaningful and worthwhile plan for the world, and I can find my own place within it.