

OHRNET

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

TURNING FAITH INTO TRUTH

"And they will make for Me a Mikdash and I will dwell among them." (25:8)

Someone stops you on the street and says, "Do you believe in G-d?" "Of course I do!" you say. Probably up to that minute the last thing you were thinking about was G-d.

Maybe you were thinking about your overdraft, or what you were going to buy your wife for your twenty-fifth wedding anniversary, or what you were going to have for dinner.

Many are the thoughts that pass through our minds — and few of them are of G-d.

I'm not talking about when we're praying, although I'm not sure how many of us would score more than four out of ten when it comes to *kavana* (concentration) even in prayer. What I'm talking about is a feeling of holiness, of closeness to G-d.

We believe that G-d fills the entire universe, that He sustains everything every single second. But how much of our lives is filled with a palpable awareness of the Divine?

"*Avodat Hashem*" — Divine Service — is about turning "Faith" into "Truth".

We can go through life with a bagful of unexamined, untested and un-lived "beliefs" which never really impinge on the "truths" by which we conduct our existence.

"Make for me a Mikdash..."

The word Mikdash comes from the root *kodesh*, meaning "holy". G-d tells us to connect everything we do to Him; that all our actions should be done with the awareness that we are in this world to elevate ourselves; that we are here to make ourselves a fit "dwelling" for the Divine Presence.

The more we focus on our everyday actions and think, "G-d and only G-d is giving me the power to do this action," the more we will realize, "Therefore I must dedicate my actions to becoming someone who is kinder, more thoughtful, less selfish, less conceited, less angry, less lazy, and less indulgent — because that's what He wants me to be; because that is why he is giving me the strength to do this action."

The more we use the minutiae of our lives to create a "Holy Space" — "*Make for me a Mikdash*" — the more G-d will respond by filling us with feelings of closeness to Him. "*And I will dwell within them.*"

• Sources: *Sfat Emet*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

G-d commands Moshe to build a Mishkan (Sanctuary) and supplies him with detailed instructions. The Children of Israel are asked to contribute precious metals and stones, fabrics, skins, oil and spices. In the Mishkan's outer courtyard are an altar for the burnt offerings and a laver for washing. The Tent of Meeting is divided by a curtain into two chambers. The outer chamber is accessible only to the *kohanim*, the descendants of Aharon. This con-

tains the table of showbreads, the *menorah*, and the golden altar for incense. The innermost chamber, the Holy of Holies, may be entered only by the *kohen gadol*, and only once a year, on Yom Kippur. Here is the Ark that held the Ten Commandments inscribed on the two tablets of stone that G-d gave to the Jewish nation on Mount Sinai. All of the utensils and vessels, as well as the construction of the Mishkan, are described in great detail.

KETUVOT 23 - 29

“A non-kohen who says *birkat kohanim* (“the priestly blessing”) is transgressing a positive Torah mitzvah.”

Rashi explains that this is learned from the verse (Num. 6:22-27), “This is how you (*kohanim*) will bless the Jewish People...” The intent is that this *beracha* is a mitzvah only for a *kohen* to say, but is forbidden for a non-*kohen* to say. (See Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 128:1 where the Rema cites this prohibition.)

However, the widespread custom is that even a non-*kohen* says this *beracha* on occasion, such as when parents bless their children on Friday night and prior to Yom Kippur. The Chafetz Chaim in his commentary *Bi'ur Halacha* records that it was the custom to bless a person setting out to travel with *birkat kohanim* and asks how this could be permitted. He insists that since it was a widespread custom it must be permitted. He reasons that it is permitted since the one saying this *beracha* is not fulfilling the Torah mitzvah of *birkat kohanim* and therefore he is not transgressing. And although he may not have had explicit intent *not* to fulfill the mitzvah, it is considered as if he had intent *not* to fulfill the mitzvah since he is saying *birkat kohanim* not as part of a prayer service.

• Ketuvot 24b

“These people believed to testify when they become adults about what they saw as minors... a certain person went from school to the mikveh to be able to eat *teruma* at night...”

The *gemara* on this *mishna* explains that this statement in our *mishna* refers to testimony that would permit eating food that is *teruma* according to rabbinical law (such as apples and oranges), but not food that is *teruma* by Torah law (such as grapes, grains, or olives). The *inference* from this *mishna* is that a person may testify only when he becomes an adult even regarding a matter of rabbinical law — *teruma d'rabbanan* — but may not testify while he is still a minor.

Tosefot poses an apparent contradiction. Why is a minor's testimony not accepted to permit a person to be considered a *kohen* for the purpose of eating *teruma d'rabbanan*, whereas we learn in the *gemara* in Pesachim (4b) that a minor is indeed believed to testify that a house has been checked for chametz, also a mitzvah *d'rabbanan*?

The difference, explains Tosefot, is that checking for chametz (“*bedikat chametz*”) is something that is within the power of the minor to do and accomplish. Therefore the Rabbis who instituted the requirement to check for chametz also determined that a minor has the credibility to testify that it was done. Other commentaries explain that he is believed to testify only if he says that he actually did the *bedikat chametz*. Another approach is that *bedikat chametz* is something that is done yearly in every home, and every person — including a minor — has great awareness of what is involved. Accordingly, even a minor is careful and serious about the matter and is therefore believed.

• Ketuvot 28a

LOVE OF THE LAND

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

GOREN ARAVNA — BEGINNING OF THE BEIT HAMIKDASH

When a plague struck the Jewish People as punishment for the census conducted by their king, a message from G-d was conveyed to David by the Prophet Gad: “Go up and build an altar to G-d on the threshing floor of Aravna the Jebusite.” (Shmuel II 24:18)

King David was welcomed by Aravna, who offered everything he needed for building and equipping such an



altar. But David insisted on purchasing the site and the animals that were sacrificed upon it, bringing an end to the plague.

It was on this purchased site that the Beit Hamikdash was built by David's son, Shlomo. This is one of three sites, say our Sages, whose Jewish ownership cannot be disputed since it was actually purchased.

PARSHA Q&A ?

1. How many types of items were the Jews to donate?
2. The donation of silver for the Mishkan differed from the donation of the other items. How?
3. What property do *techelet* and *argaman* share that *orot eilim m'adamim* do not share?
4. What property do the above three share that *shesh* and *orot techashim* do not share?
5. Onkelos translates "*tachash*" as "*sasgona*." Why?
6. What kind of trees did Yaakov plant in Egypt?
7. Describe two uses of: 1) oil, 2) spices, 3) jewels.
8. The *aron* was made with three boxes, one inside the other. Exactly how tall was the outer box?
9. Why is the Torah referred to as "testimony"?
10. What did the faces of the *keruvim* resemble?
11. On what day of the week was the *lechem hapanim* baked?
12. What does *miksha* mean?
13. What was the purpose of the *menorah's* *gevi'im* (cups)?
14. How did Moshe know the shape of the *menorah*?
15. What designs were embroidered into the tapestries of the Mishkan?
16. What is meant by "standing wood"?
17. How long was the Mishkan?
18. How wide was the interior of the Mishkan?
19. Why was the altar coated with *nechoshet*?
20. Which function did the copper *yeteidot* serve?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to This Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 25:2 - 13.
2. 25:3 - No fixed amount of the other items was required. The silver was given as a fixed amount: a half-shekel.
3. 25:4,5 - They are wool; *orot eilim* are not.
4. 25:4,5 - They are dyed; *shesh* and *orot techashim* are not.
5. 25:5 - The *tachash* delights (*sas*) in its multi-colors (*g'vanim*).
6. 25:5 - *Arazim* — cedars.
7. 25:6-7: 1) The oil was lit in the *menorah* and used for anointing. 2) The spices were used in the anointing oil and for the incense. 3) The precious stones were for the *ephod* and the *choshen*.
8. 25:11 - The outer box was one and a half *amot* plus a *tefach* plus a little bit, because it rose a little bit above the *kaporet*. (The *kaporet* was a *tefach* thick — see 25:17).
9. 25:16 - It testifies that G-d commanded us to keep the *mitzvot*.
10. 25:18 - The faces of children.
11. 25:29 - Friday.
12. 25:31 - Hammered.
13. 25:31 - Purely ornamental.
14. 25:40 - G-d showed Moshe a *menorah* of fire.
15. 26:1 - On one side a lion; on the other side an eagle.
16. 26:15 - The wooden beams were to be upright and not stacked one upon the other.
17. 26:16 - 30 *amot*.
18. 26:23 - 10 *amot*.
19. 27:2 - To atone for brazenness.
20. 27:19 - They secured the curtains against the wind.

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Rav Bulman *zt"l*
on the
Torah Portion of the Week

Alarbanel

ON PARSHAT TERUMA

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

The section of the Tabernacle outside of the Holy of Holies contained three objects: the table, the menorah and the golden incense altar. These three objects represent three different types of reward that G-d grants to those who observe the commandments.

The first type of reward, material wealth and honor, is represented by the table, which was made of pure gold and always contained twelve loaves of bread. Gold represents honor, while the bread symbolizes the Divine Providence that insures the material success of the Jewish People. Each level of the table was rimmed by a gold border or “crown” which symbolized G-d’s protecting our honor even when His Divine protection is hidden, i.e. when the righteous suffer and the evil prosper. The number twelve hints at numerous things: the twelve tribes, the twelve months of the year, the twelve signs of the Zodiac — all of which symbolize G-d’s constant involvement in the physical world.

The second type of reward, knowledge and wisdom, is symbolized by the menorah. As it states in Proverbs (2:6), “For G-d grants wisdom; from His mouth comes knowledge and understanding.” This is the earthly reward granted to man’s soul. The seven flames represent the seven branches of wisdom which are found in the Torah. The flames incline toward the middle flame which was opposite the Holy of Holies. This is to indicate that all the other wisdoms defer to the one true wisdom of the Torah resting in the Holy of Holies. The menorah was fashioned from pure gold to indicate that G-d’s wisdom is pure and unadulterated by false ideas. The cups, knobs, and flowers on each branch indicate that all of the branches of wisdom are derived from each other and interconnected. Each one is a preparation for the other. The menorah was also fashioned from only one piece of pure gold to indicate the total unity of all knowledge, wisdom and understanding through the Torah. This metaphor also appears in the reference to the wise woman in Proverbs 9:1: “With all forms of wisdom did

she build her house; she carved out its seven pillars.” There is only one house, but there were seven different skills that were required for its construction.

The third type of reward, the eternal existence of the soul and its connection to G-d after death, is symbolized by the golden altar. The smoke that rises upwards represents the soul, which also “rises” after death. This altar was not connected to either the menorah or the table to symbolize that the reward of eternal existence is not acquired through wealth and honor, or through knowledge and wisdom, but rather through the true unifying of the self with the Torah. To indicate that this reward is the highest and most valuable, the Kohen Gadol on Yom Kippur took the incense and placed it on the ark. The Kohen lit the incense morning and evening, and it was referred to as a “continual incense” — another indication of the eternal existence of the soul. It is also referred to as “holy of holies to G-d”, an expression notably absent from the services of the table and the menorah. This eternal and pure spiritual reward is totally different from the other two. Finally, even though the incense altar is referred to as the golden altar, it was not fashioned from pure gold. Rather, it was made of wood with a gold covering. This indicates that it is by means of our earthly physical existence — which is as ephemeral as wood — that we can obtain the priceless eternity that the gold covering symbolizes.

These three types of reward are also contained in the Kohen Gadol’s blessing of the people: “May G-d bless you and safeguard you” is a reference to material success and physical safety. “May he illuminate His countenance for you and be gracious to you” refers to the illumination of wisdom and knowledge and the fact that G-d’s granting them to us is an example of His graciousness. “May He turn his countenance to you and establish for you peace” is a reference to the only true peace — the connection of the soul to G-d after death.

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REWARD OF PUNISHMENT

From: Laura

Dear Rabbi,
There's something that's bothering me that I hope you can clarify. I'm uncomfortable with the strong emphasis on punishment and Divine retribution in the Torah. Does the reason for doing G-d's will have to be so based on fear? Can't we serve G-d out of love?

Dear Laura,

This is a very important question; thanks for asking it.

For starters, please recall that the "Shema" which we recite twice daily as a testimony to our belief in G-d and commitment to do His will begins with the injunction, "You shall love the L-rd your G-d with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might". This clearly defines love for G-d as the basis for believing in and serving Him.

However, love is not always enough to ensure fidelity. Sometimes a person may not feel love, or might not feel it enough, or might not be motivated to action or to refrain from action because of it, or might be attracted in other directions despite of it, etc. For these reasons and more, the incentive to serve G-d out of love is qualified with a reminder that service is not contingent on feeling but is rather a requirement.

Therefore the Torah is replete with promises of reward and warnings for punishment as a result of either fulfilling or transgressing G-d's commandments.

That being said, there are two clarifications which might make punishment more "palatable" to you.

First, the Jewish notion of punishment is not punitive but rather to purify. G-d does not desire retribution for our misdeeds but rather that we become aware of them, repent them and restore our latent purity. This is the meaning of such verses as, "He who G-d loves, He chastises" (Prov. 3:11), and "G-d does not desire the death of the wicked but rather that he repent and live" (Ez. 33:11).

Accordingly, the purpose of punishment is not to cause suffering per se, but to point one toward the path of repentance, purity and reconciliation.

Second, on a deeper level, punishment is not brought upon us from a spiteful G-d, but rather we construct the matrix of our own suffering. G-d created the world such that the positive energy we create through Torah and *mitzvot* is preserved for us to enjoy, while the harmful energy we create through transgression encompasses us in negativity. Simply put: we punish ourselves.

According to this understanding, the Torah's warnings of punishment are really the Loving G-d's imploring us not to harm ourselves.

This perception provides a unique insight into the quintessential example of punishment – the prohibition and repercussion of Adam's prematurely experiencing the knowledge of good and evil.

When G-d warned, "But of the Tree of Knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat of it, for on the day that you eat thereof, you shall surely die" (Gen. 2:17), He was not frightening them with death for transgressing, but rather foretelling the result of polluting themselves with impurity. Since G-d desired their self-perfection, rebellious sin would require effecting that perfection through the more circuitous route of death and resurrection.

And this explains on a deeper level the connection of their subsequent expulsion from Eden to the Tree of Life: "Behold, Man has become like one of us, having the ability of knowing good and evil, and now, lest he stretch forth his hand and take also from the Tree of Life and eat and live forever" (Gen. 3:22). G-d was not banishing them in His fury, but rather compassionately ensuring that, after sinning, immortality would not preclude the perfection which, post-sin, could only be achieved through the purification of body and soul through death and rebirth.

So the warning of mortality was not in order to torment, but rather to protect Man from himself. Similarly, the result of exile was not to spite, but rather to enable Man to perfect himself despite himself.

This explanation of the prototype of transgression and punishment thus provides a basis for comprehending it in all its future manifestations.

Sources:

- Tomer Devora, Ch. 1, attribute 2
- Nefesh HaChaim, Gate 1, in glosses to Ch. 6

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SHEMONEH ESREI — TENTH BLESSING: PART 3

“Gather us together” — Two Redemptions

Since we already asked for redemption in the seventh blessing why do we ask for it again here in the tenth blessing?

According to Rashi the idea of redemption in the seventh blessing does not refer to the general redemption of the Jewish People from their current exile. Rather, it is a request from G-d for rescue from distress and misfortune that befall a person in daily life. It is for this reason that the word “redeem” (*go’el*) is in the present tense, hinting to the daily help we receive from G-d, saving us from our troubles.

But the question still remains. Why are two separate blessings needed?

A person should long for the final redemption, beseeching G-d each day to hasten its arrival. However, since we may be lacking the necessary merit for this, it is also necessary to pray for our physical wellbeing while we are still in exile, i.e. in a world where G-d’s presence is “concealed” from us.

If we were to turn to G-d in our current exile, using our freedom and resources to serve Him instead of betraying Him, He would surely relieve us from our distress. This is similar to the climax of the Purim story. Although the Jews were rescued from physical harm, they still remained in exile.

Moreover, just as Yaakov lived out his final days exiled in

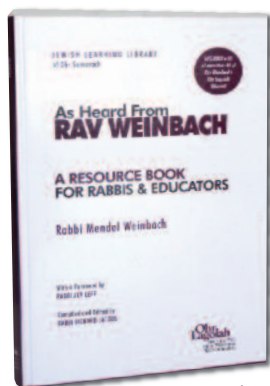
Egypt amidst peace and tranquility, so too, through prayer and *teshuva* we may become worthy to live a more tranquil life and experience great wealth and comfort. For the life of our Forefathers are examples of what can and will be for their descendants.

Since asking for a better life in the place where one is presently is a separate request from asking for the exile to end, these requests were divided into separate blessings.

Body and Soul

Another explanation for mentioning redemption in both the seventh and tenth blessings is that they refer to two different aspects of the same redemption. The first refers to the body, while the latter the soul (Rabbi Meir ben Gabay, 1480-1540, in his famous work on kabbala called *Avodat Hakodesh*). This approach, based on a precise reading of the Talmud, contends that both blessings were established for the final redemption, which ultimately is a story of the freedom of the body from its servitude, and the soul from its confines.

According to the above we can explain the phrase “Gather us together from the four corners of the earth” to refer to the unification or purification of the body that was formed from the four corners of the earth.



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RABBI NAFTALI WAINER

Graduate of Ohr Lagolah (2012)
Teacher at Hirsch Lyons High School, Johannesburg
National Rabbi, SAUJS
(South African Union of Jewish Students)

After graduating from Ohr Lagolah — Ohr Somayach's rabbinic, *kiruv* and teaching program — Rabbi Naftali Wainer returned to his native South Africa to channel his energies primarily in his work as a high school teacher at Hirsch Lyons Girl's High School. He is not only the Torah-teaching Rabbi, but also the art teacher. Being responsible for the décor of the school, Rabbi Wainer ensures that the walls of the school are always full of bright, colorful and educational material, extending the learning beyond the classroom. With the growing development of technology and the influence that it has on education, someone needs to constantly make sure that everything technological is up-to-date and running smoothly. This also falls under his jurisdiction. Rabbi Wainer comments, "I feel that even if my students are not focused on their learning in my Torah classes, at least through colorful posters or interac-



tive media I have taught and influenced them positively in some way."

Outside of school, Rabbi Wainer serves as *gabbai* and gives *shiurim* at his local shul, "Kehillas Shomer Emunim". As National Rabbi for SAUJS, Rabbi Wainer has met and engaged with some amazing people through Shabbatons and Shabbat meals at home, and has had his eyes opened wide to what is out there in the big, wide world outside of our "Jewish community-bubbles" by his regular SAUJS encounters.

Rabbi Wainer also teaches grooms-to-be, preparing them for marriage. Most of these men are removed from "yiddishkeit", allowing for a personal and open forum for discussion, engaging not only with what they need to know about married life, but also about "Jewish life".

In his "spare time" Rabbi Wainer is studying for a degree in Psychology and Anthropology at the University of South Africa.

He sums it up: "All in all, I really feel and believe that Ohr Lagolah launched me into probably the most fulfilling lifestyle that I could imagine possible."

SEASONS - Then and Now

BY RABBI CHAVIV DANESH

ADAR, HAPPINESS AND LAUGHTER

Describing the month of Adar, the Talmud explicitly mentions the direct connection between Adar and happiness, as it says: "When the month of Adar enters we increase happiness." We are also taught that the month of Adar corresponds to the experience of laughter. This needs to be understood. In Nissan we were redeemed from Egypt and in Sivan we were given the Torah, and yet there isn't a specific mitzvah to increase happiness in these months. What is special about the month of Adar that requires us to increase happiness? In order to understand the essence of the month of Adar we need to first examine the intrinsic connection between laughter and happiness, and then try to find their link to this month as a whole.

The first place where we encounter the idea of laughter in the Torah is Sarah's reaction to the prophecy that she will

have a child at the age of ninety. Describing Sarah's response the verse says, "And Sarah laughed to herself saying: 'After I have shriveled will I once again have fine skin? And my husband is old!' (Gen. 18:12)" The Torah clearly tells us that what triggered laughter within Sarah was the unexpected coming together of opposites. The idea of her aged body creating life was so ironic that she could not hold back her laughter. The punch line of a joke represents this idea beautifully; the more unexpected and out of place the punch line is, the funnier the joke. This is the essential cause of the experience of laughter.

Anyone who has experienced true laughter knows that laughter is usually accompanied by a feeling of happiness. This phenomenon needs to be analyzed, especially in light of the fact that at times it can even be something silly or unfor-

continued on page eight

SEASONS - *Then and Now*

Adar, Happiness and Laughter, continued from page seven

tunate that succeeds in bringing out laughter. For example, imagine a very dignified lecturer walking over to the podium to deliver a speech. On his way, he trips and falls down face first into the three-decker cake that was lying on a nearby table. This sudden and unexpected turn of events triggers laughter in many of those who witness it. The bizarre response of laughter and a feeling of happiness to situations such as this obviously require explanation.

Chazal tell us that real laughter is only appropriate at the time of the final revelation. As the Gemara says, “Rabbi Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai: One should not fill his mouth with laughter in this world, as it says (Tehillim 126:2), ‘then (referring to the final revelation) our mouths will be filled with laughter’... (Berachot 31a)” What is it about the final redemption that encompasses the idea of laughter? The Chafetz Chaim compares the nature of the final revelation to Yosef’s revelation to his brothers in Egypt. The moment the brothers heard that the enigmatic viceroy was really their long lost brother Yosef, everything began to make sense. Instantly, without needing any explanation, the brothers had answers to all their perplexing questions. Similarly, explains the Chafetz Chaim, in the final revelation when G-d will reveal Himself, all the questions that were asked from the beginning of history will instantly be answered. In the blink of an eye everything will all make sense.

Based on this we can understand why there will be laughter at the time of the ultimate revelation. At that moment in time everything that seemed to be tragic will reveal itself as another steppingstone in G-d’s master plan of bringing the world to its final destination. Everything that was once a reason for sorrow will become a reason to rejoice. Laughter, as mentioned before, is a result of a sudden turn of events. The laughter that will fill our mouths in the final redemption will be triggered by the sudden unexpected transition of the ultimate opposites; from bad to good and from falsehood to Divine truth.

Now we can understand the deeper connection between laughter and happiness. We live in a world where G-d’s involvement is not always apparent. It’s not hard to find selfish acts of injustice that are rewarded. It’s not hard to find the righteous trampled under the schemes of the wicked. It’s not hard to find the bad ruling the good. For a person whose trust in G-d is not strong, it seems as though the world is heading towards destruction rather than redemption. Every experience of sudden and unexpected change of events, however, gives us a taste of the ultimate transformation of bad to good that will happen in the future. This experience

reminds us that at any moment everything can turn upside down and everything can finally make sense. It is this feeling that triggers laughter in the body and happiness in the soul of each and every one of us who is looking forward to the day of the final revelation. This is the deeper reason for the feeling of happiness that accompanies every experience of laughter.

The commentaries point out that the unexpected reversal of fates is the apparent underlying theme in the Purim story. Close analysis of the Megillah reveals how quickly and smoothly the plans of Haman were not merely foiled but more notably transformed into bringing about the salvation of the Jewish People. The very night that Haman planned to convince Achashverosh to have Mordechai hanged ended up being the night on which he advised Achashverosh to extravagantly honor Mordechai. The very gallows that Haman prepared for Mordechai ended up being used for his own hanging. The very day that Haman had decided to be the time to destroy the Jews was the day on which the Jews destroyed their enemies. Ultimately, Haman’s own proposal to kill Vashti ended up paving the way for the ultimate salvation of the Jewish People. The turn of events in the story of Purim truly embody the verse that says, “Many are the thoughts that are in the heart of man but the counsel of G-d will prevail.” (Mishlei 19:21)

We can now begin to understand the connection between the month of Adar and the idea of happiness and laughter. The “special energy” of this month is the transformation of bad to good; as the Megillah says referring to the month of Adar, “The month that has been transformed for them from one of sorrow to happiness and from mourning to festivity. (Esther 9:22)” It is therefore specifically this month that is the ideal time to reflect on the miraculous turn of events that took place in the story of Purim. Through reliving the finale of the story of Purim we are given a taste of the future happiness and laughter that will fill the world when there will be the ultimate transformation of all that seems bad to good. This is the unique joy that we are meant to feel at this time, and this is the depth behind the month of Adar’s connection to the idea of laughter and happiness.

Sources:

- *Ta’anit 29a; Sefer Yetzira;*
- *Maharal in Ohr Chadash; Chafetz Chaim on the Chumash;*
- *Michtav M’Eliyahu;*
- *Rabbi Moshe Shapiro, shlita*