

# A Taste of Torah

## A Tale of Masks and Miracles

by Rabbi Avraham Dovid Karnowsky

The Purim story is a riveting, dramatic tale, a story of the survival of the Jewish People in the face of almost certain annihilation. Every aspect of the tale needs to be analyzed and discussed, but let's focus on one vital point.

Throughout Megillas Esther, you will not find even one explicit mention of G-d's Name. There are many hints and allusions, but nothing clear and open. If we were writing this story, Hashem's name would be the most mentioned name, and rightfully so - after all, He was pulling the strings. There must be a deep reason for such an omission, and we would do well to try and understand it.

One of the most beloved and key players in the Megillah is Queen Esther. The Talmud (Chullin 139b) poses an interesting question: Where does one find a reference to Esther in the Torah? Answers the Talmud, an allusion is found in the verse, "But I will surely have concealed My face on that day." (Devarim 31:18) The Hebrew word for concealment, *hester*, and the name Esther have the same root and meaning. Which leads to the obvious question: Esther and *hester* seem to signify two opposite things! Esther played a part in the redemption of the Jewish People, so why would her name be alluded to in a verse which is talking about concealment in the dark times of exile?

Rabbi Gedaliah Schorr (1910-1979) reveals a profound insight. The word *hester* means to conceal and cover something. This implies that there is something within which is being hidden. If G-d conceals His light, this means the light is not extinguished at all; it is simply hiding beneath the

cover. Deep within the darkness of exile lies the light of the redemption. This is why Esther is sourced in a verse which talks about *galus* (exile), because the light of redemption that she signifies was alive, buried deep in the exile itself!

Rabbi Schorr takes this idea a step further. Redemption itself depends on recognizing this reality. When we are able to see through the darkness and connect with the light hidden within, we unveil that light. This is why G-d's name is omitted from the Megillah. The deliverance at that time was not an open miracle, but, rather, a series of events clothed and masked as natural. The merit of the Jews was that they saw through the mask, and recognized G-d's guiding hand every step of the way. His name is alluded to many times, but it is never overtly mentioned. Purim is a day to see G-d beneath all the concealments, reveal the light, and, through that, merit redemption.

The great Chassidic master Rabbi Yisrael Baal Shem Tov used to comment on the aforementioned verse, "I will surely have concealed my face," that a double-depth of concealment is implied. He explains that the first level is for G-d to hide Himself. The second level, though, is much, much worse; the concealment is so great that we don't even know that there is something hiding - we don't know that we are in darkness at all!

Let us use the day of Purim to 1) recognize the darkness and 2) recognize the light concealed within. Through this we can merit the final and eternal unveiling of the mask!



Because Torah Is for Every Jew

## Stories For The Soul

### Prison Garb

Adapted from *Rav Schwab on Prayer*, with permission of the copyright holders, ArtScroll / Mesorah Publications, Ltd.

Rabbi Shimon Schwab was the rabbi in the town of Ichenhausen in Germany during the period of the Nazis' rise to power. On Shushan Purim in March of 1936, Rabbi Schwab was the subject of a libelous accusation that he had, in one of his sermons, publicly maligned Hitler, and he was brought before the Gestapo to explain himself. Making direct eye contact with the Nazi official, he forcefully explained that this was an outright lie. He had used the German word "*vermittler*" in his disparagement of the sin of the Golden Calf, which a spy had misunderstood as "Hitler." After this explanation, he was told that his case would be reviewed and that he would be advised of the outcome. Needless to say, Rabbi Schwab feared for his life after that meeting. Rabbi Schwab records in his diary that he was advised in the middle of the Jewish month of Iyar (April-May) that the matter had been dropped.

During this period of some two months, Rabbi Schwab slept only fitfully, with his clothes on, for fear that he would be arrested in the middle of the night, taken to jail, or brought out to the woods to be beaten and left to die - as had already occurred to several others. If this was to be his fate, he would face it with dignity - and with his clothes on - as would befit the position of a Jewish leader.

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## Kollel Happenings

### A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SHACHNE SOMMERS

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Sunday nights, 7:40-8:30 pm, at the Kollel for men, 1516 Xavier, and Tuesday nights at the Southeast Kollel Torah center, 8-9 pm, for men and women.

### THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD LUNCH & LEARN PROGRAM

The M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Program is a division of the Denver Community Kollel dedicated to bringing Torah study to seniors in the community. Don't miss a great Lunch and Learn class on the weekly parsha at the East Side Kosher Deli, 499 S. Elm St. at 12:00 am. There is no charge for the lunch or the learning! Transportation can be arranged. For more information, contact [rmf@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmf@denverkollel.org) or call 303-820-2855.

### LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. For more information, contact [rmh@denverkollel.org](mailto:rmh@denverkollel.org).

## Increase Your Jewish IQ

By Rabbi Yaakov Zions

**Last week we asked:** Which Purim-related custom is related to the obligation to provide the annual *machatzis hashekel* (half-shekel) to provide for the *Bais Hamikdash* (Temple) service?

**A:** The Rema (Rabbi Moshe Isserles; 1520 - 1572) cites the custom for each

individual to donate one-half of the local currency to charity as a memorial for the original *machatzis hashekel*.

**This week's question:** How many times a year do we read from two Torah scrolls in one setting?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email [ryz@denverkollel.org](mailto:ryz@denverkollel.org).

## Lives of Our Torah Leaders

### Rabbi Yosef Caro – the Bais Yosef XVI

The voice continued to issue from Rabbi Caro's throat.

“Be strengthened, friends; be courageous, beloved ones, rejoice and exult; know that you are the lofty chosen few, and you have merited to enter the palace of the King. And the sound of your Torah learning and the breath of your mouths have ascended before G-d and pierced many spheres and heavens until [your voices] ascended, and the *Malachim* were silent, and *Seraphim* were mute, and the *Chayos* (these are all different types of angels) stood, and all of the Celestial Host and the Holy One, blessed be He, are listening to your voices...”

The voice continued discussing the great achievements of those present, and of the terrible travails the Mishna was subjected to in the spiritual realms. It encouraged them to continue their studies, and to emigrate to the Land of Israel. It ordered them to recite *Baruch Shem* (Blessed is the Name of His glorious kingdom forever and ever) loudly, as on Yom Kippur.

The next day, they informed several others of the events of the previous

night, and they agreed to assemble a *minyan* (quorum of ten adult Jewish males) and study again on the second night of Shavuot. Again, during their studies, a voice emanated from Rabbi Caro on two different occasions, praising the great heights they had reached, even greater than the previous night due to the presence of a full *minyan*. The voice encouraged them to continue their studies and to ascend to ever-greater heights in their Torah study and service of G-d.

Following this transformative event, this spiritual being visited Rabbi Caro regularly, teaching him secrets of the Torah, instructing him, rebuking him and informing him of various Heavenly and future events. Interestingly, one of the things it informed Rabbi Caro was that he would merit to die *al Kiddush Hashem*, in sanctification of G-d's Name, as had occurred to Shlomo Molcho (discussed in an earlier column); Rabbi Caro had greatly desired to die in a similar fashion to Shlomo Molcho. This prediction was never realized, though others were.

## Stories For The Soul

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Rabbi Schwab's concept of *kavod habriyos* (human dignity) - and especially that of members of the Rabbinat, whom he conceived of as *sheluchei d'Rachmana* (God's emissaries).

In this week's parsha, Hashem instructs Moshe regarding the special garments

worn by the *kohanim* (priests) and the *Kohein Gadol* (High Priest) when they performed the service in the *Mishkan* (Tabernacle). These garments are meant to bring glory to those who wear them, as befitting those who serve before Hashem.