

Fascinating INSIGHTS

יד' אדר תשפ"א

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[A Moving Mishloach Manos](#)

One idea of giving Mishloach Manos is to increase unity. What are some ways we can do this?

1) Instead of just giving the Mishloach Manos that we “must” give such as to our friends and neighbors, we should also think of people that we may have had a conflict or some friction with and give them. Perhaps giving to these people is even more important. Purim is a great day to do this because people’s hearts are open and more receptive on this festive day. Someone once put it this way: Make a list of everyone you want to give Mishloach Manos to. Now rip up the list and give Mishloach Manos to those who didn’t make it to the list.

2) Another idea is to think of someone who could use encouragement and uplifting. Send this person a Mishloach Manos. It is not about what you give rather about the fact that the person feels like they matter, that someone cares about them, that they were acknowledged.

3) Make something special that you know the person enjoys. We can extend this even further. For example, don’t send a Mishloach Manos full of candies and cakes to an older couple that is health-conscious. Similarly, if you know someone is allergic to certain foods, make a special effort to send them that which they aren’t allergic to. Then your Mishloach Manos has so much more meaning to them which truly increases unity.

4) Another great idea is to write a letter or at least some nice words in the Mishloach Manos you send. For example, if you send to a teacher of your child, write how much you appreciate

the teacher. Or if you give to a neighbor, you can write we are so lucky and grateful to have you as neighbors. This puts some “soul” into the “body” of your Mishloach Manos. This therefore brings feelings of unity.

[Purposeful Plague](#)

Many times throughout history there have been plagues that forced people into quarantine. It was because of such quarantines that we have certain sefarim.

In 1556, R’ Moshe Isserles (1530-1572), known as the Rema, fled Krakow as a result of a plague. Because he found himself alone and without Sefarim, he wrote his allegorical exposition on Megilas Esther titled Mechir Yayin. He also lacked sufficient food and drink for a prominent festive meal on Purim due to the plague. To participate in the rejoicing, he wrote this commentary on Esther. It was called Mechir Yayin because this Chidushei Torah was instead of wine that would be drunk on Purim (Mechir means exchange as in Devarim 23:19). He presented this sefer to his father in lieu of Mishloach Manos.

In 1578, in the city of Friedberg, there was a plague. R’ Chaim¹ (1520–1588), the Maharal’s brother, was required to be in quarantine because their maid died² (The people of any house that had a death were required to go into quarantine.). For the two months that he was quarantined, he wrote his Sefer Hachaim. He titled it Sefer Hachaim because as a result of writing this sefer he hoped to merit to come out alive and intact (Chaim means life).

In Tishrei in the year 1607, there was a plague in the city of Prague. Due to this, R’ Shlomo Ephraim of Luntschitz (1550-1619), known for his work the Kli Yakar, was quarantined, which is when he wrote his sefer, Amudei Sheish.³

In 1774, when the Chida (1724-1806) reached the port city of Livorno, he was placed in quarantine for 40 days (as was standard practice in that city for any foreigner from the east). While in quarantine he compiled his famous work Shem Hagedolim.⁴

[Poor Purim](#)

על כן... שמחה ומשתה **יום טוב** ומשלוח מנות איש לרעהו⁵, therefore Jewish villagers who live in unwalled towns celebrate the 14th day of Adar as an occasion of gladness and feasting, for holiday-making and for sending delicacies to one another. Three Pesukim later it says ומשלה מנות איש לרעהו⁶, the month which had been transformed for them from one of sorrow to gladness and from mourning to festivity. They were to observe them as days of feasting and gladness and for sending delicacies to one another and gifts to the poor. Comparing these two Pesukim we notice

¹ He died at the age of 68, which is the gematria of his name, חיים.

² The daughter of R’ Chaim also got sick from the plague but she recovered.

³ Amudei Sheish, Hakdama. This was called so because of the six pillars the world stands on—Torah, Avoda, Gemilus Chassadim and Din, Shalom, Emes (Avos 1:2,18).

⁴ While R’ Dovid Chazzan was traveling to Vienna, he was imprisoned due to a case of mistaken identity. During his imprisonment, which lasted from Pesach until Shavuot, he wrote a work on Pirkei Avos, which he aptly called Dovid B’metzuda (“Dovid in the Fortress”), since he wrote it while he was imprisoned. The work was published in Salonica in 1748.

⁵ Esther 9:19.

⁶ Esther 9:22.

discrepancies. Why does it say יום טוב only in the first Pasuk? Also, why does it mention מתנות לאביונים only in the later Pasuk?

The Gemara⁷ says concerning Purim that only the prohibitions against eulogy and fasting did the Jews accept upon themselves but not the prohibition against work. This is why it doesn't say יום טוב in the later Pasuk because the Jews didn't accept upon themselves to abstain from work on Purim. The Gra⁸ explains that originally they wanted to make Purim a Yom Tov in which you can't deal with money. Consequently, they didn't institute מתנות לאביונים. However, in the end, when they didn't make it a Yom Tov, they instituted מתנות לאביונים.

Pumping Party

It says when Achashveirosh displayed the riches of his glorious kingdom... 180 days.⁹ Why was the party exactly 180 days? This seems like a random number.

1) Nevuchchadnetzar amassed vast treasures that were recovered by Coresh and then inherited by Achashveirosh. Nevuchchadnetzar's treasures filled 1,080 storehouses. Achashveirosh wanted to show off each of these treasure chests but that would be unbecoming, to blatantly gather the people to display his wealth. He therefore made such a feast where each day when the festivities were at their height, he would invite them to view his treasures. He showed them six per day as the Midrash¹⁰ relates that Achashveirosh would open six treasure houses and show their contents to the people at his party each day. Showing off six treasures a day, it took 180 days to show off all 1,080!¹¹

2) The Yalkut Me'am Loaz explains based on the Yalkut Shimoni¹² that these treasure houses contained the gold and silver vessels of the Beis Hamikdash. The Pasuk¹³ says that the number of vessels Nevuchchadnetzar looted from the Beis Hamikdash and that Achashveirosh later acquired was 5,400. It is clear from the Gemara¹⁴ that the term אוצר, storehouse refers to a place that contains no less than five vessels. Thus, if Achashveirosh invited his guests into six storehouses of treasure each day, he showed them 30 vessels per day. Over 180 days he was able to show them all 5,400!

Fading Faith

Amalek is the antithesis of אמונה as it says בקרבנו היש ה' is Hashem among us or not.¹⁵ In context to Amalek it says ריונוב בך כל הנחשלים, he struck those of you who were hindmost, all the weaklings at your rear. The war with Amalek—the war with Emuna—is especially in the generation of the נחשלים (the weak ones), our generation. Today we have struggles in Emuna like there never was in history. Never before has there been such doubt and denial of God.¹⁶ We need to realize each event in our life is Divinely sent. In this way we can fulfill תמזה את זכר

⁷ Megila 5b.

⁸ Hamaor Hagadol, p. 518-9.

⁹ Esther 1:4.

¹⁰ Esther Rabba 2:1.

¹¹ Hamaor Hagadol, p. 510-1.

¹² Esther 1046.

¹³ Ezra 1:11.

¹⁴ Shabbos 126b.

¹⁵ Shemos 17:7.

¹⁶ R' Yaakov Kamenetsky once heard from Rav Elchonon Wasserman that if Darwin would have seen the Chofetz Chaim, he wouldn't have said that people come from monkeys, apes and the like (אמת ליעקב), Kedoshim, 19:3). In a similar story, when Mayor Jimmy Walker of New York was presenting the "key" to the city to R' Baruch Ber Liebowitz (who was there for fundraising) in the spring of 1928, he said R' Liebowitz disproves Darwin's theory of evolution as such a person could only be created by God. It is interesting to note that breaking up the word עמלק we notice it spells ק עמלק, the toil of a monkey, as ק spelled out is קוף, monkey.

מתחת to erase the concept from Amalek of השמים, nature, happenstance.¹⁷

This requires Emuna. Indeed, the initials of השמים ופתיחו השמים, the heavens opened and I saw visions of Hashem, spell אמונה as this is how we must look at life—to see Hashem in all the events of our lives. It therefore comes as no surprise that in the war with Amalek it states ויהי ידיו אמונה.¹⁹

R' Mordechai Gifter once arranged a flight to a wedding in Baltimore. Upon arriving at the airport, he was informed his flight was delayed. This caused him, along with his students, to miss the wedding.²⁰ While in the airport, they asked the custodian for a private room in order to daven Mincha. As they began to daven, the custodian joined in, in which they helped him recite Kadish at the end. After Mincha, the custodian explained that his father, who recently died, appeared to him in a dream and asked him to recite Kadish on his behalf. Since he wasn't raised with a religious background, his father told him that he will arrange a Minyan so that Kadish could be recited. This was the Minyan. R' Gifter and his students originally thought that they arrived at the airport to go to a wedding when really it was so that this person could say Kadish. A Jew clearly sees the Divine hand in such an incident whereas an Amaleki attributes it to natural occurrences.

It states lift up your eyes and see who created these. Through observing the events in our lives we can recognize Hashem. Therefore, when we combine the words מי ברא אלה and מי אלה we get the word אלה-ים. This can occur when we accept the sovereignty of Hashem, עול מלכות, שמע, as the first letters of מרום עיניכם are שמוע, שמע. This is the opposite of עמלק: עול מלכות לא קבלו: עמלק. It comes as no wonder that the first letters of שנות מכל עם, שנות, their laws are different from other people's, spell שמע.

Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander zt"l for close to five years. He received Semicha from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg zt"l. Rabbi Alt has written on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of the Sefer, Fascinating Insights: Torah Perspectives on Unique Topics. His writings inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. He lives with his wife and family in a suburb of Yerushalayim where he studies, writes, and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

¹⁷ Shemos 17:12. It has been pointed out that the word coincidence can be broken into Koh (י-ה) inside, meaning even when it seems like a coincidence, Hashem is the one organizing it.

¹⁸ Yechezkal 1:1. We wear a mask on Purim to show the world is a mask (fake) as the story of Purim can seem like a coincidence. People are therefore accustomed to have a Purim play. In this light, people have said, "on Purim we are sober, the rest of the year we are drunk" since we perceive events with the wrong lens.

¹⁹ Shemos 17:12. Shomer Emunim, Mevo Hashaar, chapter 5. See Rosh Hashana 29a that when they would turn to Hashem (Emuna) they would be victorious over Amalek.

²⁰ In 1778, R' Akiva Eiger (1761-1837), just 17 years old, got married. Unfortunately, most of his family including his parents couldn't be at the wedding. Among those who were unable to attend was his uncle, R' Wolf Eiger (1756-1795), one of the renowned Jewish leaders at the time. Instead he sent a letter, which was later printed in שו"ת רבי עקיבא איגר (Orach Chaim, 29). He writes, "All of the leaders of the city are rejoicing together at the celebration made on your behalf." (Recently, there are those that when they were unable to attend a close friend's wedding or that of a relative, but still wanted to celebrate, they made what is called a Seudas R' Akiva Eiger.) R' Akiva Eiger responded to this letter (Printed in תודות אלף אל אדוני על הדבר אשר עשה: שו"ת רבי עקיבא איגר, Orach Chaim, 30): לשמחה ביום שמחתי בפומבי והוא אות נאמן על עוז אהבתו, אם כי לא ידעתי על מה... A thousand thanks to my master regarding what he did, to rejoice on the day of my wedding publicly, which is a sure sign to the strength of his love, though I don't know why [he celebrated like this]...

²¹ Yeshaya 40:26.

²² See Mishna Brura, 61:27.

²³ Esther 3:8.