

Megilla: The Torah's Fundamentals in Action

Rabbi Yisroel Chait

Written by a student

According to Tosfos, why do laws pertaining to *Mezuzah* include the requirement of *Sirtut* – the horizontally scoring of the parchment at the baseline of the verses? The reason given is that *Mezuzah* is referred to as "The truth of Torah" ("*Amitus Shel Torah*"). What does this mean?

Mezuzah teaches about Torah itself. It is a Torah component placed on the doorposts of the home. But the entire Torah is from Sinai. So what is the concept behind *Mezuzah*, that we must isolate and highlight two Torah paragraphs in this manner?

Tosfos teaches a fundamental principle: all parts of the Torah are not of equal importance. Torah has an essence, primarily, the first two chapters of the *Shema Yisrael*. What is this essence? It is Unity of God. "Hear Israel; God is our God, God is one". The idea behind the *Mitzvah* of *Mezuzah* is to highlight the primary Torah concepts. These concepts also include Knowledge of God, Love of God, Torah Study, and Reward and Punishment.

The Sefer HaChinuch says that if a person is missing the *Mitzvah* of Unity of God, he has nothing (even though he keeps all other *Mitzvos*). In *Mitzvah* 417, the Sefer HaChinuch states, "If one transgresses Unity of God, and doesn't believe in His unity, blessed be He...he loses this command, and all other commands of the Torah. For all other commands depend on this one." So we see from Tosfos and the Sefer HaChinuch that all commands are not equal.

This is why *Mezuzah* requires *Sirtut*. The *Mitzvah* of *Mezuzah* isolates the essence of Torah. *Sirtut* is an emphasis of that text, of those fundamentals. When these two paragraphs are located in the Torah, they form part of a greater whole. But when separated in *Mezuzah*, and thereby distinguished, those paragraphs must be scored, "underlining" as it were, the principles found therein. But what is the relationship between *Mezuzah* and *Megillah*, that *Megillah* also requires scoring, *Sirtut*?

The answer is based on a Talmudic portion (Megilla 19a). The Talmud asks what Mordechai saw that he didn't bow to Haman. Mordechai sensed in the person of Haman that he deemed himself immortal and omniscient. Haman's whole inner evaluation was idolatrous. Had Mordechai bowed to Haman, he would have consented to Haman's idolatrous self image.

The act of bowing per se is acceptable, as we see Jacob bowed to Esav. But in this bowing, Mordechai would philosophically defy God's Unity. Mordechai therefore held that in Haman's case, one must sacrifice his own life. Once Haman represented himself as omniscient, bowing to Haman denied God's exclusive role, and must be avoided at all costs. So although *Halachikly* Mordechai could have bowed to Haman, this bowing crossed the line of God's Unity.

As such, *Halachik* permission no longer mattered, and the philosophy dictated his need to reject Haman's decree. We thereby learn that *Megillah* embodies the concept of God's Unity. Mordechai understood this concept, and its philosophy, and demonstrated that violation is not option.

One must sacrifice his life to demonstrate the gravity of the sin of idolatry. One must give his life to uphold the truth of all truths: God alone is the cause of all. And this dedication clearly illustrates the next fundamental: Love of God.

Also in the *Megillah* are examples of man using wisdom – *Chochma*. It is insufficient that the Torah's wisdom is limited to man's act of study. But man must also extrapolate this wisdom and apply it to his *Derech HaChaim* – his style of life. Mordechai and Esther both embodied the application of Torah wisdom. And we also see in *Megillah* the principle of Reward and Punishment: Haman was punished.

However, this principle when found in the Torah is dealing with God delivering the punishments, unlike *Megillah*, when man seems to be the cause. The parallel is lacking. So where is the parallel...where are God's miracles of Reward and Punishment, so that *Megillah* parallels the Reward and Punishment of the Torah? The story of the *Megillah* appears to unveil the great cunning of Mordechai and Esther, but wherein are the miracles?

The answer is as follows. Mordechai and Esther used wisdom. However, many unexpected factors occur in our daily lives and derail the best laid plans. The miracle here, was that nothing interfered with Mordechai and Esther's plans. All the downfalls and successes in the *Megillah* occurred because God made certain that any potential human interference was held at bay. Nothing was allowed to interfere. Now the *Megillah's* rewards and punishments exactly parallel the reward and punishment of the *Shema*, of the Torah's "*VeHaya Im Shamoah*" where God promises rain in a providential time.

The *Megillah* thereby mirrors the most primary Torah fundamentals. And just as *Mezuzah's* laws require the underlining of the texts to indicate the primary nature of its content, *Megillah* too has this requirement, to convey that it too shares the character with *Mezuzah*: a text of fundamentals.

The *Megillah* includes the words "*Kimu VeKiblu*", which means the Jews reaccepted the Torah once again. But this time – unlike at Sinai – there was no coercion of the event's "amazement". Here during Purim, the Jews reaccepted the Torah lifestyle out of a love of the fundamentals. They saw how two people using Torah wisdom were successful in averting catastrophe. They appreciated what Mordechai defended: God's Unity.

They realized God's providence was essential in the unhampered success of Mordechai and Esther, as they engaged Torah wisdom in their daily lives. This highlight of "*Kimu VeKiblu*" attests again to the *Megillah's* core theme: embodying the Torah's fundamentals, just like *Mezuzah*. the Jews were attracted to those Torah fundamentals expressed in the Purim story. Their reacceptance of Torah was due to those fundamentals.