

Mystic Customs for Purim (*Sefer Yemei HaPurim*)

(1) When one gives *Matanot Le'eviyonim*/gifts to the poor, it is good to give 287 רפ"ז coins to one poor person, for 207 coins is the *gematria* of אור *Or/light*, and the remaining 80 coins is the total of יסוד *Yesod/foundation*. The *Siman/memory* device for this is:

פזר (287 רפ"ז) נתן לאביונים צדקתו עומדת לעד

“He distributed widely to the poor, his charity endures forever” (Tehillim 112:19).

(2) It is good to write the name עמלק *Amalek* on a piece of paper and to erase it by treading on it with your shoe. And it is good to erase it with שכר *beer or strong drink*, with the *Siman/memory* device

“Give שכר beer/strong drink to the woebegone [Amalek]” (Mishlei 31:6)

(3) It is good to say on *Purim* both at night and day, ברוך מרדכי *Blessed is Mordekhai* 120 times because the *Sefer Yetzirah* says “with 5 stones one can build 120 houses,” and the name *Mordekhai* has 5 letters, so we say the phrase 120 times.

It is also good to say ברוכה אסתר בת אביחיל *Blessed is Ester daughter of Avihayil* 24 times, for the name *Ester* has 4 letters which build 24 houses according to *Sefer Yetzirah*.

(4) At the *Seudah*, one should drink wine until he does not know the difference between “*Curse Haman*” and “*Bless Mordekhai*”, for as written by the Arizal, it is necessary to say “*Bless Haman*” to draw the light of the Holy spark that is within the *Klippot* to illuminate it and to give it renewed life. And one is required to say this after one is intoxicated at the time his consciousness is gone so that one will not illuminate the *Klippot*, Gd forbid!, and this is proper to do through drinking much wine and by truly getting drunk. However, be careful to be able to do the after-blessing for bread and the prayers of *Minhah* and *Aravit* with a proper mindset. If one is under duress or unable to get drunk, one still should drink more than is one’s habit [See article on page 30 below]

(5) It is a commandment to make a big *Seudah* on *Purim* day. Through eating one draws the mentality of *Hokmah/Wisdom*, and through drinking the mentality of *Binah/Understanding*. One should intend to make the mentality of *Binah* supreme, and therefore it is necessary to drink more than one eats. This is the reverse of the meal of *Ahashverosh* where there was more eating than drinking, as it says “*And the drinking was according to law.*” (*Ester* 1:8)¹ According to the *Ben*

¹ By the law of Torah which states that a person should eat more than he drinks. (The amount of food “consumed” by the altar–animal sacrifice and flour offering–exceeded the amount of liquid “it drank” with wine libation.) (*Megillah 12a, Rashi*). This rule applies to spiritual nourishment as well: “food” hints to Torah laws that relate to one’s day-to-day life must be one’s staple while “wine” hinting to the secrets must be drunk only on a full stomach. (*Alter Rebbe*) See too *Pirke Avot* 3:23

Ish Hai (tz'l), one should prepare 15 types of food related to the mentality of *Hokmah* which is the Holy Name ה"י [gematria 15] drawn through eating אכילה and drink 15 cups of wine corresponding to the mentality of *Binah* which too is the Holy Name ה"י drawn through drinking שתיה. According to one's strength² one should drink more than eat all for the sake of heaven. Here is the *Kavannot* according to the *RaShaSh*:

(In eating draw mentality of *Hokmah*/Wisdom) יו"ד ה"י וי"ו ה"י = אכילה

(In drinking draw the mentality of *Binah*/Understanding) יו"ד ה"י ויא"ו ה"י = שתיה.

Before the *Seudah*, one should say the following *Yehi Ratzon* prayer (R. Sutton trans.):
 May it be Your Will, Hashem our Gd and Gd of our forefathers, that You will do, for the sake of Your mercy and Your love, and for the sake of the Light of the *Malkhut* of *Abba* (the Light of *Ein Sof* revealed through *Mordekhai HaYehudi* in each Jew) that is revealed today, and in the merit of *Mordekhai HaTzadik* himself, whose soul-root is from this exalted Light, as it is written, “*And Mordekhai went forth from the Presence of the King dressed in malkhut, tekhelet, hur, and a great ateret-crown of gold, and tachrich butz and argaman*”; and for the sake of the mitzvah of having heard the Megillah today, which is also called *Iggeret*-Letter and *Sefer*-Book; and in the merit of the *mitzvot* of gifts to the poor, and the *mitzvot* of *mishlo'ah manot ish le're'ehu*; and in the merit of the *mitzvot* of the *seudah*, today. [In the merit of all of these] please have compassion on us and on all Israel our brethren. Irradiate us with the great Light of Your Face, the Face of the Living King, the King of Life. Give us long life, good life, sweet life. Fill our hands with Your blessings, from the great wealth of Your Hands. Spread the *Sukkah* of Your Shalom over us. Rectify us with good council. Bless us and all Israel with shalom, goodness, blessing, grace, love, mercy. Bless us all, our Father, as One, in the Light of Your Face.

It is a personal custom to recite a Psalm of Ascents [songs to “get high’] with each glass of wine. (See page 11) Also, it is a good thing to learn *Mishnayot* from *Mesechet Megilah* both on the night of *Purim* as well as during the *Seudah*, ideally with the *Rav Bartenura* commentary There are 4 chapters and intend that they correspond to the 4 letters of *Shem Havayah* יהוה and the 4 letters of *Shem Ado-noy* אדנ"י. Too one can intend the Name *Elokim* אלהים which the Arizal says relates to *Seder Moed* and the *Gevurah of Nukbah*. What follows is *Kehati*'s commentary on *Megilah* in translations with *Bartnenura* highlights. Please too see the interesting insights on *Purim* customs starting on page 31 below.

²*Shulkan Aruk* 695:2. *Rema* says to drink more than accustomed to and sleep and being asleep one won't be aware of the difference between “Cursed be Haman” and “Blessed be Mordekhai”. [See too *Mishna Berura* note 5 and *Peri Megadim*. Note that the word לינה /sleep has imbedded in it the Holy Name ה"י used in the intentions for eating and drinking. Perhaps we would intend ה"י of Mah א' ה' ו'א' ה'א' as we do in Bedtime *HaMapil*.

CHAPTER 1:

MISHNAH 1 יְהוֹרָה אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהֵינוּ

Megillah is read on the eleventh, on the twelfth, on thirteenth, on the fourteenth, on fifteenth, no less and no more. Cities surrounded by a wall from the time of Joshua bin Nun, read on the fifteenth. Villages and large towns read on the fourteenth, but the villages advance to the day of the gathering.

Mystical Commentary: *Maggid Mesharim* of R. Yosef Karo [R. Yehiel Bar-Lev trans.]

The secret of reading the Megillah on the 14th and 15th of the month is part of the secret of the days of the month that the moon illuminates which are 29 days. The secret is that those who live in towns read on the 14th hint at the full moon, for on the 14th the moon is at its fullest for the entire day, which renders it superior to the 15th. For though it is fuller on the 15th day, it reaches the end of its fullness and then its illumination begins to decrease. So of course the 14th day is more important since the light of the moon is then at the height of its strength and its shine is brighter, becomes brighter all day, and does not decrease. So on the 14th was the day for those without a wall to hint that on this day, the moon too, has no wall or boundary, but continues to illuminate more and to a deeper extent. It was decided to make Purim on the 15th for those surrounded by a wall [like Shushan] to hint that the light of the moon on that night has a wall and a boundary.

This 14th and 15th days of Purim also hint to David and Shelomo. דוד David is gematria 14. The name Shelomo in *mispar Katan* [when counting only the first digit of the number is 15, for 3 + 3 + 4 + 5], for David is the secret of the 14th day when the moon is at its height and continues to get brighter. Too there was no boundary to his wars, and wherever he turned, he succeeded. For he was the 14th ruler as our Sages counted, from Avraham our father until Tzekiyahu (#30) when the light of the moon was darkened since Tzedkiyahu was blinded. Also David is like the 14th day of the month, while Shelomo is like day 15. For Shelomo's kingdom was more wondrous than David's, just as the 15th is brighter than 14. So Shelomo did not have to go to war, like the cities that are surrounded by a wall, so the 15th was the day set for them to celebrate Purim and to read the Megillah. Shelomo was always surrounded by a wall, that is he never had to war.

On reading the Megillah on days 11, 12, and 13, we find that originally villagers were superior to city-folk. Why did the Mishnah say the villagers could read on days 11, 12, and 13? When the Jews dwelled on their land, their population was numerous. So even though the land is called בארץ הצבלי "*the land of the deer*" (Daniel 11:16, 41), since it expands to accept its population like the skin of a deer, there were so many people that they all could not settle in Yerushalayim, so they spread to the villages. These villages were more important than the cities for their inhabitants occupied themselves more with doing mitzvot of Gd than the city and town dwellers. They only worked during period of sowing and harvest, the remainder of the year they were free to occupy themselves with Torah and commandments. Also the air of the villages was pure and clear and it is said that the inhabitants have a desire to pray. Also they don't have the strong desire for money as the city folk do. So they were freer to occupy themselves with Torah and commandments. They lived well in all the worlds. This is the sign that this was so. They had enough water and food to supply their brothers in all the worlds both upper and lower. As it was below, so it was above. For the population was so numerous that they spread outwards, added from the non-holy to the holy, and thus the non-holy part rose spiritually. For they united the Sefirot the 3 Names of Gd together (אהי"ה יהו"ה אדנ"י) *Ekyeh Havaya and Adnut*. Since the villages brought about all this, they were told that they could read the Megillah on any of the 3 days, to hint to the unification of the 3 Names.

Now what they said was that the rule applies to when Purim falls on Monday or Thursday--these are the days when the Torah is taken out and read in public, like individuals who are combination of all. So these days demonstrate the unity of the three Names.

Nowadays, when our sins have caused the diminution of the population of Yisrael, this corresponds to above, and villagers have stopped reading Megillah on these days. Their reading on these days hinted to the completion of the unity. Today due to our sins the Names are not united. Would the villagers read the Megillah on these days, it would be a mockery of the Shekhinah, Gd forbid, just like one who praises his friend for his wisdom or wealth when he has none of these. The sign is the words **בְּהַמְסַתְכֵימֵינוּ** "we endanger ourselves for it". This means currently if the villagers would read on those 3 days, they would be endangering themselves as if it would be they would be mocking Kineset Yisrael. Those who learn the version **בְּהַמְסַתְכֵימֵינוּ** explain the words to mean that now in this world we do not look beyond it [the land] to expand borders except regarding Yerushalayim alone, and this may exert some influence. Then how can the villagers read during these 3 days when doing so indicates that the upper city is blessed so much that it overflows outward? This was agreed upon in the Holy Yeshiva.

מִשְׁנָה 2 לַה' אֲדָנִי אֱלֹהִים

How? If the fourteenth day falls on a Monday - villages and large towns read on that day, and those surrounded by a wall on the following day. If it falls on a Tuesday or on a Wednesday - villages advance to the day of gathering, and the large towns read on that day, and those surrounded by a wall on the following day. If it falls on a Thursday - villages and large towns read on that day, and those surrounded by a wall on the following day. If it falls on a Friday - villages advance to the day of gathering, and the large towns and those surrounded by a wall read on that day. If it falls on the Shabbat - villages and large towns advance and read on the day of gathering, and those surrounded by a wall on the following day. If it falls after the Shabbat - villages advance to the day of gathering, and large towns read on that day, and those surrounded by a wall on the following day.

If it - the fourteenth, falls on a Friday, villages advance to the day of gathering - Thursday (the thirteenth of Adar), and the large towns and those surrounded by a wall read on that day - even those surrounded by a wall, which by law normally read on the fifteenth, read on the fourteenth, for the *megillah* is not read on the Shabbat, lest a person carry it four *amot* in the public domain. The reading of the cities surrounded by a wall is not postponed until Sunday, because this is already the sixteenth of Adar, and it is written, "*so as it should not pass*" (*Ester* 9:27). At any rate, the Torah passage of "*Then came Amalek*" (*Shemot* 17:8-16) is read only on the Shabbat; regarding the Purim festive meal, one opinion holds that it is held on the fourteenth (on the day on which the *megillah* is read), while another opinion states that it is postponed until Sunday (*Bartenura*).

מִשְׁנָה 3 לַה' אֲדָנִי אֱלֹהִים

Which is a large town? Whichever has in it ten people at leisure. Less than this, then this is a village. Regarding these they said, They advance and they do not postpone. But the time of the wood of the priests, and the ninth of Av, and *hagiggah*, and *Hak'hel* - they postpone and they do not advance. Even though they said they advance and they do not postpone, they are permitted regarding a eulogy and fast days, and gifts to the poor. Rabbi Yehudah said, When? A place where they gather on Mondays and Thursdays; but a place where they do not gather, neither on Mondays nor on Thursdays, they may read it only at its time.

MISHNAH 4 ליהוה אדני אלהים

If they read the *megillah* in Adar I and the year was intercalated, they read it in Adar II. There is no difference between Adar I and Adar II except for the reading of the *megillah* and the gifts to the poor.

MISHNAH 5 ליהוה אדני אלהים

There is no difference between a Festival and the Shabbat except for man's food alone. There is no difference between Shabbat and Yom Kippur except that this one's intentional sin is by the hands of man, and this one's intentional sin is by *karet*.

MISHNAH 6 יהוה אדני אלהים

There is no difference between one who was forbidden by his fellow to derive any benefit and one who was forbidden by his fellow to derive benefit of food from him except for the benefit of crossing and vessels in which a man's food is not made. There is no difference between vow offerings and freewill offerings except that regarding vow offerings he is liable for their surety, and regarding freewill offerings he is not liable for their surety.

MISHNAH 7 ליהוה אדני אלהים

There is no difference between one suffering from a discharge who sees two sightings and one who sees three, except a sacrifice. There is no difference between the quarantined leper and the declared leper except for loosening and rending. There is no difference between clean from quarantined and clean from the declared condition except shaving and birds.

There is no difference between clean from quarantined - as it is written, regarding the quarantined leper, "*And the priest shall look on him again the seventh day; and, behold, if the plague be dim, and the plague has not spread in the skin, then the priest shall pronounce him clean*", and **clean from the declared condition** - after the declared leper has been healed, **except shaving and birds** - one who becomes clean from the declared condition of leprosy shaves and brings two birds, as prescribed in the Torah regarding leprosy (*Vayikra* 14). For it is written, "*and, behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper*" (*Vayikra* 14:3) - this refers to the leper who requires healing, excluding one who becomes clean from quarantine, whose leprosy does not require healing but rather a period of time. Regarding, however, the requirement of immersion in a *mikveh* and of the washing of the clothes, the two are equal, for even regarding one who becomes clean from quarantine it is written, "*and he shall wash his clothes, and be clean*" (*Vayikra* 13:6). There is also another difference: one who becomes clean from the declared condition requires an *asham* sacrifice and a *log* of oil, which are not required by one who becomes clean from quarantine; this mishnah, however, deals only with the requirements on the day of his becoming clean, and not with the sacrifices which are a requirement on the eighth day (*Rashi, Bartenura*).

MISHNAH 8 יְהוָה אֲדַנִּי אֱלֹהִים

There is no difference between the Books and *tefillin* and *mezuzot*, except that the Books may be written in any language, and *tefillin* and *mezuzot* are written only in *Ashurit*. Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel says, Even regarding the Books, they permitted that they may be written only in Greek.

MISHNAH 9 יְהוָה אֲדַנִּי אֱלֹהִים

There is no difference between the Kohen anointed with the oil of anointing and the Kohen with a larger number of garments, except the bullock which comes for all the commandments. There is no difference between an officiating Kohen and a Kohen who passed except for the bullock of Yom Kippur and the tenth of the *efah*.

MISHNAH 10 יְהוָה אֲדַנִּי אֱלֹהִים

There is no difference between a Great Altar and a small altar, except Pesah sacrifices. This is the general rule: What one vowed and donated freely is offered on the altar, but what is neither vowed nor donated freely is not offered on the altar.

MISHNAH 11 יְהוָה אֲדַנִּי אֱלֹהִים

There is no difference between Shiloh and Jerusalem except that in Shiloh they eat minor sacrifices and *ma'aser sheni* in all that he sees, and in Jerusalem inside the wall. And here and here major sanctified sacrifices are eaten inside the enclosures. The sanctity of Shiloh is followed by permission, and the sanctity of Jerusalem is not followed by permission.

CHAPTER 2:

MISHNAH 1 יְהוָה אֲדַנִּי אֱלֹהִים

If one reads the *megillah* in improper sequence, he has not fulfilled his obligation. If he read it by heart, if he read it in the translation, in any language - he has not fulfilled. But they may read it to the speakers of foreign languages in a foreign language. And if a speaker of a foreign language heard *Ashurit*, he has fulfilled

MISHNAH 2 יְהוָה אֲדַנִּי אֱלֹהִים

If he read it intermittently and he was drowsy, he has fulfilled. While writing it, interpreting it and correcting it: if he set his mind, he fulfilled; and if not, he did not fulfill. If it was written with color or with red color or with ink prepared with gum or with calcanthum, on the paper and on the *diftera* - he did not fulfill, until it will be written in *Ashurit* on the book and in ink.

MISHNAH 3 יְהוֹרָה אֲדָנִי אֱלֹהִים

The resident of a town who went to a city, and the resident of a city who went to a town: if he will return to his place, he reads as his place; and if not, he reads with them. From where does a man read the *megillah* and fulfill his obligation? Rabbi Meir says, All of it. Rabbi Yehudah says, from "*There was a certain Jew.*" Rabbi Yose says, From "*After these things.*"

MISHNAH 4 יְהוֹרָה אֲדָנִי אֱלֹהִים

All are fit to read the *megillah*, except for a *heresh*, a mental defective, and a minor. Rabbi Yehudah declares the minor fit. They do not read the *megillah*, and they do not circumcise, and they do not immerse, and they do not sprinkle; and similarly, the woman who observes a day against a day may not immerse, until the sun shines. And all who performed from when the dawn arose, are fit.

All are fit to read the megillah - and to cause others to fulfill their obligation, **except for a heresh, a mental defective, and a minor** - the term *heresh*, used without qualification, refers to a deaf-mute (*Ter.* 1:2). The *heresh* referred to in this mishnah, however, can speak but cannot hear, for the mishnah refers to one who reads aloud the *megillah*. Nevertheless, he has the same status as the mental defective and minor, that he does not cause others to fulfill their obligation (this mishnah is according to the opinion of Rabbi Yose, who holds, regarding the reading of the *Shema*, "If a person read and did not cause his ear to hear, he has not fulfilled" [*Ber.* 2:3]; since the deaf reader himself does not fulfill his own obligation, he cannot cause others to fulfill theirs (Gemara; *Bartenura*).

MISHNAH 5 יְהוֹרָה אֲדָנִי אֱלֹהִים

The entire day is proper for the reading of the *megillah*, and the reading of the *Hallel*, and the blowing of the *shofar*, and the taking of the *lulav*, and the *Musafin* prayer and the *Musafin*, and the confession of the bullocks, and the confession of the *ma'aser*, and the confession of Yom Kippur, for the placing of the hands, for the slaughter, for the waving, for the bring near, for the taking up of the handful and for the burning, for severing of the neck, and for the reception, and for the sprinkling, and for the giving to drink to the *sotah*, and for the beheading of the heifer, and for the cleansing of the leper.

MISHNAH 6 יְהוֹרָה אֲדָנִי אֱלֹהִים

The entire night is fit for the reaping of the sheaf and for the burning of *helevs* and parts. This is the general rule: that which must be performed during the day may be performed the entire day; that which must be performed during the night may be performed the entire night.

The entire night is fit for the reaping of the sheaf - on the night after the first Festival day of Pesah (see *Vayikra* 23:10; *Men.* 10:3), **and for the burning of helevs and parts** - the *helevs* and

the parts of the sacrifices whose blood was dashed during the day must be offered on the Altar during the same day including the entire following night, as it is written, "on its firewood upon the Altar *all night until the morning*" (*Vayikra* 6:2). All the parts from an *olah* sacrifice were burned, while from other sacrifices only the *helevs* listed in *Vayikra* 1-5 were burned. **Bartenura** interprets this as follows: "and for the burning of *helevs* and parts" - of the afternoon *olat ha-tamid* sacrifice.

CHAPTER 3:

MISHNAH 1 י"ה ר"ה אדנ"י אלהי"ם

If the residents of the town sold the open place of the town, they may purchase with its money a synagogue. A synagogue - they may purchase an Ark. An Ark - they may purchase wraps. Wraps - they may purchase books; books - they may purchase a Torah. But if they sold a Torah, they may not purchase books; books - they may not purchase wraps; wraps - they may not purchase an Ark; an Ark - they may not purchase a synagogue; the synagogue - they may not purchase the open place; and similarly with their surpluses. They may not sell that of the public to the individual, because they lower its sanctity; the opinion of Rabbi Yehudah. They said to him, If so, even not from a large town to a small town.

MISHNAH 2 י"ה ר"ה אדנ"י אלהי"ם

They may not sell a synagogue, except on condition that if they desire they may return it; the opinion of Rabbi Meir. And the Sages say, They may sell it permanently, except for four things - for a bathhouse, and for a tannery, and for immersion, and for the place of the water. Rabbi Yehudah says, They may sell it for a courtyard, and the purchaser may do whatever he wishes.

MISHNAH 3 י"ה ר"ה אדנ"י אלהי"ם

And Rabbi Yehudah further said, If a synagogue has been destroyed, they may not eulogize within it, and they may not twist ropes within it, and they may not spread nets within it, and they may not spread produce on its roof, and they may not make of it a path, as it is written, "*and I will bring your sanctuaries unto desolation*" (*Vayikra* 26:31) - their sanctity, even when they are desolate. If weeds grew in it, he may not pluck, on account of grief.

MISHNAH 4 י"ה ר"ה אדנ"י אלהי"ם

If Rosh Hodesh Adar falls on the Shabbat, they read in the Torah the passage of *Shekalim*. If it falls in the middle of the week, they advance to the previous one, and they pause on the next Shabbat. On the second - "*Remember*"; on the third - "*Red heifer*"; on the fourth - "*This month shall be to you*"; on the fifth they return to their order. They interrupt for all: on Roshei Hodashim, on Hanukkah, and on Purim, on the fast days, and on the *ma'amadot*, and on Yom Kippur.

MISHNAH 5 יהוה אדני אלהים

On Pesah they read in the passage of the Festivals of *Torat Kohanim*. On Shavuot - "Seven weeks." On Rosh Hashanah - "In the seventh month, in the first day of the month." On Yom Kippur - "after the death." On the first holiday of the Festival they read in the passage of the Festivals of *Torat Kohanim*. And on the other days of the Festival in the sacrifices of the Festival.

And on the other days of the Festival in the sacrifices of the Festival - *Bemidbar* 29:17. I.e., on the first day of *Hol Hamoed* (the second day of the Festival), they read "And on the second day..." On the second day of *Hol Hamoed* (the third day of the Festival), they read "And on the third day..." and similarly on the other days, until the eighth day, on which they read "On the eighth day you shall have a solemn assembly..." (see *Bartenura* and the other commentators of the Mishnah, who list - following the Gemara - the order of the readings on the Festivals, as is the current practice; see also *Rambam, Hil. Tefilah* 13:8-12).

MISHNAH 6 יהוה אדני אלהים

On Hanukkah - in the princes. On Purim - "Then came Amalek." On *Roshei Hodashim* - "And in your new moons." On the *ma'amadot* - in the creation. On the fast days - blessings and curses. They do not interrupt the curses, rather one reads all of them. On Mondays and on Thursdays and on the Shabbat in *Minhah* they read as their order, and they are not taken into account, as it is written, "And Moses declared to the Children of Israel the appointed seasons of the Lord" - their obligation is that they will read each one in its time.

CHAPTER 4:

MISHNAH 1 יהוה אדני אלהים

He who reads the *megillah* may stand and may sit. If one reads it, if two read it - they have fulfilled. A place where the practice is to bless, he blesses; and not to bless, he does not bless. On Mondays and on Thursdays and on the Shabbat in *Minhah* three read. They do not decrease and they do not add to them, and they do not read a *haftarah* in the Prophet. He who begins and he who concludes in the Torah blesses before it and after it.

MISHNAH 2 יהוה אדני אלהים

On *Roshei Hodashim* and on *Hol Hamoed* four read. They do not decrease from them and they do not add to them, and they do not read a *haftarah* in the Prophets. He who begins and he who concludes reading the Torah blesses before and after. This is the general rule: Whatever has in it *Musaf* and is not a Festival, four read. On a Festival - five. On Yom Kippur - six. On the Shabbat - seven. They do not decrease from them, but they may add, and they read a *haftarah* in the Prophets. He who begins and he who concludes in the Torah blesses before and after.

MISHNAH 3 יהו"ה אדנ"י אלהים

They may not *pores* the *Shema*, and they may not pass before the Ark, and they may not lift up their hands, and they may not read in the Torah, and they may not read the *haftarah* in the Prophets, and they may not perform standing and sitting, and they may not say the mourners' blessing and the consolation of mourners and the blessing of grooms, and they may not preface Grace after Meals with the Name, less than ten. And regarding lands nine and a priest, and a man similar to them.

MISHNAH 4 יהו"ה אדנ"י אלהים

The reader of the Torah may not read less than three verses. He may not read to the interpreter more than one verse, and in the Prophets three. If the three of them were three passages, they read each one. They may skip in the Prophets but they may not skip in the Torah. And how much may he skip? Until the interpreter will stop.

MISHNAH 5 יהו"ה אדנ"י אלהים

The reader of the *haftarah* in the Prophets, may *pores* on the *Shema*, and he may pass before the Ark, and he may lift up his hands. And if he was a minor, his father or his teacher may pass on his behalf.

MISHNAH 6 יהו"ה אדנ"י אלהים

A minor may read in the Torah and he may interpret, but he may not read the prayers for the *Shema*, and he may not pass before the Ark, and he may not lift up his hands. A *pohe'ah* may read the prayers for the *Shema* and he may interpret, but he may not read in the Torah, and he may not pass before the Ark, and he may not lift up his hands. One who is blind may read the prayers for the *Shema* and he may interpret. Rabbi Yehudah says, Whoever has not seen light in his lifetime may not read the prayers for the *Shema*.

minor may - be one of those called to - **read in the Torah** - in public; *Rambam* writes in his commentary on this mishnah that, according to the opinion of one of the latter Geonim, he may read only after the third person called up to the Torah (this is also brought in *Bartenura*; the author of *Melekheth Shelomo* writes that this is the opinion only of Rabbeinu Natan, the author of *Hearukh*). According to *Hameiri*, the reason for this is because the purpose of the Torah reading is only to have the public hear, and this is not a complete obligation even though he recites a blessing, since he has a connection with the study of the Torah, as evident by the fact that others are obligated to teach him.

MISHNAH 7 יהו"ה אדנ"י אלהי"ם

A Kohen who has blemishes on his hands may not lift up his hands. Rabbi Yehudah says, Even whoever's hands were dyed with *isetis* and *pu'ah*, may not lift up his hands, because the people stare at him.

MISHNAH 8 יהו"ה אדנ"י אלהי"ם

If one says "I will not pass before the ark [to act as a reader] in colored robes," he must not pass before it in white robes either. [If he says] I will not pass before it in shoes, he must not pass before it barefoot either. [Wearing] a round head tefilin is dangerous and does not satisfy the commandment. To put them on the forehead or on the palm of the hand is what heretics do. To overlay them with gold or to put [the hand tefilin] on top of one's sleeve is the way of the outsiders.

MISHNAH 9 יהו"ה אדנ"י אלהי"ם

If one says "May the Good bless you," this is the way of heretics. [If one says] "May Your mercies reach the nest of a bird,"[or] "May Your name be mentioned for well-doing,"[or] "We give thanks, we give thanks", he is silenced. If he uses euphemisms in the Torah portion dealing with forbidden marriages, he is silenced. If he says [instead of] "*You shall not give any of your seed to set them apart to Molekh*", "You shall not impregnate a non-Jewish woman," he is both silenced and rebuked.

MISHNAH 10 יהו"ה אדנ"י אלהי"ם

The incident of Reuven is read but not translated. The incident of Tamar is read and is translated. The first account of the calf is read and is translated, and the second is read but not translated. The Kohanic blessing, the incident of David and Amnon, are neither read nor translated. They do not read as a haftarah in the Chariot. And Rabbi Yehudah permits. Rabbi Eliezer says, They do not read as a *haftarah* in "*Cause Jerusalem to know*."

The incident of Tamar – and Judah (*Beresheet* 38), **is read and is translated** – because this constitutes praise for Yehudah, because he admitted the truth, and saved Tamar (*Gemara and Rashi; Rabbeinu Nissim, Hameiri*); according to another interpretation, this refers to the incident of Amnon and Tamar (*Rambam; Bartenura*; see also *Tosefot Yom Tov*).

The Kohanic blessing – (*Bemidbar* 6:24-26), **the incident of David and Amnon** – the Gemara explains that this refers to the verse in which Amnon and David are mentioned, within the passage of the incident of Amnon and Tamar (II *Shemuel* 13:1), **are neither read nor translated** – the version of the mishnah in the Gemara reads: "they are read and they are not translated." This is also the version of *R. Yitzhak Alfasi* and *Rabbeinu Asher*. According to another opinion, the Kohanic blessing is read and is not translated, and the incident of David and Amnon is neither read as a *haftarah* nor translated (*Rambam, Bartenura*).

Rabbi Eliezer says, They do not read as a haftarah in "Cause Jerusalem to know" – in Yehezkel chapter 16, which begins, "Son of man, cause Jerusalem to know her abominations." The commentators explain that this is not to be read on account of the honor of Jerusalem and the honor of Israel (Rambam, Bartenura; see also Tosefot Yom Tov, who cites another interpretation). The law is not in accordance with Rabbi Eliezer

Songs to "Get High": Shir HaMalot שיר המעלות

For the past several years I have chanted the fifteen songs of ascent (to "get high") to correspond with the 15 glasses of wine at the Seudah. The results are amazing. Here they follow with the mystical commentary Keter David translated as well as words of wisdom by contemporary scholars.

Psalm 120 David prays to be saved from scoffers; [protection from snake or scorpion]

1. A song of ascents. MALKUT ELEVATES THE ה 5 STEPS HESED GEVURAH TIFERET NETZAH HOD AND COMES TO HASHEM In my distress KLIPPOT I called to the Lord, TIFERET and He answered me.

2. Hashem, TIFERET save my soul MALKUT from false lips KLIPPOT, from a deceitful tongue KLIPPOT

3. What can He give you, and what can He add to you, you deceitful tongue KLIPPOT?

4. Sharpened arrows of a mighty man with coals of brooms. DINIM

5. Woe TIFERET WHICH ELEVATES TO 3 FIRST SEFIROT AS MALKUT FALLS is to me for I have sojourned in Meshech; I dwelt among the tents of Kedar. KLIPPOT

6. For a long time, my soul MALKUT dwelt with those who hate peace. KLIPPOT

7. I MALKUT am at peace, YESOD but TIFERET MALKUT when I speak, they [come] to [wage] war **KLIPPOT**

The First Step By Rabbi Jack Abramowitz This is the first of fifteen Psalms that begin with the words "A Song of Ascents." Rashi says these "ascents" are the 15 steps in the Temple, where the Levites would sing the Psalms. David says that he called out to G-d from all his troubles and G-d answered him. David asks to be saved from lying and deceitful people. (A liar is overtly

malicious, but a deceitful person pretends to be on your side.) David asks the gift of speech what G-d should do to keep it from abusing its power. (The Talmud in Erchin, 15b, says that the tongue is already confined behind two "walls," the teeth and the lips. How many barriers must one erect to keep it in line?) Words are like sharpened arrows.. David laments the exile of the people among the nations. He is pained by having to live among people who spurn overtures of peace. He is peace-loving, but whenever he brings it up, all the other nations want is war. (Sound familiar?)

R. Mansour:Psalm 120 begins a series of fifteen chapters which open with the words "*Shir Ha'ma'alot*" (or, in chapter 121, "*Shir La'ma'alot*"), which is generally translated as "A song of ascents." A number of commentators cite from the Talmudic sages that these fifteen songs were sung by the Levi'im in the Bet Ha'mikdash as they ascended the fifteen steps that separated the two sections of the courtyard outside the Temple. Each time they ascended one level, they would sing one of these Psalms, until at the final step they sang the fifteenth chapter of this series. This chapter is a prayer for protection from dishonesty and falsehood. Am Yisrael has always had to confront not only powerful armies, but also false charges and accusations. Their enemies would often fabricate information to discredit them and win support in their campaign to destroy the Jewish people. In this chapter, Am Yisrael laments the hardships it has suffered at the hands of such nations, who respond to their kind, peaceful gestures with hatred and hostility. In verse 4, the author likens falsehood to "*sharp arrows of warriors.*" Arrows, as Rashi explains, are used to kill enemies at a distance. Dishonesty works the same way, killing reputations and even people from a distance. False rumors and accusations can destroy a person even if the speaker is nowhere near the victim, and allows one to "shoot down" his adversary without having to confront him directly. These tactics are thus especially dangerous, and, as this Psalm expresses, it is only with God's help that Am Yisrael can protect itself from these destructive "arrows."

121 for proper mate in marriage, protection at night

A song MALKUT for ascents FROM ONE'S PLACE . I shall raise my eyes to the mountains HAGAT AND FROM THERE SEEK , from where KETER will my help come?.

2. My help is from Hashem KETER , the Maker of heaven TIFERET and earth MALKUT..

3. He will not allow your foot NETZAH AND HOD to falter; Your Guardian MALKUT will not slumber

4. Behold the Guardian of Israel TIFERET will neither slumber nor sleep ARIK ANPIN.

5. Hashem TIFERET is your Guardian MALKUT ; Hashem TIFERET is your shadow; [He is] by your right hand HESED

6. By day HESED, the sun TIFERET will not smite you, nor will the moon MALKUT at night.
MALKUT

7. Hashem TIFERET will guard you MALKUT from all evil; KLIPPOT He will guard your soul.
MALKUT

8. Hashem TIFERET will guard your going out and your coming in from now MALKUT and to
YESOD eternity BINAH

Esa Einai By Rabbi Jack Abramowitz Another song of ascents. David says he lifts his eyes expectantly towards the mountains to see the source of our help. Our help comes from G-d, Who made Heaven and Earth. G-d will not let our foot slip; He will watch us constantly, since He never dozes. G-d is the shade on our right hand. He will not let the sun harm us by day, nor the moon by night. He will protect us from all evil: human beings, wild animals, and diseases. He will guard us as we go into exile and as we return. He will protect us forever! This Psalm, "*Esa Einai*," is one of the most popular prayers in times of trouble.

RM: Psalm 121, which ranks among the more famous chapters of Tehillim, is recited in Sephardic communities each evening during the Arvit service, and is also customarily recited during any time of danger or potentially dangerous situation, including long trips. Indeed, the opening verses vividly capture the Jewish perspective on how to respond during times of trouble: "*I raise my eyes to the mountains – from where shall my help come? My help is from God...*" The message of this chapter is, simply enough, that one should turn only to God for assistance. Rather than look around "to the mountains" in search of help, one need only to lift his eyes to his Father in heaven and beseech Him for protection.

This Psalm mentions a number of aspects of God's protection that set it fundamentally apart from the protection that human beings can afford. For one thing, He is the "*Maker of heaven and earth*" (verse 2) and thus has unlimited power over the world, such that He is capable of rescuing a person from any predicament. Additionally, the Almighty "neither sleeps nor slumbers" (verse 4); human guards are only as effective as their limited supply of strength and stamina, while the "*Guardian of Israel*" offers endless protection. Similarly, God can protect "*from now and forever*" (verse 8), as opposed to human guardians whose physical strength gradually declines until they eventually pass on. God's protection has no limits in time or substance, and it is thus His protection one should endeavor to invoke when facing danger or crisis

122 David years to renew his days as of old; for success in marriage, before meeting important person

A song MALKUT of ascents of David. I rejoiced BINAH when they said to me, "Let us go to the house of Hashem" MALKUT ELEVATES TO BINAH AND ELEVATES FROM THE HOLD OF THE SNAKE

2. Our feet NETZAH AND HOD were standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. MALKUT

3. The built-up ה JOINED WITH בן NHY- NETZAH HOD YESOD AND TIFERET Jerusalem MALKUT is like a city MALKUT that was joined together WITH THE BINAH HINTED TO THE LETTER LAMED (IN THE SECRET OF THE TOWER FLYING IN THE AIR AND THE FIRST LETTER HEH OF HASHEM) within.

4. There MALKUT ascended the tribes, the tribes of God, YH IS HOKMAH BINAH testimony to ISRAEL SAVA , to give thanks to the name of the Lord BINAH .

5. For there MAKLUT were set thrones for judgment, TIFERET thrones for the house of David. MALKUT TO RECEIVE FROM THE 10 SEFIROT ABOVE

6. Request the welfare YESOD of Jerusalem; MALKUT may those who love you enjoy tranquility.

7. May there be peace YESOD in your wall, tranquility in your palaces.

8. For the sake of my brethren and my companions, I shall now speak of peace in you.

9. For the sake of the house of Hashem our Gd, MALKUT I shall beg for goodness YESOD for you.

By Rabbi Jack Abramowitz David says that he rejoiced when people were anxious for the Temple to be built, even though it would not occur in his lifetime. He envisions Jerusalem “built up” with G-d’s Presence, like its counterpart in Heaven. The Tribes of Israel went to Shilo when they entered Israel, to give thanks to the name of the G-d. In Jerusalem, thrones were established for the Davidic dynasty. Pray for the peace and prosperity of Jerusalem, which is good all of Israel. David says he will speak of peace within Jerusalem for the sake of the people, and he will request good things for them for the sake of the Temple. (This last section is familiar as “L’maan Achai V’Reiyai,” a phrase found in song and in prayer.)

RM: In Chapter 122 David sings an enthusiastic song of praise to the city of Jerusalem – the site of the "*House of God*" (verse 1) where the Tribes of Israel would assemble to celebrate festivals and give thanks to the Almighty (verse 4). David calls upon his readers to join him in praying for the peace and security of Jerusalem and for the well-being of those who appreciate its unique spiritual qualities (verses 6-9).

The commentators offer different possibilities in identifying the context for which this Psalm was composed. The Radak maintains that David wrote this poem for the period of exile, when the Jews would longingly reminisce about the glory of the Bet Ha'mikdash and the sight of throngs of Jews pouring through its gates to give praise to God. The prayer in the final verses of this chapter

is thus a prayer for the rebuilding of the Temple and the safe return of the Jewish people to Zion and to the service of God in the Mikdash. Rashi, however, understood that David speaks of his own time, when people eagerly anticipated the long-awaited construction of the Mikdash. God had already informed David that the Temple would be built only after his death, and so the people's anticipation of the Mikdash meant their eagerness to see David pass on and his son once and for all build the Bet Ha'mikdash. Nevertheless, David "rejoiced" (verse 1) upon hearing people speak so anxiously and enthusiastically about the Temple's construction. He recognized the importance and centrality of the Bet Ha'mikdash in the nation's religious experience, and therefore he was not disturbed at all by the anticipation of the opportunity for its construction, which depended on his death. To the contrary, he felt proud and gratified that the people under his charge displayed such enthusiasm and eagerness for the permanent site of the Shechina (Divine Presence) to finally be established in their midst. He therefore proudly composed this poem as a beautiful expression of the people's fervor and excitement over the Temple's imminent construction.

123 help against enemies

A song of ascents. MALKUT ELEVATES AND LOOKS FORWARD TO RECEIVING SHEFA
To You I lifted up my eyes, You Who dwell in heaven TIFERET.

2. Behold, as the eyes of slaves CALLS HIMSELF A SLAVE to the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a handmaid to the hand of her mistress, so are our eyes to Hashem TIFERET our Gd, BINAH until He favors us. BY GIVING US FLOW THROUGH THE YESOD OF IMMA CALLED NOAH/COMFORT

3. Favor us, Hashem AND GIVE US SHEFA THROUGH THE YESOD OF ZA favor us, YESOD for MALKUT we are fully sated with contempt. SINCE THE KLIPPOT HAVE OVERPOWERED

4. Our soul MALKUT is fully sated with the ridicule of the complacent, the contempt [shown] to the valley of doves.

Enough is Enough By Rabbi Jack Abramowitz A mere four verses: David says he raises his eyes to G-d, Who dwells in Heaven. He looks to G-d for his support like a servant looks towards his master and like a servant-girl looks towards her mistress. The master or mistress has the power to reward and punish. So, too, we look to G-d, hoping that He will treat us well, since we were abused in our exiles. Our souls are full of the mistreatment we've suffered at the hands of our tormentors, so we've really had quite enough of that and are ready for a change

RM: This Psalm expresses a prayer to God for assistance against the enemies of Israel who ridicule and torment the Jewish people, comparing ourselves to servants appealing to their master. This analogy is understood by the commentators in a number of different ways. Some explain that we are entirely dependent upon the Almighty for our most basic needs just as a servant relies on his master. In this prayer we thus humbly acknowledge that our very survival is dependent upon

the Almighty's grace and kindness, and we plead to Him for mercy and compassion. According to others, we appeal for God's protection just as a servant begs his master for protection against those who seek to cause him harm. Servants are generally helpless and vulnerable without the help of their master; similarly, we are powerless against our enemies without God's assistance. Finally, this analogy has been understood as referring to a servant who has betrayed his master and thus faces the prospect of harsh punishment. His only recourse is to plead for mercy and compassion. He openly confesses his guilt, and begs his angry master to spare him punishment nonetheless for no other reason than pity and sympathy. We, too, acknowledge that we have acted wrongly and are thus deserving of the humiliation to which we are subjected by our foes. But we nevertheless lift our eyes with both shame and hope to the Almighty and plead for forgiveness and assistance, asking that He grant us His protection even if we are unworthy of His kindness.

124 proper mate in marriage; to be saved from Klippot

A song of ascents. Of David MALKUT ELEVATES TO THE 7 STEPS OF HAGAT N'H. Had it not been for the Lord TIFERET Who was with us, WHO JOINS WITH US IN MALKUT CALLED ELOKIM WHICH IS GEMATARIA LANU/WITH US let Israel TIFERET declare ELEVATE now TIFERET AND BINAH IN THE NAMES HAWAYA AND THE R LETTERS OF EHYH .

2. Had it not been for Hashem TIFERET Who was with us MALKUT when men rose up against us, SITRA AHRA .

3. Then MALKUT they would have swallowed us raw THE KLIPPOT WHO TAKE ALL SHEFA when their anger was kindled against us. WHEN THE ATTRIBUTE OF GEVURAH RULES

4. Then MALKUT the waters would have washed us THROUGH THE KLIPPOT away; illness would have passed over our soul. MALKUT

5. Then MALKUT the wicked waters KLIPPOT would have passed over our soul.

6. Blessed is Hashem ,TIFERET ELEVATES AND RECEIVES FROM THE YESOD OF ABBA WHO PUSHES OUT AND EXILES THE KLIPPOT Who did not give us as prey for their teeth.

7. Our MALKUT soul escaped like a bird from the hunters' snare; THE KLIPPOT AND THESE STAND AT THE DOOR OF THE PALACE OF THE SAPHIRE BRICK the snare SAM AN DLIL broke, and we escaped.

8. Our help is in the name of Hashem TIFERET AND MALKUT , Who made heaven TIFERET and earth MALKUT

Baruch Hashem! By Rabbi Jack Abramowitz David says that if it hadn't been for G-d, we'd have been swallowed whole when our enemies rose up against us. (The Talmud in Megilla says this refers to Haman because it says "*adam*" – a common person, as opposed to a king.) When the anger of other nations was directed at us, it would have washed us away like the waters of a flood. We would have been overcome by waters of evil. Blessed be G-d ("Baruch Hashem!") who did not let us become their prey; instead, we escaped like a bird from a trap. Our help comes from G-d, Who made Heaven and Earth. This chapter is essentially a declaration acknowledging that only God's assistance has enabled Am Yisrael to survive the hostility and antagonism of the enemy nations. Those nations are described in this Psalm as seeking to "devour us alive," and likened to raging floodwaters. Their hatred is so constant and unrelenting that they seem naturally inclined to oppress us, just as wild beasts instinctively devour their prey and floodwaters flow naturally until they are held at bay. Thus, the Jewish people in their natural state are exposed to fierce enemies who seek to destroy them, and only with God's protection have we managed to escape from the claws of our foes and survive for all these centuries. Similarly, verse 7 compares Am Yisrael to a bird caught in a hunter's trap but then flies to safety when the trap inexplicably breaks. Our nation always finds itself in a "trap"; we live constantly under the threat posed by the enemies who devise strategies to plan our demise. As we declare in the Haggadah on Pesah, "In each and every generation they rise against us to destroy us." Yet, in every generation the "trap" breaks in one way or another, and we somehow escape and continue to survive. This chapter of Tehillim thus calls upon the Jews of every historical period to recognize the dangers that lurk all around us, and the extraordinary miracle of our nation's survival that repeats itself in each and every generation

125 for protection from enemies on the road; to unite lovers and remove from grip of Klippot

A song of ascents. MALKUT ELEVATES TO THE הַּ WHICH IS HaGaT N'H Those who trust in Hashem TIFERET are like Mount Zion, YESOD which will not falter but will abide forever..MALKUT

2. Jerusalem MALKUT has mountains SEFIROT ELEVATE TO BINAH around it, and Hashem TIFERET is around His people from now MALKUT and to YESOD eternity. BINAH

3. For the rod of wickedness KLIPPOT will not rest on the lot of the righteous WHO GUARD THE COVENANT , because the righteous do not stretch out their hands into wrongdoing

.4. Be good, Hashem TIFERET , to the good and to the upright in their hearts.

5. And those who turn their crooked ways-may Hashem TIFERET lead them away with the workers of iniquity ,KLIPPOT [and may there be] peace on Israel

Jerusalem Mountain High By Rabbi Jack Abramowitz David says that people who trust in G-d are like Mount Zion in that they cannot be moved. Just as the mountain stands firm, so too are those who put their trust in G-d. Just as Jerusalem is surrounded by mountains, G-d always surrounds His people. The righteous will not fall prey to evil rulers, so that they should not learn from the deeds of the wicked. David prays that G-d will do good things for the upright of His people, but lead the crooked ones away. When this happens, there will be peace on Israel.

RM Chapter 125 extols those who "trust in God," comparing them to the city of Jerusalem. The city of Jerusalem is surrounded by tall, majestic hills, yet it is the Almighty – not geographic features – that will, in the future, eternally guarantee the city's safety and protection. Similarly, one who sincerely places his trust in God can depend upon His grace, assistance and protection, without having to rely on far less dependable sources of safety. In verse 3, we are given the reason why evil cannot prevail, and why truth and justice must ultimately triumph over corruption and falsehood. The Psalmist explains that if the evildoers seize control over the righteous, they will impose their decrepit moral standards upon their pious subjects. God of course desires a world of honesty and just, upright behavior, and to that end He must eventually see to it that the righteous men of the world are victorious in their struggle against evil and corruption. Indeed, this chapter ends with a heartfelt prayer that God bestow His grace and kindness upon the righteous, and eliminate the evildoers. This chapter thus speaks of the inevitability of good's eventual triumph over evil. Just as the prophets have promised the eternal protection of Jerusalem in the time of Mashiah, so are we guaranteed that the righteous men of the earth will ultimately succeed and that corruption and evil will vanish.

126 for end of our exile yearning to unite always with Beloved

A song of ascents. MALKUT TO THE 5 ה SEFIROT HAGAT N'H When Hashem TIFERET returns ET IS MALKUT WHO JOINS WITH the returnees to Zion, YESOD we shall be NOW THE MALKUT ה AND TIFERET ו ELEVATE TO BINAH HINTS TO THE LETTERS ו״ו OF HAYYINU like dreamers. REVEALING THE LIGHT OF BINAH

2. Then AS THE LIGHT OF BINAH IS REVEALED our mouths MALKUT will be filled with laughter BINAH and our tongues YESOD with songs of praise; then IN THE FUTURE they will say among the nations, "Hashem TIFERET has done great things FROM THE SIDE OF HASSIDIM with THE LETTERS ALH these. WHICH FELL AT THE TIME OF EXILE AND NOW RETURN TO THEIR PLACES .

3. "Hashem has done great things with us; we were happy." IN THE RETURN OF THE LIGHT OF BINAH 'A HAPPY MOTHER OF CHILDREN'

4. Return, Hashem , our captivity like rivulets in arid land..

5. Those who sow with tears AT THE TIME OF EXILE will reap with song. AT THE TIME OF REDEMPTION

6. He will go along weeping, carrying the valuable seeds; he will come back with song, carrying his sheaves

Rabbosai Nevaireich! By Rabbi Jack Abramowitz This “song of ascents” is no doubt the most famous one in the series, as it is the Shir HaMaalos we say before bentching on Shabbos and Yom Tov. David says that when G-d brought the exiles back to Israel, they were like dreamers. Their mouths were filled with laughter and their tongues with song. The nations of the world will acknowledge that G-d has done great things for the Jewish people. The Jews respond, “**Yes, G-d HAS done great things with us**; that’s why we’re so happy!” All of this speaks of the future redemption. David asks G-d to return the captives from exile, invigorating them like streams do a dry land. Those who sow in tears will reap in joy; the person who carried seed while crying will return home carrying sheaves in joy.

127 for protection for a newborn child; mohin/mentalities to Malkut comes from Tiferet

A Song of ascents about Solomon. YESOD If Hashem TIFERET will not build a house, MALUT its builders have toiled at it in vain; if Hashem will not guard a city, MALKUT [its] watcher keeps his vigil in vain.

2. It is futile for you who arise early, who sit late, who eat the bread of toil, so will the Lord give to one who banishes sleep from himself..

3. Behold, the heritage of Hashem MALKUT is sons, the reward is the fruit of the innards

4. Like arrows in the hand of a mighty man, so are the sons of one's youth..

5. Praiseworthy is the man who has filled his quiver with them; they will not be ashamed when they talk to the enemies in the gate

Sing a Song of Solomon By Rabbi Jack Abramowitz Another song of ascents: David dedicated this Psalm to his son Solomon, whom he was told would build the Temple. If not for G-d, David says, the Temple could not be built. The builders would toil in vain. (This may refer to David’s own desire to build the Temple, which G-d refused.) If not for G-d, Jerusalem could not be protected and the watchman’s work would be in vain. But G-d will protect Jerusalem, since He chose it for the capital and the site of His Temple. There’s no point in getting up early and staying up late at one’s work. These people “***eat the bread of hard labor.***” G-d provides for those who banish sleep from their eyes in order to learn Torah. Children are a gift from G-d. They are a reward. The children one has in one’s youth even more so – they are like a warrior’s arrows and it’s good to have a quiver full of them! A person who does will not be embarrassed when he

confronts his opponents publicly. (Rashi says this section refers to the students of a scholar; the Radak says David is still speaking of his own son, Solomon.)

RM: A Number of commentators explain this Psalm as a poem David composed upon being informed that his son Shelomo, rather than he, would be given the privilege of building the Bet Ha'mikdash. In the first two verses, David declares that it is God, not man, who determines when a building will arise. Regardless of how hard the laborers toil or how carefully the watchmen guard the building site, the project will materialize only with the direct assistance and support of the Almighty. David here accepts God's decree forbidding him from building the Mikdash, recognizing that if God does not wish for him to build it then even if he would try the endeavor would assuredly fail. In the Psalm's final verses (3-5), David turns his attention to the great blessing of children, whom he compares to "arrows in the hands of the mighty warrior" (verse 4). A warrior's most valuable asset is effective weaponry; for a religiously conscientious Jew, the greatest commodity and blessing is children who follow the Torah traditions that he received from his parents. David thus expresses his gratitude for the fact that his son would perpetuate his legacy and heritage. Although he desired to personally oversee the building of the Mikdash, he found solace in the fact that he leaves behind a son faithful to his teachings, and who will fulfill Am Yisrael's collective dream of having in their midst an abode for the SheKhina (Divine Presence).

128 for a woman during pregnancy, said to the field which Elokim has blessed and flows without ceasing

A song of ascents. Praiseworthy BINAH is every man who fears the EXALTED NATURE UNTIL HE COMES TO Hashem , who walks in His ways. HOKMAH

2. If you eat the toil of your hands, you are praiseworthy, and it is good for you.

. 3. Your wife MALKUT will be as a fruitful vine in the innermost parts of your house MALKUT ; your sons HAGAT, NaHY will be like olive shoots around your table. BINAH

. 4. Behold that so will a man who fears Hashem be blessed. KETER

. 5. May Hashem bless you from Zion, YESOD and see the good of Jerusalem MALKUT all the days of your life.

6. And may you see children [born] to your children, [and see] peace YESOD upon Israel.TIFERET

It's 10:00 PM; Do You Know Where Your Children Are? By Rabbi Jack Abramowitz

Still another "*song of ascents*." Fortunate is every person who has appropriate awe of G-d, for such a person walks in G-d's ways. When this person eats the fruits of his labors, he will be happy and all will be well for him. (Rashi quotes the Talmud in Brachos that a person who enjoys the

fruits of his labors inherits two worlds, namely this world and the Next.) his person's wife will be like a fruitful vine and they will be blessed with praiseworthy children. These children will be "all around his table," meaning the parents will know where their children are; they're not out getting into trouble. All this is the blessing of one who is in proper awe of G-d. G-d will bless him from Jerusalem, where the Temple is, as that is the tin can on the other end of the string that talks to Heaven. (That last metaphor is mine, not David's.)The "godly" person will enjoy all the good of Jerusalem and live to see grandchildren. When this happens, the whole nation will be blessed with peace.

RM Psalm 128 confers a brief but powerful blessing upon every "*Yere Hashem*" – God-fearing person – speaking of a number of rewards that he should earn for following the path commanded by the Almighty. First, the Psalmist blesses the God-fearing man that he should "*partake of the toil of your hands*" (verse 2), meaning, that he should receive satisfaction from all his hard work and efforts. One of the greatest blessings for which a person can hope is the sense of fulfillment that comes from seeing the fruits of his efforts, and the Psalmist thus declares to the individual who earns this privilege, "Fortunate are you, and good for you!" Secondly, this Psalm blesses the righteous man that he should beget many children who will themselves beget children in his lifetime (verses 3,6). The "*Yere Hashem*" is further blessed that he should be privileged to "*behold the goodness of Jerusalem*" (verse 5) and see the day when Israel will once and for all enjoy peace and security (verse 6). The Radak deduces from these blessings that the Psalmist addresses the righteous men living in exile, and he prays that their devotion to God should be rewarded with the privilege of living to see Am Yisrael's redemption. Thus, the "Yere Hashem" is blessed that he should not only enjoy personal joy and contentment, but also have the opportunity to celebrate the redemption and success of the entire Jewish people. This should perhaps remind us not to focus our attention exclusively on our own goals and ambitions. We should strive not only for personal contentment and happiness, but also for the realization of the centuries-old dream of "Shalom Al Yisrael," that our nation should finally be blessed with enduring peace, security and prosperity

129 in praise of our Gd for protecting our people from enemies, wrestle against outsiders

1. A song of ascents. Much have they distressed me from my youth, Israel TIFERET will say now.
2. Much have they distressed me from my youth, but also they have not prevailed against me..
3. On my back, the plowmen plowed; they lengthened their furrow
4. Hashem TIFERET is righteous TIFERET AND YESOD; He will cut the ropes of the wicked.
KLIPOT
5. May all those who hate Zion YESOD be ashamed and retreat.

6. May they be like the grass of the roofs, which, before it is plucked, withers.

7. Of which the reaper did not fill his hand, nor the gatherer his arm..

8. And the passers-by did not say, "May the blessing of Hashem be to you MALKUT ; we have blessed you in the name of the Lord. TIFERET AND MALKUT

Another Song of Ascents: Israel will say that they have been greatly oppressed since their youth (meaning since the exile began), but their spirit has not been conquered. The nations plow long furrows on the backs of the Jews (a metaphor for the oppression), but G-d is righteous. He will cut the ropes that tie on the yoke of the nations. Those who hate G-d's people will be ashamed. David prays that their fate will be like the patches of grass that grow on a rooftop; they quickly dry up. Their fate will not be like an abundant harvest that inspires blessing from those who see it.

RM Psalm 129 calls upon the Jewish people to give thanks to the Almighty for the miraculous protection He has granted them throughout the period of exile. Many different nations have oppressed us and sought to destroy us since "*our youth*" (verses 1-2), since the earliest years of our current exile, yet Am Yisrael continues to survive and flourish. The Psalmist (verse 3) likens the oppression we have endured to the yoke of the plowshare upon the back of oxen, a very accurate portrayal of the dehumanizing discrimination to which we have often been subject. Many enemy regimes looked upon the Jewish people as a subhuman race that could be abused and enslaved like oxen. But the Almighty "severed the chains of the wicked" (verse 4) and released us from the yoke of racial oppression and torment. In the final verses (verses 6-8), the author offers a prayer that the enemies of Am Yisrael should be like grass and weeds that quickly wither and are never harvested along with the crops. Ibn Ezra insightfully notes the contrast between this description and the analogy drawn several chapters earlier between the redeemed Nation of Israel and joyful harvesters (126:5-6). Throughout the centuries of exile, the Jewish people "sow the seeds" of redemption which will ultimately grow, ripen and be harvested during the time of Mashiah. In direct contrast, the efforts of the enemy nations are described here as producing dry, useless weeds, which nobody even thinks to pick from the ground. We can find consolation in the promise that our toil and labor under the harsh conditions of exile will eventually yield "fruit," in the form of the great rewards that await Am Yisrael at the time of the final redemption. The efforts of the wicked, by contrast, will ultimately prove futile, as they yield no long-term benefits for the world or for themselves

130 prayer for difficult times and for forgiveness, cry to the Beloved to save

A song of ascents. From the depths FROM HOKMAH I have called You, Hashem

2. Hashem, MALKUT hearken to my voice; may Your ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

3. O Gd, MALKUT if You keep [a record of] iniquities, Hashem MALKUT who BINAH will stand?

4. For forgiveness is with You, in order that You be feared.
5. I hoped, Hashem; TIFERET yea, my soul MALKUT hoped, and I wait for His word.
6. My soul MALKUT is to the Hashem among those who await the morning, those who await the morning..
7. Israel, hope to Hashem, TIFERET for kindness is with the Hashem and much redemption is with Him..
8. And He BINAH will redeem Israel from all their iniquities

From the Depths By Rabbi Jack Abramowitz *Song of Ascents*: David says that he called to G-d from the depths, which the Radak says refers to the plight of the Jews in exile. He begs G-d to heed his prayer, saying that if G-d is going to keep an eye on our sins, then we're done for. G-d has the exclusive ability to forgive sin, a fact that causes Him to be revered. David longs for G-d. His soul longs for G-d. He prays for G-d's word. David anticipates G-d's redemption of Israel even more expectantly than the night watchmen wait for daybreak. David instructs the nation to put their faith in G-d because He is merciful and has large amounts of redemption to go around. He will save Israel from their sins first, then He will redeem them from exile. The Talmud in Brachos (10b) derives from this Psalm that it is appropriate to pray to G-d "*from the depths,*" which is why you'll find in many synagogues that the place from which the leader prays is lower than the surrounding area.

RM: Psalm 130 is among the most famous chapters of Tehillim, as it is added to the daily Shaharit prayer service during the period from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur. Additionally, in many communities this Psalm is recited on behalf of gravely ill patients, Heaven forbid, or during times of other kinds of crisis. The tenor of this chapter is established immediately in the first verse, where the Psalmist describes himself crying out to the Almighty "from the depths." This prayer was composed for times when one feels as though he has reached the very lowest depths, overwhelmed by anxiety. This is indeed the feeling we should experience during the Ten Days of Repentance, the period when we stand before God in judgment. Fully aware of our failings and inadequacies, we find ourselves in the "lowest depths" of despair and angst, pleading for undeserved mercy and compassion. And so, in verses 2-4 the author of this prayer begs the Almighty for forgiveness, noting that if He is unwilling to forgive, then no person can possibly survive. In the final two verses, the Psalmist turns to the entire Jewish nation and urges them to join him in petitioning the Almighty for forgiveness and redemption. He emphasizes God's infinite kindness and willingness to pardon our wrongdoing, thereby encouraging us to seize the opportunity of repentance. Regardless of the "depths" to which a person has sunken, he must not give up on himself and despair from God's willingness to atone, and should rather feel confident in his ability to improve and God's preparedness to grant forgiveness. The final verse of this Psalm emphasizes that God is prepared to forgive all of Israel's sins. No matter how grievous a sin or how many sins one has committed, he is still invited to repent, to commit himself to change, and thereby earn the Almighty's grace and kindness. Even after a person has reached the lowest

"depths" of iniquity, he is still afforded the opportunity to elevate himself and gradually restore his relationship with God.

131 a prayer against haughtiness words on humility, which is gematira KLA

A song MALKUT of ascent 5 ה LEVELS TO HAGAT Netzah Hod by David. Hashem TIFERET my heart was not haughty, nor were my eyes raised on high, and I did not pursue matters greater and more wondrous than I.

2. I swear that I calmed and quieted my soul MALKUT like a suckling on its mother; like a suckling was my soul MALKUT with me..

3. Israel, hope to Hashem from now MALKUT to YESOD eternity MALKUT

Modest David By Rabbi Jack Abramowitz Psalm 131 is an extremely short Psalm of only 3 verses..David tells G-d that his heart was not arrogant and his eyes were not ambitious. He did not pursue things that were beyond him. (This could either mean in physical accomplishments or in esoteric areas of Torah study.) David says he calmed his soul like a mother calms a toddler. He concludes by once again instructing his people to place their hope in G-d forevermore. Various commentators give numerous examples of David's humility, alluded to in this Psalm. He didn't become arrogant after being anointed king, nor after conquering Goliath. After the rebellion of Avshalom, when he was restored to the throne, he didn't take the opportunity to avenge himself Shimei ben Gera, who kicked him when he was down. When the Ark was returned to Jerusalem, he overlooked his own honor in order to dance with unbridled joy. The Talmud in Brachos (4a) says that even though he was the king and a scholar, David always consulted with his teacher before rendering a decision. There are many such examples

RM; In this chapter David briefly testifies that he did not conduct himself with the kind of arrogance and egotism that are generally associated with leadership and authority. He did not pursue luxuries or exert undue control and power over the people; despite his position of monarch, he led a generally humble, subdued lifestyle, ever cognizant of his obligations to the true King over the world. David proclaims that he looked at himself not as a powerful, successful ruler, but rather as an infant sucking milk from his mother. The image of a suckling babe relates to the theme of dependence; the infant is entirely dependent upon his mother for his very survival, and without his mother's devoted care he cannot live. David lived his life with this same mind set vis-à-vis his relationship to God. Rather than take pride in his remarkable accomplishments as a warrior and leader, he attributed all his success to the Almighty. He recognized his debt of gratitude to God for even his very survival, not to mention for his successful monarchy. David makes this affirmation not for self-glorification, but rather in order to admonish the Jewish people to follow his example. This Psalm concludes with a summons to all Am Yisrael, inviting them to constantly place their faith in the Almighty. David wishes to impress upon us that his success resulted from God's assistance, and not from his independent capabilities, and we should therefore show similar faith and devotion to God, and thereby be deserving of our final redemption.

132 *David desires to build the Temple so the Shekinah can rest there. In an inside way which is greater than that of one for his Beloved to dwell there always*

A song MALKUT of ascents. Remember YESOD, Hashem TIFERET , onto David MALKUT all his affliction..

2. HE SEEKS TO HAVE THE SHEKHINAH DESCEND TO HER PLACE WHICH WILL BE IN THE BEGINNING That BINAH he swore MALKUT to Hashem TIFERET, he vowed BINAH to the Mighty One of Jacob; TIFERET

3. That I shall not come into the tent of my house, MALKUT and I shall not go up on the bed that was spread for me.

4. I shall not give sleep to my eyes nor slumber to my pupils,

5. Until I find a place MALKUT for Hashem TIFERET dwellings MALKUT for the Mighty One of Jacob. TIFERET

6. Behold we heard it in Ephrath; we found it in the fields of the forest.

7. Let us come to His Tabernacles; MALKUT let us prostrate ourselves to His footstool.
MALKUT

8. Arise, Hashem TIFERET to Your resting place, You and TIFERET the Ark of Your might..

9. Let Your priests HESED be clothed with righteousness, MALKUT and let Your devout ones HESED sing praises.

10. For the sake of David Your servant, MALKUT turn not away the face of Your anointed.

11. Hashem TIFERET has sworn MALKUT to David in truth, from which He will never turn back, "Of the fruit of your body I shall seat upon your throne.

12. If your sons keep My covenant, MALKUT and this, My testimony, which I shall teach them, also their sons will sit on your throne forever. YESOD "

13. For Hashem TIFERET has chosen Zion; YESOD He desired it for His habitation. KETER TIFERET AND MALKUT

14. This MALKUT is My resting place forever YESOD ; here MALKUT I shall dwell for I desired it. KETER HOKMAH BINAH IN MALKUT .

15. I shall bless its provision; I shall sate its needy YESOD with bread. MALKUT .

16. And its priests HESED I shall clothe with salvation, MALKUT and its devout ones HESED will sing GEVURAH praises.

17. There MALKUT I shall cause David's horn MALKUT to sprout; I have set up a lamp for My anointed..

18. His enemies KLIPPOT I shall clothe with shame, and upon him MALKUT his crown will shine TIFERET

He Didn't Build It, But They Came Anyway By Rabbi Jack Abramowitz Another of the *“Songs of Ascents.”* David asks G-d to remember how hard he worked to find the location for the Temple, even though he would not be privileged to build it himself. He eschewed living in a house so long as G-d’s Ark resided in a tent. David also deprived himself of restful sleep because of his preoccupation with establishing the Temple site. Ultimately, the place was identified as the threshing floor of Aravnah the Jebusite, on the border of Benjamin. Now that we know the place, we can worship at the location of G-d’s “footstool” (See Isaiah 66:1). David beseeches G-d to come to the site of His permanent Temple, unlike the locations where the Tabernacle resided temporarily. Let the kohanim, the priests, don their “working clothes,” which David here calls garments of righteousness. Let the Leviim, the Levites, sing their songs in joy. David asks that when his son Solomon comes to dedicate the Temple that he not be turned away. (These three verses are recited in the “Atoh Horaiso” prayer on Simchas Torah.) G-d promised David that his dynasty would be established through Solomon. G-d will fulfill this and if David’s descendants remain faithful, they will retain the throne forever. G-d has chosen Jerusalem as the site of His Temple and there His presence will remain. Because of this, Jerusalem will enjoy abundant good for the residents, the priests and the Levites. The Moshiach (messiah) will be born from David’s descendants; his crown will shine and his enemies will be shamed

RM The commentators identify Psalm 132 as a prayer David composed upon discovering the future site of the Bet Ha'mikdash. As we read in the Book of Shemuel II (chapter 24) and the Book of Divre Hayamim I (chapter 21), God delivered a deadly plague upon the Jewish people, and the prophet instructed David that he could end the plague by offering sacrifices in the granary of a Jerusalemite named Aravna (who was also known as Arnan). David purchased the land, built an altar and offered sacrifices, and the plague immediately came to an end. Thereupon David declared, "This is the House of the Lord God, and this is Israel's altar for burnt offerings!" (Divre Hayamim I 22:1). Indeed, that spot became the site on which the Bet Ha'mikdash was built during the time of David's son and successor, King Shelomo. According to a number of commentators, it was in response to this event, during which David learned of the future site of the Temple, that David composed chapter 132 of Tehillim. David begins by recalling the overbearing anxiety he experienced in seeking to secure a site for the Temple, to the point where he was unable to sleep (verses 3-4). David undoubtedly refers to a comment he made to the prophet Natan many years earlier: "Look, if you will – I dwell in a home of cedar wood, while the Ark of God resides behind a curtain" (Shemuel II 7:2). He felt uneasy about enjoying the comfort and security of his magnificent palace while the Ark, representing God's presence, had no permanent abode among the Jewish people. Here in Tehillim David recalls this anxiety and expresses his jubilation over

finally finding the site of the Mikdash. In the latter part of this chapter (verses 11-18), David pleads to God to keep the promise He made to David through the prophet Natan (Shemuel II 7:4-16), that David's son will succeed him and build the Bet He'mikdash. God further guaranteed David that if his descendants remain loyal to Bene Yisrael's covenant with the Almighty, they will enjoy an enduring, stable kingship. Jerusalem will be blessed with wealth and prosperity, Israel's vicious enemies will collapse, and the "crown" of the Davidic dynasty will "glitter" (verse 18). Upon seeing God's promises beginning to materialize, with the discovery of the site of the Mikdash, David now pleads to the Almighty to fulfill the other promises, as well, and bless his offspring with a strong, stable and prosperous dynasty. As we know, God did not grant David permission to build the Bet Ha'mikdash, reserving this privilege instead for his son, Shelomo. In this prayer, as the Radak explains (verse 1), David asks that he should be rewarded for the efforts he expended towards the building of the Temple despite the fact that he would leave the world before the project's completion. From here we may learn the immense value of the effort and exertion invested in religious observance, regardless of the outcome. Many times, we, like David, make a sincere effort in a certain area without ever seeing the desired result. David here teaches that a person is rewarded for these efforts and hard work even if the fruits of the labor are not immediately discernible; so long as one exerts himself with sincerity and devotion, he will be credited with success even if he does not live to see the end result

133 desire of the Beloved to receive Shefa without end and to draw to Israel below

A song MALKUT of ascents 5 הַ שְׁעֵי חַגַּת נְהַל דָּוִד. Behold how good YESOD and how pleasant it is for brothers ZEIR ANPIN AND NOK also to dwell together YISRAEL BELOW !

2. As the good oil SHEFA OF AYN SOF on the KETER ADAM KADOM head runs down upon the beard HOLY BEARD, the beard of Aaron HESED , which runs down on the mouth of his garments YESOD .

3. As the dew of Hermon which runs down on the mountains WAQ of Zion YESOD , for there MALKUT Hashem TIFERET commanded the blessing, life BINAH forever YESOD

The Oily Bold By Rabbi Jack Abramowitz A Song of Ascents by David: Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together in unity! Who are these "brothers?" Different interpretations include the Jewish people as a whole, Moses and Aaron, or the Moshiach (the messiah) and the Kohein Gadol (High Priest) that will serve in his day. In any case, this unity is a very good thing. It is compared to two other excellent things: 1) The precious oil used to anoint Aaron as the first High Priest, which rolled down his head into his beard. 2) The dew of Chermon, a high mountain in Jerusalem, which would roll down onto other, lower mountains. It was from these mountains that G-d commanded a blessing of eternal life (that is, in the NextWorld). According to the opinion that the "brothers" are the Moshiach and the Kohein Gadol, the oil is a metaphor for the latter and the dew is a metaphor for the former. This Psalm in its entirety (three verses!) is used by the Talmud (Horayos 12a) in a discussion relating to the possibility of misuse of the anointing oil.

RM: This Psalm begins with one of the most famous phrases in all of Tehillim: "***Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell together.***" The commentators disagree, however, in explaining to whom this verse refers. Rashi claims that David speaks here of the inauguration of the Bet Ha'mikdash, when the Shechina (Divine Presence) finally resided among Bene Yisrael. It was at that time when the "brothers" – the Almighty and the Jewish people – once and for all were able to "dwell together." The Radak, by contrast, claims that David refers here the time of the final redemption. According to the Radak, David describes the harmonious relationship that will exist between the two leaders of the Jewish people – the king and the Kohen Gadol (high priest). Generally, there is a good deal of tension and discord between different branches of government, and between political and religious leaders. During the time of the Messianic era, however, a feeling of peace and brotherhood will prevail such that the nation's political and religious leaders will work and cooperate with each other in perfect harmony and mutual love and respect. A third approach appears in the Mesudat David commentary, which explains that David speaks here of the entire Jewish nation reuniting in its ancient homeland in peace and unity. Whereas during the First Temple period the nation's unity was ruptured with the formation of a separate kingdom after King Shelomo's death, in the time of Mashiah all Am Yisrael will be harmoniously united under a single kingdom, as we will all join together in the faithful service of the Almighty. In verses 2 and 3, David draws two analogies to describe the aura of peace and serenity mentioned in verse 1. First, he makes reference to the anointing of Aharon as the Kohen Gadol, which entailed pouring oil onto his head which then dripped down onto his clothing. Thereafter, David speaks of the dew that drips from the towering slopes of Mount Hermon onto the lower hills of Eretz Yisrael. Mesudat David explains that in both of these images, a liquid drips and percolates onto a wide area beneath its point of origin. These images accurately symbolize the idyllic nature of the Messianic era, when the nation's leadership will effectively inspire and influence the masses. Just as the single drop of oil split into many drops that descended upon Aharon's clothing, and the dew falls from the tall mountains onto all the surrounding lower hills, so will the wisdom and spiritual devotion of the Jewish people's leadership be bestowed upon the entire nation. They will provide the guidance and instruction Am Yisrael needs to live a life of devotion to God and His Torah, thereby ensuring that, as this Psalm concludes, we will be deserving of eternal life and blessing.

134 *Bring down Shefa to the world*

A song MALKUT of ascents הַּ HAGAT NH. Behold, bless Hashem TIFERET AND MALKUT, all servants of Hashem who stand in the house of Hashem at MALUKT night.

2. Lift your hands HESED AND GEVURAH in the holy place

3 FIRST SEFIROT and bless DRAW THE SHEFA the Lord. TIFERET AND MALKUT

3. May Hashem TIFERET bless you DRAW THE SHEFA FROM HASHEM from Zion, YESOD He Who made heaven TIFERET and earth MALKUT

The Last Step By Rabbi Jack Abramowitz This is the last in the series of 15 Psalms that begin “*A Song of Ascents*.” David tells all those who consider themselves servants of G-d to bless Him. These people get up from their beds at night to pray to G-d in the Temple. They are told to raise their hands towards Him in prayer. David concludes with a blessing to the people, that G-d should bless them in return. According to some opinions, this Psalm refers to the Kohanim, (the priests). The Kohanim in the Temple daily blessed the people in G-d’s Name, raising their hands as they did so

RM; Psalm 134 addresses "*the servants of God, who stand in the House of God during the night*," urging them to declare a blessing to the Almighty (verses 1-2). In reward for their praise of God, the Psalmist prays that God should bestow blessings upon them from Zion, the source of blessing in the world (verse 3). Why does the Psalmist address specifically those who frequent the Bet Ha'mikdash "during the night"? How are they different from those who visit the House of God by day? The Radak (verse 1) comments that this verse refers to "the scholars and pious ones who arise from their beds during the night and come to pray in the House of God and to give praise to His Name." It would thus appear that this chapter is intended as a warm greeting to those who chose to deny themselves the comfort of sleep in order to pray in the Bet Ha'mikdash. The Levi'im singing this Psalm extend to them this special greeting, congratulating them on their great devotion to the Almighty, and describing them as "servants of God," people are prepared to serve their Master at all hours. The Levi'im then pray that God should reward these visitors for their devoted service by bestowing upon them great blessing and prosperity. According to some commentators (Targum, Ibn Ezra), this Psalm addresses specifically the Kohanim, who "raise their hands" while reciting the priestly blessing (verse 2). The Levi'im in the Mikdash would encourage the Kohanim to praise God for affording them this privilege of serving Him in His Temple, and they conclude with a prayer that God should reward the devoted Kohanim for their diligence and faithful service.

The secret of “Blessing Haman” בְּרִנָּה הַמֶּן

The sustenance one draws to the evil forces should be only enough to ensure their existence and no more)(we have to draw life-force to the holiness concealed within the evil forces, but that must be a very-constricted life-force; this being the deeper meaning behind the drunkenness of Purim. It is well known that in every kelipah, there is a spark of holiness that sustains it. Should that spark disappear, the kelipah would cease to exist. On Purim, when a very great line shines from Above, it is desirable that the kelipah also draw sustenance from that light. Still, we must take that the kelipah receive only the barest amount of holiness as sustenance (lest it gain too much strength from this light) A person must therefore drink on Purim "*until he cannot tell the difference...*" Then, if in his drunken state, he says בְּרִנָּה הַמֶּן "Blessed is Haman," the kelipah receives its sustenance. But since the person said this while drunk and without clear intent, the "blessing" given to Haman is greatly diminished, with only the barest of sustenance for the Kelipah. Keep it alive and no more.

From the Sefer *Inside Purim* to spice up the Torah at your *Seudah*:

1.20: Why do we have a *seudah*, festive meal, for Purim, but not for Chanukah?

Like the era of Purim, the era of the Chanukah story saw great miracles. However, unlike the time of Purim, the struggle against the Syrian-Greeks at the time of Chanukah was long and hard, and many Jews lost their lives in those battles, including most of the Maccabee brothers. Since the victory came with the cost of many Jewish lives, and many Jews found themselves mourning for their loved ones following the victory, the Sages decided not to institute an obligatory *seudah* to celebrate.

In contrast, the Jews at the time of Purim saw great miraculous victories without a single Jewish casualty. Not one Jew died in the battles! Since there was not a single house of mourning among the Jews at Purim, and every home shared the tremendous *simchah* in total completeness and unity, the Sages instituted that a festive *seudah* be a part of the Purim celebration each year. (*Tallelei Oros, Esther* 9:16–17, citing *Yosef Lekach*) 2. During the time of Chanukah, the Syrian-Greeks and Hellenists were not looking to destroy the Jewish people physically. They only sought to eradicate every vestige of Torah, and turn the Jews into idolaters. As a result, the salvation Hashem wrought at that time was a spiritual one, and Chazal therefore instituted that Chanukah be celebrated with the spiritual commemorations of lighting candles, reciting Hallel, and singing songs of praise. Conversely, Haman did not seek to stamp out our spiritual observance, but to completely and totally annihilate the Jewish people on the physical level. Therefore, since the salvation of Purim was wholly physical, Chazal instituted that it be celebrated with the physical observance of a *seudah*, with eating and drinking. (*Mishnah Berurah* 670:2:6)

1.21. Why is there a custom to eat seeds on Purim?

1. We eat seeds on Purim in commemoration of a miracle that took place shortly before the Purim story. The first perek of *Sefer Daniel* describes how Nevuchadnetzar, the Babylonian king who destroyed the First *Beis HaMikdash*, was looking to hire the wisest men in the world to be his advisors. A group of candidates were called, including Daniel and several other Jews. However, before they could come before Nevuchadnetzar, they were required to be fattened up so that they would be physically fit for the king's service. Daniel and the other Jews requested of the officer in charge that they be fed only seeds, so that they would not have to eat the nonkosher food being served.

Understanding the officer's fear of execution for failure to properly nourish them, Daniel proposed that they be fed seeds for ten days as a trial. Miraculously, at the conclusion of the ten-day period, not only were Daniel and the other Jews looking healthy, but they appeared more robust than the other candidates who ate the nonkosher food. Shortly thereafter, they were chosen to be advisors to the king.

This miracle relates to Purim because Daniel actually played an important role in the Purim story. When Mordechai donned sackcloth and ashes in mourning over Haman's decree, he was unable to enter the palace gates by Persian law (see *Esther* 4:2), and consequently his contact with Esther was cut off. However, it was necessary for Esther and Mordechai to communicate regarding their plans for her to seek mercy for the Jews from Achashveirosh. Therefore, Esther asked Hasach, a servant of the king who is identified by the Gemara (*Megillah* 15a) as Daniel, to carry messages between her and Mordechai.

With Haman in power, Daniel was risking his life by acting as messenger, and was in fact killed *al kiddush Hashem* carrying out these duties. The Midrash (*Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer* 50) explains that Haman killed Daniel when he noticed Daniel carrying the messages, because he suspected Mordechai of attempting to get word to the king to annul the extermination decree.

We eat seeds on Purim in remembrance of this great *tzaddik* and his *mesiras nefesh*, self-sacrifice, for klal Yisrael. In addition, it was through the miracle of the seeds that Daniel was first put in the royal employ that continued with all subsequent kings. Daniel was thus in a position at the palace in which he was able to act

as messenger between Mordechai and Esther, whose correspondence through him resulted in the salvation of the Jews. (*Rama, Orach Chaim* 695:2; A.P.S.)

2. We eat seeds in commemoration of Esther's resolve to only eat kosher food when she was taken to the palace. She requested from Heigai, the steward in charge, that she only be fed seeds, and her request was granted. (*Mishnah Berurah* 695:2:12, citing *Megillah* 13a)

1.22. Why are *hamantaschen* eaten on Purim, and how did this pastry acquire its name?

1. Hamantaschen are eaten in remembrance of the great hidden miracle of Purim. A hamantasch is essentially a cookie whose filling is hidden inside the dough, just as the miracle of Purim was hidden under the guise of nature. Until the destruction of the First Beis HaMikdash, which occurred shortly before the time of Purim, the Jews regularly saw open, supernatural miracles. However, with the destruction began a period that lasts until today, where Hashem operates in a behind-the-scenes fashion, and His hand is not so apparent in daily events. The Purim story was the first time the Jews realized that the absence of overt miracles did not mean that Hashem had abandoned them. Instead, they realized that Hashem had a new *modus operandi*, as they understood how the Purim miracle was concealed and hidden within nature. Although an observer at the time might misinterpret the events as normal and natural political happenings, every step of the Purim story was directed by the hand of Hashem. (*Sefer Menuchah V'Kedushah* 2:20)

2. One of the main themes of Purim is that of "v'nahafoch hu," the turnabout. The story represents not only salvation from our enemies, but a complete reversal and interchanging of situations for the parties involved. The Jews switched from being completely dominated by their enemies to completely dominating them. There are many avenues through which Hashem could have caused His plan to come about. On Purim, Hashem used Haman, the very person who desired to destroy Hashem's people, to actually bring about their salvation. Haman's decree to annihilate the Jews caused a massive teshuvah movement and recommitment to the Torah, culminating in the hanging of Haman on the same gallows he had built to execute Mordechai. We eat hamantaschen on Purim, a sweet cookie named after the bitter Haman, to symbolize the v'nahafoch hu of how Haman and his evil actions turned into the source of sweetness and nourishment for Jewish survival. (*Rabbi David Aaron, Endless Light*, pp. 81–82)

3. Nowadays, hamantaschen are filled with all types of jellies, jams, and even chocolate. However, originally they were filled with either sesame or poppy seeds, designed as another method of fulfilling the minhag of eating seeds on Purim (see 1:21). Therefore, hamantaschen are effectively pocket pastries filled with poppy seeds. In Yiddish, poppy seeds are called "mohn," and pockets are called "taschen," revealing the source of the name mohn-taschen. Beginning with the minhag of eating seeds, this pastry became a Purim mainstay because of the similarity of the word mohn to Haman both in pronunciation and in spelling. For this reason, the name mohn-taschen eventually evolved into hamantaschen. (*Sefer Matamim, Purim* 2)

4. The word tash in Hebrew means to "weaken." On Purim, we specifically eat the pastry hamantaschen because it means "Haman became weakened." This commemorates Hashem saving us by weakening Haman during the time of Purim, and in addition expresses the wish that Hashem should always save us by weakening the Hamans of every generation. (*Otzar Kol Minhagei Yeshurun*, 50:11, p. 126)

5. On Purim, we eat hamantaschen, a food that carries the name of Haman, because as eating destroys the food being eaten, we symbolically fulfill the mitzvah of destroying Amalek by eating Haman. (*Sefer HaMoadim*, vol. 6, p. 153; Rav Yaakov Kaminetzky, *BeMechitzas Rabbeinu HaGaon Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky*, p. 142)

6. Haman offered ten thousand kikar, talents, of silver to Achashveirosh for permission to exterminate the Jews. We eat hamantaschen specifically filled with poppy seeds because the countless number of poppy seeds in the "Haman-taschen" ("Haman-pockets") commemorates the ten thousand kikar of silver Haman had in his pocket to offer to Achashveirosh. (*Sefer HaMoadim*, vol. 6, p. 154) 7. The Alshich explains that at

first, the Jews did not believe that they were going to be completely wiped out. In an effort to convince them of the seriousness of the situation, Mordechai²⁰ sent numerous letters to the Jews describing the true brutal natures of Haman and Achashveirosh. However, because Mordechai feared that the king might intercept these messages that painted him in an unfavorable light, Mordechai hid them in pastries, which he then sent to the Jews. These pastries saved the Jews, because when they found Mordechai's letters hidden within the dough, they became convinced of the direness of the situation and were stirred to repentance. On Purim, we eat hamantaschen, a pastry that contains hidden filling, to commemorate how the hidden filling of Mordechai's pastries brought about our salvation. (*Sefer Menuchah V'Kedushah* 2:20)

1.23. Why are hamantaschen called “oznei Haman” in Hebrew?

1. “Oznei Haman” literally means “Haman’s ears.” There are many reasons given for the *minhag* of eating hamantaschen on Purim, which all basically revolve around commemorating Haman’s downfall (see 1.22). The name “oznei Haman” similarly commemorates Haman’s hanging, as there is a mesorah, tradition, that Haman’s ears were cut off before he was hanged, a pre-execution custom that was practiced through the Middle Ages. (*Sefer HaMoadim*, vol. 6, p. 153)

2. There is a midrash that describes how Haman bent over in shame when he entered the king’s treasury to retrieve the royal robes and horse for Mordechai, just before he was to parade Mordechai through the streets. In describing Haman’s shame, the Midrash says that he was bent over with “oznayim mekutfos,” meaning “clipped ears.” From this description, many communities labeled these pastries prepared in remembrance of Haman’s downfall “Haman oyern,” meaning “Haman’s ears” in Yiddish, to draw his shame into the commemoration.

Apparently, each Jewish community that used this name translated it into the language of its host country. In Italy, for example, they were called “orrech d’Aman,” and eventually, the name was translated into the Hebrew “oznei Haman.” (*Purim V’Chodesh Adar* 10:36; *Sefer HaMoadim*, vol. 6, p. 153; see also *Targum Sheini*, *Esther* 6:11)

1.24. Why do hamantaschen have three sides or corners?

1. The three-sided shape represents the three avos, Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, whose merit helped saved the Jews on Purim, by causing Haman to become “tash,” weakened. (*Sefer Matamim*, *Purim* 2)

2. Traditionally it is thought that the three corners of the hamantaschen are reminiscent of the three-cornered hats worn by Haman and those in the Persian court. These hats may have resembled the tricornered hats worn by Napoleon or George Washington. Hamantaschen were fashioned and baked into the shape of Haman’s hat to further the symbolism commemorating his downfall. (*Sefer HaMoadim*, vol. 6, p. 154)

3. There are several opinions discussed in the Gemara (*Megillah* 19a) regarding the exact point in the text of the Megillah from which one must begin reading to fulfill the mitzvah of Megillah reading. None of the opinions feel that the reading should begin later than the words, “On that night, the king’s sleep was disturbed,” in 6:1. However, there are three opinions that hold that the reading should begin even earlier than that. One opinion is that one should begin reading from Haman’s rise to power in 3:1; another is that the reading should at least begin with the Megillah’s first mention of Mordechai in 2:5; and the third is that the entire Megillah must be read from the beginning. Because the Gemara cannot reach a conclusion as to which opinion to follow, it rules strictly, incorporating all three opinions. Thus, the resulting halachah is that one must read the entire Megillah to fulfill the mitzvah. Hamantaschen are made with three sides in commemoration of this halachic ruling that incorporated all three opinions. (*Sefer Menuchah V’Kedushah* 2:20)

1.25. Why is there a custom to eat kreplach on Purim?

Kreplach, dumplings, which are made of meat wrapped in dough and then cooked or fried, are traditionally eaten on Purim, Hoshana Rabbah, and Erev Yom Kippur. On these three days there are no restrictions of work as there are on yom tov. Nevertheless, there exists an element of yom tov on each of these days because we sit down to festive meals. We eat meat on yom tov because the Torah commands, “You shall rejoice on your festival” (*Devarim* 16:14), and Chazal explain, “There is no rejoicing without meat” (*Pesachim* 109a). Since Purim, Hoshana Rabbah, and Erev Yom Kippur are partial or “covered” *yom tovim*, we eat foods that contain meat, but are “covered.” (Rabbi Shmuel Gelbard, *Rite and Reason [Otzar Taamei HaMinhagim]*, p. 456)