**Parshas Zachor/Purim – אשר קרך בדרך**

**The Ice Man Came**

ותתחלחל המלכה מאד - Esther HaMalka cried out to Mordechai in great distress, how could this dreadful decree have happened? What terrible Aveirah could the Yidden have done, that brought such divine wrath upon them? Chazal teach that by joining in the royal feast of Achasveirosh, despite Mordechai’s exhortations, their fate was sealed. Granted, that it may have been an indiscretion on the part of any Yidden that went to the party. Was it so rash, so gross an iniquity, that all Klall Yisroel should now be doomed to annihilation?

ויגד מרדכי את כל אשר קרהו – It isn’t what the Yidden did, as much as how they did things. The קרירות, the cold-heartedness of Amaleik - אשר קרך בדרך - that had cooled down the shock and awe and played down the שכינה גילוי of Yetzias Mitzrayim, has now crept into the hearts of the Yidden. Amaleik’s ice-cold specialty of dull apathy and lethargy was flowing through their veins, freezing their feelings and sensitivity for Kedusha. Seventy years of Galus, according to some calculations, had come and gone. The Jewish Nation was dispirited and discouraged from striving for greatness and yearning for Geulah. There was no joy in Mitzvos. In the days of the first Bais HaMikdash they saw Shechina. Yidden no longer sensed that Divine Presence in their lives. הסתר פנים has made them feel cold and dreary.

What more blatant display of this apathy was there than their participation in Achashveirosh’s grand party? Achashveirosh was also following this seventy year calculation. He, too, noted that the prophesied length of the Galus had come and gone. The party was in celebration of the continued Galus and the unfulfilled prophecy of Yerushalayim’s restoration. Despite Yirmiyahu HaNavi’s predictions, Achashveirosh could continue to sit on the throne, without fear, as the world emperor. Maybe the Yidden who were there, felt that they dare not ignore a royal invitation, but how could they nonchalantly move about with grace and charm, as if it was just a royal feast? How could they not feel as if they needed to wear ashes and sackcloth? Why were they not convening mass gatherings for Teshuvah and Tefillah, in the wake of the Geulah that still had not come?

The memory of hearing the inimitable R’ Shalom Schwadron zt”l, the famed Magid of Yerushalayim, over forty years ago, is still fresh in my mind. His Drasha on the קרירות of Amaleik, is unforgettable. He related the story of a Rov who was visiting his Rebbi, the Chofetz Chaim. The Chofetz Chaim asked him how he was managing in his position as Rov of a sizable community. He responded that he was doing as well as expected. He was satisfied with the work he was doing. And how was it going with strengthening Shmiras Shabbos? Oy, I’m fighting a losing battle. So many businesses remain open. Children are growing up with no taste of the beauty of Shabbos. Chillul Shabbos is rampant. I talk about it, but they don’t listen. How are the Yeshivos doing? What’s happening with inculcating young and old with Torah and Yiras Shomayim? It’s an uphill battle against the Haskala Movement. We are losing our best and brightest to the allure of modernity and new ideas. What about Kashrus and Taharas HaMispacha? Those who hold strong to our values, remain vigilant and resilient. Many are lax and ignorant of the vital importance of maintaining Kedusha and Tahara in their homes. Oy! exclaimed the Chofetz Chaim. What are you doing about all this? I do the best I can. It’s a losing battle. I try to teach those who don’t understand and encourage those who are trying to do right. What else can I do? What else can you do? he cried, “Du Kenst Chalashin” – you can faint from despair! Maybe there is no more that you can do, but how can you find yourself in such hopelessness and not be passing out!

Rav Schwadron recounted his walk one Sunday morning through the snow filled streets of Queens. Ahead he spotted a gentleman standing placidly in front of a house, warmly dressed in a coat and black hat, with the requisite Sunday newspaper tucked under his arm. As he passed by, R’ Sholom called out in his heavily accented English, Good morning Rabbi. “Un er entfert nisht” – no response. After trying again without getting any answer, he peered closer and realized “Ah Rabbi foon Shnei” – a snowman! And then, Rav Schwadron gave out a cry – “Kaltkeit!!”

How can we be so cold and unfeeling about what we see in the world around us? The Yidden in Shushan were lulled by the icy, Amaleiki “Kaltkeit”. They didn’t sense the incredible Hashgacha Protis that we are so familiar with, in the story of Purim. Had they been looking with eyes that see, and feeling with a sensitive heart, they too would have marveled at how the Ribono shel Olam was pulling all the strings. Purim is waking us up from our reverie of indifference and to get us out of the rut of dull routine. The story of Purim calls on us to see, become aware and marvel at how the strings are being pulled right here and right now by the Eibishter. How can you not see it? We are on the cusp of the Geulah Sheleimah. Prepare yourself to exclaim with unbridled joy – תשועתם היית לנצח ותקותם בכל דור ודור.

Have a warm Shabbos and a truly joyful Purim, yk

**L’Ravcha D’Milsa Weekly Almanac**

**Shabbos Kodesh Parshas Titzaveh/Zachor – 13 Adar**

**Erev Purim**

**Moreinu V’Rabeinu Gadol HaDoros Rav Moshe Feinstein** (1895-1986). During the Fast of Esther, the Gaon and Tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Feinstein was called back by his Creator at the age of 91. His funeral took place during Shushan Purim in Jerusalem on Wednesday, the 15th of Adar II, 5746 (1986). Some 200,000 people escorted his coffin along its final journey, the largest funeral that had ever taken place in Israel, till then. Tens of thousands of people came from all around the world to honor the man who had devoted his entire life to the people of Israel, the Torah of Israel, and the land of Israel. Great Roshei Yeshiva and famous rabbis gave eulogies, testifying to the fact that he was the greatest Posek of the generation and a beacon of Torah; that he was a Torah prince and a Gaon in Halachah, a pillar of kindness, and one of the Tzaddikim on whom the world is founded. In the eulogy delivered by the Rosh Yeshiva of Ponevezh, the Gaon Rav Shach said in a voice choked with tears, “Torah, Torah, gird yourself in sackcloth! Prepare yourself to mourn for your only, unique son…Reb Moshe was the Gadol Hador, without embellishment, without exaggeration…Who is a Talmid Chacham? One who gives answers to questions in all areas. Such was Reb Moshe. There was no question, however complicated, that he did not answer.”

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein was born on Adar 7 (the day of our teacher Moses’ birth and passing), 5655 (1895). From his youth he demonstrated exceptional diligence and intelligence, drawing his inspiration from his father, the Gaon Rabbi David Feinstein, the Rav of the small town of Uzda in White Russia. The young Moshe absorbed a love of Torah from his father, and all his friends spoke of his great diligence in Torah study, a diligence that knew no bounds. He himself related that already by the age of 11, he was fully versed in Orders Nashim, Nezikin, and Moed.

Still young, he became the Rav and Av Beit Din of Luban, in the Minsk region of White Russia. There he remained as Rav during the first years of the Communist Revolution. Despite the government’s persecution of rabbis, he continued his Torah study with great diligence. Although his entire family lived in a small room adjoining the only remaining synagogue in Luban, he managed to sit down in a corner to study, oblivious to all else.

In 5696 (1936), he succeeded in leaving the Soviet Union with his family and moved to the United States, where he settled in New York. He became the Rosh Yeshiva of Mesivta Tiferes Jerusalem, remaining as such for the rest of his life.

He retained his great diligence in Torah study for his entire life. He studied with every spare minute he had. After a few years in the “New World,” he also became known as one the finest rabbis, great in Torah and filled with virtues and good deeds. Even though Rabbi Moshe was still young (in his forties), and there were still Torah greats and spiritual giants in America during that time, he was still known as a Gaon who was perfectly versed with all areas of Torah. From that time on, many rabbis began to address Torah questions to him. If a serious question presented itself to rabbis and they could not reach a decision, they addressed themselves to Rabbi Moshe, who decided the matter.

Why did so many people address themselves to him? It was because they saw in Rabbi Moshe a Gaon and Posek of generations past. Despite his greatness in Torah, he was very humble. All who came to ask him a question in Halachah did not feel in any way uncomfortable, for Rabbi Moshe spoke to them as equals. He treated everyone who met him with great respect, and his heart was always open to anyone afflicted by troubles, hastening to help them. This was how he became precious in the eyes of all who came into contact with him. In a short time, he became recognized as the Posek of the generation and the spiritual leader of the Jewish people.

He was always the first to say hello, and on Shabbat he was particularly careful to say Gut Shabbos to every Jew he met. Not only was Rabbi Moshe a tremendous Gaon in Torah, he was also a Gaon in humility. He had a heart of gold and loved all men, for they are created in the image of G-d.

Eight years before his passing, his doctors wanted to implant a pacemaker in him. He asked for some time to consider the idea. He reasoned that Mashiach would soon arrive and that the Sanhedrin would return to its place in the Lishkat HaGazit (Chamber of Hewn Stone). He was unsure if he could sit in the Sanhedrin, for Halachah does not allow an infirm man to sit there, and he wondered if a man implanted with a pacemaker is considered as being infirm or not. He pondered the question and decided that it was possible. Yet because of our many sins, he was taken away before the arrival of Mashiach.

Rabbi Moshe was buried in the Har HaMenuhot cemetery in Jerusalem, next to the graves of the Belzer Rebbe and the Gaon of Tchibin. His great sons, ybmch”l, Gedolim in their own right, Moreinu Harav R’ Dovid Feinstein shlit”a and Moreinu Harav R’ Reuven Feinstein shlit”a, assumed leadership of the Yeshiva and serve as beacons of wisdom and guidance to countless communities and individuals, worldwide.

**Tuesday, Parshas Ki Sisa/Parah-16 Adar**

**Rav Pinchas Menachem Alter, the Pnei Menachem of Ger** (1926-1996). The fifth son of Rav Avraham Mordechai Alter (the Imrei Emes), Rav Pinchas was born in the resort town of Palinitz, Poland when his father was 60 years old. Along with his father and other family members, he escaped to Erezt Yisrael during World War II. In 1946, he married his cousin, and two years later, his father passed away. Three of the Imrei Emes’ sons became Rebbe of Ger: Rav Yisrael (the Beis Yisrael, nifter 1977), Rav Simcha Bunim (the Lev Simcha, nifter 1992), and Rav Pinchas Menachem (the Pnei Menachem). However, Rav Pinchas Menachem was Rosh Yeshiva of Sefas Emes of Ger in Yerushalayim from the time he was 30.

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