

# Dvar Torah for Purim

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“In the first month, Nisan, of the twelfth year of King Achashveirosh’s reign, he cast *pur*—which is a *goral* (lots)—in front of Haman, from day to day and from month to month, the twelfth month, Adar” (Esther 3:7).

The holy holiday of Purim is named after *pur*, a form of divination. While it may have involved a throw of the dice, it wasn’t a crapshoot. There was a tremendous amount of wisdom in it, which is why Haman did not do it himself. Since he wanted a particular outcome, his desire would have influenced the *pur* to give an imperfect answer (Maharal of Prague). In addition to wanting to determine which date would be best for executing his version of the Final Solution—God forbid!—Haman wanted to undermine the lot that was cast on Yom Kippur.

On Yom Kippur the *kohen gadol* (high priest) performed the

mitzvah of casting lots on identical goats to determine which would be brought as an offering within the Beit HaMikdash (Holy Temple), and which would be sent off a cliff as a scapegoat. These goats were identical in height, color and even in price. The Hebrew word for goat, *aze*, shares the same root as the Hebrew word for brazenness and boldness, *azut*.

One cannot discuss *azut* without considering its complement, humility. Both of these characteristics must work in tandem; both can be kosher and used for the holy, or ersatz and used for the unholy. But on the outside they are identical! How can a person know the difference? On his own, he can't.



Reb Noson writes that the differences between being a brazenface or hero, and between being a sad sack or a saint, between knowing when to exercise *azut* and when humility, is so subtle that a person must extensively beseech God that He compassionately guide him to the honest truth. This is the kind of "Godly lot" (cf. Psalms 16:5) that the Yom Kippur lot was.

Mordekhai and Esther both knew when to be humble and when to be bold.\* When it was necessary, each knew how to pray long and hard.\*\* So Purim is not so-named by chance. Its name tells us that we have to do differently than Haman. Throughout the

Book of Esther, he exudes extreme brazenness and haughtiness in seeking wealth, honor, fame and power. Yet when he needed to boldly influence that which would have given him his heart's desire, he meekly detached himself from the *pur* in order to not bias the result. You and I, on the other hand must detach our selfishness from our worldly pursuits and cast our lot with God's determination of what's best. But when it comes to saving our Jewish soul we need a lot of prayer. To escape the clutches of Haman and live a kosher Jewish life, we must unabashedly and unambiguously involve our selves in vigorous prayer. Amen.

\*Esther 2:20, 3:4, 4:12, 4:16–17

\*\*Esther 4:1, 5:1 (see Targum)

(Based on *Likutey Halakhot, Tefillin* 6:23)