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TALMUDIC METHODOLOGY  
By: Rav Moshe Taragin

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MAZAL TOV TO REUVEN AND SHANI TARAGIN ON THE BIRTH OF THEIR  
DAUGHTER, CHAYA PENINA!

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**THE TWO KRI'OT OF MEGILLA**

Kri'at ha-megilla is unique among other "readings" in several aspects. Most unusual, indeed, is the timing of the reading. Whereas most sections of Tanakh are read on a specific occasion, the megilla can be read on five different dates depending upon one's location (more on this later). An additional peculiarity of the megilla's schedule relates to the number of times it is read. The gemara in Megilla (4a) informs us that it is read during the evening and repeated in the daytime. In this respect kri'at megilla is singular; no other part of the Biblical canon is repeated in the course of one day. True, certain portions of the Torah are read twice during the year. For example the conclusion of Ki Teitzei is read both when its turn comes in the yearly rotation and on the Shabbat before to Purim. In these instances, the parasha is read in different contexts - once as the standard kri'at ha-Torah and once as the special kri'a of parashat Zakhor. In the case of megilla, however, we repeat the very same text in the same manner and ostensibly for the same purpose. How are we to explain this phenomena?

Whenever we witness a sequence such as this, we must first question the cohesiveness of its elements. Do we view the two components as discrete or as two stages of one incorporated process? In our instance, are the two readings two distinct kri'ot or two stages of one long reading? Possibly, these two options are alluded to by the two pesukim which the gemara cites in support of this repeated reading. The first pasuk cited is taken from Tehillim 22 (La-menatzei'ach al ayelet ha-shachar), a perek identified with the events of Purim and read in many shuls after the megilla. The pasuk (v. 2) reads, "Elokai ekra yomam ve-lo ta'aneh ve-leila ve-lo dumiya li" ("My God I call out to you during the day, but you do not answer, and in the night as well I am not silent"). The second pasuk cited is taken from Tehillim 30:13, "Lema'an yizamerkha

kavod ve-lo yidom Hashem Elokai le-olam odeka" ("So that my glory may sing praise to you and not be silent, Hashem, my God I continuously thank you"). There is a considerable difference between the two pesukim. The first pasuk distinguishes between day and night as two separate units. Basing the halakha on this pasuk would suggest that the two readings are distinct. The second pasuk, however, does not designate different time frames. Rather, it refers to a continuous process, which evidently spans a length of time - probably encompassing day and night. If we were to derive the two readings from the second pasuk we might conclude that the kri'ot are part of one sequence and merely represent two stages.

This second approach - that the kri'ot are related rather than distinct - finds support in the language of the gemara as well. The gemara refers to the mitzva of the second reading by using the word "ve-leshanota," i.e., to repeat or read a second time. By employing this verb rather than a more standard form (such as "likrotah" - to read), the gemara might be implying that we should view the second reading in light of the first as a repetition or restatement of it. Additionally, when the gemara amplifies this concept it applies the following analogy: This repeated reading is like one who declares, "I will learn a certain segment and then review it." This analogy underscores the integration of this sequence.

This question has halakhic manifestations as well. The Rishonim debate the issue of reciting a second blessing of she-hecheyanu on the morning kri'a. Undoubtedly, if they are separate kri'ot it is easier to justify a second she-hecheyanu. Conversely, if they are integrated one would expect only one berakha. This issue is not absolute; one can sanction two she-hecheyanus even if the process is unified and one can similarly limit the berakhot even if the readings are separate. The likelihood of two berakhot, however, rises in direct relation to the degree of discreteness between the two kri'ot. (See the Ittur and the Me'iri for discussions of these topics.)

An additional uncertainty would surround an individual who missed the night kri'a. Would a lone morning kri'a have meaning as an independent mitzva or would this simply represent the latter half of a process which he neglected to begin? The Yerushalmi addresses the issue of one who converts to Judaism on Purim morning: Should he read the megilla? This question would cut right through our initial issue. Megilla might be analogous to sefirat ha-omer which is a long integrated process composed of many units, each of which loses its full significance when not performed as

part of an entire sequence. Indeed, a very popular question regarding sefirat ha-omer pertains to a katan who reaches the age of bar mitzva in the middle of the sefira.

#### SUMMARY:

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We have isolated the first question: Do we view the two readings as separate or as two stages in a multidimensional process?

If indeed we were to decide that the two kri'ot were distinct we would then pose another question: Are they equivalent or can we discern a disparity between the two? This line of reasoning should be pursued in all cases of two elements which are part of a series. First, their level of integration should be questioned. If they emerge as distinct, their relative significance should be explored.

Though the simplest approach would be to equate the two readings, several Rishonim and Acharonim discriminated in favor of the morning kri'a. This bias can take two possible forms. One can reduce the significance of the night readings thereby assigning the day reading the primary role. Alternatively, one might maintain the night reading as the standard, but enrich the day reading, making it more colorful and multi dimensional. Either way, the result is the same: the day kri'a emerges as the more important one.

The first stance was adopted most dramatically by the Noda Bi-Yehuda in Orach Chayim Kama (siman 41). He rules that the night reading is only a takana de-rabanan (rabbinic enactment). Unlike the morning kria which is categorized (see Rosh Hashana 19a) as divrei Kabala (not Biblical per se but based on takanot of the prophets), the night kri'a is purely rabbinic in origin. The Pri Megadim (692:2) points to a similar discrepancy between day and night by declaring that Esther and Mordechai's original takana did not include reading at night, and this reading was appended at a later date. In each case the night reading is being reduced and diminished in favor of the day reading. The morning reading remains the norm while the night reading is somehow substandard.

A possible precedent for this position can be located in the comments of the Ran. The first mishna in Megilla discusses the special dispensation afforded to those who

lived in small villages. They had no expert on hand to read the megilla and therefore had to travel to the large cities to fulfill this mitzva. Since they regularly went into town every Monday and Thursday, Chakhamim allowed them to schedule their kri'at megilla on the Monday or Thursday preceding Purim (e.g. if Purim were Friday they read on Thursday, if Purim were Wednesday they read on Monday). The Ran questions when these villagers read the evening megilla. They only traveled to town in the morning and at night remained in their hamlets without a trained ba'al kri'a (reader). The Ran suggests that since the night kri'a is not the primary reading these villagers were entirely excused from reading at night. Part of the special heter (exemption) they were afforded included the waiving of their chiyuv (obligation) to read at night. Quite possibly, the Ran viewed the night reading as purely de-rabanan and therefore a candidate for this waiver.

The second approach would be to maintain the evening reading as the standard but enrich the morning kri'a. Both Tosafot (Megilla 4a s.v. Chayav) and the Rosh (siman 6) focus on an extra dimension to the day reading which does not exist at night - *pirsumei nissa*. Part of the kri'a is geared toward publicizing the miracle, and this aspect is only fully realized during the day. Why *pirsumei nissa* is limited to the day is an intriguing question. One might suggest that this is the time of greater attendance and hence greater publicity. Such an explanation is feasible in the context of Tosafot's position; they do not specify why the publicity is greater during the day. The Rosh, however, does stipulate the reason for this imbalance. All the other mitzvot of Purim begin to kick in during the day. One cannot fulfill *mishloach manot* (sending portions to friends), *matanot la-eyyonim* (gifts to the poor) or *se'udat Purim* (the Purim feast) at night. Since these mitzvot apply during the day, the period of heightened publicity of the miracle is only during the day. Interestingly enough, the Rosh extends the definition of *pirsumei nissa* to include the mitzvot of "*assiya*" (action) and not just the mitzva of "*zekhira*" (remembering, i.e., reading megilla). Both Tosafot and the Rosh appear to be in agreement that the morning kri'a, by dint of this added dimension, is assigned greater significance compared with the evening kri'a.

#### METHODOLOGICAL POINTS:

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1. Examine the degree of integration between two related mitzvot. For example, what is the level of integration between *mila* and *tevila* in the process of *geirut* (conversion)?

Are they one long process composed of two stages, or do they represent two distinct elements, each of which are necessary to confer the full status of a Jew?

2. Once the two aspects are determined as independent, ask which, if any, is the more central one. For example, assuming that mila and tevila are independent, is one more crucial than the other?

3. Study the Biblical source to help ascertain the nature of any halakha.

4. A discrepancy between two parallel elements (mitzvot, dinim) can be attributed either to the "weakness" of one or to the "strength" of the other.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT:

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1. Additional gemarot which might stress the role of the mitzvot of Purim vis-a-vis publicizing the miracle include: Megilla 5a: reading megilla on Purim might not require ten people; Megilla 19a-b: reading a megilla on Purim might not require a separate text of Megillat Ester but can be read from a Sefer Ketuvim (a book of Tanakh manufactured from parchment in the same manner as a sefer Torah).

2. For a detailed discussion of megilla's status as "divrei kabbala" see Rema OC 687 and the Taz. Also see Shulchan Arukh 696:7 regarding the rest of Purim as divrei sofrim (rabbinic).

3. If the two readings represent one process, one would question why there is a need to read this particular text, out of all the others, twice. Possibly, because of the various layers of the megilla (peshat, derash, satire, comedy, tragedy), two passes are necessary. An initial reading familiarizes one with the words and story line while a second reading furnishes a sense of the "between the lines." The second reading, then, provides an opportunity for hermeneutic reading.

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