

FOREWORD

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It is a pleasure to provide a foreword to Reb Dovid Zucker's second volume of translations of the commentaries of the Dubner Maggid. Once again, Reb Dovid has done the English-speaking public a great service by making the Maggid's ideas available in an English rendition.

The means for acquisition of Torah are enumerated by the Sages. Most basic to this concept—acquisition or *kinyan*—is what we know as the reverence for the Torah. Such reverence in large measure is reflected in our relationship with those who give over the Torah to the generations, i.e. our regard for the chain of tradition. In this respect we need be aware of the stature of the author of this work—the Dubner Maggid of sainted memory. He was a giant in a generation of giants. No less a personality as the Gaon of Vilna chose this author as his personal guide in service to Hashem—as his conscience (*mochiach*). It is painful to contemplate how far we have come, that the name of the author has ceased to be familiar to us.

Thus, as with Reb Dovid's work on Eichah, this wonderful work on Esther enriches us immeasurably. Again we are indebted to Reb Dovid not only for opening up the Maggid—and giving us entry into a new world of Torah thought—but even more so for creating a new perspective on the Megillah. Seeing the Megillah with the Maggid is an experience in and of itself.

The Prophets gave us five Megillos. Two were written by Shlomo HaMelech. The Book of Ruth was written by Shmuel HaNavi to record the roots of the Davidic dynasty. The other two Megillos record our relationship with *Churban* and Redemption. As I mentioned in my foreword to the Eichah work, Megillas Eichah is the key to understanding all Jewish suffering. On the other hand, this Megillah—referred to as The Megillah—is the key to all Jewish redemption. *Chazal* tell us that whenever the Megillah writes merely *king* rather than *King Ahasuerus*, it is a reference to the King of Kings (see the piece *A King Without Any Other Name is the True King* in the Maggid's commentary).

This is no accident. Hashem created the world to give expression to His sovereignty. This will become a reality at the end of time. Megillas Esther is the last book in recorded prophesy: *Chazal* call Purim the end of recorded miracles (*Yoma* 29a). We know that the end does not mean finality—it means eternity. The last message contains the last piece of necessary information. On the wings of the Megillah we are secure in our anticipation of the ultimate revelation. Hashem will be the King of all Creation because He *is* the King of all Creation. This thought is expressed in the first *pasuk* of *Shema* (see *Rashi* on *Devarim* 6:4). It becomes a reality with the Megillah.

Although the setting of the Megillah is the Persian experience, the antagonist is Haman. He is a descendant of Esau—through Amalek, who battled against us immediately upon our Exodus from Egypt. The battle against Amalek was the first of our battles, and will be the last of our battles in the course of history (see *Ramban* on *Shemos* 17:8 and the Maggid's commentary on Esther 7:5-6). Amalek is the force that denies Hashem's sovereignty. Only when Amalek ceases to be present will the Divine Name and throne

be complete. Only when he is vanquished will the world recognize the ultimate eternal truth. This is the essence of the Purim story.

The whole world saw – and perceived – the salvation of Purim (*Megillah* 11a). The *Pachad Yitzchak* describes the difference between this salvation and all previous ones: *Chazal* made it clear that Purim not only represents the last recorded miracle but is also the only holiday that will never be forgotten. This is because Purim changed our perceptions – much as a blind person learns to hear more keenly to compensate for his lost sight. This ability remains part of him – an ingrained attribute – even after his sight is restored (see *Pachad Yitzchak, Purim*). So too, the perceptions that we acquired through the Purim story will remain with us even at the end of time.

Like all of Torah, the *Megillah* may be understood on innumerable levels. And, as with Reb Dovid's previous work on *Eichah*, we are indebted to Reb Dovid for making available to a broader reading public a treasure of original thought – the Dubner Maggid himself – while opening a *sefer* of prophesy that is unfortunately not taken seriously. Our hope is that in the wake of this effort, the *Megillah* will become a source of inspiration all year round, and it will serve – as it was meant – to illuminate the darkness of this last *golus*. May we merit in our day to see the *Megillah* remain even after the break of day – the day that we anticipate with the coming of *Moshiach ben Dovid*. Amen.

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

"The voice is the voice of Jacob ..." (Genesis 27:22).

"The voice of rejoicing and salvation rings in the tents of the righteous: the right hand of the Lord does valiantly" (Psalms 118:15).

With jubilant praise and thanks to the Eternal Savior of the Jewish People, I present this English translation of the Dubner Maggid's *Kol Rinah V'Yeshuah*—Voice of Rejoicing and Salvation—a commentary on the Book of Esther. This is my second translation of Dubner Maggid commentaries, the first one being a translation of the Maggid's commentary *Kol Bochim* on the Book of Lamentations. Both commentaries are part of the collection *Kol Yaacov*—Voice of Jacob—of Dubner Maggid commentaries on the Five Megillos. I am truly grateful to the Ribbono Shel Olam for granting me the opportunity and wherewithal to compose these works. I feel particularly honored to have been able to produce these works near to the 200th anniversary of the Maggid's passing, which occurred on 17 Teves 5765 (29 December 2004).

The Commentary

Having delved into the Maggid's commentaries on Lamentations and Esther in depth, and having studied various parts of his other commentaries over a number of years, I can identify a few general features and themes. The Maggid is popularly known as a master of the parable, and indeed his parables are very charming and incisive. But this is only part of the picture. Study of the Maggid's original work, as redacted after his death by his son and other scholars, reveals a much deeper side to the Maggid's wisdom. The original work, with its eclectic use of Biblical verses and Rabbinic sayings (particularly from the Midrash), penetrating analysis, sharp wit, and keen psychological insight, reflects enormous erudition and a powerful intellect. In addition, the commentaries are extremely wide-ranging. In the Lamentations or Esther commentary (either one) alone, one can find an insight to suit practically any occasion.

The Maggid's themes range through the basic principles of the Jewish world outlook. One major theme is God's great love for the Jewish People, and His steadfast guiding hand throughout all history. For example, the first piece in this book teaches us that, although we have been through turbulent times, God has never cast us off. Several pieces bring out the related idea that, at times, God may appear to us as a stern judge, but in truth He is always our compassionate Father. This idea appears, for example, in the commentary on Lamentations 5:17, expounding *inter alia* on Isaiah 25:9, the verse I chose to place at the front of the present work. It also appears in the commentary on Esther 3:2-4. A piece on the first verse of the Megillah discusses how God uses indecisive world leaders to deal with the Jewish People in whatever way circumstances call for. The final piece of the commentary describes how God manipulates men's schemes to bring the downfall of the wicked and the salvation of the righteous.

Another major theme, complementary to the first one, is a call to strive for spiritual perfection. Thus, a beautiful segment of the commentary on Esther 1:10-12 (in the piece

The Jewish People's Special Favor) calls on us not to rely on God's love for us in order to justify serving Him in a mediocre way, but rather to give God our best. Linked with this is the call, running through many of the Maggid's commentaries, to focus on spiritual development—Torah and mitzvos—rather than physical pleasures. This is brought out in the brilliant piece *True Joy* on Esther 1:10-12, and in similarly brilliant pieces on Lamentations and Ecclesiastes that I have cited in the footnotes.

The foregoing overview represents just a taste of the Maggid's teachings; it is impossible to encapsulate the full breadth and depth of his commentaries in a brief summary. I can only suggest to you, dear reader, to begin turning the pages of this book and behold the wonder of the Maggid's wisdom for yourself.

The Translation

In this translation, I followed the same general approach as in my previous translation of the Maggid's commentary on Lamentations. My goal was to provide a full translation of the original Hebrew text into idiomatic English prose. Thus, this work is neither an abbreviated digest nor a strictly literal translation. A deliberate decision was made to leave intact the basic structure of the original Hebrew text, and to firmly avoid substantive deletions or additions. Headings and subheadings were added as an aid to the reader, along with citations to Biblical and Rabbinic sources and explanatory notes. This work is more extensively footnoted than my previous translation, yet still I make no claim to comprehensive annotation.

The work is divided into two parts, the first consisting of a prologue and the commentary on Chapter 1 of the Megillah, and the second consisting of the commentary on the rest of the Megillah and an epilogue. The original text material has been re-ordered so as to follow the order of the verses in the Megillah.

The text contains many references to Biblical verses and Rabbinic statements, particularly Midrashim. The translation of these passages is my own. I was guided here by the classical commentaries and by extant English translations, especially for Biblical verses. In many cases where the original Hebrew text quotes just a fragment of a Biblical or Rabbinic passage, the English version includes the full passage for the benefit of the reader. In several cases where such a passage is quoted more than once in the same section of the commentary, the repeated quotation is omitted or shortened in the English translation. In quotations from *Midrash Rabbah*, the new Wagschal edition of *Midrash Rabbah* generally is followed. Citations to the *Eitz Yosef* commentary on the Midrash are drawn from this edition. In citations to *Yalkut Shimoni*, the form of citation is either I:xxx or II:xxx, where I and II refer to Part A (Torah) and Part B (Prophets and Writings) respectively, and xxx is the paragraph number. Citations to my translation of the Maggid's commentary on Lamentations refer to the work *Voice of Weepers: Commentary of the Dubner Maggid on the Book of Lamentations* (Feldheim Publishers, 2004).