

## Parshas Acharei

This week's Parsha includes the Yom Kippur service, during which the Kohen took two identical goats and cast lots to determine which one would be sent to Azazel and the other offered as a sacrifice.

Interestingly, the idea of a lottery, using luck, was used as part of communal forgiveness of sin. That is, a lottery to decide which goat would be sacrificed and which would be pushed off a cliff.

Another very famous point in the Torah where lots were cast was with Purim, where Haman cast lots on finding out the dates for when to pursue his evil plan against the Jews.

Furthermore, the word Goral- a lot, is used in other places in the Gemara and the Torah, such as in Sotah 2a, about a man finding a woman, quoting the posuk from Tehillim, (125:3) "For the rod of wickedness shall not rest upon a lot of the righteous."

Furthermore, in Yonah 1:7, the sailors cast lots to determine who should bear the responsibility for the stormy waters. In Bamidbar 33:54, lots were cast for each tribe to designate the lands.

The common thread here is that the optics of chance are used to level the playing field so no one can stake a claim of unfairness to the process, yielding results where every entering party is equal.

This applies to the service on Yom Kippur, to the designation of the land, to finding a wife, and to the fact that the lots of righteous and wicked bear no influence on one another. You get what you get, and don't get upset, as my children are taught in nursery.

But why did Haman leave his days to choose when to befall evil on the Jews to chance? What was he trying to beat, so to speak, by casting lots, as if to say that all the dates are equal, but to find the right day, he would leave it to chance.

We also believe in divine providence, so is luck really luck? The answer is that while all things are controlled by divine providence, even the casting of lots, it gives within the realm of our physical world the optics that there is no influence when you level the playing field by setting equal lots. So when the outcome of an event is not to be based on meritocracy, then lots are the most appropriate method by which to have that outcome. This applies to the method of representing forgiveness or the designation of land. But for Haman, he tried to use lots to show how little bearing Hashem has on the world, showing he was using the natural world and luck to find a day to befall evil. But Rashi and the Gemara in Megilla tell us that unbeknownst to Haman, the time he thought would work against the Jews, i.e. the death of Moshe in the month of Adar, was also the month of Moshe's birth. So, notwithstanding luck, it didn't work in Haman's favour to tell us that even with luck, Hashem will put us in the exact position we need to be in to fulfill our purpose.

Because, after all everything is by divine design; when Hashem tells us to cast lots, we do, and there is no meritocracy involved, but when others try to use luck and the optics of chance to befall evil, we see Hashem is truly involved, and that it underlying it all, Hashem is in control.

Good Shabbos