



NEFESH SHIMSHON

DIVREI TORAH ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA AND HOLIDAYS FROM THE TEACHINGS OF RABBEINU SHIMSHON DOVID PINCUS ZT"l

THIS PUBLICATION IS DEDICATED TO THE HATZLACHAH AND ZECHUS OF נחמה בן רחל נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה | ישראל בן רחל נחמה ויעקב בן רחל נחמה. MAY THEY GROW TO BE TALMIDEI CHACHAMIM AND OVDEI HASHEM.

PEARLS OF WISDOM FROM THE PARSHAH

Only the Kohen Gadol Asks

וְעָשִׂיתָ אֶת מַעֲיַל הָאֵפוֹד כְּלִיל תְּכֵלֶת: (שמות כח, לא)

You shall make a cloak of pure blue wool. (*Shemos* 28:31)

One of the garments of the *Kohen Gadol* was the מעיל תכלת, a cloak of wool dyed sky-blue. The bottom hem had seventy-two gold bells, which would sound as the *Kohen Gadol* walked.

What was the point in all those bells ringing when the *Kohen Gadol* moved around from place to place? The Ramban explains *ad loc*:

In order that his sound should be heard

when he enters the sanctified area and comes before his Master with these bells, thus asking permission, because if a person enters the hall of the king suddenly, he is liable for the death penalty according to the protocol of kings.

The *Kohen Gadol* would, by means of the bells, announce that he was coming into the *Mikdash* to

This week's parsha publication, for Parshas Tetzaveh and Purim, is dedicated to the zechus of our dear friend

ר' ראובן בנימין בן אסתר הי"ד

that he should have nachas from all his offspring, and see beracha and hatzlacha in all his endeavors.

May the zechus of supporting Torah be there for him and for his descendants, forever.

perform *avodah*, and the sounding of the bells was a way of asking permission to enter.

If so, we might ask, why didn't the ordinary *kohanim* need to have bells on their hems to announce their coming, and ask permission before they performed their service? How come only the *Kohen Gadol* needed to ask permission?

The service of the *Kohen Gadol* alludes to the unique *avodah* performed by special individuals, *Tzaddikei Yisrael* of the generation, whereas the service of the ordinary *kohanim* alludes to the *avodah* that every Jew does: *tzitzis*, *tefillin*, the daily *tefilos* and all the other *mitzvos* incumbent upon us.

The Torah is thereby teaching us that if a person wishes to perform his *avodah* in a unique way, with special *chasidus* and *prishus*, he needs to "ask permission" before he enters the place of *kedushah*. He needs to know who he is, what level his deeds are on, whether he is fitting for the *avodah* he wishes to perform. Not anyone can just go ahead and do any *avodah* he fancies for himself.

Chazal say about Elazar Zeira¹ that he wore black shoes when he went out in public, to show that he was in mourning. The officials of the *Reish Galusa* (head of the Babylonian exile) found him wearing his black shoes and asked him what it was all about. He replied: I am mourning over the destruction of *Yerushalayim*. They said to him: Do you think you are fitting to mourn over *Yerushalayim*?! They incarcerated him and did not let him go until they found out that he was a *talmid chacham* and was indeed fitting for this *avodah*.

By contrast, the service of an ordinary *kohen* does

not require asking permission. Each and every Jew, whoever he may be, must come in and fulfill all the *mitzvos* that the Torah requires. There is no need for him to ask himself, "Am I fitting for this?" because it is obligatory on all Jews alike.

On Yom Kippur, the *Kohen Gadol* would go into the *Kodesh Kodoshim* wearing four white garments. At that time he would not wear the cloak with bells. Why at that point, of all times, when he is entering the most sacred place of all, doesn't he need to present himself and ask permission whether he is fitting for this?

Because the *Kodesh Kodoshim* was the place of the *Aron*, which was the receptacle of the Torah. And *Chazal* say that Torah learning is equal to all the other *mitzvos* put together. The Torah is the *Kodesh Kodoshim* of the Jewish people.

When it comes to Torah learning, a person should never question whether he is fitting to study *Hashem's* Torah. Indeed, Torah has greater *kedushah* than all the *mitzvos*. He who learns Torah is surrounded by a wall of fire. The *Shechinah* rests on him. So one might be tempted to wonder: how can I, an ordinary person and full of sins, be fitting to approach the holy Torah of *Hashem*?

Thus the Torah comes and teaches us, through the unannounced entrance of the *Kohen Gadol* to the *Kodosh Kodoshim*, that for Torah learning you don't need to ask permission. Whoever wishes to come and learn is allowed, and in fact obligated, to do so. He should learn and learn as much as he can. He should aspire to true greatness in Torah. Because anyone who wishes may come and take the crown of Torah and place it on his own head. ●

1 *Bava Kama* 59b.

לעילוי נשמות

מוה"ד משה בן אליעזר המבורג זצ"ל

ומוה"ד ברוך זאב בן נפתלי קראוס זצ"ל

נדבת נדיהם ~ עשרת דקנים בני נשים והפארת בני אבותם



Carry Them on Your Heart

וְנָשָׂא אֶהָרָן אֶת שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל בַּחֹשֶׁן הַמְּשֻׁפֵּט עַל לְבוּ בָּבָאוּ אֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ לְזָכְרוֹן לִפְנֵי
ה' תָּמִיד: (דברים כח, כט)

Aharon will carry the names of the people of Yisrael in the *Choshen Hamishpat* on his heart when he enters the holy place, as a constant remembrance before *Hashem*. (*Devarim* 28:29)

Our *parshah* speaks about the holy and splendid garments that the *Kohen Gadol* wore when he performed his service in *Beis Hamikdash*. These special articles of clothing have rich symbolism. They teach us profound lessons about the nature of the human soul.

A person's clothing naturally tells us who he is. For instance, if he dresses like a *talmid chacham*, we can assume that Torah learning is probably the main thing he does. By contrast, a person who just hangs out and engages in empty pleasures will probably wear clothing that reflects this.

What about the clothing that the *kohen* wears when he serves *Hashem* in *Beis Hamikdash*? They reflect the qualities of the perfected human being who serves his Creator. In fact, all Jews are called "*kohanim*," as it says:

וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ לִי מִמְּלֶכֶת כֹּהֲנִים וְגוֹי קֹדֹשׁ –
You shall be for Me a kingdom of *kohanim*
and a holy nation.¹

We can thus learn from the *Bigdei Kehunah* a lot of important lessons about ourselves and our *avodah*. Let's look at a couple points.

There are two places where the names of the Twelve Tribes were engraved on the garments of the *Kohen Gadol*. And both places teach us really amazing ideas.

The Torah says that the names of the people of Yisrael were engraved on the *Choshen Hamishpat*. And Aharon carried these names on his heart when he served in *Beis Hamikdash*. This teaches us that every individual can carry the entire Jewish people on his heart. He does this by loving and caring for all of *Am Yisrael*.

And on the shoulder straps of the *Efod*, the names of all the people of Yisrael were also engraved:

וְלָקַחְתָּ אֶת שְׁתֵּי אֲבְנֵי שֹהַם וּפְתַחְתָּ עֲלֵיהֶם
שְׁמוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – You shall take two *shoham*
stones and engrave upon them the names of
the people of Yisrael.²

So we see that a person can also carry the whole Jewish people on his shoulders. He does this by holding up all of *Am Yisrael* through his greatness in Torah. This is what the giants of our people did. About Rashi it is said that without him, the Torah would have been forgotten by the Jewish people. Also the Rif, the Rambam and the *Gedolim* of every generation carried the whole Jewish people in their hearts and on their shoulders.

But there is a difference. The names of the people of Yisrael that were carried upon the heart were engraved on twelve separate stones, one stone for the name of each tribe. Whereas the names carried on Aharon's shoulders were grouped together on just

¹ *Shemos* 19:6.

² *Ibid* 28:9.

two stones, six names on each stone. What does this teach us?

When we bring spiritual benefit to the public by teaching them Torah and *yiras Shamayim*, this generally relates to the public as a whole. It includes all the individuals together. But when it comes to loving our fellow Jew, it is not sufficient to just love the Jewish nation as a whole. We need to love each person individually, as he is.

This latter point is alluded to in the twelve individual stones of the *Choshen Mishpat*. Each represented one of the Twelve Tribes. And each of the Tribes was considered in many aspects to be a people on its own.³ Just as the different nations in the world have significantly different qualities and characteristics, which engenders hatred and war between them, so the Twelve Tribes of the Jewish

³ See *Bereishis* 35:12 and Rashi's commentary ad loc.

people had different natures, which led to fights and conflicts between the Tribes.

Hashem commanded that each tribe should have its own unique holy stone. Each tribe was represented on the *Choshen* by a different kind of gem or precious stone, each with its own color and characteristics. And the *Kohen Gadol* bore all the stones together on his heart because one must love each individual Jew, as he is, with his own unique nature, with the practices that characterize his community and the *minhagim* he inherited from his family and ancestors, with all the differences that exist between various Jewish communities and places of origin.

And then, when we love our fellow Jew in this way, all of *Am Yisrael* will be remembered before *Hashem*, and Heaven will open to bestow a flood of blessings upon us, forever. ●

SPECIAL TOPIC

Something to Really Remember

זְכוֹר אֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְךָ עַמְּלֶךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרַיִם: (דברים כה, יז)

Remember what Amalek did to you on the way when you left Egypt. (*Devarim* 25:17)

The *Midrash* explains the *mitzvah* to remember what Amalek did:

After forty years, Moshe wanted to tell the Jewish people, “Do you remember what you said, ‘Is *Hashem* in our midst or not?’” But Moshe said to himself, “If I say that to them, I will cause their faces to turn white from shame, and he who causes his friend’s face to turn white from shame has no portion in the World to Come.

To what is this comparable? To a king

who had an orchard, and a dog tied at the entrance of the orchard, and the king observes everything in the orchard. The king’s friend goes into the orchard to steal from it, and he set the dog upon him, and the dog tore his clothes.

The king then said to himself, “If I say to my friend, ‘Why did you go into my orchard?’ I will cause his face to turn white from shame. Instead, I will say to him, ‘Did you see a mad dog? How it tore your

clothes!’ and he will understand right away what he did.”

In this vein, Moshe said to himself, “I will say to the Jewish people, ‘Remember what Amalek did to you.’”¹

According to this interpretation, we remember what Amalek did in order to remember our sins that caused Amalek to come and attack us. The message is that we shouldn’t forget even for a moment that *Hashem* is “in our midst” and is watching over us at all times.

Rashi expressed this idea at the end of *Parshas Beshalach*, on the passage about the battle with Amalek. He cited an allegory about a person who put his son up to ride on his shoulders and then went out to the way. When the son saw an object, he said, “Father, pick up that object and give it to me,” and the father gave it to him. And so it was with another object, and another. When they met a person on the way, the son said to him, “Did you see my father?” The father said to the son, “You don’t know where I am?!” He threw the son off his shoulders, and a dog came and bit the son.

In the history of the Jewish people, when Amalek came to attack them, it didn’t always end the same. This is because the end of the story depends on the Jewish people. It is written regarding this:

וְהָיָה כִּאֲשֶׁר יָרִים מִשָּׁה יָדוֹ וְגִבֹּר יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְכִאֲשֶׁר יִגִּיחַ יָדוֹ וְגִבֹּר עַמְלֵק – “And it was that
when Moshe raised his hand, the Jewish
people overcame, and when his put his hand
down, Amalek overcame.”²

The *Gemara* explains³ that it was not Moshe’s hands that won the battle or lost the battle. Rather, when the Jewish people looked up, and subjugated their hearts to their Father in Heaven, they overcame the enemy, and when they didn’t, they fell in battle.

Amalek Today

And so it is in every generation. When the Jewish people forget that *Hashem* dwells in their midst, Amalek comes. And then, if they do *teshuvah* and subjugate their hearts to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, the same thing that happened in the time of Mordechai and Esther happens to them. Everything switches around, and the Jews gain control over their enemies.

Yehoshua indeed defeated Amalek in the time of *Moshe Rabbeinu*.

Nevertheless, when the Jewish people don’t remember Who is carrying them on His shoulders, they get a nasty bite from the dog, may *Hashem* protect us. This is what happened eighty years ago in Europe. Amalek almost wiped out the Jews.

And this is the *mitzvah* in every generation, when Amalek arises and barks at us, and declares his intention to destroy, kill and annihilate. We should not make light of these threats. Rather, we should remember: זְכוֹר אֶת אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לְךָ עַמְלֵק – “Remember what Amalek did to you.” We should remember what terrible power Amalek gains when we forget *Hashem*, and we should do *teshuvah* and remember that we are a holy people, that *Hashem* is in our midst. Then the remembrance of Amalek will be blotted out, and *Hashem* will redeem us from our troubles, and save us from our enemies, and *Mashiach* will come, may it be soon. ●

1 *Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer* 43.

2 *Shemos* 17:11.

3 *Rosh Hashanah* 29.



Nothing is Like Purim!

In the yearly cycle of holidays, Purim is the peak. It is the highest point of the year.

This is because the holidays begin with Pesach. About Pesach it says:

הַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה לְכֶם רִאשׁוֹן חֳדָשִׁים – “This month shall be for you the first of months.

And the year comes to its glorious conclusion with Purim, the last holiday. Afterward, when Pesach begins again, it is not the same Pesach that was last year. The heights that we climbed all the holidays of the year bring us to a new and higher level of awareness and understanding, to a new reality of closeness to *Hashem*, and from there we go to Pesach. Because Pesach is the birth, and from all the greatness of the past year, we are reborn to a higher level.

The cycle of the holidays, from its beginning through to its end, is ascent after ascent. It builds the human being up toward his ultimate goal and purpose. And the pivotal point is our connection to *Hashem* in a relationship of love. This is the subject that Torah and *mitzvos* addresses, and there is no other subject besides this. Each holiday represents a higher level of love and connection to *Hashem*.

The Great Barrier of Nature

Nature is the greatest barrier to achieving this love. This is why our holidays are built on miracles, on supernatural events. Miracles break the darkness of nature, and make *Hashem's* love of the Jewish people visible to us. But miracles do not occur all the time. They come only rarely, to reveal a special point. In our daily routine, the laws of nature rule the world and this hides the burning love that is seen at the time of a miracle.

Purim teaches us about the miracle of nature itself. This is why Purim is the peak. Because if nature itself contains within it the love that is revealed through miracles, then this love is present always and at all times.

The following metaphor explains how nature hides things. When a person buys a gift for the home, he is expressing his love for all his family members at the same time. This itself hinders the intensity of the

love's expression, because each child is likely to think: who says Daddy really loves me? Maybe he loves my brother, or maybe he loves the family as a whole, of which I happen to be a part.

Nature hinders us in a similar way from feeling *Hashem's* love for us. When someone finds air in proximity to his nose, and he breathes in the air and absorbs life, this is in truth an awesome and incomparable gift from *Hashem*. A person should feel excited and inspired by this. *Hashem* is so awesomely great, beyond human comprehension, He is the Creator of all the worlds, and with what does He busy Himself? With giving tiny me a portion of air. I didn't even need to go out to the field to find it. He put it right next to my nose, for me to breathe in like a king without exerting any effort!

What prevents us from feeling *Hashem's* love for us like this? The fact that so many other creatures of *Hashem* share the same gift. Everyone in the world, even animals and birds, has air to breathe. So we say to ourselves: *Hashem* didn't put the air next to me specially; He spread out air over the whole face of the earth, and along with everyone else, I, too, benefit from it. This makes us wonder whether *Hashem* really loves us or not.

The great barrier of nature hinders all the closeness to *Hashem* that air and food and everything else in life are there to provide. But when nature is broken, and a miracle occurs, we feel *Hashem's* love. A miracle is something that comes from *Hashem* not in the general, usual way called nature. It is something that happens specially for us. When a miracle occurs, we feel that *Hashem* loves *me*; we feel a personal connection and relationship with Him.

Reuven's Special Kugel

This is why Jewish holidays revolve mainly around miracles. Pesach is all about the miracle of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*, and it brings us to feel that we Jews are not part of the general system of how the world runs. *Hashem* broke the general system and placed His Name and His Kindness upon us through the Ten Plagues and splitting the Sea and everything else that Pesach represents.

The same is true with *Shavu'os*. The highest heavens opened up before our eyes, to show us that there is no one and nothing other than *Hashem* – אין עוד מלבדו. And when *Hashem* came down on *Har Sinai* there never was such a miracle.

Also *Sukkos* is like this. *Hashem* enveloped us with *Ananei Hakavod*. And Chanukah, too: שעשה נסים לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה. It's all about the Chanukah miracle.

However, even after all this, we still don't feel *Hashem's* love in every slice of bread we eat, in every breath of air, because we think it is not special for us but is rather for the world in general, of which we happen to be part.

The truth of *Hashem's* love for us is not so readily apparent. By way of allegory, let's say Rabbi Reuven, a distinguished person, is invited to Shimon's house for *Shabbos*. And on *Shabbos* morning, a tasty kugel is served. Reuven doesn't know if this family has kugel every *Shabbos* morning or not. It could be that they made the kugel specially for him, in his honor, and to make him feel comfortable, they made it a big kugel, with enough for the whole family. This way he won't be the only one getting a serving of kugel, as that might make him feel awkward.

On the other hand, maybe there is nothing special or significant about the kugel. It's on the regular *Shabbos* menu in this home, and Rabbi Reuven just happens to be with them this *Shabbos*, so he enjoys it along with them.

The mere fact that there is a big, delicious kugel sitting in the middle of the table doesn't prove one way or the other.

This same question could be asked by every person who finds that right next to his nose and mouth, there is sweet air to breathe. Did *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* lovingly prepare a portion of air just for me, and just so it won't be painfully obvious, He put lots of additional portions of air all around me, for the rest of the people in the world? Or maybe there really is nothing special here at all for me? Perhaps I am just part of the world, and the world has air because *Hashem* loves the world in general, and that's all.

Miraculous Laws of Nature

All the other holidays of the year will not answer this

question because they are all exceptions to nature. They celebrate miracles that broke nature. They don't tell us anything about the myriads of items and kindnesses and graces that nature regularly bestows upon us.

This is why we have Purim. It is about hidden miracles. It is about the miracle of nature itself.

And this is why we read the *Megilah* on Purim. The word *Megilah* is similar to the word מגילה, "to reveal." This is because the *Megilah* reveals to us that all of nature is in truth nothing but hidden miracles. Every object that naturally exists is in truth a loving kiss to me from *Hashem*. And a kiss is a one-to-one expression of love. There is no love like it.

The whole story of the *Megilah* reveals the reality of hidden miracles. Let's take, for instance, the beginning of the *Megilah*:

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הוּא אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ
מֵהַדּוֹ וְעַד כּוֹשׁ שֶׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמָאָה מְדִינָה
בְּיָמֵי הָהֵם כָּשְׁבַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ עַל כֹּסֵא
מַלְכוּתוֹ אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבֵּרְיָה.

This verse tells us, according to the *Vilna Ga'on*, two contradictory things. First it says that Achashverosh ruled the whole world, and then it says that his throne was out in the provinces, in Shushan. Shushan was the capital city of Persia, but Babylon was the world center. Babylon is where Nebuchadnezzar was, and when Koresh conquered Babylon, he went to live there because it was the world center. If Achashverosh now ruled the world, why wasn't his throne in Babylon, which was the world capital?

The *Vilna Ga'on* answers that Achashverosh wanted to have a throne like that of *Shlomo Hamelech*, and in Shushan he found craftsmen capable of building it. They constructed the throne in Shushan, but it was too heavy to transport to Bavel. For this reason, Achashverosh moved the capital of the whole world all the way to Shushan, where his throne was. This is the story behind Achashverosh sitting on his royal throne in Shushan, which is where the *Megilah* begins its story.

And why did all this transpire? Because Mordechai was in Shushan. Thus we see that the natural world turned upside down for the sake of the righteous Jew named Mordechai.

The *Megilah* reveals the true character of nature. Everything that exists is specially for the Jew. It teaches us how connected we truly are to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. This is the first *mitzvah* of Purim, to read the *Megilah* in order to know the truth that a Jew is connected to *Hashem* in a relationship of love that expresses itself in every point and article and detail of the world.

Without Hashem's Name

This is why *Hashem's* Name is not mentioned anywhere in *Megilas Esther*. If His Name would be expressly written, this would leave the natural plane and enter the supernatural. That is what Pesach is about. But Purim reveals to us that everything within the darkness of the natural world is actually the peak of love. וְנִהְיֶה הוּא. It is the very opposite of what it looks like. Everything you see in the natural world is actually the peak of *Hashem's* love!

Where do we see more love: Purim or Pesach? On Pesach, *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* raised us above the world. But on Purim we discover *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* in each and every point of the natural world.

This is how you should look at nature. *Hashem* wished to hide Himself, so He gave air to another 500 people around you. But you should feel that the gift is intended personally for you.

יְהִי כָל הַנְּשָׁמָה תִּהְיֶה לַיהוָה – For every breath,
you should praise *Hashem*.

This is the meaning of וְנִהְיֶה הוּא. This is the big revolution and revelation of Purim. It is about how we see the world around us.

Casting Lots

This idea is expressed in the very name of the holiday. Purim is named after *pur*, which means “lot.” Casting lots seems to be the most natural thing there is. One lot will always be chosen, and it appears to be a matter of blind chance that a particular lot comes out. But we see from several places in the Torah and the *Nevi'im* that it is not that way at all. The selection of the lot is, in truth, an act of *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* Himself. It is not random at all.

This is why *Eretz Yisrael* was divided up between the

Tribes by the casting of lots. Each tribe wanted to have the choicest portions of land, for instance, the seashore, and so forth. Then one tribe stood up and said that they want the decision to be made by *Hashem* Himself. And where does a decision made by *Hashem* Himself express itself? In the casting of lots.

We see the same thing with the two goats of Yom Kippur, one of which goes to *Hashem* as a *korban*, and the other of which goes to *Azazel*. No *kohen* could designate a goat to be sent to *Azazel*, to Eisav – that would be idol worship! Only *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* can do that, thus we are commanded to cast lots on the two goats.

All this shows that when *Hashem* acts within the natural system which seems to embrace chance and randomness, this act of *Hashem* is expressed through casting lots.

This is the meaning of Purim, called after the *pur*, the “lot.” And this is what we learn from the *Megilah* reading, which is the first *mitzvah* of Purim. The story of the *Megilah* reveals to us the true nature of the world. Purim reveals to us not just *Hashem's* great love for us but also the nature of the world as a whole. Purim shows us what every person should think when he drinks a glass of water and blesses *shebakol nihyeh bidvaro*.

The *Megilah* shows us the greatest closeness to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, which exists inside the natural world. The power of Purim is within nature.

Matanos l'Evyonim and Mishloach Manos

The basic *mitzvah* on Purim is reading *Megilas Esther*, which is words of Torah that open our minds. But we don't leave it that, as an intellectual realization. It is written in *Shir Hashirim*:

אִם תִּעְרֶוּ וְאִם תִּעֲוֹרְרוּ אֶת הָאֲהָבָה עַד
שִׁתְּחַפֵּץ – Lest you arouse and lest you awaken
the love until it so wishes.

Although we have translated this verse according to its simple meaning, it also teaches us that when there is an arousal and awakening of our love for *Hashem*, it should be transformed into something that lasts. This is the meaning of עַד שִׁתְּחַפֵּץ. The love for *Hashem*

should be turned into a **חפץ**, a tangible object. In other words, one should express the feeling of love, which tends to be transient, in some kind of physical action, in order to give it permanence.

The *Megilah* teaches us this. It teaches us to emphasize the arousal of love by means of physical deeds. Because after we read the *Megilah*, we go to fulfill three practical *mitzvos*, the deepest of which is the *Purim se'udab*. The *Megilah* just told us about the great love that *Hashem* has for us. We just discovered that this love is expressed in the whole natural world. Then we go to do several practical *mitzvos*, to make it tangible and give it permanence.

Let's talk about two of these practical *mitzvos*: *Matanos l'Evyonim* and *Mishloach Manos*.

Giving a gift is a classic way to express one's love. But there are two kinds of gifts. The first kind is, for example, I see that my friend needs a pen, and I go and buy him a pen as a gift. This gift greatly strengthens the relationship between me and my friend. But the content and goal of the gift was to fulfill the lacking of the recipient. He lacked a pen, and I gave him one so he will have what he needs.

The second kind of gift is when we give something that the recipient wasn't in lack of at all. Instead, the very gift expresses love. For instance, a man buys flowers for his wife. It's not because she lacks flowers. Most of the time, she doesn't have flowers in the home, and that is not a problem. The whole point of such a gift is to express their mutual love.

What about *Matanos l'Evyonim* and *Mishloach Manos*?

Matanos l'Evyonim and *Mishloach Manos* are the two different types of gifts. *Matanos l'Evyonim* is when the recipient has a lack, and I give him a gift to fulfill that lack.

Mishloach Manos is different. I don't send *Mishloach Manos* to my friend because he lacks those food items and I want to give him what he needs. Even if my friend is tremendously rich, and has plenty of everything I could imagine, I still have a *mitzvah* to send him *Mishloach Manos*. This is because the very act of giving expresses love.

This explains why we give *Mishloach Manos* to one person, but we give *Matanos l'Evyonim* to two people. *Mishloach Manos* represents a gift of love, and if you give out gifts of love to everyone, it dilutes the expression of love. But *Matanos l'Evyonim* is to fulfill the lacks of the recipient, so the more people you give to, the better.

Also *Hashem's chesed*, His giving to us, comes in these two types. Sometimes the goal is to give us what we are lacking, and sometimes it is simply to express His love for us. Let's take a person's clothing as an example. The shirt he wears is a gift from *Hashem* to fulfill his needs (**מלביש ערומים**), but his necktie, without which he could manage just fine, is a gift simply expressing *Hashem's* love for him. The shirt is a *Matanos l'Evyonim* type of gift, and the tie is a *Mishloach Manos* type of gift.

We go to do *Matanos l'Evyonim* and *Mishloach Manos* specifically after reading the *Megilah*, and that is for the reason explained above. *Megilas Esther* reveals to us the true nature of the world. It demonstrates to us how deeply *Hashem* loves us and how much He gives us. The whole world is nothing but hidden miracles by which *Hashem* is constantly giving us countless gifts.

This feeling of love and relationship, stemming from the *Megilah* reading, arouses our desire to give gifts. If we could, we would give these gifts to *Hashem* Himself. But it is not possible to bestow presents on *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. So we take those gifts, which emanate from that relationship of love, and we give them **איש לרעהו**, "each person to his neighbor." We give them to *Hashem's* beloved children.

Blessed is Haman, Cursed is Mordechai?

Purim arouses in us a feeling of love and a feeling of faith in *Hashem*. A sense of *Emunah*. How far should this sense of *Emunah* go? To the point of drunkenness. And from the depths of drunkenness emerges something the person never said before.

Rava said: A person is obligated to get drunk on Purim to the point that he doesn't know the difference between "Cursed is Haman" and "Blessed is Mordechai."

Until now we talked about the good things. We

talked about how *Hashem* gives us every slice of bread we eat as a personal gift just for us, because He loves us so much. We talked about the presents *Hashem* bestows on us. But there is more to life than that. There are also troubles and painful experiences, and they, too, are part of the system that *Hashem* created.

On Purim, a person comes to a perfect awareness of *Hashem's* presence in the natural world, to the point that out of drunkenness, he yells out, "*Baruch Haman!*"

What is that supposed to mean?

Haman represents the darkest of the dark, the worst of the worse. He wanted to destroy the entire Jewish people, men, women and children! But out of drunkenness, at a time when a person sees how everything is run by *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, he can recite a blessing even over evil. He can say, "Blessed is Haman," because everything is from *Hashem*.

But that's not all.

Then a person says, "Cursed is Mordechai." What is that supposed to mean??

Normally, when people have difficulties they *daven* to *Hashem*. And if their prayers are not answered, they go to *tzaddikim* to *daven* for them. Why? Because a person sees that he did not succeed on his own. He needs the help of the *tzaddik*.

But on Purim we declare, "Cursed is Mordechai." [Mordechai is the ultimate *tzaddik*. But why do you need to go to a *tzaddik*? Why are you putting the *tzaddik* between you and *Hashem*? On the contrary,] there are no barriers between a Jew and *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. However, this awareness does not come from our thinking mind. Someone who talks that way from his intellect, [saying we don't need *tzaddikim*,] is an *apikorus*. This awareness, this level of realization, is only from drunkenness.

This profound closeness to *Hashem* exists on Purim. Even the last little point of barrier between us and *Hashem* dissolves. We speak directly with *Hashem*. And at the same time, we recognize that even the lowest of

the low, even Haman, is from *Hashem*.

The Purpose of Purim

Purim is an awesome day. The gates of heavens are open because *Hashem* found His only son, whom He loves so much, after having despaired of him. The Arizal says that what took place on the first Purim repeats itself every year, and this is the main miracle.

The Sages of that time *paskened* a special *halachah* that *Megilas Esther* should be written down for the sake of all generations. And at the time of the original Purim miracles, too, Mordechai publicized the miracle:

וַיִּכְתֹּב מֶרְדֵּכַי אֶת הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַיִּשְׁלַח
אֶל כָּל הַיְּהוּדִים סְפָרִים – Mordechai wrote
these things and sent books to all the Jews.

Such an outpouring of *chesed* there never was. Even at the time of *Matan Torah*. Because after the original Purim miracle took place, the Jewish people [had no mountain hanging over their heads. They] accepted the Torah at that time willingly, out of a profound sense of closeness to *Hashem*. And this happens each and every year, when Purim comes again.

The goal of the *Megilah* is *לְגַלוֹת*, to reveal. A Jew can take a cup of water and put into it so much *deveikus*, more than of a million years in *Olam Haba*. The world of *deveikus* is here. The *Megilah* is *megaleh* to you, it reveals to you that every breath you take is a personal gift from *Hashem* to you, and this is something you should be aware of. What do you care if the same gift was given to another million people? *כָּל הַנְּשָׁמָה תִּהְיֶה לִּי*, "For every breath you should praise Hashem." A person should think, "*Hashem* is giving me a portion of air!"

On the other hand, all the darkness of the world, all the negative things, are managed and run by *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. The goal of Purim is for us to think this way, and live this way, as a result of fulfilling all the *mitzvos* of the day. ●

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