

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita

Purim



בס"ד

# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings

## Purim

### Miracles within Nature

Each yom tov teaches us another lesson in emunah. The lessons of Purim are different than the lessons of yetzias Mitzrayim. Pesach teaches us that Hashem can intervene with nature when He wants to, and Purim teaches us that nature itself is Hashem.

The Bnei Yissaschar (Adar 1:8) explains:

"In Nisan, we experienced revealed miracles. Everyone saw that Hashem can change nature. However, many didn't know that even when

the world is run according to the rules of nature, Hashem is also leading the world with *hashgachah pratis* over every detail. The *bnei Torah* knew it, but it wasn't known to most people... This notion was corrected with the miracle of the month of Adar. The miracle was within nature; the rules of nature remained in place. Nevertheless, it was obvious to all that Hashem performed the miracle. No one thought that it happened by chance. Now, it became known that Hashem's *hashgachah* also runs nature...<sup>1</sup> This realization became revealed

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1. The Bnei Yissaschar adds the following:

" Everything that happens in the world – what a person buys, the wealth and property he attains – is through Hashem's *hashgachah*. And since everything is through Hashem's *hashgachah*, one doesn't earn more by working more. Of course, one can engage in business to earn *parnassah*, but Hashem's *hashgachah* within nature enables him to earn wealth."

to us through the miracles of Adar because it was a miracle within the rules of nature, and yet everyone saw that it happened with Hashem's wondrous *hashgachah*."

This is why we don't find Hashem's name written in the megillah. We would assume to find *pasukim* like ויצעקו אל ה' "They shouted out to Hashem," or that they said, ברוך ה' when the miracles occurred, but not once is Hashem's name mentioned. The Kedushas Levi (*Kedushah Rishonah*) explains that at this time, Hashem's presence

was concealed, and therefore Hashem's name isn't mentioned in the megillah. Although great miracles occurred, they happened within the rules of nature.

Hashem's name is found in the *roshei teivos* and the *sofei teivos* of certain words in the megillah. For example, the *roshei teivos* of יבא המלך והמון spell the *roshei teivos* of the *הוי"ה* spell the *sofei teivos* of the *הוי"ה* and the final letters of וכל זה איננו שוה לי spell the *sofei teivos* of the *הוי"ה*. The Kedushas Levi explains that this is because Hashem's name (and presence) was seen through several words, which represent different events.<sup>2</sup>

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This is why this month is called אדר because this month, we gain the awareness that א' דר, Hashem dwells within this world (*Meor Einayim*).

Chazal say, הרוצה שיתקיימו נכסיו יטע בהן אדר, 'One who wants his possessions should remain with him, should plant in them an *adar*.' This means he should remember the miracles of אדר and recognize that even nature is Hashem. When one lives with this awareness, his property will remain with him.

**2.** The Bnei Yissaschar (*Kislev* 4:83) quotes the following *mashal* from early scholars to describe the miracle of Purim:

Someone fell ill, and the doctor informed the family that he would die very shortly.

"Is there no cure?" the family asked.

"There is a cure," the doctor replied. "The cure is extracted from an expensive herb that grows in the East, on islands off the Indian coast. However, the Indian government doesn't export that herb because it wants to keep that rare herb for the local population. Additionally, these days, no merchant or tourist travels the long distance from India to here. So, although technically there is a cure, we can't give it to your relative.

The family refused to give up. "We will hire someone to travel to India to bring back the herbs."

"Your dedication is commendable," the doctor replied, "but it is a dangerous trip as it passes through perilous deserts and stormy seas. Many people who attempted this journey didn't survive. Furthermore, the trip takes years, and your relative only has a day or two to live."

"I'll tell you more," the doctor continued. "Even if we had the herb, we wouldn't know how to prepare it. The herbs need to be mixed, distilled, and prepared in a special way, and no one in this country knows how to do that. A wise doctor lives far away in the West, in Spain. He knows how to prepare the medicine. But to send someone to Spain and bring the doctor here is also a long trip that will take years, and it is also a very perilous route. It isn't certain the doctor will survive the trip. And as your relative doesn't have much more time to live, there is no hope."

Just then, someone entered the doctor's office and said, "A ship from India has just arrived, and it is carrying the precious healing herb!"

Everyone rejoiced, but the doctors cautioned them that there was no reason to be happy because, without the doctor from Spain, the herbs were worthless.

Just then, another person entered the room and announced that the great doctor from Spain had arrived. It was a miracle!

The doctor from Spain was summoned. He prepared the herbs, and the ill person recovered.

This pattern continues to this day. When we see one aspect of hashgachah pratit, we often consider it "a coincidence." But when many such coincidences happen one after the other, and through them salvation occurs, we become aware that it was Hashem's wonders.

The holy *sefarim* say that whenever it states the word המלך alone in the megillah, not two words like המלך אהשוורש, it refers to Hashem, the King of the world.

It seems strange to us that Hashem should be alluded to when we mention המלך in the megillah, which according to pshat, refers to Achashverosh. Why should

Hashem be alluded to when we discuss this low rasha?

The Maharal answers that it is the opposite. The simple translation of המלך is Hashem. When we translate it to refer to Achashverosh, that is when we are using the path of drush.

The proof of this is in the words (*Esther* 6:1), בלילה ההוא נדדה, שנת המלך, "That night, the king's sleep was disturbed." The Gemara (*Megillah* 15:) states according to Rav Tanchum, המלך is Hashem, Who couldn't sleep because it was time to save the Jewish nation. So, we see, according to Rav Tanchum, that the simple translation of המלך is the King, Hashem.

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In this story, nothing supernatural occurred. Everything could be explained by the rules of nature. However, it was obviously a miracle. Precisely when the ill person needed the doctor and the herbs, they arrived. Everyone understood that Hashem arranged these events to save the sick person's life. Only a fool would think that it happened by chance. Similarly, with the miracle of Purim, everything that occurred can be explained according to nature. But looking at the entire episode, it becomes clear beyond a shadow of a doubt that Hashem performed tremendous miracles.

We think that Achashverosh or others were pulling the strings and causing events to happen, but המלך is our reminder that everything is from Hashem.

This is the message of the megillah: to know that Hashem is with us and performs miracles for us within the rules of nature.

The Mishnah (*Megillah* 1:1) states, "The megillah is read on the 11<sup>th</sup>, the 12<sup>th</sup>, the 13<sup>th</sup>, the 14<sup>th</sup>, and the 15<sup>th</sup> [of Adar], not later and no earlier."

Bris Kehunas Olam writes that the total sum of these dates equals 65 (11 + 12 + 13 + 14 + 15 = 65), the same *gematriya* as אדני. The name אדני is Hashem's name when Hashem runs the world by the rules of nature. We read the megillah on these dates, which are *gematriya* אדני because the purpose of the miracle is to know that even a world led through the laws of nature is only Hashem.

The Mishnah adds, לא פחות ולא יותר, "not earlier and not later." This means we can only read the megillah on the five dates, not the day before or after. The day before is י' אדר, and the day after is ט"ז, which together is *gematriya* 26 (10 + 16 = 26), the *gematriya* of הוי"ה, Hashem's name alluding to miracles. We can't read the megillah on these days because on Purim, we aren't celebrating the revealed miracles, which are symbolized by Hashem's name הוי"ה. On Purim, we celebrate that even when everything appears natural, Hashem is with us, directing each detail.

An indication that everything is from Hashem are the words ויהי בימי אחשוורוש, "It came to pass in the days of Achashverosh..." Since the story is about Achashverosh, it doesn't make sense to say ויהי בימי אחשוורוש! You don't reference a time and era using the name of one of the primary players in the story. For example, sefer Shoftim begins with ויהי

בימי שפט השופטים, but the sefer isn't necessarily about the Shoftim. However, when the story is about Achashverosh, why would we add that it happened in his lifetime?

of the story. Everything is about Hashem. And therefore, it is appropriate to write בימי אחשורש, that the story happened in his lifetime.<sup>3</sup>

Or Dovid (written by Reb Dovid Dov Meizlish zt'l) answers that Achashverosh isn't part

The halachah is (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 691:1) מגילה צריכה שרטוט, that when one writes a

**3.** Children dress up on Purim. A child can look like Achashverosh, but he isn't Achashverosh. A child can appear like Reuven, but he isn't Reuven. This teaches us how to view the world. We think Achashverosh (and other resha'im) act in the world, but it isn't them. We are angry at certain people; we think they are at fault, but it isn't them. Every test and challenge that comes our way is from Hashem.

The mitzvah to drink until we don't know the difference between ארור המן and ברוך מרדכי can also be explained along these lines. We think that a situation is cursed, but it isn't. On Purim, we become aware that everything is from Hashem, and with this new perspective, we know not to be upset with any situation that Hashem sends our way.

On the words בימי אחשורש הוא אחשורש, Rashi writes that the megillah repeats אחשורש הוא אחשורש to tell us, הוא ברשעו מתחלתו ועד סופו, "Achashverosh was a *rasha* from the beginning to the end." Even when Achashverosh did good things for Klal Yisrael, it wasn't him. He was a rasha his entire life; Hashem pulled the strings, leading the world according to His will.

Someone once asked Reb Yeshayah of Prague zt'l, "Why don't we make a *brachah* on *yesurim*? After all, afflictions are for our good, as they atone for our sins. We should praise Hashem for them."

Reb Yeshayah replied, "We do say a *brachah* on *yesurim*. The *brachah*

megillah, he needs to engrave lines (שרטוט) on the parchment, as a guide where to write the letters. We can explain that the שרטוט hints that one must engrave into his heart the lessons of

hashgachah pratis that are written in the megillah.<sup>4</sup>

It is repeated in the name of the Vilna Gaon *zt'l*, "If one wants *chizuk* in *emunah*, any time of the year, he should study *Megillas Esther*."<sup>5</sup>

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is שעשה לי כל צרכי, 'Hashem provides all my needs.'"

And when you know that everything is from Hashem, you merit salvations. The Chidushei HaRim says that this is alluded to in the words (Tehillim 124) לולי ה' שהיה לנו יאמר נא ישראל "If it had not been for Hashem Who was with us, let Yisrael declare now." This means if it weren't that we knew and proclaimed that everything is from Hashem, אזי היים בלעונו... אזי עבר על נפשנו המים הזדנים, "They would have swallowed us alive... The wicked waters would have passed over our soul." But when we know that everything is from Hashem, we merit salvations.

**4.** Chazal (Megillah 19.) פרוז בן יומו קרוי פרוז, meaning, a person who lives in Yerushalayim but on Purim is located in a city that celebrates Purim on the 14th day of Adar, he must keep Purim on the 14th. His status is determined on his present location, and not on the location of his permanent residence. This contrasts with most yomim tovim. For example, when someone living in America visits Eretz Yisrael for Pesach, he keeps two days yom tov because he *lives* outside Eretz Yisrael. So why is Purim different?

The answer is that Purim teaches us *emunah* in *hashgachah pratis*. Part of this *emunah* is the awareness that wherever a person is located at any given time, it was *bashert* that he be there. So, his status on Purim is based on where he is on Purim.

**5.** Rabbeinu Shimshon m'Shantz (on *Toras Kohanim Bechukosai* 3) writes, "זכור את עשה לך עמלק" means you should learn *hilchos megillah*." By studying the megillah and Purim, we can perform *mechiyas Amalek* in our generation.

### ***Finding the Miracles in Megillas Esther***

*Shulchan Aruch* (690:3) states, צריך לקרותה כולה, "One must read the entire megillah." The Mishnah Berurah adds, "According to most *poskim* if you didn't hear just one word of the megillah, you aren't *yotzei*."

The *meforshim* explain that this is because every *pasuk* and word of the megillah expresses another part of the miracle. So, if you miss a word, you miss a brick in the miracle.

The megillah begins with the words (1:2), כשבת המלך אחשverוש על כסא מלכותו אשר בשושן הבירה, "When King Achashverosh sat on his throne, which was in the capital city Shushan." The Vilna Gaon *zy"y* explains that Shlomo HaMelech had

a magnificent throne. Many kings wanted to sit on it but failed. Pharaoh Nakeh (Pharaoh the Lame) sat on Shlomo HaMelech's throne, and one of the decorative lions bit him, and that's how he became lame. Nevuchadnezzar also wanted to sit on Shlomo's throne and failed.

Achashverosh also desired to sit on a magnificent throne similar to Shlomo's, so he sought craftsmen to fashion a replica of this unique throne. The craftsmen who knew how to build such a majestic chair lived in Shushan. It was too heavy to transfer to Bavel when it was completed, so Achashverosh moved the capital city to Shushan. Shushan became the new capital city of the Persian Empire.

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Vorke chassidim would study *Masechta Megillah* throughout the year to perform *mechiyas Amalek*.

The Shinover Rav *zt'l* said that *Masechta Megillah* is *mesugal* for *yiras Shamayim*.

The Vilna Gaon writes, "This is the meaning of the *pasuk*, כִּשְׁבַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרֶשׁ... בְּשׁוֹשָׁן. Achashverosh was the first king to live in Shushan. All the kings before him didn't live there... This is recorded in the megillah so we will recognize Hashem's wonders and understand that Hashem prepared every step leading up to the miracle for Bnei Yisrael. Mordechai and Esther lived in Shushan, so Hakadosh Baruch arranged that Achashverosh move his capital there.

The two *gedolim* of Bnei Yisrael, Mordechai and Esther, the ones who brought

about the *yeshuah*, lived in Shushan, so Hashem arranged that Achashverosh should move his capital city to Shushan, right near where they lived! When Haman passed his evil decrees, Mordechai and Esther were on the scene and were able to thwart Haman's evil plans.<sup>6</sup>

The Vilna Gaon adds, "Chazal tell us that one must read the entire megillah, even the seemingly superfluous parts. For example, why is knowing about Achashverosh's wealth and power important? However, every

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6. This also reveals Hashem's love for His tzaddikim and the Jewish nation. Hashem could have had Mordechai and Esther move to the capital city in Bavel, where all Persian kings lived. But instead, Hashem had Achashverosh and his entire cabinet move to Persia rather than making Mordechai and Esther move to Bavel.

The Rambam (introduction to *Pirush HaMishnayos*) discusses that Hashem takes exceptional care of his tzaddikim. He writes that Hakadosh Baruch Hu can put a desire in a king's heart to build a beautiful palace because "perhaps the palace was built for a chassid who will stay there one night many years later, and his life will be saved when he stays there." Similarly, Achashverosh moves to Shushan in our story, but it is all for Mordechai, Esther, and the Jewish nation.

*pasuk* of the megillah tells us another facet of this great miracle."

Here's another spectacular miracle, taught by the Alshich HaKadosh, and it shows how every detail of the Purim miracle occurred with hashgachah pratis:

Haman arrived at Achashverosh's palace when Achashverosh wanted to know how to reward Mordechai. If Haman had come earlier, when the Sefer HaZichronos was read, he would have known that they were discussing rewarding Mordechai (and not rewarding himself, as he thought). If he had come a minute later, someone else would have thought of how to reward Mordechai.

This is to show us Hashem's hashgachah pratis down to the most minor detail.

Furthermore, the Malbim *zt'l* notes, why did Achashverosh wait to

reward Mordechai? Why did he forget to reward him? All he did then was write the episode in his *Sefer Zichronos*. This was so he would get the reward at just the right time.

Also, let's think about what would have happened if Haman had arrived just one day earlier to request permission to hang Mordechai on the gallows. Achashverosh would probably have agreed because Achashverosh didn't love the Yidden (as the Gemara tells us). Haman came just at the right time so that the miracles could occur.

So, when you read the megillah, keep your heart and mind aware to recognize the miracles. If possible, try to read some commentaries on the *Megillah*. Each word is another facet of the miracle. Let yourself be astounded by the miracles Hashem performs within the rules of nature to save His nation, Bnei Yisrael.

## Shabbos Zachor is Mesugal for Children

Rebbe Aharon of Belz zt'l told someone who didn't have children, "Purim Hashem gives *mishloach manos*, and Hashem's *mishloach manos* is children."<sup>7</sup>

Particularly, Shabbos Zachor is mesugal to merit the blessing to bear children. Toras Avos writes in the name of the Yesod HaAvodah that Shabbos Zachor is *mesugal* for the barren to be

blessed with children because about Rachel it states (*Bereishis* 30:22), ויזכור אלקים, "Hashem remembered Rachel...and opened her womb." And by Sarah it states (*Bereishis* 21:1), וז' פקד את שרה... ותהר ותלד, "Hashem remembered Sarah... and she became pregnant and she bore a child." The words זכור and פקד, which both mean "remember," are used in reference to Hashem remembering us to grant us children. About Amalek, the

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7. There are two explanations בדרך גזרות, as to why this Shabbos is called שבת זכור.

One is that Moshe Rabbeinu was born on the 7th of Adar. The custom is to have a *shalom zachor* on the Shabbos following the birth of a baby boy. As such, this Shabbos was Moshe Rabbeinu's *shalom zachor*, hence the name Shabbos Zachor.

A second similar explanation is based on the Gemara (*Shabbos* 89:), which teaches that the Sinai desert has five names. One is מדבר פארן, and it comes from the word פרו ורבו, to bear children. Rashi writes, דכל אחד נתעברה אשתו וזכר במצות שובו לכם לאהליכם ולא ידענא היכא רמיזא. This means that all women became pregnant with boys after *matan Torah*. If we count nine months from the day after *matan Torah* (ז' סיון), we arrive at ז' אדר. All children were born on ז' אדר, and there was a big *shalom zachor* that week in the desert.

Both explanations hint that Shabbos Zachor is *mesugal* for bearing children.

two terms זכור and פקד are used. It states זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק, and it states in the *haftarah*, פקדתי את עשה לך עמלק, "I remember what Amalek did to you." Therefore, Shabbos Zachor is mesugal to be remembered for children.

Rebbe Tzadok HaCohen (*Divrei Sofrim* #29) writes, "I learned from my teachers that *Shabbos Zachor* is *mesugal* for bearing children..." He explains that on Shabbos Zachor, we read about destroying Amalek so that he won't have offspring. The rule is, Klal Yisrael grow and benefit from Amalek's downfall, as it states (*Yechezkel* 26:2), אמלאה החרבה, "I shall become full from the destroyed city." Reb Tzadok HaCohen writes, "Yaakov and Eisav are two opposites. When one is destroyed, the other one flourishes. We understand that when Amalek's offspring are cut off, the Yidden's offspring will increase."

## Never Lose Hope

It states (*Esther* 1:8), לעשות כרצון איש ואיש (*Megillah* 12.) say that this refers to Mordechai and Haman, who are both called איש. Haman is called ואיש, with a vav, which spells יאיש. Mordechai is איש, which is *roshei teivos* for אין שום יאוש, and this is the difference between them. Haman wants people to feel that there is no hope for them because they sinned so much. Mordechai tells us that there is always hope.

Pharaoh didn't believe in Hashem. He said (*Shemos* 5:2), מי ה' אשר אשמע בקולו, "Who is Hashem that I must listen to Him." But Haman was worse because he caused people to lose belief in themselves. This is why there is a mitzvah to destroy Amalek and all his descendants and no mitzvah to destroy Pharaoh and his descendants.

It states (*Devarim* 25:18), ויזנב בג, כל הנחשלים אחרך, "[Amalek] struck all...the weaklings in the rear." Rashi writes, "They

were weak [spiritually], and the clouds ejected them."

Amalek gravitates to such spiritually low people to convince them that there is no hope for them. The Yismach Yisrael (*Zachor* 3) writes, "Amalek caused them to think that they lost their חלק אלוי"ה, their G-dly soul..."

We will discuss three solutions to how one can avoid losing hope. One solution is to focus on your good.

It states (*Esther* 3:3), ויאמרו עבדי המלך אשר בשער המלך למרדכי "The king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordechai, 'Why do you disobey the king's command?' ויהי כאמרם אליו יום ויום, ולא שמע אליהם, "And it happened when they said this to him day after day, and he did not heed them."

Revid HaZahav (*Haftarah Shabbos Shuvah*) explains that the Megillah hints at the disheartening words Amalek

(the yetzer hara) tells us. He says, לממה אתה עובר את מצות המלך, "Why do you disobey the King's demand?" ויהי באמרם אליו יום ויום, and he repeats these things every day. Mordechai replies, אשר הוא יהודי, that he is a Yid, and he does mitzvos every day. With positive thoughts of our virtues and greatness, we can overcome the thoughts of *yeush* that come from Amalek and the *yetzer hara*.

The smallest of our deeds are incredibly significant. It states (*Esther* 4:17) ויעבור מרדכי, and the Gemara says (according to one interpretation) that this means Mordechai crossed over a body of water to go to the Jews who were on the other side of Shushan to tell them to daven for Esther. Manos HaLevi (written by Reb Shlomo Alkabetz zt'l, author of *Lecha Dodi*) explains that even a minor deed, like crossing over some water, is considered a great deed when done for a mitzvah. This water wasn't a large river; it was more like a

puddle... nevertheless, it is written in the Megillah as though it was a great accomplishment. This is because everything is accounted for." Hashem considers the smallest of our deeds, when performed for a mitzvah, to be significant, worthy of being written in the megillah for all generations to read and see. And therefore, we shouldn't lose hope. There is no yeush. The smallest of our deeds are significant in Hashem's eyes.

Chazal (Gittin 57:) state, "The grandsons of Haman taught Torah in Bnei Brak."<sup>8</sup> How did Haman HaRasha merit bearing descendants who taught Torah?

Shem MiShmuel (Purim 5680) writes it is because Haman had one moment of emunah. The Midrash (Esther 10:5) states, "When Haman led Mordechai on the king's horse through the city's

streets, what did Haman the rasha say? (Tehillim 30:7-8) ואני אמרת בשלוי בל אמוט לעולם... הסתרת פניך הייתי נבהל "I said in my tranquility, 'I will never falter.' ... You hid Your countenance, and I became frightened..." For this moment of emunah, he was rewarded with descendants that would teach Torah.

Shem MiShmuel writes, "This is a lesson for every person: Even when he is at a low level, r'l, he shouldn't consider any good thought or good word that he says to be small. Let him grasp whatever good moments he can, and this will be a great benefit for him. The mouth cannot express how great these deeds are."

No one is worse than Haman and see how much Haman gained from one good thought! So, learn one chapter of mishnayos, learn one halachah, etc. These small deeds are extremely

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8. One of Haman's descendants was Rav Shmuel bar Shilas, who taught the famous line (Taanis 29.) משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה.

precious to Hashem and the reward will be enormous, greater than we can possibly imagine.

The Gemara (Megillah 16.) states that when Haman came to honor Mordechai, to lead him on a horse, he found Mordechai teaching Torah, the laws of *kemitzah* to his students. *Kemitzah* (discussed in parashas Vayikra) is to bring a handful of a meal mixture on the *mizbeiach*. Haman wants to tell us that small deeds are unimportant; only great deeds (as represented by his gift to Achashverosh of ten thousand *kikar* of silver) are important. Mordechai taught that a small handful of a *kometz* of a *minchah* is a *korban* in Hashem's eyes. Every small deed is very precious in Hashem's eyes. In the end, Haman admitted that Mordechai was correct and said, "Your handful pushed away my ten thousand *kikars* of silver."

A second counsel is to recognize that one good deed leads to another. So, with a *kabbalah tovah*, you

will reach high levels. There is no reason to lose hope.

Chazal (Shabbos 105:) say, "This is the way of the *yetzer hara*: Today he tells you to do this [*aveirah*], tomorrow he tells you to do that, until he tells you to go and worship *avodah zarah*, and he does so!" The *yetzer hara* doesn't immediately tempt us to do great *aveiros*. He begins by inciting us to do relatively small *aveiros*. One *aveirah* leads to the next until he can cause us to transgress severe *aveiros*. We should learn from our enemy, the *yetzer hara*. Even when you do a small deed, don't consider it insignificant. That small deed will lead to another good deed, and gradually, you will grow in *avodas Hashem*.

It states (Esther 3:2) *ומרדכי לא יכרע ולא ישתחוה*, "Mordecai would neither kneel nor bow down." It is written in the future tense, which means that he won't kneel or bow down in the future. The *Sfas Emes* *zt'l* says that alluded here is a lesson to every *Yid*.

Even if there was a moment that he kneeled and obeyed the yetzer hara, he should tell himself that he won't do it again.

Or, we can explain it this way: Even if he kneeled, he wouldn't bow down. He will stop the influence of the yetzer hara in its track, and now allow himself to descend to lower levels.

Upon whom is the obligation to destroy Amalek? Does the Jewish nation destroy Amalek, or will it be Hashem? One pasuk states (Shemos 17:14) מוֹחֵה אֶמְלֵךְ אֶת זֵכֶר עַמְלֹךְ מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם "I will surely obliterate the remembrance of Amalek from beneath the heavens." It seems that Hashem will destroy Amalek. A second pasuk states (Devarim 25:19) תְּמוּחֵה אֶת זֵכֶר עַמְלֹךְ מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם לֹא תִשְׁכַּח, "You shall obliterate the remembrance of Amalek from beneath the heavens. You shall not forget!" This pasuk implies that the Jewish nation must destroy Amalek.

The Beis Avraham (ד"ה יבור) answers, "When a Yid has a thought of teshuvah and then he forgets about it, don't feel bad about that. This is Hashem's will. We begin the destruction of Amalek [with our teshuvah] even if it is just a drop, and immediately Hashem will help from above and destroy Amalek."

Yet a third counsel to overcome yeush is to remember Hashem's compassion.

The Chasam Sofer zt'l says that the greatness of the miracle was that Hashem prepared the salvation at Achashverosh's party. Attending this party was one of the primary reasons the Jewish nation deserved the death penalty, chalilah, established by Haman's decree. Yet, at this meal, Vashti was killed, creating space for Esther, and Esther would save the Jewish nation. Even as they sinned, the preparation for the solution was arranged. This is Hashem's compassion on

us, always seeking ways to draw us back to Him.

The Be'er Moshe of Koznitz *zt'l* (דרוש לפי זכור) writes, "Remember what Amalek, the *yetzer hara*, did to you... He showed you the grave *aveiros* you committed before Hashem and your faults that reached heaven... But the truth is, everything he says is untrue. Hashem is *rachum v'chanun*, and He desires the *teshuvah* of *resha'im*... Even if most of his life he did bad deeds, when he does *teshuvah* and regrets his bad deeds at the end of his life, he will also merit Olam HaBa. About him, it states (*Avodah Zarah* 10:) 'Some acquire Olam HaBa in a single moment.'"

### No Yeush in this World

The concept that there is always hope also applies to matters of this world. One can feel that he is at the lowest level in the rungs of success in this world, and from that place, he can rise to success in life.

It states (Esther 6:13) ויאמרו לו חכמיו וזרש אשתו אם מזרע היהודים מרדכי אשר החלות לנפל לפניו לא תוכל "His wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him, "If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish seed, you will not prevail against him, but you will surely fall before him."

The pasuk uses the expression זרע היהודים, Jewish seed. The Tiferes Shlomo explains that seeds are placed in the ground. They were saying that the Jewish nation grows from the lowest level. In fact, it is specifically from the lowest levels that their growth sprouts forth.

Rashi writes that Zeresh said, "This nation has been compared to the stars and to the dust. When they descend, they descend to the dust; when they ascend, they ascend to the sky and the stars."

The Tiferes Shlomo explains that from the dust,

they rise to the highest levels.

Esther requested from the chachamim that the story of Megillas Esther should be read in all generations (see Megillah 7., "קבעונו לדורות"). Certainly, Esther wasn't looking for honor or pride. So why did she ask for this?

Esther was an orphan with a low social status. According to the general rules of nature, nothing special would ever come from her. But Esther became the queen of Madai and Paras, and she saved the Jewish nation. She, therefore, requested that her story not be forgotten so every Jew would know that there is always hope for them, no matter which social status they start at.

The Midrash (Esther Rabba 6:7) states, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Yisrael, 'You cried and said (Eichah 5:3) יתומים היינו ואין אב, 'We have become orphans and fatherless.' I swear that the redeemer I

will prepare for you in Madai won't have a father or a mother."

The Maharal (Or Chodesh) explains, "To battle with Amalek, you must reach the highest level, and only an orphan and those at low levels can reach such high levels. As it states (Yeshayah 57:15) מרום וקדוש אשכון את דכא ושפל רוח, '[Hashem says, I am] exalted and holy, yet I dwell with the crushed and humble in spirit.' Hashem is with those who are low, and He raises them high. Therefore, Esther, an orphan from her father and mother, achieved social greatness above Haman. When Bnei Yisrael said they were orphans, Hakadosh Baruch replied that He doesn't leave those at low levels. 'I swear, your redeemer in Madai will be an orphan because Hashem raises them high so that they can overcome Haman.'"

Therefore, those who are downtrodden shouldn't lose hope because Hashem raises

specifically such people to the highest levels.<sup>9</sup>

### Tefillah on *Taanis Esther*

The Kav HaYashar writes that on Taanis Esther, one should pray that he should merit to celebrate Purim the way Hashem desires it.

The Kav HaYashar (ch.97) quotes the Beis Yosef's *magid*, "Hashem's *hashgachah* is always over Bnei Yisrael. They are His lot, His chosen nation, and He desires to grant them Olam Haba. Therefore, when the 14<sup>th</sup> of Adar approaches, the day the Jewish nation is extremely happy with the miracles that Hakadosh Baruch Hu performed for them, that he brought the downfall of the *rasha* Haman and his children and the other *resha'im* of that time... and Chazal say, 'one is

obligated to be happy with wine on Purim,' therefore, Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded us to fast before Purim because fasting is a *segulah* to be saved from sin. Fasting causes that the Satan shouldn't be *mekatreg* and lead the Jewish nation to sin due to abundant eating and drinking.

"It is therefore important to have *kavanah* in the *selichos* on *taanis Esther* when we say the *piyut* במתי מספר. The final stanza of this *selichos* is שומע תפילה והעבר תיפלה, 'Listen to our prayers and remove sin...' When saying these words, have *kavanah* that you shouldn't sin, *chas veshalom*, due to the eating and drinking and festivities of Purim."

The Kav HaYashar further teaches that *taanis*

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9. Esther was beautiful as it states (Esther 2:7) יפת תואר וטובת מראה. The Rokeach (quoted in Tosfos HaShalem on Megillah) says that the *roshei teivos* of these words spell יתום, orphan. Because she was an orphan, Hashem granted her beauty because Hashem gives unique gifts to the brokenhearted and downtrodden.

*Esther* is a good day for *tefillah* for all our needs. He writes, "People from the villages should come to the city, so they can daven in a beis knesses on *taanis Esther* because *taanis Esther* is very *mesugal* for our *tefillos* to be answered in the merit of Mordechai and Esther. Whoever needs a salvation should take the time to say *Tehillim* chapter 22, "אילת השחר," and afterward pour out his heart in prayer before Hashem to request his needs and to rouse the merit of Mordechai and Esther. In their merit, Hashem will listen to his *tefillos*, open the gates of compassion, and answer his *tefillos*. Therefore, beloved people of Hashem, the holy nation, who gather to listen to *megillah* on Purim... Arouse Mordechai and Esther's merits because *taanis Esther* and Purim are days of רצון ואהבה, desire and love. It is good to pray on *taanis Esther*, and the One who listens to prayers will compassionately answer your *tefillos*, amen."

### Tefillah on Purim

The Rambam writes that the mitzvah of reading the *megillah* is "to let the future generations know that what the Torah promises us is true, that Hashem is close to all those who call out to Him" (see Devarim 4:7).

Zeresh told Haman (6:13) *כי נפל תפול לפניו*, "You will fall before him [Mordechai]." What was Zeresh saying? Was she telling Haman there is no hope for him and he will fall before Mordechai?

The Malbim explains that she was offering advice. She told Haman to humble himself before Mordechai. *נפל תפול לפניו*, act as though you are weaker than him because when Mordechai will stop davening, there will be hope for you. But if you fight Mordechai and he davens to be saved, Hashem will certainly listen to his *tefillos*.

Immediately after Haman led Mordechai through the streets of Shushan with

immense honor, Mordechai returned to his tefillos, as it states (6:12) וישב מרדכי אל שער המלך, "Mordechai returned to the king's gate." Rashi adds ולשקו ולתעניתו, that he returned to his sackcloth and fasting. He wisely didn't stop praying, and that is what brought about salvation.<sup>10</sup>

When one requests and pleads for something from a human king, it is *derech erez* to request humbly. It is certainly not proper to demand that the king fulfill your wishes. The king can demand things from you, but what right do you have to demand from the king?

Yet, we find Haman demanding things from King Achashverosh.

Zeresh told Haman (*Esther* 5:14), ובבקר אמור למלך ויתלו את מרדכי עליו, "In the morning *tell* the

king and have them hang Mordechai on it." The language (אמור למלך) sounds almost like a command (she didn't say תבקש ממלך, request from the king). It seems that Haman could command Achashverosh to hang Mordechai.

Haman followed her advice. He came to Achashverosh (6:4), לאמר למלך, לתלות את מרדכי על העץ, "To *tell* the king to hang Mordechai on the gallows."

How could Haman demand things from Achashverosh?

The answer is that in the political hierarchy, Haman was higher than Achashverosh. The Gemara (*Megillah* 15.) states, גבה המן מאחשורש, "Haman became greater than Achashverosh."

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**10.** The Avnei Nezer zt'l was ill, and when he began feeling better, he said that sometimes the yetzer hara causes people to feel a bit better, so they will stop davening. The Avnei Nezer noted that Mordechai didn't make this mistake. He continued davening even after all the honor he received.

The *Yalkut Shimoni* writes that Haman's *בימה*, platform was higher than Achashverosh's. This is why Haman could demand things from Achashverosh, and Achashverosh was obligated to listen.

The *Shem MiShmuel* (תרע"ז) adds that the miracle of *v'nahapoch hu* occurs every year on Purim, enabling the Jewish nation to *keviyachol* demand things from the King, Hashem.

In *Shoshanas Yaakov*, we praise Mordechai HaTzaddik with the most significant praise of all, and that is *מרדכי* *היהודי*, "Mordechai the Yid." On Purim, the greatest compliment is simply to be a Yid, because Yidden are elevated to the highest levels on this day, Hashem cherishes them, and their requests are fulfilled.

The *Pele Yoetz* (*Hornestieple*) writes that on Purim, even the tefillah of someone davening *b'yichudus* (by himself) is beloved and accepted. This is hinted at in the *pasuk* (*Esther* 9:25), *ובבואה לפני* *המלך אמר* which is written in the singular tense. It alludes to a person who is davening by himself. Hashem answers even his *tefillos* on Purim.

It is written in *Segulas Yisrael*, "I learned from a *gadol z'l* that on Purim it is *mesugal* to rise early in the morning and daven a lot, and specifically ask Hashem for *בני חיי ומוני*, children, health, and *parnassah*, or any other matter. One should pray for himself and his relatives because Purim is a great *eis ratzon* for tefillah, all worlds are happy and want to give..." (This *segulah* is also taught by the Baal Shem Tov's students.)<sup>11</sup>

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**11.** The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* writes in the name of the Shev Yaakov that whoever studies Torah on Purim night (between the two megillah readings) is guaranteed to be a ben Olam HaBa.

It is also a good time for tefillah. Today, in many batei midrashim,

there are minyanim either on Purim night or early Purim morning to recite Tehillim.

A person set his alarm for five o'clock to get up early and learn but slept right through the alarm. But then, a fire alarm went off, waking him up. It turned out that the fire alarm was activated as a mean Purim joke, but the lesson is that if you want to do a good deed, Hashem will help you.

Yungerleit from Lakewood put out the following letter:

"Every year, before Purim, we hear about the concept of כל הפושט יד כל הנותן לו, that whatever a person asks for on Purim, he will receive. We thought it was a nice vort but didn't take it literally. But one year, we gathered, a group of yungerleit, and each of us had a serious problem in our personal lives. We decided that this year, we would invest in tefillah on Purim. We awoke early and said the entire Tehillim, and then we davened a long and passionate Shacharis. Two weeks after Purim, all of us had our salvation. We all experienced yeshuos gedolos (great salvations)."

We are saying beautiful ideas, but it is up to the individual to act on them.

Lubavitcher chassidim were together at a farbrengen, and when it was over, an elderly chasid tried to stand up from his wheelchair. Someone ran over and asked, "Do you need some help? Do you want to get somewhere?"

He replied, "No. It is just that after a good farbrengen, where we discussed improving our avodas Hashem, I knew that I couldn't be the same as before. That's why I wanted to get up, to show that I am ready to move in the right direction."

There was a bachur who studied in one of the best yeshivos in Eretz Yisrael. However, this bachur wasn't behaving as a yeshiva bachur should (he likely wasn't even putting on tefillin in the morning), and the directors of the yeshiva felt they had no choice but to expel him. However, due to the circumstances, sending him out of the yeshiva was impossible.

And then Purim came. The bachur stuck his head into the aron

The Tur (693) writes, “Rav Amram z'l writes...to say extra tefillos on Purim since it is a day of miracles (ימים נס). We were redeemed from our troubles on this day. Therefore, we must ask compassion from Hashem to redeem us once again.”

The Mareh Yechezkel zt'l teaches that sometimes

people daven for things they need, and other times they daven for luxuries. Throughout the year, our tefillos for things we need, such as health, food, and the like, will certainly be answered. However, when we daven for luxuries (such as wealth), it isn't certain that Hashem will grant our

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kodesh, cried, and davened to Hashem. And a miracle happened. He became like a new person. Less than a year later, he made a siyum on Mishnayos Zeraim from what he studied in his free time (between sedarim). He became the top bachur of the yeshiva. Such is the power of tefillah on Purim!

The Sfes Emes writes that Purim is a time for *mahapeichos*, turnovers (גיורא). This is what happened to Haman. He started at a very low level, rose to the highest level, fell again, and was hung. It is a time when things turn around. *Mahapeichos* can happen to you, too.

As a bachur, I was once in the Belzer beis medresh in Bnei Brak on Purim night. Some people there were studying Torah, and others said Tehillim, but a group of bachurim were just shmoozing and wasting time. The person in charge of the bachurim advised them to say Tehillim on this holy night. I don't remember what the others did, but one bachur from a rabbinic and prestigious family, took out a Tehillim and said the entire Tehillim with much kavanah.

Since then, everything has turned around. The family was concerned he wouldn't do a good shidduch because he wasn't learning well. But, soon after Purim, he found a perfect shidduch, better than all his brothers who were talmidei chachamim. Today, he is a respected talmid chacham in Bnei Brak. This is because everything can turn around with tefillos, especially on Purim.

wishes. But on Purim, even our requests for extras are answered. He writes that this is alluded to in the *pasuk* (*Yeshaya* 65:24), וְהָיָה טָרֵם יִקְרְאוּ וְאֲנִי אֶעֱנֶה, עוד הם מדברים ואני אשמע. The *pasuk* alludes to two types of tefillos. When one prays for necessities (such as food, clothing, etc.) Hashem says, ואני אענה, "I will answer him and grant his wishes." However, עוד הם מדברים, when one prays for עוד, extras and luxuries, Hashem says, ואני אשמע, "I will listen." Hashem listens and considers, but it is not certain that He will grant his requests.

Purim is an exception. Even tefillos for extravagances and luxuries are answered. This is hinted at in the *pasuk* (*Esther* 9:12), וְזָמַן בְּקִשְׁתְּךָ עוֹד וְתַעֲשֶׂה. On Purim even, בקשתך עוד, your requests for extras, ותעשה, will be answered.

One Purim, Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz *zt'l* was speaking with Rebbe Shalom of Belz *zt'l*. A simple farmer came by and said to Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz, "Rebbe, please

bless me with a ברכת הדיוט, a blessing of a simple person." The chassidim who were present laughed (because Rebbe Naftali's *brachos* were a ברכת צדיק, a blessing of a tzaddik and not a ברכת הדיוט, a blessing of a regular person). Rebbe Naftali Ropshitzer told them, "Why do you laugh? You didn't understand what he said. He was asking for the *brachos* that a הדיוט, a simple person, would ask for. The *ovdei Hashem* ask for success in Torah, to daven with *kavanah* and the like. But simple people ask for *parnassah*. He asked for a ברכת הדיוט, a *brachah* that a simple person wants."

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* told this story at his *Purim seudah*, teaching us that a person should ask for what he truly desires. He shouldn't be untruthful with himself. If he wants a ברכת הדיוט, that is what he should daven for. After he davens for that, and his heart is already in the process of *tefillah*, he will ask for spirituality, too.

The Imrei Noam writes, בימי פורים יש התגברות הרחמים והרצון עד למעלה מראש, "On the days of Purim, compassion, and love abound to the highest degrees." Notice that the Imrei Noam writes ימי פורים, the two days of Purim. This is because Shushan Purim is also a day for tefillah.

The Ateres Tzvi zt'l taught that a person could accomplish more with his tefillos on Shushan Purim than on Purim day.<sup>12</sup>

### **Take Advantage of the Time and Daven on Purim**

Once, in Europe, in the era of the Baal Shem Tov zy'a, there was a drought, and everyone davened, but the heavens remained sealed. The Baal Shem Tov's students asked their great rebbe to

daven for rain. The Baal Shem Tov zt'l replied, "I can't annul this decree, but I know someone who can. He's an alcoholic. If you catch him at a sober moment, and he davens for rain, it will rain."

The Baal Shem Tov's students traveled to the city where this alcoholic lived and waited for an opportunity to ask him to daven for them. This wasn't as easy as it sounds because this man would drink early in the morning, and there was no one to talk to after that. Finally, one day, they caught him the moment he awoke, and as he put out his hand to take the bottle, they stopped him and asked him to daven for rain.

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**12.** Rebbe Yitzchak Eizik of Kamarna zt'l writes, "We received a *kabbalah* from our teachers that during the days of Purim, a small *neshamah* can reach the *heichal* of a great tzaddik, and no one can stop it. All his tefillos go up to *Keser* without any disturbance... I received this in a whisper, and I am revealing it like someone who is revealing a secret because of my love for the Jewish nation. I opened a crack; there are great secrets here."

The man replied, "Don't you see that I'm an alcoholic? Why are you asking me to daven? You are great scholars. You should daven," and he grabbed his bottle.

Time was running out. The students told him, "No, we need you to daven for rain. The Baal Shem Tov said you have this ability."

The man raised his hands and davened, and it began to rain immediately.

The students returned to the Baal Shem Tov, who told them, "As you saw, this man isn't the greatest tzaddik. I will tell you how he got the power of tefillah."

One day, this man was on his way to commit a severe aveirah when he encountered a poor family thrown into a deep pit. The children were crying, and the parents looked forlorn, and the pitiful sight roused his mercy. He asked them what had happened.

"We couldn't pay the rent, so our landlord put us here to die..."

"How much money do you need?"

They told him how much. It was the exact amount of money he had with him. It was a large sum, and he had taken it with him to commit an *aveirah*. He overcame his yetzer hara and gave them all the money he had with him.

This good deed created a commotion in heaven. His reward was that he would have the strength of tefillah. Whatever he asked for, Hashem would give him.

The problem was that he might use his strength for negative matters; after all, he was a very sinful person. Therefore, it was decreed in heaven that he would become an alcoholic. This way, he wouldn't be aware of his strength.

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l told this story and explained that this is why

Chazal gave us the mitzvah to drink on Purim. On Purim, everyone has the koach of tefillah. Whatever we request is granted. To hide this great gift that Hashem gave us, Chazal decreed that people should drink. People get involved in that and forget that they have the power of tefillah.

Sometimes people say, "But I don't feel anything." They don't want to invest in Tehillim or tefillos on Purim and Taanis Esther because they say they don't feel the kedushah of Purim (...as if everyone else *does* feel something). It doesn't make a difference if you feel it or not. It is a special time for tefillah. Take advantage of it!

It can be compared to someone who enters an elevator, presses the button to reach the 100<sup>th</sup> floor, but refuses to exit the elevator when it stops. "You reached your destination; why don't you leave the elevator," people ask.

He replies, "I don't feel like I climbed a hundred flights."

It doesn't matter whether you feel it or not; you are now on the hundredth floor. Get out!

The same goes for these holy days. It doesn't matter whether you feel the kedushah of these days or not. The fact is that you are now at this high place. Take advantage of these days and invest in tefillah!

Once, a chasid of Rebbe Moshe Razadover zt'l went to Belz to be with Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz zt'l for a yom tov. When he returned to Razadov, he feared that his rebbe would be upset that he hadn't stayed with him for yom tov, and instead went to Belz, so he apologized and said, "My feet were in Belz, but my heart was here in Razadov."

The Rebbe responded, "Next time, keep your feet in Razadov, and your heart can be in Belz."

For our topic, it doesn't matter what you feel in your heart. Regardless of what you feel, these are incredibly holy days. So say Tehillim, and act according to the holiness of the time.

A person fell into the tracks at a subway station in New York. A train could come speeding down at any moment, and there would be nowhere to escape. People stared down in horror, not knowing what to do.

A simple person jumped down, lifted the man off the tracks, and somehow climbed up with him back to the platform. Moments afterward, a train came speeding down the tracks.

People rushed over to congratulate the hero, and the story made it onto the news. People praised him. "You saved a person's life! That is a huge accomplishment!"

"I didn't do it to save a life," he replied. "I knew that if this man got hit by a train

and died, there would be a delay for several hours, and I would miss hours of work and forfeit forty dollars. So, I jumped in to save him."

So, this person did the most extraordinary deed for forty dollars. He saved someone's life, but his intention was to earn forty dollars!

Let us ask ourselves if we don't make the same error. For example, a baalabusta is preparing and sending mishloach manos. She is doing a holy mitzvah. The rewards in both worlds will be enormous. She is making a nachas ruach for Hashem! But if her primary intention is that the receiver should say, "Wow! This is a beautiful mishloach manos!" she is selling the most extraordinary deed for a mere compliment.

Or if a yungerman studies for a test to get a bonus on his kollel paycheck, he is doing a great deed, but his intention is for a few dollars.

This is compared to saving someone's life to earn forty dollars.

Therefore, be wise and do mitzvos l'shmah.

For our present discussion, the nimshal is related to tefillah on Purim. You can ask for so much on Purim, and your tefillos may be answered. You can ask for so many salvations on Purim, so why settle for forty dollars?

A wealthy couple didn't have children. So the husband asked his wife to go to Reb Meir of Premishlan zt'l for a brachah for a salvation. The husband said, "Tell the rebbe that if I must lose all my money to get this yeshuah, I agree to lose all my money as long as I can have a child."

When she came to the rebbe, she stumbled on her words and accidentally said, "My husband says he agrees to remain with his money as long as he can have a child."

Reb Meir laughed because he understood what she wanted to say. The rebbe said, "But you said it correctly. Hashem can do anything. Why can't you stay with your money and also bear a child?" and that is what occurred.

Why not ask for a lot? Hashem can give it to you.

The Ben Ish Chai zt'l asked the following riddle:

Ten birds are on a gate, and you shoot one of them. How many are left?

The answer is that one is left because when you shoot one, the nine will fly away. You are left with one, with the one you shot.

He told this as a mashal of people who run after dead things. They live for seventy or eighty years, run after dead things, like money and pleasures, and don't pursue "live" things, such as Torah and mitzvos. They remain with dead matters, and the live matters fly away and elude him.

The same applies to Purim. Sometimes, people run after dead things on Purim and become involved in trivial matters. Minor matters occupy their minds. But there are live things to achieve on Purim (such as simchah, deveikus, praise to Hashem, mitzvos, etc.). Pursue what is alive, and don't get tied down with what is dead.

Reb Yankele Galinsky zt'l told a mashal of a woman who lost her diamond ring at a chasunah. Everyone helped her look for it. Reb Yankele saw a cat in the garbage, busy with a spoiled piece of meat. It spit out a diamond and went back to eating the meat.

The diamond was found, and simultaneously, Reb Yankele found a pearl of mussar, worth even more than the recovered diamond. Reb Yankele thought of telling the cat, "You had the ring with you. You could have bought enough fresh meat for the rest of your life with the ring. So why did

you spit it out to take the spoiled meat?"

But this is precisely what people do. They can take so much, yet they settle for something small and negligible.

Haman's youngest son's name was ויזאס. Perhaps this is because he saw his nine brothers hanging and didn't run away! For being so foolish, he deserved the name Vayizasa! (Vayizasa is a name people comically use on Purim to describe someone foolish.)

This joke reminds us that if there's a problem, and you have an opportunity to escape from it, you must be a fool not to utilize it. We are referring to tefillah on Purim. Look around yourself for a moment, and consider your neighbors. Is there a family that doesn't have a severe problem? For some, it is health-related; for a second, it is shidduchim; for a third, it is about nachas; and for a fourth, it is parnassah. But there's a solution. You can daven on Taanis Esther and

Purim. Only a Vayizasa will not take advantage of these holy times.

The Gemara (Megillah 4) states, "A person must read the megillah at night and repeat it in the daytime."

Rashi writes, "This is to remember the miracle that they called out [to Hashem] during their days of trouble, by day and night."

The Gemara says that the pasuk that alludes to this halachah is (Tehillim 22:3) אלקי אקרא יומם ולא תענה ולילה ולא דומיה לי, 'Hashem, I call out by day, and You do not reply, and at night I do not keep silent.'" This alludes to the Yidden's tefillos at that time.

But there is a great question. This pasuk discusses a time when our tefillos were not answered! So how can this pasuk refer to the *nes* of Purim?

Also, let's look at a pasuk before it (which also discusses the story of Purim). It states (22:2) א' לי א' לי למה עיבתני, "My G-d, my G-d, why have You

forsaken me." Once again, is this an accurate description of the miracles of Purim?

However, further in this chapter, there are many references to Hashem answering our tefillos. For example, (22:25) כִּי לֹא בִוּהוּ וְלֹא שָׁקַץ עֲנוּת עֲנִי, "For He neither despised nor loathed the prayers of the poor..."

This is because tefillah is a process. It isn't that you daven and are answered immediately. Each tefillah brings the salvation closer. Sometimes, you have to offer many tefillos before your requests are granted. The chapter discusses the two stages of tefillah: The first stage is when we daven and don't see results, and the second is when Hashem sends us our *yeshuah*.

We can also explain the chapter *b'derech tzachus*:

After Purim passes, people often feel joyful that they had the opportunity to do so many mitzvos and daven to Hashem on this

special day. But, simultaneously, they say, "I wish Purim would be longer; I would do so much more!"

It can be compared to someone who walked through a desert and found a mountain of diamonds. He fills all his pockets with precious stones (as well as his fists, socks, and shoes) and rejoices with his good fortune. But as he walks

away from this unique mountain, he thinks, "I wish I had more pockets..."

This is hinted at in this chapter. It mentions our tefillos that were answered, and simultaneously, it addresses our requests that weren't answered. It is implying, "Baruch Hashem for what we grasped. If only Purim were longer, we could have gained so much more!"<sup>13</sup>

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**13.** A girl from Williamsburg, New York, suffered stomach pain for an entire winter. Erev Purim, her parents brought her to a local doctor, and the blood tests showed that the girl suffered from celiac (a gluten intolerance). The father was relieved because he had expected a worse diagnosis, but the mother was distraught. She couldn't make peace with the fact that her daughter would have to avoid gluten for the rest of her life.

The doctor concluded, "This is how it appears to me, but I want you to go to a GI in Manhattan who specializes in these matters." He gave them the specialist's phone number.

They called the clinic and were given an appointment for two months later.

On Purim, the mother davened a lot for her daughter and recited the entire Tehillim.

This story happened during Covid, and only one parent was allowed to accompany the child to the clinic. It was hard for the parents that only one of them would accompany their daughter, and the daughter hadn't complained about stomach pains since Purim, so they decided to call the doctor in Williamsburg to ask

whether it was necessary to go to this appointment.

The doctor reviewed her chart and blood work results again and said, "Your daughter seems fine. I don't see any sign of celiac; you can cancel the appointment."

The shocked parents protested, "But just a couple of months ago, you looked at the same blood work and said that you see that she has celiac."

The doctor replied, "I said that then, but right now, I don't see any problem."

How did it change? The doctor looked at the same blood sample; now it isn't celiac, and before Purim it was celiac! Such is the power of tefillah on Purim. Our office in New York has a copy of both medical records. One document says that she has celiac and the other says that she doesn't have it. There is no medical explanation, but this is the strength of tefillah on Purim.

This story has a sequel:

Last year, Reb Shmuel Yair Miller n'y from Williamsburg fell, broke two bones in his ankle, and required serious surgery. Many askanim and rabbanim were involved as the situation was dangerous.

Reb Shmuel Yair has a good friend, Reb Shimshon Lieder n'y, who lives in Elad, Eretz Yisrael. When Reb Shmuel Yair told him about his upcoming operation, Reb Shimshon told him that just last year, a story was printed from Reb Elimelech Biderman about a girl who had celiac. The mother said the entire Tehillim on Purim, and the child was miraculously cured. Purim is approaching; perhaps you should do something similar."

Reb Shmuel Yair said the entire Tehillim on Taanis Esther, and again on Purim.

Purim was on Friday, and the surgery was scheduled for the Monday after Purim. Before entering surgery, they took another X-ray, which showed that one of the broken bones had miraculously cured on its own. The doctors didn't understand how it happened. Due to this change (that he only had one broken bone), he didn't need the surgery.

These are examples of the power of tefillah on these days.

**Learning Torah on Purim**

The Yesod v'Shores HaAvodah (Hamifkad 6) writes, "Chazal say that (Esther 8:16) ליהודים היתה אורה, 'The Yidden had light...' means that they had Torah. Rashi explains that Haman decreed that they may not learn Torah. We understand from this the great obligation for all people who know how to learn Torah that they should learn the holy Torah and be happy with the Torah on Purim. You should praise Hashem with your mouth and thoughts that Hashem foiled Haman's plan, who wanted to forbid us from studying Torah."

The Gemara (Shabbos 88.) tells us that on Purim, the Jewish nation received the Torah again. Years before, the Torah was given on Har Sinai, but at that time of matan Torah, the nation was forced to accept the Torah. If they didn't accept the Torah, they would be buried under the mountain. But because of their love for Hashem at the time of the Purim

miracle, they accepted the Torah again, this time out of love. This also indicates that Purim is a time to devote time to study Torah.

Chazal say that on the final day of Achashverosh's party was on a Shabbos. The goyim were speaking nivul peh and the Yidden were speaking divrei Torah and singing zemiros to Hashem. Ben Yohoyada says that this was the merit that began the salvation. Vashti was killed at the party, making a place for Esther to save the Jewish nation. It was the vast difference between Yidden and the goyim that saved us. Divrei Torah saved the Jewish nation, and it is appropriate to study Torah on Purim.

In particular, the Rema writes we should study some Torah before the Purim seudah as a segulah and shemirah that nothing improper occurs by the seudah.

The Chasam Sofer zt'l (Drushim v'Agados p.245) writes,

"I received from Reb Mendele Lilig zt'l who was the Rav in Frankfurt, who received it from the gaon Shev Yaakov zt'l, that whoever studies Torah between the megillah at night and the megillah in the morning, he is guaranteed that he is a ben Olam HaBa. This is how I received it; I don't know the reason."

The Chasam Sofer (Drashos vol.1, Purim 5596) notes that Purim should have been on the thirteenth of Adar because that is when they won against their enemies. Why do we celebrate on the day after the war ended? To ensure that there will always be a place where Torah is being studied. Because if the celebration were on the thirteenth, the day they fought the war, also those who live in walled cities would celebrate Purim on that day. Due to all the celebrations, the world would be without Torah. Therefore, Chazal chose to establish Purim on the day they rested from the war, thereby having two days for

Purim: the fourteenth for the unwalled cities and the fifteenth for the walled cities. In this way, the world won't be without Torah. When the Jews in unwalled cities are occupied with the mitzvos of Purim, those who live in walled cities can learn Torah, and the same when it is Purim on Shushan Purim, the Jews in unwalled cities can study Torah, and there will always be Torah studied in the world.

The Pele Yoetz (in Yaalzu Chasidim) writes, "I heard about a certain Rav who studied most of the night of Purim. He said that on this night, people eat and drink and are happy, and Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't have anyone studying the Torah. Therefore, I will study Torah, and my Torah will be precious to Hashem."

### **Purim Seudah**

There is a contradiction in the *pasukim* whether Purim is a *yom tov* - a day

when work is forbidden. When the megillah discusses Mordechai and Esther's declaration for the holiday, it states (*Esther* 9:19) that they established Purim to be שמחה ומשתה ויום טוב ומשלוה מנות, "an occasion of gladness, feasting and *yom tov*, and sending *mishloach manos* to one another." Afterward, when the *pasuk* discusses the holiday of Purim that the Jewish nation accepted, it states (9:22), לעשות אותם ימי משתה, ושמחה ומשלה מנות איש לרעהו ומתנות לאבינוים, "To observe them as days of feasting and gladness and sending *mishloach manos* to one another...." but it doesn't state Purim as being a יום טוב.

The Gemara (*Megillah* 5:) answers that Mordechai and Esther *wanted* Purim to be a *yom tov*, a day when work is forbidden, but the Jewish nation didn't accept that aspect of the holiday.

The Yismach Moshe asks, if the Jewish nation didn't accept the *yom tov* aspect of Purim, why does the megillah even mention it?

Why mention something that didn't occur?

The Yismach Moshe answers that an aspect of *yom tov* did remain. The Gemara (*Beitza* 16.) says that the money one spends on Shabbos, *yom tov*, or studying Torah is returned to him." In this aspect, Purim is a *yom tov*. Whatever you spend for the Purim *seudah* will be repaid to you.

Years ago, in Holland, the crops became infested with worms, and people feared there wouldn't be anything to eat. The king declared a fast day. Everyone had to pray and fast on a designated day to be saved from this disaster. The problem was that the selected day for the fast was Purim.

The Jewish community asked the Maaseh Rokeiach whether they should fast on Purim to appease the king or celebrate Purim like every year.

The Maaseh Rokeiach replied, "No one should fast. Have festive meals like every year. Tell the storeowners to give meat and fish for free, and I will pay the stores..."

That Purim, the goyim were in their churches, praying and fasting, while *lehavdil*, the Jewish community was celebrating Purim as usual.

The day after Purim, the worms vanished.

The king of Holland summoned the Maaseh Rokeiach and asked, "Why didn't the Jewish community obey my decree? I heard you celebrated on the day I commanded everyone to fast and pray."

The king was angry at the Jewish community but also respected them. He held the Maaseh Rokeiach in high esteem, and since the worms vanished, he supposed that the Yidden may have acted correctly, and they may have brought about the salvation.

The Maaseh Rokeiach replied, "Everyone knows that אין פרענויות באה לעולם אלא בשביל ישראל, when punishment comes to the world, it is because of Bnei Yisrael. So, we understood that our sins are the root of the infestation, and that the solution is for us to do *teshuvah* and become more loyal to Hashem's commandments. The day you chose for a fast day was Purim, the day Hashem commands us to celebrate. Since we knew that the primary solution to this agricultural problem was to be loyal to Hashem's decree, we had to celebrate Purim. That was the only way to bring about salvation."

The king accepted his explanation. (This story is recorded in *Divrei Shmuel*).

Reb Yisrael Shimon Kastilanetz *zt'l* related the following story, which he witnessed:

One Purim, the Beis Avraham of Slonim *zt'l* was in Lodz and was eating the Purim meal with his

chassidim. Suddenly, the chassid Reb Yidel Rivak z'l came in and said, "My son fell from a high place and hit his head on a stone. He's unconscious, and the doctors say his life is hanging on a thread."

The Beis Avraham replied, "Give three hundred rubles to *tzedakah* to support the poor *talmidei chachamim* of Eretz Yisrael, and *b'ezras Hashem*, your son will have a *refuah sheleimah*."

"I don't have cash on me, but I can give a check," Reb Yidel Ribak replied.

The Rebbe said, "I hope the check won't bounce like last time."

Reb Yidel Ribak assured the Rebbe that the check was good. The Beis Avraham accepted the check. Then he took an apple from the table, threw it forcefully on Reb Yidel Ribak's head, and shouted, "Go home!"

Reb Yidel replied, "How can I go home? I can't see

my son in this situation. He is battling for his life!"

The Rebbe repeated, "Go home."

Some of his friends walked him home, and he saw his son walking around, entirely well.

It is good to sing songs on Purim at the *seudah*, and you can have in mind many *tefillos* in the words of the songs you sing.

To explain this, we tell a humorous story:

There was a *moser* (someone who slandered the Jewish community to the king), and the Jewish community hated him. Young Jewish children would call him "Haman" when they saw him.

The *moser* complained to the king that children were calling him Haman, so the king decreed that it is forbidden by law to call anyone Haman.

But the children didn't give up. They found another way to humiliate him. They

called him Ben Hamdasa. He went to the king and complained that children were chanting after him, Ben Hamdasa. So the king set another decree that it is forbidden to call someone Ben Hamdasa.

The children began to say "Kadma v'Azla" when they saw him. They were hinting at the words ויבא המן, which has the *trop* of *kadma v'azla* on it.

The moser complained to the king that children were chanting after him Kadma v'Azla. So, once again, the king decreed that it is strictly forbidden to call anyone Kadma v'Azla.

The children found a solution. When they saw him, they sang the tune of *kadma v'azla*, the tune that is on the words ויבא המן. So, they kept the rule and didn't call him Kadma v'Azla, but they sang the tune.

The *moser* complained to the king that children were singing when they saw him.

The king said, "I didn't let them call you Haman, Ben Hamdasa, or *Kadma v'Azla*, but I can't stop them from singing."

The *nimshal* is that sometimes we daven to Hashem, but the *tefillos* aren't answered because there are *kitrugim* that don't permit the *tefillos* to go up. But when we sing songs, no *kitrug* can stop it. The King of the world hears the *tefillah* that is intended in the song and saves Bnei Yisrael.

The custom is to begin the Purim *seudah* during the daytime and celebrate into the night. This hints that the joy of Purim will banish all distress and sorrows characterized by the nighttime.

The *Machzor Vitri* (465) writes, "On Purim, everyone has long meals, and Hashem will give them all their requests."

After the meal at home, many celebrate Purim with

their communities (their beis medresh, their yeshiva, or their Rebbe and chassidus). Great salvations can occur at those parties. The Beis Avraham zt'l told that for centuries, countries were ruled by a singular king. His decision was the law, and no one could challenge it. But more recently, countries aren't run by a singular monarch. Instead, the leader makes a rule, which only becomes law once Congress confirms it.

The Beis Avraham zt'l said that it used to be that one tzaddik made a decree, and that was sufficient to draw salvations. But today, it isn't the tzaddik alone who brings salvations. But when a community makes a decree, it is upheld and will happen.

This expresses one of the benefits of spending time with your community on Purim. Together, you can bring *yeshuos*.

## Drink in Moderation

Chazal state that on Purim, one should drink עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי until he doesn't know the difference between cursed be Haman and blessed be Mordechai.

So, it seems we drink on Purim until *we don't know*. Yet, the Ahavas Yisrael of Vizhnitz zt'l points out that the first letters of עד דלא ידע, spell ידע, *to know*. So, is the goal of drinking to know or not to know?

We will answer in two ways:

Reb Efraim Zalman Margulies zt'l of Brod (*Yad Efraim on Shulchan Aruch* 695) writes, "In a dream, it was explained that the purpose of drinking is to enable people to be joyous, because (*Tehillim* 104:15), ויין ישמח לבב אנוש, 'Wine gladdens the heart of man.' When one is happy...he can praise Hashem for the miracles with a whole heart... However, he shouldn't drink until his

mind becomes foggy because then he won't be thinking about the miracles at all. When Chazal say one should drink until he doesn't know the difference between Mordechai and Haman, this means, *עד ולא עד בכלל*, that he mustn't actually get to that state. He should drink and be happy, but if he can't differentiate between Mordechai and Haman, the purpose of drinking is lost. Chazal wanted the kind of drinking that leads to praising Hashem. When one's mind becomes confused, he won't be able to praise Hashem for the miracles. This was my dream, and I thought about it in the morning and saw it was correct."

*עד דלא ידע* spells *ידע*. This hints that even when we drink, our goal is always to know what we are celebrating. If you lose focus from the miracles, you went too far.

The Gemara tells the story of Rabba and Reb Zeira, who ate a Purim meal

together, and due to the drinking, Rabba killed Reb Zeira. Afterward, Rabba resurrected him with his *tefillos*. Reb Efraim Zalman Margulies *zt'l* (*Yad Efraim*) writes, "They weren't cautious; they drank beyond their limits. This resulted in a *סנה*. Therefore, one must be cautious not to drink excessively. One should drink up to *עד דלא ידע*, but never actually get to that point."

Chazal say, *חייב איניש לבסומי*, בפורי' "One is obligated to be happy *with Purim*." They didn't say *לבסומי בין* to be happy with wine. The goal is not to become intoxicated with wine but to be happy with Purim and the miracles.

A second explanation for why *ידע* is implied in the *roshei teivos* of *עד דלא ידע* is from the Ahavas Yisrael of Vizhnitz *zt'l*. He explains that the *roshei teivos* teach us that one must know his limits when he drinks. If his drinking results in him embarrassing or harming others or causes him to be

lax with any of the mitzvos, it is time to refrain.

The Kol Bo writes, "One must become intoxicated on Purim, but he shouldn't get drunk because that is forbidden. There is no greater sin than being drunk. Being drunk leads to *shefichas damim* (murder) and *giluy arayos* (adultery). Rather, one should drink a little more than usual so that he will be happy. In his joyous mood, he should make the poor happy and console them. That is the proper way to be happy."<sup>14</sup>

Matteh Moshe writes that one must be cautious that drinking on Purim doesn't cause him to be lax in any halachah, such as washing

for bread, *benching*, or davening correctly.

He concludes, "All those who rejoice and praise Hashem for the miracles Hashem performed for our forefathers, their children will be like them, and Hashem will grant them success in all their endeavors."

*Lev Ha'Ivri* writes that the Rema (Reb Moshe Isserles *zt'l*) was *niftar* at the age of 33, on the 33rd day of the *omer*, and at his *levayah*, people said 32 praises. They were looking for one more praise to tell about the Rema so that the praises would equal the day of the *omer* and the years of his life. Someone came forward and said, "On Purim, the Rema would

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**14.** I remember one year, I attended a *sheva brachos* on Purim, and someone drunk stood up to speak and said embarrassing things about the *chasan*. The *chasan* smiled, pretending he found it funny. He didn't want to show publicly that he cared. But I watched the *chasan* leave the table and cry for a long time.

The drunkard had gone too far. One must know his limits or this holy mitzvah turns into an *aveirah*.

dress up (so people wouldn't recognize that he is their Rav) and go from home to home to remind people to daven *maariv*." That was the 33rd praise.

A *kohen gadol* can't marry a widow (see *Vayikra* 21:14). What is the reason for this prohibition?

The Chida (*Pnei David, Emor*) explains that when the *kohen gadol* came to the Kodosh Hakadoshim on Yom Kippur to do the *avodah*, he would say the שם המפורש - Hashem's name הוי"ה, as it is written. When the *kohen gadol* said this name, he had a lot of strength. If he had in mind, at that time, that someone should die, it would happen.<sup>15</sup> If he would be permitted to marry a widow, he may choose to kill a husband when he uttered

Hashem's name on Yom Kippur so that he could marry his wife. To prevent this, the Torah says a *kohen gadol* may not marry a widow.

Doesn't it seem far-fetched that such a murder would ever happen? On Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year, the *kohen gadol*, one of the nation's greatest people, in the Beis Hamikdash, in the Kodosh Kadoshim, saying Hashem's holy name - something only he can say, and only on Yom Kippur. Could it be that at this sacred moment, he might intend to kill someone to marry that person's wife? Apparently, it could happen.

Indeed, Chazal (*Succah* 52.) say, כל הגדול מחבירו יצרו גדול הימנו, "The greater a person, the greater his *yetzer hara*," and

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15. The Torah tells us that Moshe Rabbeinu killed a Mitzri by uttering Hashem's name. Rashi (*Shemos* 2:14) writes, מכאן אנו למדים שהרגו, בשם המפורש, "We learn that Moshe killed [the Egyptian who was beating a Yid] by saying Hashem's name." Similarly, the *kohen gadol* had the power to do so when he uttered the שם המפורש.

Reb Yechezkel Levinstein *zt'l* adds, "The greater the moment, the greater the *yetzer hara*." Therefore, it could happen. The Torah understands the *yetzer hara* and knows that even this is possible.

We mention this, so we shouldn't be surprised that the holy mitzvah of drinking on Purim could result in something negative. Unfortunately, some people don't understand this. They say, "Purim is one of the holiest days of the year, and drinking is a mitzvah. So, how could anything negative come from it?"

But don't be surprised. Drinking excessively could be damaging and lead to danger or sin; therefore, fortunate are those who are cautious.

## The Mitzvah of Drinking

Let us discuss some benefits of drinking on Purim. As clarified above, one doesn't need to drink a lot to get these benefits. The *Shulchan Aruch* (695:2) states, אחד המרבה ואחד הממעיט ובלבד שיכוין לבו לשמים, "Someone who drinks a lot and someone who drinks a little is the same, as long as their intentions are for Heaven." Even drinking a little can have all the benefits discussed in this section.

The Maharal (*Or Chadosh*) writes that the mitzvah of drinking on Purim reminds people that we are weak and can't do anything without Hashem's help (because people feel weak when they drink).<sup>16</sup>

It states (*Esther* 5:6), ויאמר המלך לאסתר במשתה היין מה שאלתך וינתן לך ומה בקשתך עד חצי המלכות ותעש, "The king said to Esther

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**16.** People say, "It is forbidden to drink and drive." Drinking on Purim reminds us that we aren't in the driver's seat. Hashem is driving us. Everything is in His hands. What we do and where we go is from Him.

at the wine party, 'What is your request, and it will be yours... Ask for half the kingdom, and it will be granted to you.' The Minchas Elazar *zt'l* says this *pasuk* means that on Purim, when we are at the מִשְׁתֵּה הַיַּיִן, wine party, the King of the world says to the Jewish nation, מָה שְׂאֵלְתְּךָ וְיִתֶּן לְךָ, "What is your request? Ask for whatever you want, and I will grant it to you."

Chazal say, חַיִּיב אִינִישׁ לְבִסּוּמִי, *בפוריא*, a person is obligated to be happy with drinking on Purim. *לבסומי* isn't a very common word. It is written only a few times in Shas. Interestingly, the Gemara uses the word *לבסומי* twice on the same page (*Megillah 7:*), and it is used with two different translations. The Gemara says that on Purim there is a *mitzvah לבסומי*, to drink wine. A few lines above that, the Gemara says, רווחא לבסומי שכיחי, "A person always has room to eat something sweet" (one of the translations of *לבסומי* is sweet). The Gemara tells that one Purim, Abaya came to Mari

bar Mar's home to deliver *mishloach manos*. Abaya said he didn't feel hungry when he came to Mari Bar Mar's house. Mari bar Mar served him sixty plates with sixty types of cooked dishes, and Abaya ate them all. The final course was pot roast, and Abaya said he had a great appetite; he even wanted to eat the dish. The Gemara says, היינו דאמרי אינשי כפין ענייא ולא ידע, "This is as people say, 'The poor are hungry, and they don't know it.' אי נמי, Or it is as people say, 'One can always find room for sweets.'"

*לבסומי* has two translations. It means sweets, and it means being happy through wine. The Yetev Lev *zt'l* connects the two Gemaras and explains, that if one is *בסומי בפוריא*, happy with wine on Purim, רווחא לבסומי שכיחי, he will have רווח והצלה salvations and will have בסומי sweetness in his life.

The Imrei Emes said that *בסומי* is *roshei teivos* for (*Tehillim 119:120*), סמר מפחדך בשרי וממשפטיך, "My flesh bristles from

fear. I am afraid of Your judgment." This hints that one should drink wine with *yiras Shamayim*.

Additionally, this implies that one can attain *yiras Shamayim* from this mitzvah.

The Mishnah states (*Beitzah* 40.), משקין ושוחטין, we give the animals water to drink before we slaughter them. This is because it is easier to skin an animal after it drinks.

We can explain that skinning an animal is akin to a human being shedding his animalistic nature and attitudes. Thus, we can explain משקין, by drinking on Purim, one sheds his animalistic self, and he becomes a more spiritual being.

The Sfas Emes (*Purim* 7635) writes, "Purim is like Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur, we go beyond nature with fasting, and on Purim, we go above nature with eating and drinking."

Once, a chassid was planning to bring his

daughter to a doctor on Purim. Rebbe Avraham Elimelech of Karlin-Stolin *zt'l hy'd* told him, "Purim, we attain *refuos* from drinking, not from doctors." The Rebbe gave the father some wine and told him to give it to his daughter. The girl drank the wine and was cured.

A chassid often asked Rebbe Avraham Elimelech of Karlin *zt'l* for a *brachah* for children. The Rebbe would bless him unenthusiastically, almost in a whisper, and the chassid understood that the Rebbe saw with his *ruach hakodesh* that his chances of bearing children were slim.

Once, he went to the Rebbe's *beis medresh* on Purim. He found chassidim seated around a table, celebrating the Purim *seudah* together, but they had run out of drinks. The chassidim told him that if he brought them something to drink, he would bear a son. He left the *beis medresh* and quickly returned with three bottles.

Everyone blessed him with children.

The next time he came to Rebbe Avraham Elimelech and gave the Rebbe a *kvittel*, the Rebbe said, amazed, "You were already helped. You will have children! Tell me, which tzaddik did you go to?"

The chassid replied that he didn't go to any tzaddik. Then he added that on Purim, the chassidim promised him a child.

The Rebbe replied, "Then it's understood! You received your salvation because of their *brachos*."

It states (*Bereishis* 9:20), ויהל נח, ויש אדמה ויש כרם. The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* said that ויהל represents the weekdays (יהל is a weekday), and נח represents *yom tov*, a day one rests from his work. So ויהל נח is referring to a day that is a *yom tov* and also a weekday. That is Purim. Purim is a *yom tov*, but it is also a weekday because work is permitted. The *pasuk* says, ויהל נח ויש אדמה

ויש כרם, this means ויהל נח, on the day that a weekday and a *yom tov* merge, or in other words, on Purim; ויש אדמה, every person can attain all his needs, ויש כרם, when he drinks wine on Purim.

## Happiness

One year, Reb Yeiva of Ostra'a wanted to be happy on Purim, but it was hard for him as he was struggling financially. A happy person arrived, they celebrated Purim together, and Reb Yeiva became joyful. Reb Yeiva said that this person was Mordechai HaTzaddik, the *baal simchah* on Purim. He comes to every Yid to make him happy on Purim.

Reb Yosef Tameshov *zt'l* (a student of the Chozev of Lublin *zt'l* and of the Bnei Yissaschar *zt'l*) was singing Shoshanas Yaakov on Purim night in his father-in-law's home. The poritz came in and said that the singing was disturbing him.

Reb Yosef immediately stopped singing.

The next day, his father-in-law went to the poritz to apologize for his son-in-law's singing. The *poritz* didn't know what he was referring to.

Reb Yosef Tameshov and his father-in-law understood that it was Haman who came in the guise of the *poritz* because it bothers Haman when Yidden are happy.

Haman tries to make us sad on Purim, and Mordechai comes to make us happy. So let us be glad on Purim.

It states (*Esther* 8:13), להיות היהודים עתודים ליום הזה להנקם מאויביהם, "For the Jews to be prepared for that day..." We read it עתידים, but it is written עתודים, which can be translated as flocks of sheep. The Maharsha quotes the Imrei Noam (HaKadmon), who explains that this hints that

the Jewish nation should be dancing and jumping like sheep on Purim. They should be jumping for joy.

This vort is also taught by the Maharam m'Rottenberg, and he says that there's a custom to write the ווא"י with horns on top of it (the תגין appear like horns) to allude to the jumping animals and our jumping for joy in praise of Hashem.<sup>17</sup>

Purim is compared to Yom Kippur. The Piaseczner Rebbe *zt'l* (Eish Kodesh) explained that on Yom Kippur, we fast whether we feel up to it or not. Similarly, on Purim, we are happy, whether or not we feel up to it. (The Piaseczner Rebbe said this during the Holocaust.)

Reb Eliyahu Meir Bloch *zt'l*, Rosh Yeshiva Telz in America, was dancing

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17. Someone asked the Brisker Rav *zt'l*, "What can one do to control his mind and avoid forbidden thoughts?"

The Brisker Rav replied, "Chasidim drink *l'chayim* and dance. They say this is a refuah for bad thoughts, and they are right."

happily with his students on Purim, in the year תש"ד. However, the students thought the joy wasn't sincere. "How could he be happy after what he suffered in the holocaust?"

Reb Bloch heard what people were saying, so he stopped the dancing, and the students gathered around him. He explained to them that the Jewish nation has the ability to be sad and happy at the same time.

He proved this from the Chazal (*Megillah* 10:) that the *malachim* didn't sing *shirah* when the Yam Suf split because Hashem said, "My creations are drowning in the sea, and you are singing *shirah*?"

Nevertheless, the Jewish nation sang *shirah* at this time. This is because a *malach* can only do one *shlichus* at a time. When he is happy and praising Hashem, he can't be sad simultaneously. But a

Yid can do both. He mourns the loss of human life and rejoices in Hashem's salvation. Similarly, it is possible to be sad and broken from the holocaust and happy with Purim. There is room in a Yid's heart for both emotions.

The Yidden won the war, and they celebrated on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of Adar, as it states (9:17-18), ועשה אותו יום משתה, ושמוחה, "He made it a day of feasting and gladness."

These words are written in the singular tense. Why doesn't the *pasuk* say, ועשו ועשה אותו יום משתה ושמוחה, "They made it a day of feasting and gladness," since it was the entire Jewish nation who were celebrating their victory?

The Sfas Emes (*Purim* תרנ"ב) answers that ועשה refers to Hashem. ועשה אותו יום משתה, ושמוחה, "Hashem made it a day of feasting and gladness."<sup>18</sup>

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18. Chazal tell us that Haman's decree to annihilate Bnei Yisrael

The Yidden rejoiced below, and Hashem was rejoicing in heaven.

It isn't only the first Purim that there was joy Above. Every year, on Purim, Hashem rejoices and celebrates in heaven. Therefore, we should be happy, too.

And if we try to be happy, Hashem will help us succeed.

### **Purim Miracle because of Joy**

The Purim miracles occurred because of happiness.

Esther HaMalkah made parties. The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* says she was trying to free the Jewish nation from

their *tzaros* through joy. She was upset when Mordechai wore sackcloth, as it states (*Esther* 4:4), ותתחלחל המלכה מאד, ותשלח בגדים להלביש את מרדכי ולהסיר שקו מעליו, "The queen [Esther] was greatly distressed; she sent garments to clothe Mordechai, and to remove the sackcloth from upon him..." The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that she believed the way to be freed from their *tzaros* was through joy, not distress and mourning. She was upset that Mordechai took the path of mourning.

The Tiferes Shlomo asks, "Why did Esther send clothing to Mordechai? Did she think Mordechai didn't have clothes to wear?"

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*ch'v* was also written and sealed in heaven. Due to their *aveiros*, Bnei Yisrael deserved this punishment, *r'l*. But the nation did *teshuvah*, and Hashem redeemed them.

The Sfas Emes explains, ועשה אותו יום משתה ושמוחה, Hashem celebrated when the Yidden were saved.

This is because Hashem wants us to annul all harsh decrees, as Chazal say, למנוצח למי שנוצחין אותו ושמה, "Hashem is happy when we win Him, and we annul His decrees."

The Tiferes Shlomo answers that Mordechai and Esther debated how to annul Haman's decree. Mordechai followed the path of crying and mourning to rouse Hashem's pity and sympathy. Esther believed they would accomplish more with joy, so she sent Mordechai proper clothing.

The Tiferes Shlomo writes, "When Esther heard Mordechai's loud cries for Klal Yisrael, she sent him clothing and asked him to remove his sackcloth. She was implying that he shouldn't be in agony. Instead, he should gird himself with joy and pray to Hashem with joy. Mordechai disagreed because one needs to begin with humility and fear and only afterwards with joy."

They both agreed that joy was necessary. Their debate was only about how to begin. Esther believed they could start with joy, and Mordechai understood they must begin with remorse. However, they both

understood that joy was necessary for the salvation to come.

The *Megillah* elaborates on the honor Mordechai received from Haman as Haman led him through the streets of Shushan. Why was this episode so important? And how was it part of the Purim miracle?

The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* explains, "Mordechai was asked to ride the king's horse, dressed in the king's clothes. People sang and played music before him. All this was to make Mordechai happy. Immediately after Mordechai was happy came *klal Yisroel's* salvation, and the wonderful miracle occurred."

All honor accorded to Mordechai was just for Mordechai to be happy, and when there was happiness, the salvation arrived.

The Gemara (*Megillah* 16.) says, "Haman took the king's clothing and horse and went to Mordechai. Mordechai

began to daven, and Haman waited until Mordechai finished davening." Then Haman led Mordechai through the streets of Shushan with immense honor.

Ben Yehoyada asks, why did Haman wait until Mordechai finished davening? Why didn't he tell him right away that he came to honor him?

Ben Yehoyadah answers, "Haman knew that Mordechai was davening with sadness, and Haman preferred it that way. Haman thought, 'If I interrupt his *tefillah*, he will need to daven again. And after hearing the good news [that I must honor him], he will daven with immense joy, and then it is likely that his *tefillos* will be answered.'" Haman preferred that Mordechai daven with sadness because the *tefillos* are less effective, so he waited patiently until Mordechai finished davening.

At the first party, Achashverosh said (*Esther* 5:6), מה שאלתך וינתן לך ומה בקשתך עד כדי המלכות ותעש, "What is your request? It will be granted to you. What is your petition? [Even if it be] until half the kingdom, it shall be fulfilled." What better time to express her plea for Bnei Yisrael, but Esther's only request was that Achashverosh and Haman come to the second feast, which she would host the following day. Why did she push off pleading for the Jewish nation? This seemed like such an ideal time! Achashverosh told her that almost whatever she asked for, he would give her!

The answer is that Haman was happy at the first party, as it states (*Esther* 5:9), ויצא המן ביום ההוא שמח וטוב לב, "That day Haman went out joyous and exuberant." Esther knew she couldn't bring down Haman when Haman was happy, so she pushed off pleading for the Jewish nation for the next day.

The next day Haman was sad, as it states (*Esther* 6:12), אבל

והפוי ראש, "despondent and with his head covered." That was an ideal time to bring about Haman's downfall. Indeed, Haman was hung that day. This teaches us that joy brings success, and sadness leads to failure.

### Reading the Megillah

The Gemara (Shabbos 88.) says that at Har Sinai, the Jewish nation was coerced into receiving the Torah. Hashem placed Har Sinai over their heads, forcing them to receive the Torah. However, after the Purim miracle, the nation accepted the Torah again, this time with love. The Chasam Sofer (*Drashos* p.164.) writes, "Therefore, the megillah is more honored and greater than the Torah itself." There's an aspect of the megillah that is greater than the Torah itself because the Jewish nation accepted it with love.

And, since the megillah is so holy, one should listen to the megillah with awe and passion. The Kedushas

Levi (*Kedushah Rishonah*) writes, "One should listen to the megillah with a fiery passion in his heart. He should think he is now accepting the yoke of Torah and mitzvos. He should think, 'What was, was. From now on, I will keep Hashem's mitzvos. The best time for *teshuvah* is during the reading of the megillah because, at that time, Hakadosh Baruch Hu purifies Bnei Yisrael from Above."

The Shei'aris Yisrael of Valednik *zt'l* (*Shaar HaZmanim 2*, Purim (ד"ה אף)) teaches that reading the megillah atones for גילוי ערויות, adultery, and is therefore called מגילה from the word גילוי.

The Beis Aharon (66:) writes, "Tzaddikim say that they see in the megillah everything that will happen that year."

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* said that it is worthwhile for a person to live seventy years if only to hear the megillah just once.

Fortunate are those who had the merit to hear the Satmar Rebbe read the megillah with an outpouring of his soul. When he came to the words (4:11), ואני לא נקראתי, לבוא אל המלך, "I have not been summoned to come to the king for thirty days," he cried so much that it was hard to hear the words. He also cried copiously when he read (3:2), ומרדכי לא ירע ולא ישתחוה, "But Mordechai would not bow and would not prostrate himself."

Rebbe Yiddele of Dzhikov *zt'l* related that one year he heard the megillah from his grandfather, the Ahavas Yisrael of Vizhnitz *zt'l*. When the Ahavas Yisrael read the words (3:3), מדוע אתה עובר את מצות המלך, "Why do you disobey the king's command?" the renowned *baal tzedakah*, Reb Shmuel Eliyahu Stern *z'l*, cried copiously. He was asking himself, מדוע אתה עובר את מצות המלך, "Why do you disobey the King's commands?" Rebbe Yiddele Dzikover said that he didn't know whom

to look at, at his grandfather, the Ahavas Yisrael, who was reading the megillah with *kedushah* and *taharah*, or at Reb Shmuel Eliyahu who was pouring out his heart in *teshuvah*.

Reb Yehonoson Eibshitz *zt'l* (*Yaaras Dvash* 1:3) writes, "Please listen, wise nation, whom Hashem chose from all other nations. Please, don't think *Megillas Esther* is a history book containing stories of what happened to our forefathers. If that is all the megillah is about, why must we read it twice on Purim? Baruch Hashem, we all know the story. Children make plays, acting out what happened. Rather, it is for the benefits that we get from the megillah. Additionally, there are many Torah secrets in the megillah, over which the masters of kabbalah elaborate. It is also called מגלת אסתר (which can be translated as "the hidden megillah") because it contains many hidden secrets of Creation. Furthermore, the megillah can be studied as a *mashal*,

discussing the battle and struggle between Bnei Yisrael and the *yetzer hara*. There are many *mussar* lessons in the megillah, which teach us how to live."<sup>19</sup>

The end of the megillah states (10:2), וכל מעשה תקפו וגבורתו, ופרשת גדולת מרדכי... הלוא הם כתובים על ספר דברי הימים למלכי מדי ופרס, "All his mighty and powerful acts, and the account of the greatness of Mordechai, whom the king had promoted, are recorded in the book of chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia." Reb Yechezkel Abramsky

*zt'l* explains this closing statement: If you want to study history, there are chronicles on the subject. They tell about Mordechai and his accomplishments in the government. If you want history, you can read those chronicles. But that isn't the purpose of the megillah. The purpose of the megillah is to teach us so much more.

The Gemara (*Megillah* 7.) provides several proofs that *Megillas Esther* was written with *ruach hakodesh*. With this awareness in mind, we know that every word is precious.<sup>20</sup>

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**19.** When a spy operating in enemy territory reports back to his government, he doesn't write clearly because the message might be intercepted. So, he writes in code, but his government knows how to read between the lines, and they understand the message. This is a *mashal* for the megillah. It is filled with secrets and divine lessons, and one must look closely to find the messages that Hashem wants us to know.

**20.** The Minchas Elazar *zt'l* related that when Rebbe Mendel of Rimanov *zy'a* was imprisoned, the police permitted him to take one item with him into prison. The Rebbe chose a megillah (although it was Tamuz). Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz *zt'l* instructed Reb Mendel's students not to fulfill his request. "With the power of the megillah, he can destroy the entire world."

The Kav HaYashar (ch.99) writes, "You need to know that there is a new world in heaven that is extremely holy. It becomes revealed only once a year, on Purim. Its revelation begins when the megillah is read. Mordechai HaTzaddik's *neshamah* comes from this world. We must arouse Hashem's compassion that this world should become revealed, and its light should shine on the people who gather to listen to the megillah with a pure heart and *kavanah*."

The Kav HaYashar adds that when we recite the *brachah* מְקַרְאֵי מְגִילָה, "We

should remember that Hashem commanded us to bring forth this great light, and this is the translation of מְקַרְאֵי מְגִילָה [to call to the revelation of this holy, world of compassion]. The congregation should answer amen with immense *kavanah*."<sup>21</sup>

Klal Yisrael needs a lot of compassion. We live in difficult times. We need this holy world where Hashem's mercy manifests itself to become revealed. It begins with the megillah reading and remains with us throughout Purim.

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The Minchas Elazar adds that if Reb Mendel of Riminov could have destroyed the world with the megillah in Tamuz, imagine what he could have accomplished on Purim when there is a mitzvah to read the megillah!

Although we don't understand the meaning of this story, we see the immense holiness that lies within the holy words of the megillah.

**21.** The Yismach Moshe (Purim end of 3) writes that מְקַרְאֵי מְגִילָה means הַזְמִנָּה וְהִתְאִסְפוּת, that all the revelations gather and become revealed when we read the megillah."

### "Who Performed Miracles... in Those Days in This Time"

The Midrash (9:2) tells us that "Haman had 365 advisors, corresponding to the days of the year, but none of them knew how to advise him as well as his wife, Zeresh. She told him, 'If Mordechai is a Yid, you must plot wisely how to defeat and kill him because if you don't plan wisely, you will fail. You must kill him in a way never done to his nation before. If you throw him into a furnace, Chananyah and his friends were saved from a furnace. If you throw him into a lion's den, Daniel was thrown into a lion's den and was saved. Perhaps you will put him in jail, but Yosef was released from jail. If you will put him in a copper pot and light a fire underneath, Menashe prayed to Hashem and was saved from exactly that situation. If you exile him to the desert, Mordechai's ancestors lived in the desert successfully and thrived

there. If you blind him, behold, Shimshon killed many Pelishtim after he was blinded. I suggest you hang Mordechai because we don't know anyone from his nation that was saved from hanging.'<sup>1</sup> It states, (*Esther* 5:24), ויטב הדבר לפני המן ויעש העץ, "This suggestion pleased Haman, and he had the gallows made."<sup>1</sup>

This Midrash needs explanation. Didn't Zeresh understand that if Hashem can save someone from a lion's den, a fiery furnace, and many other situations, He can save Mordechai from being hung, too?

The Agra d'Kalah (*Ekev*) answers that when Yidden study and speak about a miracle that occurred in the past, that is a trigger that Hashem will perform that same miracle again. A source to this concept is in *Tehillim* (60:6), ונתת ליראיך נס להתנוסס, which can be translated as, "You give to those who fear You miracles so they can receive more miracles." They talk about Hashem's past

miracles, which cause them to happen again.

Zeresh said, "If you plan to throw Mordechai into a fiery furnace, the Yidden will study the story of Chananyah, Mishael, and Azaryah, and that will draw down that miracle for Mordechai, too. If you plan to place Mordechai in a den of lions, the Yidden will discuss the miracle that happened to Daniel, and Mordechai will be saved." Therefore, Zeresh advised Haman to harm Mordechai in an unprecedented manner so that the Yidden wouldn't have from where to draw down a miracle.

Their mistake was that they didn't realize that Mordechai was a great tzaddik in his own right, and a brand-new miracle would be created for him.

It states (*Esther* 9:28), והימים האלה נזכרים ונעשים "these days are remembered and happen..." Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz *zt'l* explains that this means that when we

"remember" the miracles and speak about them, they "happen." When we study the miracles of Purim, we draw down those miracles that they should happen again. Each year, there is ונהפוך הוא, and Hashem saves us, just as He saved us in those days.

The Bnei Yissaschar writes, ונראה לי, ונצולים בכל שנה על, "It seems to me that we are saved every year in the merit of reading the megillah and giving *matanos l'euyonim*."

One of the *brachos* on the megillah is שעשה ניסים לאבותינו וזוהי, בימים ההם בזמן הזה Hashem made miracles for our forefathers in those days at this time.

The Sfas Emes (7660 ד"ה (והימים) asks: The miracles didn't occur on the 14th of Adar. They happened on the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar. So why do we say בזמן הזה, that the miracles happen on this day?

The Sfas Emes answers that we are blessing Hashem

for the miracles that happen each year on the 14<sup>th</sup> when we read the megillah.

The Eretz HaChaim (from the *Be'er Mayim Chaim*) explains the Gemara (*Megillah* 7.) that Esther requested from the Chachamim, קבעוני לדורות, that they should establish Purim as a holiday for all generations. Why did she want this? When Yidden speak about a miracle that occurred, this causes the miracle to happen again, as it states (*Koheles* 1:9), מִהַ שְׁהִיָּה הוּא, שִׁיְהִיָּה, if you discuss a miracle, that will cause it to occur again.

The Tiferes Shlomo (*Rimzei Purim*, ד"ה בגמרא) writes that the one who reads the megillah unrolls the entire megillah before he begins reading it<sup>22</sup> to demonstrate that good *hashpaos* and salvations open

up for the Jewish nation at this time.

The Gemara (*Megillah* 4:) says, עֵינֵיהֶם שֶׁל עֲנִיִּים נִשְׂוֹאוֹת לְמִקְרָא, מִגִּילָה, that the poor look out for the megillah.<sup>23</sup> The Tiferes Shlomo explains that the poor look forward to the megillah because this is the time when they receive Hashem's blessings for *parnassah* and all their needs.

The custom is to read the names of the ten sons of Haman in one breath to show that they all died at the same time (see *Shulchan Aruch* 690:15). The Chidushei HaRim (*Likutim*) *zt'l* explains that this is a *remez* that the *resha'im* of Bnei Yisrael die each year at this time, when we read the megillah.

The megillah begins with וִיָּה, which is an expression of

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**22.** *Shulchan Aruch* (690:17) states, "The *minhag* of all Yidden is that the one who reads the megillah opens it up entirely like a letter to show the miracle."

**23.** According to its simple meaning, they look forward to the *matanos l'evyonim* they will receive on the day the megillah is read.

distress, and ends with ודובר שלום לכל זרעו, an expression of joy, to symbolize that even if before reading the megillah, we were in pain, after reading the megillah, there are *yeshuos* and joy.

The Gemara (*Moed Kattan* 28.) teaches, "Life, children, and parnassah aren't dependent on one's merits. They depend on one's mazal." The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* writes that מגילה is *gematriya* מזלא. This hints that with the megillah, one can even attain life, children, and parnassah, the *yeshuos* generally dependent on one's mazal.

The *Darkei Moshe* (*HaAruch* (תרצ"ג ד) writes that when there's a *bris milah* on Purim, the *bris* should be performed before the reading of the megillah so that when we read (8:16), ליהודים היתה אורה, this *pasuk* will apply to the new-born child, too. As we know, a child is born a Yid even before his *bris milah*. Nevertheless, the child only receives the title יהודי after his *bris*. Therefore, we want the child to receive

the *milah* before the reading of the megillah so that when we read ליהודים, it will include him too. This teaches us that the megillah not only discussed the past but the present, as well, and the miracles of the past replay themselves when we read the megillah.

The Imrei Yosef *zy'a* told the following story, and he commented that it happened "to a chassidische *yungerman* in Spinka."

(His son, the Chakal Yitzchak *zy'a* writes, "Whenever the Imrei Yosef told a story, he always told the names of the people involved in the story. But this time, he said the story without names. So, I'm certain he was referring to himself." Therefore, we will tell the story using the Imrei Yosef's name):

Once, on Pesach, after the second Seder, the Imrei Yosef went to the bookcase and randomly took out a *sefer*. It was a *Megillas Esther*. He read the entire megillah, and when he finished it, a *neshamah* came to him and said that he had a problem

because he hadn't yet been admitted into Gan Eden. The neshamah explained that generally, it takes no longer than twelve months to gain entrance into Gan Eden, as it states in *Megillas Esther* (2:12-13), ששה חדשים בשמן המור וששה חדשים בבשמים ותמרוקי הנשים ובוהו הנערה באה אל המלך. But this neshamah said that more than twelve months have passed; in fact, many years have passed, and it wasn't yet permitted into Gan Eden.

The neshamah said, "The gates of Gan Eden aren't always open. They open when Yidden read the megillah. Every year, when the megillah is read on Purim, *neshamos* line up and wait their turn to enter Gan Eden. I also wait in this line, but the gates close before it is my turn to enter. This has been going on for many years. This year, I decided to wait the entire year at the gates of Gan Eden so that when the megillah is read, I'll be first in line. I just heard you read the megillah, so I knew the gates of Gan Eden

would open. I immediately knocked on the gates of Gan Eden and requested permission to enter."

The *malachim* guarding the door replied, "It's true, the megillah was read, but it isn't Purim today."

"But the megillah was read," the *neshamah* pleaded. "Open the doors and let me go to my place in Gan Eden."

The issue was debated, and the case was brought before the *beis din* in heaven. The *beis din* ruled that if the Imrei Yosef *donated* the zechus of this megillah reading to this *neshamah*, the *neshamah* would be permitted to enter Gan Eden.

The *neshamah* pleaded that the Imrei Yosef grant him the merits of this megillah reading. The Imrei Yosef agreed, and the *neshamah* was admitted into Gan Eden.

From this story, we learn that each year, while we read the megillah, the gates of Gan Eden are open.

Therefore, we understand that this is a good time for *tefillah* to attain all *yeshuos*. The gates of Gan Eden are open, and we can receive salvations.

The Divrei Shmuel of Slonim *zt'l* once said, "The *tzaddikim* of our generation don't compare to the *tzaddikim* of the past; they can't perform miracles like the great *tzaddikim* of the past. However, although the *tzaddikim* aren't the same, Hashem remains the same." Therefore, we can expect miracles to happen in our generation, too.

There are opinions that on Purim night, after reading the megillah (and saying *ואתה קדוש*), the chazan should recite Kaddish *תתקבל* (see *Mishnah Berurah* 693:1). According to this view, the chazan says Kaddish *תתקבל* after *Shemonah Esrei* and again after the megillah and *ואתה קדוש*. Kaddish *תתקבל* is the Kaddish said after a *tefillah*. But what *tefillah* did we say? This indicates that reading the

megillah is like a prayer, a plea for our nation.

One of the reasons we don't say Hallel on Purim is because *קרייתא זו הילולא*, "Reading the megillah is like saying Hallel" (*Megillah* 14.). We add that reading the megillah is like a prayer for all our needs.

### Miracles Today

The Baal Shem Tov *zy'a* explains the Gemara (*Megillah* 17), *הקורא את המגילה למפרע לא יצא*, if one reads the megillah and praises Hashem for the miracles that He performed for us in the past but lacks the knowledge that Hashem performs miracles in the present, *לא יצא*, he didn't perform the mitzvah properly. Hashem does miracles for us right now, too.

Just think about the world today. Things are happening so fast. There is so much going on, and it is all for the benefit of the Jewish nation. One day, we will look back and recognize

all the wonderful miracles that Hashem performed for us.

The Chiddushei HaRim *zt'l* described a scene in Shushan. Somebody ran into the beis medresh and said, "Did you hear the latest? Vashti was killed because she refused to attend Achashverosh's party!"

The Chachamim in the beis medresh responded, "Tell us something from the Gemara or Mishnah. We have no interest in politics."

Sometime later, someone else enters the beis medresh and says, "Did you hear? Bigson and Seresh were hung!"

The talmidei chachamim replied, "This doesn't interest us. We are interested only in the Torah."

But eventually, the story of Vashti's and Bigson and Seresh's deaths became part of the holy megillah. In retrospect, we recognize Hashem's intricate miracles.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (*Ki Sisa*) writes, "Many things happen in the world, and we wonder why Hashem is doing this. But years later, we look back and understand that everything had a purpose. Even if it initially seemed unimportant and trivial, we discover later that something very good came from it. This is what happened in the story of Purim: Vashti was killed, Esther was brought to the palace, and all the countless details, which all led up to the great miracle that saved *klal Yisrael*. As it states (*Shemos* 33:23), וראית את אחורי ופני לא יראו 'You will see My back, but you won't see My face.' We only understand Hashem's ways when we look back. Then we see that everything was *chesed*. But while things take place, we don't always understand the doings of Hashem."

Reb Yechiel of Ostrovtza *zy'a* said that even goyim could recognize Hashem's kindness *when they look back*.

As the megillah (8:17) states, "Many gentiles were converting..." This is because when they looked back at everything that happened to them and the Jewish nation, they saw Hashem's miracles and converted to Yiddishkeit. But a Yid can identify Hashem's hand even before the puzzle is complete. They understand that everything happens for a reason, for their benefit.

With these ideas, we can explain the Mishnah, הקורא את המגילה למפרע לא יצא (Megillah 17), that if you only recognize Hashem's miracles למפרע, in retrospect, לא יצא, that isn't sufficient. Recognize and praise Hashem even during difficult times.<sup>24</sup>

### **Mishloach Manos and Matanos l'Evyonim**

The Rambam (Hilchos Megillah 2:17) writes, "It is better to give a lot of matanos l'evyonim than to increase the Purim meal and to spend on additional mishloach manos to friends because there is no greater and more beautiful joy than to bring joy to the hearts of the poor, the orphaned, widows, and geirim. When one brings them happiness, he acts similarly to the Shechinah, as it states (Yeshayah 57:15) להחיות רוח שפלים ולהחיות לב נדכאים, "to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the crushed."

And in this generation, who isn't "humble" and "crushed"? Who doesn't need a kind word? When

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**24.** One translation of למפרע is to pay up a debt. The Minchas Elazar of Munkatch zy'a said, הקורא את המגילה למפרע לא יצא, if you read the megillah just to pay up your debt - your obligation to hear the megillah - לא יצא, you didn't keep the mitzvah properly. One should read the megillah with love, joy, and appreciation of the miracles that occurred.

one can't help with money, he should give whatever he can, certainly a friendly word or a smile.<sup>25</sup>

Reb Mordechai of Nadvorna zt'l said in his later years, "Had I known in my younger years what Purim is, I would go from person to person to get smiles out of them."

A member of our *chaburah* (Reb Yosef Meir Mashinsky of Beit Shemesh) went to the *mikvah* in preparation for hearing the megillah. The *mikvah* was in the basement of a small beis medresh. When the son of the rebbe of that beis medresh saw him, he said, 'You are the ninth man for our minyan!' Reb Yosef Meir had planned to go to a

beis medresh with a professional *baal koreh*, where they davened with a lot of kavanah, but he decided to remain in that beis medresh to do this *chesed*. He also called his friend, Reb Yechezkel Deutsch, to come and complete the minyan.

The *baal koreh* of this small beis medresh didn't have children. Before the megillah reading, Reb Yosef Meir told his friend, "We were moser nefesh to help them with a minyan. Let's give the merit to the *baal koreh*, that he should have children. It will be as the Chozeh of Lublin zt'l said, *ישלוח מנות איש* means that Hashem gives for mishloach manos an *איש*, a child." Nine months later, the *baal koreh*

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**25.** Reb Moshe Feinstein taught on the pasuk (Bamidbar 9:7) *למה נגרע*, that a person should always do what he can. And if he can't do something in its ideal form, he should do whatever he can.

Reb Motel Slonimer zt'l brought mishloach manos to the Bilegerai Rav zt'l, and the rav replied, "I don't have anything in the house to give back." But he showed him his son (the Belzer Rebbe Shlita) in the crib and said, "This is what Hashem gave me." This is because a person must always try to give and do whatever he can.

had a son. The first person he called to inform was Reb Yosef Meir because he knew the child was born in his merit.

Pele Yoetz advises that important people (like *roshei yeshivos*) should give *mishloach manos* to simple people because it will give them great joy that someone so respected thought of them. He also advises that people who don't get along well should send *mishloach manos* to one another as that will increase peace and remove unnecessary barriers.

It states in *Megillas Esther* that when the *Yidden* heard Haman's evil decree, there was (4:3) *צום ובכי ומספד*, fasting, crying, and eulogies. The *Alshich* points out that a *hesped*, eulogy is said on others. No one says a *hesped* on himself. He explains that each person was crying for his fellow man. They weren't only worried for themselves but also about their friends' fate.

It states (*Tehillim* 22:25) *כי לא בזה ולא שקץ ענות עני ולא הסתיר פניו ממנו ובשועו אליו שמוע*, "For He has neither despised nor abhorred the cry of the poor, neither has He hidden His countenance from him; and when he cried out to Him, He hearkened." This *pasuk* is in *Tehillim* (22), the chapter associated with *Purim*. The *Alshich* on *Tehillim* explains that the poor davened in the era of *Mordechai* and *Esther*, and it was in their merit that we were saved.

This is because *Chazal* teach that two sins caused *Haman's* *gezeirah* of annihilation. The *Yidden* participated in *Achashverosh's* party and bowed down to *Nevuchadnezzar's* idol. The *Alshich* says that the poor didn't commit these *aveiros*. *Achashverosh* didn't invite the poor to his party, and *Nevuchadnezzar* didn't care whether the poor bowed down to him or not. So, the poor were clean from *aveiros*; therefore, it was

their merit and tefillos that saved the Jewish nation.

The Alshich explains that this is the reason for the mitzvah of matanos l'evyonim on Purim because it was in their merit that the miracle occurred.

It states (*Tehillim* 121:5) ה' צלך, "Hashem is your shadow." A shadow mimics what a person does, and the Midrash teaches that ה' צלך means Hashem mimics what people do. Therefore, when Yidden care for and help one another, Hashem follows suit and helps the Yidden.

The Alshich HaKadosh (quoted in *Arvei Nachal*, Mikeitz, *Drush* 1, (ד"ה ואמנם)) teaches that this was the source of the Purim

miracle. Mordechai and Esther cared for and helped one another, which aroused Hashem to act accordingly, to care and have compassion for the Jewish nation.

The Alshich writes, "Mordechai didn't think about what he could gain, rather what Esther could gain. When he heard Bigson and Seresh plotting to kill Achashverosh, he knew that whoever saved the king would be rewarded immensely, so he told Esther about it. But Esther wanted Mordechai to get the credit, so she told Achashverosh in the name of Mordechai.<sup>26</sup> And in their merit, Hashem saved them and the entire Jewish nation".<sup>27</sup>

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26. The pasuk is (Esther 2:22) ויודע הדבר למרדכי ויגד לאסתר המכלה ותאמר אסתר למלך בשם מרדכי

27. Someone was giving a *drashah* to a group of teenagers. An *askan* approached the podium and gave the speaker a piece of paper.

The speaker stopped to read the note and announced, "A generous individual has decided to hand money to everyone present tonight. He asked that the money be distributed in the following way: Everyone must choose a partner and arm-wrestle with him. Keep

It states in the megillah (2:11), ובכל יום ויום מרדכי מתהלך לפני, חצר בית הנשים לדעת את שלום אסתר, "Day after day Mordechai would walk in front of the courtyard of the house of women to know about Esther's well-being and what would become of her." The Sfas Emes (7637) writes, "Everything written in the megillah is part of the

miracle. For four or five years, when Esther was taken by the goyim, Mordechai HaTzaddik would go every day to see how she was doing, for she was an orphan, captured among the goyim. This is certainly part of the miracle. We merited the miracle thanks to Mordechai's concern for Esther."

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track of who wins each round because, for each win, you will get one dollar."

Fifteen minutes later, the speaker approached each pair to get their score. With one team, one boy won three games, and his partner won four. So the speaker handed three dollars to one and four dollars to the other.

Another pair told him that their score was 5 to 4. So he gave five dollars to one and four dollars to the other.

But then he got to a pair who told him, "I won 1,500 times, and my partner won 1,500 times."

He gave them \$1,500 each.

The speaker turned to the others and said, "You were all trying to beat your opponents, and because of that, most of the time was wasted fighting your partner's strength. But with this pair, they worked together. This one let his partner push his arm to the table, and the other did the same. In this manner, each of them won 1,500 times."

When you focus on yourself, you work more and earn less. But when you seek to help others, you gain so much more.

Haman said (*Esther* 3:8), ישנו עם אחד מפוזר ומפורד, "There is a nation scattered about and dispersed..." Tzaddikim said that Haman's primary strategy to harm the Yidden was to cause separation among them. In response, Esther told Mordechai (4:16), לך כנוס את כל היהודים, "Go gather all the Yidden." The unity of Bnei Yisrael saved them.

Similarly, Reb Mordechai of Kozmir *zt'l* (and other tzaddikim) said that Haman's strength was his *lashon hara* on Klal Yisrael. The Gemara (*Megillah* 13:) says, "No one knew how to speak *lashon hara* like Haman." The rectification was through Esther, about whom it is

written, אין אסתר מגדת, "Esther wouldn't tell..."

The Kedushas Levi (beginning of *Kedushah Rishonah*) writes, "Purim has three mitzvos which aren't found by any other yom tov: (1) reading the megillah, (2) *matanos l'evyonim*, and (3) *mishloach manos*. The fourth mitzvah – to celebrate with a festive meal is performed every *yom tov*." The commentaries explain that the purpose of *matanos l'evyonim* and *mishloach manos* is to increase peace and love among Yidden. We have these mitzvos on Purim because it was love and peace that brought about salvation.<sup>28</sup>

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**28.** When we give *mishloach manos*, we give two items. When we give *matanos l'evyonim*, one gift for each poor person is sufficient.

The Pnei Menachem *zt'l* explains that people have compassion for the poor by nature. Therefore, this trait of sympathy for the poor doesn't need to be developed as much, and it is enough to give one gift to a destitute person. However, people don't like giving gifts to someone who doesn't lack money. They feel that they are losing money without any gain. Therefore, to train ourselves in genuine caring for our fellow man, we give two gifts to each person.

The megillah states (9:22), מושלוח מנות איש לרעהו, to send gifts of food to one's friend. According to the Sfas Emes (Megillah 7: ד"ה בגמרא, רבה שדר), one doesn't fulfill the mitzvah of *mishloach manos* by sending *mishloach manos* to his rav or *rosh yeshiva* because the mitzvah is to give איש לרעהו, to a friend, to an equal, and it isn't proper to call your *rebbe*, "my friend." However, the Sfas Emes accedes that if a *rosh yeshiva* gives him *mishloach manos*, this means the *rosh yeshiva* considers him an equal. So now he can reciprocate and send back *mishloach manos*.

On Purim, Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives *mishloach manos* to the Jewish nation. Hashem's *mishloach manos* is bounties of goodness. After Hakadosh Baruch Hu considers us רעהו, His friends, we can reciprocate and send Him *mishloach manos*. Our *mishloach manos* to Hashem are the mitzvos of Purim.

The custom of *mishloach manos* is to give the food together with the dish. (One

doesn't ask for the dish back after delivering the food.) This hints that on Purim, Hashem gives us His *mishloach manos* of bounty together with a dish, meaning that even if one isn't a vessel worthy of receiving Hashem's bounty, Hashem provides the vessel, too, to enable him to receive the bounty.

In Shemonah Esrei we say, ונאמן אתה להחיות מתים, "You are trusted that you will resurrect the dead." The *roshei teivos* are the same *roshei teivos* for ומשלוח מנות, איש לרעהו, the mitzvah to give *mishloach manos*. The last letters spell מתנה, gift. This hints that in the merit of *mishloach manos*, Hashem will grant us great gifts, even as wondrous as *techiyas hameisim*, the resurrection of the dead.

### Haman's Goral

The Bnei Yissaschar writes that generally, when one chooses one item over another, he has a reason for doing so. A goral, however, is a choice without reason.

He simply decided to follow the results of the goral.

The Baal HaTanya *zt'l* writes that on Yom Kippur, the *korban* was chosen by a *goral* – a choice without reason – to prompt Hashem to remember the time He chose us without reason – because He loves us. The Bnei Yissaschar explains that this also happened when Haman drew lots. Haman thought his lots were a tragedy for the Jewish nation, but it was actually the root of their salvation. Haman's choosing a date by *goral*, without logic, caused Hashem to remember that

He chose us without logic and reason. Even if we sinned by bowing down to Nevuchadnezzar's idol or by participating in Achashverosh's feast, and even if we didn't deserve salvation, Hashem chose to save us. Hashem chose us without logic, and therefore, He will save us, even if doing so defies logic and reason. Therefore, after reading the megillah on Purim night, we say *כי פור המן נהפך לפורינו*, "Haman's *goral* turned out to be our good fortune."<sup>29</sup>

*Midrash Talpiyos*  
(Achashverosh) writes that

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**29.** The decree against the Jewish nation came because they participated in Achashverosh's feast. Yet, even at this meal, Hashem prepared their salvation. Vashti was killed at this meal, creating a vacuum that Esther filled, leading to salvation.

This shows us Hashem's compassion for the Jewish nation. Even when they sin, Hashem seeks ways to save them.

The Ben Yehoyada says that the Jewish nation had a merit at Achashverosh's party, which is why Hashem prepared their salvation at this time. Their merit was that on Shabbos (the final day of Achashverosh's party), when the goyim were speaking *nivul peh*, the Jewish nation sang *zemiros* to Hashem and spoke *divrei Torah* (*Megillah* 12:). In this merit, Hashem prepared their salvation.

Haman made the *goral* with dice. Haman rolled three dice, and they fell on the numbers 1 3 3. This is *roshei teivos* of אג"ג, who was the king of Amalek, Haman's ancestor. That made Haman happy. He took that as a sign that he would succeed in his evil mission.

Haman wanted to know the numbers on the bottom of the dice because the numbers facing down showed a bad omen. He found the numbers 6 4 4. The numbers 6 4 4 are the gematriya of the letters דו"ד. Haman was happy about that, too, because Dovid, the king of Yisrael, was at the bottom.

He was so excited about the Jewish nation's downfall that he picked up the dice to see the numbers representing דו"ד. And that was Haman's error because when he picked up the dice and turned them over, דו"ד went to the top. This is as we say,

כי פור המן נהפך לפורינו "Haman's *goral* turned out to be our good fortune."

Haman's *goral* frightened the Jewish nation, and they realized they had nowhere to turn to other than Hashem. And their bitachon saved them. The Maharal (*Or Chadosh*) explains, "Everything has a limit on how long it can endure. Haman drew lots to discover the date the Jewish nation would end, and it fell on the month that Moshe Rabbeinu was *niftar*. Haman was happy because he thought this meant *klal Yisrael's* existence would also end in Adar. He thought that Adar, the last month of the year, denotes, *chas veshalom*, the end of the Jewish people." The Maharal explains that Haman didn't know that when a Yid has troubles and feels that there is no hope, he places his trust in Hashem. And when a Yid trusts in Hashem, he is immediately saved.<sup>30</sup>

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30. It states (*Tehillim* 22:9), גול אל ה' יפלטנו, and the Metzudas Dovid

It states (9:26), על כן קראו הימים, האלו פורים על שם הפור, "Therefore they called these days Purim, because of the *goral*." At first glance, it seems so unusual that we should name the holiday for this traumatic moment. However, when we remind ourselves of all the good we got from the *goral*: (1) It reminded Hashem of His unconditional love for us, a love beyond reason. (2) The *goral* resulted in the letters 4 6 6, דוד, being on top and 1 3 3 אגג being on the bottom. (3) It resulted in the Jewish nation relying and trusting on Hashem. These are the factors that saved the

Jewish nation, and therefore it is appropriate that the holiday is named after Haman's *goral*.

### **Purim and Yom Kippurim**

*Tikunei Zohar* (p.57:) writes that Yom Kippur is called יום כ-פורים, which can be translated as "A day like Purim." Yom Kippur is compared to Purim. The Ruzhiner zt'l said that this indicates that Purim is even greater than Yom Kippur!

The *Mishnah Berurah* (90:28) writes, "If a person in jail was granted permission

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explains, "Someone who rolls his trust on Hashem, Hashem will save him because Hashem desires those who trust in Him." This is the root of the word מגילה. It is from the word גול, which means bitachon.

The Gemara (*Megillah* 15) asks, "Why did Esther invite Haman to the party? So that the Yidden shouldn't say, 'We have a sister in the palace.'" She wanted the nation to trust Hashem, not her, and when they did so, the nation was saved.

Initially, the Yidden relied on Esther to help them. They said, "Esther will certainly speak to Achashverosh on our behalf and annul the decree." But when Esther invited Haman to her party, they lost their trust in Esther; they placed their trust in Hashem, and immediately, the salvation began.

to daven with a minyan on any one day he chooses, he should choose to daven immediately, on that day, and not wait until Yom Kippur or Purim..." Notice that the Mishnah Berurah's examples of special days for a minyan are Yom Kippur and Purim! He didn't even write Rosh Hashanah. Purim and Yom Kippur are at the top of the list of days we want to be in Beis Medresh.

One of the similarities between Purim and Yom Kippur is that they are both days of atonement. The Sfas Emes (תרל"ט) explains that the atonement of Yom Kippur comes through fasting, while the atonement of Purim comes through celebrating.

About the *korbanos* on Yom Kippur, it states (*Shemos* 30:10), וּכְפַר עָלָיו אֶהְרֹן... אַחַת בַּשָּׁנָה... וְאֶחָד בַּשָּׁנָה יִכַּפֵּר עָלָיו לְדוֹרוֹתֵיכֶם "Aharon shall bring atonement...once a year... Once a year, shall he bring atonement upon it for your generations." Notice that אַחַת בַּשָּׁנָה, "once a year," is written twice in this *pasuk*. The Imrei

Noam (Dzhikov) *zt'l* explains that this alludes to Purim and Yom Kippur. The difference between them is that the atonement of Yom Kippur comes from the *korbanos*, while the *kaparah* of Purim is achieved even without *korbanos*.

We sing, וגם חרבונה זכור לטוב, which can mean that even those who are חורבנה, destroyed by sins, זכור לטוב, they are remembered for good on Purim because they can attain their atonement.

There are other similarities between Yom Kippur and Purim:

The Rashba (*I Teshuvah* 93) writes that due to sins, there may come a time when Hashem will take away the *yomim tovim* from us, as it states (*Eichah* 2:6), שְׁבַת ה' בְּצִיּוֹן מוֹעֵד, "Hashem made Tzion oblivious of holidays and Shabbos..." Purim and Yom Kippur, however, will always be with the Jewish nation. As it states (*Esther* 9:28), וַיִּמַי הַפּוֹרִים לֹא יֵעָבְרוּ מִתּוֹךְ הַיְהוּדִים, "And these

days of Purim shall never cease from among the Yidden, nor shall their memory perish from their descendants." Yom Kippur is also eternal, as it states, והיתה זאת לכם חקת עולם, "This law is forever..."

The Ruzhiner Rebbe *zt'l* said we attain atonement and forgiveness on Purim even when we don't do *teshuva*.

What is the explanation? How can one attain forgiveness without *teshuva*? The Ruzhiner Rebbe's grandson, Rebbe Yisrael of Tchartkov *zt'l*, gave this explanation:

It states (*Shulchan Aruch* 694:3), אין מדקדקין במעות פורים אלא כל מי שפושט יד נותנים לו, "One doesn't check out people for the *tzedakah* of Purim. We give to whoever requests." Generally, before giving

*tzedakah*, we check whether the *tzedakah* is legitimate, but on Purim, we give *tzedakah* to anyone who asks. Some don't qualify for *tzedakah*, but if they stretch out their hand, we give them. On Purim, Hashem acts with us in the same way. Even if a person doesn't deserve atonement, he will receive it if he asks for forgiveness.<sup>31</sup>

As Chazal (*Megillah* 7.) say, קימו למעלה מה שקבלו למטה, which can be translated, "Heaven acts above as people act below." So, if we give *tzedakah* indiscriminately, Hashem will forgive us indiscriminately. Whoever asks for forgiveness will be forgiven.

An extraordinary moment of Yom Kippur is when we say *Keser*. The Arizal said, "What a Yid can accomplish at *Keser* on Yom

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**31.** *Shulchan Aruch* states, כל הפושט יד נותנים לו "Whoever extends his hand, we give him." We can also explain these words to mean כל פשוט יד, even the hand of a simple *פשוטע* (*pushute*) Yid, when he wants to become close to Hashem, נותנים לו, Hashem grants that to him.

Kippur can be accomplished throughout the entire day of Purim!" He explains that on Yom Kippur, the world of Keser is only revealed when we say Keser, but on Purim, it is revealed the entire day.<sup>32</sup>

**32.** The tzaddikim of Slonim *zt'l* tell the following *mashal*:

A king was moving to a new palace. All the precious items of the old palace had to be transported to the new one. This posed a serious challenge because the king's most treasured items were generally kept under guard or locked up securely in the treasury. How can they risk transporting these priceless articles to the new location in a wagon?

For example, the king has many secret documents whose contents must not be revealed. So, how can they be brought over safely? Who can guarantee that they won't be stolen or lost?

But the king's servants and brave soldiers safely transported the treasures and secret documents to the new location without incident.

Then came the greatest challenge of all: transporting the royal crown. How could they transport it while ensuring it wouldn't be stolen? After all, it is the most valuable asset of the kingdom.

They devised a plan: They placed the crown on a simple wagon, covered it with straw, and drove the wagon unguarded to the new palace. No one guessed that the crown was there. In this manner, the crown was safely delivered to its new location.

This *mashal* describes Purim.

It's an extraordinary day but also a very concealed day. Work is permitted. It isn't a *yom tov*. People have parties, etc. This is because the holiness of Purim is so great it needs to be concealed from the *yetzer hara* who desires to steal it from us.

On Purim, Hashem's *Keser*, crown, is manifested throughout the entire day. But it is concealed to hide it from the *kelipos* who seek to steal it from us.

Another similarity between Purim and Yom Kippur is our power of tefillah. The Shinover Rav *zt'l* taught: On Purim, every Yid has the power of tefillah, like the *kohen gadol* who davened in the Kodesh Kadoshim on Yom Kippur.

It states (*Esther* 4:16), וּבֵן אֲבוֹהַּ, אַל הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לֹא כַדָּת "Thus, I will come to the king though it is unlawful." The Sfas Emes *zt'l* (*Purim* תרנ"ז) explains that it is against the law for a regular person to come to the Kodesh Kadoshim, but on Purim, everyone is allowed inside (figuratively) to pray for his needs.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (*Drashos* p.156:) writes: Purim is greater than Shavuos because on Shavuos, we were forced to accept the Torah. (Hashem raised Har Sinai above our heads and threatened that we would be buried beneath the mountain if we didn't accept the Torah.) But on Purim, the Jewish nation accepted the Torah out of love (see *Shabbos* 88.). Purim is also greater than Pesach. On Pesach, we

celebrate liberation from slavery, while on Purim, we celebrate salvation from death.

Thus, Purim is greater than Pesach, Shavuos, and Yom Kippur.

### The Aveirah of Achashverosh's Banquet

A Yid and a goy were traveling together and stopped off along the highway to eat lunch.

"Do you want some wine?" the goy asked.

"No thanks. Jews aren't permitted to drink the wine of gentiles."

"How about a sausage? I have extra."

"No, thank you. We can't eat that either."

"It is delicious. You're sure you can't eat it?"

"I'm positive. We can only eat such foods when life is in danger."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, let's say someone is ill, and a doctor says he needs to eat these foods to live."

"Then you would be allowed to eat it?"

"Definitely. Or let's say a goy takes out a knife and says, 'If you don't eat this food, I will kill you,' then we would also be allowed to eat it."

The goy took out his knife and said menacingly, "Eat my food, or I'll kill you."

The Yid was afraid and began eating. What could he do? It was *pikuach nefesh*.

"I'm sorry I did that to you," the goy said a few minutes later. "I was just joking."

The Yid put down the meat and pushed the wine to the side, and said, "I forgive you for playing that prank on me, but I won't forgive you for revealing that it was a joke so soon. Why didn't you wait until I finished the meal?"

This story explains the aveirah that the Jewish nation committed by eating at Achashverosh's feast. The sin was that they *wanted* to be there. They were permitted to eat at this meal because their lives were at stake, but they should have attended with a heavy heart.

Chazal say that they were punished, שנהנו מסעודתו של אחשורוש, because they *enjoyed* Achashverosh's meal. The problem was that they enjoyed it and were happy to be there.

The Chasam Sofer (*Toras Moshe, Esther*, ד"ה איתא במגילה) writes that they should have eaten a lot at home before going to the party, so the non-kosher food at the party would be אכילה גסה (eating after they were full when one doesn't enjoy eating and isn't considered eating, according to halachah). Then, it would be as though they didn't eat non-kosher foods.

**Vitur**

Achashverosh used the holy utensils from the Beis HaMikdash at his *seudah*.

The Gemara (*Megillah* 12.) states, "At that time, a *bas kol* went out: "Generations ago, people died because they used these utensils, and now you are using them?!" The Gemara refers to Balshatzar, the king of Bavel, who died the night he used the vessels of the Beis HaMikdash. This time, the sin caused Vashti's death.

The *meforshim* ask, why didn't Achashverosh die like Balshatzar, who died when he used these holy utensils?

Why did Vashti die instead of Achashverosh?

It is repeated in the name of Reb Shlomo Kluger *zt'l* that at this feast, Achashverosh was *mevater*. He didn't demand that things be exactly as he wanted. We learn this from the *pasuk* (Esther 1:8) לעשות כרצון איש ואיש that at the meal, everyone's wishes were respected and fulfilled. And the rule is that when one is *mevater*, this grants him life.<sup>33</sup>

But Vashti wasn't *mevater*. She didn't let everyone do as they pleased. This is implied from the *pasuk*, גם ושתי המלכה עשתה משתה נשים בית המלכות "Queen Vashti also made a

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**33.** A source that *vitur* gives life is the Midrash (*Yalkut Midrashim, Rabbeinu HaKadosh*, see also *Rosh Hashanah* 17.) that Rav Huna the son of Reb Yehoshua ben Levi was *niftar* (perhaps what is termed today 'clinical death') for a few days. When he came back to life, he said to his students, "My children, fortunate is the one who isn't עומד על מדותיו and is *mevater*. Malachim pleaded that I should live, but their claims were rejected. And then came along a *malach* who told the heavenly court I'm always *mevater*, and they immediately freed me from death and granted me life."

We see from this Midrash that being *mevater* grants life. This merit saved Achashverosh at this feast.

feast for the woman in the royal house." She acted with royalty and power. She acted like a queen, and everyone had to do as she required. Therefore, she suffered the brunt of the punishment.

This can also be explained in the following way:

Shame and humiliation save from death. Achashverosh was shamed at this meal. His wife Vashti sent a message to Achashverosh (*Megillah* 12:) "Listen here, my father's stable hand (Achashverosh used to work in Nevuchadnezzar's royal stables): My father could drink with a thousand people and didn't get drunk. And you drink a drop of wine and become drunk and insane." This shame saved Achashverosh from death, and Vashti was killed instead. It says, כלים מכלים, שונים, and מכלים can also be translated as shame. The shame saved Achashverosh.

Another hint is from the *pasuk* (*Esther* 1:18) ודדי בזיון וקצף, which Rebbe Yechezkel of

Kozhmir *zt'l* translated as "The *bizyonos* and humiliation saved Achashverosh from Hashem's anger."

The Gemara (*Megillah* 15:) states, "Why did Esther invite Haman [to her party]? Reb Shimon ben Menasya says, 'Perhaps Hashem will take note and perform a miracle.'"

Rashi explains that Esther wanted that Hashem should see שאני צריכה להחניף רשע זה ולזלול בכבודי, that I am forced to flatter this rasha and belittle my honor." She figured that her shame and humiliation would arouse Hashem's compassion and save the Jewish nation.

Reb Chaim Shmuelevitz *zt'l* said: Esther's fasts and tefillos didn't save her. But her humiliation saved her and the entire Jewish nation.

### ***A Gantz Yur Purim – Purim All Year Long***

The Shem Mishmeul said there is no kiddush on Purim, so we shouldn't make

havdalah. This means we should keep the teshuvah and inspiration we attain on Purim for the entire year.

A drunk bachur told Reb Mottel Slonimer zt'l on Purim that he wanted to do teshuvah. Reb Motel said, "Come back to speak with me about it tomorrow." It is easy to say on Purim that you will improve your ways, but the trick is to do so tomorrow." Will you still want to improve your ways then?

This is hinted in Esther's words (5:8) מחר אעשה כדבר המלך, "Tomorrow I will do as the king says." This is the primary test that your inspiration for change continues, even tomorrow.

A poor person went to a wealthy person Friday night and said, "I need money. I have so many debts. Can you please give me ten thousand dollars?"

The wealthy man replied, "Perhaps. But now it's

Shabbos. Let's discuss it after Shabbos."

Shabbos morning, the poor man came over to the wealthy man again and said, "In addition, maybe you can give me a loan for one hundred thousand dollars so that I can get myself back on my feet."

"That, too, is possible. We'll discuss it after Shabbos."

*Shaloshudes* time, the poor man, seeing that he is connecting well with this wealthy person, returns and says, "Perhaps you can make me a partner in your business."

"It could be," the wealthy man replies. "I'm not against it. But now it's Shabbos. Come to me after Shabbos, and we will discuss it."

The poor man is so happy. Finally, he can see the end of the dark tunnel of his tzaros.

After Shabbos, he looked for the wealthy man but

couldn't find him. When he finally found him, the poor man said, "Nu. What is your decision?"

"About what?" the wealthy man asked.

"What we discussed! Ten thousand dollars for tzedakah, a hundred-thousand-dollar loan, and the partnership."

"That we discussed on Shabbos," the wealthy man said, "but now it isn't Shabbos anymore."

Similarly, people make great, lofty plans on Purim, resolutions for the future, but the trick is to keep them after Purim passes.

It says in Megillas Esther (9:27) ולא יעבור, and Rebbe Henech of Alexander zt'l explains that this means that Purim should never pass, never leave us. What we acquire should remain with us forever.

## Shushan Purim

It states (Esther 9:27) להיות עושים את שני הימים האלה ככתבם וכוונתם בכל שנה ושנה "to make these two days...every year." There are two days of Purim, the fourteenth and the fifteenth of Adar, and sefarim write that even those who celebrate Purim on the fourteenth should celebrate on the fifteenth as well.

One year, Shushan Purim was on Friday, and Rebbe Yehoshua of Belz zt'l heard someone say, "*Neh*, it isn't really Purim today." To teach this person and his community the importance of Shushan Purim that week by kabbalas Shabbos, he began by (Tehillim 29) מזמור לדוד הבו לה' בני אלים, as we do when Shabbos follows a yom tov. He wanted to show them that Shushan Purim is a yom tov. This is the minhag in Belz until today. When Shushan Purim is on Friday, kabbalas Shabbos begins with מזמור לדוד, so we should understand the importance of Shushan Purim.

Mishmeres Shalom writes, "Shushan Purim also has a great, wonderful light. Therefore, it is proper to be happy on this day and to make a seudah. טוב לב משתה, תמיד, "He who has a cheerful heart always has a feast" (Mishlei 15:15).

The Tzemech Tzaddik of Viznitz zt'l (ד"ה המנהג) writes, "The custom is to be very joyful on Shushan Purim... more than Purim itself."

Yismach Yisrael (9) writes, "We saw many tzaddikim who were more joyous on Shushan Purim than on Purim."

The Minchas Elazar of Munkatz zt'l (Shaar Yissaschar, Yemei Sason 31) quotes the Tikunei Zohar (Hakdamah 13.) that says the two days of Purim, on the fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar, are alluded to in the pasuk that discusses the war against Amalek (Shemos 17:16) כִּי יָד עַל כַּס כִּי יָהּ. The second date, י"ה, the fifteenth, is Hashem's name. Therefore it is

understandable that it is a greater day.

Also, the Chasam Sofer zt'l (Drashos 5590) writes that logically the primary day should be the fifteenth "because how does it help if there is peace in the world if the war is still raging in the king's capital? Therefore, the primary day for celebration is the fifteenth."

The Rebbe of Sadugeira teaches, "The primary Purim is on the fifteenth of Adar because Yerushalayim is in the center of the world... And on that day, the moon is full."

As we wrote above, the Ateres Tzvi of Ziditchov zt'l said that one could accomplish more with tefillos on Shushan Purim than on Purim itself.

The Gemara (Megillah 7:) says that at a Purim seudah, Rabba accidentally killed Reb Zeira. The next day, he resurrected him. The Imrei Noam zt'l explains that the next day was Shushan

Purim. On that day, one can create miracles with his tefillos to the degree of techiyas hameisim.

Rebbe Mordechai Chernobler zt'l (Likutei Torah, Parashas Zachur, ד"ה כתיב) writes, "Whoever has joy and a meal on Shushan Purim...it is certainly a great mitzvah, as it states (Esther 8:15) והעיר שושן צהלה ושמחה, 'The city of Shushan shouted and rejoiced.'" He says that this is

alluded to in the pasuk (Shir HaShirim 5:13) שפתותיו שושנים נוטפות מור עובר, "His lips are like roses, dripping with flowing myrrh." He explains that שושנים alludes to Shushan Purim. Celebrations on this day מור עובר, are like besamim that give off a pleasant scent.

May we all have the merit to seize this tremendous opportunity and take advantage of these holy days.