

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Purim



Torah WELLSPRINGS

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Torah Wellsprings - Purim

Tefillah

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 14th 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 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 afterwards 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 purpose of the mitzvah to read 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). It was *tefillah* that saved the Jewish nation in the days of Mordechai and Esther.

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 then Mordechai will stop davening, and then there will be hope for you. But if you fight Mordechai and he davens to be saved, Hashem will certainly listen to his *tefillos*.

Indeed, 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," and Rashi writes ולשקו ולהענייתו, that he returned to his sackcloth and fasting. He wisely didn't

stop praying, and that is what brought about the salvation.¹

This is one of the lessons of Purim, to believe in the power of tefillah. And particularly, on Purim itself, it is an *eis ratzon* for tefillah.

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 with this report 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 specialist in Manhattan who is an expert in these matters." He gave them the specialist's phone number.

They called the clinic and set an appointment in two months in Iyar.

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

This story happened during the Covid pandemic, and only one parent could 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 indeed so necessary to go to this appointment.

The doctor reviewed her file and the blood work results 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 was looking at the same blood sample; now it isn't celiac, and before Purim it was celiac! Such is the power of tefillah on Purim.

This story has a sequel:

Last year, Reb Shmuel Yair Miller from Williamsburg fell, broke two bones, and required serious surgery. Many askanim and rabbanim were involved because the situation was dangerous. They advised him on how to proceed and which doctors to use.

Reb Shmuel Yair has a good friend, Reb Shimshon Lieder n'y, who lives in Elad, Eretz Yisrael. When Reb Shmuel Yair told him what happened and about his upcoming operation, Reb Shimshon told him, 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 on Purim, he said the entire Tehillim again.

Purim was on Friday. Monday, after Purim, he took another x-ray, and it showed that one of the broken bones had wondrously 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.

1. 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.

A short while later, Reb Shmuel Yair fell again on the same spot of his earlier break. He took another x-ray, and the doctors were shocked that he had healed at such record-breaking speed.

These are examples of the power of tefillah these days.

In the spirit of Purim, we suggest why Haman's youngest son was called ויזיזא. The reason is that he saw his nine brothers hanging and didn't run away! Therefore, for being so foolish, he deserved the name Vayizasa! (Vayizasa is a name people comically use on Purim to describe someone unwise.)

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, consider all your neighbors' homes. Is there a family that doesn't have a serious problem? For one, it is related to health; for a second, it is about shidduchim; for a third, it is about nachas; and for a fourth, it is about parnassah. But there's a solution. You can daven on Taanis Esther on Purim. Only a Vayizasa will be callous and not take advantage of these holy times.

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 anything (...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 100th floor, but refuses to exit the elevator when it stops. "You reached your

destination, why don't you leave the elevator," people asked.

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

It doesn't make a difference if you feel it or not; you are now on the hundredth floor. Get out!

The same goes for these holy days. It doesn't make a difference whether you feel the kedushah of these days or not. The fact is that you are now at this high place. So 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,² 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 or if your heart is in the spirit of Purim or not. The fact is that these are incredibly holy days. So keep your feet in these days, even if your heart isn't there. Say Tehillim, and act according to the holiness of the time.

A person fell into the tracks at a subway station in New York. It was risky to jump down to save him; 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 was among the crowd of onlookers. Suddenly, he jumped down,

2. There are stories of rebbe's who were upset when one of their chassidim left them to go another rebbe. We will not discuss here why this upset the rebbes, but it has to do with the amount of effort and mesirus nefesh that the rebbe placed into each chasid. For example, the rebbe might have fasted for him for days, and he may have sacrificed other matters for the chasid, and then he goes elsewhere. This is part of the reason rebbes were sometimes upset when a chasid left them.

lifted the man off the tracks, and somehow climbed up with him back to the platform. Moments afterwards, 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 he intended to earn forty dollars!

This story is worth remembering because we often make the same mistake. 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! Such 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 it. 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?

Most will answer that nine are left, but it isn't so because when you shoot one, the remaining 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.

The same applies to Purim. Sometimes, on Purim, people run after dead things 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 the live, and don't get tied down with the 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 was thinking of telling the cat, "You had the ring with you. With the ring, you could have bought enough fresh meat for the rest of your life. 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 take something small and negligible.

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.

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, and the Baal Shem Tov 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 walking to commit a severe aveirah, and he met a poor family thrown into a deep pit. The children were crying, 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 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.

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 strife, by day and night."

The Gemara says that the pasuk that alludes to this halachah is (Tehillim 22:3) אלקי לי לא דומיה לי יומם ולא תענה ולילה ולא דומיה לי לילה, '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"ל לי א"ל לי למה עזבתני", "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) "כי לא בזה ולא שקץ ענות עני", "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 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 made 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 the tefillos 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!"

The Power of Tefillah on Purim

When one requests and pleas 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 Achashveirosh.

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 Achashveirosh to hang Mordechai.

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

How could Haman command and demand things from Achashveirosh?

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

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

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

In *Shoshanas Yaakov*, we praise Mordechai HaTzaddik with the greatest 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* (*HaKadmon*) 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), **וּבְיָחֻדָּא**, לפני המלך אמר, and it 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 ומזוני, 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.)³

The Tur (693) writes, "Rav Amram z'l writes...to say extra tefillos on Purim since

3. The Chasam Sofer zt'l writes in the name of the Shev Yaakov that whoever studies Torah 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 in the morning to get up early and learn, but he slept right through the alarm. But then, a fire alarm went off, waking him up. As it turned out, the fire alarm was activated as a mean Purim joke, but the lesson we learn 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 ונתנים לו, that whatever a person asks for on Purim, he can attain, and we thought it was a nice vort, but we 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 had yeshuos gedolos (great salvations)."

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

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

We are discussing davening on Purim, but that is all theory if one doesn't do something with it.

There was a bachur who studied in one of the best yeshivos in Eretz Yisrael, but 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 decided that the right thing to do was to expel him. But for some reason, sending him out of the yeshiva was impossible.

But then Purim came. The bachur stuck his head in the aron kodesh and cried and davened to Hashem. And then 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 Sfas Emes says that Purim is a time for *mahapeichos*, turnovers (וּתְהִיךָ הוּא). This is what happened to Haman. He began at a low level, rose to the highest level, fell again, and was hung. It is a time when things turn around. Mahapochos can happen to you too.

it is a day of miracles (יום 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 wishes. But on Purim, even our requests for extras are answered. He writes that this is alluded to in the *pasuk* (*Yeshaya* 65:24), והיה טרם, יקראו ואני אענה, עוד הם מדברים ואני אשמע.⁴ 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), ומה, בקשתך עוד ותעש. On Purim even, בקשתך עוד, your requests for extras, ותעש, will be answered.

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.⁵

Seudah

Purim Seudah

There is a contradiction in the *pesukim* whether Purim is a *yom tov* - a day when work is forbidden or not. 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 "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), אותם ימי משתה ושמחה ומשלח מנות איש לרעהו ומתנות לעשות, "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.

As a bachur, I was once in the Belzer beis medresh in Bnei Brak on Purim night. There were people there who were studying Torah, others were saying Tehillim, and there was a group of bachurim who were just shmoozing and wasting time. The person who led 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 a Tehillim and said the entire Tehillim with much kavanah.

Since then, everything turned around. The family was concerned that 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. And today, he is a very respected talmid chacham in Bnei Brak. This is because everything can turn around with tefillos, especially on Purim.

4. The literal translation of the *pasuk* is as follows: "And it shall be, when they have not yet called, that I will respond; when they are still speaking, that I will hearken."

5. 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 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 mention it at all? Why mention something that didn't occur and is apparently irrelevant?

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*. Therefore, 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. On a designated day, everyone had to pray and fast 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 פרעניות 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 when we 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 Yiddel 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 Yiddel Ribak replied.

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

Reb Yidal 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 Yiddel Ribak's head, and shouted, "Go home!"

Reb Yiddel 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 someone 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 are singing when they see 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."

May we merit this.

After the meal at home, many go to celebrate Purim with their communities (their *beis medresh*, their *yeshiva*, or with their Rebbe and *chassidus*). Great salvations can occur at those parties, too. The Beis Avraham *zt'l* expressed that for centuries, countries were run by a singular king. His decision was the law, and no one could challenge it. But in more recent times, this isn't how the country is governed. Instead, the leader makes a rule, which only becomes law when 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 draws salvations. But when a community together makes a decree, it is upheld and will happen.

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

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 that 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 shouldn'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 [goes beyond that limit] and his 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.⁶

Chazal say, *חייב איניש לבסומי בפורי'א*, "One is obligated to be happy *with Purim*." They

didn't say *לבסומי ביין* 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 Viznitz *zt'l*. He explains that this tells us that when one drinks, one must *know* his limits. If his drinking results in him humiliating or harming others or causes him to be lax with any of the mitzvos, it is time to refrain. We know this because when we are told to drink *עד דלא ידע*, the first letters spell *ידע* because one must always have an awareness of what he is doing or he has gone beyond the limit intended by Chazal.

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."⁷

The 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 properly.

He concludes, "All those who [are cautious] and rejoice and praise Hashem for the miracles Hashem performed for our forefathers, their children will be like them,

6. 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 Margolis *zt'l* (*Yad Efraim*) writes, "They weren't cautious; they drank beyond their limits. This resulted in a *סכנה*. Therefore, one must be cautious not to drink excessively. One should drink up to *עד דלא ידע*, but never actually get to that point."

7. I remember one year, I attended a *sheva brachos* on Purim, and a drunkard stood up to speak and humiliated the *chasan*. The *chasan* smiled as though he thought it was funny. He didn't want to show in public 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 becomes an *aveirah*.

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 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.⁸ This is why the Torah forbade a *kohen gadol* from marrying a widow. If permitted to marry a widow, he may choose to kill a husband when he uttered Hashem's name on Yom Kippur so that he can 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? It is Yom

Kippur, the holiest day of the year, and we are talking about the *kohen gadol*, one of the nation's greatest people. He is in the Beis Hamikdash, in the Kodosh Kadoshim, and saying Hashem's holy name - something only he can say, and only on Yom Kippur. Could it be that at this most 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, מהבירו יצרו גדול הימנו, “The greater a person, the greater the *yetzer hara*,” and Reb Yechezkel Levinstein *zt'l* adds, “The greater the moment, the greater the *yetzer hara*.” Therefore, it could happen. On Yom Kippur, in the Kodosh Kadoshim, while saying Hashem's name as it is written, the *kohen gadol* might wish for someone to die so he can marry that person's wife.

The Torah understands the *yetzer hara* and knows that even this is possible.

We mentioned this, so we shouldn't be surprised that the holy mitzvah of drinking on Purim could result in something negative. But, 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.⁹

8. The Torah tells us that Moshe Rabbeinu killed a Mitzri by uttering Hashem's name. Rashi (*Shemos* 2:14) writes, בשם המפורש, מוכאן 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.

9. Some tzaddikim encouraged drinking a lot on Purim. The *Shulchan Aruch* (695:2) states, אחד המרבה ואחד, הממעט ובלבד שיכוין לבו לשמים, “Someone who drinks a lot and someone who drinks a bit is the same, as long as their intentions are for Heaven.”

Rebbe Dovid of Lelov *zt'l* was visiting Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk *zt'l* on Purim. Rebbe Elimelech offered him a drink, but Rebbe Dovid declined, saying his doctor forbade him to drink.

Rebbe Elimelech replied, “The doctor is sleeping now...”

Rebbe Elazar *zt'l* (Rebbe Elimelech's son) said he now understands the *Shulchan Aruch* (695:2) that states, יש אומרים

Some More on 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.

When one drinks, he feels weak and helpless. The Maharal (*Or Chadosh*) says the mitzvah of drinking on Purim reminds people that we are weak and can't do anything without Hashem's help.¹⁰

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 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 wine party, the King of the world says to the Jewish nation, מה שאלתך וינתן לך "What is your request. Ask for whatever you want, and I will grant it to you."

Chazal say, חייב איניש לבסומי 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, "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 "This is as people say, 'The poor are hungry, and they don't know it.' 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 *Yeitav Leiv zt'l* connects the two Gemaras and explains, 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, "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 from this mitzvah, one can attain *yiras Shamayim*.

The Mishnah states (*Beitzah* 40.), משקיין ושוהטין, 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 משקיין by drinking on Purim, one sheds his animalistic self, and he becomes a more spiritual being.

¹⁰ Some say one doesn't have to drink so much. Rather, he should drink more than usual and go to sleep." Rebbe Elazar explained that the אומרים are the doctors because they say that one shouldn't drink. But you don't have to be concerned about them, because the doctors are sleeping...

10. 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.

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 hakadosh* 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 other than him. 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 איש אדמה ויטע כרם. The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* said that ויהל represents the weekdays (חול 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 also 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, ויחל נח איש אדמה ויטע כרם, this means ויחל נח, on the day that a weekday and a *yom tov* merge, or in other words, on Purim; איש אדמה, every person can attain all his needs, ויטע כרם, when he drinks wine on Purim.

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.

Good Knowledge

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* said that by drinking on Purim, one can reach the level of Adam HaRishon and Chavah before their sin. Adam and Chavah sinned when they ate from the עץ הדעת, the tree of knowledge, and they attained knowledge that wasn't good for them. When people drink, עד דלא ידע, until they *don't know*, they lose their bad knowledge and become like Adam and Chavah before they sinned.

What is bad knowledge?

It is when one thinks that the world runs by chance and by the rules of nature.

With the mitzvah of drinking on Purim, we have the ability to shed our bad knowledge, עד דלא ידע, until our hearts become filled with *emunah* in Hashem and *emunah* in Hashem's hashgachah pratis.

The megillah begins, ויהי בימי אחשורש הוא, אחשורש, "And it came to pass in the days of Achashveirosh, he is Achashveirosh..." Rashi writes that the megillah repeats אחשורש הוא, הוא ברשעו מתחלתו ועד סופו, "Achashveirosh was a *rasha* from the beginning to the end." Even at the end of the megillah, when Achashveirosh helps the Jewish nation, honors Mordechai, orders the death of Haman and his ten sons, etc., we shouldn't think that Achashveirosh changed and he became virtuous. Achashveirosh was always a *rasha*.

The Maharal (*Or Chadash*) expresses it this way: "The megillah reveals that all the kindness Achashveirosh bestowed on Esther, on Mordechai, and the Jewish nation wasn't from Achashveirosh, rather from Hashem, because Achashveirosh was wicked until the very end." We think we should thank this person or that person and forget that everything is from Hashem's hashgachah pratis.

There's a custom to dress up on Purim. Perhaps the custom is to remind us that things aren't the way they appear. It looks like Achashveirosh did things, but everything was directed by Hashem.

The costumes are a lesson on how to view *tzaros*, too. Children in costumes look like bears or like lions, but they are actually sweet children in disguise. Similarly, when we have problems, the problems are goodness in disguise.

There's a mitzvah on Purim to drink until we don't know the difference between ארוך המן and ברוך מרדכי, curse Haman and bless Mordechai (see *Shulchan Aruch* 695). "Curse Haman" represents all problems of life, and "Bless Mordechai" represents the good

aspects of life. Purim, we are to reach the level of recognition that everything is for the good, and even bad (ארוך המן) is for our good.

Someone once asked Reb Yeshayah of Prague *zt'l*, "Why don't we make a *brachah* on *yesurim*? After all, these 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* for *yesurim*. The *brachah* is שיעשה לי כל צרכי, 'Hashem made me all my needs.'"

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 Chozeh 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, הוזה להנקם מאיביהם, "For the Jews to be prepared for that day..." We read it עתודים, 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 for joy for sheep on Purim.

This vort is also taught by the Maharam m'Rottenberg, and he says that there's a custom to write the וי"א 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.

Someone asked the Brisker Rav *zt'l*, "What can one do to control his thoughts that he shouldn't have forbidden thoughts?"

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

Purim is compared to Yom Kippur. The Piasetzner Rebbe *zt'l* (Eish Kodesh) explained that Yom Kippur we fast whether we feel up to it or not. Similarly, on Purim we are happy, whether or not we are up to it. (The Piasetzner Rebbe said this during the Holocaust. He was encouraging his chassidim to be happy, even under those trying circumstances.)

Reb Eliyahu Meir Bloch *zt'l*, Rosh Yeshiva Telz in America, was dancing happily with his students on Purim, year תש"ד. However, the students thought the joy wasn't sincere. "How could they 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.

Hashem is Happy on Purim

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

These words are written in the singular tense. Why doesn't the *pasuk* say, ועשו אותו יום, משתה ושמחה, "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* תרי"ב) answers that ועשה refers to Hashem. ועשה אותו יום משתה ושמחה, "Hashem made it a day of feasting and gladness."¹¹

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

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

11. Chazal tell us that Haman's decree to annihilate Bnei Yisrael 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 saved them.

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

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

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), ותתחלהל המלכה מאד ותשלה 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?"

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?

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 *tefillas* will be answered.'" Haman preferred that Mordechai daven with sadness because the *tefillas* are less effective, so he waited patiently until Mordechai finished davening.

At the first party, Achashveirosh said (*Esther* 5:6), מה שאלתך וינתן לך ומה בקשתך עד חצי 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 Achashveirosh 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! Achashveirosh 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 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 even for a rasha like Haman), and sadness leads to failure.

Mikrah Megillah

Reading the Megillah

The Gemara (Shabbos 88.) says that Hashem put Har Sinai over the nation's head and forced them to receive the Torah. However, because of the Purim miracle, the nation received the Torah again, this time willingly and from love. The (*Drashos* p.164.) Chasam Sofer writes, "Therefore, the megillah is more honored and greater than even 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 have in mind that 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 *teshuva* is when the megillah is being read because, at that time, Hakadosh Baruch Hu purifies Bnei Yisrael from Above."

At the Purim miracle, we accepted the Torah again, and this time from love, and these should be our thoughts when we listen to the megillah. (The Kedushas Levi says this should also be our thoughts at the Purim seudah. We should rejoice with the Torah.)

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

And 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, 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 came to 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 *teshuva*.

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

to tell the stories that 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 [to recognize and celebrate the miracles Hashem performed for the Jewish nation].

Additionally, there are many Torah secrets in the megillah, and the masters of kabbalah elaborate on them. 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*... And there are many *mussar* lessons in the megillah, which teach us how to live."¹²

The end of the megillah states (10:2), וכל מעשה תקפו וגבורתו ופרשת גדולת מרדכי... הלוא הם כתובים מעשה תקפו וגבורתו ופרשת גדולת מרדכי... 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 that the megillah is saying: 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.) states several proofs that *Megillas Esther* was written with *ruach hakodesh*. With this awareness in mind, we know that every word is precious.¹³

The Kav HaYashar (ch.99) writes, "You need to know that there is a new world in heaven that is extremely holy. It only becomes revealed once a year. It begins to be revealed 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 say the *brachah* מגילה, "על מקרא מגילה", "We should have in mind that Hashem commanded us to bring forth this great light, and this is the translation of מקרא מגילה [to call to the revelation of this holy, world of compassion]. The congregation should answer amen with immense *kavanah*."¹⁴

12. When a spy in an enemy country has to report to his homeland in code, he can't write things 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.

13. The Minchas Elazar *zt'l* tells that when Rebbe Mendel of Riminov *zy'a* was imprisoned, the police permitted him to take one item to the prison with him. The Rebbe requested a megillah (although it was Tamuz). Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz *zt'l* instructed Reb Mendel's students not to fulfill this request. "If he has the megillah, he'll destroy the entire world."

The Minchas Elazar writes 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 we have a mitzvah to read the megillah!

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

14. The Yismach Moshe (Purim end of 3) writes that מקרא מגילה means הזמנה והתאספות, that all the lights gather and become revealed when we read the megillah."

Klal Yisrael needs a lot of compassion. We do not live in simple 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.

"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 will throw him into a furnace, Chananyah and his friends were saved from a furnace. If you will 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, Menashah prayed to Hashem and was saved from exactly that situation. If you will exile him to the desert, Mordechai's ancestors lived in the desert successfully and multiplied 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.' It states, (*Esther* 5:24), ויטב הדבר לפני המן ויעש העץ, "This suggestion pleased Haman, and he had the gallows made."

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), נתת ליראיך נס להתנוסס, which can

be translated as, "You give to those who fear You miracles so they can make more miracles." They talk about Hashem's past miracles, which cause the miracles to happen again.

Zeresh said, "If you plan to throw Mordechai into a furnace, the Yidden will study the story of Chananyah, Mishael, and Azaryah, who were saved from a furnace, and that will draw down the 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 that he harm Mordechai in an unprecedented manner so that the Yidden won'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* explained 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, "It seems to me that we are saved every year in the merit of reading the megillah and giving *matanos l'evyonim*."

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

The Sfas Emes (ד"ה והימים 7660) asks: The miracles didn't occur on the 14th of Adar. They happened on the 13th 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. The miracles happen each year on the 14th 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, קבעונו, לדורות, that they should establish Purim as a holiday and to read the megillah in all generations. Why did she want this? It is because when Yidden speak about a miracle that occurred, this causes the miracle to happen again, as it states (*Koheles* 1:9), מזה שהיה, הוא שיהיה, if you discuss a miracle that happened that will cause it to occur again.

He concludes that this is the meaning of the *pasuk* (9:28) ויהימם האלו נזכרים ונעשים בכל דור ודור, that in every generation when we read about the miracles of Purim (נזכרים), the miracles occur again (נעשים).

The Tiferes Shlomo (*Rimzei Purim*, ד"ה בגמרא) writes that the one who reads the megillah unrolls the entire megillah before he begins to read it¹⁵ to demonstrate that good *hashpaos* and salvations open up for the Jewish nation at this time.

The Gemara (*Megillah* 4:) says, עיניהם של עניים, נשואות למקרא מגילה, that the poor wait for the megillah.¹⁶ 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 means the *resha'im* of Bnei Yisrael die each year at this time when we read the megillah.

The megillah begins with ויהי, which is an expression of distress and ends with ודובר שלום לכל זרעו, an expression of joy. This symbolizes 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.) tells us, "Life, children, and *parnassah* aren't dependent on one's merits. They depend on one's *mazal*." The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* writes that מגלה 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 ושמחה וששון ויקר, this *pasuk* will apply to the new-born child, too. (As we know, the child is born a יהודי, 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 the child, too. This teaches us that the megillah not only discussed the past but the present, as well. And the miracles of the past happen to us as well when we read the megillah.

The Imrei Yosef *zy'a* told the following story, and he commented that it happened "to a chassidische *jungerman* 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):

15. *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."

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

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 ובוה 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 Gan Eden. This has been going on for many years. This year, I decided to wait the entire year by 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 are 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* went to Gan Eden.

We learn from this story that each year, while we read the megillah, the gates of Gan Eden are open. We also understand that this is a good time for *tefillah* to attain all types of *yeshuos*.

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

He was saying that it is Hashem Who performs the miracles, and Hashem is still with us. Therefore, we can expect miracles to happen in our generation, too.

There are opinions that on Purim night, after reading the megillah (and saying *קדוש 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*. It is a request that Hashem accept our *tefillos*. But what *tefillah* did we say? This indicates that reading the megillah is like a prayer, a plea for our salvations.

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 יוצא, if one reads the megillah and praises Hashem for the miracles that Hashem did for us in the past but doesn't acknowledge that Hashem performs miracles in the present, לא יצא, he didn't keep the *mitzvah* properly.

Hashem does miracles for us right now, too. Often, we can only recognize the miracles after the fact, in retrospect.

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 how it appeared in Shushan. Somebody ran into the beis medresh and said, "Did you hear the latest? Vashti was killed because she refused to attend Achashveirosh's party!"

The Chachamim in the beis medresh responded, "Tell us something from the Gemara or Mishnah. We aren't interested in political news."

Sometime later, someone else enters the beis medresh and says, "Did you hear the news? 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 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 years 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 Ostrovtsa *zy'a* said that even goyim could recognize Hashem's kindness *when they look back*. As the megillah (8:17) states, ורבים מעמי הארץ מתיהדים, "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 Yidden should believe in Hashem even before the puzzle is completed. They should believe 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.¹⁷

The Origin of the Salvation

Matanos l'Evyonim and Mishloach Manos

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 give many 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 is acting similarly to the Shechinah, as it states (*Yeshayah* 57:15) ולהחיות 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 one can't help with money, he

17. One translation of למפרע is to pay up a debt. The Minchas Elazer of Munkatch *zy'a* said, הקורא את המגילה, 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 and joy and appreciate the miracles that occurred.

should give whatever he can, perhaps a friendly word or a smile.¹⁸

Reb Mordechai of Nadvorna zt'l said in his older years, "If I knew in my younger years what Purim is, I would go from person to person to get a smile 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 told him, 'You are the ninth man for our minyan!' Reb Yosef Meir had planned to go to a beis medresh where they had a professional *baal koreh*, and the tefillah was with a lot of kavanah, but he decided to remain in that beis medresh to do this *chesed*. He also called another friend to come, Reb Yechezkel Deutsch, so there would be 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, משלוח מנות איש means that Hashem gives for mishloach manos an איש, a child." Nine months later, the *baal koreh* had a son. The first person he called to inform was Reb Yosef Meir because he knew he gave him this 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 so well should send to

one another because this will increase peace and remove unwanted 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 concerned about their friends' fate.

It states (Tehillim 22:25) כי לא בזה ולא שקץ ענות עני ולא הסתיר פניו ממנו ובשועו אליו שמע, "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 ate at Achashveirosh's party and bowed down to Nevuchadnezzar's idol. The Alshich says that the poor didn't commit these aveiros. Achashveirosh didn't invite the poor to his party, and Nevuchadnezzar didn't care whether the poor bowed down 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'

18. Reb Moshe Feinstein taught on the pasuk (Bamidbar 9:7) למה נרע, that a person should always do what he can. And if he can't do the ideal, whatever he can do, he should do.

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

לך means Hashem mimics what people do. One aspect of this concept is that when Yidden care for and help one another, Hashem follows suit and helps the Yidden.

The Alshich HaKadosh (quoted in *Arvei Nachal, Miketz, 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 in that manner, 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 Achashveirosh, he knew that whoever saved the king would be rewarded immensely, so he told Esther about it. But Esther wanted Mordechai to earn the credit, so she informed Achashveiros in the name of Mordechai.¹⁹ And in their merit, Hashem saved them and the entire Jewish nation".²⁰

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 in the merit of Mordechai's concern for Esther."

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 the Jewish nation.

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

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

20. 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 donor decided to give money to everyone present tonight. We will distribute it this way: Everyone must take a partner to arm-wrestle with him, and you should keep track of who wins each round because, for each win, you will receive a dollar."

Fifteen minutes later, the speaker approached each pair to get their score. With one team, one won three games, and his partner won four. So the speaker gave 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 came to a pair who told him, "I won 1,500 times, and my partner won 1,500 times."

He gave them \$1,500 each.

He said to all the others, "You were all trying to win against your opponent, and because of that, much time was wasted fighting your partner's strength. But in this pair, each one was trying to help his partner. 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 solely on yourself, you work more and earn less. But when you seek to help others, you gain so much more.

whom it is written, אין אסתר מגדת, "Esther wouldn't tell..." *Lashon hara* causes division among Yidden, and Esther's caution with her speech brought about the salvation.

The Kedushas Levi (beginning of *Kedushah Rishonah*) writes, "Purim has three mitzvos which aren't found by any other yom tov: (1) to read the megillah, (2) *matanos l'evyonim*, (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.²¹

The megillah states (9:22), משלוח 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 sends *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 doesn't have a vessel to accept 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 to 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 or the mitzvos we perform on Purim, and in the merit of *mishloach manos*, Hashem will grant us great gifts, and even gifts as wondrous as *techiyas hameisim*, the resurrection of the dead.

Haman's Goral

Another origin of the Purim miracle is Haman's lots.

The Bnei Yissaschar explains that generally when one chooses one item over

²¹. The Rambam (*Megillah* 2:17) writes, "It is better to give a lot of *matanos l'evyonim* than to make a large meal or increase the amount of *mishloach manos* that you give because there is nothing greater or more beautiful than to bring joy to the poor, to orphans, to widows, and to *geirim*. When one brings joy to these brokenhearted people, he is like the *Shechinah*, about whom it states (*Yeshayah* 57:15), להחיות רוח שפלים ולהחיות לב, נדכאים, "To revive the spirit of the lowly ones and to revive the heart of the despondent."

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, by nature, people have compassion for the poor. Therefore, this trait of sympathy for the poor doesn't need to be developed so 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. They might even be jealous of others, and now they are helping them. Therefore, to train ourselves in genuine caring for our fellow man (even for those who aren't poor) we give two gifts to each person.

another, he has a reason why he prefers this one. A *goral*, however, is a choice without reason. He simply decided to follow whatever the *goral* dictates.

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 – just because He wanted 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 participating in Achashveirosh'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.

After reading the megillah on Purim night, we say *כי פור המן נהפך לפורינו*, "Haman's *goral* turned out to be our good fortune."²²

Midrash Talpiyos (Achashveirosh) writes that Haman made the *goral* with dice. Haman rolled three dice, and they fell on the numbers 1 3 3. This is *roshei teivos* of א"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.

Now Haman wanted to know what numbers were on the bottom of the dice because that might show a bad omen for the Jewish nation. He found the numbers 6 4 4 (the numbers on opposite sides of the dice equal 7. So, when there is a 1 on top, there's a 6 on the bottom, and when there's a 3 on top, there's a 4 on the bottom.) The numbers 6 4 4 are the gematriya of the letters דו"ד. Haman was happy about that, too, because he took that as a bad omen for the Jewish nation. Dovid, the king of Yisrael, is at the bottom.

He was so excited about the Jewish nation's downfall that he picked up the dice to see the numbers of דו"ד on the side facing the table.

And that was Haman's error because when he picked up the dice and turned them over, דו"ד went to the top.

We can offer yet a third explanation of how Haman's *goral* became the salvation of the Jewish nation. It is because this *goral* frightened the Jewish nation, and their reaction was to place their trust in Hashem. They realized that they had nowhere to turn other than Hashem. And their bitachon saved them.

The Maharal (*Or Chadosh*) explains, "Everything has a limit on how long it can

22. The decree against the Jewish nation came because they participated in Achashveirosh'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 Achashveirosh's party, which is why Hashem prepared their salvation at this time. Their merit was that on Shabbos 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.

As it states (1:10), ביום השביעי כטוב לב המלך בין, "On the seventh day, when Achashveirosh's heart was happy with wine... he called for Vashti..." The Gemara (*Megillah* 12:) says that this seventh day was Shabbos, the day the Jewish nation eats, drinks, speaks *divrei Torah*, and sings *zemiros* to Hashem, unlike the *goyim* who eat, drink, and talk *nivul peh*.

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."

What was Haman's error?

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.²³

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 stressful 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, אגג being on top and 1 3 3 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 be named after Haman's *goral*.

Drashos

Purim and Yom Kippurim

The *Tikunei Zohar* (p.57:) describes the greatness of Yom Kippur, referring to as a

day like Purim. This is the reason Yom Kippur is called יום כ-פורים, which can be translated as "A day like Purim."

The *Mishnah Berurah* (90:28) quotes a *teshuvos Radvaz* that discusses a prisoner whose jailors permit him to daven with a minyan for one day. The question is, which day should he choose? Should he request to go to shul for Yom Kippur or rather on Purim? The Radvaz advises that he go to shul at the first opportunity because if he pushes off the offer, one will know what will be. Therefore, right away the following day, he should go to shul to daven.

Nevertheless, when we study his question, we notice the importance of specifically these two days, Purim and Yom Kippur. 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), וכפר עליו אהרן... אחת בשנה... "Aharon shall bring atonement...once a year... Once a year, shall he bring atonement upon it for your generations." Notice that אחת בשנה, "once a year," is written twice in this *pasuk*. The *Imrei Noam* (Dzhikov) *zt'l* explains that this

²³. It states (*Tehillim* 22:9), גול אל ה' יפלטנו, and the *Metzudas Dovid* explains, "Someone who rolls his trust on Hashem, Hashem will save him because Hashem desires those who trust in Him properly." 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 in her, and when they did so, the nation was saved.

Initially, the Yidden trusted that Esther would help them. They said, "Esther will certainly speak to Achashveirosh and annul the decree." But when Esther invited Haman to her party, people lost their trust in Esther; they placed their trust in Hashem. And immediately, the salvation started.

alludes to the two days of 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 bringing *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 more 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), שבת ה' בציון מועד ושבֹת, "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), וימי הפורים לא יעברו מתוך היהודים וזכרם לא יסוף מזרעם, "And these days of Purim should never cease 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..."

In some ways, Purim is greater than Yom Kippur. The Ruzhiner Rebbe *zt'l* said that since Yom Kippur is יום-כ-פורים, a day like Purim, it seems that Purim is greater.

We also mentioned above from the Imrei Noam of Dzikov *zt'l* that the atonement on Purim is achieved even without bringing *korbanos*.

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

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

It states (*Shulchan Aruch* 694:3), אין מודקדקין, 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 that asks. There will be those who don't deserve *tzedakah*, but if they stretch out their hand, we will give them.

On Purim, Hashem acts with us in the same way. Even if a person doesn't deserve atonement, if he asks for forgiveness, he will receive it.²⁴

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

A very special moment of Yom Kippur is when we say Keser. The Arizal said, "What a Yid can accomplish by the Keser on Yom Kippur can be achieved throughout the entire day of Purim!" He explains that on Yom Kippur, the world of Keser is revealed when we say Keser, but on Purim, it is for the entire day.²⁵

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

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

A king is moving to a new palace. All the precious items of the old palace have to be transported to the new one. This creates a serious problem because the king's most treasured items are generally kept under guard or locked up securely in the treasury. How can they risk taking them on a wagon to the new location?

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*), ובכן אבוא אל המלך אשר לא כדת, "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 to go inside to pray for anything he needs.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* (*I 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 said we would be buried beneath the mountain if we didn't accept the Torah.) But on Purim, the Jewish nation took the Torah out of love (see *Shabbos* 88.). Purim is also greater than Pesach. Pesach we celebrate liberation from slavery, while on Purim we celebrate salvation from death.

Thus, Purim is greater than Pesach, Shavuos and Yom Kippur. May we all have the merit to seize this opportunity and take advantage of these holy days.

Explaining the Aveirah of Achashveirosh's Banquet

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

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

"No thanks. Jews aren't permitted to drink that wine."

"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 are only allowed to eat such foods when one's 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 a knife, pointed it at the Yid and said, "Eat my food, or I'll kill you."

The king also has many secret documents whose contents cannot 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 were cautious and managed to bring the documents and the precious items to the new palace without any problems.

Then came the greatest challenge of all: bringing over the crown. How can they transport it while ensuring it won't get stolen?

They devised a solution: They put the crown on a simple wagon and covered it with straw. 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 make 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. The *Keser*, the King's crown is manifest throughout the entire day. But it is concealed, to hide it from those [*kelipos*] who seek to steal it.

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 telling me now that it was a joke. Why didn't you wait until I finished the meal?"

With this story, we can explain the aveirah that the Jewish nation committed by eating at Achashveirosh's feast. The sin was that they *wanted* to be there. They were permitted to eat at this meal because their lives would be at stake if they didn't, but they should have gone with a heavy heart.

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

The Chasam Sofer (*Toras Moshe, Esther*, ד"ה איתא, במגילה) says that they should have eaten 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, which isn't called eating, according to halachah). Then it would be as though they didn't eat non-kosher foods.

26. 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 called 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*). There were *malachim* who pleaded for me that I should live, but their claims weren't accepted. And then came a *malach* who told the court in heaven that 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 Achashveirosh at this feast.

27. We can also explain it in the following way:

Shame and humiliation also save from death, and Achashveirosh was shamed at this meal. His wife Vashti sent a message to Achashveirosh (*Megillah* 12:) "Listen here, my father's stable hand (Achashveirosh used to work in Nevuchadnezzar's royal stables): My father could drink with a thousand people and didn't get drunk. And

Vitur

Achashveirosh 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 Achashveirosh himself die like Balshatzar, who died when he used these holy utensils?

It is repeated in the name of Reb Shlomo Kluger *zt'l* that at this feast, Achashveirosh 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. Achashveirosh didn't demand that people do as he wanted. And the rule is that when one is *mevater*, this grants him life.²⁶

But Vashti wasn't *mevater* this time. She didn't let everyone do as they pleased. This is implied from the *pasuk*, גם ושתי המלכה עשתה, מושתה נשים בית המלכות, "Queen Vashti also made a 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 got the brunt of the punishment.²⁷

Miracles Within Nature

The miracles of Purim teach us a different lesson than the miracles of yetzias Mitzrayim. The Bnei Yissaschar (Adar 1:8) writes:

"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 each 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 weren't altered. Nevertheless, it was obvious to all that Hashem performed the miracle. No one thought that it happened by chance. Now, it became known to all that nature is also run by Hashem's *hashgachah*. Everything that happens in the world - what a person buys, the wealth and property he attains - is Hashem's *hashgachah*.²⁸ This realization became revealed 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 in the megillah. We would assume to find *pesukim* 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 in the *sofei teivos* of the megillah. For example, the *roshei teivos* of *יבא המלך והמן* spell *הוי"ה*, and the final letters of *וכל זה* spell *הוי"ה*, and the final letters of *איננו שיה לי* spell *הוי"ה*. The *Kedushas Levi* explains that this is because Hashem's name (and presence) was seen with several words, which represents several events. Each word represents another aspect of events, and when one takes a collective view of everything that happened in the megillah, that is when one recognizes Hashem's name and presence.

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

There are other places where Hashem's name is mentioned in the megillah. The holy

you drink a drop of wine and become drunk and insane." This shame saved Achashveirosh from death, and Vashti was killed instead. It says, *כלים מכלים שונים*, and *מכלים* can also be translated as shame. The shame saved Achashveirosh.

Another hint is from the *pasuk (Esther 1:18)* *וכדי ביוון וקצף*, which Rebbe Yechezkel of Kozhmir *zt'l* translated as, "The *bizyonos* and humiliation saved Achashveirosh from Hashem's anger."

28. The Bnei Yissaschar adds the following:

"Since everything is Hashem's *hashgachah*, one who works a lot won't earn more money, and one who works less won't earn less. Of course, one makes natural attempts to earn *parnassah* through business, but Hashem's *hashgachah* within nature grants him strength, courage, and ability to earn wealth."

Chazal say, *הרוצה שיתקיימו נכסיו יטע בהן אדר*, 'If one seeks to ensure that his property will remain with him, he should plant an *adar*.' This means he should remember the miracles of *אדר* and to recognize that even nature is from Hashem. When one believes this, his property will remain with him.

This is the reason the month is called *אדר* because this month, we become aware that *אדר*, Hashem dwells in this world (*Meor Einayim*).

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

The Maharal says that המלך isn't only **hinting** at "the King, Hashem." המלך in the megillah means Hashem. Proof of this is in the words (*Esther* 6:1), המלך, בלילה ההוא נודדה שנת המלך, "That night, the king's sleep was disturbed." The Gemara (*Megillah* 15:) states a *machlokes* regarding the translation of המלך in this *pasuk*. According to Rav Tanchum, המלך is Hashem, for He is the King of the world. The *pasuk* is saying that *keviyachol*, Hashem, 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. We think that Achashveirosh 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 11th, the 12th, the 13th, the 14th, and the 15th [of Adar], not later and not earlier."

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

The Mishnah adds, לא פחות ולא יותר, "not earlier and not later." This means we can only read the megillah on the aforementioned 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 הו"ה, Hashem's name for 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 הו"ה. Purim we celebrate that even when everything appears natural, Hashem is with us, directing each detail.

Finding the Miracles in *Megillas Esther*

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

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

The megillah begins (1:2), כשבת המלך אחשורוש, על כסא מלכותו אשר בשושן הבירה, "When King Achashveirosh sat on his throne, which was in the capital city Shushan." The Vilna Gaon *zy" a* 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.

Achashveirosh also wanted 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. When it was completed, it was too heavy to transfer to Bavel, so Achashveirosh moved the capital city to Shushan. Shushan became the new capital city of the Persian Empire.

The Vilna Gaon writes, "This is the meaning of the *pasuk*, ... כשבת המלך אחשורוש... בשושן. Achashveirosh 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 that led up to the miracle for Bnei Yisrael. Mordechai and Esther lived

in Shushan, so Hakadosh Baruch arranged that Achashveirosh should move his capital there."

This is the astounding miracle implied in this pasuk. The two *gedolim* of Bnei Yisrael, Mordechai and Esther, from whom will come the salvation for Bnei Yisrael, lived in Shushan, so Hashem arranged that Achashveirosh 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.²⁹

The Vilna Gaon adds, "Chazal tell us that one must read the entire megillah, even the parts that are seemingly superfluous. For example, why is knowing about Achashveirosh's wealth and power important? However, every *pasuk* of the megillah tells us another facet of this great miracle."

Here's another spectacular miracle. It is taught by the Alshich HaKadosh:

Haman arrived at the palace of Achashveirosh just when Achashveirosh wanted to know how to reward Mordechai. If Haman had come earlier, he would see 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 details.

The Malbim *zt'l* expresses the wonder why Achashveirosh didn't reward Mordechai

at the time Mordechai saved his life. 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 happen if Haman arrived just one day earlier to request permission to hang Mordechai on the gallows. Achashveirosh would probably agree because Achashveirosh 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 alert 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.

A Gantz Yur Purim – Purim All Year Long

The Shem Mishmeul said there is no kiddush on Purim, so we shouldn't make havdalah, either. This means we should keep the teshuvah and inspiration we attain on Purim for the entire year.

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

29. 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 Hashem had Achashveirosh and his entire cabinet move to Persia rather than have Mordechai and Esther come to Bavel.

The Rambam (introduction to *Pirush HaMishmayos*) discusses that Hashem takes exceptional care of his tzaddikim. He writes that Hakadosh Baruch Hu can give a king a desire to build a beautiful palace, and "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, in our story, Achashveirosh moves to Shushan, but it is all for Mordechai, Esther, and the Jewish nation.

This is hinted in Esther's words (5:8) מחר אעשה כדבר המלך, "Tomorrow I will do as the king says."

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

The wealthy man replied, "Could be. 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 cover all my debts."

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

Shalosh seudos time, the poor man sees that he is connecting well with this wealthy person, so he 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 looks for the wealthy man, and he can't find him. When he finally finds him, the poor man says, "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."

"We discussed that 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 actually keep them after Purim passes.

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