

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
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Purim



Torah WELLSPRINGS

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Torah Wellsprings - Purim

Prepared for Purim - or Not

It states (Esther 1:21) וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ כְּדַבַּר מְמוֹזָן. The Beis Aharon (p.69a) explains this to mean as follows וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ, Hashem will do כְּדַבַּר מְמוֹזָן, in accordance with how the person prepared himself for the holiday. It is known that when one prepares himself for a *yom tov* or for a *mitzvah*, the *kedushah* of the good deeds, and the השפעות, bounty that Hashem gives us, increase immensely.¹

About *Matan Torah* Chazal (Shabbos 88a) teach: "(Shemos 19:17) וַיִּתְּצוּ בְּתַחֲתֵית הָהָר, 'They stood at the bottom of the mountain.' This tells us that Hakadosh Baruch Hu raised the mountain [Har Sinai] above them, as if it were a barrel, and Hashem said to the nation, 'If you accept the Torah, it will be good. Otherwise, you will be buried there.' Rava bar Acha said ... מִכַּאֵן מוֹדְעָה רַבָּה לְאוֹרֵייתָא, 'From this the nation can claim that they were forced to receive the Torah!'

Rashi explains that if they don't keep the Torah, the nation now has an excuse. Rashi writes, "If they will be brought to judgment, 'Why didn't you keep the Torah that you accepted?' They have an answer. They can say that they were forced to receive the Torah."

The Gemara continues, אַף עַל פִּי כֵן הָדָר קָבְלוּ, בימי אחשורוש, 'Nevertheless, they received the Torah again in the days of Achashveirosh, as it states (Esther 9:27) קִיְמוּ וּקְבְּלוּ הַיְהוּדִים, קִיְמוּ, they accepted, מִדָּה שֶׁקִּיְבְּלוּ כָּבֵר, the Torah that they had already received."

Rashi writes, בימי אחשורוש, "In Achashveirosh's time [they received the Torah again] due to their love of the miracle that happened to them."

They can no longer claim that they were forced to keep the Torah because they accepted the Torah with love. This occurred in the days of Mordechai and Esther.

There is an aspect of *matan Torah* on Purim, too. On Shavuos, we received the Torah out of fear, and on Purim, we receive the Torah again, from love. Before Shavuos, we have three days for preparation (the שלשת ימי הגבלה). Rebbe Yitzchak of Vorka zt'l says that similarly, before Purim, we have three days to prepare. As the Mishnah states at the beginning of Masechta Megillah (2a), מְגִלָּה, וְקָרְאתָ בְּאַחַד עֶשְׂרִים, בְּשָׁלְשִׁים עֶשְׂרִים, בְּאַרְבָּעָה עֶשְׂרִים, "The megillah is read on the days: 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 [of Adar]." Today, we don't read the Megillah on the 11th, 12th, and 13th of Adar, only on the 14th and 15th. Nevertheless, the 11th, 12th, and 13th remain special days. They are like the שלשת ימי הגבלה, the three days we prepare for *matan Torah*. We prepare for the *matan Torah* of Purim, and for the mitzvos that we will perform when Purim arrives. The preparations will elevate the mitzvos to higher levels, and we will receive many spiritual and gashmiyus blessings.

Therefore, it is good to prepare for Purim. We can do this by studying about the holiday and the mitzvos, and we can increase our yearning and aspirations, and we can daven that we should succeed in performing the mitzvos properly.

Nevertheless, Hashem knows the hardships of the times. People don't have *yishuv hadaas*; they don't have time, and it is hard to prepare properly for Purim. Therefore, Hashem has compassion for us, and even without preparation, Hashem gives us immense bounty.

1. The gematria of הכנה is 80, the same as יסוד, foundation. This is a hint that the foundation of proper mitzvah performance is its preparation.

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l told a mashal of an oil merchant who came to a village. The villagers brought their empty vessels to him. One brought a jug, one brought a pot, etc., and the merchant filled the vessels with oil. Eventually, the villagers ran out of vessels. The merchant said, "You want to buy more oil, and I want to sell it to you, but if you don't have vessels to receive it, I have no way to give it to you." This mashal describes the importance of preparing for a yom tov, and for Purim. Hashem wants to give gashmiyus and ruchniyus, and we want to receive, but we need vessels to receive the spiritual and worldly goods. Each step we take in our preparation for Purim prepares another jug, another container to receive Hashem's bounty that He wants to give us. Nevertheless, as we wrote, Hashem has compassion on us, and if we didn't prepare, Hashem gives us a vessel so that we can receive the bounty of the holiday.

On Purim, when one gives mishloach manos, he gives the dish, too. During the year, when one gives a gift to another person, he wants the container back. (Perhaps not in our generation, when people use plastic dishes and containers, but going back to the days when a gift was placed in a glass or silver container, the giver expected to receive the container back.) However, with mishloach manos, the container is also given, together with the gift. This hints that on Purim, when Hashem gives us bounty, He gives it together with the vessel, which means that even if a person didn't prepare for Purim, he doesn't have anywhere to place Hashem's bounty, it's not a problem, because Hashem will give us the bounty *together* with the container.²

When the miracle of Purim occurred, the Jewish nation wasn't worthy. They weren't at a high level due to their aveiros, as Chazal tell us. Nevertheless, Hashem saved them. Therefore, we shouldn't be surprised, Hashem will perform miracles for us, too, on Purim, even if we didn't prepare, even if we have aveiros, and even if we aren't worthy.

The Chasam Sofer (Drashos) quotes from Chazal that Haman's gezeiros were decreed after the Jewish nation had aveiros. They had bowed down to Nevuchadnezzar's avodah zarah, and they partook in Achashveirosh's seudah. Heaven agreed that Haman's decree of annihilation was fitting for them, r'l. Nevertheless, Hashem saved them and performed miracles for them. This is actually one of the great miracles of Purim that the salvation came despite their aveiros.

Vashti was killed at Achashveirosh's meal, and her vacancy made place for Esther to come and save the nation. The Chasam Sofer points out that at the time of the aveirah (eating at Achashveirosh's feast), Hashem was already preparing the stages for the salvation of Bnei Yisrael! This was an amazing kindness and miracle.

Hashem saved us from Haman and from Achashveirosh, not because we were worthy, but rather because of His love and compassion for us. The Chasam Sofer teaches that therefore, Shulchan Aruch (694:3) tells us, אֵין מְדַקְדָּקִים בְּמַעוֹת פּוּרִים אֲלָא כָּל מִי שֶׁפּוֹשֵׁט יָדוֹ לְטַל נוֹתְנִים לוֹ, "We aren't cautious [where to give] tzedakah for Purim. Whoever puts out his hand to receive, we give to him." We aren't particular

2. Another indication to this concept is from Shulchan Aruch (694:3). It states, כָּל מִי שֶׁפּוֹשֵׁט יָדוֹ לְטַל נוֹתְנִים לוֹ. The literal meaning of this halachah is that when someone says, "I don't have money to prepare a Purim seudah", we give him money without investigating whether his claim is true or not. We can also read the phrase בְּדֶרֶךְ רַמֵּי, that the phrase is hinting at the following idea: כָּל מִי שֶׁפּוֹשֵׁט יָדוֹ לְטַל, whoever stretches out his hands in prayer, and asks his Father in heaven for salvation, יְדוֹ... נוֹתְנִים לוֹ, Heaven gives him a hand. This means that even if he didn't prepare a vessel with which to receive Hashem's bounty, יְדוֹ... נוֹתְנִים לוֹ, Hashem gives him a hand and a vessel, so that he should be able to receive the bounty and the salvation that Hashem desires to shower on him.

as to where we give tzedakah. Everyone can receive. The Chasam Sofer says that just as Hashem wasn't picky with us, and He saved us although we weren't worthy, we also aren't particular with others, and we help whoever puts out his hand for assistance.

We understand from this that even if we didn't prepare for this holy day, as we should have, Hashem will have compassion on us and perform miracles for us, as He did in the days of Mordechai and Esther.³

The Midrash says, "Even if all the yomim tovim will cease to exist, Purim will continue to be, because it states *לֹא יִסּוּף מִזְרָעָם לֵאמֹר הַיּוֹמִים הַאֵלֶּה לֹא יִעָבְרוּ*, "These days of Purim should never cease among Yidden, nor shall their remembrance perish from their descendants."

This is a surprising Midrash. Why should the yomim tovim cease to exist? Isn't the Torah forever?

Someone asked this question to the Rashba, and the Rashba wrote this question in his teshuvos (Teshuvos HaRashba vol.1 teshuvah 93): "Why would one think that something from the Torah will ever cease? Not one letter, and not the *קוצו של יוד*, drop of the letter yud [will ever change from the Torah]!"

The Rashba replies that due to sin, it is possible that the yomim tovim might end. As it states (Eichah 2:6) *אֲשַׁכַּח ה' בְּצִיּוֹן מוֹעֵד וְשַׁבָּת*, "Hashem made Tzion oblivious of yom tov and Shabbos..."

3. We sing, *וגם חרבונוה זכור לטוב*, which can mean that even those who are *חורבנה*, destroyed by sin, *זכור לטוב*, they too are remembered for good on Purim and can attain atonement and salvation.

4. The Rashba adds that the Midrash says that the same is with Yom Kippur. It will never cease, and we will always have the atonement of Yom Kippur. This is because it states (Vayikra 16:34) *וְהִיְתָה זֹאת לָכֶם לְחֻקֵּי עוֹלָם*, "This shall be to you *an eternal decree* to bring atonement upon Bnei Yisrael for all their sins once a year."

Although about Pesach it states (Shemos 12:14) *וְחִגַּגְתֶּם אוֹתוֹ חַג לְדוֹרֹתֵיכֶם חֻקֵּי עוֹלָם תִּחְגְּגוּהוּ*, "You shall celebrate it as a yom tov for Hashem for your generations, as an *eternal decree* shall you celebrate it." This is a command – in each generation, we must celebrate the yom tov of Pesach. But with regards to Yom Kippur and Purim, the Torah is promising that these yomim tovim will always exist. They will never be taken from us, even if we aren't worthy, and even if we have aveiros, *chalilah*.

But regarding Purim, Hashem promised that (9:28) *לֹא יִעָבְרוּ מִתּוֹךְ הַיְּהוּדִים וְזָכְרָם לֹא יִסּוּף מִזְרָעָם*, "These days of Purim should never cease among the Yidden, nor shall their remembrance perish from their descendants." Purim will be forever, in all generations.⁴

We understand from this that no aveirah will ever make us unworthy of Purim. So, certainly, we should prepare for Purim, and the more we prepare, the better. But even when we aren't worthy, Purim will be for us. Miracles and salvations will occur, as they did in the past.

Tefillah

Tana d'Bei Eliyahu (ch.20) writes that when Agag, the king of Amalek, was captured (by Shaul HaMelech and his army), he cried and moaned in prison. He said, "Woe to me. Perhaps I will not leave descendants in the world!" Tana d'Bei Eliyahu says that in the merit of these tears, he merited descendants, and Haman came from him. Reb Chaim Kanievsky zt'l says that we see from this source the amazing power of tefillah. It doesn't make a difference who is praying or what he is praying for. Tefillah is so powerful before Hashem that every prayer has an effect. Agag was a rasha, from the family of Amalek, and his prayers were that he should have offspring, which is entirely against Hashem's will. Hashem wants Amalek's memory to be erased – not perpetuated. Nevertheless, his tefillos were answered. That is the power of tefillah. Let us learn

from this that when a Yid davens to Hashem, and his requests are the will of Hashem, the tefillos will be very effective.

After reading the megillah, we say שושנת להודיע שכל קויד לא יבושו ולא יכלמו, יעקב, and we say, "To make known that all those who trust in You, they will never be embarrassed – all those who trust in You." The Brisker Rav zt'l (פניני הגר"י עמוד פ"ג) explains that this means that the purpose of Megillas Esther is to make known that Hakadosh Baruch Hu answers the tefillos of Bnei Yisrael when they call out to Him.

Taanis Esther is a day for tefillah. The Divrei Chaim zt'l would stay in his room throughout Taanis Esther. When a question arose, he would answer it quickly and return to his avodah. Also, Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev zt'l would spend the entire day of Taanis Esther alone with his Creator. On Taanis Esther, no one was able to talk to him about matters of this world. Tzaddikim said that due to the Berdichever Rav's avodah on this day, he subjugated the kelipos of the seventy nations.⁵

One year on Purim, Rebbe Shimon Nosson Nata zt'l, the Lelover Rebbe, was in his room for a very long time. Many people arrived to give him mishloach manos. They were waiting outside his room, but he wasn't coming out, and he didn't open the door for them. Reb Matisyahu Deutsch z"l was there, and he filled his heart with courage and opened the Rebbe's door. He apologized to the Rebbe for disturbing him but explained that many people were waiting for him. The Lelover Rebbe replied, "My avodah of the entire year is dependent on Purim. Do you want to take this away from me?" Then he instructed him to leave the room and to close the door behind him.

His son, Reb Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l, would do something similar. He spent a lot of time saying Tehillim on Purim.

We should learn from their ways. Purim is an ideal time to invest in tefillah and to arouse Hashem's compassion for His children.

נוהג כצאן יוסף (printed in Frankfort, year 5478) writes that the custom is to come to the beis medresh

5. 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 joyous 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 protected from sin. Fasting causes the Satan not to 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 תפלה. The final stanza of this *selichos* is שומע תפילה והעבר תפלה, 'Listen to our prayers and remove sin...' When saying these words, have *kavanah* that you shouldn't sin, *chas veshalom*, as a result of the eating, drinking, and festivities of Purim."

The Kav HaYashar further teaches that *taanis Esther* is an auspicious day for *tefillah* for all our needs. He writes, "People from the villages should come to the city, so they can daven in a beis knesses on *taanis Esther* because *taanis Esther* is very *mesugal* for our *tefillos* to be answered, in the merit of Mordechai and Esther. Whoever needs a salvation should take the time to say *Tehillim* chapter 22, "אילת השחר," and afterward pour out his heart in prayer before Hashem to request his needs, and 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."

The *Pele Yoetz* (*Honestieple*) 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*), וּבְבוֹאָהּ, לפני המלך אמר, which is written in the singular tense. It alludes to a person who is davening by himself. Hashem answers even his *tefillos* on Purim.

It is written in *Segulas Yisrael*, "I learned from a *gadol z'l* that on Purim it is *mesugal* to rise early in the morning and daven a lot, and specifically ask Hashem for בני היי ומוזני, 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.)⁸

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

It is also a good time for tefillah. Today, in many batei midrashim, there are minyanim either on Purim night or early Purim morning to recite Tehillim.

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 laughed (because Rebbe Naftali's *brachos* were a ברכת צדיק, and not a ברכת הדיוט). 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. *Ovdei Hashem* ask for success in learning, to daven with *kavanah*, and the like. But simple people ask for *parnassah*. He wants a ברכת הדיוט, a *brachah* for the matters that a simple person requests."

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* repeated this story at his *Purim seudah*, adding a lesson 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.

The Sfas Emes writes that Purim is a time for *mahapeichos*, revolutions (ונהפך הוא). This is what happened to Haman. He started at a very low level, rose to the highest level, fell again, and was hanged. It is a time when things can turn around.

Once, in Europe, in the time of the Baal Shem Tov *zy'a*, there was a drought, and everyone davened for rain, 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 reached for his bottle, they stopped him and asked him to daven for rain.

The man replied, "Don't you see that I'm a *shicker*? Why are you asking me to daven for rain? You are great scholars. You should daven."

The students replied, "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.

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

The Baal Shem Tov told the following story:

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

"We couldn't pay the rent, so our landlord threw us in here to die..." they cried.

"How much money do you need?"

They told him. It was the exact amount of money he had with him, which he had taken with him to perform his aveirah. It was a large sum. He overcame his yetzer hara and gave them all the money he had with him.

This good deed created a commotion in heaven. It was decided that he would be rewarded with the power of tefillah. Whatever he would ask, Hashem would fulfill.

The problem was that he might use his strength for negative things; 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 power of tefillah. Whatever we request is granted. To hide this great gift that Hashem gave us, Chazal decreed that people should drink. People get involved in that and forget that they have the power of tefillah.

Sometimes people say, "But I don't feel anything." They aren't inclined to invest in Tehillim and tefillos on Purim and Taanis Esther because they say they don't feel the kedushah of Purim (...as if everyone else *does* feel the kedushah!). It doesn't make a difference whether 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 ask.

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

"Whether you feel it or not, you are now on the hundredth floor. Get out!"

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

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

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

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

A wealthy couple was childless. The husband asked his wife to go to Reb Meir of Premishlan zt'l for a brachah for children. The husband said, "Tell the rebbe that even if I must lose all my money to get this yeshuah, I agree to that, 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 had wanted to say. The rebbe said, "But you spoke correctly. Hashem can do anything. Why shouldn't you stay with your money and have a child too?" And that is what occurred.

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

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

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

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

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

The 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.

The Miracle Came from Tefillah

The Midrash (*Esther Rabba* 7:13) states, "When Haman plotted to destroy the Jewish nation, Eliyah HaNavi z'l ran, in a בהלה, confusion, to the avos (Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov) and to Moshe Rabbeinu, and he said, 'Holy forefathers! For how long will you sleep in your graves? Why aren't you paying attention to the tzarah the Yidden are in? The malachim, the sun, moon, and the stars are all crying bitterly, and you are keeping distant and not paying attention.'

"The avos asked, 'What is the reason for this decree?'

"Eliyahu replied, 'Bnei Yisroel ate at Achashveirosh's party, and it was therefore decreed that they will be destroyed and that their memory be erased forever.'

"The avos replied, 'If they transgressed Hakadosh Baruch Hu's laws and therefore

the decree was signed, what can we do about it?'

"Eliyahu returned to Moshe Rabbeinu and said, 'Devoted shepherd of Bnei Yisrael. Many times, the Jewish people's lives were in danger, and you prayed for them. You annulled the decree, and the nation was spared. [Now, once again, daven for the Jewish people.]'

"Moshe replied, 'Is there a tzaddik in the generation?'

"Eliyahu replied, 'There is. His name is Mordechai.'

"Moshe said, 'Tell him about the decree. He will daven that the decree should be annulled from the earth, and you and I will daven before Hakadosh Baruch Hu in heaven.'

"Eliyahu said, 'But the decree has already been written.'

"Moshe said, 'If the decree was sealed with clay, our tefillos could be effective. If the decree was sealed in blood, what will be will be.'

"Eliyahu replied that the decree was signed in clay."

Moshe repeated, 'Tell Mordechai about the decree.'

"Eliyahu went to Mordechai and told him. As it states (*Esther* 4:1) ומרדכי ידע את כל אשר נעשה ויקרע מרדכי את בגדיו, 'Mordechai knew everything that happened and Mordechai ripped his clothing.'..." He knew about the decree because Eliyahu told him about it. Moshe and Eliyahu davened in heaven,

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

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

Mordechai davened from the earth, and the decree was annulled."

It states (*Esther 2:5*), איש יהודי היה בשושן הבירה ושמור, "There was a Yid in the capital Shushan. His name was Mordechai, the son of Yair, the son of Shimi, the son of Kish..."

The Gemara (*Megillah 12:*) says that the *pasuk* isn't only mentioning Mordechai's *yichus* (because if it were, it would tell his *yichus* up to Binyamin). The *pasuk* is coming to teach us about Mordechai HaTzaddik. The Gemara says בן שהאיר עיניהם של ישראל בתפלתו, "Mordechai was someone who enlightened the eyes of Yidden with his *tefillos*. בן שמעי implies, בן ששמע א"ל תפלתו, he was a person whose *tefillos* were heard by Hashem. בן קיש means, שהקיש על שערי רחמים ונפתחו לו, "He knocked on the doors of heaven, and they were opened for him."

We can wonder why Mordechai was named קיש, because he was הקיש, knocking on the gates of heaven. It seems more appropriate to call him יפתח, hinting at the fact that he opened the gates of heaven with his *tefillah*.

We can explain that we are praising Mordechai for not giving up. He knocked at the gates of heaven, and when the gates didn't open, he knocked again and again until they opened. His *tefillos* were answered, and Klal Yisrael was saved.

The Rambam (end of *מנון המצוות*) writes:

"The *nevi'im* with the *beis din* established and commanded that we read the *megillah* at its designated time to remember Hakadosh Baruch Hu's praises and the salvation He performed for us, and that He was near to

listen to our shouts, so we will bless Him and praise Him and to let the upcoming generations know that what the Torah says is true [that Hashem listens to our *tefillos*]. As it states (*Devarim 4:7*), ומו גוי גדול אשר לו אלוקים, 'Which great nation has a god as close to them like Hashem our G-d who is close to us whenever we pray to Him.'⁹

The word מגילה is associated with *bitachon*, as it states (*Tehillim 22:9*), גול אל ה' יפלתהו, "Roll [your problems] onto Hashem, and He will save you." מגילה comes from the word גול, roll, associated with *bitachon*, which is what saved us in the era of Mordechai and Esther.

The Gemara (*Megillah 15*) asks, "Why did Esther invite Haman to the party...? So the Yidden won't say, 'We have a sister in the palace.'"

Initially, the Yidden trusted that Esther would help them. When Haman made his evil decree, they said, "Esther will certainly speak with Achashveirosh and annul the decree." But then Esther invited Haman to her party. The people lost trust in Esther helping them, and they placed their trust in Hashem. That's when they were saved.

Similarly, when Haman drew lots, he thought that he could destroy the Jewish nation, but the lots caused the Jewish nation to turn to Hashem and trust in Him. They felt desperate, and they turned their eyes to Hashem, and whenever Yidden turn to Hashem, they are saved. Therefore, the *yom tov* is called פורים, named after the פור. The פור was a positive moment for the Jewish nation because it brought them to place their trust in Hashem.

9. The Midrash tells about a ship that came to an inhabited island. They sent the only Yid aboard to go to the island to bring back provisions. The Yid asked, "Why me? I'm a stranger on this island, just like you. No one knows me here. I will be all alone there..."

The captain answered him, "A Yid is never alone. As it states, כה' אלקינו בכל קראנו אליו, when you call to Hashem, Hashem is near you, and He will help you."

Miracles Each Purim

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

It states (*Esther* 9:28) וְהַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה נִזְכָּרִים וְנַעֲשִׂים כָּכָל דְּיוֹר וְדוֹר, "These days shall be remembered and celebrated by every generation..." Every year, and every generation, the light and the miracles of Purim recur.

Reb Chaim Vital *zt'l* teaches this lesson from the following pasuk (*Esther* 9:28), וְיָמֵי הַפְּוִרִים, "These days of Purim should never cease among Yidden, nor shall their remembrance perish from their descendants." On Purim, we don't only remember the miracles of the past, but they happen every year again.

The Arizal writes, "This 'light' doesn't come, not on Shabbos and not on Yom Tov, only on Purim." Purim is a very special time, a kedushah that doesn't exist on any other day of the year, and together with this holiness comes the many miracles, which occur each year.

The Maor Einayim writes that just as we were saved from Haman on Purim, every year, we are saved from our enemies who want to harm us, in the merit of Purim.¹⁰

Before reading the Megillah, we say the brachah שַׁעֲשֵׂה נִסִּים לְאַבּוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בּוֹמֵן הַזֶּה, that Hashem performed miracles in those days, and at this time. However, the Sfas Emes (ד"ה והימים 5760) asks, we read the megillah on the 14th of Adar. No miracle occurred on the 14th of Adar. The miracle occurred on the 13th of Adar, when they won the war! As Rashi writes (*Megillah* 2a) דַּעִיקָר הַנֶּס בּוֹ הִיָּה, the primary miracle was on the 13th of Adar, when they won the war, and on the 14th, they celebrated the miracle that occurred. So, why do we say on the fourteenth of Adar, שַׁעֲשֵׂה נִסִּים, that Hashem performed miracles in those days, at this time? The miracles weren't exactly "at this time."

The Sfas Emes answers that we are blessing Hashem for the miracles that happen each year on the 14th of Adar when we read the megillah and celebrate Purim. We praise Hashem שַׁעֲשֵׂה נִסִּים לְאַבּוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם, that Hashem made miracles on the 13th of Adar in those days, and that Hashem continues performing miracles for us in our generation, בּוֹמֵן הַזֶּה, in this time, on the 14th of Adar, when we read the megillah and perform the mitzvos.¹¹

10. The Gemara (*Megillah* 13b) says that Haman said lashon hara on the Jewish nation, that throughout the year, they say: שַׁבַּת הַיּוֹם, פֶּסַח הַיּוֹם, Today is Shabbos... Today is Pesach..." The simple meaning is that when they are called upon to work for the king as a tax, they always come up with different excuses; it is Shabbos, or it is Pesach, and they can't work. But we can also explain that Haman couldn't stand that the Jewish nation would say "Today is Shabbos... Today is Pesach..." They didn't celebrate the holidays solely to commemorate what occurred in the past; they understood that Pesach occurs each year, anew. Every year, there is an aspect of yetzias Mitzrayim for the Jewish nation. Every week, there is Shabbos, a day that the King of the world rests from His work and creation. It was the fact that the Jewish people related to the yomim tovim with such vibrancy that made Haman so upset.

Despite Haman's distress with this phenomenon, another holiday, Purim, was created. It isn't a mere celebration and commemoration of a past miracle; instead, each year, a new Purim miracle occurs.

11. The Chasam Sofer (*Drashos* vol.1, Purim 5596) writes that Purim should have been on the thirteenth of Adar since that is the date they won the war against their enemies. Why do we celebrate on the following day, on the 14th, the day after the war ended? It is to ensure that there will always be a place in the world where Torah is studied. By celebrating on the days they rested from the war, there are two days to celebrate: the

The Holiness of the Day

Yom Kippur is the holiest day of the year, but Purim is even higher. Tikunei Zohar (57b) says, "The kedushah of Yom Kippur is like the kedushah of Purim. This is the reason Yom Kippur is called **יום כפורים**, a day like Purim." The holy Ruzhiner zt'l explains that Yom Kippur is **יום כ-פורים**, a day like Purim, which means Purim is even higher.¹²

The Vilna Gaon zt'l would celebrate the entire day of Purim. He explained that Purim and Yom Kippur are two parts of the same day. There is a rule on Yom Tov, **הצי לכם וחצי** לה, half of the day should be for celebration, and half the day should be for avodas Hashem - Torah and tefillah. However, Purim and Yom Kippur are the same day. On Yom Kippur, we keep the half of **הצי לה**, because we are in the beis medresh the entire day, with tefillos and with teshuvah. The **הצי לכם**, the part of the day for celebration, is performed on Purim.

Reb Tzaddok HaKohen zt'l (Pri Tzaddik, Shemos, Purim 1, **ד"ה ואיתא בתקונים**) writes that Purim is like Yom Kippur. Regarding Yom Kippur, Chazal say **עיצומו של יום מכפר**, the specialness of the day, itself, brings atonement. Similarly, for Purim **עיצומו של יום עושה מחיית עמלק**, the specialness of the day itself brings the destruction of Amalek.

The sefer **בנת ישראל** proves that just as Yom Kippur brings atonement, the same occurs on Purim. He writes that the atonement of Purim is *greater* than the atonement of Yom Kippur. This is because it states in Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 695:2) **וַיֵּשׁ אֹמְרִים דָּאם הַזִּיק אֶחָד אֶת חֲבֵרוֹ מִכַּחַת שְׂמֹחַת פּוּרִים, פְּטוּר מִלְשָׁלֵם**, "Some say that if someone harms his

friend due to the festivities and joy of Purim, he doesn't have to pay for the damage." This halachah isn't so on Yom Kippur. If someone harms his fellow man on Yom Kippur, he will have to pay. He is only exempt from paying on Purim. We see that the atonement of Purim is greater than that of Yom Kippur.

About the *korbanos* on Yom Kippur, it states (Shemos 30:10), **וּכְפַר עָלָיו אֶהְרֹן... אַחַת בְּשָׁנָה... אַחַת**, **בְּשָׁנָה יִכְפֹּר עָלָיו לְדוֹרוֹתֵיכֶם**, "Aharon shall bring atonement...once a year... Once a year, shall he bring atonement upon it for your generations." Notice that **אַחַת בְּשָׁנָה**, "once a year," is written twice in this *pasuk*. The Imrei Noam (Dzhikov) zt'l explains that this alludes to Purim and Yom Kippur. The difference between them is that the atonement of Yom Kippur comes from the *korbanos*, while the *kaparah* of Purim is achieved even without *korbanos*.

The Gemara (Megillah 10b) discusses Megillas Esther, and it begins studying its *pasukim*. Suddenly, the Gemara changes topic and writes, **מְקוֹם אֲרוֹן אֵינוֹ מִן הַמִּדָּה**, that the aron [in the Kodesh Kadoshim of the Beis HaMikdash] didn't have measurements. The Gemara explains that the Kodesh Kadoshim was 20 x 20 amos. There were ten amos on each side of the aron to the wall of the Kodesh Kadoshim. This means there were ten amos to the right side of the aron, and ten amos to its left side, ten amos in front of it, and ten amos before it. So, where was the aron itself? The areas around the aron were 20 x 20, so how was there place for the aron? The answer is, **מְקוֹם אֲרוֹן אֵינוֹ מִן הַמִּדָּה**, the aron didn't take up place. It was a miracle. But why is this idea written in the Gemara, where the Gemara is discussing Megillas Esther?

¹⁴th (in unwallled cities) and the 15th (in walled cities, to commemorate Shushan, which rested from the war on the 15th of Adar). In that manner, there will always be Torah studied in the world. While some people are celebrating Purim, others will have time to study Torah. However, if the celebration of Purim had been on the thirteenth, the day of the war, everyone would have Purim on the same day.

12. The Zohar says, "In the future we will enjoy pleasures on Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur will change from being a day of affliction to being a day of pleasure." This is why Yom Kippur is called **יום כ-פורים**, a day like Purim. Yom Kippur will become like Purim.

We can explain that the Gemara is telling us that just as we don't understand how the aron didn't take up room in the Kodosh Kadoshim, similarly, it is impossible for us to fathom the miracles and the holiness of Purim. Purim is a day beyond time and place, a day of miracles, a day of wonders.

The Megillah

It states (Esther 8:16) לַיְהוּדִים הַיְתָה אוֹרָה וְשִׂמְחָה וְשִׂשׂוֹן וְיָקָר, "The Yidden had light and gladness and joy and honor." לקוטי מהרי"ל (a student of Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk zt'l) writes, "From reading the megillah, one can receive בני חיי children, life, and parnassah, and together with these, one can receive all other good *hashpaos*."¹³

It states in Shulchan Aruch (693:1, see Mishnah Berurah) that after reading the Megillah, one says kaddish תהקבל, the kaddish that is said after tefillos. This tells us that reading the megillah is like a tefillah before Hashem. Another hint to this concept is the Gemara (Megillah 4a) "A person is obligated to read the megillah at night and to repeat it by day, as it states (Tehillim 22:3) אֶלְקֵי אֶקְרָא יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה וְלֹא תַעֲנֶה וְלַיְלָה, "Hashem, I call out by day, but you answer not; and by night, but there is no respite for me."

The Gemara (Shabbos 88.) says that at Har Sinai, Hashem placed Har Sinai over their heads, and told them that if they don't receive the Torah, they will be buried under the mountain. So, they were forced to receive the Torah. However, after the Purim miracle, the nation accepted the Torah again, this time with love. The Chasam Sofer (*Drashos* p.164.) writes, "Therefore, the megillah is more honored, and greater than the Torah itself." There's an aspect of the megillah that is greater than the Torah itself, because the Jewish nation accepted the megillah with love.

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

Shei'aris Yisrael of Valednik zt'l (*Shaar HaZmanim* 2, Purim אף י"ה) teaches that reading the

13. The לקוטי מהרי"ל explains this from the pasuk (Esther 8:16) וְשִׂשׂוֹן וְיָקָר וְשִׂמְחָה וְאוֹרָה, "The Yidden had light and joy, and gladness, and honor." This pasuk alludes to בני חיי children, life, and parnassah. This is because Chazal (Megillah 16b) tell us that אוֹרָה is Torah, וְשִׂשׂוֹן is milah, and יָקָר is tefillin. The לקוטי מהרי"ל writes, "We can explain b'derech remez that אוֹרָה alludes to parnassah, because אין קמח אין תורה, one can't have Torah without parnassah. וְשִׂשׂוֹן is milah, this means that there will be children. יָקָר is tefillin, this alludes to life, because Chazal (Menachos 44a) say that when one is cautious with tefillin, he lives long. So, from reading the megillah, one can be zocheh to בני חיי children, life, and parnassah, and along with these, all other good *hashpaos*."

Tzaddikim said that when the megillah is read, those who don't have children can have a salvation and bear children (also, included is if someone has צער גידול בנים, that his children aren't going on the proper path, he can attain his salvation on Purim). Therefore, the megillah begins with וַיְהִי בְיָמַי, and Chazal tell us that וַיְהִי בְיָמַי is an expression of distress, and the final words of the megillah are וְדָבַר שְׁלוֹם לְכָל יִרְעוּ. This means that everything can turn around (וְנִרְפָּא הוּא), and instead of the tzaar, he will have children, and they will bring him nachas. He will merit seeing children studying Torah and performing mitzvos.

A person came to Rebbe Aharon of Belz zt'l on Purim to ask for a brachah for children. Rebbe Aharon told him, "Purim is mesugal for bearing healthy children, זרע של קיימא." This is as the Chozeh of Lublin zt'l said, Hakadosh Baruch Hu performs the mitzvah of לרעהו איש משלוח מנות איש לרעהו, means children לרעהו, means to Klal Yisrael. This means Hashem gives children to the Jewish people.

megillah atones for גילוי עריות, adultery, and is therefore called מגילה from the word גילוי.

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 profusely, and it was hard to hear the words. He also cried copiously when he read (3:2), ומרדכי לא יכרע ולא ישתחוה, "But Mordechai would not bow and would not prostrate himself."¹⁴

Reb Yonoson Eibshitz *zt'l* (*Yaaras Dvash* 1:3) writes, "Please listen, wise nation, whom Hashem chose from all other nations. Please, don't think *Megillas Esther* is a history book containing stories of what happened to our forefathers. If that is all the megillah is about, why must we read it twice on Purim? Baruch Hashem, we all know the story. Children make plays, acting out what happened. Rather, it is for the benefits that we get from

the megillah. Additionally, there are many Torah secrets in the megillah, upon which the masters of kabbalah elaborate. It is called מגלת אסתר (which can be translated as "the hidden megillah") because it contains many hidden secrets of Creation. Furthermore, the megillah can be studied as a *mashal*, discussing the battle and struggle between Bnei Yisrael and the *yetzer hara*. There are many *mussar* lessons in the megillah, teaching us how to live."¹⁵

The end of the megillah states (10:2), וכל מעשה תקפו וגבורתו ופרשת גדולת מרדכי... הלוא הם כתובים על ספר דברי הימים למלכי מדי ופרס, "All his mighty and powerful acts, and the account of the greatness of Mordechai, whom the king had promoted, are recorded in the book of chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia." Reb Yechezkel Abramsky *zt'l* explains this closing statement: If you want to study history, there are chronicles on the subject. They talk about Mordechai and his accomplishments in the government. But that isn't the purpose of the megillah. The purpose of the megillah is to teach us so much more.

The Gemara (*Megillah* 7.) provides several proofs that *Megillas Esther* was written with *ruach hakodesh*. We understand from this that every word of the megillah is precious.¹⁶

14. Rebbe Yidele of Dzikov *zt'l* related that one year he heard the megillah from his grandfather, the Ahavas Yisrael of Vizhnitz *zt'l*. When the Ahavas Yisrael read the words (3:3), מדוע אתה עובר את מצות המלך, "Why do you disobey the king's command?" the wealthy chasid Reb Shmuel Eliyahu Stern *z'l* cried copiously. Rebbe Yiddele Dzikover said that he didn't know whom to look at: at his grandfather, the Ahavas Yisrael, who was reading the megillah with *kedushah* and *taharah*, or at Reb Shmuel Eliyahu, who was pouring out his heart in *teshuvah*?

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

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

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

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

The Kav HaYashar adds that when we recite the *brachah* על מקרא מגילה, "We should remember 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*."¹⁷

Klal Yisrael needs a lot of compassion. We live in difficult times. We need this holy world where Hashem's mercy manifests

itself to become revealed. It begins with the megillah reading and remains with us throughout Purim.

Mishloach Manos and Matanos l'Evyonim

The Rambam (Hilchos Megillah 2:17) writes, "It is better to give a lot of *matanos l'evyonim* than to increase the Purim meal and to spend on additional mishloach manos to friends because there is no greater and more beautiful joy than to bring joy to the hearts of the poor, the orphaned, widows, and *geirim*. When one brings them happiness, he acts similar to the Shechinah, as it states (Yeshayah 57:15) להחיות רוח שפלים ולהחיות לב נדכאים "to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the crushed."¹⁸

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 should give a friendly word or a smile.¹⁹

Although we cannot perceive the depth of this story, we see the immense holiness that lies within the holy words of the megillah.

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

18. We say in Shemonah Esrei ונאמן אתה להחיות מתים, "You are trustworthy to resurrect the dead." The Imrei Noam (Rosh Chodesh Adar) teaches, that the first letters are roshei teivos for ומשלוח מנות איש לרעהו. The final letters spell מתנה. This hints at the two mitzvos of Purim, mishloach manos and matanos l'evyonim. These mitzvos have the power to resurrect the dead.

On Purim, Hashem gives Yidden the power to resurrect the dead. This also applies to refuos, which are, in a smaller form, a resurrection. Chazal (Megillah 7b) tell us that once, on Purim, due to drinking, Rabba killed Reb Zeirah. The next day, Rabba davened for Reb Zeirah and resurrected him. This is an indication that Purim has the ability to resurrect the dead and to bring refuos.

Imrei Noam writes that with the mitzvos of mishloach manos and matanos l'evyonim, it is possible to annul 903 types of illnesses that were created in the world (see Brachos 8a). These mitzvos grant life, and people are saved from death, r'l.

Rebbe Mordechai Shlomo of Boyan zt'l quoted the Yerushalmi (Rosh Hashanah 1:3) that says that Hakadosh Baruch Hu keeps the Torah. This means that Hashem also performs the mitzvos of mishloach manos and matanos l'evyonim. Now, if Klal Yisrael are worthy and they deserve that Hashem grant them goodness, the goodness Hashem gives them isn't called a matanah, a gift. They are receiving what they deserve. It is a matanah, a gift, when they don't deserve to receive, and Hashem gives them anyway, as a gift.

Reb Mordechai Shlomo concluded with a tefillah, "So, may Hashem give you matanos l'evyonim, בני חיי ומזוני, children, health and parnassah."

19. Reb Moshe Feinstein zt'l taught on the pasuk (Bamidbar 9:7) למה נגרע that a person should always do what

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

One of the primary concepts of *Mishloach Manos* is to increase friendship. 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 should send *mishloach manos* to one another, as that will increase peace and remove barriers.²⁰

The words *יום ויום* are written twice in the megillah. It states (Esther 2:11) *וּבְכֹל יוֹם מְרַדְּבֵי בַּיּוֹם מִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי הַחֵצֵר בֵּית הַנְּשִׂיִם לְדַעַת אֶת שְׁלוֹם אֶסְתֵּר וּמֵה יַעֲשֶׂה בָּהּ*, "Day after day Mordechai would walk about in front of the courtyard... to learn about Ester's well-being and what would

become of her." The Sfas Emes (5637, ד"ה ובכל) writes, "This is certainly a great deed. For three or four years, from the time Esther was taken to Achashveirosh, Mordechai HaTzaddik would go every day to check up on Esther, since she was an orphan, and she was suffering in captivity in the house of a goy. In this merit, the miracle occurred." The Purim miracle came about through Mordechai's devotion and caring to help Esther. We learn from this the greatness of doing deeds of *chesed*. It was in this merit that Hashem saved us, in the days of Mordechai and Esther.

It also states *יום ויום* in the following verses (3:2-4): *וְכָל עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ כֹּרְעִים וּמוֹשְׁתַּחֲוִים: (3:2-4) לְהַמֹּן כִּי כֵן צָוָה לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ וּמְרַדְּבֵי לֹא יִכְרַע וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה, וַיֹּאמְרוּ עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְמַרְדֵּכִי מִדּוּעַ אִתָּה עוֹבֵר אֶת מִצְוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ, וַיְהִי כְּאֲמַרָם אֵלָיו יוֹם וַיּוֹם וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵיהֶם*, "All the king's servants at the king's gate would bow down and prostrate themselves before

he can. And if he can't do something in its ideal form, he should do what he can.

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

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

A simple person jumped down, lifted the man off the tracks, and somehow carried him back to the platform, just moments before 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 of several hours, and I would miss hours of work and forfeit forty dollars. So, I jumped in to save him."

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

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

Therefore, be wise and do *mitzvos* l'shmah.

Haman, for so had the king commanded concerning him. But Mordechai would not bow and would not prostrate himself. The king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordechai, 'Why do you disobey the king's command?' Now it happened when they said this to him *day after day* and he did not heed them..."

The Sfas Emes explains that one good deed led to another. Since Mordechai came every day to check up on Esther, he would meet with Haman every day. The Sfas Emes writes, "Everything written in the megillah was needed for the miracle... By Mordechai going there daily, he merited to win over Haman HaRasha and to anger him every day."

A similar lesson is written by the Chasam Sofer (Drashos קב"ג טו"ד). "When one thinks about the great miracle of Purim, its foundation is based on Mordechai's *gemilus chasadim*, that he raised Hadassah (who was Esther) when she was orphaned from both parents. She is called אסתר, because... she suffered הסתר פנים, that Hashem concealed His face from her. Mordechai, the greatest of the Sanhedrin, always sat at the king's gates (שער המלך). He wasn't concerned about his own honor. He took her as a daughter (לקחה מרדכי לו), *כבבת עינו* (see Esther 2:7), and she was to him like the pupil of his eye. This is because after she was taken to Achashveirosh's house, every morning and every evening, Mordechai would go to hear how she was faring. It also seems that the שער המלך alludes to the gates of the King of the world. Mordechai would

pray for her by the gates of compassion, that she shouldn't be harmed and nothing bad should occur, *chas v'shalom*. In the merit of his chesed, they both became the שלוחי דרחמנא, Hashem's messengers to eradicate the cruel Amalek from the world and to build the second Beis HaMikdash."²¹

It states (Tehillim 121:5) ה' צלך, "Hashem is your shadow." The Midrash teaches that just as a shadow mimics what a person does, ה' צלך means Hashem copies what people do. The Alshich HaKadosh (quoted in *Aroei Nachal, Mikeitz, Drush 1, ר"ה ואמנם*) teaches that Mordechai and Esther cared for one another, and they helped one another. This aroused Hashem to act accordingly, to care and have compassion for the Jewish nation.

The Alshich writes, "Mordechai didn't think about what he could gain, but rather what Esther could gain. When he heard *Bigson* and *Seresh* plotting to kill Achashverosh, he knew that whoever saved the king would receive a grand reward. Mordechai told Esther about the plot. [He wanted her to be rewarded.] But Esther wanted Mordechai to get the credit, so she told Achashverosh in the name of Mordechai. It states (Esther 2:22) ויודע הדבר למרדכי ויגד לאסתר, 'The matter became known to Mordechai, and he told it to Queen Esther, and Esther told the king in Mordechai's name.' They were both trying to help each other, and in the merit of their selfless caring for one another, Hashem saved them and the entire Jewish nation."²²

21. A member of our *chaburah* (Reb Yosef Meir Mashinsky of Beit Shemesh) went to the *mikvah* in preparation for hearing the megillah. The *mikvah* was in the basement of a small beis medresh. When the son of the rebbe of that beis medresh saw him, he said, 'Please daven with us. You will be the ninth man for our minyan!' Reb Yosef Meir had planned to go to a beis medresh with a professional *baal koreh*, a place where the community davens with a lot of kavanah, but he decided to stay in that beis medresh to do a *chesed*. He also called his friend, Reb Yechezkel Deutsch, to come and complete the minyan.

The *baal koreh* of this small beis medresh didn't have children. Before the megillah reading, Reb Yosef Meir told his friend, "We were moser nefesh to help them with a minyan. Let's give the merit to the *baal koreh*, that he should have children. It will be as the Chozeh of Lublin zt'l said, 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 tell the good news was Reb Yosef Meir because he knew the child was born in his merit.

22. Someone was delivering a *drashah* to a group of teenagers. An *askan* approached the podium and gave

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 and their caring for one another saved them.

Rebbe Mordechai of Kozmir zt'l and other tzaddikim say that the salvation came in the merit of Esther's caution with her speech, as it states (*2:10*) לא הגידה אסתר את עמה ואת מולדתה כי לא תגיד, "Esther had not told of her people or her kindred, for Mordechai had instructed her not to tell." This saved the Jewish nation. Chazal say, "No one knew how to speak lashon hara like Haman." The

only way to conquer Haman was with the Tzadekes Esther, who guarded her speech.²³

When the Jewish people received the letters of Achashveirosh's and Haman's plan of annihilation, it states (*Esther 4:3*) אָבַל גָּדוֹל לַיהוּדִים וְצוּם וּבְגָי וּמְסָפָד, "There was great mourning among the Yidden, and fasting and weeping and eulogies..."

The Alshich says that a הספד, eulogies, are what people say for *someone else*. A person might weep over his own tzaros, but הספד is solely for others. This means people mourned and cried and eulogized the tzaros of others. This is the reason there is a mitzvah of mishloach manos. When they were saved in the days of Mordechai and Esther, they gave gifts to one another because they knew that

the speaker a piece of paper.

The speaker stopped to read the note and announced, "A generous individual has decided to hand out money to everyone present tonight. He instructed that the money be distributed as follows: Everyone must choose a partner and arm-wrestle with him. Keep track of who wins each round because, for each win, you will receive one dollar." The competition began immediately.

Fifteen minutes later, the speaker approached each team to get their score. With one team, one boy won three rounds, and his partner four. The speaker gave them three and four dollars, respectively.

The next pair told him their score was 5 to 4, so he gave one five dollars and the other four.

Then he reached a pair who told him, "I won 1,500 times, and my partner won 1,500 times."

He gave them each \$1,500.

The speaker turned to the others and said, "You were all trying to beat your opponents, and because of that, most of the time and energy was wasted fighting your partner. But this team worked together. They let each other easily push their arms to the table, and in this manner, each won 1,500 rounds."

The lesson is that you earn the most by helping your fellow man.

23. It states (*Tehillim 22:25*) כי לא בזה ולא שקץ עונת 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 brought about Haman's gezeirah of annihilation. The Yidden participated in Achashverosh's party, and they bowed down to Nevuchadnezzar's idol. The Alshich says that the poor didn't commit these aveiros. Achashverosh didn't invite the poor to his party, and Nebuchadnezzar didn't care whether the poor bowed down to his idol or not. So, the poor were clean from aveiros; therefore, it was in their merit and through their tefillos that the Jewish nation was saved.

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

their fellow man had cried and said eulogies for them.

The Chida (*D'vas l'Fi*) writes, "The primary aspect of Purim is that they accepted to give *mishloach manos* and *matanos l'evyonim*, to give *tzadah* and to perform *chesed*, and thereby, *קיימו למעלה*, this means literally *קיימו*, also in heaven they performed *middah kneged middah* to do kindness and to be *mashpiah* goodness to them." This means that the nation accepted on themselves to give *tzedakah* and to do *chesed*, and in this merit, Hashem performed *tzedakah* and *chesed* with them and saved them from Haman's evil decree.

Seudas Purim

It states (*Esther 5:6*), *ויאמר המלך לאסתר במשתה היין*, ומה 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 *משתה היין*, 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 (*Megillah 7:*) say, *חייב איניש לבסומי בפוריא*, a person is obligated to be happy with drinking on Purim. *לבסומי* means to be happy with wine. A few lines above that, the Gemara uses *לבסומי* to mean sweet. The Gemara says, *רווחא לבסומי שכיחי*, "A person always has room to eat something sweet." The *Yetev Lev zt'l* explains that if one is *בסומי בפוריא*, happy with wine on Purim, *רווחא לבסומי שכיחי*, he will have *רווח והצלה* salvations and *בסומי* sweetness in his life.²⁴

The *Imrei Emes* said that *בסומי* is *roshei teivos* for (*Tehillim 119:120*), *סמר מפחדך בשרי וממשפטיך*, *יראתי*, "My flesh bristles from fear. I am afraid of Your judgment."

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

It states (*Bereishis 9:20*), *ויחל נח איש אדמה ויטע כרם*. The *Satmar Rebbe zt'l* said that *ויחל* represents the weekdays (*חול* is a weekday), and *נח* represents *yom tov*, a day one rests from his work. *ויחל נח* refers to a day that is a *yom tov* and 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

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

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

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

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

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

attain all his needs, ויטע כרם, when he drinks wine on Purim.

Divrei Shalom (from Rebbe Shalom of Brahlin zt'l) quotes his grandfather (Reb Shlomo Chaim zt'l) that Chazal were cautious to say מייחייב איניש "A person is obligated to be happy on Purim until he doesn't know the difference between 'Curse Haman' and 'Bless Mordechai'," and they didn't say that one should be בייך לבסומי, happy with wine. Rather, one should be בסומי בפוריא, happy with Purim. This means that the purpose of the wine is to help him reach this state of happiness. The wine removes his *atzvus* and *daagos*, worries and sadness, which he suffers from the entire year. But his joy and happiness should be from the day of Purim itself.

Yosef Lekach explains the reason Chazal established that we should be so happy on Purim. It is because we are to learn from the Purim story that even when we are in galus, Hashem's hashgachah is upon us, and He watches over us. This awareness is a great simchah.

The Chasam Sofer zt'l repeats this lesson from the Yosef Lekach and says that this is the reason there is a mitzvah to drink wine on Purim. Chazal (Sanhedrin 70a) say that wine was created for *nichum aveilim* (to console mourners) and to help people forget their tzaros. This describes the joy of Purim. On Purim, we discover that Hashem is taking care of us. We can forget about all our tzaros, and we put our trust in Hashem to take care of us.

Benefits of Yesurim

This week's parashah begins with the pasuk וְאַתָּה תִּצְוֶנָה אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ אֵלֶיךָ שֶׁמֶן זַיִת זָךְ וְאַתָּה תִּצְוֶנָה אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמָאוֹר לְהַעֲלֹת נֵר תָּמִיד, "You shall command Bnei Yisrael, and they shall take to you pure olive oil, crushed for lighting, to kindle the lamps continually." כְּתִיב לְמָאוֹר means that the crushed olives will become oil and give off light. This hints to the people who go through hard times. It is a preparation for the great light that will come from it.

The Chasan Sofer zt'l (the son of the daughter of the Chasam Sofer zt'l) elaborates on the message of this pasuk. He teaches as follows:

Many people go through hardships, yesurim and hester panim, each person in his own way. He asks bitterly, מַה נִּשְׁתַּנָּה, "Why did this have to happen to me? Why did all these tzaros come to me?" Actually, all these yesurim will purify him in this world so that he can receive his reward in Olam HaBa.

The proof is from Moshe Rabbeinu, the greatest of all nevi'im. Who is greater than him? Nevertheless, he suffered yesurim his entire life. When he was born, he was brought to Pharaoh's home, and he had tests and yesurim there. Three months after he was born, he was already cast into the Nile, and from there he was raised r'l by Pharaoh, the *rashah*. Afterwards, he had to escape and leave his father's home, and his brothers of Bnei Yisrael, and he ran to Midyan. In Midyan, he didn't have honor and respite. As he said (Shemos 2:22), גֵּר הָיִיתִי בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם, "I was a stranger in a foreign land." Even after he became the leader of Bnei Yisrael, he said (Shemos 17:4), מַה אֶעֱשֶׂה לָעָם הַזֶּה עוֹד קוֹעֵט וּסְקָלָנִי, "What shall I do for this people? Just a little longer and they will stone me!" And he said (Shemos 32:32), מְחִינֵי נָא מִסִּפְרֶךָ, "Erase me now from Your sefer." (Indeed, Moshe's name was erased, to an extent, for Moshe's name is not mentioned in this week's parashah - parashas Titzaveh.) There are several other examples of the hardships Moshe went through. But this was all for his benefit. All these hardships raised him until he became "Moshe Rabbeinu," אב לנביאים, the greatest prophet. He reached levels no other human being ever reached. Several times, he was in heaven for forty days to receive the Torah from Hashem's mouth. This teaches a lesson to all people. It tells them that they shouldn't be upset when they endure yesurim. They should know that this will bring forth their *sheleimus*, perfection, and it will be for their benefit in the future.

This is the meaning of the pasuk (at the beginning of the parashah): וְאַתָּה תִּצְוֶנָה אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, Bnei Yisrael should learn a lesson from Moshe

Rabbeinu. שְׁמֵן זַיִת נֶרְ קָתִית לְמֵאוֹר, as the Midrash (Shemos Rabba 36:1) states, "Just as olive oil only comes out after the olives are pressed, so too, when a person undergoes yesurim, he becomes holy and pure. קָתִית, he is pressed, לְמֵאוֹר, to bring forth his light. The yesurim help him grow until he is a great light. He will shine and bring light to others, as it states ²⁵לְהַעֲלֹת נֶר תְּמִיד.

Happiness

The Yidden won the war, and they celebrated on the 14th and 15th of Adar, as it states (9:17-18), וַעֲשֵׂה אוֹתוֹ יוֹם מְשֻׁתָּה וּשְׂמֵחָה, "He made it a day of feasting and gladness."

These words are written in the singular tense. Why doesn't the *pasuk* say, וַעֲשֵׂה אוֹתוֹ יוֹם, מְשֻׁתָּה וּשְׂמֵחָה, "They made it a day of feasting and gladness," since it was the entire Jewish nation who were celebrating their victory?

The Sfas Emes (תרי"ב *Purim*) answers that וַעֲשֵׂה refers to Hashem. וַעֲשֵׂה אוֹתוֹ יוֹם מְשֻׁתָּה וּשְׂמֵחָה, "Hashem made it a day of feasting and gladness."

Chazal tell us that Haman's decree to annihilate Bnei Yisrael ch'v was written and sealed in heaven. Due to their *aveiros*, Bnei

Yisrael deserved this punishment, r'l. But the nation did *teshuvah*, and Hashem redeemed them.

The Sfas Emes explains, וַעֲשֵׂה אוֹתוֹ יוֹם מְשֻׁתָּה, Hashem celebrated when the Yidden were saved.

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

The Yidden rejoiced below, and Hashem was rejoicing in heaven. Every year, on Purim, Hashem rejoices and celebrates in heaven. Therefore, we should be happy, too.

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

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.

25. A baal yesurim once came to Rebbe Mendel of Riminov zt'l, and he was krechtzing and moaning a lot. He asked Reb Mendel for a brachah. Reb Mendel replied, "Your moaning won't help you. You shall know that קָתִית לְמֵאוֹר, the purpose of your yesurim is that you should shine. Accept the yesurim with love, and then they will go away. Because when you accept them with love, it is considered that they did their *shlichus*, and then they can leave.

A mashal is told about a servant who was carrying a heavy load on his back. He had to carry it to another place. The load was heavy, so he decided to stop and rest for a moment, while the package was still on his back. He stood there and moaned about his heavy load. Someone told him, "Standing here won't help you at all. You are making it harder for yourself, because you are holding the load on your back for a longer extent of time. Better to go where you have to go and take the load off your back." The same can be said to the people who stand in one place and moan and cry over their yesurim. They would be better off to accept the yesurim with love. That will help the yesurim leave quicker.

Obviously, one should daven that the yesurim leave him. He should beg Hashem for rachmanus that the yesurim should end. (In fact, when one is in a *tzarah*, it is more important to daven. According to the Ramban, when one davens when he is in a *tzarah*, the tefillah is a mitzvah from the Torah.) When one davens, one can moan, to express before Hashem his immense tzaar. Who can measure the great holy value of a "Yiddishe krechtz," a moan from a Yid? But when one isn't davening, that is the time to accept Hashem's will with love. That will accomplish more. The yesurim will leave him. And he will earn many benefits from the yesurim, as we explained.

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.

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

sheep on Purim. They should be jumping for joy.

This vort is also taught by the Maharam m'Rottenberg, and he says that there's a custom to write the ווא"ו with horns on top of it (the תנין appear like horns) to allude to the jumping animals and our jumping for joy in praise of Hashem.²⁶

The Greatness of Small Deeds

It states (*Esther 4:17*) ויעבור מרדכי, and the Gemara says that this means Mordechai crossed over a body of water to go to the Yidden who lived on the other side of Shushan, to tell them to daven for Esther. Manos HaLevi (written by Reb Shlomo Alkabetz *zt'l*, author of Lecha Dodi) explains, "Even a minor deed, like crossing over water, is considered a great deed when done for a mitzvah. The water wasn't a large river; it was more like a puddle... Nevertheless, the Megillah tells us that Mordechai crossed the water as though it were a great accomplishment. This is because everything is accounted for." When a person performs a mitzvah, even the slightest deeds are worthy of being

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

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

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

Reb Eliyahu Meir Bloch *zt'l*, Rosh Yeshiva Telz in America, was dancing happily with his students on Purim, in the year תש"ד. His students thought the joy wasn't sincere. "How could he be happy after what he had endured during the holocaust?" they wondered.

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 *Yiddishe hartz* for both emotions.

written in the megillah for all generations to read and see.

Chazal (Gittin 57:) state, "The grandsons of Haman taught Torah in Bnei Brak."²⁷ Why did Haman HaRasha merit this?

Shem MiShmuel (Purim 5680) writes that it is because Haman had one moment of emunah. The Midrash (Esther 10:5) states, "When Haman led Mordechai on the king's horse through the city's streets, what was Haman the *rasha* saying? (Tehillim 30:7-8) ואני אמרתי בשלוי בל אמוט לעולם... הסתרת פניך הייתי נבהל "I said in my tranquility, 'I will never falter.' ... You hid Your countenance, and I became frightened." He had a moment of emunah, and for that, he was rewarded with descendants who taught Torah.

Shem MiShmuel writes, "This is a lesson for every person: Even when he is at a low level, r'l, he shouldn't consider any good thought or good word that he says to be small. Let him grasp whatever good moments he can, and this will be a great benefit for him. The mouth cannot express how great these deeds are."²⁸

The Gemara (Megillah 16.) states that when Haman came to Mordechai (to lead him through the streets of Shushan, as Mordechai rode on Achashveirosh's horse), he found Mordechai teaching the laws of *kemitzah* to his students. *Kemitzah* is to bring a handful of a meal-offering (made of just flour and oil) on the *mizbeiach*. Haman thought that small deeds are unimportant; only great deeds have value. This was demonstrated

by the enormous gift of ten thousand kikar silver coins he offered Achashveirosh. In his eyes, only tremendous and impressive matters have value. Mordechai, on the other hand, taught his students that even a small handful (a *kometz*) of a *minchah* is a *korban* in Hashem's eyes. Every small deed is very precious in Hashem's eyes. In the end, Haman admitted that Mordechai was correct and said, "Your handful of flour pushed away my ten thousand *kikars* of silver."

One of the benefits of the "small deeds" is that one good deed leads to another, as Chazal say מצוה גוררת מצוה.

Chazal (Shabbos 105:) say, "This is the way of the yetzer hara: Today he tells you to do this [aveirah], tomorrow he tells you to do that [aveirah], until he tells you to worship avodah zarah – and he worships it!" The yetzer hara is happy with minor sins because he cleverly knows that one deed leads to the next. We should learn from our enemy and consider every good deed significant. It is great in Hashem's eyes, and furthermore, one small deed will lead to another good deed, and gradually, we will grow in avodas Hashem.²⁹

Bigdei Kehunah

In this week's *parashah*, the *bigdei kehunah*, the clothes of the kohanim are discussed. The Gemara (*Zevachim* 88:) asks, "Why does the Torah juxtapose the *korbanos* with the clothes of the *kohen gadol*? To teach you that just as the *korbanos* atone, so do the clothes of the

27. One of the lessons of Haman's descendants was the renowned phrase (Taanis 29.) משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה, when Adar arrives, we increase joy. This was taught by Rav Shmuel bar Shilas, a descendant of Haman.

28. No one is worse than Haman, yet see how much he gained from one good thought! So, even when you learn just one chapter of mishnayos or one halachah, etc., these small deeds are extremely precious to Hashem, and the reward will be enormous – greater than you can imagine.

29. It states (Esther 3:2) ומרדכי לא ירע ולא ישתחוה "Mordecai would neither kneel nor bow down." It is written in the future tense. Sfas Emes zt'l says that alluded here is a lesson for every Yid. Even if in the past, there were times he kneeled and yielded to the yetzer hara, he should tell himself that he won't do it again.

Or, we can explain it this way: Even if he kneeled (ירע), he wouldn't bow down (לא ישתחוה). He will stop the influence of the yetzer hara in its tracks and not allow himself to descend even lower.

kohen gadol atone. The כְּתוּנֶת, tunic, atones for murder (see *Bereishis* 37:31). The מְנַסִּים, pants, atones for adultery (see *Shmos* 28:42). The מְצַנְפֶת, turban, atones for arrogance. (Why? Let something that's worn high on the head atone for someone who feels high.) The אֲבֵנֶת, belt, atones for the heart's bad thoughts (because the אֲבֵנֶת was worn upon the heart).³⁰ The חֹשֶׁן, breastplate, atones for [the courts'] errors in judgment, as it states (28:15) וְעִשִׂיתָ חֹשֶׁן וְשֵׁפֶט. The אֲפֹדֶת atones for *avodah zarah*... The מְעִיל, robe, atones for *lashon hara*. Why? Let a garment that makes sounds (the מְעִיל had bells along its hem) atone for *lashon hara*. The צִיץ (the gold band worn on the *kohen gadol's* forehead) atones for *chutzpah*..."

The *Kli Yakar* writes, "Perhaps this was the intention of the ger who would say, 'Convert me, but on the condition that I can be a *kohen gadol*, so I can wear the clothes of a *kohen gadol*' (see *Shabbos* 31.). Was this convert so foolish that he wanted to convert solely to put on the clothes of the *kohen gadol*? Certainly, he heard that the clothes of the *kohen gadol* atone for the aveiros mentioned above, and he wanted these atonements. As a goy, he committed all these aveiros, and he wanted a manner to attain atonement."

The *Gemara* (*Megillah* 12.) says that *Achashveirosh* wore the clothes of the *kohen gadol* when he made his party. The *Kli Yakar* explains that *Achashveirosh* made the same mistake, as mentioned above. He wanted

the eight clothes of the *kohen gadol* to atone for the eight primary aveiros.

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*. Also, this time, the sin caused *Vashti's* death.

The *meforshim* ask, why didn't *Achashverosh* die like *Balshatzar* died when he used these holy utensils? Why did *Vashti* die instead of *Achashverosh*?

It is repeated in the name of *Reb Shlomo Kluger zt'l* that at this feast, *Achashverosh* was *mevater*. He didn't demand that things be exactly as he wanted. We learn this from the *pasuk* (*Esther* 1:8) לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּרָצוֹן אִישׁ וְאִישׁ that at the meal, everyone's wishes were respected and fulfilled. The rule is that when one is *mevater*, it grants him life.

But *Vashti* wasn't *mevater*. She didn't let everyone do as they pleased. This is implied from the *pasuk*, גַּם וְשֵׁתִי הַמַּלְכָה עָשְׂתָה מִשְׁתֵּה נָשִׁים בַּיִת, הַמַּלְכוֹת, "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

30. *Reb Zalman Sorotzkin* (*Oznayim l'Torah*, *Tetzaveh*, 28:39) points out that most of the clothing of the *kohen gadol* had to fit the *kohen gadol* perfectly, as it states כַּמִּידָתוֹ, which means according to the *kohen gadol's* size. The *Rambam* (*Kli HaMikdash* 19:4) states that if the clothes weren't exactly the right size, they were *pasul*, and the *korbanos* brought while wearing such clothes become *pasul*.

There were two exceptions. The *Rambam* (*Kli HaMikdash* 8:19) states that the *מצנפת*, the hat the *kohen gadol* and the *kohen hedyot* wore, was 16 amos long. The *אֲבֵנֶת*, the belt, was 32 amos long. These two clothes were wrapped around the head or the body many times. These are the only two items of clothing that don't need to be exactly the size of the *kohen*. In fact, there had to be extra material to wrap around several times. Their size didn't fit the *kohen* perfectly, like the other clothes.

Oznayim l'Torah explains that the hat is near the eyes, the belt is near the heart, and the heart and the eyes need to be guarded very well. For them, regular protection won't suffice. One must add precautions to remain distant from an aveirah. Therefore, they were longer, to hint that one should add precautions to prevent himself from sinning, *chalilah*, with his eyes or heart.

required. Therefore, she was punished, and not Achashveirosh.

The *meforshim* added another explanation as to why Achashveirosh didn't die at this meal, rather Vashti did. It is because shame and humiliation save from death. Achashveirosh was embarrassed 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 you drink a drop of wine and become drunk and insane." This shame saved Achashveirosh from death, and Vashti was killed instead. It says (*Esther* 1:7) וְגַלִּים מִגַּלִּים שְׁוֹנִים, and מַכְלִים can also be translated as shame. The shame saved Achashverosh.

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

The Jewish nation was also saved due to shame and humiliation. The Gemara (*Megillah* 15:) states, "Why did Esther invite Haman to her party? Reb Shimon ben Menasya says, 'Perhaps Hashem will take note and perform a miracle.'"

Rashi explains that Esther wanted "Hashem should see that I am forced to flatter this rasha and belittle my honor." She understood that her shame and humiliation would arouse Hashem's compassion and save the Jewish nation.

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

Hashgachah Pratis in Nature

The interesting thing about the Purim miracle is that nothing outside of nature occurred. It was natural for Achashveirosh to become angry at his wife, Vashti, and kill her, and it was natural that Mordechai might

overhear people planning to kill Achashveirosh, and so on. Every aspect of the megillah can be explained according to the rules of nature. But when we think about the entire episode, with all its details, we are astounded at the wondrous miracle that occurred.

The Bnei Yissaschar (*Kislev* 4:83) tells a *mashal* of an ill person who had no cure. The only remedy found was from an herb that grew in the far east, which was never imported to their country. Furthermore, even if they had the herb, they needed a doctor to prepare it so that it would have its healing abilities. But the doctor who knew how to prepare it lived far away in the west. The doctor and the herbs never came to their country.

Suddenly, they heard that a ship arrived from the east, and the herbs were on the ship. The family rejoiced. They saw that Hashem was helping them. But their doctor told them that the herbs were useless without the expertise of a doctor from the West who knew how to prepare them.

Just then, they heard that the doctor from the west arrived.

They were able to heal the patient.

Each part of the story could be explained according to the rules of nature, but when one considers the chain of events, he is astounded by the *hashgachah pratis*, and he will recognize that this was a great miracle.

This describes the miracles of Purim (and the Bnei Yissaschar adds that the miracles of Purim were far greater than this *mashal* portrays). The miracles were within nature; nothing miraculous occurred, but it is obvious to all that Hashem arranged it all to save Bnei Yisrael.

With this information, we understand the reason Hashem's name isn't written in the megillah. However, Hashem's name is seen in the *roshei teivos* and the *sofei teivos* of some words. For example, there aren't *pasukim* like וַיִּצְעֲקוּ אֶל ה', "They shouted out to Hashem," in the megillah, and the megillah

doesn't say that they said, ברוך ה', to praise Hashem when the miracles occurred. Hashem's name isn't written in the megillah. But Hashem's name is found in the *roshei teivos* and the *sofei teivos* such as the *roshei teivos* of יהוה יבא המלך והמן היום, and the final letters of יהוה, spell יהוה, and the final letters of יהוה, spell יהוה.

Kedushas Levi (*Kedushah Rishonah*) explains that this is because Hashem was concealed when this miracle occurred. And just as Hashem was concealed in the world, Hashem's name is concealed from the megillah. But Hashem and His name are clearly seen and recognized when one looks at the series of events that occurred. Therefore, in the *roshei teivos* and *sofei teivos*, which represent a series of several events, Hashem's name is seen.

The Maharal teaches that the simple translation of the word המלך in the megillah is Hashem. When we translate it to mean Achashverosh, it's according to *drush*. But the simple and literal translation of המלך refers to Hashem.

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

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

It seems strange to us that Hashem should be alluded to when we mention המלך in the megillah, which refers to Achashverosh. Why should Hashem be alluded to, even in a concealed manner, when we discuss this rasha? The answer is as the Maharal explained: The simple translation of המלך is Hashem.

We think that Achashverosh or others were pulling the strings and causing events to happen, but המלך is our reminder that everything is from Hashem.³¹

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

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