

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories

Compiled by Yitzchok Henry

















לעילוי נשמת



אבי מורי ר' גדליה דוד ב"ר איסר הענרי ע"ה

ר' איסר ב"ר זרח הענרי ע"ה

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ת*נ*צ*ב*ה

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פורים

Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz



Hamaayan is prepared by laymen and published weekly for the edification and enjoyment of the reader who is lacking the time or ability to study the weekly parashah on his own. Hamaayan's goal is to acquaint the reader with a broad spectrum of traditional Torah commentary — classical, recent and "obscure" — as well as with aspects of Jewish history and thought. The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah")



Megilas Esther

וְהַקָּרֹב אֵלָיו כַּרְשְׁנָא שֵׁתָר אַדְמָתָא תַּרְשִׁישׁ מֶרֶס מַרְסְנָא מְמוּכָן - *'And those who were close to him were Karshina, Sheitar, Admata, Tarshish, Merres, Marsina, Memuchan…'* (Esther 1:14)

The midrash writes that corresponding to King Achashveirosh's seven advisors whose names are listed in the above verse were seven angels who stood before G-d and defended Bnei Yisrael. Each angel pleaded with Hashem using words related to the name of one of the seven advisors.

One said, "If Achashveirosh defeats Bnei Yisrael, who will sacrifice before You one year-old calves?" (Referred to in Hebrew as "Par ben shanah" / similar to the name "Karshina")

The second said, "Who will sacrifice before You two doves?" ("Shtei Torim" / "Sheitar")

The third said, "Who will build for You an earthen altar?" ("Mizbach Adamah"/ "Admata")

The fourth said, "Who will wear the bigdei kehunah/priestly garments, which contain the gem called 'Tarshish'?"

The fifth said, "Who will stir the blood of the sacrifices?" ("Mimarres"/ "Merres")

The sixth said, "Who will stir the flour offerings?" ("Mimarres"/"Marsina")

Finally, the seventh said, "Who will prepare the altar before You?" ("Maicheen"/"Memuchan")

When the angels concluded their pleas, Hashem answered, "Bnei Yisrael are My sons. They are My friends. They are My beloved…"

Why, of all of the mitzvot, did the angels single out these seven? " Why didn't they ask, "Who will put on tefilin? Who will lift the lulav?"

R' Eliyahu Hakohen z"l explains: Chazal teach that the day on which the Mishkan was completed was as happy in G-d's "eyes" as the day on which He created the world.

When Adam was created, G-d had great expectations for his future. Using his G-d given free will, Adam "frustrated" those plans (by eating from the Eitz Ha'daat), but mankind was given a second chance when Bnei Yisrael received the Torah and built the Mishkan. The day on which the Tabernacle was dedicated was as auspicious as the very day on which the world was created.

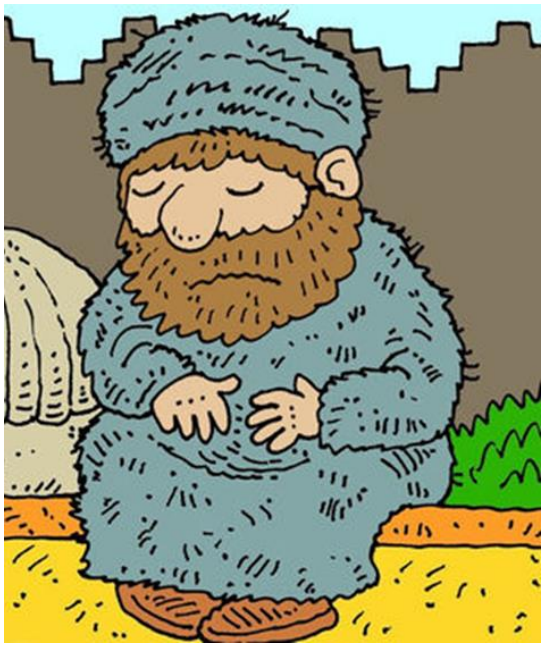
Achashveirosh knew that. As the gemara notes, the purpose of the party described at the beginning of the Megillah was to celebrate

the fact that, according to Achashveirosh's calculations, the appointed time for the end of the exile had come and gone without the Bet Hamikdash – successor to the Mishkan – being rebuilt.

He therefore donned the garments of the Kohen Gadol (captured in Nevuchadnetzar's war on Yerushalayim) and defiantly celebrated the apparent victory of evil over good. [The Talmud explains how he miscalculated the date of Bnei Yisrael's redemption.]

The angels said to G-d, "Achashveirosh is celebrating the demise of the Mishkan and its service. Haman says You are sleeping. Tell us: Whose plan for the Mishkan will stand – Achashveirosh's or Yours?" (Sefer Midrash Talpiot)

פורים Megillas Esther



וַתִּתְחַלְחַל הַמַּלְכָּה מְאֹד וַתִּשְׁלַח בְּגָדִים לְהַלְבִּישׁ אֶת־מָרְדֳּכַי וּלְהָסִיר שַׂקּוֹ מֵעָלָיו וְלֹא קִבֵּל - ***"The Queen was greatly distressed; she sent garments to clothe Mordechai so that he might take off his sackcloth, but he would not accept them."*** *(4:4)*

Presumably, says **R' David Soloveitchik** (in the name of his father, the **Brisker Rav z"l**), the reason Esther wanted to send clothes to Mordechai was so that he could enter the palace to confer with her on a plan to counter Haman's decree. (After all, Mordechai had his own clothes at home!) Why then did Mordechai refuse?

Because the halachah states that when an evil decree is made against us, we must dress in sackcloth, fast and pray. This is the first order of the day, and it takes precedence over meeting with politicians or lobbyists to work against the decree.

וּמָרְדֳּכַי יָצָא מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בִּלְבוּשׁ מַלְכוּת תְּכֵלֶת וְחוּר וַעֲטֶרֶת זָהָב גְּדוֹלָה וְתַכְרִיךְ בּוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן וְהָעִיר שׁוּשָׁן צָהֳלָה וְשָׂמֵחָה - *'Mordechai left the king's presence clad in royal apparel of turquoise and white with a large gold crown- and the city of Shushan was cheerful and glad.' (8:15)*



Was the city of Shushan cheerful and glad because Mordechai was wearing these royal garments, or does the verse contain two separate pieces of information?

R' David Soloveitchik answers in the name of his father: We say in the hymn recited after the Megillah reading, **שׁוֹשַׁנַּת יַעֲקֹב צָהֳלָה וְשָׂמֵחָה בִּרְאוֹתָם יַחַד תְּכֵלֶת מָרְדְּכָי** - "***The rose of Yaakov was cheerful and glad when they jointly saw Mordechai robed in royal blue***." - It appears, therefore, that Mordechai's garb was the cause of Shushan's joy. Why?

After Haman was forced to lead Mordechai around Shushan on the king's horse, the verse says (6:12) **וַיָּשָׁב מָרְדֳּכַי אֶל־שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ** "***Mordechai returned to the king's gate***."

The gemara states that Mordechai returned to wearing sackcloth and fasting at the king's gate. Why?

Because although he had personally triumphed over Haman, the Jewish people were still in danger. That was what concerned Mordechai, and he would not remove his sackcloth until the Jews were safe.

It follows, then, that when Mordechai did remove his sackcloth and don royal robes, it was a sign for the people of Shushan to be cheerful and glad that Haman's evil plot had been defeated.

פַּתְשֶׁגֶן הַכְּתָב לְהִנָּתֵן דָּת בְּכָל־מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה גָּלוּי לְכָל־הָעַמִּים וְלִהְיוֹת הַיְּהוּדִים עֲתִידִים (כתיב עתודים) לַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, לְהִנָּקֵם מֵאֹיְבֵיהֶם - *"The contents of the document were to be promulgated in every province and be published to all peoples so that the Jews should be ready on that day to avenge themselves on their enemies." (Esther 8:13)*

In this verse in the Megillah, the word "**עֲתִידִים**" is spelled with an extra, silent letter "vav." What is the significance of that vav?

R' Mordechai Zvi Adler z"l (dayan in Uglya, Hungary; late 19th – early 20th centuries) explains:

The Mishnah (end of Tractate Uktzin) teaches that Hashem has found no receptacle more suitable for holding blessings than shalom / peace. This is why Birkat Kohanim / the Priestly Blessing culminates with a blessing for shalom, for that is the pinnacle of all blessings. Note that Birkat Kohanim consists of six phrases, of which, "May He give you shalom," is the sixth. Note also that the Gematria of the letter vav is six.

When Mordechai pleaded with Esther to go to Achashveirosh in an attempt to annul Haman's decree, she responded (4:16), "Go, assemble all the Jews to be found in Shushan . . ." It was understood that if the Jewish People would observe the entire Torah, they would be invincible.

However, it is impossible for any single Jew to observe the entire Torah, since some mitzvot are only for men, others only for women, some only for Kohanim, some only for Levi'im, etc. But, if the Jewish People are united, then, collectively, they can observe the whole Torah. That is why Esther instructed Mordechai to assemble "all" the Jews.

This, concludes R' Adler, is the reason for the extra vav. - In order to be ready to fight back against Haman's attack, the Jewish People needed the vav, the sixth blessing, which is shalom / unity.

"Yesod Ve'shoresh Ha'avodah" - "The Foundation and Root of Divine Service"

This year, we are presenting excerpts from the work Yesod Ve'shoresh Ha'avodah by R' Alexander Ziskind z"l (died 1794). In Sha'ar Ha'mifkad, Chapter 3, the author writes about the thoughts that one should have on Ta'anit Esther:

The reason for this fast on the 13th of Adar is because on this day our ancestors rose to fight for their lives [against Haman's allies] and they needed G-d's mercy. We do as they did in the days of Mordechai and Esther by gathering to pray to and beseech Him. In addition, it is written that this fast is an obligation for all Jews because of the miracle that happened on this day–the day on which Haman had planned to exterminate the Jews.

When one experiences a miracle, especially when his life is saved, he should fast and pray every year on that day and give thanks to the One Whose Name Is Blessed.

It is appropriate for a person to awaken his heart at all hours of this day to thank Hashem for our great salvation. One should don his Shabbat garments before Minchah and recite the Minchah prayer while wearing them.



כִּי־בְשִׂמְחָה תֵּצֵאוּ וּבְשָׁלוֹם תּוּבָלוּן הֶהָרִים וְהַגְּבָעוֹת יִפְצְחוּ לִפְנֵיכֶם רִנָּה וְכָל־עֲצֵי הַשָּׂדֶה יִמְחֲאוּ־כָף - *"For with joy you shall go forth, and in peace you be led. The mountains and the hills will break out in jubilant song before you, and all the trees of the field clap hands."* (Yishayah 55:12)

R' Yaakov Kranz z"l (1741-1804; the Dubno Maggid) observes that the Gemara (Megillah 10b) interprets the verse after this one as referring to Haman, Mordechai, Vashti and Esther. Presumably, then, it is reasonable to interpret this verse in connection

with Purim as well. Specifically, the rejoicing described in this verse would seem to be relevant to Haman's downfall.

But why would the mountains, hills and trees care about Haman's downfall?

The Dubno Maggid explains with a parable:

In a certain school, there was one very difficult child, as a result of which the parents hired a teacher who was a strict disciplinarian. Naturally, all the children suffered at the hands of this strict teacher, even though they themselves had not been naughty. Eventually, the troublesome child matured and the strict teacher was dismissed, much to the relief of all the students.

Similarly, when the Jewish People sin, Hashem appoints a dictator to oppress them. The whole world suffers at the hands of this dictator. Even nature suffers when evil flourishes in the world. On the other hand, when the Jewish People repent and the evil dictator is dismissed from the world, all of nature rejoices.

The Megillah tells us that after Haman was killed, Esther put Mordechai in charge of Haman's house. Why did she do this? More importantly, why do we need to know this?

The answer, says the Dubno Maggid, is that it demonstrates that Haman existed for only one purpose – to oppress the Jews and drive them to repentance. Once that purpose was accomplished, not only did he cease to exist, but every tangible memory of him, including his property, was eliminated. (Kol Rinah Vi'shuah)

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.

וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶל־יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּחַר־לָנוּ אֲנָשִׁים וְצֵא הִלָּחֶם בַּעֲמָלֵק - "Moshe said to Yehoshua, 'Choose people for us and go do battle with Amalek . . .'" (Shemos 17:9 –from the Torah reading for Purim)

Rashi z"l comments on the word "us": "For me and for you." Moshe placed Yehoshua on the same level as himself. Our Sages derive from here the teaching: "Let your disciple's honor be as dear to you as your own." [Until here from Rashi]

R' Shmuel Yaakov Borenstein z"l (1946-2017; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Kiryat Melech in Bnei Brak, Israel) asks: Why is this lesson taught in this context? Surely it is not by chance.

He explains: Midrash Rabbah refers to Amalek as a "Letz," a scoffer and mocker. A Letz has the ability to destroy a moment of inspiration. [Imagine, for example, hearing an inspiring Derashah / sermon and resolving to act on the rabbi's message, only to have your enthusiasm cooled by a wisecrack from the person sitting next to you.] That is what Amalek did.

We read in the aftermath of Kri'at Yam Suf / the Splitting of the Sea (Shmot 15:14-15), "Peoples heard–they were agitated; terror gripped the dwellers of Philistia. Then the chieftains of Edom were confounded, trembling gripped the powers of Moav, all the dwellers of Canaan dissolved." But not Amalek!

Our Sages liken Amalek to someone who jumps into a scalding bath; though he gets burnt, he cools the water for others. Similarly, Amalek was defeated, but its attack stripped the aura of invincibility from Bnei Yisrael, cooling off the fear of G-d that had gripped all of the nations.

R' Borenstein continues: We read (18:1), "And Yitro heard," and then he came to join Bnei Yisrael. What did Yitro hear? - Rashi writes: "Kri'at Yam Suf and the war of Amalek."

R' Borenstein explains: From the fact that Amalek was not moved by Kri'at Yam Suf, Yitro understood how low a person can fall when he

does not have a connection to a Rebbe / spiritual mentor. Therefore, he came to Moshe.

R' Borenstein concludes: The encounter with Amalek teaches us the importance of having a mentor. Therefore, it is also an appropriate place to remind mentors of the respect they should show their students. (*Zot L'Yaakov: Megillat Esther* p.131)

A Related Thought (in the Spirit of Purim . . .)



We read in Tehilim (96:12) regarding the days of mashiach: יַעֲלֹז שָׂדַי וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ אָז יְרַנְּנוּ כָּל־עֲצֵי־יָעַר- "***Then all the trees will rejoice.***"

Why do the trees care if mashiach comes?

R' Simcha Shepps z"l (maggid shiur / instructor in Yeshiva Torah Voda'ath in Brooklyn) explained: Today, more and more sefarim / Torah works are being published, and we can no longer tell which represent the true interpretation of Torah and which do not. However, when mashiach comes, the Truth will become widely known, and there will be much less publishing taking place.

With the decrease in publishing, the demand for paper will decrease as well, thus leading to widespread rejoicing among the world's trees.

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! ~ R' Elimelech Biderman.

A Minyan is Greater than the Tefillos of the Biggest Tzaddik of the Generation



The Beis Aharon writes, "I have received the following rule: When one prays with a minyan, the *Shechinah* is there, and it accomplishes and corrects all matters, just as it is when the greatest tzaddik of the generation davens."

We see the power of a minyan in halachah. A great tzaddik cannot say kedushah when he is alone. Even if the nine greatest tzaddikim of our nation daven together, they still cannot say kaddish or chazaras hashatz. Yet, a minyan of simple people can say kedushah and kaddish, etc. This proves the uniqueness of a minyan, which even the greatest tzaddikim cannot compare to.

The Yaaras Dvash (vol.2 drush 9) teaches that Esther told Mordechai that he needed to daven with a minyan to bring salvations.

It states (Esther 2:5) **איש יהודי היה בשושן הבירה ושמו מרדכי** , "There was a Jewish man in Shushan HaBirah (Shushan the capital) whose name was Mordechai…"

The Yaaras Dvash explains that **איש יהודי היה בשושן הבירה** means that Mordechai was the only Yid living there. This is because there were two parts of Shushan: Shushan and Shushan HaBirah.

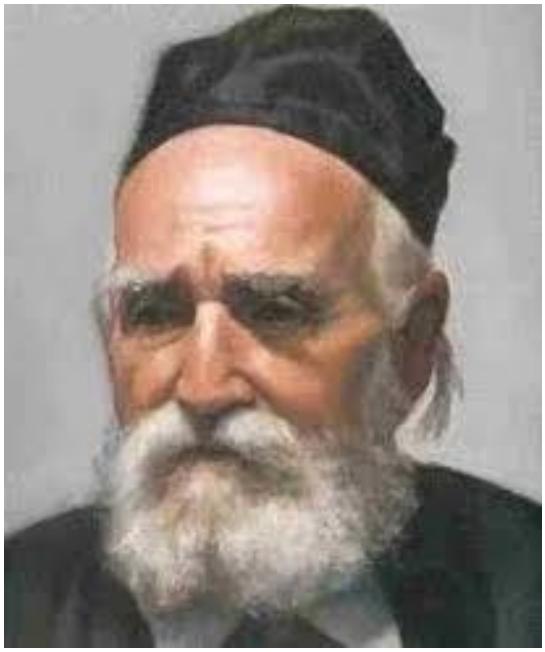
Achashverosh and the high-ranking officials lived in Shushan HaBirah, while most Yidden lived in Shushan. Mordechai, a high-ranking official also lived in Shushan HaBirah, and was the only Yid living there.

Esther told him (Esther 4:16) **לך כנוס את כל היהודים הנמצאים בשושן**, "Go, assemble all the Yidden that are found in Shushan…." to pray for Esther when she approaches Achashverosh to plead for their lives.

The Yaaras Dvash explains that Esther told Mordechai his prayers in Shushan HaBirah were insufficient. He must gather all the Yidden and daven together.

So, we see that even the greatest people of the generation benefit from tefillah b'tzibbur. It is the most exalted form of tefillah.

R' Moshe Feinstein z"l



R' Moshe Feinstein, whose yahrzeit will be observed on Ta'anit Esther, stands out as the foremost halachic authority for American Jewry in the 20th century. As the sh'ailot u'teshuvot / responsa collected in his Igrot Moshe attest, his halachic opinion was sought on virtually every significant question that arose as Torah- observant Jews adapted to a new civilization in America and enjoyed the benefits of rapid advances in technology. Among the subjects addressed there are questions of Shabbat-observance, medicine (for example, halachic issues raised by new procedures and surgeries), business and legal matters, kashrut, and cultural trends.

R' Moshe Feinstein was born on 7 Adar 5655 / 1895 in Uzda, White Russia, and was named after Moshe Rabbeinu, whose birthday he shared. His father, R' David, was the rabbi of Uzda and a great-grandson of R' Avraham, brother of the Vilna Gaon. R' Moshe's mother, Faya Rachel, was a descendant of the author of

the Mishnah commentary Tosfot Yom Tov and of the Shelah Ha'kadosh.

R' Moshe's first teacher was his father, who taught the boy all of Tanach before he studied his first page of Gemara. R' Moshe's family reports that throughout his life, R' Moshe studied two chapters of Tanach every day. Young Moshe also was an expert chess player until he realized that the game had ceased to relax him and instead demanded his full strength and concentration. At that point he considered the game to be harmful to his growth in Torah study, and he gave it up.

When the future R' Moshe was 12 years old, he was sent to Slutsk to study in the yeshiva of R' Isser Zalman Meltzer. R' Moshe's primary teacher there was R' Pesach Pruskin. In 1908, R' Pruskin decided to take his students and form his own yeshiva, and R' Meltzer called him to a din Torah before R' David Feinstein. R' Feinstein ruled that R' Pruskin was within his rights and, soon after, the new yeshiva opened. The guest of honor at the dedication was none other than R' Meltzer. One of the original students in the new academy was 13-year-old Moshe Feinstein.

When World War I broke out, R' Moshe sought the blessing of the Chafetz Chaim that he be spared from the draft. The elder sage told the young rabbi, "I've heard of you." The Chafetz Chaim then told him, "We learn in Pirkei Avot that anyone who accepts the yoke of Torah is spared from the yoke of the king." Soon after, R' Moshe learned that his call-up had been delayed for six months. As further security, R' Moshe accepted his first rabbinic position at that time, in his birthplace Uzda.

Shortly after Purim 5681 (1921), R' Moshe Feinstein was offered the rabbinate of Lyuban, Belarus (White Russia). He assumed the post before Pesach and immediately impressed his congregants by acting firmly in the matters that came before him. Less than two months later, on the night of Lag Ba'omer, the pogroms spawned by

the Russian civil war reached Lyuban. One night, the home where R' Moshe was staying was ambushed, apparently with the intent to assassinate the rabbi. Miraculously, R' Moshe escaped into a nearby corn field. Adding to the miracle, R' Moshe noted that the corn stalks were unusually tall for that time of year.

After a hiatus of a year, R' Moshe returned to Lyuban and served as its rabbi for 15 years. In R' Moshe's responsa, Igrot Moshe, there are halachic decisions written during that period.

Throughout the Lyuban years, R' Moshe had to deal with many challenges from the Communist government, including closure of the mikvah and the cheder and repeated confiscations of R' Moshe's own home. Nevertheless, unlike many other Russian citizens, R' Moshe made clear that he recognized the Communists as the legitimate government of Russia. For example, when relatives sent him money from America, a fact that was known to the government, he always asked at the post office to have it converted to rubles, which was the only legal currency. In this way, he was saved from even greater persecution.

R' Moshe would also relate that he saw clearly the hand of Hashem in his ability to deal with the authorities. For example, when one of his congregants was caught possessing ten dollars, R' Moshe was asked if he thought the man was concealing more money. R' Moshe answered, "How much money could a worker have saved under the reign of the Czar?" The Communists, who were happy to hear such criticisms of the Czar, who they considered an "enemy of the workers," let the man go.

In 1922, R' Moshe married Sima Kostonowitz, the daughter of one of the leading citizens of Lyuban. They had two sons and two daughters who survived to adulthood.

The Sadovner Rav



For many years, the **Sadovner Rav, R' Yisrael Sekula Zt'l**, would spend his Purim morning in a rather unusual way. He would daven שַׁחֲרִית and hear the reading of the מְגִלָּה at an early מִנְיָן. He would then spend the rest of his morning making the rounds of the Boro Park shuls on foot, walking among the congregants at each מִנְיָן as he collected צְדָקָה for the poor.

One year, he arrived home from his collections shortly before noon, exhausted but exhilarated. It was R' Sekula's custom to partake of two meals on Purim day, and the table was already set for the first meal. However, R' Sekula's pockets were bursting with assorted change and bills of a variety of denominations. He emptied his pockets and, assisted by his children, proceeded to unfold and sort out the money.



Suddenly, R' Sekula cried out in dismay, "Look! A $100 bill!" R' Sekula was one of scores of collectors who made their rounds of the Boro Park shuls on Purim morning. It was highly doubtful that an individual would give one collector — even one as distinguished as the Sadovner Rav — such a large contribution.

"I'm sure that I know who gave this to me. Whenever I come around collecting, he gives me a $10 bill. This man probably reached into his wallet for ten dollars and mistakenly pulled out this $100 bill. He probably thinks that he must have dropped it somewhere."

R' Sekula donned his coat and headed for the door; he was going to return the money. His family pleaded with him to eat something first. He had exerted himself and was now about to strain himself yet further. Could he not partake of the meal first and then attend to the matter?

The Rav explained, "If my assumption is correct, and indeed that man did give me this bill mistakenly, then he is surely distressed over its loss. Every minute that I delay in returning it is another minute of anguish that he will suffer. I must return it immediately."

With those words, the Rav headed out the door, accompanied by his sons. They arrived at the man's house and R' Sekula got straight to the point. "Did you lose any money today?" he asked.

Taken aback, the man replied that he had lost a $100 bill somewhere.

"Did you intend to give me $10 this morning?"

When the man replied affirmatively, the Sadovner Rav handed him the bill and explained what had happened. However, the man was somewhat embarrassed to accept the money and suggested that the Sadovner Rav keep it. However, R' Sekula would not hear of it.

"I only accept צְדָקָה that is given בְּלֵב שָׁלֵם (with a full heart). You never intended to give this for צְדָקָה. Please take back your $100, give me $10 and we'll be 'even.'"

Their transaction completed, R' Sekula wished him "a joyous Purim "and headed home with his children for the Purim Seuda. [Adapted from: More Shabbos Stories – ArtScroll]

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz said, "Once a person becomes accustomed to taking from others, he is in danger of feeling entitled to all that he receives – to the point that he might seek to harm someone who refuses his request." (Sichos Mussar)

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Rebbe Mendel of Vorker zt'l said: Children play high-and-seek. When a child hides, he shouts, "I'm ready!" The sound gives the child away. Now, the one searching for him knows where he is.

Hashem does the same. He conceals himself, as it states **ואנכי הסתר אסתיר** - But when one is in such a situation, Hashem is shouting, "I'm hiding. Find me." And we know exactly where to find Him.

How Could Haman's Daughter Not Recognise Her Own Father?



The Gemarah (Megilla 16a) writes: 'As Haman was taking Mordecai along the street of Haman's house, Haman's daughter was standing on the roof and saw the spectacle. She thought to herself that the one who is riding on the horse must be her father, and the one walking before him must be Mordecai. She then took a chamber pot full of faeces and cast its contents onto the head of her father, whom she mistakenly took as Mordecai. When Haman raised his eyes in disgust afterward, and looked up at his daughter, she saw that he was her father. In her distress, she fell from the roof to the ground and died.'

The pasuk (Esther 6:12) writes - **וְהָמָן נִדְחַף אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ אָבֵל וַחֲפוּי רֹאשׁ** – Haman rushed home, mourning and with his head covered. Haman

was mourning his daughter, and his head was therefore covered because of what happened.

The World asks: She was sure that it was her father on the horse being led by Morderchai. But she surely heard her father's voice proclaim ״כָּכָה יֵעָשֶׂה לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקָרוֹ״ - ***'So shall be done to the man whom the king wishes to honour***!', and she would have recognised it as her father's voice? Why didn't she recognise his voice? From this proclamation alone, she should have realised that it was her father Haman leading the horse, and not Morderchai?

The answer is that Haman's daughter knew her father very well. She knew that it was possible that her father was actually the one who was upon the horse, but still had the audacity to still make this proclamation – with himself as the intended honouree!

An arrogant person has no limits; – Crazy to the extreme!

Let us not behave this way. Even if we don't announce it, let's not even think it!



"Active Emunah" is dedicated to help bring emotional health to the world, especially through the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov Hakadosh zy"a.

What We Can Learn from Haman

I was zocheh years ago to be at the Megilla reading with Rav Tzvi Meir Zilverberg. What became apparent to me was that the Megilla isn't a story book – all of the people mentioned there actually exist now in a different form, both inside of us, and in the world at large. This means that when we mention Haman and we stamp our feet (or whichever minhag you happen to have) we aren't just trying to

destroy the Haman from the time of the Megilla – we are trying to destroy the Haman who exists now in all of us, and in the whole world.

Haman is another word for the forces of evil, for the yetzer harah, for all negative things in the world. And for us, it also represents whichever difficulties we might be struggling with. Rav Tzvi Meir one year quoted someone, and said something very interesting. We know that the daughter of Haman jumped off the roof and killed herself when she realized that she poured garbage on her father, who at the time was leading Mordechai Hatzaddik on a horse. The question is, how could she have made the mistake to pour it on him? He was loudly saying, "So shall be done to the man who the king wishes to honor"! So how could she have not realized that it was him leading?

He answered that she did hear him, but she knew that her father was such a baal gaavah, and she thought that he was the one on the horse saying about himself – "so shall be done to the man who the king wishes to honor"!

That's one of the big things we know about Haman – his tremendous level of gaavah. Another thing that we know is that he said, "all of this is worthless to me!" He couldn't stand to see Mordechai Hatzaddik to the extent that it ruined his whole day. He couldn't deal with the "rejection" of having one person not bow down to him. And he wasn't able to appreciate anything that he had.

Personally, I get a little sensitive when people make fun of Haman too much, because I also do those things sometimes! But that's exactly the good news – Purim is a time when we are able to get past a lot of these things.

The Gemarah says that the proper order of things on Purim is that first you read the Megilla at night and during the day, and only then are you supposed to do the Mitzvah of the seuda and drinking. What this means is that before you are able to drink "until you don't know the difference between Arur Haman and Baruch Mordechai", you

need to have first read the megillah twice and banged on the floor when you heard Haman's name mentioned, and then you can drink until you don't know the difference.

There are lots of things that we can learn from Haman. We can learn how to not be arrogant. We can learn how to not complain about everything. We can learn how to not be so self-centered. We can learn how to not take ourselves so seriously. We can learn how to deal with rejection. - These are some valuable lessons!

What's helpful to know is that we might have Haman inside of us, but we are not Haman. It is an external force. We might have the similar thoughts to him at times, but that's not us. We might get furious at times, but that's not who we really are.

In essence, we are all truly good, and that is what Haman was trying to disprove. We might occasionally do the wrong thing, but that's just us not acting in line with what we are really made of. True, we might need to do teshuva, but teshuva is a Mitzvah given to us by H-shem. It's a Mitzvah just like putting on tefilin and keeping Shabbos! Teshuva is a chance to fix things given to us by H-shem who loves us. Not only are we given another chance, but when we do teshuva from the love we have for H-shem, and not just so we don't get punished, anything we did wrong doesn't just get erased, it gets turned into a Mitzvah!

They change the recording upstairs so instead of an avera it shows a Mitzvah! And this may be a part of what is hinted in what it says in the **Zohar Hakadosh** that Yom Kippurim means "a day which is similar to Purim" meaning that Purim has something on a higher level than Yom Kippur itself! On Purim we can do teshuva from love of H-shem, and we are able to accept on ourselves the Torah from fresh.

May H-shem destroy the power of Haman and Amalek from within us and outside of us.



A Counsel to Overcome Anger

A primary counsel to overcoming anger is to push off becoming angry until later. **Tzaddikim of Lelov zt'l** would advise holding water in the mouth to control anger. Some baalei mussar wore a special suit when they needed to become angry.

These activities help postpone anger to a later time, a wonderful tactic to control anger.

Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz zy'a (renowned for his wisdom) had an empty *tabak pushkeh* (snuff box) that he often held in his hands and would occasionally open and close its lid.

One of his chassidim asked about the box and why he holds onto it. He replied, "Whenever I am aroused to anger, I open the lid of the box and place the anger inside. Two hours later, I open the lid again to assess whether the matter warrants anger or not."

The Ben Ish Chai told the following parable:

A king and his prime minister would often dress up like ordinary people and travel about the kingdom to hear what the common folk were saying.

Once, the king wanted to visit the hospital to hear what the sick people say about the king and the kingdom. The prime minister didn't think it was a good idea. He said, "What can we hear in a hospital that is important for the kingdom?" - But the king insisted, and they went to the hospital.

They visited a person in great pain. "What happened to you?" they asked.

"A wild dog bit me."

"Is there no cure for you?"

"There is a cure. If I eat the liver of the dog that bit me, I will be healed."

"So why are you upset? You can be healed."

The man answered, "The liver needs to be removed from the dog while the dog is alive. But I was so angry at the dog that I threw a stone and killed it. Now, I don't have a cure anymore."

When they left the hospital, the prime minister said, "I told you this would be a waste of time. We didn't hear anything worthwhile here."

The king disagreed. "I heard something beneficial. I learned that if I become angry, I must wait before responding. Because if I act impulsively, I might regret it later, like the sick man who regrets killing the dog. - From now on, I will never put to death anyone before taking a night to think things over."

Achashverosh never learned the benefits of putting off anger. Therefore, when Vashti insulted him, he killed her immediately (Esther 1:12). Later, he regretted what he did, but of course, it was too late. - Such is the lot of those who react impulsively.

At Esther's party, Achashverosh became angry at Haman and killed him immediately (see Esther 7:7). He didn't give himself time to think things over.

In the megillah (Esther 7:9), Charvonah told Achashverosh about the gallows Haman built and added a few ambiguous words. He said, **אשר דבר טוב על המלך** - It means that Mordechai spoke well about the king (by foiling Bigsan and Seresh's plan to poison Achashverosh). But in his haste, Achashverosh understood that Haman said that the gallows are **טוב על המלך**, suitable for Achashverosh to hang on it.

The Vilna Gaon teaches that this is why Achashverosh killed Haman. - This was the result of acting in anger, impulsively, without taking time to think things through matters.







Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein Zt'l

A guy comes to his friend and says, "Can you lend me $10,000."

"When are you going to pay me back?"

"Listen, I *mamesh* need it for only a week, I have a whole big deal coming through, and after a week, I will pay you back."

"You promise?"

"I promise."

"Okay."

A week passed, then a month, then a year and then two years. He calls him up regularly – "Where's my money?"

One day the guy from Borough Park who borrowed the money calls the guy in Williamsburg, and he says to him, "I have $5000, if you come right now to my house within 15 minutes, I will give it to you – but on condition that you forget about the remaining $5000!"

So the guy thinks to himself, 'Listen, this guy ain't paying me back, I've been chasing him for two years, $5000 is better than nothing.'

"Deal!"

He gets into his car, and leaves Williamsburg. He's on the highway but realizes that if he doesn't get there fast enough, he won't get

anything at all. So, he puts his foot down on the gas pedal. He's doing 85 MPH. Right behind him *sirens*. A traffic cop pulls him over.



"Hashem, please, You can't do this to me! I did a big mitzva by lending somebody money to someone I didn't want to, and not only is he ripping me off and won't I get my money back, but I will also get a speeding ticket fine and conviction?"

He was really angry with Hashem.

The cop rolls down his window, and says, "Are you crazy man - 85 MPH? – licence and registration."

The guy says, "Listen officer, before I give you anything, I just want to explain. I lent this guy $10,000, it's been 2 years, he called me up and if you get here within 15 minutes, You will get $5000, otherwise you are getting nothing."



The cop says, "Oh, I hear stories like this every day. I don't believe a word that you are saying."

"Here's the deal. You come with me to the guy, if I'm telling the truth, you don't give me a ticket. If it's not true, then you can arrest me and lock me up."

"Really – Deal."

So, the cop goes in front of him with his *sirens* and flashing lights to Borough Park. They pull up to the house which is in an apartment building and go up the elevator.

You know what a highway cop looks like? Boots, leather hat, puffy pants, the whole shebang.

He rings the bell of the apartment; The guy answers the door and he's got the $5000 in his hand all ready. The cop sees this, but as soon as the guy looks up and sees a cop standing there, he stammers, "What, you've brought a policeman? – I have $10,000, I really do have $10,000. Here, take the $10,000."

Understand? When the cop pulled him over, he's thinking, 'Hashem how can You do this to me? When in reality, Hashem sent the cop to ensure that he would get all of his money back!

This is really happening to us every day. The month of Adar is a time that focuses on 'what you see is good'. But what we really must do is focus on the stuff that we think is bad. - "**משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה**", the stuff that you think is not good, realize that Hashem loves you, and it is only for your good.

So, you don't have to be told to drink wine, listen to music etc. – No that's not going to do it; It's a state of mind. You need to change your state of mind. So, you must understand that whatever happens to you and whatever challenges that you have, are good.

That is Purim! Purim is **ונהפוך הוא** – Whatever looked bad ended up being good.

The Day(s) After Purim

Rabbi Meir Shalom of Porisov would make it a point to distribute money to the poor on the day after Purim. He would say "Since there is a special obligation to give gifts to the poor on Purim, people neglect this commandment the day after Purim. It is especially important to perform a neglected mitzvah. ~ Derech Tzadikim as quoted by R' Zelig Pliskin.

Esther's Make-over, Fit for a Queen

וּבְהַגִּיעַ תֹּר נַעֲרָה וְנַעֲרָה לָבוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ מִקֵּץ הֱיוֹת לָהּ כְּדָת הַנָּשִׁים שְׁנֵים עָשָׂר חֹדֶשׁ כִּי כֵּן יִמְלְאוּ יְמֵי מְרוּקֵיהֶן שִׁשָּׁה חֳדָשִׁים בְּשֶׁמֶן הַמֹּר וְשִׁשָּׁה חֳדָשִׁים בַּבְּשָׂמִים וּבְתַמְרוּקֵי הַנָּשִׁים – '*Each young woman's turn came to go in to King Ahasuerus after she had completed twelve months' preparation, according to the regulations for the women, for thus were the days of their preparation apportioned: six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with perfumes and preparations for beautifying women*.' (Esther 2:12).

Why did the young women go through such a lengthy beauty preparation?



The scripture does not answer the question of why the long beauty process, but it stresses that the procedures were "according to the regulations for the women."

Were the procedures known and practiced by women in general? Did mothers pass on recipes for soothing oils and perfumes to their daughters?

It is likely women used oils and scents to some extent and taught their daughters how to make fragrances. But only the women inducted into the king's harem would have had the luxury of a twelve-month beauty program.

Hegai required all the candidates to undergo the twelve-month regimen; one could not opt out of the treatment. The words that form the basis of "beauty treatment" are translated "to scour, polish". In a dry climate subject to drought and water shortage, people did not bathe frequently. The twelve-month process might be

thought of as a cleansing, hygienic exfoliation, followed by a refinement with fragrances.

Candidates for queen came to the king's palace in Susa from "all the provinces of his kingdom" (Esther 2:2). The Persian Empire extended east toward India and west toward Greece. It encompassed expansive deserts and a sub-tropical area along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. The climate in most of the kingdom was hot and arid. Droughts and shortage of rainfall were common. Weather along the two rivers was humid, but regions distant from the Tigris-Euphrates plain suffered blistering heat.

One of Hegai's objectives was to ameliorate the effects of heat, wind and evaporation. His plan placed skin care first. Six months of oils addressed troublesome conditions such as cracking, wrinkling, wind damage, sunburn, healing of sores and skin diseases.

Several of the oils available in Esther's time had disinfectant and anti-fungal properties. Because every young woman underwent a thorough oil exfoliation, skin disorders were noted and treated. The king was protected from picking up skin diseases and infections that he could have been introduced to.

After six months of basic skin health care, they incorporated oils, spices and fragrances to enhance (polish) each girl's natural beauty. The scriptures do not say whether the cosmetics of Egypt such as kohl for the eyes, henna for hair color, pomegranate juice for blush and lip stain figured in the finishing process.

What oils were used in the beautifying process?

Although scripture doesn't reveal much, it is thought that the women had daily massages with olive oil, cassis oil, myrrh oil and honey to moisturize, heal, disinfect and promote uplifting emotions.

Olive oil is touted for its anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory qualities. It soothes inflammation and heals burns. It softens skin texture and is thought by some to cure dandruff.

As a natural humectant or moisturizer, honey plays a role in natural cosmetics today as well as in Esther's time. It retains moisture, is mildly antiseptic, and has been found helpful in healing acne.

Scripture lists myrrh oil first in the list of oils, and it may have been the most important ingredient in the regimen. Myrrh oil increases spiritual awareness and strengthens memory.

Myrrh oil is derived from a resin that bleeds from the bark of a commiphora tree. The resin has been used for thousands of years as an ingredient in perfume, as incense and as a wound dressing.

Ancient Egyptians "carried cones on their heads that contained myrrh to prevent sunburn and repel insects". Myrrh is believed to have anti-aging and hormone-like properties. It is reported to stimulate circulation, decrease inflammation, soothe inflamed skin, prevent wrinkles, heal fungal infections, heal mouth sores, alleviate stretch marks, and repel parasites and insects.

What is known about fragrant oils?

To make fragrant lubricants, women placed resins of myrrh, or any of a number of aromatic peels, leaves, petals, or spices such as cinnamon and saffron into stone bottles of oil. The bottles sat in the sun for several days. Each morning the aromatic matter was refreshed, until the scent had sufficiently infused the oil.

Are the ancient oils used in beauty products today?

Many people believe the oils are effective, safe and desirable. The natural oils are free of carcinogens and chemicals that disturb metabolism. A number of the oils and aromatics listed in scripture are incorporated into lotions and creams today.

'Sincere Ahavat Hashem begins with true Yir'at Shamayim.' ~ R Chaim Kanievsky Zt'l.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman ~ Torah Wellsprings

The Four Parshiyos



Rebbe Yisrael of Chortkov *zt'l* teaches, "Every Shabbos of the four *parshiyos* brings bounty to the world.

The Alshich HaKadosh says that the ancient law of Persia was that if a person sentenced to death merited to see the king, he was pardoned.

When *Achashveirosh's* anger was aroused on Haman, someone quickly covered Haman's face, so Haman wouldn't see the king's face and be forgiven. The Alshich explains that this is the meaning of (*Esther* 7:8) וּפְנֵי הָמָן חָפּוּ - "***Haman's face was covered***." Someone covered Haman's face so he wouldn't see *Achashverosh's* face and be pardoned.

As we said, during the weeks of the "four parshiyos," we merit seeing Hashem's face, *keviyachol*. And when one sees the King's face, all his sins are pardoned.

"Money can be compared to salt. In moderation, it improves one's life, but if a person is consumed with adding and acquiring more and more money, the entire taste of life is ruined!" ~ R' Simcha Bunim of P'shischah zt"l.

"A father once asked me to give his son a blessing. Instead, I taught him an important lesson: Teach him to smile!" ~ R' Shlomo Zalman Aurbach zt"l.



The Specialty of Megillas Esther

The Gemara (Shabbos 88a) says that Hashem placed Har Sinai over the nation's head and forced them to receive the Torah. However, because of the Purim miracle, the nation received the Torah again, this time willingly and from love.

The *Chasam Sofer* (*Drashos* pg. 164) writes, "Therefore, the *Megillah* is more honored and greater than even the Torah itself." - There is an aspect of the *Megillah* that is greater than the Torah itself, due to the fact that the Jewish nation accepted it with love.

Since the *Megillah* is so holy, one should listen to the *Megillah* with awe and passion. **The *Kedushas Levi*** (*Kedushah Rishonah*) writes: "One should listen to the *Megillah* with a fiery passion in his heart. He should have in mind that he is now accepting the yoke of Torah and *mitzvos*. He should think, 'What was, was. From now on, I will keep Hashem's *mitzvos*.'

The best time for *teshuvah* is when the *Megillah* is being read, because, at that time, Hakodosh Boruch Hu purifies Bnei Yisroel from Above."

At the Purim miracle, we accepted the Torah again, and this time from love, and these should be our thoughts when we listen to the

Megillah. (The *Kedushas Levi* says this should also be our thoughts at the Purim *seudah*. We should rejoice with the Torah.)

The *Beis Aharon* (66b) 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 to hear the *Megillah* just once.

Reb Yonason Eibshitz *zt"l* (*Yaaras Devash* 1:3) writes: "Please listen, wise nation, whom Hashem chose from all other nations. Please, don't think *Megillas* Esther is a history book to tell the stories that happened to our forefathers... If that is all the *Megillah* is about, why must we read it twice on Purim?

Boruch Hashem, we all know the story. Children make plays, acting out what happened. Rather, it is for the benefits that we get from the *Megillah* [to recognize and celebrate the miracles Hashem performed for the Jewish nation].

Additionally, there are many Torah secrets in the *Megillah*, and the masters of *kabbalah* elaborate on them. It is also called *Megillas* Esther (which can be translated as "the hidden *Megillah*") because it contains many hidden secrets of Creation. Furthermore, the *Megillah* can be studied as a *moshul* [parable], discussing the battle and struggle between Bnei Yisroel and the *yetzer horah*... And there are many *mussar* lessons in the *Megillah*, which teach us how to live."

[When a spy in an enemy country has to report to his homeland in code, he can't write things clearly because the message might be intercepted. So, he writes in code, but his government knows how to read between the lines, and they understand the message. This is a *moshul* 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.]

The end of the *Megillah* (10:2) states: - "***All his mighty and powerful acts, and the account of the greatness of Mordechai, whom the king had promoted, are recorded in the book of chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia***."

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

The Gemara (*Megillah* 7a) states several proofs that *Megillas* Esther was written with *ruach hakodesh*. With this awareness in mind, we know that every word is precious. [**The Minchas Elazar zt"l** tells that when **Rebbe Mendel of Riminov** was imprisoned, the police permitted him to take one item to the prison with him. The Rebbe requested a *Megillah* (although it was Tamuz). **Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz *zt"l*** instructed Reb Mendel's *talmidim* not to fulfill this request. "If he has the *Megillah*, he'll destroy the entire world."

The *Minchas Elazar* writes that if Reb Mendel of Riminov could have destroyed the world with the *Megillah* in Tamuz, imagine what he could have accomplished on Purim when we have a mitzvah to read the *Megillah*!

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

One of the *berachos* on the *Megillah* is: **שעשה ניסים לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה** – "***Hashem made miracles for our forefathers in those days at this time***".

The *Sefas Emes* asks: The miracles didn't occur on the 14th of Adar. They happened on the 13th of Adar. So why do we say: בזמן הזה, that the miracles happen on this day?

The *Sefas Emes* answers that we are blessing Hashem for the miracles that happen each year. The miracles happen each year on the 14th when we read the *Megillah*. (R' Elimelech Biderman, Torah Wellsprings)







פרק א׳ Ignoring the Messages

וַיְהִי בִּימֵי אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הוּא אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הַמֹּלֵךְ מֵהֹדּוּ וְעַד־כּוּשׁ שֶׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה - *"And it was in the days of Achashveirosh: he is Achashveirosh who ruled from Hodu* to *Cush over a hundred and twenty-seven provinces."* (Esther 1:1)

Rashi comments: **הוּא בְּרִשְׁעוֹ מִתְּחִלָּתוֹ וְעַד סוֹפוֹ** – "***He [remained] in his evil from the beginning until the end***".

Rashi reveals to us an allusion to the nature of Achashveirosh, one of the main characters in the Purim story. He teaches us that Achashveirosh was an evil person at the beginning of the story and remained evil till the very end.

Two questions arise: Firstly, every detail in the *Megillah* teaches us a message that is connected to the theme of Purim – in what way is the fact that Achashveirosh remained evil relevant to the lessons of Purim? Secondly, why, of all the many *reshoim* who feature in the Tanach is Achashveirosh one of the only ones to be singled out for this particular criticism?

By answering the second question we can then understand the first as well. It seems that there are two very significant factors that can cause a wayward person to change his ways; the first is exposure to righteous people. The Torah instructs us to cleave to *talmidai chachomim* and *Chazal* speak at length of the importance of spending as much time as possible with great people because one can learn from their righteous behavior and see first-hand the results of living a spiritual life.

A second possible catalyst for *teshuva* is the events surrounding us; when a person is involved in events that seem to be guided by the Divine Hand, he has the opportunity to respond to the Divine message and change his ways.

Achashveirosh merited both opportunities; He married the righteous Esther, whose greatness could not have been hidden from

him despite her secretive nature. Moreover, his main advisor towards the end of his life was Mordechai HaTzadik, one of the greatest Sages of the time. Achashveirosh also had the good fortune to be one of the players in the remarkable Purim story - the account of how the very existence of the Jewish people was threatened, and yet everything was miraculously turned on its head.

It would be difficult to not be positively affected by such great people and by being part of such a miraculous story. Yet Achashveirosh remained the same, greedy, selfish person at the end of the story and indeed the end of his life.

Proof to this is in one of the very last *pasukim* in the *Megillah*: "And King Achashveirosh placed a tax on the land and the islands." The *meforshim* explain that when he married Esther, he reduced the taxes on his Kingdom so that her home nation might reveal itself to him in order to benefit further from its new connection to the King. At the end of the story he knew her identity, therefore he raised the taxes again. This demonstrates that at the climax of the Purim story all Achashveirosh could think about was money. Another indication that he remained evil is that he never committed to rebuilding the second *Beis HaMikdosh* despite the great benefits he derived from Mordechai and Esther.

We can now understand the connection between Achashveirosh's flaw and the Purim story. The lesson of Purim is to see the Divine Providence even in a time of *hester panim* [when Hashem's Presence is hidden] and to increase our awareness of Hashem in our own lives. Yet it is insufficient if that newfound recognition remains in the realm of the mind and heart. It must bring about an enhancement in one's *avodas* Hashem.

The example of Achashveirosh teaches us how not to respond to Divine Providence – remaining oblivious to Hashem's messages and engulfed in base lusts and desires. (R' Yehonosan Gefen)

Why Do Sefardim Observe Purim?

The following is a thought from the ***Chida***. The *Chida* writes in a number of places that the miracle of Purim took place in countries outside of Sefard. Sefardim lived in Spain from the time of the *churban Bayis Rishon*. The *pasuk* at the end of Ovadiah writes that the Anshei Yerusholayim were exiled to Sefard, to Spain. That is why Sefardim have a disproportionate number of Kohanim. This is because the Anshei Yerusholayim specifically which was disproportionally Kohanim was exiled to Sefard, to Spain.

During the time of the miracle of Purim, the Sefardim were not **מֵהֹדּוּ וְעַד־כּוּשׁ**, they were not in the countries from India until Kush. Exactly where Kush is, it is basically Asia. The Sefardim were outside of this challenge. Therefore, the Sefardim were not really subject to the decree of Achashveirosh.

The big question therefore is, why are they part of the observation and celebration of Purim, if it is an Ashkenazi miracle, why do Sefardim celebrate Purim?

The simple answer would be, that Klal Yisroel are one big nation, and if half the nation is happy, then the entire nation is happy, therefore, all Jews celebrate.

However, the *Chida* answers with something which is really the message behind Purim. He says that the Yom Tov of Purim is not just to commemorate what **once** happened. The Yom Tov of Purim is because the *ohr* of Purim, the light of Purim, the influence of Purim, the impact of Purim, the spirituality of Purim is something that was put there by Mordechai and Esther in Shushan HaBirah and it remains that way from year to year.

Every year that *gilui ohr* is *nisgaleh* [revealed] again and again. The Yom Tov of Purim is not to remember what happened. It is to tap into the tremendous *kimu v'kiblu*, the tremendous energy that was put into **this** day.

We say: שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בַּזְּמַן הַזֶּה – "***That he did for our forefathers on those days, at this time***". The *nissim* were done a long time ago, but: בַּזְּמַן הַזֶּה – the *zman* [time] is still here, it is still that *zman*, it is still that magical time of Purim where a person can tap into it and use it.

This ability to tap in is very special and we shouldn't let it slip away. We shouldn't just sleep away Purim. We shouldn't be busy with *mishloach manos* all day, we must make sure to get a *ruchniosdika* feeling out of the day, we must make sure to get some spiritual elevation from the day of Purim.

The *Chida* explains: This is why they only established Purim the following year. They never established the original year as Purim, only when the next year came round, did they establish Purim. *Chazal* understood that that the *ohr* is incorporated into the day, it is in the *guf hazman*, and they established Purim forever.

The Gemara in *Megillah* (7a) says: בַּתְּחִילָּה קִבָּעוּהָ בְּשׁוּשַׁן, וּלְבַסּוֹף בְּכָל הָעוֹלָם כּוּלּוֹ – "***Originally they established Purim in Shushan, then they established it throughout the entire world***". Originally, they established Purim in Shushan, as a commemoration to thank Hashem for the miracle, then, in the end, however, when they saw that Purim was a special time, they established Purim worldwide.

This is also *peshat* in: תְּשׁוּעָתָם הָיִיתָ לָנֶצַח וְתִקְוָתָם בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר.- "***There salvation, You have been eternally, and their hope throughout generation after generation***". Purim happened many years ago, what does it have to do with all future generations? The answer is: The influence of Purim repeats itself on a yearly basis. We must make sure to tap into it.

So, although the *yetzer horah* will fight strong, and try and distract us, we must make the most of Purim, and make sure to tap into the special *kedusha* of the day, as much as possible. (R' Yisroel Reisman)

The Importance of Every Second



The Medrash relates that Rav Akiva was once in the middle of giving a *shiur* when he noticed his *talmidim* beginning to doze off. He digressed from the subject he had been discussing and asked, "Why did Queen Esther deserve to rule over 127 countries? She merited this because she was descended from Sorah, who lived 127 perfect years." Why did Rav Akiva interrupt his *shiur* specifically to interject this tangent at this time?

The *Chiddushei HaRim* explains that a person could view Esther's kingdom as simply a collection of countries, and for each year of Sorah's life she merited to rule over another one. In reality, each country consists of states, cities, neighborhoods, streets, and even houses. Similarly, a year can be subdivided into months, weeks, days, hours, minutes, and seconds.

Rav Akiva explained that Sorah didn't live a "mostly" good life which allowed Esther to receive the same number of countries as the years of her life. If Sorah would have let up for a week or even a second, it would have resulted in a corresponding deficiency in Esther's empire, causing her to be lacking a city or even just a house. It was only because Sorah's life was equally good from the beginning until the end (Rashi, *Bereishis* 23:1), every second of every day, for her entire life, that Esther's kingdom was complete.

Rav Akiva's *talmidim* were obviously tired, and they assumed that if they would take a short nap and miss a little of the *shiur*, it wouldn't have any ramifications. Realizing this, Rav Akiva wanted to teach them that every second of our lives, every word that we say, and every action that we take, have very real and direct consequences.

Finding the Miracles in Megillas Esther

בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם כְּשֶׁבֶת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ עַל כִּסֵּא מַלְכוּתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה - "*When King Achashveirosh sat on his throne, which was in the capital city Shushan*." (Esther 1:2)



The *Shulchan Aruch* (690:3) rules: **צריך לקרותה כולה** - "**One must read the entire *Megillah***." The *Mishnah Berurah* adds: "According to most *poskim*, if you didn't hear just one word of the *Megillah* you aren't *yoitza* [haven't fulfilled your duty]."

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

The Vilna Gaon explains that Shlomah HaMelech had a magnificent throne. Many kings wanted to sit on it but failed. 'Pharaoh Nakeh' (Pharaoh the Lame) sat on Shlomah HaMelech's throne, and one of the decorative lions attacked him, and that's how he became lame. Nevuchadnetzar also wanted to sit on Shlomah's throne and failed.

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

The Vilna Gaon writes: "This is the meaning of: **בְּשָׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ עַל כִּסֵּא מַלְכוּתוֹ אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוּשַׁן** - Achashveirosh was the first king to live in Shushan. All the kings before him didn't live there… This is recorded in the *Megillah* so we will recognize Hashem's wonders and understand that Hashem prepared every step that led up to the miracle for Bnei Yisroel. Mordechai and Esther lived in Shushan, so Hakodosh Boruch arranged that Achashveirosh should move his capital there."

This is the astounding miracle implied in this *pasuk*. The two *gedolim* of Bnei Yisroel, Mordechai and Esther, from whom will come the salvation for Bnei Yisroel, lived in Shushan, so Hashem arranged that Achashveirosh should move his capital city to

Shushan, right near where they lived! When Haman passed his evil decrees, Mordechai and Esther were on the scene and were able to thwart Haman's evil plans. [This also reveals Hashem's love for His *tzaddikim* and the Jewish nation. Hashem could have had Mordechai and Esther move to the capital city in Bavel, where all Persian kings lived. But Hashem had Achashveirosh and his entire cabinet move to Persia rather than have Mordechai and Esther come to Bavel.]

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

Here's another spectacular miracle pointed out by the ***Alshich HaKadosh***:

Haman arrived at the palace of Achashveirosh just when Achashveirosh wanted to know how to reward Mordechai. If Haman had come earlier, he would have seen that they were discussing rewarding Mordechai (and not rewarding himself, as he thought). If he had come a minute later, someone else would have thought of how to reward Mordechai.

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

The *Malbim* expresses wonder why Achashveirosh didn't reward Mordechai at the time Mordechai saved his life. Why did he forget to reward him? All he did then was write the episode in his *Sefer Zichronos*. This was so he would get the reward at just the right time.

Also, let's think about what would happen if Haman arrived just one day earlier to request permission to hang Mordechai on the gallows. Achashveirosh would probably agree because Achashveirosh didn't love the Yidden (as the Gemara tells us). Haman came just at the right time so that the miracles could occur. So, when you read the *Megillah*, keep your heart and mind alert to recognize the miracles. If possible, try to read some commentaries on the *Megillah*. Each word is another facet of the miracle. Let yourself be astounded by the miracles Hashem performs within the rules of nature to save His nation, Bnei Yisroel. (R' Elimelech Biderman)

True Honor and Splendor - כָּבֹוד וּלְתִפְאֶרֶת

בְּהַרְאֹתוֹ אֶת־עֹשֶׁר כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ וְאֶת־יְקָר תִּפְאֶרֶת גְּדוּלָּתוֹ - "*Where he showed the great wealth of his kingship and the honor of the splendor of his greatness*." (Esther 1:4).

The Gemara in *Megillah* (12a) explains that Achashveirosh at his feast wore the *bigdei kehuna* [garments of the Kohanim]. This is inferred from the *Megillah's* description of Achashveirosh displaying at his feast: **יְקָר תִּפְאֶרֶת גְּדוּלָּתוֹ** - "*The honor of the splendor of his greatness*", which resembles the Torah's description in *Parshas Tetzaveh* of the *bigdei kehunah* as being made: **לְכָבֹוד וּלְתִפְאֶרֶת** – "*For honor and splendor*" (*Shemos* 28:2). - Rashi comments that the Gemara refers here to the garments of the Kohen Gadol, which had been brought from Yerusholayim.

The Tolner Rebbe says that our conception of **כָּבֹוד וּלְתִפְאֶרֶת** - "*honor and splendor*", differs fundamentally from that of the other nations. We understand that true beauty is inner beauty, the beauty of *avodas* Hashem and fulfilling Hashem's will. Anything that is done for His honor and to fulfil His will is beautiful and glorious, whereas anything that is not done for His sake has neither beauty nor glory.

Indeed, we have always known how to show honor and glory to matters of *kedusha*. For example, we dress in special clothing for Shabbos, even though the *goyim* don't see any beauty or glory in these clothes. We can see the beauty in our special Shabbos clothes, just as we can see the beauty in the plain clothing of the ordinary Kohanim, which could not possibly be appreciated by members of other nations. - We see them as garments made in accordance with Hakodosh Boruch Hu's command for the purpose of serving Him in the *Beis HaMikdosh*, and there is nothing more glorious and beautiful.

This message needs to be reinforced in our generation. Unfortunately, many among us have been attracted to the **כָּבֹוד וּלְתִפְאֶרֶת** - "*honor and splendor*", of the foreign nations, and they dress their children in clothing that is deemed beautiful and honorable by non-Jews. On Purim, they dress their children in costumes that originate from non-Jewish culture, something our predecessors would never have countenanced, and this can cause grave spiritual destruction, *chas vesholam*.

The Tolner Rebbe then relates what he heard his grandfather say about the time he moved to Eretz Yisroel and saw the way the impoverished Jews of Eretz Yisroel, who barely had any money, prepared themselves and their homes for Shabbos.

They spread white sand on the floor of their homes in honor of Shabbos, the food for Shabbos was scarce, and they lit candles in crevices in the stone walls. His grandfather remarked that although he had seen lavish Shabbos festivities in Tulchyn, Russia, and in

America, nevertheless, he never saw as beautiful a Shabbos as what he witnessed in Yerusholayim. Indeed, this is a kind of splendor that no non-Jew can appreciate.

On Shabbos *Parshas Tetzaveh*, when we read about the garments of the ordinary Kohanim, which, like the golden garments of the Kohen Gadol, are described with the phrase **לְכָבוֹד וּלְתִפְאָרֶת**, we must reinforce this awareness of the distinction between Jewish beauty, which is true, inner beauty, and the external beauty which is appreciated by other nations.

We must distance ourselves from all forms of, **כָּבוֹד וּלְתִפְאָרֶת**, which originate from impure sources and ensure to give honor and respect only to matters of *kedusha*, and we will then be worthy of true splendor and glory, **אָמֵן כֵּן יְהִי רָצוֹן**.

False Impressions



During the era of Purim, there was a terrible decree to destroy the Jews. The decree was not only in this world but was a heavenly decree as well. *Chazal* (*Megillah* 12a) teach us that the cause of this decree was because: **מִפְּנֵי שֶׁנֶּהֱנוּ מִסְּעוּדָּתוֹ שֶׁל אוֹתוֹ רָשָׁע** – "*They took pleasure in the feast of Achashveirosh*".

But what was so terrible about enjoying a party that it warranted such a devastating decree?

Perhaps the food wasn't kosher. But we know that this was not the case. The *pasuk* says: **לַעֲשׂוֹת כִּרְצוֹן אִישׁ־וָאִישׁ** - "*to do the will of each*

man." (Esther 1:8). The Gemara explains this to mean: "*Like the will of Mordechai and Haman*". So, Mordechai made sure that all the food was kosher *l'mehadrin*.

One might suggest that at the *seudah* there was *pritzus* – men and women mingling together, or women dressed improperly, etc. No, on the contrary, this *seudah* was as *tznua'dik* as possible.

The men and women were completely separate; the men were outside the palace: **בַּחֲצַר גִּנַּת בִּיתַן הַמֶּלֶךְ** – "*In the courtyard of the garden of the king's palace*." (Esther 1:5), and the women were inside the palace, as it says: **גַּם וַשְׁתִּי הַמַּלְכָּה עָשְׂתָה מִשְׁתֵּה נָשִׁים בֵּית הַמַּלְכוּת** – "*Also Queen Vashti made a feast for the women in the palace*." (1:9). They weren't even in the building together, so how could there have been *pritzus*?

Perhaps they served *avodah zorah*? But again, we find nothing like that mentioned in any *Chazal*. So why did Klal Yisroel deserve to be annihilated?

However, we do find that Achashveirosh had the *keilim* [vessels] of the *Beis HaMikdosh* displayed at the party. When the Jews at the party saw the *keilim* being used by the non-Jews they should have cried and ripped their clothing.

The Yidden may have deserved to be punished for not showing emotion upon seeing the *keilim* being desecrated, but this does not seem to be the reason for the decree to destroy them. The Gemara's words: **שֶׁנֶּהֱנוּ מִסְּעוּדָתוֹ** – "*enjoying the feast*", does not seem to be referring to their lack of emotion upon seeing the display of the *keilim*. So, what does: **שֶׁנֶּהֱנוּ מִסְּעוּדָתוֹ** mean?

The Awesome Display

It is very important to take note of the *Megillah's* description of *seudas* Achashveirosh: **בְּהַרְאֹתוֹ אֶת־עֹשֶׁר כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ וְאֶת־יְקָר תִּפְאֶרֶת גְּדוּלָּתוֹ** - "*When he displayed the riches of his glorious kingdom and the honor of his splendorous majesty*." (Esther 1:4). Achashveirosh's

party was a very grand, glamorous affair. The *Megillah* even gives a detailed description of its splendor: **תרצפעסוןמלכיחזוגבא ח**

חוּר כַּרְפַּס וּתְכֵלֶת אָחוּז בְּחַבְלֵי־בוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן עַל־גְּלִילֵי כֶסֶף וְעַמּוּדֵי שֵׁשׁ מִטּוֹת זָהָב וָכֶסֶף עַל רִצְפַת בַּהַט־וָשֶׁשׁ וְדַר וְסֹחָרֶת - "*There were hanging of white cotton and blue wool, caught up by cords of fine linen and purple wool to silver rods and alabaster columns; and there were couches of gold and silver on a pavement of marble, alabaster, mother-of-pearl, and mosaics.*" (Esther 1:6). - This feast was a grand display of wealth, power, and beauty.

Now imagine how this looked to the people who attended the *seudah*. When the Jews walked into this grandiose affair, they were most likely awestruck by all the glitz and glitter, enamoured and entranced by the grandeur they saw around them. That is what it means when it says they were, **שֶׁנֶּהֱנוּ מִסְּעוּדָתוֹ שֶׁל אוֹתוֹ רָשָׁע**.

Throughout the ages, many of the terrible tragedies that have befallen Klal Yisroel have been caused by this same behavior. We look at the external world and we chap *hispeilus* [are awestruck]. We are captivated by the brilliance, wealth and beauty of the culture around us. It seems to beckon Yidden with a message that there is a "real world" out there that is better than ours.

The Big City

R' Yisroel Belsky relates that he once heard a *ba'al mussar* speak about the *tefillah* of *Al Chet* that we say on Yom Kippur. The last one is: **וְעַל חֵטְא שֶׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּתִמְהוֹן לֵבָב** - "*On the sin that we committed with a heart full of wonder.*" What does: **בְּתִמְהוֹן לֵבָב**, mean?

Suppose a *yeshivah bochur* must go to Manhattan. He goes on the subway, taking a Gemara along with him, and he doesn't lift his eyes from the Gemara during the entire trip. All he is thinking about is how the entire universe was created for Torah, and how that nothing that happens in the world has any real importance outside of Torah. All the movements of empires, politicians, the wealthy, and the

power structures – everything takes place only to serve Torah. The world, the universe, the galaxies: "It was all created for Klal Yisroel and the Torah".



Then the *bochur* steps out of the subway and looks around. He sees huge buildings stretching to the sky. He sees crowds of people, some in elegant clothing, some carrying attaché cases, all looking very important, very busy, and very wealthy.

Not one person takes notice of him, standing there with his Gemara in his hand. He looks around, and suddenly a thought begins to creep into his mind: "Maybe there is a bigger world out there. Maybe I'm just a small person, with a Gemara, who isn't really important." - He becomes *botul* [nullified] in his own eyes: **וַנְּהִי בְעֵינֵינוּ כַּחֲגָבִים וְכֵן הָיִינוּ בְּעֵינֵיהֶם**– "*And we were like grasshoppers in our eyes and so we were in their eyes*" (*Bamidbar* 13:33).

That's the **שנהנו מסעודתו של אחשורוש**. That's what happens to Klal Yisroel when they take in this extremely impressive world: they begin to feel small in their own eyes. They feel the need to acknowledge the culture of the external world. They start to wonder: How can we say the whole world out there is: **בטל והפקר כעפר הארץ** – "*nullified and worthless like dirt of the ground*"? - How can we say it doesn't exist?

The Jews of the Purim era were awestruck by the world, and they began to think of themselves as part of the world. They took pride in considering themselves as part of the non-Jewish culture. They believed that they were important because that world was so

important and not because the Torah, Klal Yisroel, and *ma'amad* Har Sinai were important. For thoughts like these we say, **וְעַל חֵטְא שֶׁחָטָאנוּ לְפָנֶיךָ בְּתִמְהוֹן לֵבָב**. - Unfortunately, in today's generation as well, many people also feel this displaced sense of pride.

True Importance

We sometimes fail to realize that every word of Torah, each *pasuk*, every Mishnah and Gemara, all the wonderful teaching of the holy *Rishonim* and *Achronim* who explain the Torah Hakedosha, is so much more important than everything else in this word. All those massive buildings are actually there to serve us. They were created – the entire world was **נברא כדי לשמשני** – "*created to serve me*".

When the Ribbono Shel Olam saw how Klal Yisroel were reacting to the splendor of the Persian culture, He had to show them what this glamorous world is really all about: It's a world of filth and murder. It's a world that showed tremendous excitement when a decree to wipe out the Jews was passed. The non-Jew's gloated as they prepared themselves for that tremendous opportunity.

This is the real world that the Jew's who attended the party admire so much! And the glorious king who hosted the party is nothing but a drunkard! And in his drunken state, he killed his queen. This is who you are awed by. - Their world is not at all beautiful, it is ugly. But they have a knack for dressing up this ugliness in a very impressive way.

New York City once had a campaign to beautify Fifth Avenue. This is the area where all the luxurious stores and hotels are located, one after another – impressive buildings, everything is so imposing and majestic.

It was decided that the one thing that was ruining its beauty were the garbage cans on every street corner. So, they replaced the old garbage cans with elaborate new ones, with special designs and colors to fit perfectly with the decor of Fifth Avenue.



Rav Yisroel Belsky relates how he remembers looking at one of them and thinking, "Look at this beautiful shell. It's just rotting food and garbage, all dressed up in a glamorous can. This is the perfect *moshul* for *seudas* Achashveirosh. The king and his ministers, dressed in royal robes encrusted with diamonds and gold, sat in a totally drunken state. The king even killed his wife!"

Then he relates, he then thought to himself "It's not just *seudas* Achashveirosh, it's our entire civilization. Their culture is nothing more than a dressed-up garbage can".

Is there anything in their world that should really impress us? Do they do anything to compare to the Torah Hakedoshah and to the relationship Klal Yisroel has with the Ribbono Shel Olam? What in their life compares to a simple Shabbos that we experience every single week? Do they have anything as impressive as *simcha shel* mitzvah [the joy of doing a mitzvah]?

No. There's nothing out there that compares. It's all just emptiness: **לָא שְׁרִירִין וְלָא קַיָּמִין בְּטֵלִין וּמְבֻטָּלִין** – "*Null and void, and non-existent*".

The world exists only on account of the Torah. It exists only on account of Klal Yisroel. Purim is a time when we must take a very special look at Klal Yisroel and recharge ourselves with protective immunity from the non-Jew's who surround us in *galus*.

That is the lesson that we should all take from Purim and carry with us throughout the year.

Explaining the Aveirah of Achashveirosh's Banquet



A Jew and a non-Jew were traveling together and stopped off somewhere along the highway to eat lunch.

"Do you want some wine?" the non-Jew asked.

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

"How about a sausage? I have extra."

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

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

"I'm positive. We are only allowed to eat such foods when one's life is in danger."

"What do you mean?"

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

"Then you would be allowed to eat it?"

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

The non-Jew took out his knife, pointed it at the Jew and said, "Eat my food, or I'll kill you."

The Jew was afraid and began eating. What could he do? It was *pikuach nefesh* [life threatening].

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

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

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

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

The *Chasam Sofer* (*Toras Moshe,* Esther, *d.h Isa B'Megillah*) says, that they should have eaten at home before going to the party, so the non-kosher food at the party would be *achilah gasah* (eating after they were full when one doesn't enjoy eating, which isn't called eating, according to halachah). Then it would be as though they didn't eat non-kosher foods. (R' Elimelech Biderman)

Insight into Why the Big Feast Needed to be 180 Days

בְּהַרְאֹתוֹ אֶת־עֹשֶׁר כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ וְאֶת־יְקָר תִּפְאֶרֶת גְּדוּלָּתוֹ יָמִים רַבִּים שְׁמוֹנִים וּמְאַת יוֹם - *"Where he showed the great wealth of his kingship and the honor of the splendor of his greatness, many days - a hundred and eighty days."* (Esther 1:4)

Why did Achashveirosh celebrate specifically for 180 days?

The Vilna Gaon in *Kol Eliyohu* explains: According to the Medrash Rabbah (2:1), Nevuchadnetzar hid 1,080 treasures in the Euphrates River. They were revealed to Koresh as a reward for permitting the

rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdosh*, and they were later inherited by Achashveirosh. The purpose of his making a celebration was to impress everyone with his vast riches. Each day he showed six of the treasures, as is indicated by the six expressions in this *pasuk*, which says that he displayed "*osher*" - "riches" - "*kevod*" - "glory" - "*malchus* - "kingdom" - "*yekar*" - "splendor" - "*tiferes*" - "excellence" and "*gedulah*" - "majesty" (*see Yalkut Shimoni* 1046).

Consequently, the celebration stretched over 180 days since 180 x 6 = 1,080.

Alternatively, the ***Likutei Anshei Shem*** explains: In the *Beis HaMikdosh* there was a total of 5,400 vessels, as stated in Ezra (1:11): "*All the vessels of gold and silver were 5,400; Sheshbazzar brought them up when the exiles were brought up from Bavel to Yerusholayim.*"

All these vessels were taken in captivity by Nevuchadnetzar when he destroyed the *Beis HaMikdosh* and ultimately acquired by Achashveirosh. During the festivity he displayed daily six treasures of the *Beis HaMikdosh* which were in his possession.

According to the Gemara (Shabbos 126b) a grouping of at least five items constitutes an "*otzar*" — treasure. Consequently, at the rate of six treasures per day (a total of thirty vessels), it took 180 days to show the entire 5,400 vessels (180 x 6 x 5 = 5400).

"The mitzva of Ahavas Yisrael extends to anyone born into the people of Israel, even if you have never met him.

How much more so does it extend to every member – man or woman of the Jewish community where you live, who belongs to your own community." ~ R' Schneur Zalman of Liadi zt"l.

An Incredible Calculation Which Personifies the Gadlus of R' Chaim Kanievsky zt"l

וּבִמְלֹאת הַיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה עָשָׂה הַמֶּלֶךְ לְכָל־הָעָם הַנִּמְצְאִים בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה לִמְגָדוֹל וְעַד־קָטָן מִשְׁתֶּה שִׁבְעַת יָמִים בַּחֲצַר גִּנַּת בִּיתַן הַמֶּלֶךְ - "*At the end of this period, the king made a banquet for seven days in the court of the king's palace garden for all the people who lived in the fortress Shushan, high and low alike.*" (1:5)



The Medrash Rabbah (Ch. 7) tells us that Reb Yishmoel says 18,500 went to the feast of Achashveirosh. Where do we know this from and what is the significance of this number?

Rav Chaim Kanievsky *zt"l* explains that this *cheshbon* [calculation] is not a rough estimate, but is rather an exact calculation. The *Targum Sheini* says that the feast made after 180 days for the people of Shushan, was especially for the Yidden who did not want to partake together with the *goyim*. The *Megillah tells* us that it took place **בַּחֲצַר גִּנַּת בִּיתַן הַמֶּלֶךְ**- "In the courtyard of the garden of the royal palace". (1:5)

The Gemara in *Eruvin* (26a) says that the courtyard of a king is a *beis kur* which is 30 *se'ah*. A *beis seah* is 50x50 *amos*, which totals 2,500 square *amos*. Therefore, a *beis kur* which is 30 x 2,500 = 75,000 square *amos*.

The Gemara in *Succah* establishes that a person seated occupies a space of one *amoh*. However, Achashveirosh would not have wanted his guests to be squashed, rather he would have wanted them to have

ample space so that they were able to stretch out their arms and legs, so let's assume a space of 2x2 = 4 square *amos*. So, in an area of 75,000 divided by 4, which = 18,750, 18,750 were able to be seated comfortably.

בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה הָרְגוּ חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ - "*In Shushan the capital, 500 people were killed*". The *Targum* says, that the 500 people killed in Shushan were Amalekim. Presumably, those who did not go to the party were the ones who merited to kill these Amalekim because it was those that attended the feast who were the cause of the whole decree.

The *Yerushalmi* (*Sotah* 3:1) asks how much of the *megillas sotah* – the passage written for a woman who had to drink the waters of the *sotah* must be rubbed out to be considered a *mechika* [an erasure].

Beis Hillel say that two letters is considered a *mechika* but less than that not. The *pasuk* says: **וּמָחֲתָה אֶל־מֵי הַמָּרִים**- "*They should be erased into the bitter waters*". The Torah tells us: **תִּמְחֶה אֶת־זֵכֶר עֲמָלֵק** – "*To obliterate the memory of Amalek*", using the same expression as by the *sotah*. Therefore, just like by *sotah, mechika* means two, similarly by Amalek, in order to fulfill the mitzvah of *mechiyas* Amalek [obliterating Amalek] one has to kill at least two Amalekim.

Mordechai and his followers who did not go to the party must have been a group of 250. Each one killed 2 Amalekim (**חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ**).

Achashveirosh would have certainly prepared seats for all the Yidden in Shushan since he did not know how many would turn up and would not have wanted to leave anyone without a place.

The courtyard of the king, held space for 18,750 people. However, Mordechai and his followers, which totalled 250 didn't attend. 18,750 – 250 = 18,500. The exact number the Medrash gives, for the number of attendees at Achashveirosh's feast.

One Who Follows His Desires, Will Fall and Fall and Keep Falling, Until He Can't Get Any Lower

חוּר כַּרְפַּס וּתְכֵלֶת אָחוּז בְּחַבְלֵי־בוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן עַל־גְּלִילֵי כֶסֶף וְעַמּוּדֵי שֵׁשׁ מִטּוֹת זָהָב וָכֶסֶף עַל רִצְפַת בַּהַט־וָשֶׁשׁ וְדַר וְסֹחֶרֶת - *"[There were hangings of] white cotton and blue wool, caught up by cords of fine linen and purple wool to silver rods and alabaster columns; and there were couches of gold and silver on a pavement of marble, alabaster, mother-of-pearl, and mosaics."* (Esther 1:6)

The aforementioned *pasuk* describes at great length the amount of money Achashveirosh spent on his grand feast. The amount he spent was absolutely ridiculous, he even spent money ensuring that the floors were covered with precious stones and diamonds. The big question is, however, why do we need to know this, what difference does it make to us?

The Gemara in *Megillah* (7a) tells us that *Megillas* Esther was written with *ruach hakodesh,* which means that *Megillas* Esther is not simply another story book. It means that every single word in the *Megillah* is of upmost importance, and if it is written in the *Megillah,* there is a lesson of upmost importance to glean from it. If so, what is the lesson we are supposed take from reading about the tremendous amount of money that Achashveirosh spent on the flooring of the room where his grand feast took place? What difference does it make to us if the floor was made from, **בַּהַט־וָשֶׁשׁ וְדַר וְסֹחֶרֶת**, or from simple stones?

R' Ben Tzion Felman used to say over, that he heard from R' Gavriel Riklis, who heard from the Ponevezher Rov, who heard from R' Asher Kalman MiKelm, that in the next few *pasukim* we learn the story about Vashti.

On the seventh day of the feast, Achashveirosh asked that she be brought in front of him so that he could show off her beauty. The Gemara in *Megillah* (12b), explains that he didn't simply ask that she be brought in front of him, he asked that she be brought in

unclothed. Vashti refused, "The king got very angry, and his anger was burning inside him", Achashveirosh completely lost his cool, and he was inconsolable, and the only thing that managed to calm him down was the execution of Vashti.

If we stop and think for a second, this story is unbelievable. How could someone like Achashveirosh ask such a ridiculous thing from his queen. Even the lowest of the low don't ask for such ridiculous things.

Even more difficult is, when Achashveirosh saw that she refused to come, he was inconsolable and wasn't able to return to his senses until he had her executed.

Achashveirosh ruled over 127 provinces, surely, he was a very wise man, otherwise he would never have gotten the job he had in the first place. How could it be that such a successful king would make such ridiculous requests, and how could it be that nothing could calm him down, except for the execution of his queen?

The answer is that this is why the *Megillah* which was written with *ruach hakodesh* introduces us to the great wealth of Achashveirosh, and tells us about how much money Achashveirosh would spend on seemingly pointless things. Already from the beginning of his reign Achashveirosh got what he wanted. If Achashveirosh had a desire for something he got it, he lived without any limitations, anything he desired he got.

If Achashveirosh wanted beautiful curtains made from the most expensive materials he got it, if he wanted the latest whatever it was, he got it. The more he followed his desires and got what he wanted, the bigger his desires grew. Eventually he got to the stage, that if he had a desire to design the floor which everyone walks on with their muddy shoes with the most expensive stones and diamonds, he got that as well. If he wanted flooring designed from בַּהַטְוָשֵׁשׁ וְדַר וְסֹחֶרֶת, he got it.

When a person follows his desires, he falls lower and lower and lower, until he can't go any further. He turns crazy, and he will end up doing things that even the lowest of the low would never dream of.

Because Achashveirosh got what he wanted, when he wanted it, he ended up asking for crazy things. He fell so low, that he even asked for his wife to turn up unclothed in front of everyone. And because he had stooped so low, and was used to getting what he wanted, he couldn't cope when he was told "NO". The only thing that would calm him down was something ridiculous – the execution of his wife.

The lesson we must take from here is, how dangerous it is to follow our desires, and how low we can fall if we do. Even if now and again we do go after our desires it must be with limitations. If we don't, then we may end up doing things which anyone with even half a brain would realize never to do. - One who follows his desires will fall lower and lower and will end up forgetting the line between what is normal, and what is absolutely ridiculous.

On the other hand, *kedusha* is the exact opposite. If a person overcomes his desires and makes boundaries of what is allowed and what is not allowed, what one is supposed to do, and what one is not supposed to do, he will become elevated and he will climb higher and higher.

If one works on overcoming his desires, Hashem will help him continue to climb, and he will be given the strength to do more and more, and he will end up doing things he never dreamed he could ever do.

If one works on his *kedusha*, Hashem gives him *siyata dishmayah*. Like it says in *Yoma* (39a): **אָדָם מְקַדֵּשׁ עַצְמוֹ מְעַט — מְקַדְּשִׁין אוֹתוֹ הַרְבֵּה, מְקַדֵּשׁ מִלְּמַטָּה — מְקַדְּשִׁין אוֹתוֹ מִלְּמַעְלָה** - – "*If one sanctifies himself a little, (Hashem) sanctifies him a lot, if one works on himself below, they help sanctify him from Above*".

The Vilna Gaon on the aforementioned *pasuk* of, עַל רִצְפַּת בַּהַט וְשֵׁשׁ וְדַר וְסֹחֶרֶת, writes an important lesson in regard to following *teivah* [desire]. He says, "The *yetzer horah* enters into us slowly, first he wants food and drink, then he wants fancy clothes, then he wants nice beds and mattresses, then he wants gold and silver, then he wants precious stones and diamonds, a person never dies with half of what he wants in his hand".

In short, the *yetzer horah* tries to make us follow our desires, and slowly slowly before we know it, we end up at rock bottom.

We must learn from Achashveirosh not to follow our *desires,* and on the contrary, to make boundaries. Then *iy'H* we will rise higher and higher and reach levels we never dreamed of.

What Were They Not Coerced to Do?

וְהַשְּׁתִיָּה כַּדָּת אֵין אֹנֵס - ***"And the drinking was according to the law without coercion."*** (Esther 1:8)

What does the aforementioned *pasuk* mean, that they were not coerced, what were they not coerced to do?



The *Yalkut Me'am Lo'ez* explains: The tradition in Persia at festive meals was that each participant was served a very large cup of approximately two quarts, and he had to drink it in its entirety regardless of the consequences. At this meal, too, Achashveirosh ordered that everyone should be served a large cup filled to the top, lest he be accused of stinginess, but the people were not coerced, and they were permitted to drink as much or as little as they desired.

The *Malbim* explains: The *Megillah* is describing King Achashveirosh's wealth. There was a week-long feast

for all the people who were present in Shushan the Capital, and all the drinks were served in golden goblets. Nevertheless, there were enough golden goblets to serve the drinks to the tens of thousands of people, and no one was forced to finish drinking so that his goblet could be used for another guest.

Being Mavater [Foregoing] Gives Life

לַעֲשׂוֹת כִּרְצוֹן אֵישׁ־וָאִישׁ - "*To do the will of each man.*" (Esther 1:8)

Achashveirosh used the holy utensils from the *Beis HaMikdosh* at his *seudah*. The Gemara (*Megillah* 12a) states, "At that time, a *bas kol* [heavenly voice] 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 HaMikdosh*. This time, the sin caused Vashti's death.

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

It is repeated in the name of **Rabbi Shlomo Kluger *zt"l*** that at this feast, Achashveirosh was *mevater*.

He didn't demand that things be exactly as he wanted. We learn this from the *pasuk* **לַעֲשׂוֹת כִּרְצוֹן אֵישׁ־וָאִישׁ**, that at the meal, everyone's wishes were respected and fulfilled. Achashveirosh didn't demand that people do as he wanted. And the rule is that when one is *mevater*, this grants him life.

But Vashti wasn't *mevater* this time. She didn't let everyone do as they pleased. This is implied from the *pasuk*: **גַּם וַשְׁתִּי הַמַּלְכָּה עָשְׂתָה מִשְׁתֶּה נָשִׁים בֵּית הַמַּלְכוּת אֲשֶׁר לַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ** – "*Queen Vashti also made a feast for the woman in the royal house.*" (1:9) She acted with royalty and power. She acted like a queen, and everyone had to do as she required. Therefore, she got the brunt of the punishment.

We can also explain it in the following way:

Shame and humiliation also save from death, and Achashveirosh was shamed at this meal. His wife Vashti sent a message to Achashveirosh (*Megillah* 12b): "*Listen here, my father's stable hand (Achashveirosh used to work in Nevuchadnezzer'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:**וְכֵלִים מְכֻלִּים שׁוֹנִים** , and **מְכֻלִּים** can also be translated as shame. (1:7)The shame saved Achashveirosh.

Another hint is from the *pasuk* (Esther 1:18): **וּכְדַי בִּזָּיוֹן וָקֶצֶף**, which **Rebbe Yechezkel of Kozhmir *zt"l*** translated as: "The *bizyonos* and humiliation saved Achashveirosh from Hashem's anger." (R' Elimelech Biderman)

Why Wasn't Mordechai Worried About *Lifnei Iver* [Creating a Stumbling Block]



The Gemara in *Megillah* (12a) (according to Rashi) *darshens* from above *pasuk* that Haman and Mordechai were the waiters at the feast. The question is, how could Mordechai agree to do such a thing, surely by serving drinks at such a meal he was causing Klal Yisroel to stumble? Mordechai himself warned them not to attend the feast, so how could it be that he would serve them and cause them to stumble?

R' Chaim Kanievsky Zt'l (*Tama Dekra*) answers: That Mordechai wanted to be in charge, in order that he would be able to guard the

wine, and make sure it was kosher, and wasn't poured for *avodah zorah* or the like. He also wanted to ensure that there were no problems of *bishul akum* [food being cooked by a non-Jew] and *pas akum* [bread baked by a non-Jew], therefore, he helped out, in order that he would be able to start the fire in the kitchen. He did the best he could to save them from *issur*.

The *Maharsha* says a very similar *peshat*. The *Maharsha*, however, argues with Rashi and learns that Mordechai wasn't a waiter, according to the *Maharsha* there is no question on Mordechai.

Haman Was Struck by the Number 40

וַיֹּאמֶר מְמֻכָן (מומכן כתיב) לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ - *"Memuchan declared in the presence of the king and the ministers."* (Esther 1:16)



The Gemara (Megillah 12b) says that the name **מְמוּכָן** in *Megillas* Esther refers to Haman who was: **מְמוּכָן זֶה הָמָן, וְלָמָּה נִקְרָא שְׁמוֹ מְמוּכָן? שֶׁמּוּכָן לְפוּרְעָנוּת** – "Prepared, or destined, for punishment".

How does the name **מְמוּכָן** imply punishment? And secondly if Haman was "prepared for punishment," he should have been called **מוכן** and not **מְמוּכָן**. What is the purpose of the extra letter *mem*?

Rabbeinu Bechaye (*Bereishis* 36:12) writes that the Name of Hashem which has the power to defeat Amalek is the Name of forty letters. Therefore, Haman was called Memuchan, Muchan because he was prepared for punishment and Memuchan because it is the Holy Name of forty letters (the *gematria* of "*mem*" is forty) which would bring about that punishment.

The number forty is mentioned in several places in the context of Haman's defeat. The Medrash states that the pole upon which Haman was hanged was fifty *amos* high, but ten *amos* were embedded into the ground, and thus Haman's body was suspended forty *amos* above the ground. The *Targum* (Esther 9:14) says that the bodies of Haman and his sons, who were hanged one after the other, occupied forty *amos* of the fifty-*amos* pole. In that sense Haman indeed was punished by the number forty (the forty *amos* of the pole).

Additionally, the *Targum Sheini* (2:5) says that Mordechai was exactly the fortieth generation after Yaakov Avinu. Hence, Mordechai and his generation were the "forty" that struck Haman.

Why the "Vav" Is Between the Two "Mems"

וַיֹּאמֶר מומכן לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ - "*Memuchan declared in the presence of the king and the ministers*." (Esther 1:16)

Why in the aforementioned *pasuk* is his name now written with the "*vav*" between the two "*mems*"- **מומכן** and not with the "*vav*" after the two "*mems*" - **מְמוּכָן** as in 1:14 and 1:21?

The *Chida* in *Nechel Eshkol* explains as follows: The Gemara in *Megillah* (12b) teaches that Memuchan is Haman, who was **מוכן** "*muchan*" — "destined" for trouble (to be hung).

The Medrash (*Manos HaLevi*) says that Haman's reign lasted only seventy days. This is derived from the *pasuk*: **כִּי־כֵן צִוָּה־לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ**- "*For so had the King commanded concerning him*" (3:2) — since the word **כֵּן** has the numerical value of seventy.

When Memuchan is spelled with a "*vav*" between the two "*mems,*" it is a combination of two words "*mum chein*" meaning that Haman was a blemish (**מום כן**) and indicating prophetically that the Jewish people would suffer from this blemish only "*chein*" (**כֵּן**) for seventy days.

Understanding the Decree About Language

לִהְיוֹת כָּל־אִישׁ שֹׂרֵר בְּבֵיתוֹ וּמְדַבֵּר כִּלְשׁוֹן עַמּוֹ -*"Every man should wield authority in his home and speak the language of his own people."* (Esther 1:22)



As a result of Vashti's disrespectful behavior towards him, Achashveirosh had her killed. In order to ensure that nobody in his empire would emulate her, Achashveirosh sent out a royal proclamation decreeing that every man should be in charge of his house. This part of the edict makes logical sense, as it seems to be a direct consequence of the incident with Vashti.

However, Achashveirosh appended a second component to his decree - that every husband should speak in the language of his nation - which appears to be completely unrelated to Vashti's conduct. The problem with her behavior was that she spoke to him in an insolent manner, which seems to be irrelevant to the language in which they conversed.

Indeed, the ***Ibn Ezra*** writes that this second part of Achashveirosh's declaration had nothing to do with Vashti's actions and was included precisely to distract people from focusing on her disgrace of the king and the decree which resulted from it.

The *Chasam Sofer* suggests that the issue of language was in fact connected to the humiliation that Achashveirosh suffered at the hands of Vashti. He explains by posing a question: Even if Vashti was willing to relate her embarrassing message to Achashveirosh's

servants, why were they willing to repeat it to him? Weren't they afraid for their own lives to speak to the king in such a manner?

The *Chasam Sofer* explains that Achashveirosh and his servants spoke a language called Sursi, while Vashti spoke a different language called Kasdi. When the servants heard Vashti's message, they didn't understand it because they didn't speak her language. Due to the language barrier, all they understood was that Vashti was refusing to come with them as Achashveirosh had requested, and they assumed that the message was an explanation of her decision, so they returned to Achashveirosh and innocently repeated her words, oblivious to their true meaning.

In reality, the Gemara (*Megillah* 12b) teaches that not only did Vashti refuse to come, but she sent back a message saying that Achashveirosh was a lowly stable boy for her father, who was able to drink a large amount of wine without becoming intoxicated, while Achashveirosh had consumed only a small amount of wine but had clearly gotten drunk, as evidenced by the ridiculous request that he made of her to appear naked at his royal party.

When Achashveirosh heard the message, he was humiliated in front of the noblemen, many of whom also spoke and understood the Kasdi language. In other words, the entire embarrassing situation only came about because Vashti spoke her own language, which the servants didn't understand and naively repeated. In order to prevent this from happening again in the future, Achashveirosh decreed that all wives must speak their husband's language.

"When two people love one another, they can stand together on the head of a pin. When two people hate one another, the whole world is not wide enough for them to coexist." ~ R' Shlomo Ibn Gabirol zt"l.

פרק ב׳

Understanding Why Vashti Was So Against Keeping Shabbos

***זָכַר אֶת־וַשְׁתִּי וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר־עָשְׂתָה וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר־נִגְזַר עָלֶיהָ* -"*He remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what had been decreed upon her.*"** (Esther 2:1)

The Gemara in *Megillah* (12b) says that this refers to the Heavenly decree against Vashti for causing the Jewish girls to disrobe and work for her on Shabbos. Why did she want them to violate Shabbos and why was her punishment meted out necessarily on Shabbos?

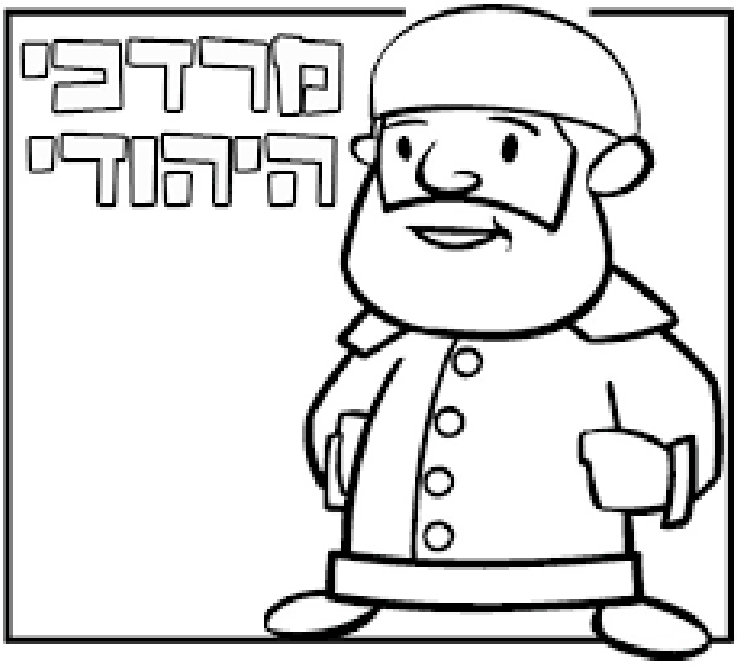
The *Yalkut Me'am Lo'az* explains as follows: Cyrus, King of Persia gave the order that the *Beis HaMikdosh*, which had been razed by Nevuchadnezar, should be rebuilt. Two years afterward, Achashveirosh, King of the vast Persian Empire, put a halt on the rebuilding. He did this under the influence of Queen Vashti, granddaughter of Nevuchadnezar. She had furiously bellowed "Why are you allowing the rebuilding of what my grandfather destroyed?"

Cognizant that in merit of properly observing Shabbos the redemption would come, Vashti did not allow Jewish women to wear their nice clothing on Shabbos, which is a way of honoring Shabbos. Moreover, she forced them to violate it, by performing work. She anticipated that once the women stopped keeping Shabbos, they would influence the men to follow suit. Hence, the Jews would remain in exile and the *Beis HaMikdosh* would not be rebuilt.

Hashem's way of punishment is *midah keneged midah* — measure for measure. Since Vashti stripped the clothing of the Jewish girls and caused them to desecrate Shabbos, and Shabbos is known as Shabbos HaMalkah — Shabbos the Queen (Shabbos 119a) — hence, on the Shabbos, as she celebrated her reign as Queen, she was stripped of her title *malkah* — Queen — and put to death.

Mordechai's Yiddishkeit Proceeded His Name

אִישׁ יְהוּדִי הָיָה בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה וּשְׁמוֹ מָרְדֳּכַי בֶּן יָאִיר בֶּן שִׁמְעִי בֶּן קִישׁ אִישׁ יְמִינִי
"*There was a Jew who lived in Shushan, who went by the name of Mordechai, who was the son of Yoir, the son of Shimi, the son of Kish, from the tribe of Binyomin.*" (Esther 2:5)



Since his real name was Mordechai and "Yehudi" was only a title he earned for not accepting *avodah zorah* (*Megillah* 13a), the *pasuk* should first state his name and then his title?

The Lubavitcher Rebbe once explained: Unfortunately, sometimes due to outward appearances the only way to know that one is a Jew is by his Jewish name, e.g., Goldberg, Cohen, etc.

The *Megillah* is telling us that without even knowing his name, one who would see Mordechai walking in the streets of the capital would immediately know by his beard, peiyos, and attire that "Ish Yehudi" — here walks a Jewish man.

Although the Gemara provides an allusion to Haman in a *pasuk* in *Parshas Bereishis*, **Rav Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld** suggests that he is also hinted to in the section of anointing spices together with Mordechai. All the 11 spices are fragrant except for **חלבנה** – "galbanum" (*Shemos* 30:34) – which has a foul odour. Not surprisingly, the word **חלבנה** has the same numerical value (95) as Haman. (R' Ozer Alport)

Who Says Esther Was Green?

וְהַנַּעֲרָה יְפַת־תֹּאַר וְטוֹבַת מַרְאֶה - "*The maiden was shapely and beautiful*." (Esther 2:7)



The Gemara in *Megillah* (13a) quotes the opinion of Rav Yehoshua ben Karcha, who maintains that Esther was not inherently beautiful. In fact, she was a *yerakrokes* – she had a green complexion – but Hashem miraculously caused her to find favor in the eyes of everybody who saw her.

The Gemara does not provide a source for Rav Yehoshua ben Karcha's opinion, and it seems difficult to understand. If the *Megillah* explicitly testifies that Esther was physically attractive, for what reason did he denigrate her?

The Vilna Gaon explains that specifically Rav Yehoshua ben Karcha had no choice but to reinterpret the *Megillah's* statement about Esther's appearance. The Gemara in *Bava Basra* (15b) records a dispute regarding when Iyov lived, and it quotes several opinions. One of them is that of Rav Yehoshua ben Karcha, who maintains that he lived in the times of Achashveirosh. His source for this is a *pasuk* in *Iyov* (42:15) which states: **וְלֹא נִמְצְאוּ נָשִׁים יָפוֹת כִּבְנוֹת אִיּוֹב בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ** - "*Iyov's daughters were the most beautiful women in the world*".

When was there a time in world history that the entire world was searched and examined for beautiful women? In the times of Achashveirosh.

However, this explanation presented Rav Yehoshua ben Karcha with a difficulty. If Achashveirosh set up a royal beauty pageant to seek

out the most beautiful woman to be his wife, why didn't he choose one of Iyov's daughters if the *pasuk* testifies that they were the most attractive women in the world at that time, and why did he choose Esther if she was less beautiful?

To resolve this question, Rav Yehoshua ben Karcha concluded that Esther's selection had nothing to do with her true appearance, as she was in fact naturally unattractive, but Hashem miraculously caused her to find favor in the eyes of everyone who saw her, which caused Achashveirosh to select her over Iyov's daughters.

Her Real Name Was Hadassah, So Why Was She Called Esther?

וַיְהִי אֹמֵן אֶת־הֲדַסָּה הִיא אֶסְתֵּר - *"And he reared Hadassah, that is Esther."* (Esther 2:7)

Her real name was Hadassah; why was she called Esther?

R' Moshe Bogomilsky explains: There is a popular question concerning how Esther was permitted to live with Achashveirosh. Isn't this one of the three transgressions where one is required to allow oneself to be killed rather than transgress (see *Sanhedrin* 74b)?

According to the *Zohar* (*Devorim* 226a), she in fact did not live with him; rather, a *sheid* - demon - was created which resembled Esther, and whenever the King called for Esther, the demon would appear in her stead. Mordechai created it, using his knowledge of Hashem's holy Name.

Thus, Esther is from the root word of **סתר**- "concealment" - as in the *pasuk*: **אַתָּה סֵתֶר לִי**- *"You are shelter [lit. concealment] for me"* (*Tehillim* 32:7). Hashem concealed her [hid her] from Achashveirosh while she remained faithful to Mordechai.

The Difference Between Esther and All the Other Girls

וּבְהִקָּבֵּץ נְעָרוֹת רַבּוֹת. אֶל־יַד הֵגַי וַתִּלָּקַח אֶסְתֵּר אֶל־בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־יַד הֵגַי שֹׁמֵר הַנָּשִׁים –'*And when many young girls were being brought together.. under the charge of Heigai, Esther was taken into the palace, under the charge of Heigai, guardian of the women*.' (2:8)

Originally, he is called **הֵגֵא** (2:3). Why now in this *pasuk* is his name first spelled with a *kamatz* -**הֵגָי** and then with a *patach* **הֵגַי**?

The *Nachal Eshkol* explains: The word "*patach*" is related to the word "*petach*," which means "opening." To pronounce the *patach* vowel, one must open the mouth. On the other hand, *kamatz* literally means "close," and to pronounce the *kamatz* vowel (in the Ashkenazi pronunciation) the mouth is in a "closed, rounded" position.

The two different spellings and pronunciations of the name "Heigai" relate to the hopes of the girls who were chosen to be potential replacements for the Queen.

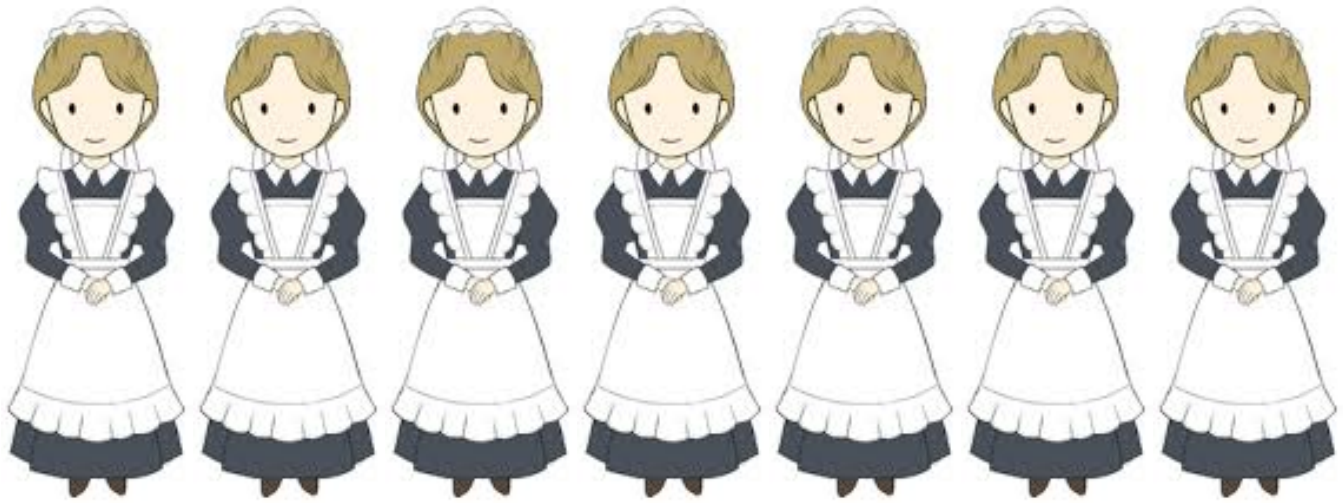
Each of the other girls came to the house of the women hoping that it would be closed for admission to all her rivals. Thus, she would be assured the opportunity to become Queen. Each one expressed this feeling by referring to the chief supervisor **הֵגָי** with a *kamatz*.

Esther, on the other hand, came reluctantly and hoping that the doors would be flung open wide (*patach*) with multitudes of beautiful girls seeking entrance, so that she would not even be considered for the position or have only a very slim chance of being accepted. - Therefore, in connection with her the *pasuk* refers to the supervisor in charge as **הֵגַי**, with a *patach*.

"Hashem helps at the moment when a person doesn't see any natural means for his salvation – because that's when he places his trust in Hashem." ~ The Chazon Ish.

Esther's Role in Correcting the Sin of Eating at Achashveirosh's Party

וְאֵת שֶׁבַע הַנְּעָרוֹת הָרְאֻיוֹת לָתֵת לָהּ - "And seven maids who were fitting to be given to her." (Esther 2:9)



When Esther was taken to Achashveirosh's palace along with the other candidates to replace Vashti, she found favor in the eyes of Hegai, who was in charge of guarding the women, and he arranged for her to have seven young women who were fit for her.

In what way were these seven young women specifically suitable for Esther?

In his commentary on the *Megillah* called *Megillas S'tarim*, the ***Nesivos HaMishpot*** (**Rav Yaakov Lorberbaum of Lisa**) explains that even though Esther refused to disclose her identity or nationality, she was miraculously provided with seven girls to assist her who were all Jewish. This made her feel more comfortable, and it was a sign from Hashem that He had not forgotten about her even while she seemed to be abandoned and forlorn in the king's palace.

What specifically did these young women do to take care of Esther?

The *Targum* writes that they made sure to bring her kosher food. Additionally, the Medrash teaches that the reason Mordechai sat in front of the palace gates every day was to try to ensure that Esther would not eat any non-kosher food. Why were Esther's servants and

Mordechai more concerned about her eating kosher food than about her observing other *mitzvos*?

The Vilna Gaon writes that the Jewish people in that generation committed two sins for which they were threatened with destruction. One was that they went to Achashveirosh's party and ate non-kosher food there, and the other was that they bowed down to a statue in the times of Nevuchadnetzar.

To rectify these two sins, they had to engage in both *teshuvah* [repentance] and fasting. The *teshuvah* was intended to rectify the sin of bowing to the idol, and refraining from eating during the fast corrected the sin of eating the food at Achashveirosh's party.

For this reason, there were two redeemers in the *Megillah*: Mordechai and Esther. Mordechai rectified the sin of bowing down to the statue through his refusal to bow down to Haman, while Esther corrected the sin of eating at Achashveirosh's party.

In light of this explanation, **Rav Yitzchok Sorotzkin** writes that we now appreciate why there was such a specific focus on Esther not eating non-kosher food while she was in the king's palace, as her role was specifically to rectify this sin, which she did through her dedication to ensuring that she only ate kosher food.

He adds that perhaps this was one of Mordechai's deeper intentions in commanding Esther not to reveal her identity, because if Achashveirosh would know that she was an observant Jew, he would gladly give her kosher food, and she would lose the challenge of fighting for it and the merit that she created through her struggles and sacrifice.

"A Jew should not ask himself what he is expecting out of life, but rather, what's life expecting of him." ~ R' Yosef Chaim Sitruk Zt'l.

The Miracle of a Woman Keeping a Secret

לֹא־הִגִּידָה אֶסְתֵּר אֶת־עַמָּהּ וְאֶת־מֽוֹלַדְתָּהּ כִּי מָרְדֳּכַי צִוָּה עָלֶיהָ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תַגִּיד "*Esther did not reveal her people or her kindred, for Mordechai had told her not to reveal it.*" (Esther 2:10)



It is well-known that Hashem's name doesn't appear a single time in the entire *Megillah*. This peculiarity is traditionally explained as hinting to the fact that the *Megillah* contains only "hidden miracles" but is lacking open miracles which more clearly demonstrate Hashem's Providence.

Rav Eizel Charif 'sharply' suggested that nevertheless, one clear miracle remains. Mordechai told Esther not to reveal her religion or nationality, and a woman actually managed to keep a secret!

The Difference Between Esther and All the Other Girls

וּבְהַגִּיעַ תֹּר נַעֲרָה וַנַעֲרָה לָבוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ - '***And when each maiden's turn arrived to go to King Achasverosh***.' (2:12)

וּבְהַגִּיעַ תֹּר־אֶסְתֵּר בַּת־אֲבִיחַיִל דֹּד מָרְדֳּכַי אֲשֶׁר לָקַח־לוֹ לְבַת לָבוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ - '***Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Avichail, Mordecai's uncle, who had taken her for a daughter, came to go in to the king***.' (2:15)

The *trop* [cantillation] on **נַעֲרָה וַנַעֲרָה** (each maiden) is "**קדמא ואזלא**". — "every maiden" [whose turn arrived to come to the King], while the *trop* for Esther's turn to come to the King, is **מֻנַּח**. Why?

The Vilna Gaon and *Manos HaLevi* explain: "*Kadma ve'azla*" means to get up early and move. "*Munach*" means "resting." All the other

girls were excited and ran eagerly for the chance to be chosen as Queen. Esther, on the other hand, had absolutely no interest in this, and she went slowly and without any excitement.

In fact, the *Megillah* says twice: **וַתִּלָּקַח אֶסְתֵּר** - "Esther was *taken*" (2:8,16) - by force, against her will.

Originally, when it became known that the King wanted to appoint the most beautiful woman in his country to be Queen, Esther hid and was forcefully brought to the harem. After she had gone through the year-long procedure of preparation and her turn came to be with the King, she had no desire to go and again **וַתִּלָּקַח אֶסְתֵּר** - "she was taken by force."

How Esther Managed to Find Favor in the Eyes of Everyone

וַתְּהִי אֶסְתֵּר נֹשֵׂאת חֵן בְּעֵינֵי כָּל-רֹאֶיהָ - "*Yet Esther won the admiration of all who saw her.*" (Esther 2:15)

In the spirit of Purim, **Rav Yechezkel Abramsky** jokingly questioned how Esther managed to find favor in the eyes of everybody who saw her. As everybody knows that men have different tastes in what traits they find desirable and important in a woman, how could Esther manage to please them all?

Rav Abramsky explains that there was one unique quality that Esther possessed that they could all agree was desirable, something that they'd never before found in a woman: the *Megillah* records that despite being given the opportunity to select anything she wanted to improve her appearance, Esther didn't ask for a thing.

When the men heard that there was a woman who didn't want or need anything to enhance her looks, they unanimously agreed that she was indeed unique and special!

A Clever Response from the Chiddushei HaRim



Sir Moses Montefiore once tried to convince the ***Chiddushei HaRim*** to introduce secular subjects, particularly the study of foreign languages, into the yeshiva curriculum. He brought proof to his position from *Megillas* Esther.

One of the crucial events in the narrative was when Mordechai overheard Bigsan and Seresh plotting to kill Achashveirosh and relayed the information to Esther so that their plan could be thwarted. Rashi writes that they were conversing in their native tongue. If Mordechai only spoke one language, he would not have been able to comprehend their scheme and put a stop to it. This teaches us the value of learning and being fluent in foreign languages.

The *Chiddushei HaRim* responded that a closer examination yields precisely the opposite conclusion. The only reason Bigsan and Seresh felt comfortable discussing their proposal in Mordechai's presence was because they assumed that as a Jew, he would not understand what they were saying, and they could freely speak in front of him without worry.

Although Mordechai was required to know 70 languages to serve on the *Sanhedrin*, Bigsan and Seresh took for granted that the average Jew had no such familiarity. If the Jews of the time had studied foreign tongues, Bigsan and Seresh would have been on guard around Mordechai, and the *Megillah* may have had a very different ending. - Thus, it was precisely because they were content to speak only their own language that they were able to be saved.

Why Did Mordechai Reveal to Achashveirosh the Plan of Bigsan and Seresh?



Why did Mordechai reveal to Achashveirosh that Bigsan and Seresh wanted to kill him, what did he care? Additionally, the halachah is that by a non-Jew we say: **לא מעלין ולא מורידין** - "If he is in danger, we don't try to save him", so why here is Mordechai suddenly so worried about Achashveirosh?

The Yalkut Shimoni (Esther, *remez* 153) offers a number of answers. One answer he says is that Mordechai wanted Achashveirosh to remain alive, as he thought that he would be helpful in the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdosh*.

Another answer is that he thought that if Klal Yisroel needed anything, he would be able to get it from Achashveirosh.

A third answer the Yalkut says is, so that people shouldn't say that all this time he was married to a non-Jew, and nothing happened, and suddenly he marries a Jew, and look what happens.

R' Chaim Brisker answers, that the reason he told Achashveirosh was, because it is better that two non-Jews die then just one. If Achashveirosh would have been killed there would have been one death, however, now that Mordechai told Achashveirosh about the plan of Bigsan and Seresh, two deaths were brought about. - Two is better than one.

What Was Lost and Found?

וַיְבֻקַּשׁ הַדָּבָר וַיִּמָּצֵא - "*And the matter was investigated and found true*." (Esther 2:23)

Literally, the aforementioned words mean "and the thing was searched for and found" — what lost thing was searched for and found?



The *Manos HaLevi* explains that Bigsan and Seresh were angry for being overworked by Achashveirosh after he married Esther, so they planned to poison him (*Megillah* 13b). They put a snake in his water decanter so that the water he would drink would become poisoned and would kill him when he drank it.

Upon hearing that the King learned of their plan they quickly removed the snake and discarded it and denied the allegation.

Miraculously, Hashem created a new snake in the decanter. When the investigators searched for the thing — i.e. the snake — it was found, in the decanter.

Why Didn't Achashveirosh Reward Mordechai Straight Away

וַיִּכָּתֵב בְּסֵפֶר דִּבְרֵי הַיָּמִים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ - "*And it was written in the book what Mordechai did to save the king*." (Esther 2:23)

Mordechai told Esther to warn Achashveirosh about the plot of Bigsan and Seresh. After Achashveirosh realized that Mordechai had saved his life, he wrote it down in his book to make sure that he

would reward him. The question is, why did he not simply reward Mordechai straight away?

The *Chida* (*Chomas Onoch, Perek* 41 in the name of the ***Yaares Devash***) explains, that Mordechai told Esther not to mention his name. However, Esther knew: **כל האומר דבר בשם אומרו מביא גאולה לעולם** – "*One who says over something in the name of the person who said it brings redemption to the world*", therefore, she ignored Mordechai and said it over in his name. - However, Esther told Achashveirosh to pretend that he never knew that it was being said over in Mordechai's name, therefore, he was unable to reward Mordechai straight away. Consequently, he needed to write it down, in order that at a later date he would remember.

With this we can also understand why: **כל האומר דבר בשם אומרו מביא גאולה לעולם** – "One who says over something in the name of the person who said it brings redemption to the world".

If Mordechai would have been rewarded straight away, then the whole Purim story may have ended differently. Only because, Esther said over the information in Mordechai's name, did Achashveirosh have to write it down, and then happen to come across it at a later date just when Haman was trying to destroy the Jews.

Haman Was a Quasi Jew

וַיַּגִּ֣ידוּ לְהָמָ֗ן לִרְא֛וֹת הַיַּעַמְד֥וּ דִבְרֵי֙ מָרְדֳּכַ֔י כִּֽי־הִגִּ֥יד לָהֶ֖ם אֲשֶׁר־הֽוּא יְהוּדִֽי - "***They told it to Haman, to see whether Mordechai's words would be able to stand; for he had told them that he was a Jew.***" (3:4)

What words of Mordechai did they convey to Haman?

The *Chasam Sofer* (*Toras Moshe*) explains: Achashveirosh was once at war with another country. He selected two armies and placed one under the command of Mordechai and the other under the command of Haman. He gave each army a supply of food which was to last for the duration of the war. When Haman mismanaged his allotment and

quickly ran out of food, his soldiers became angry and planned a mutiny against him. Helpless, he ran to Mordechai and begged for food for his troops. Mordechai agreed to give him food on the condition that Haman become his slave (Yalkut Shimoni).



According to halachah, when a Jew acquires a gentile as a slave, he is required to put him through a ritual in which he is converted to a quasi-Jew, and he becomes required to fulfill some *mitzvos* (*Chagigah* 4a).

When the people asked Mordechai why he was violating the King's edict to bow down to Haman, he replied, אֲשֶׁר־הוּא יְהוּדִי – "that Haman, by becoming his slave, was really a Jew". - As Haman's master, he could not be expected to bow down to him.

The people were surprised to hear this and conveyed these words to Haman to see whether Mordechai's *words* would avail. Haman, knowing this to be true, was embarrassed and filled with rage.

Mordechai Didn't Bow Down to Haman, Regardless of the Idol

כִּי־אֵין מָרְדֳּכַי כֹּרֵעַ וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לוֹ - ***"Mordechai did not bow down nor prostrate himself to him."*** (Esther 3:5)

The word: לוֹ – "to him", seems superfluous: To whom else was Mordechai expected to bow down to?

Reb Yonason Eibshitz *zt"l* (*Yaaras Devash* Vol. 2, 80b) and the ***Manos HaLevi*** explain that Mordechai was a very humble person who

honored everyone. When he would meet someone on the street, he would bow to him and greet him cordially. The only one to whom he refused to do this, was Haman and he would not even respond if Haman greeted him.



Haman wore a large idol, and the people interpreted Mordechai's refusal to bow down as refusal to bow to it. Haman was very eager to see Mordechai bow to him, so he resolved to remove the idol when Mordechai would come into his presence. Nevertheless, Mordechai still refused to bow.

When Haman saw that Mordechai was not bowing to him, he realized that Mordechai refused to be subordinate to him and that it had nothing to do with the idol. So, he became filled with rage.

Mordechai refused to bow to Haman even when he removed the idol because he feared that it would be misleading to the Jews. They might not distinguish and conclude from his action that it was permissible to bow to Haman even when he wore the idol.

Why Didn't Haman Mention the Jews by Their Name

וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן לַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ יֶשְׁנוֹ עַם־אֶחָד מְפֻזָּר וּמְפֹרָד בֵּין הָעַמִּים בְּכֹל מְדִינוֹת מַלְכוּתֶךָ וְדָתֵיהֶם שֹׁנוֹת מִכָּל־עָם וְאֶת־דָּתֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינָם עֹשִׂים וְלַמֶּלֶךְ אֵין־שֹׁוֶה לְהַנִּיחָם – *'Haman then said to King Achashveirosh, "There is a certain people, scattered and dispersed among the other peoples in all the provinces of your realm, whose laws are different from those of any other people and who do not obey the king's laws.'* (3:8)

Why talking about the Jews, Haman says, "there is one people" why didn't Haman mention them specifically?



Haman realized that since the Jews paid taxes and their intelligence made them an asset to the country, Achashveirosh would not readily consent to have them annihilated. Therefore, he spoke to him about: עַם־אֶחָד - "one people" - i.e. a certain insignificant group, unworthy of mention by name, who were scattered throughout the country. Thus, he not only dissembled regarding their true value, but even implied that they were undesirable vagrants.

Achashveirosh knew precisely who Haman was referring to. However, being a greater anti-Semite than Haman (Medrash Rabbah 7:20), Achashveirosh despised them so much that he would not even utter the word "Jew," and thus told him, "You may keep the money, and regarding 'the people' do as you please." (R' Moshe Bogomilsky)

Either Serve Avodah Zorah or Work, the Jews Can't Have Both

When Haman talks about the Jews, he says: **וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן לַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ יֶשְׁנוֹ עַם־אֶחָד מְפֻזָּר וּמְפֹרָד בֵּין הָעַמִּים בְּכֹל מְדִינוֹת מַלְכוּתֶךָ וְדָתֵיהֶם שֹׁנוֹת מִכָּל־עָם וְאֶת־דָּתֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינָם עֹשִׂים וְלַמֶּלֶךְ אֵין־שֹׁוֶה לְהַנִּיחָם** – ***'Haman then said to King Achashveirosh, "There is a certain people, scattered and dispersed among the other peoples in all the provinces of your realm, whose laws are different from those of any other people and who do not obey the king's laws.'*** (3:8)

Why did Haman give all these descriptions of the Jewish people? He should have just said "There is a people who do not keep the laws of the King, and therefore they should be put to death."

The *Kosnas Ohr* explains: Nevuchadnetzer made a golden statue and ordered the people to bow to it. When the Jews refused, he said to them "Did not in fact Moshe write down in the Torah 'Hashem will scatter you among the peoples... there you will serve gods the handiwork of man'" (*Devorim* 4:27-28). They replied: "Your Majesty! This service does not mean worship, but service in taxes" (see Medrash Rabbah Vayikra 33:6, and *Devorim* 28:64 Rashi).

In the Gemara (*Megillah* 13b) Rashi explains that when Haman said: "They do not observe the King's laws," he meant that they waste the whole year avoiding the King's work with the excuse "Today is Shabbos" or "Today is Pesach," and thus they do not perform national service or pay various taxes the government imposes on the working people.

In light of the above, Haman now came before the King with the following argument: "There is one nation scattered throughout your kingdom, and they should be worshipping idols, as it is written in their Torah. Should you say that the Torah did not mean idol worship but paying various taxes to the government, why do they constantly claim that their laws prohibit them from working and refrain from paying taxes. They can't have it both ways — either they must serve idols or perform national service and pay taxes! And since they do neither the King will not gain anything by tolerating them."

Why Exactly 10,000 Silver Talents

Why did Haman offer to pay 10,000 silver talents, no more and no less?

The *Hagaos HaBach* on *Tosfos* in *Megillah* (16a) explains as follows: Every Jewish male from the age of twenty and up was required to contribute one-half *shekel* annually to pay towards the *korbonos tzibbur*. Money was considered *kofer nefesh* - atonement for the soul (*Shekolim* 2a, *Shemos* 30:15).

The number of the Jewish people who came out of Mitzrayim was six hundred thousand, and this always remained the official count, corresponding to the six hundred thousand *neshamos* which descended to this mundane world.

Thus, Haman calculated that since the average lifetime of a person is seventy years (*Tehillim* 90:10), during a lifetime one contributes a total of twenty-five *shekolim* (one only starts donating from age 20).

Consequently, the entire population of six hundred thousand, over the fifty-year period of a standard lifespan, contributed a total of fifteen million *shekolim* (600,000 x 25 = 15,000,000). Since one ordinary *kikar* [talent] contains 1,500 *shekolim* (unlike the *kikar* in the *Beis HaMikdosh*, which was double — three thousand *shekolim* — see *Shemos* 38:24, Rashi, *Bava Basra* 90b), ten thousand *kikar* are the exact equivalent of the fifteen million *shekolim* of *kofer nefesh* monies contributed by the entire Jewish community for fifty years (15,000,000 ÷ 1,500 = 10,000).

Therefore, Haman offered this amount because he calculated it to be the precise value of the Jewish people, and thus the King would not suffer any loss with their extermination.

A Deeper Understanding of the Purim Miracle

אִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יִכָּתֵב לְאַבְּדָם - *"If it please Your Majesty, let an edict be drawn for their destruction."* (Esther 3:9)

Megillas Esther revolves around the decree written by Haman and sealed by Achashveirosh to eradicate every Jew, and every year on Purim we celebrate our salvation from their plot by Hashem.

Rav Shimshon Pinkus points out that we say in the *Haggadah* that the nations of the world try to destroy us in every generation, but Hashem inevitably rescues us. Ferdinand and Isabella, Stalin, Hitler, and so many others all tried to do the same thing as Haman and

Achashveirosh, yet we do not make any Yom Tov in conjunction with them. Why is Purim different?

The Medrash says (Esther Rabbah 7:13) that when Eliyohu heard about Haman's plan, he pleaded with Moshe to intercede on behalf of his nation but warned him that Hashem had agreed to it and signed a Divine edict to wipe out the Jewish people.

This was unprecedented. Moshe asked Eliyohu: "Did Hashem seal His decree with blood or with clay? If it was sealed with blood, it is too late, but if it was only sealed with clay, then there is still a chance." Eliyohu replied that Hashem sealed it with clay, so Moshe immediately got to work and instructed Eliyohu to inform Mordechai as well.

Rav Pinkus explains that when we hear this Medrash, we make a big mistake. We think the Medrash means that only an order sealed with blood is serious, but one sealed with clay is no big deal because it can simply be annulled. In reality, once an edict has been sealed by Hashem, it is final, regardless of the type of seal used, as the *Megillah* states (8:8) that once the King has sealed a decree, it cannot be revoked. If so, why did Moshe ask Eliyohu about the seal?

Rav Pinkus explains that the concept of past, present, and future does not exist for Hashem. Everything takes place simultaneously in heaven, a concept that humans cannot grasp.

When Moshe asked if the order was signed in blood, he was in essence asking if it had already taken place, even if it had not yet manifested itself in this world. A seal of blood would mean that the Jewish blood was already spilled in heaven, in which case nothing could be done.

To appreciate what happened next, Rav Pinkus gives a *moshul* [parable] of an only child, a little boy named Yankel. One day, as Yankel was walking to school, he was hit by a car. Hatzolah came and rushed him to the hospital, where he was immediately taken into

surgery. As his parents were anxiously saying *Tehillim*, the surgeon came out and told them that he did everything he could, but unfortunately their son's internal injuries were too great, and he did not survive.

Yankel's parents cried and held each other, and with a heavy heart, they called the *chevra kadisha* [Jewish burial society] to make funeral arrangements. Just after they hung up the phone, a nurse came running out and screamed: "It was a mistake. We just revived your son, and his heart is beating again."

After lots of intense rehabilitation, Yankel was eventually taken home by his overjoyed parents, but not in the family sedan. They had to rent a special truck for the occasion, as it was filled with every gift their son had ever asked for: a new bike, Legos, games, virtually the entire toy store.

It is impossible to put into words the *simcha* his family felt that day after they thought it was all over, and now their Yankel had truly come back to life.

This is exactly what happened on Purim more than 2000 years ago. We were Yankel. Hashem *kavayachol* [so to speak] endured a sleepless night after sealing the decree to wipe out His only child – בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא נָדְדָה שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ (6:1). It was time for the *chevra kadisha*.

What happened next? Whenever we find ourselves in serious trouble, we cry out to Hashem with prayer and *Tehillim* and turn to our Rabbis for guidance. Accordingly, when the Jews heard about Haman's edict and realized that they were facing total annihilation, their first thought was to *daven*. Unfortunately, Mordechai quickly discovered that this avenue was unavailable as Eliyohu informed him that Hashem had consented to Haman's plan.

At that point, the Jews shifted their focus to human intervention. They felt they could not count on Mordechai, as he was the one who caused the predicament by walking past Haman and refusing to bow

to him. They realized that they had one last hope: Esther, their sister in the royal palace. Accordingly, when she asked them to fast for her for three days, they knew it was their last chance and went along with her plan.

To their chagrin, Esther then appeared to switch sides. Of all people, she decided to invite Haman to her private banquet with the king. At that point, Hashem had signed them away, Mordechai was responsible for their plight, and now Esther had forged an alliance with the enemy. It appeared that they had been abandoned by everybody.

In their darkest moment, when everything seemed hopeless and everyone they were used to counting on had turned on them, they knew deep down that there was only One hope, so they decided to continue *davening* and trying to reconnect to Hashem against all the odds.

Their persistence and devotion in the face of death *kavayachol* broke Hashem's heart and brought them back from the *chevra kadisha*. Their *teshuvah* [repentance] was so intense and unprecedented that it led to *techiyas hameisim* [the resurrection of the dead].

Just like Yankel's parents, the burning love Hashem felt for His resurrected child caused Him to shower us with presents, but instead of a new bike, we got a new *Beis HaMikdosh* and a new Kabbolas HaTorah (Shabbos 88a). Purim was the day when Hashem's *ahava* [love] for us burst forth more than at any other time in history.

Returning to Yankel, what would happen on the first anniversary of his return from the hospital if he would remind his parents of the special day and ask for more toys? They would tell him "That was a one-time deal when Hashem gave you back to us. Don't think that every year on this day you are going to get gifts all over again." Purim does not work this way.

What happened on the first Purim takes place annually. Every year on Purim, Hashem feels the identical intense love toward us and showers us with presents once again.

Normally, if a person approaches us and asks for *tzedokah*, we are permitted to inquire and verify whether he is truly needy, but on Purim, there is a unique halachah (*Orach Chaim* 694:3) that: **כל מי שפושט ידו ליטול נותנים לו** - "*we should give blindly to anyone who sticks out his hand without asking any questions*".

Several *meforshim* explain that Hashem also keeps this law. All we have to do is stick out our hands in prayer and ask, and just as on the original Purim, Hashem has oceans of *berachah* waiting to give to His beloved Yankel. (R' Ozer Alport)

How Haman Earned the Title "Tzoreir HaYehudim"

הָמָן בֶּן־הַמְּדָתָא הָאֲגָגִי צֹרֵר הַיְּהוּדִים - "***Haman the son of Hamdosa the Agagi the adversary of the Jews.***" (Esther 3:10)

Haman is described with many adjectives; how did he acquire the title "**צֹרֵר הַיְּהוּדִים**"?

When Haman maligned the Jewish people, he told the King: **יֶשְׁנָו עַם־** **אֶחָד מְפֻזָּר וּמְפֹרָד** - "*There is one nation, scattered and separated*" (3:8). explain this to mean that they were in total disharmony.

To counteract this, Esther felt that unity was the call of the hour, and therefore she instructed Mordechai: **לֵךְ כְּנוֹס אֶת־כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים** - "*Go gather together all the Jews*" (4:16).

In Hebrew, the word "*tzoreir*" means to bind and tie together (see *Bereishis* 42:39, *Chullin* 107b). Haman, through his vicious plot against the Jewish people, united and bound them together. (*Iturei Torah*, *b'shem* R' Tzvi Yechezkel Michaelson of Varsha)

What Was Haman's Rush

הָרָצִים יָצְאוּ דְחוּפִים בִּדְבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ - "*The couriers went out post-haste on the royal mission.*" (Esther 3:15)

After Haman made his decree to wipe out and destroy the Jewish people, the *Megillah* stresses that he quickly sent out messengers to promulgate the royal decree. In light of the fact that this took place on the 13th of Nissan and the date of the planned genocide was the 13th Adar, which wasn't for another 11 months, why did Haman feel such a tremendous sense of urgency?

On a simple level, **Rav Elisha Galiko**, who served on Rav Yosef Caro's Beis Din in Tzfas, explains that Haman was afraid that Achashveirosh might reconsider and change his mind, so he sent out the letters immediately before he could have a chance to do so.

The Medrash adds that this is why Haman's next step was to sit down to drink with Achashveirosh (3:16), so that he would get drunk and not be able to interfere with the messengers until after they had already departed.

Alternatively, **Rav Chaim Kanievsky** suggests that Haman knew that Pesach was about to start, so he ordered the messengers to leave as quickly as possible in order to disseminate the message of the decree, so that the Jewish people wouldn't be able to enjoy their Yom Tov.

On a deeper level, in his commentary on the *Megillah* called *Mechir Yayin*, the ***Rema*** **(Rav Moshe Isserles**) writes that Haman waited until after the first twelve days of Nissan had passed, because those were the days when the *nesiyim* [tribal leaders] brought their offerings during the inauguration of the *Mishkan*.

Haman issued his decree on the following day, as a way of saying that the *zechus avos* [merit of our forefathers] has now ended, and the Jewish people have no more protection.

Regardless of why Haman decided to send out the messengers so quickly, Rav Chaim Kanievsky points out that this was yet another hidden miracle in the *Megillah*. If Haman had waited until closer to the actual date to send out his message, when Mordechai and Esther succeeded in convincing Achashveirosh to rescind the decree, they could have simply torn up the paper with the royal decree, and because it was never sent out, nobody would ever know anything about it.

However, now that Haman disseminated the decree immediately, when Achashveirosh wanted to change his mind, he had a dilemma, because he told Esther that everybody knows that anything that is written and sealed with the king's royal seal cannot be rescinded.

As a result, Esther and Mordechai had only one choice: to send out a new decree which was also signed by the king giving the Jewish people permission to take revenge against their enemies on that day.

In other words, the Jews would have been saved whether or not Haman sent out his original decree, but now that he did, they were additionally able to kill Haman and their enemies, something they would not have been able to do if he had waited.

This reminds me of a story which took place in the times of the *Chofetz Chaim*: One time, the person who took care of the finances for the Radin Yeshiva came into the *Chofetz Chaim* carrying a plain envelope sent through the Polish Postal System. The envelope contained 500 rubles in cash.

We must assume that the postal system in Radin circa 1920 was no better than the postal system in the United States 90 years later and yet nobody today would put $500 cash in uncertified mail and expect to see it arrive at where it is supposed to arrive.

The *Chofetz Chaim* told his secretary to find out the story behind this envelope. Who puts 500 rubles in an envelope in the mail without even bothering to get it certified?

The story was as follows. A certain businessman was trying to make a business deal. He pledged "If this deal is successful, I am going to give 500 rubles to the *Chofetz Chaim's* Yeshiva." Lo and behold, the deal was successful, but it was late in the afternoon. The post office was already closed. So, he figured, alright I'll send it out tomorrow. Then he heard a little voice in his head go off which said "Five hundred ruble? Do you not think the Yeshiva would be happy to receive 50 rubles? Of course they would be happy with 50 rubles! Why do I need to send 500 rubles?"

The man said, "I saw my determination dissipating. I was afraid that if I would wait until tomorrow, it would become 5 rubles. I determined, come what may, I am going to stuff the money into an envelope and drop it into a mailbox – no certified mail, no return receipt required, because I saw that if I would wait any longer, the enthusiasm and determination to do the mitzvah would evaporate.

When moments of inspiration arrive, we must act upon it, before we end changing our minds. Haman used this in a bad way, however, we must learn from Haman, and use it for good.



The Cause for Perplexity

וְהַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמָן יָשְׁבוּ לִשְׁתּוֹת וְהָעִיר שׁוּשָׁן נָבוֹכָה - ***"The King and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Shushan was perplexed."*** (3:15)

What was the cause of their perplexity?

R' Yonosan Eibshitz (*Yaares Devash*, Vol. 1. *Derush* 8) explains: According to the famous historian Josephus, in the days of the Greeks and Romans a decree issued in proximity to a drinking party

was considered valid only if issued beforehand. However, if it was issued after a drinking party, it was invalid since it possibly reflected the influence of alcohol.

The people of Shushan were not sure if the decree could be ignored because Achashveirosh and Haman sat down to drink before the decree was issued, or perhaps it was issued earlier and therefore valid. Hence, the city of Shushan, which was close to the capital was bewildered.

When Esther succeeded in pleading the case of the Jewish people to Achashveirosh, the King told her that "you may write concerning the Jews as it may be good in your eyes, in the King's name, and seal it with the King's signet-ring; for an edict which was written in the King's name...cannot be revoked" (8:8).

This statement is contradictory. If the previous letters could not be revoked, how could they write concerning the Jews whatever they desired?

Achashveirosh meant that the first edict could not be revoked; however, they could write about the Jews: "as it may be good in your eyes" i.e. letting everyone know that this edict was issued after the drinking party took place, and therefore it was null and void.

Alternatively, the **Yalkut Shimoni** (1056) explains: It was not just the Jews who were perplexed, but: **וְהָעִיר שׁוּשָׁן** - "*the [entire] city of Shushan.*"

When the decree was issued, strange things began occurring to the residents of the city. Women, while laying out their produce on the rooftops to dry, suddenly fell off the roofs and died; men going to draw water from the wells fell in and drowned.

They were puzzled and could not figure out why suddenly they were experiencing these many misfortunes.

The Connection Between Mordechai and Yaakov, Haman and Eisav

וַיִּזְעַק זְעָקָה גְּדוֹלָה וּמָרָה - "*And he cried out loudly and bitterly.*" (Esther 4:1)

The *Arizal* writes that Mordechai was a *gilgul* [reincarnation] of Yaakov, and Haman was a *gilgul* of Eisav, which can enable us to appreciate a number of fascinating parallels between them.

The Medrash (Esther Rabbah 8:1) says that, because Eisav screamed when Yitzchok told him that Yaakov had come and taken the *berachos* – **וַיִּזְעַק זְעָקָה גְּדוֹלָה וּמָרָה** (*Bereishis* 27:34) – Haman caused Mordechai to scream in a similarly bitter manner - **וַיִּזְעַק זְעָקָה גְּדוֹלָה וּמָרָה.** - This also explains why Mordechai refused to bow down to Haman to rectify the fact that Yaakov had bowed to Eisav (*Bereishis* 33:3).

The Gemara in *Chullin* (139b) teaches that Mordechai is hinted to in the section of the Torah that lists the spices that were used in creating the anointing oil (*Shemos* 30:23).

The first of the spices is called: **מָר־דְּרוֹר** – pure myrrh, which the ***Targum Unkelos*** translates into Aramaic as, **מֵירָא דַּכְיָא**, which sounds like Mordechai. Since Mordechai is associated with the sense of smell and sweet-smelling spices, it is not surprising that when Yaakov came to Yitzchok to get the *berachos*, Yitzchok commented that he smelled the pleasant aroma of Gan Eden entering with him.

The *Ba'al HaTurim* (*Bereishis* 25:34) points out that the word: **וַיִּבֶז** – "*and he disgraced*", appears twice in Tanach, once regarding Eisav: **וַיִּבֶז עֵשָׂו אֶת־הַבְּכֹרָה** – "*Eisav disgraced the birthright*" and once in conjunction with Haman (Esther 3:6): **וַיִּבֶז בְּעֵינָיו לִשְׁלֹחַ יָד בְּמָרְדֳּכַי לְבַדּוֹ** – "*It was a disgrace in his eyes, and he wanted to kill Mordechai*".

Just as Yaakov bought the birthright from Eisav with bread and lentils, so too the Medrash teaches (Yalkut Shimoni Esther 1056) that Mordechai purchased Haman as his servant by giving him food.

When Yaakov thought that Yosef had been killed by a wild animal, the Torah records (*Bereishis* 37:34) that as a sign of mourning he wore sackcloth, something that Mordechai also did in response to Haman's decree.

When Yaakov approached Eisav, he *davened* (*Bereishis* 32:12): **הצילני** הַצִּילֵנִי נָא מִיַּד אָחִי מִיַּד עֵשָׂו –"*Please save me from the hand of my brother Eisav*". **The *Ba'al HaTurim*** points out that the first letters of the first three words can be rearranged to spell Haman.

In an effort to pacify Eisav, Yaakov sent him a gift of many animals and instructed his messengers: **וְרֶוַח תָּשִׂימוּ בֵּין עֵדֶר וּבֵין עֵדֶר** - "*leave a space between each drove*" (*Bereishis* 32:17). **The *Ba'al HaTurim*** points out that the word **רֶוַח** appears only one other place in Tanach: **רֶוַח וְהַצָּלָה יַעֲמֹוד לַיְהוּדִים מִמָּקוֹם אַחֵר** – "*relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from some other place*" (Esther 4:14).

Finally, Rav Dovid Cohen points out that this insight from the ***Arizal*** can help us understand why the song we sing on Purim to commemorate the victory of Mordechai is … Shoshanas Yaakov.

On Yom Kippur the Sotan Has a Day Off

אֵבֶל גָּדוֹל לַיְהוּדִים וְצוֹם וּבְכִי וּמִסְפֵּד שַׂק וָאֵפֶר יֻצַּע לָרַבִּים - "*There was great mourning for the Jews, with fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes*." (Esther 4:3)

The Medrash (*Manos HaLevi*) says that the mention of the six descriptions of their sadness ("**אֵבֶל**" - "mourning" - "**צוֹם**" - "fasting" - "**בְּכִי**" - "weeping" - "**מִסְפֵּד**" - "wailing" - "**שַׂק**" - "sackcloth" - "**אֵפֶר**" - "ashes") was to indicate their *teshuvah* for the six days that they enjoyed the feast tendered by Achashveirosh.

How does this reconcile with the statement in the *Megillah* (1:5) that the King made a seven-day feast for all the people?

R' Yonosan Eibshitz (*Yaares Devash* Vol. 1, pg. 19a) explains: In describing the feast, it is stated that Achashveirosh displayed his riches for: **יָמִים רַבִּים שְׁמוֹנִים וּמְאַת יוֹם**- "many days, — 180 days." (1:4) From the words **יָמִים רַבִּים**- "many days" - which are apparently superfluous since it says "180 days," it is derived that the feast took place in the summer when "*yomim rabim*" - the days are longer (*Rokei'ach*).

Thus, from Rosh Chodesh Nissan till Rosh Chodesh Tishrei, with three months being twenty-nine days and the other, thirty days, there is a total of 177 days, and the 180th day was on the third day of Tishrei. This was followed by another feast for seven days, which culminated on the tenth of Tishrei — Yom Kippur.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 20a) says that the word **השטן** - "the Sotan" - has the numerical value of 364 to indicate that Sotan can instigate the Jewish people to sin only on 364 days of the solar calendar and not on Yom Kippur. Consequently, the Sotan did not incite the Jewish people to come to the seventh day of the feast, and thus they exhibited only six forms of sadness to express remorse and repentance for participating in six days of festivity.

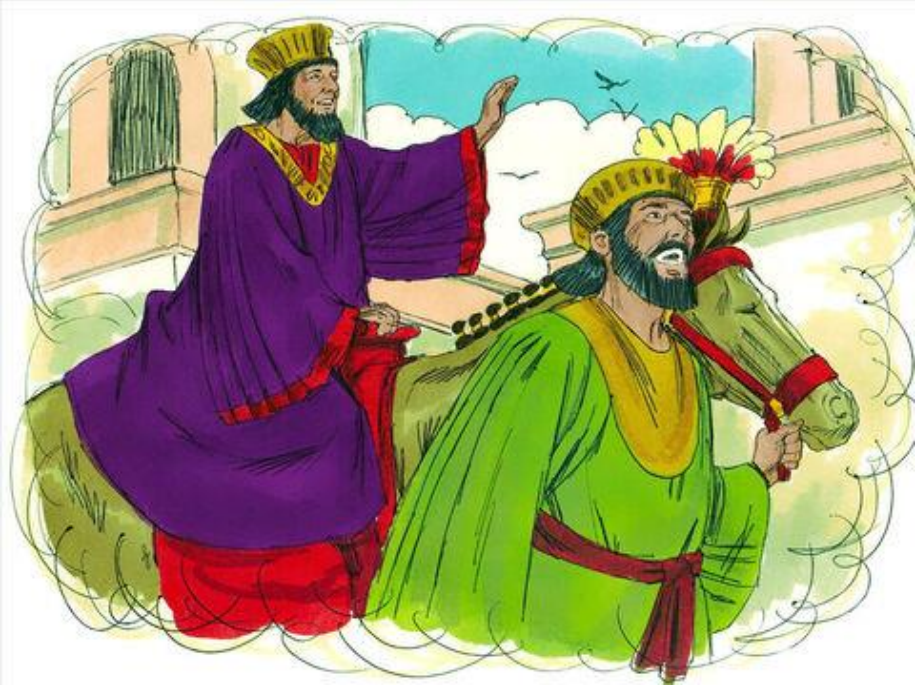
Joy Brings Success, Sadness Leads to Failure

וַתִּתְחַלְחַל הַמַּלְכָּה מְאֹד וַתִּשְׁלַח בְּגָדִים לְהַלְבִּישׁ אֶת־מָרְדֳּכַי וּלְהָסִיר שַׂקּוֹ מֵעָלָיו
"*The queen [Esther] was greatly distressed; she sent garments to clothe Mordechai, and to remove the sackcloth from upon him*." (Esther 4:4)

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

The *Tiferes Shlomah* answers that Mordechai and Esther debated how to annul Haman's decree. Mordechai followed the path of crying and mourning to arouse Hashem's pity and sympathy. Esther believed

they would accomplish more with joy, so she sent Mordechai proper clothing.



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

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

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

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

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

The Gemara (*Megillah* 16a) says: "Haman took the king's clothing and horse and went to Mordechai. Mordechai began to *daven*, and Haman waited until Mordechai finished *davening*." Then Haman led Mordechai through the streets of Shushan with immense honor.

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

He answers: "Haman knew that Mordechai was *davening* with sadness, and Haman preferred it that way. Haman thought, 'If I interrupt his *tefillah*, he will need to *daven* again. And after hearing the good news [that I must honor him], he will *daven* with immense joy, and then it is likely that his *tefillos* will be answered.'"

Haman preferred that Mordechai *daven* with sadness because the *tefillos* are less effective, so he waited patiently until Mordechai finished *davening*.

At the 1st party, Achashveirosh said: **מַה־שְּׁאֵלָתֵךְ וְיִנָּתֶן לָךְ וּמַה־בַּקָּשָׁתֵךְ עַד־חֲצִי הַמַּלְכוּת וְתֵעָשׂ** – "*What is your request? It will be granted to you. What is your petition? Even until half the kingdom, it shall be fulfilled*" (5:6). What better time to express her plea for Bnei Yisroel, but Esther's only request was that Achashveirosh and Haman come to the 2nd feast, which she would host the next day.

Why did she push off pleading for the Jewish nation? This seemed like such an ideal time! Achashveirosh told her that almost whatever she asked for, he would give her!

The answer is that Haman was happy at the first party, as it states: **וַיֵּצֵא הָמָן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא שָׂמֵחַ וְטוֹב לֵב** – "*That day Haman went out joyous and exuberant*" (5:9).

Esther knew she couldn't bring down Haman when Haman was happy, so she pushed off pleading for the Jewish nation for the next day.

The next day Haman was sad, as it states (Esther 6:12): **אָבֵל וַחֲפוּי רֹאשׁ**– "despondent, and with his head covered." That was an ideal

time to bring about Haman's downfall. Indeed, Haman was hanged that day. - This teaches us that joy brings success (and even for a *rasha* like Haman), and sadness leads to failure. (R' Elimelech Biderman)

A Minyan is Greater than the *Tefillos* of the Biggest *Tzaddik* of the Generation

The *Beis Aharon* writes: "I have received the following rule: When one *davens* with a *minyan*, the Shechinah is there, and it accomplishes and corrects all matters, just as it is when the greatest *tzaddik* of the generation *davens*."

We see the power of a *minyan* in halachah. A great *tzaddik* cannot say *kedusha* when he is alone. Even if the nine greatest *tzaddikim* of our nation daven together, they still cannot say *kaddish* or *chazoras hashatz*. Yet, a *minyan* of simple people can say *kedushah* and *kaddish*, etc. This proves the uniqueness of a *minyan*, which even the greatest *tzaddikim* cannot compare to.

The *Yaaras Devash* (Vol.2 *Derush* 9) teaches that Esther told Mordechai that he needed to *daven* with a *minyan* to bring salvations. - It states (Esther 2:5): **אֲיִשׁ יְהוּדִי הָיָה בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה וּשְׁמוֹ מָרְדֳּכָי** - "***There was a Jewish man in Shushan HaBirah (Shushan the capital) whose name was Mordechai***..."

The *Yaaras Devash* explains that this means that Mordechai was the only Yid living there. This is because there were two parts of Shushan: Shushan and Shushan HaBirah. - Achashveirosh and the high-ranking officials lived in Shushan HaBirah, while most Yidden lived in Shushan. Mordechai, a high-ranking official also lived in Shushan HaBirah, and was the only Yid living there.

Esther told him (Esther 4:16): **לֵךְ כְּנוֹס אֶת־כָּל־הַיְהוּדִים** - "*Go, assemble all the Yidden that are found in Shushan*...." to *daven* for Esther when she approaches Achashveirosh to plead for their lives.

The *Yaaras Devash* explains that Esther told Mordechai his *tefillos* in Shushan HaBirah were insufficient. He must gather all the Yidden and daven together.

So, we see that even the greatest people of the generation benefit from *tefillah b'tzibbur*. It is the most exalted form of *tefillah*. (R' Elimelech Biderman)

Hashem Looks Forward to Seder Night



Why did Esther insist that they fast on Pesach and not wait at least till after Yom Tov?

The *Tiferes Shlomah* explains: According to the ***Zohar*** (*Shemos* 40b), Hashem looks forward with anticipation to the Yom Tov of Pesach, and His Shechinah personally comes to witness the Jews sitting at the *seder* table and expressing their love for Him.

Esther planned that because of the vacuum they would create by forgoing proper observance of the *seder* night, Hashem would realize what He would be missing by permitting the annihilation, *chas vesholam*, of the Jewish people. He would thus come to their rescue and miraculously save them from Haman's evil plans.

"A Jew is never lost on his journey. Wherever he finds himself, Hashem has a reason for placing him there." ~ Rav Mordechai Pogremansky (1903-1949)

Hashem's Appearance at the Sea and at Sinai

וַתַּעֲמֹד בַּחֲצַר בֵּית־הַמֶּלֶךְ הַפְּנִימִית - "*And she stood in the inner court of the King's palace*." (Esther 5:1)

The Gemara in *Megillah* (15b) says that as she entered the area which was filled with idols, she felt the Shechinah leave her, so **וַתַּעֲמֹד** — she stood and prayed: **אֵ-לִי אֵ-לִי לָמָה עֲזַבְתָּנִי** — "*My G-d, my G-d, why have You forsaken me?*"

According to the **Medrash Shochar Tov**, with the repetition of "my G-d" she was alluding, "My G-d at the sea, my G-d at Sinai, do not forsake me."

The question is, why the emphasis on Hashem's appearance at the sea and Sinai?

Rav Yonasan Eibshitz (*Yaares Devash*, Vol.2, *Derush* 10) explains: Hashem appears in different forms. At Kriyas Yam Suf, He appeared as a powerful warrior, and at the giving of the Torah on Har Sinai, He appeared in the form of a merciful Sage (Yalkut Shimoni 246).

According to the ***Arizal***, the different forms of revelation depend on the mission to be accomplished. Kriyas Yam Suf was against the laws of nature: Water, which normally flows continuously, stood as a pillar. To emphasize that Hashem governs nature and is not limited by it, He appeared as a powerful warrior who conquers and controls. In contrast, the giving of the Torah was not an act contrary to nature, and therefore He appeared as a merciful Sage.

Esther was pleading with Hashem, "The Jewish people are facing an extremely difficult time. We are being threatened with annihilation. You, my G-d, are the All-powerful; You control nature and are above it. We need Your miraculous help! May it be Your will to perform a miracle on our behalf which is within the laws of nature, as You have done at Sinai, or one which surpasses nature, as You have done at the sea; whatever it may be — please do not forsake me."

Why Did Esther HaMalkah Refer to Achashveirosh as a Dog

The Gemara in *Megillah* (15b) says that as she entered the area which was filled with idols, she felt the Shechinah leave her, so וַתַּעֲמֹד — she stood and prayed: אֵ-לִי אֵ-לִי לָמָה עֲזַבְתָּנִי — "*My G-d, my G-d, why have You forsaken me?*"

We mentioned above the Medrash. The Gemara offers a different *peshat:* the Gemara says that she ascribed the Shechinah's departure - to the fact that she had displayed disrespect to Achashveirosh (a king appointed by Hashem to rule) by asking Hashem to save her from '**the dog**' (as recorded in *Tehilim* 22 כִּי סְבָבוּנִי כְּלָבִים), a mistake that she immediately rectified by referring to him as 'a lion'- הוֹשִׁיעֵנִי מִפִּי אַרְיֵה.

In the words of **R' Yisroel Reisman**: "I would like to understand Esther. That's not a fine thing to do - can you imagine a Gadol B'Yisroel using the expression - not a *rosha* - but using the expression dog?! That's not even a nice expression to use. Why did she use that expression?"

R' Yisroel Reisman then explains as follows: **Rav Hutner** (*Pachad Yitzchok, Maamar* 60) says the following: *Chazal* (*Beitzah* 25b) say: שְׁלשָׁה עַזִּין הֵן - "*there are three that have chutzpah*", one of the three is a dog. What is the chutzpah of the dog?

Rav Hutner explains, the chutzpah of a dog is that he's man's best friend. Why is that chutzpah? The chutzpah is, that he could look at a human being as being on the same level as himself?! The chutzpah of a dog is not when he's a wild and rabid dog, the chutzpah of a dog is when he's a warm and friendly dog! The fact that, a dog sees man as his best friend, *oy vey*!

The special uniqueness of: וּלְכֹל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יֶחֱרַץ כֶּלֶב לְשֹׁנוֹ, is not that dogs didn't attack the Jews, why would a dog attack the Jews, they didn't bother the dog. It's that the dogs didn't even have a friendly

bark for the Jews. When Klal Yisroel left Mitzrayim on the morning of Pesach, they were so uplifted, *derhoiben*, that even a dog that looked at a member of Klal Yisroel saw that, that's not my friend! *Chas vesholam*! A friend - it's *le'eyla ule'eyla*!

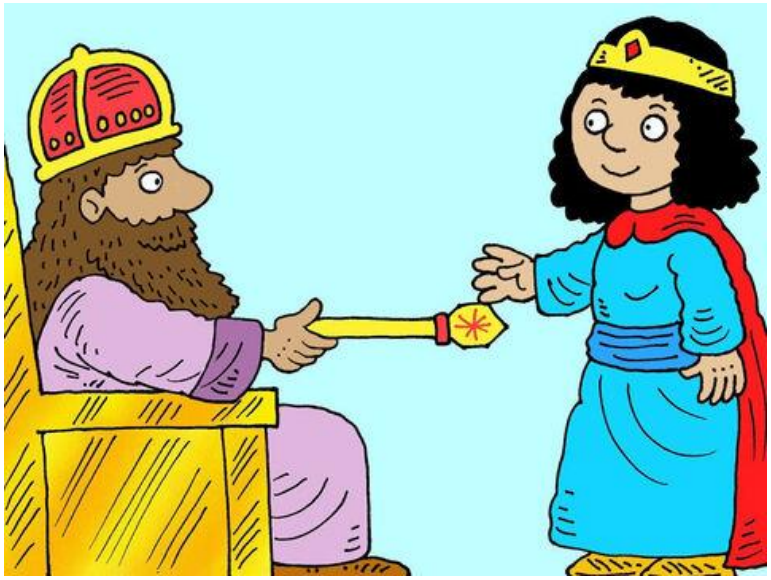
A man doesn't say that a Malach is his friend, and a dog doesn't say that a person is his friend. Somebody who has no boundaries, inappropriate relationships, fails to see himself where he is. Someone who can be friendly with a dog, has fallen very low.

Esther says Achashveirosh is a dog. So, we think, like a truck driver calls someone a dog. What!? Esther is one of the seven *Nevios*! If she said dog, she had depth to what she said, a lot of depth. She didn't call him a dog, like a bum in the street calls people a dog. She said the *middah* of a dog, because he has relationships that crosses a boundary, where it's inappropriate.

- Achashveirosh thinks that he's a *shidduch* for me!? Achashveirosh thinks that Esther HaMalkah - even if he didn't know that she's Jewish, but he saw her fine *middos*, he saw her extraordinary personality, he saw her *yiras* Shomayim, he saw her *ahavas habriyos*, and he thinks that he's a *shidduch* for me? Hakodosh Boruch Hu, save me "*miyad kelev*" - what's *kelev*? *Kelev* is, the danger to me is that he's acting like a *kelev*, he sees me as someone on his level. - *Oy, hatzilah.*

"Eat only enough to satisfy your hunger and you will protect yourself from trouble and preserve your health. Do not keep eating as long as the food still appeals to you, because the palate always wants more until the stomach is loaded. Eating like this will lead to all sorts of damage and disease." ~ Rabbeinu Yonah of Gerondi.

An Insight from R' Shimshon of Ostropoli



וַיְהִי כִרְאוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־אֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה עֹמֶדֶת בֶּחָצֵר נָשְׂאָה חֵן בְּעֵינָיו וַיּוֹשֶׁט הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאֶסְתֵּר אֶת־שַׁרְבִּיט הַזָּהָב אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ וַתִּקְרַב אֶסְתֵּר וַתִּגַּע בְּרֹאשׁ הַשַּׁרְבִּיט - ***"As soon as the king saw Queen Esther standing in the courtyard… The king extended to Esther the golden sceptre which he had in his hand, and Esther approached and touched the tip of the sceptre."*** (Esther 5:2)

R' Shimshon of Ostropoli asks two questions on the above *pasuk*:

1) The words: אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ - "*that was in his hand*" seem to be extra. It could have just said: וַיּוֹשֶׁט אֶת־שַׁרְבִּיט הַזָּהָב - "*he extended to Esther the gold sceptre.*" In fact, the second time he extended the sceptre to her (see 8:4) the words, אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ, are not mentioned?

2) The Gemara in *Megillah* (15b) says that an angel stretched the King's golden sceptre, which was originally two *amos* towards her either twelve or as much as sixty *amos*. If so, why was it necessary that: וַתִּקְרַב אֶסְתֵּר - "*Esther approached*"?

R' Shimshon of Ostropoli answers: The golden sceptre had a handle. Normally, when the King wanted to extend it to someone, he would hold onto the handle and extend it lengthwise. When Esther appeared, her presence moved him very much, and to show his great love for her, he turned around the sceptre and handed her the handle, אֲשֶׁר בְּיָדוֹ - the part which was normally in his hand.

To show respect to the King, though the handle of the sceptre was offered to her, she humbly approached the King and "touched the top of the sceptre — the part which was now "in his hand."

Why Hashem's Name Is Hinted in Roshei Teives

The *Kedushas Levi* (*Kedushah Rishonah*) explains that during the time of the Purim story, Hashem's presence was concealed, and therefore Hashem's name isn't mentioned in the *Megillah*. Although great miracles occurred, they happened within the rules of nature.

However, Hashem's name is found in the *roshei teivos* and in the *sofei teivos* of the *Megillah*. For example, the *roshei teivos* of **יבא המלך והמן היום** spell **הוי״ה** and the final letters of **וכל זה איננו שוה לי** spell **הוי״ה**.

The *Kedushas Levi* explains that this is because Hashem's name (and presence) was seen with several words, which represents several events. Each word represents another aspect of events, and when one takes a collective view of everything that happened in the *Megillah*, that is when one recognizes Hashem's name and presence.

What Changed Between the First and Second Feast

אֶל־הַמִּשְׁתֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה לָהֶם - *"To the meal I will make for them."* (Esther 5:8)

Although Esther risked her life by going to Achashveirosh when she had not been called, he extended his golden sceptre to her. After she touched the end of the scepter and approached, he asked her what she wanted.

Esther invited Achashveirosh and Haman to join her at a royal *mishteh* [banquet]. At that meal, Achashveirosh again asked Esther what her request was, and she responded that she wanted them to join her at another feast the following day.

The *Meshech Chochmah* points out a subtle change in the wording of Esther's invitations. When she told Achashveirosh about the first *mishteh* (5:4), she described it as: **אֶל־הַמִּשְׁתֶּה אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂיתִי לוֹ** – "*The feast I will make for him*", meaning Achashveirosh. The second time,

she said (5:8): אֶל־הַמִּשְׁתֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה לָהֶם – "*The meal I will make for them*", referring to Achashveirosh and Haman.

Why did she change her wording?

The Gemara (*Megillah* 15b) explains that one of Esther's intentions in inviting Haman to the banquets was to make Achashveirosh suspicious that something was going on between Haman and his wife. When the first *mishteh* came and went without Achashveirosh showing any signs of jealousy, Esther decided to up the stakes.

Although she invited Haman to the first feast, she made it clear that her husband was the guest of honor, describing it as the meal I am making for the king. The second time she implied that Haman would be an equally important guest at the: אֶל־הַמִּשְׁתֶּה אֲשֶׁר אֶעֱשֶׂה לָהֶם – "The meal I will make for **them**", equating Haman to her husband.

The Gemara says that Achashveirosh picked up on this subtle change in wording, and this was one of the reasons he could not sleep (6:1). He was worried that there might be a secret plot going on between Esther and Haman to assassinate him.

Still, why didn't Esther present her request on behalf of her nation at the first *mishteh*? Seemingly, nothing changed from one meal to the next, so what was she hoping to gain by delaying her entreaty until the second one?

The *Ibn Ezra* explains that at the first banquet, Esther was watching for a heavenly sign indicating that the time was right. When none was forthcoming, she decided to postpone her plan until the following day.

In the interim, she saw Haman being humbled and ordered to lead Mordechai through the streets of Shushan on the royal horse. Esther interpreted this as a sign from Hashem that now the time was right, and she proceeded with her intervention on behalf of the Jews later that day.

A Gantz Yur Purim – Purim All Year Long

וּמָחָר אֶעֱשֶׂה כִּדְבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ - "*Tomorrow I will do as the king says*." (Esther 5:8)

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

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

Do you want to improve your ways then, as well? This is hinted in Esther's words: **וּמָחָר אֶעֱשֶׂה כִּדְבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ**– "*Tomorrow I will do as the king says*."

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

The wealthy man replied, "Could be. Perhaps. But now it's Shabbos. Let's discuss it after Shabbos."

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

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

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

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

The poor man is so happy. Finally, he can see the end of the dark tunnel of his *tzaros*. After Shabbos, he looks for the wealthy man, and he can't find him. When he finally finds him, the poor man says, "Nu. What is your decision?"

"About what?" the wealthy man asked.

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

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

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

It says in *Megillas Esther*: **וְלֹא יַעֲבֹור** (9:27), and **Rebbe Henoch of Alexander *zt"l*** explains that this means that Purim should never pass, never leave us. What we acquire should remain with us forever. (R' Elimelech Biderman)

An Incredible Remez

וְכָל־זֶ֣ה אֵינֶ֗נּוּ שֹׁוֶה לִ֙י - *"Yet all this means nothing to me."* (5:13)

In the above *pasuk*, the word: זֶ֣ה- "this", seems superfluous; it could have just said: **וְאֵינֶ֗נּוּ שֹׁוֶה לִ֙י** - "*and it means nothing to me*"?

The *Likutim MiPardes* explains as follows: Haman told his wife Zeresh and his advisors about the royal treatment the King had afforded him. In the course of the conversation, he also expressed his fear of Mordechai and Esther, observing that together the numerical value of their names (**מָרְדֳּכַ֣י אֶסְתֵּ֑ר**) totaled 26 (in "single numerals," taking 40 as 4, 200 as 2, etc.), which is the numerical value of Hashem's four-letter Name, indicating that He was with them.

Zeresh comforted Haman that he had nothing to worry about, because their names, Haman (**המן**) and Zeresh (**זרש**), also added up to 26 (in "single numerals"). Haman responded, "Mordechai alone adds up to 13 as does Esther alone. Thirteen, is also the numerical value of the word "*echad*" (**אחד**), indicating that the One and Only — Hashem — is with each of them. It also indicates that there is unity between them, and in unity there is strength. However, my name alone adds up to 14 and I am short 12. Thus, the '*zeh*' (**זה**), which has the numerical value of 12, which you, Zeresh, contribute, is worthless because Hashem is not with us and there is also no unity between us." (R' Moshe Bogomilsky)

What Was the Point of the Gallows Being 50 *Amos* High, The Eye Doesn't See That High?

וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ זֶרֶשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ וְכָל־אֹהֲבָיו יַעֲשׂוּ־עֵץ גָּבֹהַּ חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה - *"Zeresh his wife and all his friends advised that he make a gallows 50 cubits high."* (Esther 5:14)



Why did Haman want to make such high gallows, there doesn't seem to be any logic behind it. In the end Haman and his ten sons were hung on it, and it needed to be that high. However, surely Haman never knew about this, and certainly Zeresh didn't, so why did she tell Haman to build the gallows so high?

The simple answer would be, so that everyone could see what happened to Mordechai for not listening to Haman and they would become scared and fearful of him. However, the Gemara in *Eruvin*

(2a) says that eye doesn't notice things above 20 *amos*. If so, people wouldn't notice it, so it would seem there was no gain in hanging him so high, so why did the gallows need to be so high? (**R' Tzadok HaKohen**, *Inyonei Purim* asks the above.)

The *Alshich HaKodosh* answers, Haman saw how in the past Yidden were saved from tragedies. For example, he saw how Doniel was saved from the lion's den, and how Chananya, Mishael and Azaryah were saved from the fire. Therefore, he wanted to: **לצרף חמשים כחות הטומאה אשר לעומת חמשים שערי הקדושה** – "*To use the 50 levels of tumah to override the 50 levels of kedushah*". Therefore, he built the gallows 50 *amos* high, somehow including in it the *kochas* of *tumah* to override the *kochas* of *kedusha,* and since there are 50 levels, he built it 50 *amos* high.

Rav Yonasan Eibshitz (*Yaaras Devash,* Vol. 2, pg. 123) answers based on a Mishnah in *Bava Basra* (25a). The Mishnah says: **מרחיקין את הקברות מן העיר חמישים אמה** – "*We distance graves from the city 50 amos*". Rashi explains, that this is because of the bad smell. Haman wanted to kill Mordechai in the city, but he didn't want it to smell, therefore, he built the gallows 50 *amos* high.

With this he explains something amazing. The Gemara in *Megillah* (16a) explains the *pasuk:* **אשר הכין לו**, to mean **לו הכין**, that when Haman prepared the gallows for Mordechai, he was really preparing them for himself. The question is, where do we see this?

Rav Yonasan Eibshitz explains, that the **Yalkut Reuveni** (*Parshas Emor*) explains: **צדיקים אף במותם אין להם ריח רע** – "*Tzadikim even when they are dead, don't have a bad smell*". On the contrary: **מעלים ריח כבשמים** – "*They give off a nice smell*".

If the gallows were destined for Mordechai, they didn't need to be so high, as Mordechai never gave off a bad smell. From the fact that Haman ensured they were so high, it must be that were for him, therefore, they had to be 50 *amos* high, to ensure that the bad smell was 50 *amos* away from the city.

The Specialty of Davening with Sunrise (Neitz)

וּבַבֹּקֶר אֱמֹר לַמֶּלֶךְ - "*In the morning speak to the King*." (Esther 5:14)

What was the rush, why did Haman have to speak to the king in the morning?

Rav Yonasan Eibshitz (*Yaares Devash,* Vol. 1, *Derush* 17) explains: The Gemara in *Berachos* (9b) says that the "*vasikin*" - "devoted ones" - who were meticulous in performing *mitzvos*, would rise early in the morning to complete the recitation of *Shema* before sunrise and then say the *Shemoneh Esrei* at sunrise so that they could be: **סומך גאולה לתפילה** –"*recite the blessing about redemption (which follows immediately after Shema) together with Shemoneh Esrei".* - **Rabbi Yose ben Elyakim** testified: "If one joins the blessing about redemption with *Shemoneh Esrei* at sunrise, no harm will befall him all that day."

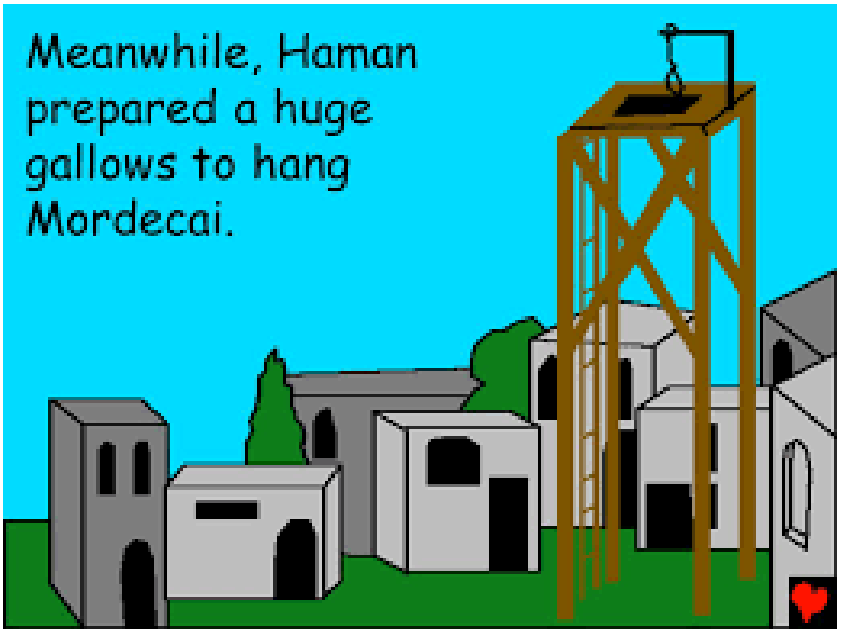
Hence, to be sure that the hanging of Mordechai would be approved by the King, they told Haman to discuss it with the King early in the morning before Mordechai recited *Shema* and the *Shemoneh Esrei*.

Perhaps with this we can understand the widespread *minhag* to *daven* with sunrise on Purim. We see from the *Megillah* the importance of *davening* with sunrise, therefore, on a day where a large focus of the day is about *Megillah,* it only makes sense to *daven* then.

"Any fool could count the seeds in one apple, but only Hashem, the highest power could count the apples in one seed." ~ as quoted by Rabbi Paysach Krohn who explains that when you do something for someone, you plant a seed of friendship, and you have no idea how much those seeds could blossom.

Why Haman Liked the Idea of a Gallows

וַיִּיטַב הַדָּבָר לִפְנֵי הָמָן וַיַּעַשׂ הָעֵץ - *"This suggestion pleased Haman, and he made the gallows"*. (Esther 5:14)



The Medrash (9:2) tells us: "Haman had 365 advisors, corresponding to Torah the days of the year, but none of them knew how to advise him as well as his wife, Zeresh.

She told him, 'If Mordechai is a Yid, you must plot wisely how to defeat and kill him because if you don't plan wisely, you will fail. You must kill him in a way never done to his nation before. If you throw him into a furnace, Chananya and his friends were saved from a furnace. If you will throw him into a lion's den, Doniel was thrown into a lion's den and was saved. Perhaps you will put him in jail, but Yosef was released from jail. If you put him in a copper pot and light a fire underneath, Menashah *davened* to Hashem and was saved from exactly that situation. If you exile him to the desert, Mordechai's ancestors lived in the desert successfully and multiplied there. If you blind him, behold, Shimshon killed many Pelishtim after he was blinded. - I suggest you hang Mordechai, because we don't know anyone from his nation that was saved from hanging.'

It states: **וַיִּיטַב הַדָּבָר לִפְנֵי הָמָן וַיַּעַשׂ הָעֵץ** - 'This suggestion pleased Haman, and he made the gallows.'"

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

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

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

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

Hatred Disrupts the Correct Order of Things



In the aforementioned *pasuk* it says: **וַיַּעַשׂ הָעֵץ** - "***And he made the gallows***". The advice given to Haman was: **יֵעָשׂוּ־עֵץ** - "*let gallows be made*", why did Haman make it himself?

The *Alshich* explains: His wife and all his friends told him that the best thing for him would be for Mordechai to be wiped out. However, they cautioned him, that it was below his dignity to be personally involved in the whole sordid process. Therefore: **יֵעָשׂוּ־עֵץ** - "Let gallows be made" — by artisans, and: **וְיִתְלוּ אֶת־מָרְדֳּכַי עָלָיו** - "The executioners will hang Mordechai on it."

Chazal tell us that: **שִׂנְאָה מְקַלְקֶלֶת אֶת הַשּׁוּרָה** - "*Hatred disrupts the correct order of things*" (Rashi to *Bamidbar*, 22:21), and people deviate from the norm when acting out of hatred. Consequently, Haman who hated Mordechai with a passion did not wait for any workers, but immediately: **וַיַּעַשׂ הָעֵץ** — he personally made the gallows.

HaMelech (המלך) In the *Megillah* Refers to Hashem

Although Hashem's name is not mentioned explicitly in the *Megillah*, the holy *seforim* say that whenever it states the word, **המלך** , alone in the *Megillah*, (not two words like **הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ**) it refers to Hashem, the King of the world.

The *Maharal* says that, **הַמֶּלֶךְ**, isn't only hinting at "the King, Hashem." **הַמֶּלֶךְ** in the *Megillah* means Hashem. Proof of this is in the words: **בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא נָדְדָה שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ** - "*That night, the king's sleep was disturbed.*" The Gemara (*Megillah* 15b) cites a *machlokes* [dispute] regarding the translation of **הַמֶּלֶךְ** in this *pasuk*. According to Rav

Tanchum, הַמֶּלֶךְ, is Hashem, for He is the King of the world. The *pasuk* is saying that *keviyachol* [so to speak], Hashem, couldn't sleep because it was time to save the Jewish nation. So, we see, according to Rav Tanchum, that the simple translation of, הַמֶּלֶךְ, is the King, Hashem. We think that Achashveirosh or others were pulling the strings and causing events to happen, but, הַמֶּלֶךְ, is our reminder that everything is from Hashem.

This is the message of the *Megillah*, to know that Hashem is with us and performs miracles for us within the rules of nature. The first Mishnah in *Megillah* states, "The *Megillah* is read on the 11th, the 12th, the 13th, the 14th, and the 15th [of Adar], not later and not earlier."

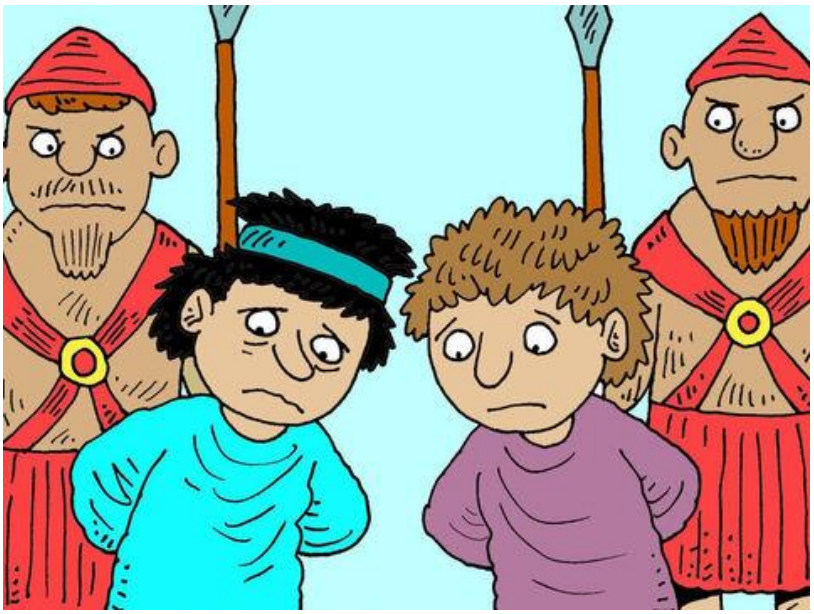
The *Bris Kehunas Olam* writes that the total of these dates equals 65 (11 + 12 + 13 + 14 +15 = 65), the same as **אדנ"י**. The name **אדנ"י** is Hashem's name when He runs the world by the rules of nature. We read the *Megillah* on these dates, which are *gematriya* **אדנ"י**, because the purpose of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

The Mishnah adds: **לא פחות לא יותר** – "*Not earlier and later*". This means we can only read the *Megillah* on the aforementioned five dates, not the day before or after. The day before is the 10th of Adar, and the day after is the 16th, together the *gematriya* is 26 (10 + 16 = 26), the *gematriya* of **הוי"ה**, Hashem's name for miracles.

We can't read the *Megillah* on these days because on Purim, we aren't celebrating the revealed miracles, which are symbolized by Hashem's name **הוי"ה**. On Purim we celebrate that even when everything appears natural, Hashem is with us, directing each detail.

Was It Bigsan and Seresh, or Bigsana and Seresh

וַיִּמָּצֵא כָתוּב אֲשֶׁר הִגִּיד מָרְדֳּכַי עַל־בִּגְתָנָא וָתֶרֶשׁ - "*There it was found written that Mordecai had denounced Bigsana and Seresh*." (6:2)



When Achashveirosh's sleep was disturbed, he ordered his servants to read him his book of chronicles, where he found recorded that Mordechai had saved him from Bigsana and Seresh's plan to kill him, which led him to discover that Mordechai had never been properly rewarded for his actions. Earlier, the *Megillah* says (2:21) that Mordechai saved Achashveirosh from the assassination plot of Bigsan and Seresh. Why was Bigsan's name changed to Bigsana?

The Medrash Talpios explains that Achashveirosh's scribe was one of Haman's sons, who did not want Mordechai to be compensated for what he did. Therefore, when he recorded the episode in the royal chronicles, he wrote that Mordechai discovered that: **בגתן או תרש** – "Bigsan or Seresh were plotting to kill Achashveirosh". In other words, one of them wanted to assassinate the king, but because it was not clear which one, there was no choice but to kill both to protect the king. According to this version of events, Mordechai did not deserve substantial remuneration for his efforts, because at the same time he saved Achashveirosh, he was also indirectly responsible for the death of an innocent man.

To ensure that Mordechai received the honor to which he was justly entitled, Hashem split the word **או** by attaching the letter **א** to the end of Bigsan's name and the **ו** to the beginning of **תרש** 's name. As a result, the royal book of records now stated that Mordechai saved the king from **בִּגְתָנָא וְתֶרֶשׁ**.

The *Megillah* alludes to this transformation when it says: **וַיִּמָּצֵא כָתוּב** - "*and they found that it was written*" – hinting that this was not the

text that was originally written but was miraculously changed at this time.

Why Haman Personally Dressed, Paraded, and Had to Make a Proclamation for Mordechai

Why did the King order Haman to personally dress Mordechai with the kingly apparel, parade him in the city square and make a public proclamation about him?

The *Manas HaLevi* explains: In the *Megillah*, the word "HaMelech" - "the King" - refers to Hashem, and the message of the *Megillah* is that Hashem always protects His beloved children - the Jewish people.

Hashem's way of reward is *middah keneged middah* - measure for measure - and everything that occurs is an act of Divine Providence.

Haman with his evil decree caused righteous Mordechai to do three things: 1) "He rent his clothes and put on sackcloth" 2) "He went out into the midst of the city" and 3) "He cried with a loud bitter cry." (4:1)

Mordechai deserved restitution for his pain and suffering. Therefore, The King - Hashem - ordered Haman to personally compensate the righteous Mordechai by particularly doing three things for him: 1) Dressing him in royal apparel; 2) Parading him in the city square; 3) Publicly proclaiming before him "so shall be done to the man whom the King - Hashem - desires to honor."

An Incredible *Vort* from Rebbetzen Abramsky

Reb Yechezkel Abramsky *zt"l* once related the following:

One year on Purim night, in London, I read *Megillah* for my wife at 1 in the morning. That year on *erev* Purim my *rebbetzen* had a terrible

toothache and she wasn't up to hearing *Megillah* at the ideal time. At 1 in the morning, she felt better, and she asked me to read her the *Megillah*. When I finished reading the *Megillah* I asked her, "Raizel, what do you think Mordechai was thinking when he was on the horse, and Haman was leading him through the city square proclaiming, "so shall be done to the man who the king wants to honor?".

She answered Mordechai was probably thinking: "*Kavod* such as this is something fit for drunkards, and isn't even *kavod,* when is this stupidity going to finish, so that I can get back to my learning".

What Was the *Heter* for Mordechai to Have a Haircut from a Non-Jew

וַיִּקַּח הָמָן אֶת־הַלְּבוּשׁ וְאֶת־הַסּוּס וַיַּלְבֵּשׁ אֶת־מָרְדֳּכָי - "*Haman took the garments and the horse*." (Esther 6:11)



The Gemara in *Megillah* (16a) relates, that Haman told Mordechai to put on the royal clothes and then ride the horse of the king. Mordechai said that he was unable to do so, until he had a haircut first, as it's not respectful to wear the royal clothes without first having a haircut. Esther went around telling all the barbers to close, and Haman was left with no choice, but to perform the haircut himself.

The question is, the Mishnah in *Avodah Zorah* (27a) teaches, that it is forbidden to get a haircut from a non-Jew. R' Meir forbids doing so in all places, whereas the Chachomim allow it in the *reshus harabim* [public domain], but not in private. If having a haircut from a non-Jew is forbidden, how was Mordechai allowed?

The *Gevul Binyomin* (*Megillah* 17a cited in *Asifas Zekeinim*) answers, that the Chachomim hold that it is allowed in a *reshus harabim*. When Haman gave Mordechai his haircut there were other people present, it was therefore considered like a *reshus harabim* and allowed.

The *Gevul Binyomin* (*Megillah* 17a cited in *Asifas Zekeinim*) offers a second answer. *Tosfos* in *Avodah Zorah* (29a) learns that the *issur* is when the barber is using a razor, and it is very easy to cause damage. If, however, the barber uses scissors where damage is not as likely it is allowed. Haman used scissors when giving Mordechai a haircut, therefore, there was no *issur* involved.

The *Madanay Asher* answers, that it's clear from the *Rishonim* that the reason for the *issur* is that we are scared that the non-Jew will try and kill the Jew. In our case this was not of concern, as

Achashveirosh had commanded Haman to get Mordechai prepared, and he was scared to disobey the king. Since he was scared, there was no concern of the barber trying to kill the Jew, therefore, it was allowed.

A second answer the *Madanay Asher* suggests, is that it's clear from the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh Deah,* 157) that for an *adam choshuv,* important person, it's different. Mordechai was an *adam choshuv,* therefore, it was allowed.

Why Wasn't Haman's Daughter Able to Recognize Her Father



Haman's daughter poured garbage on her father by mistake, and ended up so distraught that she killed herself. The question is, how exactly did this happen, why was she not able to recognize the voice of her father?

The *Ben Yehoyada* answers: **כי מחמת שהיה מכריז בכמה מבואות ניחר גרונו ונשתנה קולו ונמצא אדרבה הקול הטעה אותה שאין זה אביה**- "*Since he went through all the streets and alleyways shouting, his throat was effected and his voice started to sound different, and on the contrary this is what confused her, and made her think this wasn't her father*".

However, why was she not able to see who he was based on what he looked like?

The *Ben Yehoyada* explains that Haman was embarrassed at what he was doing, so he held his head low and faced the ground. Since he was facing the ground, his daughter who was standing above on the roof top was unable to see him and made a mistake.

However, he then asks, surely, she should have been able to see that the person on the horse was Mordechai and not her father?

He answers that Mordechai was weak from fasting for three nights and two days and was unable to lift up his head whilst on the horse, so he was bent over leaning on the horse, therefore, Haman's daughter couldn't see his face.

Some answer, that Mordechai always ran away from *kavod* [honor], therefore, he specially bent over to hide his face. Since Mordechai made sure to hide his face, Haman's daughter was unable to recognize him. Some say that this is one of the reasons why there is a *minhag* to wear masks on Purim.

The *Ibn Ezra* learns that Mordechai covered his face with a mask, according to this it's easy to understand why Haman's daughter couldn't see who it was.

However, I think the simplest answer to explain why Haman's daughter couldn't recognize her father's voice or see who it was is that she was very high up, and it's hard to see and hear from so high up.

Some answer, Haman changed his voice specially in order that people wouldn't recognize that it was him, therefore, his daughter couldn't tell. Others answer that Haman's daughter knew the extent of her father's haughtiness, and she knew that he would even do things like sit on a horse and call out by himself: "*So shall be done to the man who the king wants to honor*". Therefore, although she heard her father calling out, "So shall be done to the man who the king wants to honor", she didn't rule out the option that he was the one on the horse.

One final answer I saw is: Leading Mordechai through the streets was a great embarrassment to Haman. So, after dressing Mordechai in the royal garb, he cunningly turned to Mordechai and asked him for permission to wear his clothing as he led him through the city square. Mordechai consented, thinking this would only intensify Haman's humiliation since the people viewing the parade would recognize that the one leading was really Haman.

When Haman's daughter looked down from the rooftop and saw someone dressed in Jewish garb leading someone in royal garb, she was convinced that the leader was undoubtedly Mordechai and that the one on the horse was her father. However, when her father looked up to her and she saw his face, she realized her error and threw herself from the roof.

Even Zeresh Understood the Power of Tefillah

כִּי־נָפוֹל תִּפּוֹל לְפָנָיו - "*You will fall before him*." (6:13)

Zeresh told Haman: **כִּי־נָפוֹל תִּפּוֹל לְפָנָיו** - "*You will fall before him* [Mordechai]". What was Zeresh saying? Was she telling Haman there is no hope for him and he will fall before Mordechai?

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

Indeed, immediately after Haman led Mordechai through the streets of Shushan with immense honor, Mordechai returned to his *tefillos,* as it states (6:12): **וַיָּשָׁב מָרְדֳּכַי אֶל־שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ** - "*Mordechai returned to the king's gate*", and Rashi writes: **לְשַׂקּוֹ וּלְתַעֲנִיתוֹ** - "*That he returned to his sackcloth and fasting*". He wisely didn't stop *davening*, and that is what brought about the salvation.

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

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

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

This joke reminds us that if there's a problem, and you have an opportunity to escape from it, you must be a fool not to utilize it. We are referring to *tefillah* on Purim. Look around yourself for a moment, consider all your neighbors' homes. Is there a family that doesn't have a serious problem? For one, it is related to health; for a second, it is about *shidduchim;* for a third, it is about *nachas;* and for a fourth, it is about *parnassah*.

But there's a solution. You can *daven* on Taanis Esther and on Purim. Only a Vayizasa will be callous and not take advantage of these holy times. (R' Elimelech Biderman)

"Your heart is the one place in the world that Hashem can only enter if you let Him in." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe.

Why Charvona Suddenly Plucked Up the Courage to Speak Against Haman

וּפְנֵי הָמָן חָפּוּ - ***"Haman's face was covered."*** (Esther 7:8)

The *Ibn Ezra* explains that the custom in Persia was, that if the king was angry at a certain person, they would cover over his face, this is what the *pasuk* means: **וּפְנֵי הָמָן חָפוּ**, the king was angry with Haman, therefore, he had his faced covered.

However, the question is, why do we need to be taught this in the *Megillah*?

The Brisker Rav explains, that Charvona was one of the low-end ministers of the king, like we find that at the beginning of the *Megillah* he is listed very low down on the list.

Being that he was low down, he was too scared to speak up against Haman, who ranked top of the list as he was scared that he would take revenge. However, now that Haman's face was covered over, and the king was angry with him, he was no longer scared, therefore, this time he plucked up the courage and spoke against him.

Why Didn't Mordechai Knock Out Haman's Teeth

הָמָן הָרָע הַזֶּה - "*This wicked Haman*" (Esther 7:6)



In the *Haggadah* we are told that the way to deal with a *rosha* is to knock out his teeth. There is no doubt that Haman was a *rosha*, so why didn't Mordechai knock out Haman's teeth?

According to the Medrash, Achashveirosh once sent two divisions of his army to battle. One was headed by Haman and the other by Mordechai. He gave each one an equal supply of food. Haman was careless and let his soldiers finish the food in a short period of time. Desperately, he came to Mordechai and begged him to give him some of his food, but Mordechai refused. Haman, fearing that his soldiers would revolt

against him, sold himself to Mordechai as a slave and, thus, Mordechai supplied him with food.

When a Jewish master knocks out the tooth of his non-Jewish servant, he becomes free (*Shemos* 21:26). Not wanting to lose such a slave as Haman, Mordechai refrained from knocking out Haman's teeth. (R' Moshe Bogomilsky)

How the Gemara Knows That Charvonah Was a Partner with a Haman

**וַיֹּאמֶר חֲרְבוֹנָה אֶחָד מִן־הַסָּרִיסִים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ גַּם הִנֵּה־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה הָמָן לְמָרְדֳּכַי אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר־טוֹב עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ עֹמֵד בְּבֵית הָמָן גָּבֹהַּ חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ תְּלֻהוּ עָלָיו - "*And Charvonah said, 'Behold there is also the gallows which Haman made for Mordechai... standing in the house of Haman fifty cubits high*.'" (Esther 7:9)

The Gemara in *Megillah* (16a) says that Charvonah conspired with Haman to hang Mordechai. How did the Gemara know this?

The Dubner Maggid in *Kol Yaakov* explains with the following *moshul*: There was a blind beggar who used to make his rounds with a little boy guiding him through the streets. One night before retiring to bed he counted his collection for the day and found that he had collected thirty coins.

During the night the young boy stole his wallet. When the beggar arose and realized his misfortune, he cried bitterly. The young boy, frightened of the consequences, handed him the wallet, saying, "I found the thirty coins you lost."

When the blind beggar heard this, he grabbed the boy and began to beat him. The boy sobbed; "I did you a favor; why are you beating me?"

The beggar said, "Obviously, you were the thief because otherwise how would you know that there were thirty coins in my wallet?"

Since Charvonah knew the exact dimensions of the gallows, obviously he was a partner in the plot.

The Gallows Fit for a King



We just mentioned the *pasuk*: **גַּם הִנֵּה־ הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה הָמָן לֶמָרְדֳּכַי אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר־טוֹב עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ** - "***Behold, there is also the gallows, which Haman made for Mordechai who spoke good for the King***." When did Mordechai ever "speak good" for King Achashveirosh?

Haman's advisors told him to make a gallows and get the King's consent to hang Mordechai. Immediately, he hired one of the best carpenters in Shushan Habirah and instructed him to build a 50-cubit-high pole. The carpenter was not aware of its purpose, but, knowing Haman's wealth, he made it of the most expensive wood and adorned it with gold.

Upon completion, he handed Haman a hefty bill. Somewhat surprised, he said to the carpenter, "Who ever heard of paying such a huge amount for a 50-cubit pole?" The carpenter replied, "Why don't you look at what I did, and then you will agree that my fee is reasonable." When Haman saw the golden pole, he became enraged and shouted, "I wanted this to serve as a gallows for Mordechai; the one you made is *tov al hamelech* - good for the King!"

Upon hearing from Charvonah that Haman said the gallows "is good for the King," Achashveirosh immediately bellowed, "hang him on it!" (R' Moshe Bogomilsky *b'shem* R' Shmuel Tzvi Fuchs)

Understanding the Double "Chaf"

וַחֲמַת הַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁכָכָה - "*And the fury of the King abated.*" (7:10)

Instead of "**שָׁכָכָה**" (with two "*chafs*") it should have said "**שָׁכָה**"?

The *Nachal Eshkol* explains: According to the Medrash Rabbah, it was not only Mordechai who intervened on behalf of the Jewish people, but Moshe Rabbeinu too.

Thanks to his *tefillos* the decree against them was nullified. The word "**שָׁכָכָה**" with two "*chafs*" has the numerical value of 345, the same as the name "**משה**."

With this spelling the *Megillah* is alluding that the wrath of HaMelech – Hashem, the King - subsided in merit of Moshe.

The Joy of Life

In the eighth year of Achashveirosh's rule, on the thirteenth of Adar, every Jewish man, woman and child was to be slaughtered. Young or old, wealthy or poor, they were counted as one, and on that fateful day, the Jewish people would cease to be. According to the ways of the world and according to the natural course of events, that is what should have happened.

But it didn't. In the greatest reversal of fortune, the tables were turned, and the Jews were saved. In a heartbeat, they went from death to life, from despondency to hope, from being sheep led to the slaughter to having Mordechai HaTzadik paraded through the streets of Shushan. The people had lived through an astonishing miracle, and they experienced great joy. "And the Jews of Shushan were jubilant and celebrated."

Yet, when the Gemara describes their elation, it seems to leave out the issue of life and death. Where the *Megillah* says, "To the Jews there was light, happiness, joy and elation," *Chazal* interpret it to mean, "The Jews had Torah, Yom Tov, *Milah* and *Tefillin*," as if to say that the reason the Jews were celebrating was because they

again had the opportunity to do these *mitzvos*. The issue of their being granted their lives doesn't seem to weigh into the equation, it as if the Gemara is saying that their entire celebration and their source of joy was that they were now again able to perform these *mitzvos*.

This is very difficult to understand. Granted, these might be additional reasons to celebrate, but isn't life a much greater reason? They were going to die, and Hashem saved them. Isn't that the greatest cause for celebration and giving thanks to Hashem?

(Rashi makes this question even more difficult by adding his comment that Haman decreed against all of these *mitzvos*. But this is not true. Haman's decree wasn't against the keeping of religion at all. It was quite simply death to the Jews. There was no mention of *mitzvos* whatsoever. What does Rashi mean that Haman decreed against these *mitzvos*?)

To understand this, let's fast forward to a modern day, rags to riches story.

Rags to Riches

Born in 1934, Sheldon Adelson was the son of a Ukrainian immigrant. His father drove a taxi, and his mother ran a knitting shop. He grew up in one of the poorest sections of Boston. But even as a young boy, he showed great ambition, first selling newspapers on the street corner, and then running his first business at the age of twelve. He went on to build over fifty businesses, and eventually he became a very wealthy man.

A funny thing, however, happened to Sheldon Adelson in 2003 when he took the Sands Corporation public. The stock skyrocketed, and his assets went from 1.4 billion dollars to 20 billion dollars in a year and a half. Forbes Magazine estimates that during this time, his wealth increased at the rate of a million dollars an hour.

A million dollars an hour is a tidy sum of money. To illustrate what that means. Imagine that during this time, he sat down to a nice leisurely lunch. When he got up and walked away, he was a million dollars richer. Or if he went for a dip in the pool, by the time he had dried his hair, he was seven hundred and fifty thousand dollars wealthier. If he took a nice Shabbos nap, by the time he woke up, another three million dollars were in his coffers.

Extremely wealthy people describe getting rich as exhilarating – almost intoxicating. "It is one of the most pleasurable experiences on the planet." It seems that having wealth is nowhere near as much fun as acquiring it. And here this man was gaining wealth at a dizzying pace. It is difficult to imagine the sense of excitement he must have felt. Wow!!! Life is awesome. More and more! This is indescribably great!

This seems to be the answer to the Gemara. When the Jews of Shushan were saved, they saw Hashem taking care of them, orchestrating events, running the world. They saw behind the veil of physicality and recognized their Creator. But more than just seeing Hashem, this experience changed their understanding of life. Someone who has had a near death experience is a changed man. His interests change. His value system changes. The pursuits that once gripped him lose their hold. Because he tasted death, he looks at life differently. And he questions. Why is life so precious? What is the tragedy of death? We all die anyway. Sooner. Later. What difference does it make?

And the real answer is – no difference. Generations come; generations go. They seem so important at the time, and then they pass as if they were never, like dust in the wind. And really nothing matters. Until you understand the purpose of life. Once you understand that Hashem created us to grow, that Hashem put us in this world to shape ourselves into what we will be for eternity, then you understand the value of life. Life is valuable because it is time,

time to grow, time to accomplish, time given as the chance to acquire your World to Come. Once you understand that, you understand life, and then you understand the tragedy of death. Death is dreadful because it robs a person of that chance to grow.

Rav Matisyohu Solomon *zt"l*, explained, that this is what Rashi is telling us. When the Jews of Shushan celebrated, it was because they had reached a different understanding of life. A moment earlier, death was upon them. Yet, suddenly, inexplicably, it all turned around. As a result, they were a changed people. They no longer valued the things they once did; they viewed life from a dramatically different vantage point.

Because it was so sudden and the change so complete, it catapulted them to a level of understanding that was unprecedented. It was all clear. And they felt tremendous joy – but joy for a reason, happiness for a cause. They recognized the extraordinary wealth they could acquire with one mitzvah. And this is what brought them happiness.

They understood the value of life. They understood the reason that Hashem put us on this planet. And so, life was precious beyond description because they understood its ultimate value.

This concept should be very relevant to us, as we, too, should be happy beyond description. Every moment of life is an opportunity to acquire wealth of unimaginable proportions – far more than a million dollars an hour. One word of Torah learning is a jewel that will last forever. Putting on *tefillin* once is an eternal treasure far more valuable than anything found in this world.

When a person understands this, his perspective changes. He understands the great opportunity that Hashem has given us: a chance to acquire eternity. He will be filled with happiness and joy, and he will take on life with a passion — he loves life. (R' Ben Tzion Shafier)

The Jews Had the Upper Hand Obviously They Did What They Wanted

וַיַּכּוּ הַיְהוּדִים בְּכָל־אֹיְבֵיהֶם מַכַּת־חֶרֶב וְהֶרֶג וְאַבְדָן וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְשֹׂנְאֵיהֶם כִּרְצוֹנָם
"***And the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of sword, slaughtering and exterminating; and they did to their enemies as they wished.***" (Esther 9:5)

The words: **וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְשֹׂנְאֵיהֶם כִּרְצוֹנָם** - "*they did to their enemies as they wished*", seem superfluous; since the Jews had the upper hand, obviously they did as they wished?

A wealthy father who had an only son whom he loved very much instructed the executor over his estate: "When I die, give my son as much as you want from the estate and keep the rest for yourself." The greedy executor kept 95% for himself and gave 5% to the son. The son, very upset and unable to believe that this was really his father's intention, called the executor to a *Beis Din*. The rabbis listened carefully and ruled that the executor was to give 95% to the son and keep only 5% for himself, explaining to the executor that the father was indeed a very wise man. "His words were, 'Give my son as much as you want, and the rest keep for yourself.' Since you demonstrated that you want 95%, that must be the amount that the father wanted you to give his son."

With the seemingly superfluous words the *Megillah* is telling us that, **וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְשֹׂנְאֵיהֶם** they did to their enemies - **כִּרְצוֹנָם** - exactly as they, the enemies, wished to do to the Jewish people. (*Alshich, Manos HaLevi*)

"With Emunah, we can access a source of strength and courage that comes from knowing that Hashem is on our side." ~ Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe.

Why the Word וְאֶת So Many Times?

וְאֶת פַּרְשַׁנְדָּתָא וְאֶת דַּלְפוֹן וְאֶת אַסְפָּתָא - "They also killed Parshandosa, and Dalphon, and Asposa…" (Esther 9:7).



When the *Megillah* lists the ten sons of Haman, by each one the *pasuk* says **וְאֶת**. Why does the *Megillah* need to say **וְאֶת** every time?

I saw a *peshat* that the *gematriya* of the word **ארור** - "cursed", is 407. Similarly, the *gematriya* of the word **וְאֶת** is 407, therefore it's written **וְאֶת** by all of the Haman's ten sons to show that each one was **ארור**- "cursed".

Whilst we are talking about the numerous **וְאֶת**'s, I would like to mention another *he'orah* I heard. The aforementioned *pasuk* is one of the *pasukim* that everyone reads aloud. Many people when they read the *pasuk* focus on the names, and they say the **וְאֶת**, off by heart. Especially, as they are trying to say the ten names in one breath.

It's important to make sure that one actually reads the word **וְאֶת** from the *Megillah,* and doesn't say it by heart. This same warning applies to the *baal koreh*.

"Bitachon means living in the present moment with faith that the future will unfold according to Hashem's plan." ~ Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe.

Why The *Tzibbur* Reads the Aseres Bnei Haman Aloud

עֲשֶׂרֶת בְּנֵי הָמָן - "*The ten sons of Haman*" (Esther 9:10)



When the person reading the *Megillah* gets up to the names of Haman's ten sons who were hanged, he pauses while the *tzibbur* [congregation] reads them quickly before he reads them out loud. The Rogatchover Gaon gives a brilliant explanation for this custom. Even though most people don't read the *Megillah*, they fulfil their obligation to hear it through the concept of *shomei'ah k'oneh*, which means that somebody who listens to something is considered to have said it himself.

However, while this principle works for fulfilling our primary obligation to read the *Megillah*, in this case, there's a problem. The Gemara (*Megillah* 16b) teaches that there is an obligation to read the names of Haman's ten sons in one breath to commemorate the fact that they all took their last breaths together at the same time. Ideally, we would say all of their names simultaneously, but since that isn't humanly possible, we read them quickly in one breath.

The Rogatchover explains that although the rule of *shomei'ah k'oneh* makes it legally considered that the listener said something himself, it's not enough to make it viewed as if he said it in one breath, which leaves the listener no choice but to say the names of Haman's ten sons himself in one breath, as that requirement cannot be fulfilled by listening to somebody else do it.

Why Didn't the Yidden Take from the Spoils?

וּבַבִּזָּה לֹא שָׁלְחוּ אֶת־יָדָם - *"And on the spoils, they never set their hands."* (Esther 9:10)

After the death of Haman, Mordechai issued a new decree sealed with the king's ring giving the Jewish people permission to kill all their enemies and plunder their possessions (8:11).

Although they adhered to Mordechai's instructions in slaying their foes, the *Megillah* stresses that they did not take any of the spoils. Why not?

The *Ralbag* writes that Shaul was commanded by Shmuel to destroy the Amalekites and their possessions but erred by keeping some of their animals alive (Shmuel 1 15:9). The Jews in the *Megillah* rectified this sin when they were given explicit permission to take their enemies' belongings yet refrained from doing so.

Rav Aryeh Leib Tzintz offers an allusion to this explanation by noting that the first letters of the four words that record that they abstained from the spoils can be rearranged to spell Shaul.

The *Imrei Emes* adds that it took tremendous self-control for the impoverished Jews to restrain themselves and not take any of the booty. They had a legitimate opportunity to improve their financial circumstances, but they all passed it up for the sake of heaven.

Hashem rewarded them by giving the mitzvah of *matanos l'evyonim*, which obligates us to seek out the poor and give them gifts to make up for what they declined to take in the times of the *Megillah*.

"We must know that whichever way Hashem leads us is for our benefit. Sometimes, it's a place we wouldn't expect, but we must believe that Hashem has a plan, and knows what's best for us." ~ Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.

The Missing *Amah* Can Be Found in Haman's Huge and Inflated Head

וְאֶת עֲשֶׂרֶת בְּנֵי־הָמָן יִתְלוּ עַל־הָעֵץ - "*And let the ten sons of Haman be hanged on the gallows*." (Esther 9:13)



The *Shulchan Aruch* rules: "One should read the ten sons of Haman in one breath to show that they were all killed and hung together as one." The *Targum Sheini* on *Megillas* Esther describes in vivid detail how Haman and his ten sons were hanged. The height of the gallows was fifty *amos*. It was anchored three *amos* into the ground. Haman was hanged at the top, with his oldest son, Parshandosa hung right beneath him, leaving a space of one *amah* between them. Each son was hung in succession with an *amah* of space between one son and the next. Each son took up a space of three *amos*,with the youngest son, Vyzasa at the bottom, hanging three *amos* off the ground.

The problem is this: When we count the total amount of *amos* listed above, we end up with forty-nine *amos*. (3-anchor, 3-off the ground, 33-the height of eleven people, 10-ten spaces between Haman and his ten sons = 49) What happened to the missing *amah*?

R' Chaim Kanievsky *zt"l* quotes *Tosfos* (*Chagigah* 11a) that a typical man is the size of four *amos*. The reason why the ten sons of Haman are listed as being only three *amos* high in the *Targum* is because they were killed the day before they were hanged, and based on *pasukim* in the *Megillah* they were not just killed but decapitated. Therefore, when they were strung up on the gallows, it was without their heads!

However, Haman did not get off so easily and did not lose his head in any sort of decapitation. In fact, he was killed through hanging, with a rope around his neck, on the gallows that he prepared for Mordechai, his mortal enemy and would-be victim of his evil ploy! And it is there that we find the missing *amah*. It is none other than Haman's huge and inflated head. (R' Shmuel Kameny)

How Noach Found His Way into the Megillah

וְנוֹחַ בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר בּוֹ - "*And they rested on the fourteenth day*" (Esther 9:17)

How did the Noach manage to get himself included in the text of the *Megillah*?

R' Shlomah Alkabetz (*Manos HaLevi*) quotes a Medrash Pliah, that when Haman's wife Zeresh advised him to erect a pole 50 *amos* high on which to hang his enemy Mordechai, Haman searched everywhere and could not find such a large pole. His son Parshandosa, however, remembered that on one of his travels to the land of Turkey, he encountered the *teivah* [Ark] of Noach, which had landed on Har Ararat. He travelled there again and retrieved a long piece of wood, 50 *amos* in length, and brought it home for his father's use.

In the end, it was this very same pole that was used to hang Haman, and his ten sons. As a result, while following Hashem's command to build a *teivah* many years earlier, Noach played a large part in the Purim miracle as well. Shouldn't he then be mentioned?

"When things don't go as planned, it's Hashem teaching us the invaluable lesson that He's the one in charge, and the purpose of life is to recognize that Hashem runs the world." ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller.

Why is Mishloach Manos Mentioned Before Matonas L'evyonim

The Rambam in *Hilchos Megillah* (2:17) writes: "It is better to increase in gifts to the poor than in sending portions to one another." If so, why in the *pasuk* is *mishlo'ach manos* mentioned before *matonas l'evyonim*?

The *Apiriyon* (see also *Shu"t Tirosh Veyitzor* 172) answers, that when giving *tzedokah* to the poor, it is very important that one should be extremely careful not to embarrass the recipient. When Mordechai instituted Purim as a day of giving *matonas l'evyonim*, he was greatly concerned lest it become known as the poor man's day to receive handouts. Therefore, he also instituted the mitzvah of *mishlo'ach manos* so that an observer would be unable to distinguish between *matonas l'evyonim* and *mishlo'ach manos*. To conceal the *matonas l'evyonim*, the *Megillah* preceded it by writing about sending *mishlo'ach manos*.

With the aforementioned *chiddush* we can understand why no *berachah* is made over the mitzvah of *mishlo'ach manos.*

The *Rashba* (*Teshuvah* 18) writes that when one performs the mitzvah of *tzedokah,* he does not make a *berachah* - because possibly the person will refuse to accept. However, according to *Rema* (*Orach Chaim* 615:4), when one sends *mishlo'ach manos*, he fulfills the mitzvah even if the recipient refuses them.

Consequently, if a *berachah* would be made for *mishlo'ach manos* and not for *matonas l'evyonim*, it would be obvious which gift is which, thus defeating the entire purpose of instituting *mishlo'ach manos*.

"Bitachon is not the absence of fear, but the faith that allows us to face fear head-on." ~ Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman.

A Chiddush in Halachah from the Sefes Emes



Based on the *pasuk*: **וּמִשְׁלֹחַ מָנוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ** – "***Sending portions a man to his friend***", the ***Sefes Emes*** (*Megillah* 7b) writes, that one doesn't fulfill the mitzvah of *mishlo'ach manos* by sending *mishlo'ach manos* to his rav or rosh yeshiva because the mitzvah is to give, **אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ**, to a friend, to an equal, and it isn't proper to call your rebbe, "my friend."

However, the *Sefas Emes* accedes that if a rosh yeshiva gives him *mishlo'ach manos*, this means the rosh yeshiva considers him an equal. So now he can reciprocate and send back *mishlo'ach manos.*

The Villager Who Partied the Entire Month of Adar



In one village there was a man who indulged in eating and imbibing during the entire month of Adar. When asked why he did so, he explained: "Everyone celebrates Haman's downfall on Purim with food and drink, right?

"But just think. Haman decreed that all the Jews in the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of the empire be annihilated on one single day, the

14th of Adar. How on earth is it feasible to kill all the men, women and children spread out over such a vast empire in a single day?

"The truth of the matter is that Haman originally planned to designate the entire month of Adar for the destruction of the Jews. However, aware of their history, and the fact that Hashem intervenes to save the Jews, as He did in Mitzrayim, Haman reasoned that if Hashem saved them from his scheme, they would celebrate their salvation by establishing a Yom Tov such as Pesach. If the month of Adar were set aside for their distinction, and then they were miraculously saved, the Jews would of course turn the whole month into one of rejoicing.

"Haman was so wicked that he wished to prevent such a possibly. He therefore decreed only one day for the realization of his plot, so that in the event of a miracle, the Jews would have only that one day for their partying."

Here, the villager licked his lips, raised his eyebrows, and said "But I know what his evil plans really were, so I celebrate the entire month."

A Sharp Response from R' Yonason Eibshitz

לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתָם יְמֵי מִשְׁתֶּה וְשִׂמְחָה - *"They were to observe them as days of feasting and happiness."* (Esther 9:22)

The *Rema* rules (*Orach Chaim* 695:2) that most of the festive Purim meal must be eaten before sundown, while it is still Purim.

A priest once challenged **Rav Yonason Eibeshutz** to explain why the custom of so many Jewish families is to start the Purim meal just before sundown and to conduct the bulk of the meal during the night, after the holiday has already ended.

Rav Yonason sharply responded with a question of his own. The most popular holiday in the priest's religion falls on December 25th. If

the non-Jewish day begins at midnight, why is it so prevalent among his coreligionists to begin their festivities the night before?

Having turned the tables and with the priest now on the defensive, Rav Yonason proceeded to brilliantly answer both questions.

The holiday that the non-Jews are observing on December 25th is really the commemoration of the birth of a Jew. As such, it is only proper to celebrate it using the Jewish day and to begin at sundown on the evening before. Purim, on the other hand, commemorates the death of the non-Jewish Haman, and it is therefore fitting for our festive meal to be based on the non-Jewish day and continue into the night. (R' Ozer Alport)

Purim Seudah



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

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

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

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

The day after Purim, the worms vanished.

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

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

The *Maaseh Rokeiach* replied: "Everyone knows, **אין פורענות בא לעולם אלא בשביל ישראל** - *'when punishment comes to the world, it is because of Bnei Yisroel'*. So, we understood that our sins are the root of the infestation, and that the solution is when we do *teshuvah* and become more loyal to Hashem's commandments.

The day you chose for a fast day was Purim, the day Hashem commands us to celebrate. Since we knew that the primary solution to this agricultural problem was to be loyal to Hashem's decree, we had to celebrate Purim. That was the only way to bring about salvation."

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

Singing Songs at the Purim *Seudah*

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

To explain this, we tell a humorous story: There was a *moser* (someone who slandered the Jewish community to the king), and the Jewish community hated him. Young Jewish children would call him Haman when they saw him.

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

But the children didn't give up. They found another way to humiliate him. They called him בֶּן־הַמְדָתָא. He went to the king and complained that children were chanting after him, Ben Hamdasa. So, the king set another decree that it is forbidden to call someone Ben Hamdasa.

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

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

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

The *moser* complained to the king that children are singing when they see him. The king said, "I didn't let them call you Haman, Ben Hamdasa or Kadma v'Azla, but I can't stop them from singing."

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

The Choftez Chayim used to say that a transgression against a fellow man is worse than a transgression against God. You can always ask God for forgiveness. But if you have sinned against a fellow man, how will you ask for forgiveness if he has moved far away and you do not know his address? ~ R' Zelig Pliskin

Mishlo'ach Manos

וּמִשְׁלֹחַ מָנוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ - "*And of sending portions one to the other*." (Esther 9:22)

Why did Mordechai institute specifically the mitzvah of *mishlo'ach manos* as a way to celebrate the miracle of Purim?

The *Manas HaLevi* explains: Haman derided the Jewish people, by telling Achashveirosh that though they were only one nation among many nations, they were: **מְפֻזָּר וּמְפֹרָד בֵּין הָעַמִּים** – "in total disharmony among themselves". They lacked love and compassion for their fellow Jews.

To counteract this claim, Esther said to Mordechai: **לֵךְ כְּנוֹס אֶת־כָּל־ הַיְּהוּדִים** - "*Go gather together all the Jews*" (4:16), and stress to them the importance of unity and *ahavas* Yisroel.

Since the decree was caused by Haman's allegation that there was disunity among the Jewish people, Mordechai instituted that on Purim we should exchange edibles with friends to demonstrate our unity and love for one another.

A Segulah to Help Concentrate in Davening

אָמַר עִם־הַסֵּפֶר יָשׁוּב מַחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ הָרָעָה - "*Achashveirosh commanded that they should write in a book, that he had retracted from his bad thoughts*." (Esther 9:25)

It's brought down from the **Gaon**, that a *segulah* to be saved from bad thoughts during *davening*, is to look inside the *siddur* when *davening*.

The above is hinted at in the aforementioned *pasuk*: **אָמַר עִם־הַסֵּפֶר** – *daven* with a *siddur*, **יָשׁוּב מַחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ הָרָעָה** – then you will be saved from bad thoughts.

Why Is Purim Called "Purim" and Not "Pur"

Purim is called Purim because we were saved from the lots that Haman drew. The question is, however, why is Purim called Purim in the plural, surely Haman only drew lots once, so it should be called Pur, in the singular, and not Purim in the plural?

The *Maharal* (*Ohr Chodosh*) answers: Purim is split over two days, on the 14th of Adar the enemies were killed, and on the 15th of Adar the Yidden celebrate with *mishteh* and *simcha*. Even though these two days are the result of one lot, since they are two separate days with different activities, we refer to it as Purim in the plural.

* * *

R' Chaim Kanievsky in *Tama Dekra* answers based on the Medrash. The Medrash says: Haman originally drew lots to pick a suitable day of the week, and each day had a different reason why it wasn't suitable. Therefore, he decided to pick a month, and then found a suitable month. Since Haman drew two lots, one for weeks and then one for the month, we call Purim, Purim in the plural.

* * *

R' Yonsasan Eibshitz (*Yaares Devash, Derush* 3) answers: In order to be sure that the day determined by the 'lot' was indeed correct, Haman made two lots. In one box he placed 13 pieces of paper, each containing one of the Hebrew months of the year (the miracle of Purim took place in a leap year). In the other box he put 385 pieces of paper, each containing a number from 1 to 385, for all the days of the year. Haman thought as follows: If, for instance he pulled the month of Sivan (the third month) from the first box and the number 200 from the second box, then something would be wrong, since the 200th day of the year cannot occur in the third month.

Haman was pleased when he pulled Adar Sheini (the thirteenth month) from the first box, and the number 368 from the second, because this came out to be the 13th day of Adar Sheini, and

obviously the two lots supported each other. Hence, the Yom Tov is known as "Purim," because of the two lots.

Finally, here is an incredible *peshat* R' Shmuel Kameny sent me: Haman was quite adept with these lots. And what exactly were these lots? They were your basic six-sided dice. Each side has on it a number from one to six, and the number on the top together with the number opposite on the bottom, will always equal seven. If the six is the top number, the one is always opposite. If it's a three on top, the bottom will be a four.





Now, quotes the **Bobover Rebbe**, Haman took three small square stones and wrote a number from one to six on each side. He then threw them down and watched as they settled on three numbers: One, three, and three. Applying these numbers to the age-old Jewish practice of interchanging Hebrew letters for numbers, he transposed these numbers into the letters, *Aleph, Gimmel,* and *Gimmel*. These letters spelled out Agog, the Amaleki king who fought against the Jewish people Haman's great, great-grandfather. He knew that this was a good sign for him and in a manner in which only he understood, he deciphered the lots to determine the 14th day of Adar as his day of destruction.

What happened next is unusual. Rather than call it quits, Haman unthinkingly flipped over the stones and rested them in the position where the numbers that were formally on bottom, now sat on top. They were: six, four and four. By using the same system of changing the numbers for letters again, we now have the letters *Vov, Daled, Daled,* which when rearranged spells out the name of none other than Dovid HaMelech, the righteous king who led the Jewish people to victory in battle and brought them to the height of glory.

This is where the villain realizes that he has a problem. Throughout the entire story of Purim, the "Hand of Hashem" was evident in secret, yet miraculous ways. These are the words of the ***Kedushas Zion***, who quotes the ***Shevet Mussar***, who derives it from the Medrash. Haman understood that these lots were not insignificant little stones that had no meaning. He used them specifically because he realized that when cast for a specific purpose, they held valuable information.

Plans can be devised; fates can be realized, and history can be altered — all through the secrets that are concealed within these small dice. Hashem, therefore, used Haman's own devices to turn the tables on him.

By inexplicably turning over the dice — he writes that Haman just wanted to see what was on the other side of the dice! Didn't he know what he would find? — Haman caused his entire *mazul* to be overturned, and instead of reaping a glorious victory that would forever cement him in the Amaleki "Hall of Fame" as the one who finally destroyed the Jews, he came to the crashing realization that the G-d of Dovid HaMelech and the Jewish people would never allow for their destruction.

This turn of events — or shall we say "overturn" of events, is the true "*V'nahaphoch Hu*" in the story of Purim, and thus we celebrate this theme on this holiday.

The *pasuk* in *Megillas* Esther tells us: "Therefore, they called these days 'Purim' on account of the 'Pur' (Lot)." Based on this *pasuk*, it's very unclear. If the holiday is named for the central event of the lot that was cast by Haman, then why is it called "Purim," which is plural for lots?

Shouldn't it have better been named "Pur" in the singular? After all, weren't we always taught that Haman made a single lottery and decided on a date from that? – But now, we understand very clearly why this holiday is named the way it is.

Under the constant guidance of Hashem's All-Powerful Hand, the evil villain Haman inexplicably and without knowledge of why and what he was doing, basically "Shot himself in the foot". Instead of just throwing down his stones once and leaving them be, he turned over his dice – in effect, casting a second lot.

This second lot was the final one and it spelled out the eventual turn of events in a way that even Haman understood. Thus, the name Purim.

Achashveirosh Lost Popularity

וַיָּשֶׂם הַמֶּלֶךְ אחשׁרושׁ מַס עַל־הָאָרֶץ וְאִיֵּי הַיָּם ***"King Achashveirosh levied taxes upon the land."*** (Esther 10:1)



Throughout the *Megillah* Achashveirosh is spelled with either one or two "*vavs*." Why is the "*vav*" omitted entirely here?

The *Orah V'Simcha* explains: Public officials are highly lauded when they reduce taxes and criticized and scorned when they increase taxes. Not knowing Esther's nationality, the King proclaimed an amnesty (from taxes) for all the provinces in her honor when he married her (2:18), thus enhancing his popularity with all the people.

Now that he had levied taxes, he immediately lost some of their admiration and to indicate the decline in his popularity, his name is not spelled as fully as previously.

A Beautiful Peshat from the Meshech Chochmah

The *Megillah* records that Mordechai and Esther sent letters to all of the Jews to establish the observance of the days of Purim "on their proper dates." This expression is difficult to understand; when else should Purim be celebrated if not at the time that the miracle occurred?

The *Meshech Chochmah* explains that non-Jews begin their day in the morning and end it at night, while the Jewish day is the opposite, beginning and ending at sundown. Since the story of the *Megillah* was based on Haman's decree, it is reasonable to assume that he, being a non-Jew, issued an order that the Jews should be killed on the day of the 13th of Adar and the following night, what Jews would call the night of the 14th of Adar.

If so, Rav Meir Simcha suggests that the miracle of Purim occurred during the day of the 14th of Adar and the following night, what we call the night of the 15th of Adar, while in Shushan it was on the 15th of Adar and the following night, what we call the night of the 16th of Adar. Nevertheless, Mordechai and Esther emphasized that the Jews should observe Purim "on their proper dates," based on the Jewish calendar which begins and ends at sundown.

In light of this, he brilliantly explains the mistake of Haman. The Gemara teaches (*Megillah* 13b) that when Haman cast his lots, he was excited that they fell out in the month of Adar which was the month when Moshe died. The Gemara adds that Haman's mistake was that although Moshe died on the 7th of Adar, he was also born on the 7th of Adar because Hashem completes the years of the righteous, in which case it doesn't reflect negatively on the *mazal* of the Jews in the month of Adar. But if Haman knew when Moshe died, why didn't he also know when he was born?

The *Meshech Chochmah* explains that Moshe was born on the 7th of Adar, but on which part of the 7th of Adar was he born? Rashi writes (*Shemos* 2:2) that when Moshe was born he filled up the house with

light, so he must have been born at night when it would be noticed that he was filling up a dark house with light. When did he die? The *pasuk* (*Devorim* 32:48) says that he died in the middle of the day on the 7th of Adar.

Haman mistakenly thought like a non-Jew that the day starts in the morning and ends at night, in which case Moshe didn't die on the same day that he was born. Haman thought that Moshe was born on the 6th of Adar and died on the 7th of Adar, in which case the month of Adar had a bad *mazal* for the Jews. In reality, the Jewish day begins and ends at sunset, in which case Moshe was born and died on the 7th of Adar, and the *mazal* of Adar was in fact good for the Jews.

The Message of Techeiles



After we finished reading the *Megillah* we sing a song called *Shoshanas Yaakov*, which begins by expressing the tremendous joy the Jewish people felt when they saw Mordechai wearing turquoise garments. Although these words are well known, they are difficult to understand. Why was the colour of Mordechai's clothing a cause for *simcha*?

Rav Chaim Zvi Senter points out that the Torah (*Bamidbar* 15:38) instructs us to place *techeiles* threads on our *tzitzis*. The Gemara (*Menachos* 43b) explains that when a person sees the turquoise threads, they should remind him of his spiritual obligations, for *techeiles* is similar in colour to the sea, which in turn resembles the appearance of the sky, which is comparable to Hashem's Kisay HaKovad [Throne of Glory].

Why did Hashem command us to apply a dye that is so many steps removed from its ultimate purpose instead of requiring the use of a different colour that is directly like the Kisay HaKovad?

Rav Senter suggests that the indirect chain is intended to teach us that even when Hashem's Providence is not clearly visible, it is nevertheless present, even though the passage of a lengthy period of time is sometimes necessary for it to become revealed.

As the *Megillah* unfolds, the veil of confusion is slowly lifted, and by the end, it has become clear that the entire series of events was Divinely orchestrated. Accordingly, the **תְּכֵלֶת** that Mordechai wore symbolized the awareness of Hashem's involvement and protection, even when it seems hidden, and it was this appreciation of Hashem's master plan that generated such happiness and celebration.

Like the Jews in Shushan, we also experience moments of doubt in our lives and dark periods that can feel insurmountable. At such times, it behooves us to remember the message of the *techeiles*, that even when there is no salvation in sight, Hashem is hiding just beyond the curtain, guiding every second of our lives with precision.

From Up High Everything Looks Different

אָרוּר הָמָן אֲשֶׁר בִּקֵּשׁ לְאַבְּדִי. בָּרוּךְ מָרְדְּכַי הַיְּהוּדִי. אֲרוּרָה זֶרֶשׁ אֵשֶׁת מַפְחִידִי. בְּרוּכָה אֶסְתֵּר בַּעֲדִי. -*"Cursed be Haman who sought to destroy me, blessed be Mordechai the Jew. Cursed be Zeresh the wife of my terrorizer, bless be Esther who shielded me."* (Shoshanas Yaakov).

After we finish reading the *Megillah*, we sing the *piyut* known as **שׁוֹשַׁנַּת יַעֲקֹב** in which we proclaim that Haman and his wife Zeresh are cursed, while Mordechai and Esther are blessed. At that point, we have already finished reading the *Megillah*, and it is quite clear that Mordechai and Esther had much happier endings than Haman and Zeresh, so why is it necessary to reiterate this self-evident point, and what lesson is it coming to teach us?

The Vilna Gaon explains that the term: בָּרוּךְ – "blessed", refers to a person who may have endured terrible suffering, but eventually comes out happy. On the other hand, somebody who is: אָרוּר - "cursed" might enjoy lengthy periods of great success and joy, but ultimately his end will be bitter.

The *Lekach Tov* explains that in the *Megillah*, Mordechai experienced tremendous anguish: He was exiled from Israel, Esther was forcibly taken away from him and given to Achashveirosh, and he was challenged and threatened by Haman. However, in the end, Mordechai ultimately enjoyed success, as he wore royal clothing, received Haman's estate, and his name and reputation were respected throughout the land.

Haman, on the other hand, initially achieved unparalleled bounty and blessing. He had wealth, honor, children, and power. As a result of his anger at one individual, he had the ability to issue a decree to destroy an entire nation. However, although Haman seemingly had it all, his end was one of disgrace and humiliation, as everything he knew and had was reversed in a matter of hours.

This is the lesson of the *Megillah*. Many times in life, we see people around us who seem to have it all, yet no matter how hard we try to perform Hashem's will, nothing ever seems to go our way.

Since *Chazal* would not have included *Megillas* Esther in Tanach unless it had a relevant message for every generation, it is insufficient for us to view it as a one-time historical event, for its message is eternal and relevant to each of us. We therefore reiterate in *Shoshanas Yaakov* the triumph of Mordechai and Esther over Haman and Zeresh to help us internalize the recognition that if we follow in the spiritual paths of Mordechai and Esther, the time will ultimately come when we will merit following in the footsteps of their success and happiness as well, and indeed, many have the custom to add: **אֲרוּרִים כָּל הָרְשָׁעִים. בְּרוּכִים כָּל הַצַּדִּיקִים.** – "*Blessed are all the righteous, and cursed are all the wicked*".

As we learn from the *Megillah*, there is often much more going on beneath the surface than meets the eye. Although Hashem seems even more hidden today than in Mordechai and Esther's era of *hester ponim*, that just means that our job is that much harder to look behind the veil and discover the hidden miracles that are still taking place for anybody who wants to find them.



Rav Gamliel Rabinovitch, to whom people turn for *berachos* and advice with all types of problems once related that he once took a trip to some *kevorim* in the North of Eretz Yisroel. Along the way, he noticed a tall office building that had just been built and was advertising for tenants. There was a large banner near the top of the building that said: **מלמעלה הכל נראה אחרת** – "***From up high, everything looks different***". He pulled over and took a picture of the sign, and when he returned home, he had it blown up and taped to the inside of one of his closet doors.

He explained that often, when people open up and share their pain, they express it in a way that seems to question Hashem's treatment of them. When that happens, he opens the door and shows them the sign with the message: **מלמעלה הכל נראה אחרת** – From up High with a capital H, there is another perspective, and the situation may appear quite different.

Even in the *Megillah* itself, where Hashem's name is not mentioned a single time and He appears to have abandoned us, He is still there protecting us through Mordechai and Esther. (R' Ozer Alport)







The Weekly Vort - Pyjama Costume



The fragrant aroma of hamantashen wafted through the relatively small Yerushalayim apartment of the Warshavski family. Zevulun Warshavski, who had been living with his son Menachem's family for the past 7 years, enjoyed the Purim spirit, which dispelled, at least temporarily, the cobwebs of old age and his tedious daily routine.

Zevulun greatly admired his son who learned in kollel, lived with his family of seven children in a small apartment on a small income, and was still genuinely happy to take in his aged father.

The Warshavski children loved their grandfather, and their exemplary *middos* made life in their cramped quarters pleasant for everyone.

As Zevulun sat in his room, he saw Srulik, his oldest grandson, walk through the front door exuberantly. Returning from yeshiva, he first came over to speak with his grandfather. He then climbed up to their tiny attic to search for a costume. Though he was too old for dressing up on Purim, he needed a costume to go around collecting money on Purim for his yeshiva's *chosson* fund.

He opened the box which he thought contained the costumes and pulled out a pair of strange pyjamas. They were very old, with blue and white stripes. The white areas were filled with words in ink.

As soon as Zevulun's eye caught sight of the pyjama costume which Srulik brought down, he let out a piercing scream, "Don't touch them! Leave those pyjamas alone!"

Startled, the children drew back. They had never seen their grandfather so angry. His eyes were blazing and his whole body was trembling.

Mrs. Warshavski gently told Zevulun that Srulik did not mean to upset him; he must have looked in the wrong box. Zevulun, now calm, regretted having frightened his grandchildren. He explained that the pyjamas were his only reminder from his past.

Mrs. Warshavski suggested that he share with them the story of his life, from back then. - They all gathered around. Zevulun began his tale: I was born 81 years ago in Poland. As a child, I attended the local cheder. I was a wild boy. Together with my good friend, Motke Blumenthal, I'd get into all sorts of trouble. When we grew a little older, Motke and I became caught up in the alien winds that blew so many youths away from the path of Torah. We left yeshiva and believed in the Socialist ideal with all our hearts.

After a year and a half of training in the HaPoel movement, we moved to Palestine in 1938. Motke and I went together to one of the kibbutzim. We soon realized that Socialism was a fundamentally flawed system and joined the Irgun HaTzeva'I HaLeumi, known as Etzel. We fought actively against the British who ruled Palestine at the time, participating in several bombings of British strongholds.

We continued to acquire weapons. The money for these purchases was funnelled secretly to us through various Etzel channels. And then, one sale went wrong. I received a coded message that I was to bring money to a late-night meeting for the purchase of 100 belts of bullets for an automatic weapon.

Motke and I came to the meeting with some baby carriages for carting away our purchase. We waited tensely at 2 am on a dark and deserted street. Motke suddenly told me that he was afraid this may be a trap, that he had a bad feeling about it. He wanted to leave. I called him a coward and insisted on staying. He conceded, but suggested that we hide the money, explaining, "If this is a legitimate deal, we can simply get the money out of the hiding place. If it's a trap, at least we'll have the money waiting when we get out of jail." It sounded logical, so we hid the money in an abandoned basement,

in an empty box, hidden on a shelf behind jars of old nails and screws, and then returned to wait for our rendezvous.

It was not long before Motke's fears were realized. A sudden glare of light in our eyes blinded us, as someone shouted, "Hands up!"

We had fallen into a trap, surrounded by British soldiers. They sentenced us to ten years in the Akko Prison, the most secure prison in the country. Its walls were made of stones a meter thick and on one side lay the sea. There was no escape.

Zevulun continued his tale: We felt broken-hearted and depressed. But a few days later we heard that *Etzel* was planning a daring jailbreak. Over the next week, small packages of explosives were smuggled into that "secure" prison. All 40 members of our group in the Akko jail – some for long prison terms and some sentenced to death – were informed of the date of the planned attack – Sunday, 14 Iyar. We were given civilian clothing so that we could remove our striped prison "pyjamas" once we escaped.

The night before the big day, we were so nervous that it was impossible to sleep. We each signed each other's prison pyjamas. On mine, Motke wrote, "*To my dear Zevulun Warshavski, I will never forget you, Mordechai Blumenthal.*" I wrote something similar on his.

Srulik interrupted his grandfather's story to point out these very words written in faded ink on the prison pyjamas. - His grandfather continued: *Etzel* forces arrived the next day. They set off explosives in the prison wall, while we prisoners on the inside used explosives to blow open the prison gates. Outside the prison, we ran right into British military forces.

In the ensuing battle, five *Etzel* members were killed and seven more injured. Motke was among the wounded; a bullet had shattered his left kneecap. We ran several kilometres towards the highway, with a comrade and me dragging Motke along. We soon realized that at

that rate our pursuers would capture us. Motke begged us to leave him and run for our lives.

With no choice, we knocked on the door of a Jewish home and they took in Motke. I made it to the agreed upon meeting place and was secretly transported to Haifa.

Late that night, I wandered the streets of Haifa, looking for a place to rest. I went to a building that was lit up – it was a yeshiva. I heard the long forgotten, but still familiar, sounds of Torah study. The students greeted me warmly but started laughing. I suddenly realized that I was still wearing my prison pyjamas! I had forgotten to change and was wandering around with "Escaped Convict!" written all over me.

It was a miracle that no British soldier saw me. They lent me clothes, and I stayed there for quite a while. It was there that I found myself returning to my Jewish roots, until I became a full-fledged *baal teshuvah*.

A year later when the British left Palestine, I tried to find Motke, but could not. Until today I have no idea whether he lived or died. I paid a visit to the abandoned basement, but the money was gone.

When Zevulun concluded his tale, Srulik asked permission to use the pyjamas for his Purim costume. He could sell his grandfather's story to the highest bidder, and thus raise plenty of money for tzedakah.

Zevulun was hesitant; the pyjamas were very sentimental. But he finally relented, saying, "Well, if it's for the sake of a mitzvah, I'll agree."

Indeed, Srulik's pyjama costume attracted attention wherever he went, and he took advantage to charge a "fee" – for tzedakah – for telling the spellbinding tale behind the costume.

Purim afternoon, a friend dragged Srulik along to the hospital to cheer up the patients. Srulik protested, stating that sick people would not donate, and he could not afford to "waste time" from his

collections. His friend retorted, "Money isn't everything in life. Come and do a *mitzvah*, plain and simple!"

Srulik allowed himself to be persuaded. They brought *mishloach manos* and a merry spirit to the patients' rooms. Srulik told them cheerfully, "You see, I'm also wearing pyjamas."

They passed the room of an elderly patient in a private room, whose Filipino attendant sat in the doorway. The attendant told them he was sleeping, so they turned to leave.

Suddenly, the elderly man excitedly called to them, "Mr. Pyjamas! Come here, quick!"

When they entered the room, Srulik whispered to his friend that this looked like a wealthy man – private attendant, private room... With a sense of urgency, the elderly man ordered them, "Tell me what you're wearing."

Srulik politely replied, "I've sold the story of this costume for a nice sum to anyone who's willing to give to our tzedakah fund..."

The patient grew angry, "Okay, okay, I'll give 100 shekels. Just tell me where you got those pyjamas."

Srulik relayed that they had belonged to his grandfather.

"What's his name?" the old man demanded.

"Zevulun," replied Srulik.

The old man shrieked, "Zevulun?! Could it be Zevulun Warshavski?"

Srulik was astonished, as he confirmed that yes, his grandfather was still alive and well.

The patient leaned over and read the words scribbled on the pyjama costume. "I recognize my writing. Here's my name – Motke Blumenthal."

Now it was Srulik's turn to shout, "You're Motke Blumenthal?! My grandfather looked all over for you!"

Motke told him that *he* was the one who had been searching for Zevulun for over 50 years. "Is your grandfather religious like you?" he asked. "Yes, very religious," replied Srulik.

Motke now understood why he never located him – it never occurred to him to look for Zevulun in the religious sectors.

Srulik then told Motke the tale his grandfather had told them about the pyjama costume. Motke recounted what had happened to him: "Your grandfather left me that day injured in a house in Akko. The family made every effort to help me. After several weeks, gangrene set in, and my foot had to be amputated."

The reunion of the two old friends took place the next day amid a sea of tears. Then Motke related how he had achieved material success despite his crippled leg, amassing a great deal of wealth and property. But he had never married and was alone.

Zevulun said he had also been successful, but not financially. He had returned to the religion of their youth. He married and had one son, who had given him a great deal of nachas. But money did not play a major role in their lives. They lived in a cramped apartment.

Motke noted it was time they moved to a bigger place. Zevulun thought it was a good idea, but how? There was not a penny to spare. Motke told him that he had gone back to take the money they had hidden in the abandoned basement and found it all intact. He sent it to Switzerland with a friend and deposited it into a bank account there. Later, he invested the money, and there was now $200,000 waiting for Zevulun in the Swiss bank, for Motke had intended to save it for him.

Zevulun was thunderstruck, "But why did you do it, Motke?"

Motke replied, "I believed that we would meet again. I've known you for a long time, Zevulun. You never had two cents to rub together. I imagined that would always be the case."

The reunion of the two old friends changed Zevulun's life. He regained Motke as a companion, and the entire Warshavski family celebrated the following Purim in a much larger, more comfortable apartment.

All because Srulik looked in the "wrong" box for his costume, and through the tradition of Purim costumes, brought joy to patients in the hospital. (HolidayTales for the Soul)

Eating Seeds



The Rema 695:2 writes that "it is customary to eat seeds on Purim to commemorate that miracle that occurred to Daniel."

Nevuchadnetzar, the king of Bavel, ordered Daniel to serve in his palace. Daniel resolved in his heart not to eat from the king's food, and requested that he be given only seeds and water. The officers were concerned that if Daniel only ate seeds his health would deteriorate. Yet, a miracle occurred and after ten days Daniel's appearance was healthier than the other officers. (Daniel 1:1)

We remember Daniel as he is mentioned in the Megillah as the messenger of Esther, under the name Hasach. (Levush 695:2 (based on the Gemarah in Megillah 15a)

Furthermore, the Mishna Berura 695:12 (based on Gemarah Megillah 13a) points out that Esther followed the example of Daniel and ate only seeds while in the palace of Achashveirosh.

In order to commemorate the commitment of Daniel and Esther not to eat non-Jewish foods, and the miracle that they merited, we eat seeds on Purim as well.

Many people follow this custom by filling their hamantachin with poppy seeds. Some *poskim* write that all vegetables are included in this custom, not only seeds.

Once, on Purim, a tipsy bachur said to the Chofetz Chaim that he wanted to be with him in Gan Eden. The Chofetz Chaim thought for a moment and said, "If you undertake never to speak or listen to lashon hara, you will be with me in Gan Eden."

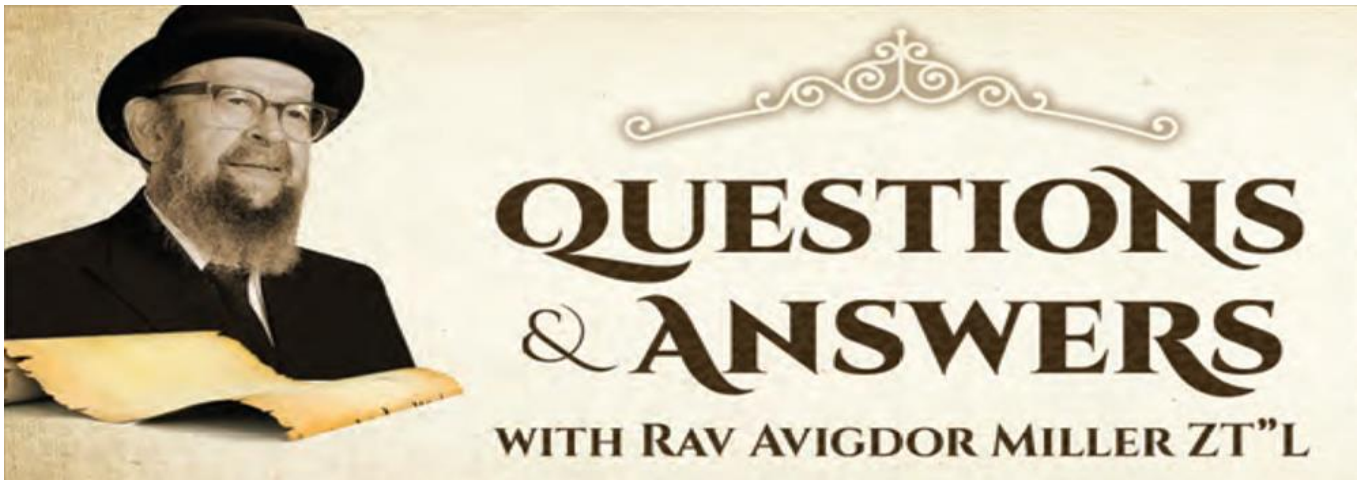
The boy didn't respond. The Chofetz Chaim turned to the other bachurim present, "Take him away from me. He had Gan Eden in his hands and didn't take advantage of it."

Splendid Quote by Rabbi Menachem Lomner

"Do What's Right – Even If It's Not Popular."

The Megillah attests that Mordechai was accepted by most of his brothers (Esther 10:3). This means that there were those who felt he should not be in the palace but lead the Jews by teaching Torah.

On the other hand, Mordechai did what he felt was right. He was willing to suffer ridicule, all for the purpose of doing the right thing. We can learn from Mordechai. It takes courage to act against popular opinion, but it is doable with Hashem's Help.





How are we really supposed to see the neis of Purim if it was a neis nistar that was hidden in the natural events?

The answer is that sometimes a thing can be so startling that you just can't hide it. The American government is carrying out nuclear tests – nuclear explosions – and they're trying to hide it, but the scientists who have the proper instruments know what's going on, and they can tell you the details where it's going on and when. - And your mind is your instrument. With a little bit of thought, you see the Hand of Hashem.

You can't hide certain things. And when Haman, who was the king's favorite, is now not only not a favorite, but he's wiped out – and not only that, but the one who took his place was the least likely person, so even the biggest dumbbell could guess Who is to blame for all this. **יוֹשֵׁב בַּשָּׁמַיִם יִשְׂחָק** – "The One who dwells in Heaven is laughing." Hashem was playing the joke, and everybody could see it.

And therefore **רָאוּ כָּל אַפְסֵי אָרֶץ אֵת יְשׁוּעַת אֱלֹקֵינוּ**. – "All the ends of the world saw that it was a salvation from Hashem." - It was very clear to everyone. Only that if you don't put your mind to it, you don't see anything and you'll remain the same person you were last Purim, and the year before that, and the year before that. But the wise

person will use his Purim to see how Hashem is doing everything for the Am Yisroel, and he'll fall in love with Hashem. Because the person who is the same person on the day after Purim as he was the day before Purim, has wasted a tremendous opportunity.



How do I utilize drinking עד דלא ידע in order to serve Hashem?

עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי. I'll tell you one peirush. It means **עד ולא עד בכלל**. You drink up to the point of losing your da'as. You drink just enough. But not enough to lose your da'as. On Purim you have to have da'as. You have to have more da'as on Purim, not less. Now, a little bit of da'as can be gained by drinking. A little bit. Oh yes. It's like an airplane that needs high octane gas to get up in the air. A little bit of alcohol helps your spirit go higher. Yes, a little bit of mashkeh. But too much alcohol will sink you. And therefore, there's no use in falling asleep in the middle of Purim like a drunken goy and then they have to call Hatzalah. On Purim you should be gaining da'as. If you utilize the day properly, it'll be a day of da'as. And you won't be gaining any da'as lying on the floor waiting for Hatzalah to come.

R' Nachman's Old Tallis

Rabbi Nachman once gave his old tallis to one of his close students. "Show this tallis a lot of respect," he said. "For as many threads as there are in this cloth, that is how many tears I shed in order to be able to understand what a tallis truly means." ~ Sichos HaRan.



וּבְהַגִּיעַ תֹּר נַעֲרָה וְנַעֲרָה לָבוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ

'***And when each maiden's turn arrived to go to King Achasverosh***.' (2:12)

The Vilna Gaon says that the trop- **טעמי המקרא** for the words נַעֲרָה וְנַעֲרָה (each maiden) is "**קדמא ואזלא**".

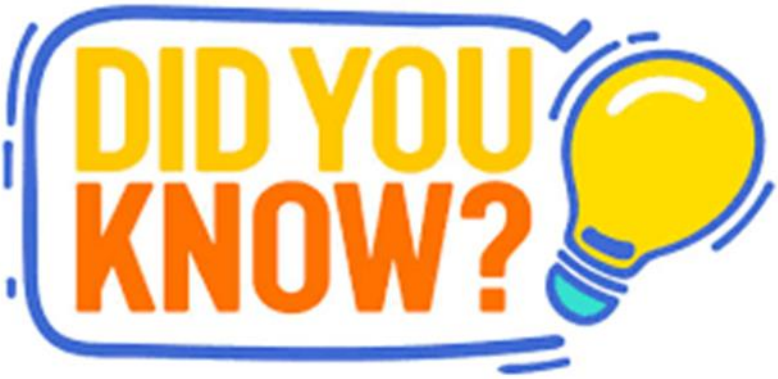
In a later pasuk (2:15) it says וּבְהַגִּיעַ תֹּר־אֶסְתֵּר בַּת־אֲבִיחַיִל דֹּד מָרְדֳּכַי אֲשֶׁר לָקַח־לוֹ לְבַת לָבוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ – '***Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Avichail, Mordecai's uncle, who had taken her for a daughter, came to go in to the king***.' - The trop here is מֻנַּח four times in succession.

The Vilna Gaon explains that all the other maidens were - **קדמא ואזלא** – they hurried to ready themselves and rushed to be the first to be accepted as the new queen. None of them were successful, and they were all sent home.

Esther Hamalkah on the other hand, was completely מֻנַּח, relaxed and calm about the matter. "If it's meant to be, it will be, and if not, so be it. It's all in the control of The Ribboino Shel Olam." – And she was the one who became the queen.

Stay calm!, relax!, chill!, let go! – Worrying about things won't help you. Put your faith in Hashem – that will certainly help.

Darwin was able to formulate his theory of evolution only because he had never seen a real human being. Thus, he could view men as no more than smarter monkeys. "Had he seen my rebbe, Reb Yisrael Salanter, who developed his character traits to a degree of perfection that fully expressed the essence of the Divine Image, he never could have entertained the possibility that human beings evolved from monkeys. ~ The Alter of Kelm



The Gemara in Megilla (16a) says that when Haman came to parade Mordechai on the horse, as the king decreed, Mordechai was teaching his students the laws of kamitza for the mincha offering.

When Haman asked what they were learning, they said, "When the Bais HaMikdash will be rebuilt, one who wishes to bring a korban will have to bring flour along with it to atone."

Haman ruefully replied, "Your fistful of flour has pushed away my 10,000 talents of silver."

By studying the laws of the Bais HaMikdash even when it wasn't extant, Mordechai hastened the salvation of Purim and the rebuilding of the Bais HaMikdash in their times.

The Weekly Vort

◆ **Save Your Soul**

When Esther hesitated to plead for the Jews before Achashveirosh, for she feared the king's wrath, Mordechai told her, **אל תדמי בנפשך**, *Do not imagine [Literally: form an idea in your soul]*, i.e. Mordechai said: "You may, by some remote twist of fate, manage to save your body, but how will you save your soul [if you forfeit this opportunity to save your fellow Jews]? (M'nos HaLevi)

◆ **Just For This Moment!**

Esther had wanted to delay going to the King. Mordechai therefore said, **ומי יודע אם לעת כזאת הגעת למלכות**, *And who knows whether it was just for such a time as this that you attained the royal position!* He said, "This opportunity cannot be delayed. Do not delude yourself

into thinking you can achieve this salvation in a few days, for you have been elevated to the throne by Hashem *just for this very moment*." (HaMalbim)

◆ **Coincidental?**

After Haman was degraded, he told his wife **אשר קרהו**, *everything that had happened*. Haman was still not dissuaded from seeking revenge against Mordechai. The word **קרהו**, 'happened', implies a coincidental happening. This is how Haman viewed the situation: "It was just a matter of bad luck in my going to the King to hang Mordechai on the day the King decided to repay Mordechai a debt of gratitude. Now that the debt has been paid, the King will surely listen to my advice and hang Mordechai." (HaMalbim)

◆ **No Spoils**

ובבזה לא שלחו את ידם – *But they did not lay their hand on the spoils* (Esther 9:10). By not enjoying the spoils of the Amalekim, the Jews were rectifying the tragic error of Shaul who spared some of Amalek's cattle.

Shaul's rationalization – that the physical possessions of Amalek could be elevated by designating them as a *korban* – was equally tempting to the Jewish people of Mordechai's time. Yet, unlike their royal ancestor, Shaul, they realized that Amalek is different from other nations and cannot be welcomed into the fold.

Taking possession of their property, no matter how sacred their motives, would only serve to honour the memory of the one nation that deserves no memorial. (Sfas Emes)

"The challenge is not to have faith when miracles happen – The challenge is to find the miraculous in the everyday." ~ Rebbe Nachman of Breslov.

Matanos La'evyonim

A poor man came to the home of **R' Boruch Ber Leibowitz**, Rosh Yeshiva of Kaminetz, asking for a donation. R' Boruch Ber only had a small amount, which he gave with his apologies for giving such a small sum.

R' Boruch Ber asked the man if he was going home then, to which the poor man responded, "Yes, this is my last stop today."

R' Boruch Ber, together with two of his students, insisted on accompanying the man home. Along the way, R' Boruch Ber showered him with encouragement and kind words. The man was delighted with this honor.

Later, when his students asked why he had shown the man such honor, R' Boruch Ber replied, "Who can understand the depths of a poor man's shame when he comes to ask for a donation? He loses part of his health and tranquility when he stretches out his hand. Yet when he receives a nice donation, he receives aid to sustain his family, *and* he feels encouraged by the compassion shown to him – thus the health he lost returns to him.

I did not have much money to give him, and if I don't have, I'm not obligated to give. But I was still obligated to replace the health he lost when he approached me for a donation, because I had a part in his shame. I therefore decided to provide him with honor and encouragement since these, too, would restore his health." (Glimpses of Greatness)

"Hashem created two doors, one in heaven and one in the heart of man. - When one opens his heart to the needs of his fellow man, then the corresponding door in heaven is opened to hear his cry." ~ The Vilna Gaon.

The Symbolism of Haman's Offer of Silver Shekels – Rabbi Yissacher Frand

The Megillah [Esther 3:9] states that Haman offered to increase the King's coffers by 10,000 kikar silver in exchange for the right to get rid of the Jews. (Tosfos in Tractate Megillah [16a] indicates that this was a half Shekel for every Jewish person.)

The simple analysis of Haman's offer is that Haman was afraid that Achashverosh would object to the loss of Jewish tax revenue if he killed them all. To pre-empt that financial objection, Haman was ready to sweeten the deal for the King by making an offer of ten thousand kikar silver.

On the metaphysical level, however, the Rabbis tell us that Haman was trying to negate the merit of the Jews annual half Shekel contribution to the Temple's upkeep. The Gemara [Megilla 13b] says that since HaShem [G-d] knew that Haman would offer Shekels to Achashverosh to 'purchase' the right to destroy the Jews, HaShem pre-empted Haman's contribution through the half- shekel. The merit of the Jews contributing the annual half-shekel protected them (in the future) against Haman's evil designs.

I once heard an interpretation of this Gemarah in the name of the **Yismach Yisrael**. Haman's potential for destroying the Jewish people was hinted at in his own description of the nation: **עַם־אֶחָד מְפֻזָּר וּמְפֹרָד** -"*There is a people that is dispersed and divided...*" [Esther 3:8]. It is only because there is division and unjustified hatred within the Jewish nation that their enemies have the ability to harm them.

When the Jews are divided, they represent only individuals -- not a Klal [a communal entity]. When that happens, we have lost our strength.

Haman's whole plot was based on the division of the nation. That is why G-d insisted that each Jew should give exactly one-half shekel.

The symbolism of the half shekel is that each Jew is only a fraction of the entity. He needs to combine with his fellow Jew to make a significant contribution.

If we think we can be 'an entire shekel unto ourselves', that is not going to work. Our strength is through the recognition that we need each other, and the realization that we need to set aside our petty differences to come together to provide a complete shekel.

This is the strength that ultimately saved the Jewish people. Because of the terrible calamity that was hanging over them as a result of Haman's decree, they decided to put away those 'dispersions and divisions in the nation' and came together as a unit and as a whole.

Smelly Haman

Chazal point to the Pasuk in Ki Sisa, which lists 'Mar-D'ror' at the head of the list of spices, and which Unklus amazingly translates as 'Mira-Dachya' (which contains all the letters of 'Mordechai'). This they explain, is where Mordechai is hinted in the Torah.

Haman too, has the distinction of being mentioned in the Torah - in the Pasuk in Bereishis (3:11) "ha'min ha'Eitz", which can also be read as 'Haman ha'Eitz', an obvious allusion to Haman's happy ending, for us anyway.

The Torah Temimah explains the connection between the episode of Haman and the Pasuk in Bereishis according to the opinion of those in Megilah (12a), who hold that Yisrael was guilty at that time, for participating in the grand party of Achashverosh.

The difficulty with this lies in the fact that eating with gentiles, even where the food is not kasher, is not subject to the death-penalty. So why does the Gemara attribute their sentence of extermination to this sin?

That is why the Gemara (in Chulin 139b) cites the Pasuk in Bereishis, to cite a precedent where someone (by the name of Adam) was sentenced to death for eating something that he should not have. This may not fully answer the question, but it does take the sting out of it.

R. Yosef Chayim however, finds Haman hinted in the very same set of spices as the one in which Mordechai is hinted - in the evil-smelling "Chelb'nah", one of the components, of the spices (see Parshas Ketores, in the Korbanos that we read each morning, before Pesukei de'Zimrah).

Because the numerical value of "Chelb'nah" is the equivalent of 'Haman' (particularly relevant after his beloved daughter had poured something rather obnoxious over his head, just before he was hauled off to the second party with the King and Queen).



Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface By: R' Shmuel Winzelberg

Write this as a remembrance in the Book (Shemos 17:14) **כְּתֹ֨ב זֹ֤את זִכָּרוֹן֙ בַּסֵּ֔פֶר**

Rav Tzvi Hersh Farber writes in his Sefer Shvil HaTzvi that the word **זאת** , this, has the Gematria, numerical value, of 408, the total of the three words: **צום, קול, ממון** (fast, voice, and money), each of which has the Gematria of 136. Thus, 3 x 136 = 408.

This hints to the three items linked to Purim [as Haman was a descendent of Amaleik, which is why we read the Parshah of Amaleik

on Purim (Shemos 17:8-16). The Shabbos before Purim we read Parashas Zachor, "Remember what Amaleik did to you"].

צום – This hints to the Fast of Esther and Mordechai which brought about the downfall of Haman, and the establishing of the holiday of Purim.

קול – This hints to the central Mitzvah of Purim: Reading the Megilah at night and day.

ממון – This hints to the two Mitzvos that are performed on Purim: sending food gifts and gifts to the poor. (Parperaos LaTorah)



L'Maaseh

Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein related a great story, which took place on Purim about ten years ago:

During Purim in Bnei Brak, a taxi driver noticed a young man standing with a few small children, and he was flagging down one taxi after another. He saw how each taxi stopped by him, and within a few seconds, he sped away.

This particular taxi driver was curious to see why no taxi driver wanted to take this Yid anywhere. He pulled up to the young man and asked what it was that he wanted.

The young man said, "I only have forty Shekel, and I need to get to a hospital in Tel Aviv for an important appointment. I need a taxi to wait for me, and then bring me back to Bnei Brak."

Now the taxi driver understood why no one was willing to fulfil such a request. He thought to himself, "It is true that today is Purim, and traffic is terrible everywhere. Besides, how can one go to Tel Aviv and back, and wait, for only forty Shekel?! You will lose a lot of money from many other potential jobs. Purim is a busy day for a taxi driver!"

The taxi driver later said over: My heart felt bad for this poor Yid who was in desperate need of help. I told him, "I am happy to take you, and I am not willing to charge you a Shekel. The entire trip, including the wait, will be free."

I put my full Bitachon in Hashem that I would not lose out any of my Parnasah because of this act. I felt like I wanted to jump on the opportunity to fulfill this Mitzvah.

We drove to Tel Aviv, and I waited outside the hospital. After a short while, he came back to the car, and we were on our way back to Bnei Brak.

As I was driving with this young man and his children in the back, I noticed a fellow outside who was waving his hand, trying to flag me down. Since I had an open seat in the front, I stopped for him. I asked him, "Where do you need to go?" - He responded, "To Petach Tikvah."

I said, "Sure thing, come on in." I figured that I would stop in Bnei Brak, and then continue on to Petach Tikvah.

As we were driving, the Petach Tikvah fellow turned to me, and in a curious whisper, he asked, "Who is this family in the back?"

I quietly answered him, and I told him what I had seen and done. The Petach Tikvah man listened and remained silent for a few moments. Then he turned his head towards the back of the car and said, "Reb Yid, I assume that if all you have is forty Shekel in your wallet, then you did not have any money to buy Mishloach Manos to give out. Am I correct?" - The young man nodded that that assessment was true.

"Here," he said, and he pulled out 1,000 Shekel, and handed it to the young man. "This is for you to buy things to be able to give Mishloach Manos with dignity."

The Petach Tikvah man continued, "Now that I think about it, you probably don't have the money to buy wine and Matzah for Pesach, so here is another 2,000 Shekel for your Pesach expenses."

The young man was almost crying from the tremendous Chesed that was just done for him. He thanked this unknown man and told him how much it meant to him, and that he brought tremendous Simchah to his family!

They reached Bnei Brak, and the young man and his children got out, and the taxi continued on to Petach Tikvah. As the Petach Tikvah man was leaving the taxi, he turned to the driver and said, "Tell me, how much should the trip have cost the young man, if you had you charged him?"

I told him an amount, and he said to me, "I am so impressed with what you have done," and he gave me ten times more than the amount that I had told him!

The taxi driver related, "I am convinced that this man was Eliyahu HaNavi in disguise!"

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

One year at the Purim Seudah by **Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l**, a grandson asked Rav Chaim an interesting question.

He said, "In Megilas Esther (6:11), Achashveirosh decreed that Haman dress Mordechai in the king's royal garments, adorn him with the king's crown, and seat him on the king's horse. Haman was to lead Mordechai through the streets and announce, 'This is done for the man that the king wishes to honor!'"

The child asked, "What was Mordechai thinking in those moments? Did he realize that things were starting to turn against Haman?"

Rav Chaim replied, "Mordechai was thinking, 'Stop with this nonsense! Take me off this horse and let me go learn Torah!'"



In regard to the Mitzvah to drink on Purim, the Rama says (Orach Chaim 695:2) that one need not get drunk, but to drink just a bit more than he usually does, and then go to sleep. The Mishnah Brurah writes (695:5), "This is the proper thing to do."

Rav Dovid Orlofsky says that getting drunk is not a Jewish idea.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky, zt"l, was asked (see Siach HaMedrash on Esther) if the obligation to drink on Purim should be specifically done with wine, as Rashi and the Rambam write, and Rav Chaim gave three answers to this. 1- See the Rama, 2- The Poskim only mention using wine, and 3- It is also possible to get drunk from the Torah!

Rav Chaim also warned that one should not miss doing any Mitzvah, like Davening Maariv, because he got too drunk.



Never Lose Hope

It states (*Esther* 1:8), **לעשות כרצון איש ואיש**, and Chazal (*Megillah* 12.) say that this refers to Mordechai and Haman, who are both called **איש**. Haman is called **ואיש**, with a vav, which spells **יאוש**.

Mordechai is **איש**, which is *roshei teivos* for **אין שום יאוש**, and this is the difference between them. - Haman wants people to feel that there is no hope for them because they sinned so much. Mordechai tells us that there is always hope.

No Yeush in this World

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

It states (Esther 6:13) **וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ חֲכָמָיו וְזֶרֶשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ אִם מִזֶּרַע הַיְהוּדִים מָרְדֳּכַי אֲשֶׁר הַחִלּוֹתָ לִנְפֹּל לְפָנָיו לֹא־תוּכַל לּוֹ כִּי־נָפוֹל תִּפּוֹל לְפָנָיו** , "*His wise men and Zeresh his wife said to him, 'If Mordecai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish seed, you will not prevail against him, but you will surely fall before him.'*"

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

Rashi writes that Zeresh said, "*This nation has been compared to the stars and to the dust. When they descend, they descend to the dust; when they ascend, they ascend to the sky and the stars.*" - The Tiferes Shlomo explains that from the dust, they rise to the highest levels.

Esther requested from the chachamim that the story of Megillas Esther should be read in all generations - **קִבְעוּנִי לְדוֹרוֹת** – '*Establish me for future generations*'. (see Megillah 7a.) - Certainly, Esther wasn't looking for honor or pride. So why did she ask for this?

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

מרדכי היהודי

In *Shoshanas Yaakov*, we praise Mordechai HaTzaddik with the most significant praise of all, and that is **מרדכי היהודי**, "Mordechai the Yid."

On Purim, the greatest compliment is simply to be a Yid, because Yidden are elevated to the highest levels on this day, Hashem cherishes them, and their requests are fulfilled.

The *Pele Yoetz* (*Hornestieple*) writes that on Purim, even the tefillah of someone davening *b'yichudus* (by himself) is beloved and accepted. This is hinted at in the *pasuk* (*Esther* 9:25), **וּבְבֹאָהּ לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אָמַר** which is written in the singular tense.

It alludes to a person who is davening by himself. Hashem answers even his *tefillos* on Purim.

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

The Avnei Nezer zt'l was ill, and when he began feeling better, he said that sometimes the yetzer hara causes people to feel a bit better, so they will stop davening.

The Avnei Nezer noted that Mordechai didn't make this mistake. He continued davening even after all the honour he received.

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.

Davening for Luxuries

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

But on Purim, even our requests for extras are answered. He writes that this is alluded to in the *pasuk* (*Yeshaya* 65:24), **וְהָיָה טֶרֶם־יִקְרָאוּ וַאֲנִי אֶעֱנֶה עֹוד הֵם מְדַבְּרִים וַאֲנִי אֶשְׁמָע** . – '*And it shall be, when they have not yet called, that I will respond; when they are still speaking, that I will hearken*'.

The *pasuk* alludes to two types of tefillos. When one prays for necessities (such as food, clothing, etc.) Hashem says **וַאֲנִי אֶעֱנֶה**, "I will answer him and grant his wishes." However, **עֹוד הֵם מְדַבְּרִים** when one prays for **עוד** , extras and luxuries, Hashem says, **ואני אשמע** , "I will listen." - Hashem listens and considers, but it is not certain that He will grant his requests.

Purim is an exception. Even tefillos for extravagances and luxuries are answered. This is hinted at in the *pasuk* (*Esther* 9:12), **וּמַה־ בַּקָּשָׁתֵךְ עֹוד וְתֵעָשׂ**. On Purim even, **בַּקָּשָׁתֵךְ עֹוד** - your requests for extras, **וְתֵעָשׂ**, will be answered.

It is customary to eat seeds on Purim, such as poppy Hamantashen, to commemorate the seeds that Esther ate when keeping Kosher in the king's palace.

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

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."

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

Atonement And Forgiveness on Purim

The Ruzhiner Rebbe *zt'l* said we attain atonement and forgiveness on Purim even when we don't do *teshuvah*. What is the explanation? How can one attain forgiveness without *teshuvah*?

The Ruzhiner Rebbe's grandson, **Rebbe Yisrael of Tchortkov *zt'l***, gave this explanation: It states (*Shulchan Aruch* 694:3), **אין מדקדקין במעות פורים אלא כל מי שפושט יד נותנים לו** , "One doesn't check out people for the *tzedakah* of Purim. We give to whoever requests."

Generally, before giving tzedakah, we check whether the tzedakah is legitimate, but on Purim, we give tzedakah to anyone who asks. Some don't qualify for tzedakah, but if they stretch out their hand, we give them.

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

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

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

אַיִשׁ יְהוּדִי

The Chasam Sofer says an incredible vort: In the entire Megillas Esther, the true miracle was one thing.

The fact that the decree was nullified is not unusual for us Yidden. Through fasting and crying out to Hashem, we have the power to overturn and destroy all difficult judgements and decrees.

The וְנַהֲפוֹךְ הוּא – that the decree was turned over to our enemies, is also not out of the ordinary, because Achashverosh constantly changed his mind, and was known to be a master of indecision. Therefore the reversal of fortune wasn't the essence of the miracle either.

The Chasam Sofer says the true miracle was as follows:

As we know, the feast lasted for 180 days followed by an additional 7 days. For 186 days, Achashverosh and Vashti went about their business as normal. But on the 187th day, Achashverosh and Vashti both got drunk. Achashverosh lost his mind! – Why?

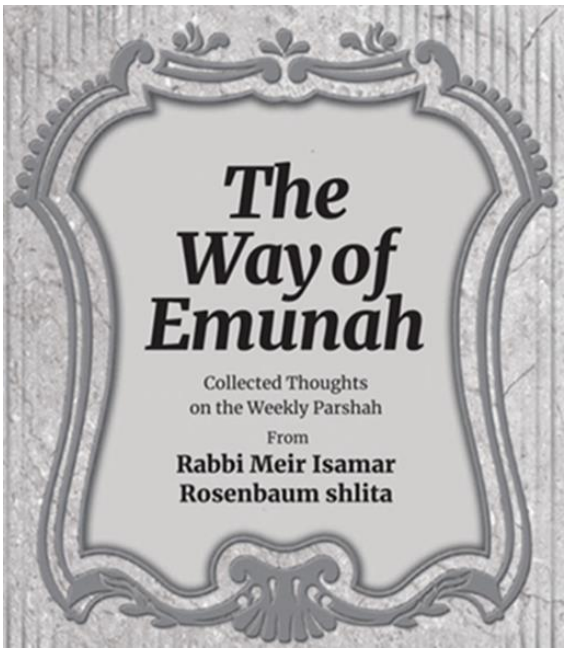
The Gemara explains that the malachim stirred up a commotion in heaven and were in a rush to pave the way for the demise of Vashti in order that Esther HaMalka could take her place, and eventually defeat Haman. – Vashti needed to go!

When did this *yeshua* take place? - When the Yidden were at their lowest level! Whilst they were in the depths of sin, in the middle of the forbidden feast!

At the very same time, Hashem quickly prepared the salvation so that they could return! – This was the essence of the powerful miracle! This is the lesson of Megillas Esther! Even when the Yidden

were bang in the middle of aveiros, Hashem was planning our salvation! - Wherever a Yid is, Hashem is always with him!

The word צַדִּיק does not appear in Megillas Esther even once. It does however refer to Morderchai as אֲנִי יְהוּדִי. - Remember in any and every situation – you are a Yid! A precious Yid! This is how we destroy Amalek.



● Not Missing the Benefits of the Day

The Bais Avrohom of Slonim zy"a explained the great sanctity of Purim with a moshol: In olden times, a major fair would be held once a year. All types of merchandise were sold at the fair at discount prices, and merchants would come from far and wide to make their purchases. They would buy large quantities of goods at cheap prices, and sell it over the course of the year at a profit. On the sidelines, musicians would play their instruments and sing songs, and they put down plates beside them for passersby to throw in a coin or two.

One year, a villager came to the fair for the first time. He brought along a sum of money to purchase merchandise that he would sell during the year.

When he got to the fair, he heard very nice music playing. He enjoyed the music so much that he stood next to the musicians and listened for hours. When it got dark, he realized that he hadn't bought anything. He ran to the dealers to ask what they had to sell, but they all told him the same thing, "You are too late. Everything is sold already. Where were you all day? You wasted your time all day, so you get nothing!"



The nimshol is that Purim is a "fair" for Hashem. Hashem makes this fair once a year, and, on this day, He opens all of the gates of Shomayim in order to provide hashpa'os of all kinds to whomever asks.

A wise person will take advantage of this day and purchase the "merchandise" he needs – both in terms of ruchnius and in terms of gashmius. Therefore, one must be careful not to be like that foolish villager. Make sure not to spend all your time enjoying the music and the revelry, and, at the end of the day, to be left with no merchandise.

● The Benefits are in Accordance with the Preparations

The way to ensure that one takes advantage of the benefits of Purim is to properly prepare for the great day.

The pasuk states (Esther 1:21): **וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּדְבַר מְמוּכָן** - "***And the king did like the words of Memuchin***."

The Bais Aharon of Karlin zy"a explains that every time the word "the king" is used in the Megillah, it is a reference to Hashem. Accordingly, the pasuk can be understood to be saying that "the King does" – Hashem provides goodness and hashpa'os on this day – according to "Memuchin" – according to the way one prepares (hachanos) for the day.

● Through Reading the Megillah, Sins are Forgiven

The Sar Shalom of Belz zy"a notes that the word "Megillah" has the same gematriah as the word "machol". This indicates that our sins are forgiven through the reading of the Megillah.

This is as stated in the **Zohar Hakadosh** that when Klal Yisroel says shira to Hashem, He forgives our sins, and the Megillah is as shira, which is akin to Hallel, as is stated in the Gemara (Megillah 14a). - Therefore, reading it atones for our sins.

● Mordechai Hatzadik Saves Those Who Read the Megillah



Rav Moshe of Kobrin zy"a related that there was a city in the Sefardic lands that was ruled by a pasha who was a terrible rasha who claimed that he descended from Amalek. The pasha forbade the Jews from reading the Megillah and decreed that anyone caught doing so would be punished with death. - The Jews were very upset.

When it came time to read the Megillah, all they could do was to cry out to Hashem. Suddenly, a very elderly, poor man entered the bais medrash with a sack slung over his shoulders. He asked, "It is time to read the Megillah. Why aren't you reading it?"

They told him about the decree and he responded, "Read the Megillah and don't be afraid. Not only that, also stamp as much as you can when Haman's name is read. I will take responsibility!"

His words encouraged the people greatly. They trusted the old man and felt no fear of the pasha. They read the Megillah and stamped vigorously when Haman's name was said.

When the recital of the Megillah was completed, everyone was very happy to have been able to fulfill the mitzvah. Everyone wanted to invite the poor man to his home for the seudah to break the fast, but no one could find him. They searched for him all over the city, but he had disappeared. They understood that something extraordinary had occurred.

The Rov, who was a great man, made a "shailos chalom" to ask for an explanation, and the elderly man appeared to him in a dream. He told him, "I am Mordechai Hatzadik. I saw how upset you all were about not being able to read the Megillah, so I came to encourage you to read it with no fear. Hashem will help you and no harm will come to you from the wicked pasha."

● When Wine Enters

Sefer Sichasan Shel Avdei Avos (Chelek 1, page 69) relates that when **Rav Nosson Dovid of Shidlovtza zy"a** once came to visit the **Sanzer Rov zy"a** on Purim, the Rov gave him son wine to drink. However, his son declined the offer because doctors had told him that drinking wine was bad for his health.

Rav Nosson Dovid got angry at the boy and said, "Even if the Rov gave me poison to drink, I would drink it without a moment's delay!"

● When Adar Arrives, Joy is Increased

Sefer Siach Sarfei Kodesh writes that on Purim the **Avnei Nezer zy"a** would relate the story of a wagon driver from Krakow who was accustomed to drinking a lot of whiskey and getting drunk two weeks before Purim and two weeks after Purim.

He explained his conduct by saying, "How could Haman intend to kill all of the Jews on one day? What if some of them would hide in

bunkers and caves and would only be found later? He should have made the decree for the entire month of Adar!"

The wagon driver would answer, "This was part of Haman's wickedness. He knew that Hashem might save the Jews and they would make a yomtov to celebrate their salvation. He didn't want us to have more than one day of celebration, so he refused to make the decree for more than one day. But because I know his true intentions, and I know that he really would have needed a full month to kill all the Jews, I celebrate Purim for a full month!"

● Drinking Like a Jew

Rav Yochanon of Stolin zy"a (quoted in Sefer Birchas Aharon, page 228) said, "It says that one is obligated to drink on Purim, but one still must drink like a Yid.

There are people who drink and say good things, while others drink and need to be dragged through the streets!"

● At the Purim Seudah, One's Requests are Granted

The pasuk states (Esther 5:6) that the king said to Esther at the feast of wine, מַה־שְּׁאֵלָתֵךְ וְיִנָּתֶן לָךְ - "*What is your request, and I will give it to you.*"

The Kotzker Rebbe (quoted in Sefer Amud Emes) states that this is a hint that Klal Yisroel is not only answered when they daven. We are also answered when we engage in holy forms of rejoicing.

When Yidden gather to drink and be happy together, "the King" (Hashem) tells "Esther" (Klal Yisroel) that He will fulfill all our requests.

● Like Yom Kippur

The Sefas Emes (Purim 5635) writes: "Purim is like 'Yom Kippurim'. On Yom Kippur, we are on a level of being above nature because we do not eat and drink. In the merit of fasting and afflicting our bodies, we are able to reach 'the world of freedom' and our sins are forgiven.

On Purim, we can reach this level through feasting and rejoicing. This is not as a result of our own actions. Rather, it is a gift from Hashem. What we accomplish on Yom Kippur through fasting, we can accomplish on Purim through eating and drinking."

● No Hishtadlus Needed on This Day

Rav Tzadok of Lublin zy"a writes (in Sefer Resisei Layla, Ois 31) that on Purim, we merit receiving a great light, which is akin to the light of Shabbos, which is akin to the light of Olam Haba. - When we have this light, there is no need for us to do any hishtadlus. He can simply bask in holiness.

Therefore, there is no need to do any work on Purim. Instead, we are able to drink as much as we desire, and we still receive abundant goodness. We are just like someone who wins the lottery without having to put forth any effort to make a living!

● Making Others Happy on Purim

My ancestor, **Rav Mord'chele of Nadvorna zy"a** once said (quoted in Raza D'Uvda, Shaar Ha'Osiyos, page 93), "If I had known when I was young how much importance is placed in Shomayim on rejoicing on Purim, I would have put aside all of my avodah on this holy day and I would have gone from one Jew to the next to make them happy and to drink with them on this day."

● The Great Effect of Tzedakah

There is an ancient minhag to give a lot of tzedakah on Purim and to donate to anyone who stretches out his hand.

The Yesod V'Shoresh Ha'avodah (Shaar 12, Perek 6) describes the power of giving tzedakah on Purim by saying as follows: "This day is glorious that it is above all other days of the year in regards to the mitzvah of tzedakah. When one gives tzedakah on this day, he makes great tikkunim in the Upper Worlds, which cannot be made on other days.

Therefore, one should give a lot of tzedakah and gifts to the poor, even more than he can afford. If anyone stretches out his hand to take – even if you know that he doesn't need to take charity – you should give him.

In the merit of this middah of vatranus (giving in) on this day, one makes great tikkunim in the Upper Worlds."

● Tefillos Accepted After the Decree is Sealed

The Bais Avrohom of Slonim zy"a quotes the **Berditchover Rebbe zy"a** as saying that the miracle of Purim proved to us that even after a decree is signed and sealed, we can annul it through tefillah and teshuva. – The gates to Heaven can always be opened to accept our prayers and teshuva, and Hashem will always receive them and provide us with salvation.



"There is nothing outside of Hashem. He is the source of everything, and everything exists only because He continually wills it so." ~ Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk.

● Tefillos for Luxuries

The pasuk states (Esther 9:12): **וּמַה־שְּׁאֵלָתֵךְ וְיִנָּתֵן לָךְ וּמַה־בַּקָּשָׁתֵךְ עֹוד וְתֵעָשׂ** - "***What is your request and I will give it to you, and what do you ask for additionally, and I will do it***."

The **Kreitchnifer Rebbe zy"a**, explains that the word **עֹוד** - "additionally" is reference to "*mosros*" (luxuries), which a person wants but does not really need to survive.

Usually, it is difficult to ask Hashem for such things. However, on the day of Purim all gates of Heaven are open to our prayers and one can even ask Him for luxuries.

● The Evil forces Have No Power on This Day

וְהָמָן נִבְעָת -"***And Haman became terrified***". (Esther 7:6):

Sefer Sifsei Tzadik writes that this refers to all forces of impurity. On this day, they all are terrified and fearful. Therefore, this is a good time to daven for whatever we need.

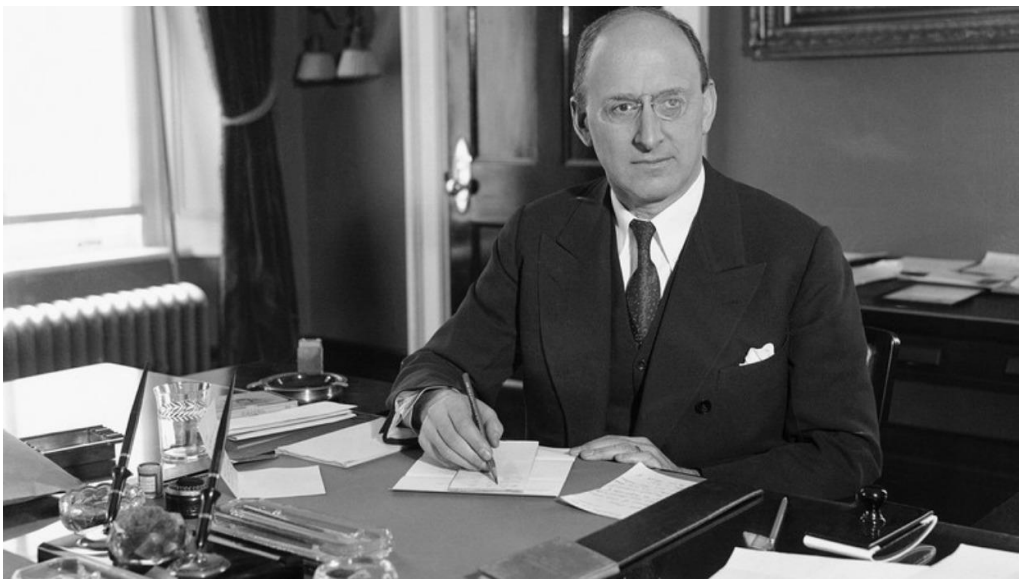
The Gemara says that we blow the shofar in order to confuse the satan. So too, the satan is confused and worried on Purim, which allows our tefillos to be heard and accepted on this day.

● Blessing Other Jews

A man once approached **Rav Aharon of Belz zy"a** on Purim and said, "The Shulchan Aruch rules that if someone stretches out his hand to you on Purim, you must give him what he asks. My hand is outstretched to the Rebbe and I am asking for a bracha."

Rav Aharon turned to his shamash, R' Shalom Fogel z"l, and said, "bring the Shulchan Aruch." - He opened it and looked at the halacha and said, "Yes. It does say that." - He then blessed the man.

Henry Morgenthau's Queen Esther Moment - *aish.com*



The only Jew in FDR's cabinet, the influential politician was in a position to stand up for being a Jew and help save Jewish lives during the Holocaust.

On the holiday of Purim, Jews worldwide celebrate the salvation of the Jewish people in the ancient Persian empire. Haman, royal vizier to the Persian King Achashverosh, plotted "to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jewish people, young and old, men and women, in a single day" (Esther 3:13).

In the face of Haman's imminent genocidal decree upon the Jewish People, Mordechai directed his niece, Queen Esther, to approach the King and beseech him to save her people. Esther was understandably reluctant because she could be killed immediately for entering the king's chamber without being summoned.

In the face of her demurral, Mordechai responded with strong words, telling her, "If you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from another place, while you and your father's house will perish. And who knows, perhaps it is precisely for this opportunity that you became queen" (Esther 4:14).

Understanding that this was the reason she had ascended to royalty and influence, Queen Esther made an immediate about-face. Rising to the occasion, she instructed Mordechai to tell all Jewish residents of Shushan to fast and pray for three days and nights and upon the conclusion of the three days, she would approach the king uninvited. "And if I am to perish, I shall perish…" (4:16)

Her strategy worked, Haman and his 10 sons were hung, and the Jewish people were saved by G-d.



President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Henry Morgenthau Jr. in a car on Feb. 9, 1934.

Fast forward two millennia, another Jewish leader named Henry Morgenthau Jr. (1891–1967) would experience his Queen Esther Moment when the Jewish people were being threatened with annihilation. He was born in New York City to a prominent family of German Jewish descent. His father, Henry Morgenthau Sr., was a successful real estate investor and diplomat and had served as ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during the presidential administration of Woodrow Wilson.

Henry Morgenthau Jr. served as the United States treasury secretary in the Roosevelt and Truman administrations from January 1, 1934, until July 23, 1945. Morgenthau stabilized the US dollar during the Great Depression, helped finance the "New Deal," prepared the US economy for war, and later funded the war effort by selling war bonds.

He was the only Jewish person to serve as a cabinet member during Roosevelt's administration. He was very devoted and loyal to Roosevelt, despite the President's failure to take concrete actions to save European Jewry from the Holocaust or allow Jews to save themselves by immigrating to the United States.

In 1943, several months after the US State Department confirmed Nazi Germany's mission to annihilate all the Jews of Europe, Morgenthau became directly involved in the rescue of the Jews in Europe.

The catalyst for Morgenthau's new-found involvement was the advocacy of two Jewish groups: The *Vaad Hatzalah* (The Rescue Committee), led by America's leading Orthodox Rabbis, and the "Emergency Committee for the Rescue of European Jewry" led by Hillel Kook.



Meeting with the President

Rabbi Aharon Kotler, Rabbi Eliezer Silver, Rabbi Avraham Kalmanowitz

The *Agudath HaRabbanim* (Union of Orthodox Rabbis), led by **Rabbi Eliezer Silver** of Cincinnati, founded an organization specifically devoted to the rescue of European Jews called the *Vaad Hatzalah* ("Rescue Committee"). The Vaad was supported by all of Orthodox Jewry (Agudath Israel, Young Israel, Mizrachi, etc.). It was led by three of the greatest Sages of America: Rabbi Eliezer Silver, **Rabbi Avraham Kalmanowitz**, and **Rabbi Aharon Kotler**. The leaders of the Vaad were willing to do *anything* to save their fellow Jews, recognizing that saving lives was *the* priority.

In mid-1943, the heads of Vaad Hatzlalah met with Morgenthau for the first time. Rabbi Kotler, Rabbi Kalmanowitz, and lay leader **Irving Bunim** pleaded with him to change American policy that had thus far done little to prevent the destruction of European Jewry. Visibly

moved by the words of these great rabbis, Morgenthau called Secretary of State Cordell Hull and demanded a joint meeting with the President concerning the Nazi murder of the Jews in Europe.

When Hull politely refused, Morgenthau shocked him by responding, "If I do not get the meeting, my resignation will be on Mr. Roosevelt's desk in the morning." Morgenthau got his meeting with Roosevelt, and although it did not create immediate changes in US policy, it paved the way for creating the War Refugee Board a few months later.

Jewish Activism and the Founding of the War Refugee Board



The Rabbis March in Washington

The Bergson Group was led by Hillel Kook, one of the heads of Irgun in America and nephew of the First Chief Rabbi of Mandatory Palestine, Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook. He also called himself Peter

Bergson, thus the name of the group. He established the Emergency Committee for the Rescue of European Jewry. The Committee, which included Jewish and non-Jewish American public figures, worked to publicize the facts of the Nazi's annihilation of the Jews and lobby the President and Congress to take action to save the remnants of Europe's Jews.

One of the Committee's more well-known actions was a protest Kook organized, known as the "Rabbis' March." The protest took place in Washington, D.C., on October 6, 1943, three days before Yom Kippur. The group of over 400 rabbis marched to the United States Capitol, Lincoln Memorial, and White House in Washington, DC. The March's success was limited by the actions of some of FDR's Jewish friends (who were more concerned about FDR and less concerned for their fellow Jews in Europe), including Reform leader Stephen Wise.

A few months later, on January 13, 1944. Treasury staff members John Pehle, Randolph Paul, Ansel Luxford, and Josiah DuBois presented Morgenthau with an 18-page memorandum entitled "Report to the Secretary on the Acquiescence of This Government in the Murder of Jews." After reading it, Morgenthau's immediate response was, "I am physically ill."

As a result, three days later, on January 16, 1944, Morgenthau personally visited the White House and met with President Roosevelt. The following week, the president issued an executive order establishing the War Refugee Board on January 22, 1944.

Through the efforts of the War Refugee Board, steps were finally taken to save Jews in Europe. Refugee camps were prepared in North Africa, and safe havens were arranged in Palestine, Switzerland, and Sweden. The War Refugee Board also lobbied Roosevelt to publicly condemn the mass murder of Jews by the Nazis, which he did on March 24, 1944.

By attracting international attention to the desperate plight of Hungarian Jewry, the War Refugee Board contributed to the cessation of deportations of Hungarian Jews to Auschwitz. The Board also sent Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg and others to protect the Jews of Budapest. The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee funded Wallenberg's rescue work through the War Refugee Board. The work by Wallenberg in Hungary was one of the most successful and vital rescue efforts accomplished by the War Refugee Board.

It is difficult to determine the exact number of Jews rescued by the War Refugee Board. Professor David Wyman (1929-2018), a noted Christian Holocaust historian, credited the War Refugee Board with saving as many as 200,000 people; the War Refugee Board staff estimated they saved tens of thousands. At the end of the war, considering reports of ill-treatment of the Jews in the DP camps, Morgenthau and the War Refugee Board also convinced President Truman to send an American envoy, lawyer Earl Harrison, to examine the situation personally, and following his trip, the situation in the DP camps improved.

Yet, there was a time during the war when even Morgenthau hesitated.

His Queen Esther Moment

Shortly before Purim, in February 1945, Irving Bunim arranged for an urgent meeting with Morgenthau and was accompanied by Rabbi Aharon Kotler and Rabbi Avrohom Kalmanowitz, both of whom had escaped Europe and were using any means at their disposal to try to save the European Jews.

They came with a desperate request. The 'Musy Negotiations' were underway, which involved a payment of close to a million dollars to the Germans in exchange for releasing Jews from concentration camps and sending them to Switzerland.

The Vaad Hatzalah had the astronomical sum pledged to them by another Jewish organization. Yet, that organization insisted the Vaad receive official US government approval to transfer the funds through American agents in Switzerland. The Vaad Hatzalah appealed to Morgenthau to grant them official permission. Morgenthau responded that American foreign policy was not to pay ransom to the enemy: "Millions for defense but not one cent for tribute."

"One Single Jewish Life is Worth More Than all the Positions in Washington!"

Rabbi Kotler did not speak English, and Secretary Morgenthau did not understand Yiddish, so Bunim had been serving as their translator. However, Morgenthau's tone was clear to Rabbi Kotler, even before Bunim said a word. The answer was NO.

Unable to hold back his emotions, Rabbi Kotler looked at Morgenthau with piercing blue eyes. With a voice shaking, he pointed at the Secretary of Treasury and said in Yiddish, "Bunim, tell him that if he cannot help rescue his fellow Jews at this time, then he is worth nothing, and his position is worth nothing! One single Jewish life is worth more than all the positions in Washington!"

After a few awkward moments, Bunim began translating, somewhat softening the Rabbi's message as he spoke. Rabbi Kotler realized his words were not being conveyed accurately and cried in Yiddish, "*Nein, nein Bunim, zugt em vus ich hub gizugt!* No! Tell him exactly what I said!" Bunim realized that this was not a time for social niceties. He cleared his throat and silently prayed, knowing that countless Jewish lives hinged on his success.

"Sir… Rabbi Kotler feels that because you are afraid of losing your prominent position in the government, you may be unwilling to help us and your fellow Jewish brothers and sisters. He wants you to know that one Jewish life is worth more than any office."

Hearing this, Morgenthau turned white and placed his head on his desk, covering his face in his hands.

"Tell the Rabbi that I am a Jew. Tell him I'm willing to give up my life — not just my position — for my people."

Finally, Morgenthau raised his head and cried, trembling with emotion, "Tell the Rabbi that I am a Jew. Tell him I'm willing to give up my life — not just my position — for my people."

In the face of Rabbi Kotler's challenge and words of truth, Morgenthau recognized his Queen Esther Moment. He rose to the occasion and enabled the Vaad Hatzalah to continue the negotiations, directly bringing about the release of 2,000 Jewish women from Ravensbruck. His actions live on eternally, in the lives he saved and the example he set.

We each have our own Queen Esther Moments. A time when we face a choice as to whether we will stand up for the Jewish people and Jewish values. It might be at work, on a college campus, etc. If you are able to stand up and do something, will you? Will you educate yourself and others on Jewish values and Israel's right to defend itself? Will you proudly wear a Jewish symbol or kippah? Will you write to encourage elected officials and community leaders to support Israel and the Jewish people?

And, if you are like Morgenthau, someone in a position with real influence, will you act as he did, knowing there are values more important than your job or ephemeral popularity?

When your Queen Esther moment comes, what will you choose?

"Bitachon is not the absence of fear, but the faith that allows us to face fear head-on." Rabbi Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman.

Parsha Points to Ponder by Ozer Alport

Achashverosh showed off his wealth by making elaborate feasts full of food and drink (Esther 1:3-8). Why wasn't there any musical entertainment at these parties?

The **Maharam Schiff** notes that the Megillah stresses (1:8) that the drinking at Achashverosh's party was in accordance with each person's preferences, but music had to be omitted because there is no music liked by all.

Alternatively, Achashverosh knew that after the destruction of the Temple, the Jews forbade live music at their parties (Sotah 48a). He wanted them to come willingly so that they would be punished for participating, but if there was music, they would have to be forced to attend.



From Under the Heavens, Do Not Forget! -Ganzach Kiddush Hashem

In the Gemara (Megillah 6) it is written on the verse "do not let their plans succeed": This is the Germamia of Edom, if they go forth, they destroy the entire world. Germamia, according to the rabbinic commentators – is Germany.

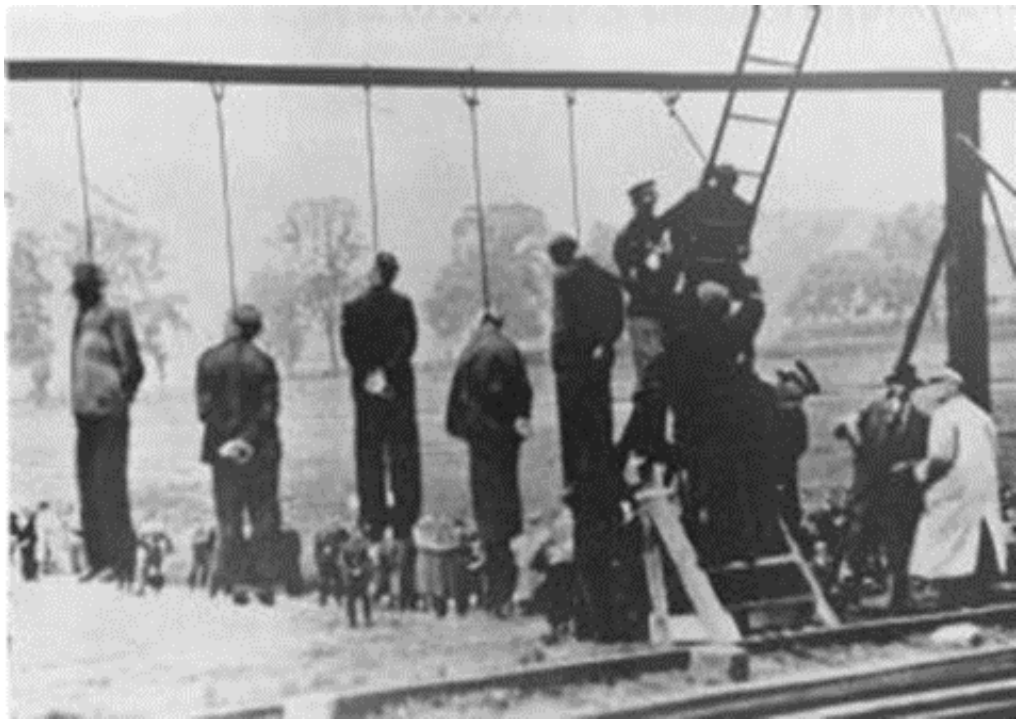
The Gra (short for "Gaon Rav Eliyahu," also known as the Vilna Gaon), already wrote 250 years ago that Germany is Amalek.

Therefore, on the days of Purim and the revival of Amalek, we try to wipe out the memory of the Nazi Amalek who destroyed the world and consumed a third of our people, women and children, holy and pure people.

Even then, during the years of rage, the Nazis knew about the days of Purim, and would commit sadistic murders on them while organizing mass public events.

Here are two testimonies from the holiday of Purim during the Holocaust, in the same year, in two different places (they were published in the "Zachor" documentation files).

10 Martyrs who were Hung on Purim 5702 (1942)



Yes, this also happened in Zdunska Wola. In preparation for Purim in the year 5702 (March 1942), the Germans decided to celebrate Purim in a special way. That is: In many ghettos they set up gallows on which ten Jews were hung on each. You will surely ask: why exactly the number ten? Well, the Germans, who followed the Jewish calendar, wanted to demonstrate by avenging the hanging of the ten sons of Haman. And so it was also imposed on Zdunska Vola to sacrifice ten of its best sons on Purim 5702. And this is how the town's resident, L. Piotrkowski, described the event:

"There is no human power to describe the Jewish heroism shown by these ten martyrs in the last moments of their lives. Everyone as one held firm and silently climbed up the gallows and announced: 'Jew! Do not cry, dear brothers! Hold on! You will also get to see their downfall. Brothers, take revenge!…' And finally, from the throats of the ten martyrs came the cry of Shema Yisrael (Hear Oh

Israel), and when the entire crowd of Jews, five thousand men and women, answered as an echo to each other, "Shema Yisrael," their souls departed in holiness and purity, at exactly 12 noon, on Purim, the year 5702 since the creation of the world."

The Martyrs who were Hung on Purim in the Brzeziny Ghetto

The Nazis were "artists" in inventing tortures that would hurt us as much as possible and shorten our miserable lives. Hungry and depressed, we surrendered to them physically, but they failed to break our spirits. A spark lived inside every tormented Jew. We hoped for the day of revenge and repayment.

In March 1942, huge notices were posted that a hanging of 10 Jews would be held on Purim and that all the Jews in the ghetto must be present at the event as "retribution" for the hanging of the ten children of Haman.

On the appointed day, they set up a gallow by the river, near the place where our magnificent synagogue was located, which the Germans, may their named be blotted out, had burned. The Germans forced all Jews to participate in the "sight". When the Jews gathered and began to bring the condemned to the hanging, some of the Jews burst into tears and wails. The SS immediately silenced them. "If there is no quiet, we will shoot you, all of you." Deathly silence immediately reigned.

The condemned behaved in a pleasant and beautiful manner; they went out upright and showed no sign of fear before their death. One of them was a homeless poor man named Yidel Suchachevsky. He was a quiet man who had never harassed anyone. This Jew, as he ascended the steps of the gallows, declared with a heroic voice: I am going to sanctify the Name of G-d on behalf of the whole city! After the hanging of the martyrs, the Nazis forced all the Jews to pass around the martyrs and look at the gallows.



Rav Yitzchok Zilber זצ"ל was a Russian refusenik who kept **תורה** and **מצוות** with incredible **מסירת נפש** in KGB-controlled Soviet Union. He was a Maths professor, and would walk to the university so as not to transgress **שבת**. As he had to be there early in the morning and couldn't daven before he left, he would clandestinely daven whilst facing the notice boards and pretending to read the Pravda headlines.

One day, the other professors caught on that he didn't write on **שבת** and they reported him to the KGB. He was summoned for an interrogation and asked whether he realised that it was against the law to keep **שבת**.

He responded that he was indeed aware, however the laws of **ה'** were more important!

Incensed at his response, they deported Rav Yitzchok to Siberia, where he was forced to perform back-breaking labour in sub-zero temperatures.

Even in Siberia, he kept **מצוות** as best he could, but when **ליל פורים** came around he sadly realised that they had no **מגילה** and wouldn't be able to fulfil the **מצוה**. Suddenly, Rav Yitzchok remembered that according to the **מאירי**, if one has no way of leining the **מגילה**, he should say **הלל** instead, and so he proceeded to recite **הלל** with great emotion.

The communist prisoners scoffed at him and said, "What's the point of saying **הלל**?! If Stalin wants, he can have you killed right now!"

Rav Yitzchok responded, "If **ה'** wants, He could kill Stalin right now!"

Unbelievably, at that very moment, on the 1st of March 1953, Josef Stalin, the murderous, anti-Semitic killer of millions of *Yieden*,

suddenly had a stroke whilst vacationing in his dacha! Four days later he died, and Rav Yitzchok was freed along with thousands of other prisoners!

The נס of פורים teaches us that no matter how dark or terrible a situation may seem, ה' can turn things around in the blink of an eye!

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman - Torah Wellsprings

Everybody

In the *piyut, Shoshanas Yaakov* we acknowledge, "*Also Charvona (חרבונה) is remembered for good*". The name Charvona comes from the root חרבן which means destruction. **Even someone who *chas v'shalom* feels that they are spiritually destroyed will be remembered for good by Hashem on Purim.** Rav Tzadok Hakohen zy"a taught that just like the halacha is that on Purim we distribute tzedakah more freely than usual, to whoever asks for it, Hashem as well "observes" this halacha today, and will give "tzedakah" for all those that need any type salvation whether it be in *ruchnios* or *gashmios*.

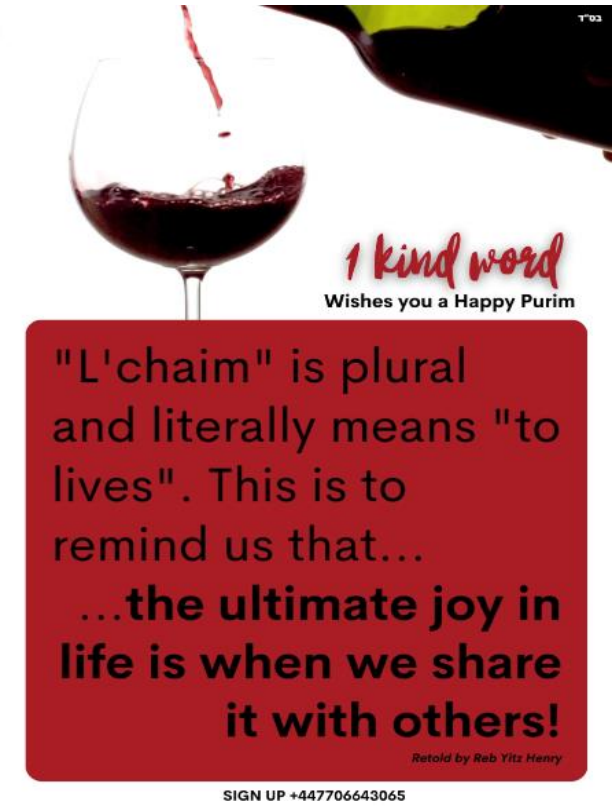
Rabbi Elimelech Biderman - Torah Wellsprings

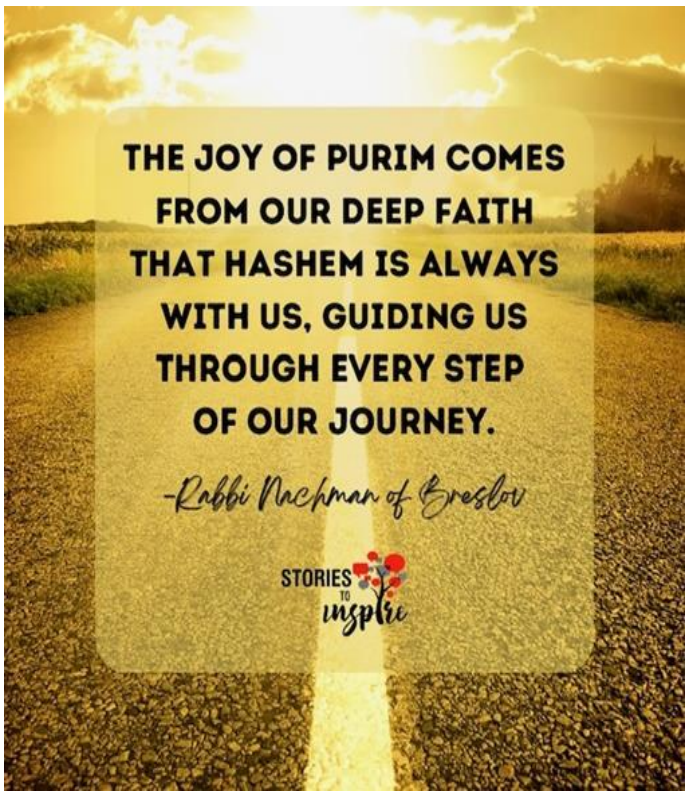
Purim

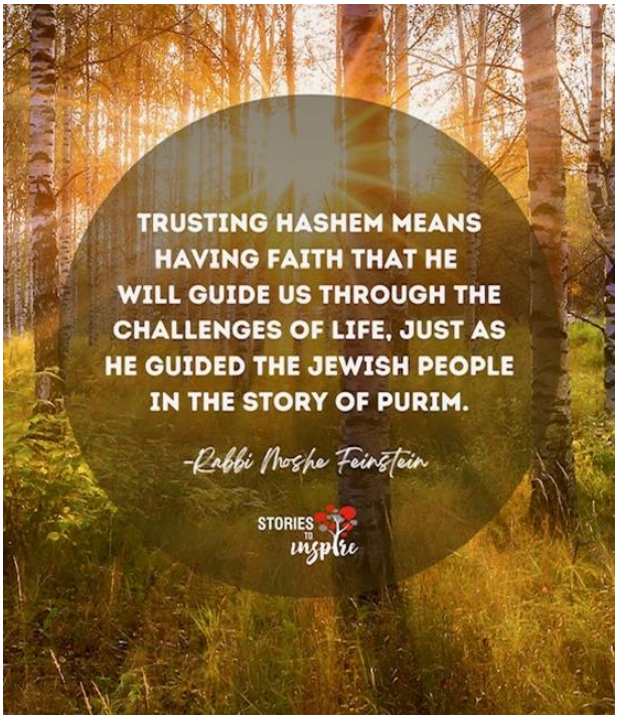
The Power of Simcha

When Queen Esther was asked by Achashveirosh, *"What is your request and it will be granted"* (5:6), she responded that she will let the king know the next day. Why did she think that pushing off her request to the next day would be more productive? The Tzadikim explain that since, *"Haman went out on that day happy and a glad heart"*, Esther knew that when one is full of joy, it is impossible to victorious over him. **No evil can come to one who is enveloped in the trait of simcha - joy**. She had to wait a day until his joy subsided a bit. **Take this to heart: If the trait of simcha can be so effective for a *rasha* like Haman, how much more effective can it be for the Bnei Yisrael to remove hardships and troubles.**

Our decisions in life must be as strategically calculated as a person playing chess. See to it that any move you make is not later regretted. ~ R' Simcha Bunim of Pshischa zt"l


1 kind word
Wishes you a Happy Purim
"L'chaim" is plural and literally means "to lives". This is to remind us that...
...the ultimate joy in life is when we share it with others!
Retold by Reb Yitz Henry
SIGN UP +447706643065


THE JOY OF PURIM COMES FROM OUR DEEP FAITH THAT HASHEM IS ALWAYS WITH US, GUIDING US THROUGH EVERY STEP OF OUR JOURNEY.
-Rabbi Nachman of Breslov
STORIES TO inspire


TRUSTING HASHEM MEANS HAVING FAITH THAT HE WILL GUIDE US THROUGH THE CHALLENGES OF LIFE, JUST AS HE GUIDED THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN THE STORY OF PURIM.
-Rabbi Moshe Feinstein
STORIES TO inspire


PURIM IS A TIME TO LET GO OF OUR WORRIES AND TRUST IN HASHEM'S PLAN. JUST AS HE SAVED OUR ANCESTORS FROM DANGER, HE WILL PROTECT US AS WELL.
-Rabbi Yitzchak Berkowitz
STORIES TO inspire


וְנַהֲפוֹךְ הוּא



Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

"Events happen or do not happen for a myriad of reasons, but behind the supposed motivations of people, the Al-mighty is manipulating history to carry out His Will. Behind the curtains, the Master of the Universe is pulling the strings." These are not my words, but this was said by Rabbi Yissochor Frand Shlita.

He continues, "When I was in Mexico City [for a convention], I heard a true story (which appears in the historical archives of the Knesset) from Rabbi David Ordman. Rav Shlomo Lorenz zl, [a former Knesset member of Agudas Yisroel from 1951 until 1984], once met Harry S Truman, 33rd President of the United States. President Truman told Rabbi Lorenz, "You should know that when I agreed to recognize the State of Israel, it went against the advice of my advisors and it was against every political instinct that I have. But I will tell you why I did it…"

[The vote at the United Nations passed on the narrowest of margins with many Zionists claiming victory due to their immense lobbying]. The conventional wisdom is that Harry Truman recognized the State of Israel in 1948 because he had a Jewish partner in the haberdashery business in the city of Independence, Missouri, many decades earlier who came to him in the White House and asked him for this favour. This conventional wisdom. Now you will hear the rest of the story from Harry Truman himself.

President Truman told Rabbi Lorenz " I was a little boy growing up in the United States and every little boy in the United States dreams of becoming president. That was my dream. I'll tell you something else. I was a good Christian boy and I learned my Bible. My hero in the Bible was Cyrus (Koresh, who was a descendant of none other than Queen Esther). This Koresh is the one who let the Jewish People go back to their homeland and build their Temple (Bais HaMikdash). I said, if I ever become President of the United States, I want to imitate my hero and if I ever get the opportunity

to let the Jewish people go back to their country and rebuild their Temple that is what I am going to do." "And that," he concluded, "Is why I recognized the State of Israel."

This is the same story: The Hand of G-d at work. Just like Vashti – we do not know what on earth possessed her to disobey her husband and not come as he ordered. Somehow the Almighty 'sent an Angel' and made it happen, so that Klal Yisroel should be saved. So too, Harry Truman had this '*meshugaas*' – he wanted to emulate Koresh. There is probably no other person in the world whose main Biblical hero was Koresh, but that was the idiosyncrasy of Harry Truman. Because of that, the rest is history."

Good Shabbos

Myriad – def: vast number

Idiosyncrasy – def: a person's own attitude of mind or way of behaving etc. that is unlike that of others.

Meshugaas – def: mad or idiotic ideas or behaviour.

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

This story is more about Pesach than Purim. It's about *emuna,* about appreciating that we, and our responsibilities, first and foremost belong to Hashem. It is about our *mesorah,* and it is also about our faith in our *chachomim* who show us the Torah's way.

As a young man, Avrohom* (Abe) Pincus was enlisted in the US army. It was World War II, and he was stationed at Binghamton, New York, for his training period before being sent overseas.

A few days before Purim, the soldiers were told that they were being given a 24-hour furlough. Abe's initial joy at this news was short lived, though. He had fervently hoped that the furlough would fall on Purim so that he would be able to spend it at home with his family. But, alas, it was not to be. The furlough fell out on Taanis

Esther, which meant that since he had to be back at base before midnight, he would miss most of Purim at home. Nonetheless, he decided to spend his free day visiting his mother in Williamsburg. So it was that Taanis Esther morning found him on a bus for the five-hour journey from Binghamton.

His mother was delighted to have him home and naturally assumed he would be staying overnight to hear the Megillah a second time.

"I'm sorry, Ma, but I have to be back by tonight," he said.

"Heint obend shoyn?" (Already tonight?) his mother asked. *"Vuss vet zayn mit Megillah?"* (What will be with Megilla?)

Although she had lived in America for many years, Mrs Pincus still only spoke enough English to get by. Her regular means of communications was in Yiddish, as it used to be *in der heim.*

Abe looked down at his uniform. "I'll think of something," was the best he could come up with.

"You should stay here for the Megillah," his mother firmly responded.

"I can't," he said. "There could be serious consequences if I'm not back at base on time."

"Why don't you go back tomorrow," she urged him. "I'm sure they won't mind."

"Ma, this isn't Cheder, it doesn't work like that," he patiently explained. "In the army, you have to be back when they say you have to be back, otherwise you could get into very serious trouble."

"Stay another day," his mother repeated, "You can't miss Megillah, you can't."

"I really can't stay, Ma."

But Mrs Pincus would not give in. To her, the idea that her son would miss the Megillah was unthinkable. And so the conversation

continued, back and forth. Ultimately, seeing that she wasn't getting anywhere, his mother made a suggestion.

"Gey tzum Rebben and freg voss du zollst tun," (Go to the Rebbe and ask him what you should do).

The Pincus family were very close with the Boyaner Rebbe zt"l, who at that time lived on the Lower East Side. If her son would not listen to her, she reasoned, perhaps he would listen to the Rebbe.

The young man hesitated. He knew that if the Rebbe told him to stay then he would not be able to refuse, and he was reluctant to put himself in that position. On the other hand, how could he deny his mother's request? Besides, he did not want to miss the Megillah either, but he felt that being in the army he didn't have much choice.

After some more pressure from his mother he eventually acquiesced, and they went to visit the Rebbe.

The close family connection meant that they were admitted quickly. Mrs Pincus explained to the Rebbe that her son was in uniform because he was stationed with the US army at Binghamton, that he was due back that same evening, and that she wanted him to stay another day so that he could hear the Megillah. Her son then explained that he could not simply fail to turn up, and the possible consequences of not being back in time.

The Rebbe thought for a few minutes. Then he looked up and said, *Mein kind, zollst allemuhl folgen deh Mamme."* (My child, you should always listen to your mother). "Stay overnight and go back tomorrow afternoon after you have fulfilled the mitzvois of the day."

"But Rebbe," Abe explained with no small amount of urgency, "if I am not there in time for the roll call there could be very serious consequences. I could even be arrested."

"Zollst allemuhl folgen deh Mamme," the Rebbe repeated. "Everything will be OK. Stay overnight for the Megillah, listen to

the Megillah again, give some mishloach monos, matonos L'evyonim, have the seuda and then go back. It will be OK."

The Rebbe had spoken. Given his strong emunas chachomim, Avrohom Pincus knew he had to stay. He asked the Rebbe for a brocho and left.

That night, he heard the Megillah, in shul, as his mother had wished. The following morning, he heard the Megillah again, gave mishloach monos, ate a quick seudah and finally bade his mother farewell and rushed back to base. By this time, he was very anxious about what awaited him; but he was in for a surprise. On entering the camp, he found the place utterly deserted. Looking around, he spotted a lone soldier in the yard. "What is going on, where is everybody?" Abe asked him.

The GI stared at him, incredulous. "Have you been under a rock?" he asked. "A pack of wild dogs from the nearby forest invaded the camp last night. We chased them into the forest, where the soldiers have been trying to catch them ever since. There wasn't even a roll call this morning!" - Abe didn't waste a second. He hurried to his barracks, dropped his belongings on his bed, and then ran to the forest and joined the others. Nobody was any the wiser.

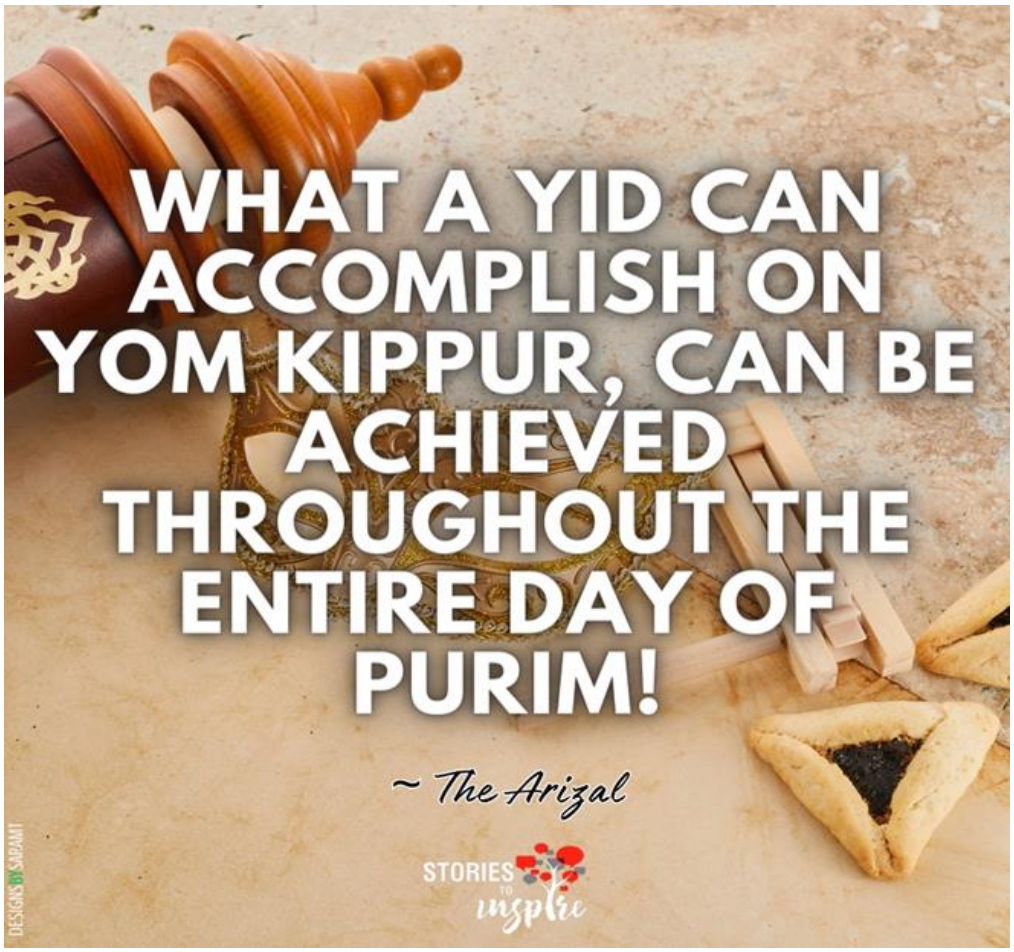
That evening, the delayed roll call finally took place. And Abe, with no small amount of relief, was able to respond, "Here!" when his name was called.

Our fathers are tasked with teaching us the lessons of our faith. But our mothers instil us with the emotional connection to Hashem. The *ehrlichkeit* of a Jewish mother who served her Creator with genuine sincerity, prevailed upon her young GI son to risk serious repercussions in order to fulfil the mitzvois of the day. Perhaps it was even her influence that planted *emunas chachomim* so firmly in his heart. - *A Ganz yor Purim!* - Good Shabbos.

The Gaon writes that a person's main purpose in this world is to break his bad character traits. If not for that what is the purpose of living?

In Rav Elyashiv's shul on Purim, the minhag was to bang for a long time by each Haman. Every year HaRav Elyashiv sat through it and never protested against it. There was one exception. When Yerushalayim Purim falls out on Shabbos, so the Megilla is read on Thursday night right after the **תענית**. Here was the only time that Rav Elyashiv stopped them by saying "Nu, nu nu." Indicating that it was improper to extend the noise making while people where still fasting.

What does middos tovos mean? It means not just thinking about me. For example, the fact that I am enjoying myself noise making and having a great time. This is how **ר' אלישיב** was **מחנך** his **קהילה**



Rabbi Jeremy Golker – Happiness

משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה - (תענית דף כט עמוד א)

Simcha is primary in Jewish thoughts, life and practices. As we say every day - **עִבְדוּ אֶת־ה׳ בְּשִׂמְחָה בֹּאוּ לְפָנָיו בִּרְנָנָה** – '***Serve Hashem with joy, come before Him with praise***.' (Tehillim 100:2)

Rabbi Shlomo Gissinger used to bentch people with the bracha – "You should always be zoche to serve Hashem **בְּשִׂמְחָה**."

One of the most chilling pesukim at the end of the Tochacha says: **תַּחַת אֲשֶׁר לֹא־עָבַדְתָּ אֶת־ה׳ אֱלֹקיךָ בְּשִׂמְחָה וּבְטוּב לֵבָב** - '*All these curses will befall you, because you did not serve Hashem with happiness and with gladness of heart*.' (Devorim 28:47)

More than that, there is an often-quoted gemara in Taanis 22a – '*Rabbi Beroka Ḥoza'a was often found in the market of Bei Lefet, and Elijah the Prophet would often appear to him. Once Rabbi Beroka said to Elijah: Of all the people who come here, is there anyone in this market worthy of the World-to-Come? He said to him: No.*

In the meantime, two brothers came to the marketplace. Elijah said to Rabbi Beroka: These two have a share in the World-to-Come. Rabbi Beroka went over to the men and said to them: What is your occupation? They said to him: We are jesters, and we cheer up the depressed.

Rashi says amazingly - **בדוחי – שמחים ומשמחים בני אדם.** *They were jesters who were happy themselves… and made other people happy.*

So we see that to be **בְּשִׂמְחָה** is a very important ideal in Yiddishkeit.

"The message of Purim is that even in the darkest of times, we can still find hope and redemption through our connection to Hashem." ~ Rabbi Meir Shapiro (1887-1933)



What Are We Dancing About On Purim? by Rabbi Moshe Krieger

In Megilas Esther (8:16), it states that "the Jews fulfilled and accepted upon themselves" the mitzvos of Purim. The Sages (Shabbos 88a) interpret these words as meaning that at the time of Purim, the Jews made a new acceptance of the Torah. At Mount Sinai, their acceptance of the Torah had been coerced. The Sages describe this as Hashem holding the mountain over them like a barrel, declaring that if they did not accept the Torah, this would be their place of burial. On Purim, however, they accepted the Torah out of love, not fear. Rashi (ibid.) explains that this was the love the nation felt because of the miracles Hashem had done for them at this time.

Only, many other miracles had occurred since Matan Torah. Why didn't they inspire the Jews to accept the Torah out of love? What was so special about the miracles of Purim?

Also, what exactly did the Jews accept upon themselves? Did this acceptance only add feelings of love to the original acceptance, or did it entail some new obligation?

The Vilna Gaon (Megilas Esther 1:2) begins by explaining that the miracles of Purim are unique from those that preceded them in that they had occurred while the nation was in Exile. They had only recently been evicted from their land by Nebuchadnezzar, and they still felt the brunt of this punishment. That Hashem would do miracles for them even amidst His anger was such a powerful display of His love for them that it inspired them to want to show their love to Him as well.

The Vilna Gaon offers an analogy for this: A king was very angry at his son, the prince, for his behavior. He decided to expel him from

his palace, intending that this would make him correct his ways. The prince was forced to set out to a dangerous forest. There, he was attacked by a wild animal. He tried in vain to defend himself, but out of nowhere, a group of men appeared and came to his rescue. The prince assumed that this was just a coincidence, so he thanked the men and moved on. Later, a group of people angry at the king came and attacked the prince. Again, from out of nowhere, a group of men appeared and rescued the prince. This time, he realized that this was no coincidence, but rather his father had arranged for these men to be on hand to protect him.

When the prince realized that his father was still caring for him even amidst his punishment, he felt a greater love for his father than ever before. So, too, when the Jews realized that even in this time of anger, Hashem wrought such miracles for them, their love for Him was aroused, and they were ready to make a new kabalas haTorah.

What was this new kabala? Midrash Tanchuma (Noah 6:9) explains that at Matan Torah, the Jews had accepted upon themselves the written Torah and fulfillment of its mitzvos, but as for Torah sheb'al peh, meaning strenuous study of Torah — this they had not accepted. For Torah to be studied correctly, it must be learned day and night, with tremendous effort and a willingness to forego pleasures, wealth and even sleep.

Even though they desired Hashem's Torah, it was hard for them to accept upon themselves such self-sacrifice. Now that they felt Hashem's love so strongly, this instilled in them a greater love for Torah, and they accepted these sacrifices wholeheartedly.

For us as well, Purim is a time to make a new kabalas HaTorah, each Jew at his level. For some, this means learning day and night with added devotion and self-sacrifice. For others, self-sacrifice takes the form of getting up earlier in order to have a learning seder before setting out to work. In general, sticking to a daily schedule

of learning means that at times, we forego pleasures, opportunities to make more money and the like. This willingness to sacrifice is part of the acceptance of the Torah that we should all be making at Purim.

Rav Avraham Yitzchak Kook says that before Purim, we should pause and remind ourselves what it is we are celebrating. We must have in mind that the joy of Purim is based on love for Hashem and His Torah. The singing and dancing is meant to express how happy we are that we are Hashem's nation and that we have the privilege of studying His Torah. Even if we get wild in dancing, it's only an expression of this great love (see Ohr Hachaim Devarim 26:11).

The custom of drinking on Purim is also supposed to be based first and foremost on the joy we feel for Hashem and His Torah. The Beur Halacha (695:2) states clearly that if drinking will detract from our fulfilling mitzvos such as birkas hamazon, we should not drink.

Rav Yerucham Levovitz would explain that the expression, "A man must drink on Purim until he does not know [the difference] between 'blessed is Mordechai' and 'cursed is Haman'" (Megila 7b), means that one should feel closeness to Hashem even if his intelligence has been dimmed by the effects of alcohol. Even in such a state, his very body should cling to Hashem, even if his intelligence is not altogether with him at this moment. If after drinking, a person does not feel this closeness to Hashem, he should realize that he is not fulfilling the mitzvah of Purim correctly.

Rabbi Eliezer Gordon (Telzer) was a living example of love of Torah. At his funeral, one of the Rabbanim said in his eulogy:

"Once, as Rav Elazar was on his way to shul, he passed by a window of that same shul and overheard two bachurim speaking in learning. He stopped in his tracks, mesmerized by their words, and suddenly, he felt a desire to add an explanation of his own to their discussion, only he was on the sidewalk below. The windowsill alone was barely in

his reach. I saw that he was preparing himself to jump, grab hold of the windowsill and pull himself into the shul.

"'Rav Elazar! What are you doing?' I called out, trying not to scream. 'Just keep walking, and at the end of the block is the door to the shul. You can walk in like a mentsch!'

"That was what I tried to say, but before I got the words out, Rav Elazar had already grabbed hold of the windowsill and pulled himself into the shul, calling out to the bachurim: 'Wait! Don't go on! I want to add something important to your discussion!'

"After giving his input into their sugya, Rav Elazar apologized: 'I'm sorry for startling you by climbing through the window, but for such a beautiful bit of reasoning, I couldn't hold myself back.'

"What ahavas Torah he had!" May we *grow* in ahavas Torah on Purim!

Why Read the Whole Megila?

The sages (Megila 19a) differ as to where a person must begin reading Megilas Esther in order to fulfill this mitzva on Purim. One opinion is to start at the beginning of the Megila, another is from the first mention of Mordechai, still another from the first mention of Haman, and the last opinion is that the obligation begins with the words: "On that night, the king could not sleep." The final opinion is because this is when the main miracle of Purim actually began. The previous opinions agree that this is the main miracle, but hold that more details need to be added.

Rav Shlomo Brevda notes that all the sages agree that the Megila must be read until the end, which raises a question: If the reason for reading the Megila is to appreciate the miracle that happened then, why read the Megila until the end? The Megila ends with the Jews' acceptance of the festival of Purim and details about how to fulfill it (mishloach manos, matanos l'evyonim, seudas Purim and the Megila reading). This is not part of the miracle; why must it be read?

Rav Brevda answers that it is not enough simply to appreciate the miracle and thank Hashem for it. Were that enough, we would be able to stop reading the Megila after the description of the killing of Haman and the enemies of the Jews. However, we must keep reading, because we need to learn about how the miracle affected the nation: We merited a new festival, replete with mitzvos, each of them bringing us closer to Hashem.



Still, Rav Brevda asks: the last verse of the Megila (10:3) praises Mordechai as being the viceroy and a great benefactor to the Jews, and that he was liked by "most of his brothers." Why must we read this verse? What does it have to do with either the Purim miracle or the effect the miracle had on us? Moreover, the sages (Megila 16b) ask: Why only to "most" of his brothers? Why shouldn't everyone have lauded Mordechai?

Rather, the sages explain that some of the chachamim actually drew away from Mordechai because his appointment into Achashverosh's government took him away from Torah study somewhat. Of course, Mordechai reasoned that accepting this position was necessary for Klal Yisrael, and he surely continued learning. Nevertheless, these chachamim felt that at a time when the entire nation accepted the Torah out of love, it was incumbent upon the leader to learn Torah exclusively, without making any outside considerations.

We see that the majority of the people, and the chachamim of that time, did not share this minority opinion, but the Megila relates this in order to show how enthusiastic the nation was then over Torah.

Derech Hashem (4:8) states that every year on Purim, we have to put ourselves back into this experience and renew our own acceptance of Torah out of love. Of course, one should learn as much

as he can on Purim. At night, we can surely learn, and even during the day, when we are busy with the mitzvos of the day, giving out matanos l'evyonim and mishloach manos, and preparing the seuda — still, a person should try to learn as much as he can.

The Yesod V'Shoresh Ha'Avoda says that one shouldn't leave the shul after Shacharis on Purim until he has learned something. This way, he is sure to accomplish some learning, and hopefully, later in the day he will find more time to learn. I knew a man who learned the entire Maseches Megila every Purim. The Yerushalmi (Megila 2:4) hints that on Purim, it is fitting to engage in this Masechta.

May we *make* a proper kabalas HaTorah on Purim!

Why the Joy of Purim Starts So Early

The sages state (Taanis 29a) that "when the month of Adar begins, we increase our level of joy." The Gemara goes on to say that not only joy, but the Mazal of the Jewish people is better in Adar than in other months.

Presumably, Adar is a joyful month because of Purim. So why should the joy start a whole two weeks before Purim? And when there are two Adars, some say that the joy begins a month and a half before Purim! While we may start our Pesach cleaning well in advance of the holiday, Pesach only starts on the 15th of Nissan, and the same applies for all the Chagim. Aren't we starting the joy of Adar a bit too early?

Also, the exact wording of the Gemara is "just as when Av begins, we reduce our level of joy, so too on Adar, we increase our level of joy." Why does the Gemara connect Av, which is the time for mourning the loss of the Beis Hamikdash, with the month of Adar? We reduce joy during Av as a sign of mourning. What does that have to do with increasing joy on Adar?

The Sefer Shevet Mussar answers that in Av, the main Mitvza is to mourn for the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash on Tisha Baav itself. Only, we can't reach a state of real mourning if we don't start ahead of time. Arousing in ourselves a sense of mourning for the Churban must be done little by little.

So too, the main joy of the month of Adar is on Purim. However, we have to first build up an inner sense of joy and Hodaah [thanksgiving and praise to Hashem]. This is a process that takes time. It's not a matter of drinking a bit of wine and feeling an induced sort of "joy." The sages are referring to an internal state of joy and Hodaa for the miracles of Purim, and such a lofty, inspired feeling cannot be reached in a minute.



Finding Hashem When He is Hiding

Rav David Cohen, the Rosh Yeshiva of Chevron, reminds us that the Purim story took place in a time of *hester panim* – where Hashem was "hiding His face from us," as it were. In such a situation, one can only reach Hashem by applying extra effort to one's prayer (see *Chulin* 139b.) This is what Mordechai and Esther were doing at that time. Indeed, the Midrash (*Shemos Rabba* 38:4) tells us that Mordechai was literally praying nonstop throughout the entire episode described in *Megillas Esther*.

From the time of the *Megilla* until this day, we remain in a state of *hester panim*. Hashem's guiding hand remains hidden from us. We can learn from Mordechai and Esther that our primary focus when facing troubles must be to apply extra effort to prayer.

Many people do turn to Hashem in prayer when they experience difficulty. However, if time goes by and they feel they are not being answered, their prayer may lack hope of redemption. **The Steipler** used to tell people never to give up. Even if it takes a long time before one is answered, it is not a reason to stop praying fervently.

Perhaps Hashem is merely waiting for more prayers. Indeed, the Sages teach (*Brachos* 32b) that one who prays and is not answered should pray again, and again, and again. He should never despair that Hashem will eventually answer him.

Another way to help our prayers reach Hashem during *hester panim* is to strengthen our *tzniyus*. In addition to the primary usage of the word, referring to modesty in dress, *tzniyus* also entails serving Hashem in a private manner – not showing off or gaining attention or respect for our deeds. **The Maharal** (*Ohr Chadash*, introduction) writes that Mordechai and Esther were exceptional in their *tzniyus*, and because of this, their prayers were answered.

The Maharal notes that their *tzniyus* was evident in their names. The name "Esther" is very close to the word *hester*, hiddenness. Mordechai's name is hinted at in the *Targum* (the Divinely inspired translation of the Torah written by Onkelos) as two of the spices of the *ketores* offering (*Chulin* 139b). The *ketores* was offered in a secret manner—only the Kohen who offered it was present, and no one else ever saw it. Through their *tzniyus*, Mordechai and Esther merited that their prayers reached Hashem and saved the entire nation, despite the *hester panim*.

We should try to serve Hashem with *tzniyus*, doing mitzvos without trying to draw attention. We should even look for opportunities to do mitzvos that no one will ever know about. This brings us closer to Hashem, which is what Hashem loves (see *Micha* 6:6-8). Thus, our relationship with Hashem is strengthened, and our prayers will be answered even in *hester panim*.

Many people would come to **Rav Menachem Mandel** of Bnei Brak for his blessing, as he had acquired a reputation as a *poel yeshuos* (a *tzaddik* who had the ability to redeem them from their afflictions with his blessing). He would advise people, "The more you do things for Hashem in a secret manner, the more the Shechina will be present. The greater the presence of the Shechina, the more

your prayers will be answered, and the more you will save yourself from troubles."

His son-in-law was once asked how he was able to bring about what often seemed like open miracles. "Do you not know the Gemara (*Moed Katan* 16b) which states, 'Hashem makes decrees, but who can annul them? One who is *tzanua*.'? My father-in-law hid himself for years. No one knew who he was. He stayed at home, serving Hashem by himself. Even after people began to hear that he was a *poel yeshuos*, he still tried to keep himself hidden as much as possible. He even went out of his way to do things that gave the impression that he was a simple man!"

May we be *zocheh* to come closer to Hashem!



וּמִשְׁלַח מָנוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ וּמַתָּנוֹת לָאֶבְיוֹנִים

The amazing story of **R' Michoel Ber Weissmandel *zt"l*** and the way he survived World War II is truly inspiring. When the war broke out, he quickly realized the horrific extent of Germany's plans for his Jewish brethren. His creativity and understanding of human nature, though, told him there was a way to at least delay the menace: the Nazis could be bribed.

With supreme daring and ingenuity, he and a small "Working Group" managed to hold off the deportation of Slovakian Jews for almost two years, from 1942 till 1944. This created a window of opportunity through which thousands of Slovakians escaped. During that time, he worked to save individuals and whole communities with every fiber of his being, communicated with the Nazi beasts themselves, the Allied powers, the Zionist groups, and international Jewish agencies. Tragically, a lack of funds and apathy from overseas, along with

assimilated Jews' distrust of "ultra-Orthodox" rabbis, conspired to thwart his plans. Nevertheless, thousands of Jews escaped certain murder through his assistance. However, as a well-known presence and guardian of Slovakian Jewry, he was also a prime target of the Nazis. He was able to evade capture for some time but eventually the Nazi sadist in charge of Slovakian deportations, Alois Brunner ym"s, made it his prime goal of capturing the renowned Rabbi Weissmandel, and before long, he was caught and placed on a cattle car to Auschwitz.



But R' Michoel Ber came prepared and snuck a small saw with him which he used to cut through the wooden boards of the train doors. When he opened up a hole large enough for a person to fit through, he begged his family and the other Jews on the train to jump out. But they were petrified at the thought of hurtling from a speeding train and in the end, only R' Michoel Ber jumped off and saved himself. He was sure that his wife and children would see his example and follow him but when he realized that they were not coming, his heart was torn asunder and he never fully recovered from the pain of their loss.

Through his networks, he had been made aware of a secret bunker set up for Slovakian Jews by a kind Slovakian gentile who allowed Jews to stay there protected from the authorities. By the time R' Michoel Ber reached the confines of the bunker, seventeen Jews, including the holy personage of the **Stropkover Rebbe, R' Menachem Mendel Halberstam *zt"l***, were already living there. It was said that when the *Rebbe* came to the bunker and asked to be

let in, the people there would only do so if he blessed them and "guaranteed" that they would all survive. He did so and not one person from the bunker was lost!

Life in the bunker was at times interminable. The men used their time to learn *Torah*, and the women took care of the cooking and laundry. The kind Slovak provided them with food and raw goods and tried to acquire whatever they requested of him. It was hot and stuffy inside and there was very little to do in the bunker.

Among the group residing in the bunker were a number of teenaged girls, and one day, R' Michoel Ber noticed that some of the young girls were hiding some inappropriate reading material which they surreptitiously looked at throughout the day. Apparently, they had asked the Slovak gentile to procure them some reading material to while away the long hours of boredom and he had brought them whatever he found. How was he to know what was appropriate and what was not?

As the weather began to moderate, the holiday of *Purim* arrived and the Jews inside the bunker were determined to keep the spirit of the holiday and the *mitzvos*, as best as they were able. - There was one single cube of sugar in the bunker, and everyone took turns passing it to the next person. In this way, they fulfilled the *mitzvah* of *Mishloach Manos*.

Suddenly, R' Michoel Ber thought of an idea. Turning to the girls, he said, "We have given each other a 'gift' with this cube and done our best to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *Mishloach Manos*. Now let us give *Mishloach Manos* to the One Above, *Hakadosh Boruch Hu*. Let us offer Him a gift as well. If we were to get rid of these books and papers which a Jewish daughter has no business reading anyway, surely *Hashem* will look favorably on this 'present' that we are presenting to Him. Maybe this merit will see us all through to the end of this bitter war." The girls agreed and the books were tossed.



Purim Insights by Harav Zisha Kohn

On Purim, we have four central Mitzvos: Reading the Megillah, Mishloach Manos, Matanos L'Evyonim, and having a Seudah (festive meal).

The Megillah publicizes the miracle that took place. Mishloach Manos and Matanos L'Evyonim bring joy and happiness to others while allowing them to have food for a Seudah. The Seudah is meant to bring us joy and happiness. However, there is an added Mitzvah of drinking to the point of intoxication (Ad D'lo Yodah).

Let's try to understand the purpose behind this seemingly strange commandment. The Gemara (Chullin 139b) - teaching there is a source in the Torah for everything - asks, "Where is there an allusion to Haman in the Torah? As it is written (Bereishis 3:11), הֲמִן הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ לְבִלְתִּי אֲכָל־מִמֶּנּוּ אָכָלְתָּ - *'Have you perhaps eaten from the tree (הֲמִן־הָעֵץ) from which I told you not to eat?'"* The word ("perhaps from") is spelled הֲמִן with the same letters as Haman.

At first inspection, this appears to be a simple play on words. Upon reflection, however, we will find that there is more to this "simple allusion" than meets the eye.

The Vilna Gaon, Z"TL, offers an incredible insight into what the Gemara was teaching us. Where do find in the Torah the source for a person such as Haman and his downfall? A person who had so many blessings in his life - more children than anyone in the world, more money than most of the world, and more power than anyone (everyone had to bow down to him) – and yet, he was miserable. How is it that one doesn't appreciate so much obvious good in their lives?

The Megillah tells us that one day, Haman came home and said (Esther 5:13), "All this (my power and riches) gives me no

satisfaction as long as I see that Jew Mordecai sitting at the king's gate" - because there is one person (Mordechai) who did not bow down to him. He focused on what he didn't have instead of on what he did have.

Where is this kind of behaviour found?

The Gemara answers that it comes from the first couple, Adam and Chava. Hashem created the two and told them that they could have pretty much anything they wanted. They had Gan Eden at their disposal, the angels were pouring wine and roasting meat. The only thing they could not have partaken in was the Eitz Hada'as – the fruit from the tree of Knowledge, and they fell and ate.

This concept of letting what we lack be our downfall was ingrained in mankind from the beginning of creation. From the sin of Eitz Hada'as, we understand Haman's attitude from the Torah.

The big question is as follows. Haman was a Rasha (wicked man) so, of course, he wasn't happy with his lot. However, we know that Adam and Chava were tremendous people; how is it they were not happy with their lot. What lesson can we glean from this and why is it learned specifically during the Purim story?

Rabbi Yonasan Eibshitz, ZT"L (in Ya'aros Devash) explains as follows. Hashem tells Adam (Bereishis 2:17) "you must not eat of it (the Eitz Hada'as); for as soon as you eat of it, you shall Mos Tomus – die, die." Why the repetition of the word die? Then later (ibid. 3:4), the snake says the double language, "You are not going to die die." How can someone die twice?

Rabbi Eibshitz explains that Adam wasn't just a person who wanted fruit. He was someone close to Hashem and wanted to know Him on the highest level. There are 50 levels of wisdom, and the 50th level of knowledge is understanding Hashem himself and that's a level that a person cannot reach while in this world; only one who leaves this world can achieve that. Adam thought that by eating from the Tree

of Knowledge he would reach this exalted level of understanding Hashem. Hashem told him that you will not be able to live if you eat from the tree, to which Adam countered that he was ready to die for this incredible privilege. All he wanted was to know Hashem;

Hashem told him that it was not going to work. "If you go against My Word, you will not get to know Me in the next world, either – you will die both in this world and the next." You cannot reach greatness by not listening to Hashem's Will; one can't reach levels of knowledge in forbidden ways. - The snake was telling Adam, "Don't worry – you won't die twice; you will reach the level you are seeking to aspire." Adam and his wife listened and faltered.

Haman wanted to destroy the Jewish nation, but he knew it would not be a simple task to annihilate such a beautiful nation. So, he concocted an advanced plan to make a Seudah (meal) of Achashveirosh, to get Jews to eat what they're not supposed to, where they're not supposed to, in order for Hashem to remember the sin of the Eitz Hada'as, which he hoped would bring death to the Jews.

To rectify this, the Sages instituted that we have the Mitzvah of Seudas Yom Tov, wherein we are supposed to reach a level through feasting of Ad D'Lo Yodah – a state of not knowing the difference between "blessed is Mordechai and cursed is Haman." So much so, that we have a Mitzvah to provide others with the means in order to help them reach this level.

We can now understand this seemingly peculiar Mitzvah of getting intoxicated.

Since the sin all started with Adam wanting to understand Hashem even while going against His Will. So, on Purim, we have the exact opposite goal: to lose our sense of knowledge/understanding and to do it because that's what Hashem said and that's His Will. - We searched for da'as (knowledge) through food and now we give it up through food and say, "Hashem – it's not about us, but about doing

what You want us to do because we love You." That being the case, we can now extrapolate a central lesson from the Yom Tov of Purim. With all this being said, we need to understand that the original sin, as explained by the Vilna Gaon above, started with Adam not being happy with the amount that he had, which then had to be corrected through Haman who was the ultimate prototype of one who does not appreciate their lot.

Haman was not happy with his state of gashmeus (materialism), while Adam was not happy with his state of ruchneus (spirituality). There are many people who have a lot of good, either in ruchneus or gashmeus, and are searching for more to add to their "fortune." Although Hashem put this trait into humanity to help us strive for more and be greater, the negative side, authored by Haman/Yeitzer Harah compels one to discredit their successes. Haman had it all but one thing, and l'havdil, Adam had all the enjoyments of the world and the 49th level of knowledge but was still willing to die and give it all up for the one thing he did not have.

We must take this lesson into our lives. Hashem has given us so much good in both the spiritual and material arenas and we must be very appreciative to Him for all our blessings. In this way, we fix up our erroneous attitude. We are so happy and thankful for our lot to Hashem, like we say at the end of Modim D'Rabbanan, "[We are grateful for the privilege] of thankfully acknowledging You." Even if we don't reach higher levels, we appreciate the ability to be able to appreciate. This way we can reach the level of more Simcha of Adar and Purim. This will herald the day of the ultimate Simcha with the coming of Mashiach when "our mouths will be filled with laughter."

"Purim is a time to let go of our fears and anxieties, and to embrace the joy and happiness that comes from being close to Hashem." ~ The Kotzker Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel.

Bonus Story on Purim by Yoni Schwartz

In **Rav Chaim Kanievsky's** younger years, he learned in the Lomza Yeshiva in Israel under **Rav Shach**. One year on Erev Purim, as the clock was ticking with still many important tasks yet to be tended and much learning to be finished, Rav Chaim, ZT"L, and his chavrusa decided to prepare a special mishloach manos for their Rebbe, Rav Elazar Shach, ZT"L.

In the Mishloach Manos they wrote a paper expressing their appreciation for him together with a long list of deep and complex questions on Shas from Brachos to Bava Basra. At the end of the letter they wrote, "We have journeyed thus far, and we hope that the Rav will respond to us and set us on the right path."

Rav Berel Weintraub and his chavrusa signed it and sent it to Rav Shach, who was very touched by it. He saved it with his papers for life and said it was the best mishloach manos he had ever gotten.

The Avodah of Purim

When the Kohein Gadol entered into the Kodesh HaKedoshim before Hashem, he prayed for himself, but not without first praying for his nation.

When Esther entered before Achashveirosh, she sacrificed her life and did so entirely and selflessly for her nation.

In this exact vein, when **R' Nosson Tzvi Finkel** was asked what he has in mind when he Davens, his response was: "Someone else!"

That is the Avodah of Purim; do and daven for someone else.

"We are not expected to be perfect; we are expected to try to grow." ~ Rabbi Efrem Goldberg.

3 Days of Purim

This year, because Shushan Purim falls on Shabbos, in Yerushalayim Purim is celebrated over three days. - The three days of Purim comprise 72 hours which is also the numerical value of "chesed," the Divine mercy that saves Israel and defeats all our enemies.

Not coincidentally, Esther also decreed, and Mordechai enacted that all of Israel should fast for 72 hours in order to awaken this divine mercy. As it was a salvation for us in those days, so should it be in these days.



● World of Happiness

Tonight is Rosh Chodesh Adar and so, naturally, our subject is מִשֶּׁנִּכְנַס אֲדָר מַרְבִּין בְּשִׂמְחָה. Now, when our Sages (Taanis 29a) told us this *halachah* that 'when Adar comes in we're expected to increase our happiness' it's not intended merely as good advice. It's that too of course, but it's more than that. It means that there's an *obligation* upon us during this month to find ways and means of adding joy to our lives; for thirty days we're expected to practice up on *the habit* of happiness.

Not merely for this month alone. Yes, דָּבָר בְּעִתּוֹ מַה טּוֹב, but the idea is to *train* ourselves in the ways of happiness, to become so *habituated* to patterns of thought that increase happiness, that we'll become happy people all year long. And so when, like this year, there are two Adars it's even better. A habit that we can practice for two months will have much more of an effect.

● Good Habits

Now, I use the word 'habit' intentionally and I have to explain that. Because you might say, 'Well, a habit of happiness, after a while it becomes mundane, boring.' Like a man once said to me: 'How can you *daven* with *kavanah* every day? After a while you get accustomed to the words and you start *davening* without *kavanah.* It becomes a bad habit.'

I told him it's not so. 'Just the opposite,' I said. 'Keep on trying to *daven* with *kavanah* every day and after a while it becomes a good habit; you get into the habit of *davening* with *kavanah,* of feeling that you're talking to your Creator.' It's true that *hergel,* habit, can be used *chalilah* for great harm. If a person gets into the habit of doing good things or saying good things, like in *davenen*, without thinking what he's doing, it's a tragedy. If three times a day he's mumbling words without thinking so he's practicing destroying his personality. He's ruining himself with bad habits. But like all gifts from Hakadosh Baruch Hu, the gift of habit can be used for great benefit too. You can get into the habit of enjoying the *davenen;* every word becomes sweet, every word a treasure.

● Happy Habits

And the habit of *simcha* is the same; if a person practices *ignoring* all the happiness of this world so he becomes a person of habit – the habit of sadness, of gloominess. You meet people like that. Old grouches. They practiced up all their lives and now they're habituated belly-achers – nothing is good, everything is bad. There's nothing to be happy about. But when it's practiced

properly – you have to go to the right places and learn the right ideas – then you develop a habit of happiness; you become habituated in *simcha,* in finding happiness in things that go unnoticed by others.

That's what it means to be *marbeh besimcha.* You can't just order *simcha* from the Kedem Wine Factory. *Marbim* means you have to do something to increase the dose, to develop the habit of looking at the world through rosy glasses. I say rosy glasses – the truth is you don't need rosy glasses; creation is good without any tints. It's very good!

And don't think it's just an idea, a *ra'ayon* that I'm trying to sell you. It's one of the *yesodos* of the Torah. Hakadosh Baruch Hu expects us to see that the world He gave us is a good world. וַיַּרְא אֱלֹקִים אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה וְהִנֵּה טוֹב מְאֹד – Hashem saw that it's a very good world (Bereishis 1:31). Why did He tell us that? Of course it's good – He made it. The answer is He wants *us* to know it. *We* should say it's a very good world. It means we should be happy people. And so you see that all the way from the beginning, that's one of the primary purposes of creation, to acquire the habit of happiness.

● Garden of Pleasure

You know when Adam and Chava were created they didn't have any habits. They had excellent minds; fresh, innocent, pure minds. They had perfect *seichel* but they had no habits. All animals have instincts. As soon as they're born they have built-in habits of what to do, how to react. Human beings however were created without habits, a clean slate, ready to be written on. But Hakadosh Baruch Hu did something that showed that there is a certain habit He wanted them to get right away. What did He do? He put them in Gan Eden, a Garden of Enjoyment. *Eden* means the pleasure of *this* world; all kinds of delicious fruits.

And it's not an accident; it's made for that purpose. Don't you see that when an apple grows on the tree, it doesn't become worse and worse as it ripens. It becomes better and better. So you see it's so!

The purpose is you should enjoy it! No question about it. Hashem is interested in making this a world of happiness, of enjoyment.

● Enjoying the Garden

Now, I know you *tzaddikim* don't believe in enjoying things but listen to me. Hakadosh Baruch Hu put them in a Gan Eden because He wanted them to learn the habit of enjoying things; He wanted them to get in the habit of saying "Oh, Ribono Shel Olam! How good this is and how good that is!"

Of course once they say that, they'll say 'Thank You, Hashem.' When Adam and Chava would take a delicious fruit off a tree in that garden, they'd enjoy it to no end and they'd thank Hashem. Once you enjoy, you're reminded of the One giving you all of this happiness.

And therefore we see that the plan of Hashem was at the very beginning to train Adam and Chava in being *marbeh besimcha* by learning the habit of enjoying Olam Hazeh. And it was such an important principle, that He put them into Gan Eden. Otherwise He could have put them in a place that's not Gan Eden; He could have made for them a place with all kinds of interesting things. *A Gan Chochma,* a Garden of Wisdom, where they could see wonderful things in nature, all types of *niflaos haBorei* that would show them the *chochmas Hashem* in the world. No, He didn't do that. He put them in a Gan Eden, a place of *enjoyment,* because He wanted them to learn how to be happy in this world.

And now they were ready for the great career of life, the career of enjoying this world. Because the greatest *hatzlacha* in *Olam Hazeh* is טוֹב לְהֹדוֹת לַה'. The best of all things is to learn how to say thank you to Hashem. That's the highest form of *avodas Hashem*, to serve Him with gratitude.

● His Happy Handiwork

What are you grateful for? What are you thanking Him for? כִּי שִׂמַּחְתַּנִי ה' בְּפָעֳלֶךָ - *You made me happy with Your work* (Tehillim

92:5). Dovid said, "I look around at Your world and I say thank You Hashem for such a world. בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ אֲרַנֵּן – *I sing at the works of Your Hands* (ibid.).

It means *all* the 'work of Your Hands'. Everything in the world is made for happiness. The sun is a happiness. The clouds are a happiness. The rain is happiness. The fact that you can swallow; swallowing is happiness! A heartbeat is happiness. The ocean is for happiness. It's full of good things to eat. Hundreds of thousands of tons of fish are taken out of the ocean every day.

The soil is for happiness! Every tablespoon of soil has more living things inside of it, bacteria and fungi, more than people in Greater New York. Every tablespoon full of soil! And it's intended to make you happy. Soil causes all good things to grow.

That was the intention of the *briah*, that we should enjoy all the details of life and thus sing to Hashem; and sing more and more and more and more until it becomes a habit to sing all your life. And if that's the purpose of life then we have to understand how important, how essential, how urgent it is to cause ourselves to be happy!

Because without *simcha* we're not going to do this big job that's waiting for us; that's לְמַעַן יְזַמֶּרְךָ כָבוֹד וְלֹא יִדֹּם ה' אֱלֹקַי לְעוֹלָם אוֹדֶךָּ – *to sing to and praise Hashem always and forever* (ibid. 32:13). And in order to do that, you know, you have to have a happy personality.

● The Biology of Happiness

Not only for thanking; if you want to make progress in *avodas Hashem*, progress in *davening* or progress in good character and *middos tovos*, progress in *emunah*, progress in *mitzvos*, a man must have certain ingredients and one of the most important ingredients is *simcha*. You must gain the habit of happiness in your daily regimen, otherwise you cannot succeed. That's why there's such a big emphasis in the Torah on happiness.

That's why Hakadosh Baruch Hu desires that we should be not only Orthodox Jews, not only *frum* Jews, but happy Jews.

I can prove it scientifically. It's easy to prove scientifically, from biology, that our Creator wants us to be happy because the body functions better when we're happy. The Creator made the body and He made it so that a person lives a healthier life, a longer life, when He's happy.

You know we have in our body glands that give forth secretions, hormones, that help control very many functions in the body. You have the pituitary gland. You have the thyroid gland. The parathyroid, the adrenals, the pancreas, other glands; and they give forth secretions and hormones.

Now, these secretions are tremendously complicated and the scientists have spent lifetimes in the laboratories studying their secrets. And it's been discovered that when a person is disturbed, when he's angry or jealous or worried, when he's unhappy, something happens to these secretions and they don't come out right. And when somebody is happy, when he's in a good mood, certain chemical reactions take place that make the secretions come out exactly right. It's a well known fact.

● It's Old News By Us

Now you're hearing something not what I said. It's not said by *tzaddikim*. It's said by the scientists. In order for your body to function most efficiently, it's important to be in a good mood, a mood of happiness. But we understand that the scientists are only discovering the plan of Hashem, that He wants happy people. They're finally figuring out what we knew all along; that עוֹלָם חֶסֶד יִבָּנֶה, that the entire *briah*, your own body included, is made for the purpose of seeing the good of the world!

And so מִשֶּׁנִּכְנַס אֲדָר מַרְבִּין בְּשִׂמְחָה means not only that we should be happy when we see Haman hanging; that we'll be delirious with happiness when the time comes and we see all of our enemies hanging.

It's that too but it's much more than that. *Marbin besimcha* means we have to start changing our attitude and understand that it's the *ratzon Hashem* that we should try to gain this *middah* of *sameach,* the habit of happiness, all year long.

◆ **אשר הכין לו** – ***Which he had prepared for him*** (Esther 6:4). The word **לו**, *for him*, is seemingly superfluous. According to the Gemara: *A Tanna stated: He had prepared it for himself* (Megillah 16a). The Gemara tells us that Haman, without realizing it, was Divinely influenced to prepare the gallows for ultimate use on himself. Elsewhere in the Megillah, the Heavenly decree that was originally against the Jews was reversed and turned against their enemies.

The preparation of the gallows was different. The Gemara tells us that from the moment of its preparation, its intended victim was Haman. (Vilna Gaon) [Purim - Artscroll]

Smelly Haman - R. Yosef Chayim Sonnenfeld

Chazal point to the Pasuk in Ki Sisa, which lists ***'Mar-D'ror'*** at the head of the list of spices, and which Unklus amazingly translates as 'Mira-Dachya' (which contains all the letters of 'Mordechai'). This they explain, is where Mordechai is hinted in the Torah.

Haman too, has the distinction of being mentioned in the Torah - in the Pasuk in Bereishis (3:11) "***ha'min ha'Eitz***", which can also be read as 'Haman ha'Eitz', an obvious allusion to Haman's happy ending, for us anyway.

R. Yosef Chayim however, finds Haman hinted in the very same set of spices as the one in which Mordechai is hinted - in the evil-

smelling "Chelb'nah", one of the components, of the spices (see Parshas Ketores, in the Korbanos that we read each morning, before Pesukei de'Zimrah).

Because the numerical value of "Chelb'nah" is the equivalent of 'Haman' (particularly relevant after his beloved daughter had poured something rather obnoxious over his head, just before he was hauled off to the second party with the King and Queen).

Stalin and the Purim Miracle



Stalin had plans to murder millions of Russian Jews. Like Haman, the tables suddenly turned.

Jewish holidays are not merely a commemoration of an event in time. The time of year in which the miracle occurred was an opportune time for the conception of that miracle. As we make our way toward the Purim holiday, we are entering a time zone in which the all the Haman's of the world can fail, and Jewish redemption is born. The death and downfall of Stalin is an example of a miraculous, yet untold, modern day Purim story.

Joseph Stalin, tyrant of communist Russia dubbed the invincible "man of steel," who murdered approximately 20,000,000 of his own people, was particularly hateful toward the Jews. After World War Two, his anti-Semitic campaign took a more aggressive, public stance. In 1947, he targeted thousands of Jewish scientists, politicians, and intellectuals who were dismissed from their positions, humiliated, arrested, and tortured. Stalin's infamous

Doctor's Plot, in which six Jewish doctors were arrested and tortured into making a confession, began with the Stalin-controlled media spreading rumors that Jewish doctors were poisoning Russian children by injecting them with diphtheria and killing infants in hospital wards.

After spreading his toxic rumors about Jews to the public, Stalin carried on with his plans to eliminate Russia's two to four million Jews, by deporting them to the freezing, uninhabitable regions of Russia and leaving them to die of starvation, hypothermia, and disease. An article from the National Journal in 2003 reported that newly discovered documents proved that in the February of 1953, Stalin commissioned the construction of four camps in Kazakhstan, Siberia and in the Arctic North. The conjecture about Stalin's genocidal plans were confirmed by P.K. Ponomarenko, Soviet Ambassador in Poland.

"A week before the Purim of 1953… Jewish faces were far from merry," recounted Mrs. Batyah Barg, author of the autobiography *Voices in the Silence*. "In train stations all over Russia, train cars were being requisitioned to carry huge caravans of Jews into exile and slow death. Reliable sources confirmed that the expulsion would begin on the sixth of March, just a few days after Purim".

G-d will yet help…. Stalin is a mere mortal... no one can know what will be with him in a half hour.

Rabbi Yitzchak Zilber, another Jewish hero and author of the autobiography, *To Remain a Jew*, recounts this climatic time during which he was imprisoned in the frosty region of Siberia. After Rabbi Zilber read the Book of Esther recounting the miracle of Purim to a group of Jewish prisoners, one prisoner responded, "Who needs your tales about what happened 2,500 years ago? Tell me, where is your God today? It's not enough that Hitler finished six million – here they are about to be done with another three. Do you not see the

trains and the barracks that have already been built (for this purpose)?" To which the fearless Rabbi Zilber replied, "True, our situation is difficult, but don't be so quick to eulogize us. Haman also sent orders to 127 provinces. G-d will yet help…. Stalin is a mere mortal... no one can know what will be with him in a half hour."

That Purim night, a few days before the Jewish doctors were due to go to trial, and just thirty minutes after Rabbi Silver's foretelling of Stalin's vulnerable fate, Stalin was said to have "collapsed in a fit of rage" during a meeting in which his supporters expressed opposition to his evil plan, according to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. 1st of March 1953, Josef Stalin, the murderous, anti-Semitic killer of millions of *Yieden,* suddenly had a stroke.

Rabbi Zilber took out a Tehillim and repeated it constantly that Stalin's end should come sooner, until the news four days later that he had indeed died, and Rav Yitzchok was freed along with thousands of other prisoners! He said, "If today I know all of Tehillim by heart, this is due to Stalin. I went through them continually for three days and nights. I stopped only when I found out he was dead."

That Purim, thousands of Jewish prisoners were freed. Joseph Stalin died on March 5, just a few days later, to the great relief of Russian Jewry. – "To this day, I am choked with emotion every time I think back to that Purim of miracles," recounts Mrs. Batyah Barg.

May we continue to re-experience the miracles of our holidays each and every year.

"The story of Purim teaches us to never give up hope, no matter how dire the circumstances. Haman's decree was overturned in a single moment, showing us that salvation can come when we least expect it." ~ Noam Elimelech, Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk.

The Secret, Secret Story of Stalin's Purim Death

On the night of March 1st, 1953, when Jews around the world had just finished celebrating Purim, attendants of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin found him laying semi-conscious on the floor of his bedroom. He was sick and haemorrhaging blood for the next several days until finally dying on the 5th of March. His death was announced to the public the following day. While most Jews around the world were probably jubilant at the news, little could they know of the incredible events—both political and spiritual—which were transpiring in the fateful days before.

A couple of months earlier, on the 9th of January, state-owned mouthpiece *Pravda* published a propaganda article about a "Doctor's Plot" to secretly poison top Soviet leaders, including Stalin. Six of the named doctors were Jewish, and the others were supposedly Jewish-Zionist sympathizers, working together with American spies to destroy the Soviet Union. The article said:



Josef Stalin in 1920

Not surprisingly, a huge wave of anti-Semitism spread across the Soviet Union. Stalin used this as a pretext to order the construction of four new concentration camps in Kazakhstan and Siberia, arguing that he will gather Soviet Jews there, "for their own protection", to save them from angry Russian mobs.* Stalin's real intent was to finish what Hitler had started. Records suggest that the deportations were set to begin on March 6th, 1953—ironically, the same day his death was announced. After his death, Stalin's successors quickly absolved the doctors of any wrongdoing and buried the Doctors' Plot for good. Stalin's impending holocaust was scrapped. Millions of Jews across

the Soviet Union were saved—a Purim miracle. But there is much, much more to the story.

The Rebbe's Farbrengen

Back in New York City, on March 1st, 1953, the Lubavitcher Rebbe was starting a *motzei*-Purim farbrengen. In his discourse, the Rebbe recounted how when the czar was deposed in 1917, the Rebbe Rashab (Sholom Dov Ber, the fifth Lubavitcher Rebbe, 1860-1920) urged his followers to go vote. After voting, one simple Hasid saw some Russians shouting *hoora!* and joined in as well, thinking they meant *hu-ra* (**הוּא רַע**), "he is evil!"—happy that the evil, anti-Semitic czars that had caused the Jews so much anguish were finally gone. Bizarrely, the Rebbe (the seventh one, that is) started to shout *hu-ra*, too, and repeated the same story three separate times, each concluding with more *hu-ra's*. No one in the room understood what was going on. They assumed the Rebbe had done a spiritual rectification of some sort.

Nothing more was said of the Rebbe's strange actions until March 6th, when Stalin's death was announced. Turns out, at the same time that the Rebbe was making his *hu-ra's*—while recounting the fall of an old anti-Semitic Russian dictator—the contemporary anti-Semitic Russian dictator, Stalin, had collapsed in his room and was writhing in pain. It was only then that the Hasidim that were with the Rebbe on the night of March 1st began to piece together what had happened. Did the Rebbe put an end to Stalin? Well, not directly; the Rebbe was no assassin! (Not even a spiritual one.) So, what was really going on that night of March 1st?

Stalin's Purim Feast

While Jews around the world were enjoying their Purim feast, Stalin was getting together for a feast of his own back in Russia. At his last dinner Stalin was accompanied by secret police chief Lavrentiy Beria, Georgi Malenkov, Nikita Khrushchev (his soon-to-be successor) and Nikolai Bulganin. Later that night, Stalin had

mysteriously collapsed in his room. Yet, no doctor was called in to treat him until the following day. Some believe that Stalin's friends had gotten him drunk, and then Lavrentiy Beria slipped Stalin a poison. High-ranking Soviet diplomat Vyacheslav Molotov (1890-1986, of "Molotov cocktail" fame) would recall in his memoirs that Beria boasted about how he managed to terminate Stalin: "I did him in! I saved all of you!"

Others state that Stalin was not much of a drinker, and was unlikely to let himself get drunk. It is more likely that his treatment was purposely delayed until it was too late. Whatever the case, the evidence is very strong that Stalin's own inner circle killed him. Why?

For Stalin, the Doctor's Plot was only the start of something much bigger. Stalin had tied the doctors to American agents in Moscow. His plans were to accuse the US of plotting to nuke Moscow, and he supposedly had proof from a spy captured and interrogated in 1951. Stalin was gearing up to spark World War III (and possibly drawing up plans for an attack on American soil). His inner circle knew that he had absolutely lost it. And Stalin knew that they did not support him anymore, so he planned another purge of the Communist Party to eliminate dissenters. This was confirmed in the 1956 "Secret Speech" given by Khrushchev, who said:

It is not excluded that had Stalin remained at the helm for another several months, Comrades Molotov and Mikoyan would probably have not delivered any speeches at this congress. Stalin evidently had plans to finish off the old members of the political bureau. He often stated that political bureau members should be replaced by new ones… We can assume that this was also a design for the future annihilation of the old political bureau members and in this way a cover for all shameful acts of Stalin, acts which we are now considering.

This is why Beria had boasted that he had saved his comrades. Khrushchev and the others were in on it. They got rid of Stalin just

in time to avoid another Jewish holocaust, to save their own skin, and to prevent World War III. What they did was incredibly risky, and no doubt needed help from Above. The Rebbe must have sensed something going on in the Heavens, and perhaps really did play some spiritual role in the plan's success.

Indeed, it was a great miracle that the plan succeeded. That it happened on Purim specifically is certainly no coincidence.** After all, Purim is all about how the Jews avoided a holocaust in the nick of time: "…on the very day when the enemies of the Jews sought to dominate them, *v'nahafokh hu*"—everything was turned upside down and the Jews were saved instead. On the very day Stalin planned to start deporting Jews, his death was announced instead.

And Purim is about the defeat of Amalek which, like Communism, is that atheistic force in the universe seeking to undermine G-dliness at every opportunity. The Communists tried so hard to expunge religion that they even attempted to change their calendar to a five-day week so that there could be no commemoration of the Sabbath! Thankfully, the Soviet Union collapsed in 1989. However, Communism is not quite dead, and the forces of Amalek continue to rear their ugly heads around the world today. And so, there is yet work to be done until we can celebrate Amalek's final defeat. May we merit to see it soon.

*The concentration camps were ordered to house foreign criminals captured in World War II, particularly Germans and Austrians. However, there were no more than 5000 such prisoners in the USSR, so why the need for so many large camps? Besides, the war had ended long ago—why the sudden need for new camps? The real reason was surely tied to the Doctor's Plot and/or a new impending war.

** Naumov and Brent point out that one of the hidden heroes in the story was Sophia Karpai. She was one of the Jewish doctors that was accused, then arrested, tortured, and kept in a refrigerated

cell. Despite this, Karpai refused to "confess" and maintained the innocence of the Jews. By this point, most of the other doctors had already "confessed" under extreme torture. Karpai held out on her own, which frustrated Stalin and the authorities. They couldn't have even a single doctor claim innocence, for that would ruin the entire conspiracy. Naumov and Brent write that "It satisfies the imagination to think that the fate of the Jews of Russia might have depended on this latter day, unknown Esther."

Rabbi Jeremy Golker - Torah in America

Who built Torah in America? Rav Aharon Kotler? Rav Shraga Feivel Mendlowitz? Rabbi Moshe Feinstein?

It actually goes back much further than that to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella!! They were the archenemies of the Jewish people!

We are familiar with the expulsion of the Jews from Spain on 2nd August 1492 (Tisha B'Av). The very next day on 3rd August 1492 Chrsitopher Columbus sets sail to America (Christopher Columbus Day – 12 October 1492 is when he arrives!) Who funded trip? King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella!! [They wanted to expand their Spanish Empire].

Lakewood should have a plaque "This yeshiva was built by the great benefactors of the Jewish people - King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella"!

The Greatest Hashgocha is when Hakadosh Baruch Hu not just saves Klal Yisrael but does so using our enemies as a vehicle!

"In every situation, live with Hashem. Nothing brings us closer to Hashem than turning to Him in difficult situations. There is no end to the greatness this brings." ~ Rabbi Shimshon Pincus.



Purim is supposed to be the happiest day of the year. So, what do we do to get ourselves happy? – Look how brilliant Chazal were when they instituted how we spend our day. - Everything that we do on Purim is supposed to lead us to becoming happier.

מִשְׁלֹחַ מָנוֹת – giving gifts and food packages to other people. It's a well-known fact that emotionally healthy people get pleasure from giving to others.

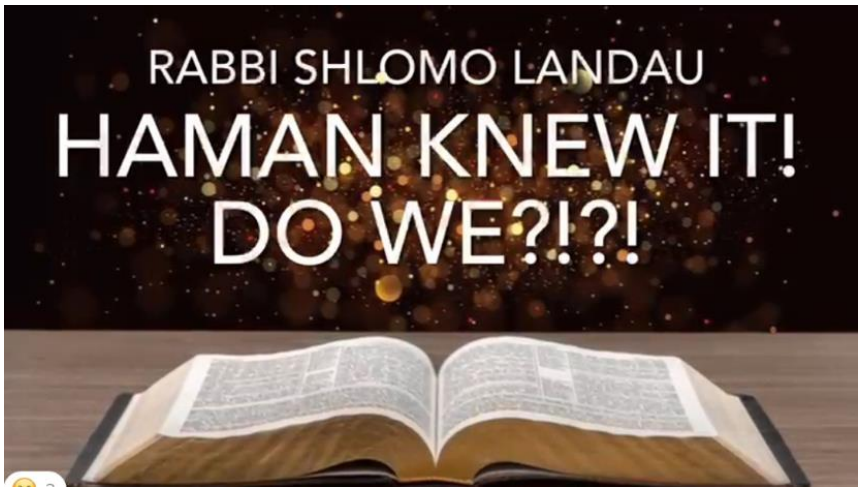
מתנות לאביונים - Giving charity to the poor. When you see what other people don't have, and what you do have, you're filled with gratitude, and gratitude causes happiness.

מִקְרָא מְגִלָּה -We read the Purim story, and we see how Hashem has our back, and we're not alone. When a person comes to the understanding that they're not alone, and that Hashem is taking care of them, that gives them simcha.

And finally, **סעודת פורים** - the Purim meal, which we eat with our family and friends – having other people in our lives, makes our lives infinitely happier.

So, this Purim, focus on the happiness which is a by-product of doing the mitzvos of the day properly. And may this Purim be the happiest day of the year.

Pesach is coming soon… - Don't be in De Nile!



Haman knew more about our inner power and strength than sadly we know about ourselves.

Haman was about to commit a genocide to kill every man, woman and child, all within one day – the 13th of Adar. First Haman decreed something strange – The pasuk (3:13) says…**לְהַשְׁמִיד לַהֲרֹג וּלְאַבֵּד** to destroy, to murder, to decimate. What does **לְהַשְׁמִיד** mean?

The Gemara teaches us, and the **Vilna Gaon** points out that **לְהַשְׁמִיד** means that Haman decreed that the Yidden were not allowed to learn Torah. And that's why when Haman catches Morderchai and his disciples studying Torah, he has a fit of anger.

Haman was going to kill them anyway that day and wipe out every single last Jew, so what's the difference if they would learn Torah? Haman should have spent his time and resources on the genocide. - This is how Haman knew more about the Jewish People than we know about ourselves. Haman knew that if the Jewish People would continue to learn Torah, he would not be able to annihilate them.

The power, strength and eternal power of protection from learning Torah would protect the Jewish People. The only way for him to be successful in his nefarious plan would be to pull the plug on Torah learning. Once the Jews stop learning Torah, we lose our protection, and he can carry out his evil and wicked plans.

Is this not relevant nowadays in Israel and across the world? The thing that's protecting us and ensures that the Jewish People continues to thrive and prosper, is Torah study!

Torah will IY'H protect us - **לַיְהוּדִים הָיְתָה אוֹרָה וְשִׂמְחָה וְשָׂשׂוֹן וִיקָר**.

Story of the Week Compiled by Aaron Leitner

What Goes Around, Comes Around

Caring for others is very much the essence of Purim, but it does not always have to be about giving but can also be by giving support at critical times. The following story came my way last week.

"I was at night seder in the *beis medrash*, waiting for my *chavrusa*. When it was apparent that he was not likely to show up, my Rosh Chaburah asked me to learn with a young man sitting at the next table. He did not look like the other *yungeleit* in the *beis medrash*, as he was wearing a coloured shirt while the rest of the men wore the standard white.

I went over to the next table and introduced myself. The young man began to tell me about himself. He was going through a tumultuous divorce, and as he poured out his heart, I just listened. I understood the heartbreak of divorce because I had gone through one myself.

The young man mentioned that he had to be in a court the following morning and was dreading the upcoming proceedings. After learning for a while, I wished him well on the court case, and we went our separate ways.

I have a job in a yeshivah. The next day, the Rosh Yeshiva informed me that my class was having *chazarah*, so I could have the morning off. I was thrilled to have a few hours to myself, but something was niggling me. There was somewhere I needed to be, and it had slipped my mind. Then suddenly it hit me. I could be supportive to my fellow Jew in court.

I showed up in court not even knowing what name to tell the clerk, but it was the only Jewish-sounding name in the courts that day. I sat at my friend's side, and needless to say, he was happy to see me. His father also appeared in court and asked his son, "Who is this guy, and why is he here?" I told him who I was and explained

that I was there to give his son moral support, because I cared. He was very moved and thanked me profusely.

Sometime later, my wife and I bought a house. It turned out that the owner was dishonest and had sold us a house ridden with termites. We had to gut the whole thing and start from scratch. It was a major monetary undertaking and a huge job. We scrambled, trying to make things work.

I sought a good electrician, and a name was mentioned to me. It turned out that it was the father of the young man I had supported in court. He insisted on replacing all the electricity in the house, a $30,000 job – for free. My wife and I, both, told him that we could not accept such a generous offer, but he would not take no for an answer. We were at an impasse, so my wife suggested that we assist the young man, and his parents, in finding him a *shidduch*.

We sat with them and discussed what he was looking for. We had them send the resumes of suggested young women to my wife, who has a wide circle of friends and acquaintances who could help with information. After some investigation into a promising shidduch, the couple got engaged and is now happily married, with three adorable children.

A good word, a smile, and offer of support, a listening ear and caring for another Yid never go unnoticed or unappreciated. Everyone stands to gain! What goes around, comes around – *''Shelach lachmecha…"*

Good Shabbos and a Freilichen Purim

Aaron Leitner

"The city of happiness can be found in the state of mind." ~ Rabbi Avraham Yaakov Pam (1913-2001).



The Tail of Vashti - G-d's Hand in History By Rabbi Yissocher Frand

We all know the story. Achashverosh made a grand party. When he was good and "happy," he commanded his wife Queen Vashti to appear before those assembled to show off her beauty. Vashti refused to come. According to the Talmud [Megilla 12], her refusal to come was not based on any sudden sense of modesty on her part, rather the Angel Gavriel came and put a tail on her.

Often, when the Talmud relates an incident of Aggadic nature such as this, the Gemara is not to be taken literally. The Gemara is teaching a message with this story. We do not need to assume that Vashti literally grew a tail. **The Chofetz Chaim** suggests that the Gemara means something else.

The Talmud teaches [Sanhedrin 96] that Nevuchadnetzar, King of Babylonia, was not born into royalty. How did he become King? The Gemara relates that Chizkiyahu, King of Judea, became very sick and he was miraculously saved. The Almighty wanted to publicize the fact that the King of Judea was miraculously healed so he made a second miracle – namely, the day that King Chizkiyahu was cured lasted 18 hours! That got people's attention! The whole world realized that it was a miraculous day.

The King of Babylonia at that time was a person named Biladan. Biladan said, I need to send congratulatory remarks to the King of Judea. "He is so righteous that the Almighty changed nature for him, I must send him a letter of congratulations and admiration." He ordered his scribe (who at the time was Nevuchadnetzar) to draft the letter for him. However, that day, for whatever reason,

Nevuchadnetzar was not there. So, the other scribes went ahead and drafted a letter without the input of the chief scribe, Nevuchadnetzar.

The letter salutation was as follows: "Peace unto you King Chizkiyahu; peace unto Jerusalem; and peace unto the Mighty G-d." Nevuchadnetzar returned from wherever he was and asked to review a copy of the letter. When he saw the salutation he objected that the honor of the Mighty G-d should have been placed first not third in the letter. However the other scribes told him that the original had already been sent off. Nevuchadnetzar ran after the messengers to try to stop them so as not to send the letter with such a "blasphemous" salutation. The Talmud says that he ran 4 steps in the direction of the courier. He wanted to stop him and reverse the salutation by rewriting it according to proper protocol: "Peace to the Almighty G-d; peace to the city of Jerusalem; and peace to King Chizkiyah."

However, the Talmud in Sanhedrin teaches that after he ran those four steps (according to an alternate version in the Yalkut he ran only 3 steps) to stop the letter, Gavriel came and stopped him in his tracks so that he would not be able to run any further. The Talmud comments that had Gavriel not come and limited the merit Nevuchadnetzar was gaining for himself by showing G-d this honor, "there would not have been left a remnant of the enemies of the Jewish people" (a euphemistic way of saying the Jewish people would have been totally wiped out). The Gemara asks, "So what did Nevuchadnetzar get as reward for his walking the 4 steps?" The Gemara answers that he saw himself and 3 generations after him become royalty. The 4 generations were Nevuchadnetzar, Evil Merodach, BalShezzar, and Vashti. Vashti was a great-granddaughter of Nevuchadnetzar.

The Chofetz Chaim explains that there is no dispute between the version that says Nevuchadnetzar ran 4 steps and the version that

says he ran 3 steps. He actually ran 3 full steps. In the middle of the fourth step Gavriel came and stopped him before he had a chance to complete the fourth step. It was cut off in the middle.

That is why the Gemara testifies that if he would have taken four whole steps the Jewish people would have been wiped out! The Chofetz Chaim interprets: Since he did not take a complete fourth step, the reign of his fourth descendant (Vashti) was terminated prematurely. Had Vashti remained on the throne, Esther would never have been in a position to save the Jewish people, and they would have been wiped out in the time of Haman.

The Chofetz Chaim states further that this is what it means that Gavriel (the same Angel who stopped Nevuchadnetzar from taking that fourth step) came and placed a tail upon Vashti. The term "zanav" (tail) alludes to the fact that it was the tail end of the dynasty of Nevuchadnetzar.

The lesson of this story is that this is how the Almighty runs his world. The incident with Gavriel happened in the time of Chizkiyahu King of Judea – many years before the era of Haman and Achashverosh. Because of what took place then, Klal Yisrael was saved many years later in the time of Purim.

Events happen or do not happen for a myriad of reasons, but behind the supposed motivations of people, the Almighty is manipulating history to carry out His Will. Behind the curtains, the Master of the Universe is pulling the strings.

"When a person worries about his fellow's material suffering as he worries about his own spiritual state, then he has begun to understand the Torah's vision of ahavas Yisrael. Until then, it remains theory." ~ Rabbi Yisrael Salanter.

Charvona

How many times is Charvona mentioned in the Megillah?

He is mentioned twice: Once in the beginning of the first chapter. He was one of the "kitchen cabinet" – namely one of the seven advisors of Achashverosh listed in the *pasuk* [Esther 1:10]. The second time Charvona is mentioned is when Haman finally met his downfall. "Then Charvona, one of the chamberlains in attendance before the king, said 'Furthermore, the gallows which Haman made for Mordechai – who spoke beneficially about the king – is standing in Haman's house; it is fifty cubits high.' And the king said 'Hang him on it.'" [Esther 7:9]

Charvona is mentioned a third time in the poem "*Shoshanas Yakov*" that we recite after the conclusion of the Megillah reading. We say there "*V'Gam Charvonah zachur l'tov*.

Pirkei D'Rabi Eliezer notes that the first time he appears in the Megillah, Charvona's name is spelled with an Aleph at the end and the second time he appears his name is spelled with a Hay at the end. Therefore, Pirkei D'Rabi Eliezer claims they are **not** the same person! The real Charvona is the one mentioned in the first Perek. The "second Charvona" was really Eliyahu haNavi impersonating Charvona!

Interestingly, the name Charvona in the Shoshanas Yakov poem is immediately followed by the expression "*Zachur L'Tov*" (let him be remembered for good). About whom else do we find this expression "*Zachur L'Tov*"? It is none other than Eliyahu HaNavi.

The Chazon Ish said, "If a non-Jew knew the enjoyment of learning a daf Gemara before Shacharis on Shabbos morning, he would convert just to experience it."

Purim Torah

לְאׇ־הִגִּ֥ידָה אֶסְתֵּ֖ר אֶת־עַמָּ֑הּ וְאֶת־מֽוֹלַדְתָּ֔הּ כִּ֤י מָרְדֳּכַי֙ צִוָּ֣ה עָלֶ֔יהָ אֲשֶׁ֥ר לְאׇ־תַגִּֽיד
Esther did not divulge her nation, nor her birthplace. For Mordechai told her not to revel this information. 2:10

This was the main miracle of Purim. - A woman was able to keep a secret!!!

It says in the Megilla that "**וַחֲמָתוֹ בָּעֲרָה בּוֹ**", ie that Achashveirosh's mother-in-law was named Boarah Vo. Later it says "**וַחֲמַ֥ת הַמֶּ֖לֶךְ שָׁכְנָ֑ה**", meaning that his mother-in-law was named Shachacha.

How could Achashveirosh have 2 mothers-in-law?

The teretz must be that vashti had 2 mothers. And in fact, we see it says "**גַּם וַשְׁתִּי הַמַּלְכָּ֣ה עָשְׂתָ֣ה מִשְׁתֵּ֔ה נָשִׁ֖ים**!"



In the Haggadah we say we deal with a rashah by knocking out his tooth. Haman was surely a rashah so why didn't Mordechai knock out his tooth?

The answer is that when Achashverosh sent out 2 armies one with Mordechai and one with Haman. Haman ran out of food so he begged Mordechai for food and Mordechai made Haman a slave and we learned in shemos one of the ways to free an eved is knocking out his tooth so Mordechai didn't knock Haman's tooth out so that Haman shouldn't go free

Shabbos is an oasis of tranquillity amid an ocean of confusion.

The Yerushalmis used to ask why we lain parts of the megillah in Eicha trop?

They answer that some people are only happy when they're miserable, and on Purim we want to be mishtateif everyone in the simcha!



How do we know that Esther was a major tzadeikes?

The gemara (Yoma 75a) writes that the more righteous someone was, the closer to them the manna would fall. The reshaim would have to walk a great distance, the beinonim would walk a short distance, and the tzaddikim would have the mann fall at their doorstep.

The pasuk in the Megillah (7:8) states: **וְהָמָן נֹפֵל עַל־הַמִּטָּה אֲשֶׁר אֶסְתֵּר עָלֶיהָ** – "And the King returned from the palace garden to the hall of the wine feast, and the manna was falling on the couch that Esther was upon…" - The manna didn't just fall on her doorstep; it fell right on her couch!



What was the weather like when Haman led Mordechai through the streets? - It was rainy and muddy since it says that Mordechai went out with boots.**וּמָרְדֳּכַי יָצָא מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בִּלְבוּשׁ בְּוּץ**



How do we know there were phones in Haman's times? - Achashveirosh told Haman he'll give him a "ring". - **וַיָּסַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־טַבַּעְתּוֹ מֵעַל יָדוֹ וַיִּתְּנָהּ לְהָמָן**



How do we know the king thought of Esther as being an angel? - Because he called her **וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ מַה־לָּךְ אֶסְתֵּר**



We say in Maoz Tsur (sang on Chanuka after lighting candles) "Roiv bonov v'kinyonov al ha'eitz toleesa", which literally means "Most of [Haman's] children and possessions were hanged/hung on the tree". Chazal tell us that 10 of Haman's sons were hanged, but he had many more than 10.

The question is, why most of his children? Why not all of them? After all, they were all enemies of the Jews?

The gemara informs us that Haman was an unusually tall man. I forget exactly how tall it says, but that's not important to my point. Zeresh, however, the gemara says was "k'zeres", like the pinky finger. OK, let's say the gemara is exaggerating a little. Maybe she was as big as a thumb. That still makes her rather small.

A different gemara talks about genetic inheritance. It says that if a father and mother are both tall, their children will grow tall. If a father and mother are both short, their children will be short. But if one is tall and the other is short, their children will be "beinonim" (literally, average). So the children of the giant Haman and the tiny Zeres (aka thumbelina) were doubtless "beinonim".

Now we can answer the original question with a famous gemara. We all know that Rosh Hashana is the Yom Hadin. If one is a complete Tzaddik, he is immediately inscribed in the Book of Life for a good year. If one is a complete Rasha, he is immediately inscribed in the other book. But for BEINONIM, the gemara says, TELUYIM (veomdim) AD ESER! That is, we could only hang 10 of Haman's sons.

The Baal Shem Tov teaches, "When a Jew truly rejoices, even the harshest decrees can be nullified." The joy of Purim is not just an emotion - it's a spiritual force that transforms reality.

The students of **R' Chaim Brisker** asked him to tell them, "Purim Torah," a sort of whimsical, humorous Torah lecture, and he agreed. As the students gathered around, R' Chaim began. He quoted a Rambam, then compared it to a different quote from the Rambam which seemed to contradict it.

For the next forty-five minutes, he wove a powerful shiur with proofs and sources from all over the Talmud, rebutted many of them, and finally ended with a single, brilliant explanation.

The students were stunned by the intricacy of his lecture but wondered about it. "Rebbi," they said. "We asked you to say Purim Torah."

"That was Purim Torah," he smiled. "The second Rambam I quoted doesn't exist!"

HaGaon HaRav Zilberstein: "It's A Mitzvah This Year Not To Get Drunk"



In a special shailos and teshuvos ahead of Purim, HaGaon HaRav Yitzchak Zilberstein issued guidelines on the obligation to be careful about drinking too much wine on Purim, especially this year when Purim falls out on Erev Shabbos.

At the end of his lengthy remarks about the pitfalls of drinking more wine than Chazal recommended, HaRav Zilberstein issued a surprising p'sak, saying that it's a special mitzvah this year to refrain from getting drunk.

The Rav wrote: "And especially this year when Purim falls out on Erev Shabbos and one who gets drunk may, chalilah, be mechallel Shabbos, rachmana litzlan – anyone who refrains from drinking and does what

the Rema wrote that he should drink more than his learning and sleep – fulfills a great mitzvah and prevents himself from severe aveiros, that he won't be mechallel Shabbos from drunkenness or carry muktzah items and the like. This year it's a mitzvah to refrain from drunkenness because of Kavod Shabbos!"

Read the full shailos and teshuvos below:

Shaila: What is the fine line between drinking wine b'simcha and deteriorating to a state that is not fitting for a Ben Torah?

HaRav Zilberstein: "Wine has many benefits. It brings simcha and it says in Masechtas Brachos that Shira is only said over wine. Kiddush and Havdalah are also made on wine. But on the other hand, wine poses great danger, and therefore it is only considered a mitzvah if you drink wine in the amount that Chazal determines. If if you start to overdo it, it is a very great danger."

"And it is possible to say that all the the tzaros in this world began as a result of drinking more wine than Halacha requires, as it says in Masechtas Sanhedrin, that the sin of the Eitz HaDaas that brought death to the world was that Hakadosh Baruch Hu forbade Adam HaRishon to eat from the vine and drink wine. And it is written in the Zohar HaKadosh that the decree was until Shabbos, for then he would make Kiddush over wine. But he was tempted and drank the wine beforehand. Also Noach, after he emerged from the Mabul and began to build the world could have based the world on the foundations of mussar and Derech Eretz, and our whole world would have looked different. But he failed to learn from Adam HaRishon and drank wine and got drunk, and this caused a lot of tzaros in the world."

"It also says in the Gemara there that if someone drinks wine and gets drunk, he has a red face and looks good in this world, but in the next world his face will be white from tza'ar. And drinking more than necessary brings poverty, woes, sorrow, strife, physical injuries, and all types of tzaros to a person. After the Gemara brings more tzaros

that wine can cause, it concludes 'There is nothing that brings lamentation to a person but wine.'"

"Wine also stimulates the Yetzer Hara in a person and causes him to sin, as Chazal said in Masechtos Berachos: 'Don't get drunk on wine and don't sin because drunkenness leads to sin.' And so wrote the Rambam: 'Anyone who gets drunk is a sinner and is disgraceful and loses his wisdom.' And the Beit Yosef brought in the name of the Orchos Chaim: 'Drunkenness is completely forbidden and there is no greater transgression than this because it causes Gilui Arayos and Shefichas Damim and many other aveiros.' And the Biur Halacha wrote that several places in the Torah and the Neviim mention that drunkenness is a great michshol (stumbling block)."

"And in the Zohar, it says that a Ben Torah who gets drunk is called 'a golden nose ring in a pig's nose,' and is Mechallel Shem Shamayim. And [getting drunk] is the minhag of reshaim to arouse their yetzer hara, for the yetzer hara is aroused only from wine. Therefore, anyone who drinks more wine than he is used to and becomes intoxicated should know that he is transgressing an issur—one that is very despicable and causes himself many sins and tzaros."

"There are those who get drunk on Purim night, and this is something that has no basis in Halacha. Drunkenness at this time [on Purim night] is not only not a mitzvah but has great pitfalls, as is known, and one is not fulfilling a mitzvah but is only drunk with all the inherent disgrace. This also applies at chasunahs [drinking that does not fulfill a mitzvah]. There are, lo aleinu, bochurim who drink to intoxication and this is norah v'ayom (terrible and frightening). The one who drinks causes himself sins and many tzaros, and about this it can be said that 'it is not the mouse that steals, but the hole that steals.' The mechutanim who bring the wine and other alcoholic beverages will ultimately be brought to din for causing troubles to bochurim tehorim v'kedoshim."

Shaila: In practice, how should we act on Purim? What should we do to distance ourselves from the great michsholim (stumbling blocks)?

HaRav Zilberstein: "The only time of the year that we find that there is an issue to get tipsy is only on Purim during the day, and even on that, many disagree that it is not as simple as it seems. And it is impossible that Chazal gave us a mitzvah that causes a michshol. Everyone should ask a Shailas Chacham on how to behave. But we must remember what is written in Chayei Adam: 'Anyone who knows about himself that he will be mezalzel (disrespectful) of any mitzah at that time – Netilas Yadayim, a bracha, Birchas Hamzon, or not davening Mincha or Maariv – and he'll act frivolously, it is better not to get drunk, and all his actions should be l'Shem Shamayim."

"And it should be noted that sometimes there is a great michshol that a drunk person davens Mincha or Maariv. And it says in the Gemara, and so it is ruled in the Shulchan Aruch, that if one cannot speak before the King, if he davens, his tefillah is a toevah [abomination]. And in the Gemara Berachos, it says that if he davens, it is as if he was oved Avodah Zara. So this is also a great michshol – if he knows that he will lose a proper tefillah, he should not get drunk."

As mentioned above, HaRav Zilberstein concluded with the surprising p'sak, which relates specifically to this year: "And especially this year when Purim falls on Erev Shabbos and if he gets drunk he may, chalilah, be mechallel Shabbos, rachmana litzlan, anyone who refrains from drinking and does what the Rema wrote that he should drink more than his learning and sleep, fulfills a great mitzvah and prevents himself from severe aveiros – that he won't be mechallel Shabbos from drunkenness or carry Muktzah items and the like. This year it's a mitzvah to refrain from drunkenness because of Kavod Shabbos!"

(YWN Israel Desk – Jerusalem)



Joyful Servants of the King

The yeshivah bachurim were surprised when an elderly non-Jew approached them and said, "You know, I've been meaning to tell you young men how much I appreciate certain things about you," the stranger remarked. "Whenever I see you, you are always dressed in such a respectful and dignified way. And the most impressive thing of all is that you are always smiling. I can see the satisfaction on your faces, and it really is such a pleasure for me to behold."

The mood and state of mind of a ben Torah are an important part of shaping the impression that others will have. The pesukim in Nechemiah (2:1-3) relate that Nechemiah, who was employed as a servant of the king, was distressed over the destruction of Yerushalayim and the plight of his brethren. When the king noticed his unhappiness, he accused Nechemiah of being displeased with his status as a royal servant, and Nechemiah became extremely frightened, fearing that the king would punish him.

Rav Avraham Pam zt"l pointed out that this incident illustrates a very important principle in avodas Hashem. When a person who lives a life of Torah radiates unhappiness and displeasure, it reflects negatively on his life's pursuit — serving Hashem. When such a person is unhappy or depressed, others who observe him will conclude that serving Hashem is not a valuable or enjoyable experience. It stands to reason, then, that it is of vital importance for a ben Torah always to project an air of joy and contentment, in order to demonstrate how wonderful a life of Torah truly is.

The holiday of Purim is known as a time of simchah, but it is important to recognize the true nature and purpose of that simchah. On Purim, we have an opportunity to infuse our service of Hashem

with joy. And as we have seen, bringing joy into our service of Hashem is a crucial part of our role as the purveyors of kiddush Hashem in the world.

Rav Yitzchak Hutner zt"l uses a mashal to explain the difference between the joy of Purim and the simchah of the other holidays throughout the year: Many people, upon recovering from an illness, hold a special feast in order to celebrate their recovery. At most of these celebrations, the degree of joy that the recovered patient demonstrates tends to be proportionate to the degree of danger posed by his disease and to the efficacy of the cure. The more dangerous the disease and the better the prognosis, the more joy the person will display.

But there is one type of illness in which the degree of the patient's joy is not dependent on the severity of his condition. This is the state of depression, a condition that itself limits a person's ability to experience joy. When a person recovers from this illness, the joy that he displays is more than merely a response to his recuperation. Rather, the joy itself is the sign that he has recovered. The more he is able to celebrate, the further he extricates himself from the morass of depression that his condition created; every increase in his simchah is a reason for even greater joy. - Thus, the delight of a person who has recovered from this illness is limitless by its very nature, as the joy itself continues to increase of its own accord.

Rav Mattisyahu Salomon shlita (Matnas Chaim: Moadim) elaborates further on this discussion. Before the miracle of Purim took place, the Jewish people were in a state of extreme melancholy. They had lost the ability to find joy in their performance of mitzvos, and they turned instead to the feast of Achashverosh in their search for happiness.

After their salvation from Haman's decree, however, they rediscovered the vast potential for joy in the observance of mitzvos.

As they regained the ability to love Hashem and His commandments, they renewed their commitment to the Torah, and their newfound

simchah shel mitzvah became a source of endless happiness for them.

On Purim, each of us is charged with absorbing this uniquely Jewish simchah, the joy in keeping Hashem's mitzvos, and making it part of our service of Hashem. The more we are able to feel this joy, the more reason we will have to rejoice. - This simchah, then, is an integral part of our status as the nation of mekadshei Hashem.

Purim is a time for us to rediscover and renew our simchah shel mitzvah — the joy we experience in performing mitzvos. That sense of joy is important for us to cultivate, because it enables us to convey the message that serving Hashem is truly a source of joy, and that there is nothing in the world that is more enjoyable.

The Paradigm of "Hope For Each And Every Generation" By Rabbi Yissocher Frand

I saw the following beautiful insight in a Sefer — Yemei HaPurim.

Following the Megillah reading, we sing the prayer "Shoshanas Yakov," which includes the statement "You have been their eternal salvation and their hope throughout the generations". What does this phrase — v'tikvasam b'chol dor v'dor — mean?

Prior to singing Shoshanas Yakov, we actually recite a blessing to conclude the Megilla reading: "Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who takes up our grievance, judges our claim, avenges our wrong; exacts vengeance for us from our foes, and Who brings just retribution upon all enemies of our soul. Blessed are you Hashem, Who exacts vengeance for His people Israel from all their foes, the G-d Who brings salvation."

The language of this blessing is in the present tense (haRav es riveinu, haDan es dineinu, v'haNokem es nikmaseinu, etc.)

On Chanukah, the Al HaNissim prayer contains similar language except it is in the past tense: He fought our fight; He judged our claim; He avenged our wrong (ravta es rivam, danta es dinam, nakamta es nikmasam). The change of tense in these two similar prayers must be significant. Why on Chanukah are the verbs in the past tense and on Purim they are in the present tense?

The Vilna Gaon says regarding the pasuk, "To speak of Your Kindness in the morning, and of Your Faithfulness at night" [Tehillim 92:3] that morning (boker) connotes days of redemption. Redemption is bright like the morning sun. When Klal Yisrael are redeemed, when they are in Eretz Yisrael at peace in their land, then things appear to us like morning. Likewise, evening and nighttime are metaphors for exile. When we are in exile, it is a time of "Your Faithfulness at night," meaning we do not see the Hand of G-d, which is hidden. At such times, it appears as if we are abandoned, Heaven Forbid. The quality that sustains us through the night of our exile is our "Emunascha ba'Leylos" — we have faith that despite our exile, the Almighty is still interested in us and still cares about us.

The paradigm of the quality of "Emunascha ba'Leylos" is the holiday of Purim. Purim is the holiday of exile, the Yom Tov of Galus. Durng the Persian exile, it looked for a time as though Divine Providence abandoned them. ("The decree went forth to destroy and eradicate every Jew from young to old in a single day.") The attribute of "Your Faithfulness at night" that kept them going. Purim is a paradigm of an event in history when Klal Yisrael thinks they are abandoned but then discovers that the Almighty is still interested and He still loves us. He is still fighting our battles even in the exile.

That is why the text of the Purim prayer is in the present tense – who fights our battles, who judges our claims, who avenges those who wrong us. Even in the Galus, when it appears so many times that

things are lost — until this very day we are surrounded by people who want to destroy us — even now He is still — in the present — fighting our battles.

Chanukah is a miracle that occurred when we had a Beis HaMikdash. We know that the Master of the World is involved at such a time in history. That era is in the past, so we speak of the Chanukah narrative in the past tense. However, on Purim while we are still in exile, we need to hear that the Almighty not only DID IT for us in the past, but he DOES IT for us in the present as well.

Purim is OUR holiday and that is why the Sages enacted in the prayer of Shoshanas Yakov the words "And their hope throughout the generations." Our hope is that what happened on Purim will keep happening for us even now. Our hope is not only for then but also for every generation (including the present) where they "stand up against us and attempt to destroy us".

Like Charvona – Always Diber tov al haMelech!

How many times is Charvona mentioned in the Megillah?

He is mentioned twice: Once in the beginning of the first chapter. He was one of the "kitchen cabinet" – namely one of the seven advisors of Achashverosh listed in the *pasuk* [Esther 1:10]. The second time Charvona is mentioned is when Haman finally met his downfall. "Then Charvona, one of the chamberlains in attendance before the king, said 'Furthermore, the gallows which Haman made for Mordechai – who spoke beneficially about the king – is standing in Haman's house; it is fifty cubits high.' And the king said 'Hang him on it.'" [Esther 7:9]

Charvona is mentioned a third time in the poem "*Shoshanas Yakov*" that we recite after the conclusion of the Megillah reading. We say there "And also Charvona, let him be remembered for good." (*V'Gam Charvonah zachur l'tov*).

Pirkei D'Rabi Eliezer notes that the first time he appears in the Megillah, Charvona's name is spelled with an Aleph at the end and the second time he appears his name is spelled with a Hay at the end. Therefore, Pirkei D'Rabi Eliezer claims they are **not** the same person! The real Charvona is the one mentioned in the first Perek. The "second Charvona" was really Eliyahu haNavi impersonating Charvona! Interestingly, the name Charvona in the Shoshanas Yakov poem is immediately followed by the expression "*Zachur L'Tov*" (let him be remembered for good). About whom else do we find this expression "*Zachur L'Tov*"? It is none other than Eliyahu HaNavi.

Rav Zalman Mintz told me that he once heard over a beautiful explanation of this from **Rav Ephraim Waxman**: The message emphasizes how and why the redemption occurred. The *pasuk* states "And Charvona, one of the officers before the king, said 'Also, behold here is the gallows that Haman made **for Mordechai who spoke beneficially about the King** standing in Haman's courtyard 50 cubits high.' The *Geulah* came because Mordechai never spoke ill of the ***Ribono shel Olam***. Chazal say that every time it says the word "*HaMelech*" in the Megillah it is referring to the King of Kings. So too, in the expression *Mordechai asher diber tov al* ***haMelech*** – it is referring to the *Ribono shel Olam*!

The Jews of that time, could very well have fallen into the trap of saying "What is the Almighty doing to us!" Haman came close to executing his plan to exterminate all the Jews – men, women, and children. The Jews could very well have despaired and begin questioning the Justice of Heaven. "Excuse me! What did we do? Why do we deserve this?" Complaints against G-d were very likely being murmured. But Mordechai – who spoke good about the **King** – never complained and never questioned G-d's Justice. He never doubted that what was happening was fair and just. He was always "*Diber tov al haMelech*". He accepted the Talmudic principle that whatever G-d does is for the best (*Kol mai d'Avid Rachmana, l'Tav avid*) [Berachos 60b].

The message is that Purim, which is the paradigm of our hope for redemption, foreshadows the way it is going to happen for us again. To ensure the speedy coming of this redemption, we must remember to always be "*Diber tov al* ***haMelech***". After thousands of years of Jewish history and thousands of years of suffering – both on a national scale and on a personal scale – the key is to speak positively about the King and not to question and not to complain "Why is G-d doing this to us!"

This is sometimes very difficult, especially for people that lived through national trials and tribulations, lived through the Holocaust, *lo aleinu*. It is very hard for people who unfortunately have suffered tragedy and *tzoros*. It is a difficult *nisayon*. But Pirkei D'Rabi Eliezer is telling us, Charvona is telling us, and Eliyahu haNavi – who is going to usher in and announce the future redemption – is telling us: The key is to act like Mordechai "*asher diber tov al* ***haMelech***". If we continue to do that, then just as they merited "For the Jews there was Light, Gladness, Joy and Honor" [Esther 8:16]– so too will it be for us, *Im Yirtzeh Hashem*.

What is the Lesson of the Megilla's Last Pasuk?

The very last *pasuk* of Megillas Esther says, "For Mordechai the Jew was viceroy to King Ahasuerus; he was a great man among the Jews, and found favor with the multitude of his brethren; he sought the good of his people, and spoke for the welfare of all his seed." [Esther 10:3]

Rav Shlomo Alkabetz (author of the Lecha Dodi) wrote a sefer on Megillas Esther, called Manos haLevi. (Rav Shlomo Alkabetz distributed the Manos HaLevi to his friends together with his "*shalach manos*".) In the Manos HaLevi, Rav Alkabetz asks why the aforementioned *pasuk* is the last *pasuk* in the Megillah. After listening to the ten *perakim* of the Megillah for 45 minutes, why is is *pasuk* the fitting conclusion of the whole story of the Megilla?

More pointedly, what is the expression "***ki*** *Mordechai haYehudi*?" Under normal circumstances, "*ki*" means "because," which implies that what follows is the answer to a question. The Manos HaLevi wants to know what question is being answered. He explains that this *pasuk* is indeed the "answer" to the entire Megilla that was just read. What is the question that this is coming to answer?

There is a big question that we can ask about the story of the Megilla. If we would have been in Shushan at the time of the story, I really doubt whether we would have listened to what Mordechai had to say. If we analyze the story, the person who seemingly caused all the problems that threatened the Jewish community was none other than *Mordechai haYehudi!*

Picture it in our day and time. There is this powerful fellow, Haman, who wants everyone to bow down to him or else…, but the*gadol ha'dor* insists, "**I** am not going to bow down to him."

As a result of the refusal of this one person to bow down, the whole decree of Achashverosh to exterminate the Jewish community, from young to old, was triggered. In fact, *Chazal* say that the Jews of the time criticized Mordechai, telling him, "You are sending us before the sword of the wicked Haman because of this unbending, obstinate, irrational, fanatic behavior of yours. You are going to get us all killed." That is, in fact, what almost happened.

So, when Mordechai later comes and rallies the people to be strong in the face of the decree, why do they listen to him? Did he not lose all credibility as a trusted leader? Would the people not be inclined to tell him, "We told you so! It is your fault that we find ourselves in this predicament in the first place!" Would we not expect the masses to send him off to some corner of the country, and leave them alone to somehow try to dig themselves out of the mess he created? Why did they listen to him? Would we listen to such a person nowadays, under similar circumstances?

The answer is introduced with one word – the word that introduces the last *pasuk* of the Megilla: "*Ki…*" (Because…)

Mordechai stood on his feet in the midst of the community and said, "My dear brethren, all the gates are closed, except the Gate of Tears. Look at the people of Ninveh. Let us take them as our example, and let us fast and repent." Mordechai rallied them, but he rallied them with words of endearment, calling them "My brethren," and showing his concern for them.

Perhaps the people felt that Mordechai made a mistake originally. Maybe they did not understand what he did or why he did it, but they knew that it must have been for their benefit. When you have a sense of closeness with someone, when you feel that he loves you and is interested in your welfare, you cut him slack.

This is what the climax of the Megilla is teaching. Do you want to understand the whole story here? How could it be that if they believed that Mordechai got them into the trouble they were facing, they still listened to him? The answer is "BECAUSE Mordechai haYehudi, the viceroy to King Achashverosh, and the leader of the Jewish people, was beloved by all; he sought the welfare of his nation and spoke peace to all his descendants." Because he was beloved by all, and they knew that he was always seeking their welfare — that is why they listened to him, despite his having potentially been the source of their problem.

When such a relationship exists, the person is cut a lot of slack. That is what the last *pasuk* of the Megilla is coming to explain.

"Make a list of everyone to whom you want to give Shalach Manos. Throw it away. Then give to the people who didn't make your list." – R' Moshe Meir Weiss Shlit"a.



Here it is again, that exciting time of year, and we have Megillas Esther to hear the Purim story all over again. And after we finish the reading, there is one last thing that we have to do. There is a custom to sing the song שׁוֹשַׁנַּת יַעֲקֹב. We say אָרוּר הָמָן - that Haman and his wife are cursed, and בָּרוּךְ מָרְדְּכַי - Morderchai and Esther are blessed.

Why are we re-iterating this? We just spent the best part of an hour telling over the story. We already know what happens. We know who is victorious!

The Vilna Gaon explains that the word בָּרוּךְ refers to someone who endured terrible and bitter suffering but came out with a happy ending. And the word אָרוּר is referring to someone who had a lengthy period of time with success, power and happiness, but ultimately meets his bitter end.

The Lekach Tov explains in the Megillah that Morderchai HaTzaddik experienced tremendous anguish. He was exiled from Eretz Yisrael. Esther his wife was taken from him and given to Achashveirosh. He was constantly being challenged by Haman. But in the end, he experienced the most amazing success.

Haman on the other hand experienced unparalleled bounty. He had everything one wished for. He had money, respect and power. And he had the ability to pass a decree to annihilate an entire nation. His end was one of disgrace and humiliation. In a matter of hours, everything was reversed.

This is the message of the Megillas Esther and of course Purim. This isn't a one-time historical event that happened. This is an eternal

message for every single one of us in our lives. And because of that, we re-iterate it again just after the reading of the Megillah.

There is a well-known tzaddik here in Yerushalaim called **Rabbi Gamliel Rabinovitch Shlita**, who receives countless visitors every single day. People come with all their issues, problems and challenges.



He once took a trip up north to visit some kevarim to daven. On the journey, he noticed some brand newly built skyscrapers. On the top of the building there was a sign – It read **מלמעלה הכל נראה אחרת** – '*From up high, everything looks different.*' He pulled over and took a photo of that sign, and when he returned to Yerushalaim, he had it enlarged, and he taped it to the inside door of one of his closets in his office.

People come to him all the time sharing their troubles, pain and anguish. He often goes over to the cabinet, opens the door and shows them the sign **מלמעלה הכל נראה אחרת** – '*From up **High**, everything looks different.*'

What a chizuk. This is the message that the Megillah is giving every single one of us. - Klal Yisrael are experiencing really difficult times, in Eretz Yisrael and around the world. The message of the Megillah is this:- **בְּרָכָה** means that someone who is experiencing difficulties and challenges, will eventually come out successful. And the Megillah is guaranteeing success and hapiness to anyone who aspires to a life of Yiddishkeit like Morderchai & Esther.

Wishing everyone a freilechin Purim!

בס"ד

למודי משה

Purim Play



R' Chaim Kanievsky *zt"l* related in the name of his father **the Steipler**, that in the *yeshivah* he learnt in they would make a "Purim Shpiel" every year to highlight the Purim story. To bring it to life, the *bochurim* would dress up as the characters in the Purim story.

Interestingly, every single year, the *bochur* that dressed up like Haman didn't stay in learning, and would end up leaving *yeshivah* that year. - Just something to think about before dressing up like Haman.

Clothing Are Mashpia

Mechanchim [educators] say that clothing is an expression of the inner soul, a type of 'role model', and influences the child's aspirations. Therefore, it is advisable for children to dress up as righteous men and women (Moshe Rabbeinu, Aharon HaKohen, Mordechai HaTzaddik) and not as negative things (Haman, priests, wicked people, secular people).

Dressing Up as A Clown

In *Orchos Rabbeinu* (Vol. 3, *ois* 104) they bring that someone once publicized that the clown costume was invented by the *goyim* to be used for their festivities and therefore it is forbidden to use it as a Purim costume.



However, the Steipler disagreed with this statement and permitted dressing up as a clown, as has been the custom for centuries, and as is stated in the *Ma'asei HaChida*. He writes that on the contrary, the *goyim* took the idea from us, and in such cases, there is no prohibition of **ובחקתיהם לא תלכו** – "going in the way of the non-Jew's." Similar to what we find on Shavuos, that although non-Jew's also use trees to decorate their places of worship, they copied us, therefore, there is no prohibition.

Dressing Up as a Non-Jew or Priest

In regard to dressing up like a non-Jew, such as Haman or Achashveirosh, R' Chaim Kanievsky *zt"l* held that it is not a problem of 'Going in the ways' of the non-Jews."

In regard to dressing up like a priest etc. according to **R' Chaim Palagi *zt"l*** (*RuachChaim, Yoreh Deah* 178:2) one shouldn't stand in front of the *amud* with such a costume.

According to **R' Elyashiv *zt"l*** it is forbidden to dress up as a priest and the like, due the prohibition of: **וְשֵׁם אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים לֹא תַזְכִּירוּ, לֹא יִשָּׁמַע עַל פִּיךָ** - "The names of other gods you shall not mention, nor shall they be heard from your mouth."

When R' Chaim Kanievsky zt"l was asked how Chazal could enact the mitzvah of mishlo'ach manos, when normally we say שונא מתנות יחיה, he replied: מַתָּנוֹת שֶׁל חֲבֵרוּת אֵין קְפִידָא - "presents given for the purpose of friendship are okay". (Osicha, Vol. 2, pg. 387)

Interesting *Shailah*

If a *gadol hador* writes a check for *matanos l'evyonim* and someone buys the check instead of letting it be redeemed is the *gadol hador yoitza*?

Such a story happened with **R' Elyashiv**, he wrote out a check for 1,000 *shekel*, and someone heard about it and he wanted the check with the writing of R' Elyashiv on and he paid 10,000 *shekel* for it. The question then arose if R' Elyashiv was *yoitza* the mitzvah of *matanos l'evyonim*, as in the end of the day no money left his account.

R' Chaim Kanievsky *zt"l* (*Mo'adei HaGrach*, Vol. 1, *Teshuvah* 730) ruled that such a thing is okay.

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman



The following story happened to a certain sofer. Beginners in 'safrus' typically start by writing a Megillah. This sofer wrote his first Megillah. The Megillah came out not so beautiful! It wasn't attractive in the slightest. Nobody was interested in buying it nor hardly looking at it. Neither buyers nor sellers.

His father took pity on him and agreed to buy it for $1000. He knew he wouldn't be able to sell it, so he gave it to a Megillah seller and asked him to keep it with him. He knew what the Megillah looked like, one letter was long, another letter was short, one letter was large and another letter was small. One letter was straight, and another was crooked. The Megillah had quite the look! So he told him, "If you get any interest at all, then sell it at any

price. Whatever price you get will be fine. If it only sells for ₪20 then so be it."

The Megillah salesman travelled to Chutz La'aretz. He took along with him the most beautiful Megillos, written by the best sofrim in Eretz Yisrael. The Americans don't hesitate to spend large amounts of money for a beautifully written Megillah.

He went to the home of a very wealthy person and showed him a magnificent Megillah.

"No"

The man didn't like it. It had an extremely beautiful ksav (handwriting), but he didn't want it.

He took out another equally beautiful Megillah, but he didn't want that one either. – He rejected all of the beautiful Megillos that he was shown.

Deep inside the seller's suitcase sat the Megillah of the aforementioned yungerman.

"I see that you have another Megillah," the wealthy man said. "Let me have a look at it."

"No, no, this one is not for you," the salesman replied.

"Take it out, let me see it."

The wealthy man looked at the Megillah, and he liked it so much that he paid $2000 for it!

The salesman asked him, "Please explain to me why you like this Megillah so much over the other beautiful ones I showed you? None of them appealed to you but this one did - Why?"

He explained – "The others you showed me were so perfect that they looked printed! – What do I need a printed Megillah for? – This last Megillah has clearly been written by hand, one letter is long, another letter is short, one letter is large and another letter is small. One

letter is straight, and another crooked. – This Megillah is clearly handwritten.!"

Besides for the obvious important lesson in Emunah that we can learn from this story, you never know from where your money will come from. Here it came from an unsuccessful Megillah!

But we can also learn another lesson… When a person's learning and davening comes easily to him, without challenges, he may be seen from heaven as one of those perfect Megillos. – It looks printed, there is nothing interesting about it. – But a Megillah whose writing is uneven, can be compared to a person who has challenges, a person who has ups and downs, but who keeps fighting and trying again. – That kind of Megillah is cherished by the **רִבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם**.

The Kav HaYashar 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.

Taanis Esther and Purim are days of **רצון ואהבה**, desire and love. Therefore, 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*.

"We sing, וגם חרבונה 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." ~ R' Elimelech Biderman.

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."

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.

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!"

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.

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!

Midei Shabbos BeShabbato: by Rabbi Eliezer Chrysler

Purim and the Sa'ir la'Azazel



The Ma'or va'Shemesh cites the **Tikunim**, which ascribes the name 'Purim' to its similarity to Yom Kipur (Yom ke'Purim). And it this connection that explains what happened to change Achashverosh's mind at the second party, to suddenly side with the Jewish people and turn against Haman.

It is based on the concept of the Sa'ir la'Azazel (the goat that carried out all the people's sins to the cliff called 'Azazel'). When that happened, Chazal tell us, Sama'el (alias our eternal enemy, the Satan) changed his spots, as it were, and began to sing the praises of K'lal Yisrael before Hashem. Hence the Gematriyah of 'ha'Satan' is three hundred and sixty-four, equivalent to the days in the year minus one, Yom Kipur, the one day when the great Kategor (the prosecutor), becomes the Sanegor (the chief defence counselor).

And so it was at Esther's second party, he explains. With the Sa'ir la'Azazel uppermost in her mind, and using her powers of manipulation, Esther succeeded in changing Achashverosh, who until now, had acted as the great Kategor of the Jewish people, into their great Sanegor, who could speak only good about Yisrael.

No Name of Hashem

The Taz explains why Mordechai and Esther were careful not to insert the Name of G-d in the Megilah even once. It is, he says, because they knew that it would be translated and placed in the annals of Persia and Medes, where it would doubtlessly be subject

to abuse. **The Maharil** explained it to mean that the Persians would equate the Names with their own gods (Chas ve'Sholom).



The Big 'Vav'

The 'Vav' of Vay'zasa (the youngest son of Haman to be hanged on the gallows) is written big, to illustrate that Haman and his ten sons were all hanged vertically, in one row (like a 'Vav') one on top of the other.

Other commentaries say that the idea is to lengthen the reading of the word. So the L'vush concludes that one should do both.



Esther

The Gemara in Megilah explains that Esther is hinted in the Torah when it writes (in Parshas Vayeilech " **וְאָנֹכִי הַסְתֵּר אַסְתִּיר פָּנַי בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא**" (And I will hide My Face on that day) a clear allusion to the events that took place in Shushan up to the time of Esther's intervention. The Medrash ascribes the name Esther to the fact that Esther hid her identity from Achashverosh - a feat that played a major role in the resounding success of her plan. Whereas according to the Ayeles ha'Shachar, Esther was so called because she concealed herself, so as not to be taken to the royal palace as a candidate for the throne.



Haman (Zeresh's Spouse) & Zeresh (Haman's Spouse), *(Adapted from Ishei ha'T'nach & Ta'amei ha'Minhagim)*

Flying High

Quoting the Seifer ha'Chayim, the Ta'amei ha'Minhagim bases Haman's decision to build a fifty-Amah gallows to hang Mord'chai, on a Medrash. Haman, it appears, had a dream in which he saw

Mordechai flying above his house. Now Haman, in keeping with his lofty position as prime minister of the entire Persian Empire, lived in a very large mansion that rose to a height of almost fifty Amos. So Zeresh and Haman's friends suggested that, in order to conform to the dream, he should build a gallows that was a little taller than his mansion.

Acting upon his wife's advice, he became so excited that (like his master the king) he couldn't sleep that night - only unlike his master the king, he didn't even try. He immediately set out to find carpenters and builders to construct the desired gallows post-haste. Meanwhile an ecstatic Zeresh played on the fiddle in time with the carpenters' banging and chiseling. "Ho hum", she declared gleefully. "I shall pay these workers well for their holy work!" (Targum Sheini). In the end, it transpired that Mordechai flying above Haman's mansion was merely symbolical of the king placing 'Mordechai over Haman's house'.

Incidentally, the size of the gallows contained a touch of prophecy, as that was the exact height that would accommodate Haman and his ten famous sons, as the Medrash demonstrates. How nice of Haman to anticipate that! Perhaps one might add this and the Chesed that Haman did for us by giving us Purim (without him it would never have happened) as another reason for acknowledging Haman by banging whenever his name is mentioned in the Megilah.

Pleading for Mercy

After Achashverosh issued the fateful words "Hang him on it!" Mordechai went to fetch Haman. 'Come' he said, 'Allow me to hang you on the tree that you prepared for yourself!'

But Haman ha'Rasha, his loyalty to the king notwithstanding, was none too keen to end up swinging on a tree. 'Please', he pleaded with Mordechai, 'Don't hang me on a tree the way they do ordinary

people. I was known as Haman, deputy to the king and his patron. I caused the downfall of kingdoms with the staff of my mouth and with the very breath of my lips did I bring confusion upon nations.

Now I'm scared that you will do to me as I planned to do to you. Have mercy on me, and don't kill me like they killed my grandfather Agag (whom Shmuel hacked to pieces with his sword). And I beg of you, don't hang me on a tree! Kill me any way you please, but not that! Perhaps you will kill me with the king's sword that is used to kill high dignitaries'.

And he began to wail pitifully.

But Mordechai, unimpressed, proceeded to carry out the king's orders. And Haman hanged (or should it be hung).



Zeresh

Zeresh was the daughter of Tatnai, the governor of Eiver ha'Nahar, who later tried (unsuccessfully) to stop Nechemyah from building the second Beis-Hamikdash.

"And he (Haman) fetched his friends and Zeresh his wife" (Esther 5:10) - to tell them the good news about his invitation to Esther's second party, together with the King.

When Haman went to attend Esther's first party, Zeresh went off to join her lovers, says the Medrash, and it is from there that Haman fetched her.

Haman had three hundred and sixty-five advisors, the Medrash tells us, but none of them could match his wife, Zeresh. When consulting with them about what to do with Mordechai, they told him that if he (Mordechai) was a Yehudi, then he would not succeed in eliminating him unless he came up with a novel method of doing so.

Death by fire would not succeed, they said, since their father Avraham, as well as the Tzadikim Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah

had emerged from the furnace unscathed. The sword would not work either, they pointed out, as their father Yitzchak had survived the sword, neither would drowning, to which their saviour Moshe had not succumbed or throwing him to the lions, from which Daniel had been spared. And so they concluded, hanging would be a good idea, as no Yehudi had ever survived that.

Of course, had these people in their wisdom bothered to take a peep in the Megilah, they would have soon realized their mistake. Come to think about it, one wonders why they not suggest electrocution, since, at that time, no Jew had ever been electrocuted.

Megilas Esther Megapearls, *(from the Divrei Eliyahu)*

What do You Know!

The Medrash states that of the hundred and twenty-seventy provinces over which Achashverosh ruled, one hundred were situated on land and twenty-seven in the sea.

This is hinted, says the G'ro, in the Pasuk at the end of the Megilah, which describes how Achashverosh placed a tax (Mas) on the land and on the islands of (Iyei) the sea. Since the Gematriyah of "Mas" = a hundred, and of "Iyei" = twenty-seven.

Esther and the Maidens

The Pasuk describes what happened when the turn of every maiden ("Na'aroh ve'Na'aroh") came to appear before the king, and when the Esther's turn arrived (***"u've'Hagi'a tor Esther bas Avichayil*** … ").

The G'ro points out that the Neginos (the Leining notes) on the former are Kadmo ve'Azlo, where the Neginos on the latter are three consecutive 'Munachs'.

This, he explains, portrays the difference between the other maidens and Esther, bearing in mind that whereas 'Kadmo ve'Azlo' means 'to go quickly', 'Munach' means 'to hold back'.

And so it was, says the G'ro. The other maidens couldn't get to the royal palace fast enough to spend a night with the king. Not so Esther, who made use of every excuse under the sun to avoid the privilege.



Provoking Haman

The Pasuk informs us that all the servants of the king prostrated themselves before Haman, "because so the king commanded them, but Mordechai did not bow down and did not prostrate himself". The G'ro explains that Mordechai's exclusion from the obligation to prostrate himself was part of the royal edict. In that case, Mordechai could well have kept quiet about his motives for not paying homage to Haman. But that is not what he did. He spread the word that he refused to prostrate himself before Haman because he was a Yehudi, as the Pasuk itself informs us.

Little wonder then that the Pasuk describes Haman, not just as angry, but as filled with fury'!



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.



Sensitive To Recipients



There are many Torah laws in connection with the caring for the poor and needy year round. The Torah educates us to be sensitive to the feelings of the recipients. Whenever we deal with people of need we must try to preserve their dignity and not make them feel as the object of our charity.

A tale is told about some very conscientious Jews who excitedly came to their Rabbi a few weeks before Purim telling him that they had found a pauper with whom they planned to fulfil their obligation of donating to the poor on Purim. In their eagerness to fulfil this great obligation in the best possible way, they told the Rabbi that they had locked up the pauper to make sure that he remained without means until Purim.

Another tale is told of a teacher who wanted to impress upon his students the importance of performing lovingkindness on a daily basis. The teacher told the students that the next day he would ask each one what acts of lovingkindness they had performed on the previous day.

The next day the first student asked by the teacher related how he had helped an elderly lady cross the street at a crossing. The next one replied that he had also helped this lady cross the street at the same crossing. One can well imagine the surprise of the teacher when he found out that no less than six of his students had assisted the elderly lady to cross the street at that particular crossing.

"Why on earth did you require six boys to assist this lady?" asked the teacher. "But teacher", answered the students, "it took all six of us because she did not want to cross the street."

Bring joy to downtrodden



The lesson is quite clear. Donations to the poor and acts of lovingkindness must be done with a sense of dignity and compassion for the needy rather than giving those performing the act a sense of self-worth for performing good deeds. Our sages teach that when someone knocks on our door or approaches us in the synagogue for a donation, it is not sufficient that we write them a cheque or hand them some money. We are expected to give them our donation with a smile and a kind word (see Talmud Ketuboth 111a and Bava Bathra 9b).

In every community there are people who need invitations for Shabbos and Yom Tov meals and other acts of kindness. We must be aware of their sensitivity not to make them feel that they are being invited because they are a tool to allow us to do a mitzvah. If we thank them for coming, and tell them how much we appreciate their company, or ask them please to come again another time, then we will have accomplished that they will go home feeling great about themselves.

This is the spirit of Purim. On this day we are educated through the mitzvot of the day to express care and compassion for each other, whether it is the needy or members of our family and social circles.

This is most beautifully expressed in the words of the Rambam as he concludes The Laws of Megillah: "It is better for a person to spend on donations to the poor rather than on his own meal and the gifts of food to his friends. For there is no greater and more praiseworthy joy than to make the heart of the poor and other needy people rejoice. For the one who brings joy to the downtrodden is comparable to G'd Himself. As it says, 'He lifts the spirit of the low ones and brings life to the heart of the downtrodden.'" *These words were based on a talk given by Rabbi Avraham Kahn.*

Parsha Potpourri by Oizer Alport

אסתר 2:20- אין אסתר מגדת מולדתה ואת עמה כאשר צוה עליה מרדכי



When Esther was initially brought to the royal palace under the charge of Hegai, she found favour in his eyes, yet the Megillah records (2:10) that she refused to disclose her nationality or her lineage, as she had been commanded by Mordechai.

A short while later, after Achashverosh selected her as Vashti's replacement, the Megillah again emphasizes that Esther would not reveal her people or her background. As this information was already conveyed a mere 10 verses earlier, why does the Megillah repeat this point, and why would we think that her conduct would change in such a short period of time?

The Vilna Gaon explains that the reason Mordechai told Esther not to reveal her identity was because he was afraid that he and all of

the Jews would be killed for attempting to hide her instead of willingly turning her over like loyal subjects of the king.

At this point, Esther had now been selected as queen and there had not been any backlash. In fact, the king was so infatuated with her that he threw extra parties and gave tax cuts to show his love for her. Seeing this, Esther could have easily concluded that Mordechai's concern was misplaced, and if she told Achashverosh that she was a Jew, not only would he not hold it against her people, but he would shower them with favorable decrees. Nevertheless, Esther decided that if Mordechai instructed her not to divulge this information, she would follow his orders with complete faith.

The Gemora in Megillah (13b) teaches that due to Rochel's tznius (modesty), she merited having the modest King Shaul descended from her, and in the merit of Shaul's tznius, he was rewarded with the modest Queen Esther being descended from him.

The Gemora explains that Rochel's tznius was that she gave over the simanim (signs) to her sister Leah and did not reveal Lavan's trickery, and Shaul's modesty was that he did not tell anybody that he had been chosen by Shmuel as the first Jewish king (Shmuel 1 10:16). As for Esther's tznius, the Gemora cites the fact that she did not reveal her nation or her lineage. In what way do these three episodes demonstrate the attribute of tznius?

Although today tznius has become associated with clothing, the Maharal explains (Nesivos Olam Nesiv HaTznius 1) that the quality of keeping something hidden within oneself instead of publicly sharing it with others is also considered a form of modesty. Since the Gemora teaches that the trait of tznius is passed on to one's descendants, he adds that somebody who can keep a secret and knows when to keep quiet is revealing himself to be meyuchas (of distinguished lineage).

שושנת יעקב

ארור המן אשר בקש לאבדי ברוך מרדכי היהודי ארורה זרש אשת מפחידי ברוכה אסתר בעדי



After the public reading of the Megillah, we sing a festive song known as Shoshanas Yaakov, in which we proclaim that Haman and his wife Zeresh are cursed, while Mordechai and Esther are blessed. At that point, we have already finished reading the Megillah, and it is quite clear that Mordechai and Esther had much happier endings than Haman and Zeresh, so why is it necessary to reiterate this self-evident point, and what lesson is it coming to teach us?

The Vilna Gaon explains that the term **ברוך** (blessed) refers to a person who may have endured terrible suffering, but eventually comes out happy. On the other hand, somebody who is **ארור** (cursed) might enjoy lengthy periods of great success and joy, but ultimately his end will be bitter. The Lekach Tov explains that in the Megillah, Mordechai experienced tremendous anguish: He was exiled from Israel, Esther was forcibly taken away from him and given to Achashverosh, and he was challenged and threatened by Haman. However, in the end, Mordechai ultimately enjoyed success, as he wore royal clothing, received Haman's estate, and his name and reputation were respected throughout the land.

Haman, on the other hand, initially achieved unparalleled bounty and blessing. He had wealth, honor, children, and power. As a result of his anger at one individual, he had the ability to issue a decree to destroy an entire nation. However, although Haman seemingly had it

all, his end was one of disgrace and humiliation, as everything he knew and had, was reversed in a matter of hours.

This is the lesson of the Megillah. Many times in life, we see people around us who seem to have it all, yet no matter how hard we try to perform Hashem's will, nothing ever seems to go our way. Since Chazal would not have included Megillas Esther in Tanach unless it had a relevant message for every generation, it is insufficient for us to view it as a one-time historical event, for its message is eternal and relevant to each of us.

We therefore reiterate in Shoshanas Yaakov the triumph of Mordechai and Esther over Haman and Zeresh to help us internalize the recognition that if we follow in the spiritual paths of Mordechai and Esther, the time will ultimately come when we will merit following in the footsteps of their success and happiness as well, and indeed, many have the custom to add **ברוכים כל הצדיקים ארורים כל הרשעים**– *Blessed are all the righteous, and cursed are all the wicked.*

As we learn from the Megillah, there is often much more going on beneath the surface than meets the eye. Although Hashem seems even more hidden today than in Mordechai and Esther's era of hester panim, that just means that our job is that much harder to look behind the veil and discover the hidden miracles that are still taking place for anybody who wants to find them.

There is a well-known tzaddik in Yerushalayim named **Rav Gamliel Rabinovitch**, to whom people turn for blessings and advice with all types of problems. He told a friend of mine that he once took a trip to the kevarim (burial sites of the righteous) in the North of Eretz Yisroel.

Along the way, he noticed a tall office building that had just been built and was advertising for tenants. There was a large banner near the top of the building that said **מלמעלה הכל נראה אחרת** – from up high, everything looks different. He pulled over and took a picture

of the sign, and when he returned home, he had it blown up and taped to the inside of one of his closet doors.

He explained that often, when people open up and share their pain, they express it in a way that seems to question Hashem's treatment of them. When that happens, he opens the door and shows them the sign with the message **מלמעלה הכל נראה אחרת** – from up High with a capital H, there is another perspective, and the situation may appear quite different.

Even in the Megillah itself, where Hashem's name is not mentioned a single time and He appears to have abandoned us, He is still there protecting us through Mordechai and Esther.

The Rokeach points out that Haman's name appears 54 times in the Megillah, and the Vilna Gaon notes that there are 54 letters in the names of Haman's 10 sons who were hanged on the gallows. Correspondingly, Esther's name also appears 54 times.

Memuchan, which is Haman's other name, appears once, as does Esther's alias, Hadassah. While Haman's name appears 54 times, the name of his wife Zeresh is mentioned only four times. To allude to Mordechai's ability to thwart them, his name appears 58 times.

Another beautiful mathematical "coincidence" is that even the name of the Yom Tov has a significant numerical value. The gematria of Purim is 336, which is precisely the number of days from 13 Nissan, when Haman issued his decree against the Jewish people, until 13 Adar, when the Jews successfully defended themselves and killed their enemies, as the Yerushalmi (Megillah 7a) teaches that that year was a leap year.

Continuing with the theme of numbers in the Megillah, there is a mitzvah to drink on Purim until we get to the point that we can no longer distinguish between **ברוך מרדכי** (blessed is Mordechai) and **ארור המן** (cursed is Haman). One of the interpretations of this unusual obligation is based on the fact that these two expressions

have the same gematria, meaning that the mitzvah is to drink until one can no longer do the math to calculate that their numerical values are equal.

However, if one calculates their gematrias, he will find that the numerical value of each phrase is 502. In the Haggadah, there is a mnemonic device to remember the 10 plagues using the first letter of each plague, which is called **דצ״ח עד״ש באח״ב**. Adding up the numerical value of these letters, we find that the 10 plagues have a gematria of 501, one less than **ברוך מרדכי** and **ארור המן**. This hints to us that while everybody can recognize the clear miracles that Hashem did in Egypt, the higher level is to see and acknowledge the hidden miracles that He orchestrated in the times of Mordechai and Esther.

Similarly, **Rav Dovid Feinstein** explains that we begin each new cycle of Yomim Tovim with Pesach in Nissan, when we celebrate the open miracles that Hashem performed to redeem us from Egypt. It takes us 11 months of going through the calendar and celebrating the full gamut of festivals before we reach the even higher level on which we can appreciate the equally miraculous story of the Megillah, when Hashem's miracles were concealed and cloaked in the guise of nature.

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah

'אִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יִכָּתֵב לְאַבְּדָם If it pleases the king, let it be written to destroy them…'(Esther 3:9)

Rav Chaim Volozhiner, zt"l, was accustomed to sitting at the head of the table for his Purim Seudah. He carried a sack of coins that he gave out to the poor and needy. No one was ever turned away.

One Purim an old man with a long flowing white beard accepted a coin from Rav Chaim. He hesitated a moment, gathered up his courage, and asked for another coin. "If the Rav will be so kind as to offer me another coin," said the old man, "I will tell him a Chiddush, a novel

thought that I am pretty sure even the great Rav Chaim Volozhiner has never heard!"

Rav Chaim raised an eyebrow in surprise, but moved by the Purim spirit, gave the old man another coin. The old man joyously accepted the coin and asked the following question:

The Yalkut Shimoni describes where Eliyahu HaNavi came to Mordechai and revealed to him that the deadly decree forced upon the Jews was within his reach and he had the ability to repeal it.



Eliyahu HaNavi explained that the Heavenly decree was not written in blood, which would have sealed the Jews' fate for good. Rather, it was encrusted in cement, and with the power of Tefilah and Teshuvah of the Bnei Yisroel, there was a chance that they would be saved. The old man faced Rav Chaim and asked, "My question is, where is this concept hidden in the words of the Megillah?"

All the guests at the table held their breath in anticipation. Rav Chaim closed his eyes, creased his brow and was deep in thought. After a few moments he opened his eyes, smiled and admitted defeat. "Please tell me the answer to your question," said Rav Chaim. The old man smiled and said, "There is an opinion that states that every time the word Ha'melech, the king, is written in the Megillah, it is a reference to HaKadosh Baruch Hu, the King of all kings. When Haman approached Achashverosh with his proposal, he said the following (Esther 3:9) **אם על המלך טוב יכתב לאבדם** ***'If it is good before the king, he shall write to destroy them'***. If we look carefully at the words, however, the word **לאבדם** can be split into

two words: **לא בדם** -***'not with blood'***, and the meaning of the Pasuk would then be ***אם טוב על המלך , 'If it is proper before the King— Hashem'***, **יכתב**, 'He will inscribe the heavenly decree', **לא בדם**, 'not with blood'— but rather in cement!

Rav Chaim cried out with joy after hearing this truly novel Chiddush. Later, upon visiting his Rebbe, **the Vilna Gaon, zt"l**, Rav Chaim told over this Chiddush. The Vilna Gaon told him that the old man could have been none other than Eliyahu HaNavi!

Project Mesorah - Rabbi Paysach Krohn's inspiring Erev Shabbos Bracha



If you look near the end of the Megilah, you will see that there is a recurring theme of *achdus*. My son said many years ago when he was a little boy, that on the Pasuk that we say **אִישׁ .וּמִשְׁלֹחַ מָנוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ** is the gematriah of 311 and **לְרֵעֵהוּ** is the gematriah of 311. This represents **ואהבת לרעך כמוך**.

Purim was a time of *achdus* when we give gifts to each other. It says in the pasuk **קימו וקבלו** (אסתר ט, כז) Klal Yisrael were once again *mekabel* the Torah that they had received at Har Sinai. And it does say that they were **כאיש אחד בלב אחד**- they were unified with one heart. Where do we see that here?

Take a look at the Pasuk, it doesn't actually say **קימו וקבלו**, we read it like this, but it actually says - **קִיְּמוּ וקבל**- loshon yochid. So once again, there was achdus.

So I would like to make a suggestion. This year let's do something different and unusual, and give at least one Shlach Monos to a person that you never gave before, and somebody that you wouldn't even think of giving. Because let's face it, I know many of us give Shlach Monos to our friends, relatives and neighbours that we are friendly to anyway. Let us *go out of the box* and do an act of achdus and reach out to somebody that we have not given before.

Oh! This would be **אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ**.

Purim Thoughts - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



The *Arizal* teaches that Purim is a greater *Yom Tov* than Yom Kippur. **Rav Yaakov Moshe Kulefsky, *zt"l***, explains that the *Mitzvos* of Purim have two tracks: interpersonal *Mitzvos* and *Mitzvos* between us and *Hashem*, while Yom Kippur only has one aspect— *Mitzvos* between us and *Hashem*. On Purim, the *Mitzvah* that is between us and *Hashem* is *Pirsumei Nisah*, spreading awareness of *Hashem's* miracles. The main way to do this is by recognizing that *Hashem* is constantly aware of our actions and needs. When we have this recognition, *Hashem* answers us when we beseech him in prayer. In fact, this was the way that we were saved from the evil plans of Haman— through prayer. The story of Purim teaches us to realize that *Hashem* is constantly available to us, and we can also learn and understand the gravity and potential of prayer. May *Hashem* answer all of our prayers speedily!

Purim Treasures



After Haman and his children were hanged and they were no longer a threat, Esther went to Achashveirosh and pleaded with him to rid the world of the evil of Haman and his ideas (*Esther* 8:3).

Why was Esther still pleading and crying? **Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv, *zt"l***, answers that some may think that after they have eliminated one threat, they are free, and their security is now guaranteed. And then, somehow, yet again we will find that our existence is threatened. Rebbi Shimon Bar Yochai said it is *Halachah*, that Eisav will always hate Yaakov!

This is true for all generations. Haman may be gone, but Haman's evil scheme still lives on, whether we see it or not. No matter what threats have passed, we must never stop pleading and throwing ourselves to *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*, our King, and beg for Him to rid the world of hatred for the Jews, and to finally reveal His glory to the world!

There is a saying from generations ago regarding Purim: יעדער שמוגער ווערט א צדיק הדור – 'every simple, regular person becomes the tzaddik of his generation on Purim.'

Everyone receives the amazing power on Purim to annul decrees and to draw down yeshuos with his tefillos. ~ R' Elimelech Biderman.

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember



One Purim night, in the house of the *Gaon* **Rebbe Yaakov Yeshaya Blau, *zt"l***, the head of the *Beis Din*, the *Rav* of the Sanhedria neighbourhood in the holy city of Yerushalayim, while the entire family was sitting around the table for the *Purim Seudah Ketanah* (as brought down in *Shulchan Aruch* 695:1, *Mogen Avraham* 6), there was a soft knocking at the door, as if the person was unsure whether they should knock at this hour or not. When they opened the door, there was a woman standing there, embarrassed, and she apologized for disturbing them at this hour, while the *Rav* was sitting with his family, but she had an important *She'ailah* to ask. She asked if she could quickly ask her question, as it would only take a moment, and again, she apologized.

When the *Rav* heard that there was a woman standing there and she was profusely apologizing, he stood up and quickly went straight to the door. He smiled and greeted her warmly and compassionately, and said, "Of course you may ask! You are not disturbing us at all!" He told her that there was nothing to be embarrassed about and there was nothing to apologize for.

When she entered the *Rav's* office, she presented her question, "Tonight, during *Megilah* reading, I was so tired, and without realizing it, I dozed off in the middle and missed a few words of the

Megilah. Did I fulfil my obligation to hear the *Megilah*?" The *Rav* immediately ruled, "No, I'm sorry. If you missed hearing a few words, then you have not fulfilled your obligation to hear the *Megilah*."

The woman then asked, "What am I supposed to do now?" The *Rav* replied, "You have to hear the *Megilah* again." In her distress, the woman said, "Where will I find *Megilah* reading at this late hour? All the *Shuls* have finished *Megilah* reading a while ago!" The *Rav* responded, "What's the problem? Come into my house and I will read the *Megilah* for you!" The woman was stunned. She said, "The respected *Rav* would read the *Megilah* himself for me?" She was quite appreciative.

We learn from this that even though Rav Blau had other options, as there were still *Shuls* that had later *Krias Megilah* times, he took care of the matter himself. To the *Rav*, the answer was simple. He would just read the *Megilah* for her and help someone who needed assistance, without pushing it onto someone else!

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

Rav Shimshon Pincus, *zt"l*, possessed an originality that was well known. He could find ways to reach people, where others could not. Once, while selling the *Aliyos* on Purim, the *Gabai* announced, "Fifty *Shekels* for opening the *Aron HaKodesh* by *Pesichah*." Rav Shimshon quickly leaped to the *Bimah* and said, "*Pesichah* will be sold for a different price. We will start the bidding with the pledge of saying the *Brachah* of *Asher Yatzar*, word by word, for one month!" The congregants started outbidding each other, and when someone undertook to do this for three years, Rav Shimshon awarded him with *Pesichah*!

Purim Gems



Rav Shimshon Pincus, *zt"l*, writes (*Sichos Purim*) about how after Haman's decree was sealed and it became law, it seemed that the Jews were doomed, and all over the world, the Jews became despondent. But then, there came a glimmer of hope. Esther, the Jewish Queen, sent word that she will make a heroic effort and sacrifice her life by going uninvited to the king to plead for her people.

She asked that all Jews, men, women, and children, fast for three days and nights, so that with their *Tefilos*, her difficult mission can succeed. With the entire nation starving and crying, everyone awaited to hear the outcome of the meeting that can give the Jews hope to live.

But what happens? Word came out from the royal court that Esther invited Haman and Achashveirosh to a party. This is betrayal at its worst! The Queen chose to save her own life and switch over to the enemy side, rather that save her people! Everyone thought that it was all over now, and they had no hope. Despite this, they continued fasting and crying to *Hashem*, only this time with one hundred percent dedication, knowing that there wasn't a single person in the world they could count on, especially after the one person they relied on, Esther *HaMalkah*, had betrayed them. Only this pure *Bitachon*, trust in *Hashem*, was able to save *Klal Yisroel* from a decree that was already sealed.

Rav Shimshon says that this was all part of Esther's plan to save the *Yehudim*. Only by removing herself as their 'saviour', would their

true *Emunah* shine through. The only One we can ever rely on is our Father in *Shamayim*. Additionally, *Chazal* tell us that the final *Geulah* will also only come when we truly have nothing and nobody to rely on, except on *Hashem*!

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt – Behind the scenes



The Pasuk states **הללו את ה' כל גוים**... Tehillim 117 *praise Hashem all nations*…for His kindness has overwhelmed us. Why should the non-Jews praise Hashem for the kindness Hashem does to us Jews?

Many times, the kindness of Hashem is apparent immediately. Other times it becomes clear after a period of time as is demonstrated in the story of Purim.

It was towards the end of the holocaust that the Nazis decided to hand out sandwiches to the inmates. Upon seeing this, one of the Jews there took two sandwiches. Two non-Jewish Russians imprisoned there who witnessed this then beat this Jew severely. After the beating, this Jew conversed with Hashem- 'I went through years of the holocaust and survived. So, why- when the end is near as the Nazis are losing- did you let these Russians beat me to the point of near death?'

He received his answer soon after he had this dialogue with Hashem after he fell asleep on the ground. Upon awakening at sunrise because of the light, he saw everyone around him was dead since the sandwiches that were handed out were poisoned by the Nazis. It was because the Russians beat him senseless that caused him not to eat the sandwiches.



During the summer of 2005, a boy from London would travel every Thursday morning by train to arrive at choir practice by 9 a.m. One morning as the train was two stops from his destination, he looked at his watch and saw it was 8:30. Seeing that there was a coffee shop across the street, he figured he had time to get a coffee and relax before returning on the train for practice.

Shortly after exiting the train, he heard a deafening explosion in which the train had blown up. The mayhem that ensued was accompanied with sirens of ambulances and fire engines rushing to the scene. Since the cell phone network had crashed, he was unable to call home to inform his family that his life was spared. After a two-hour walk, he entered his house seeing his parents sobbing. Those tears quickly turned to tears of joy as they exclaimed, you're alive! The parents told him that there was a synchronized terror attack on the London transit system and multiple explosions took place at 8:50 a.m. The boy recalled it was 8:30 not 8:50. He then looked at his watch and saw it still read 8:30! Hashem arranged that his watch stop so he would think he had enough time to get a cup of coffee. This is how his life was saved.

These are stories that are known to us. Yet at times, there is the kindness of Hashem that we never know about it. To this we can apply the words of Rashi **כמה נסים באים לנו ואין אנו מכירין בהן**; ***many miracles happen to us, but we don't recognize them***.

How many times did the plans of the non-Jews against us never come to fruition? How many times was a terrorist attack prevented? How many times did an assailant decide not to execute his plans? How many times have we been involved in a near car accident? How many times did one's child go into the street without being hit by a car?

For this we thank Hashem as we say **הודו לה' כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו** as **לעולם** can be translated as conceal as in **העלם**. This means that we thank Hashem for the good that we are unaware of!

The analogy is given of one who places an obstacle in front of a blind person that is walking. Miraculously he is saved from it. However, only the one who put the obstacle there is aware of this not the blind person. Likewise, the non-Jew knows how many times there was a plot against us that we were saved from.

In many ways it is the non-Jews that know the kindness of Hashem more than us. The Pasuk therefore calls upon the non-Jews, explains the Netziv, to praise the kindness Hashem has done to us because they know the failed attempts and foiled plots.

It was in Nissan 2009 in Haifa that a sophisticated Arab terrorist parked a white Subaru containing close to 250 pounds of explosives, near the supporting columns of the Lev Hamifratz mall. However, the bomb malfunctioned. Smoke issuing from the vehicle alerted bystanders who called police who then neutralized the device. Had the bomb detonated the entire mall would have been in danger of collapsing. Hashem should continue to protect us from all evil.

"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." ~ The Brisker Rav zt'l.

Knowing What Is Best



דעת - knowledge, is what distinguishes humans from other creatures. For this reason, the first request in Shemona Esrei is **אתה חונן לאדם דעת**. So why are we told **מיחייב איניש עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן ... לברוך מרדכי** - ***one is obligated to become intoxicated on Purim until he doesn't know the difference between cursed Haman and blessed Mordechai?*** Furthermore, this also seems to conflict with **אין עני אלא בדעת**; the real poor person is one impoverished of understanding, as well as **קני מה חסר דדא ביה...** one who has **דעת** has everything and one who does not have **דעת** has nothing?

People tend to think they know what is good when in truth, only Hashem knows. The story is told of a Jewish Russian family who were evicted from their home and sent to Siberia. Soon after they left their town, the Nazis came and killed all the Jews in the town. At the time of the eviction, it seemed to be a horrific event. Later, they saw that it saved their life.

While one's perception of events might initially cause them to react with horror, in reality it is all goodness. This is in accordance with **כל דעביד רחמנא לטב עביד** and **גם זו לטובה**- ***whatever Hashem does is for the best***. This lesson is also brought about in the story of Purim where initially the events seemed negative- Haman, the decree and so on.

One lesson we learn from Purim is to completely nullify ourselves to Hashem as the events of the Purim story all proved to be for the

best. Additionally, we nullified ourselves on Purim when we reaccepted the Torah. In light of this we can grasp a different explanation in **עד דלא ידע** – until we don't know the difference between **מרדכי** and **המן** as we are nullifying our **דעת**to Hashem's **דעת**.



To Be Grateful

Chazal teach one who has 100 (money) wants 200. We see this by those dissatisfied with the **מן**- although they had enough food every day that could taste according to their desires, they still complained. Therefore, if we rearrange the word **מנה**(currency)- which is equivalent to 100 **זוז**- it also spells **המן**; the **מן**.

Are we so much different? Do we appreciate the gifts we have? Kings in prior times didn't have the luxuries that we do. The material possessions and comforts that we take for granted were unimaginable a few generations ago. Walking down an aisle at Wal-Mart everything is available in whatever colour, shape or texture we desire and for the most part we have the money to buy it.

Not too long ago a new Russian immigrant to the United States went to a supermarket in America. Upon seeing the abundance at the produce section, she fainted as she was overcome with emotion since she never saw so much food so readily available. In the Russian communist regime, it was a regular part of the day to wait for hours in food lines. And us- If we are held up for 10 minutes at the checkout counter we get upset.

A woman who grew up in the 1930s once recalled that she had two dresses- one for weekday and one for Shabbos. This was normal then as she was from a typical home.

After World War Two, many who emigrated from Poland to America couldn't believe that there was a bathroom in the apartment as they

were accustomed to use out-houses whether it was freezing cold or sweltering hot.

Another woman described how she lived before World War 1 in Poland as her family was considered well off. She lived in a two-room house- one for the parents and one for the children. In the children's room they slept, ate, played cooked, bathed and cleaned their clothes. Additionally, these rooms were small. They had furniture which consisted of a bare table and a few chairs, dirt floors and wood burning fireplaces that had to be stocked by chopping trees. Their walls were filled with cracks that let in the cold air of the winter but held in the heat of the summer. They rode horses to the market and bathed only on special occasions. In addition, they had no phones, television, running water or electricity.

When **R' Alexander Ziskind** would put on his Shabbos clothing on Friday, he would thank Hashem with a great happiness. He would think to himself that there are bigger Tzadikim than me who don't have such clothing. Also, he would thank Hashem for his weekday clothing especially for his winter clothes which without, he would be in tremendous discomfort from the cold.



This was the opposite of Haman. He was someone that no matter what he possessed, it was worthless to him- **כל זה איננו שוה לי** - because Mordechai didn't bow to him. Thus, Haman follows the dictum 'one who has 100 wants 200', as he was never satisfied with what he had.

Is it any surprise that the word **מנה** consists of the same letters as **המן**. Now we can grasp why the Gemara teaches a hint to Haman in the Torah from the tree Adam ate from- **המן מן התורה מנין ? המן העץ**- as Adam was allowed to eat from all the trees besides one. Yet, that is what he ate from. The same is with Haman in that everyone bowed to him except Mordechai. Let us take a lesson from this and appreciate all that we have.

Bending and Bowing

Why did Binyomin merit to have the Beis Hamikdash in his portion?

We are taught that Mordechai is a **גלגל**, reincarnation, of Yaakov and Haman of Esav. This is hinted to in that which it states by Yaakov and Esav, **נא מיד...עשו הצילני**, which contain the initials **המן**. **The Chida** explains this is what Yaakov requested from Hashem when he said **הצילני נא מיד...עשו**, now it is Esav but in the future when I am Mordechai it will be Haman, save me!



Since Yaakov bowed to Esav, Mordechai doesn't bow to Haman as a rectification. Where did Mordechai get this strength from? He is a descendant from Binyomin. Binyomin was the only one not born when Yaakov bowed to Esav. As a result, he wasn't affected by Yaakov's bowing. Therefore, Mordechai had the power to withstand and refrain from bowing to Haman.

In light of what we mentioned we can grasp why the Beis Hamikdash is in the portion of Binyomin as it is the place of completely nullifying oneself to Hashem. Since Binyomin did not bow to Esav, he merited to have the portion of land where bowing takes place, the Beis Hamikdash.

The Pasuk in the Megila teaches that it is called **פורים ע"ש הפור** because of the lottery- **גרל**. Reversing these letters, we notice it spells **רגל**, foot, that which represents bowing, nullifying oneself.

The following is some of that which we do on Purim which comes from what occurred when Yaakov received the Brachos:

1) How did Yaakov receive the Brachos? Through dressing like Esav. This is one of the reasons given as to why we wear a mask, costume, on Purim.

2) Just as receiving the Brachos was done through a meal, we too have Seudas Purim.

3) Just as by the Brachos it says **ויבא לו יין וישת**, he drank wine, so too on Purim we drink wine.

Never Tell a Lie

A talmid told **Horav Yaakov Kamenetzky זצ"ל** that he had to work on Purim. He asked if he could lie and tell his boss that he is sick so that he will be able to stay home and be mekayim the mitzvah of seudas Purim.

Rav Yaakov answered that seudas Purim is a mitzvah from the Rabbanan, while to tell a lie is an issur from the Torah. He suggested to have the seudah in the morning, which is how the **Vilna Gaon** held, but under no circumstances should he tell a lie!

Throughout the ages, many a Jewish community has encountered enemies comparable to the evil Haman of the Purim story. Sometimes the Jews succumbed to his persecutions, rachmana litzlan; in other instances, there was a reversal of fortune, and they were saved. At such times, a Purim Katan, a local Purim, would be enacted. Its observance on that same date in future years would serve to commemorate their deliverance from impending disaster. Where the sequence of events rendered it appropriate, a day of fasting was instituted on the day previous to the new Purim.

A story is told about the time when, centuries ago, it was decided that all the Jews in Rome were to be expelled. Naturally, there was a big uproar from the Jewish community and due to the pressure, the Pope finally decided to make a deal. He would conduct a debate on religious and theological issues. A ranking Christian theologian would face off against any rabbi who would be chosen to represent the Jews. If the priest won, all the Jews were to be expelled. If the rabbi won, the Jews would be allowed to remain in Rome.

Realizing that they didn't have much of a choice, the Jews looked around for a rabbi - any rabbi - who would be willing to champion their faith. But the task was daunting, and the risk was too great, and a volunteer could not be found. After exhausting their list of candidates, a simple, old man named Moshe, who spent his days as a caretaker in the local synagogue stepped forward and humbly offered his services, reasoning that being old, poor and alone, he had less to lose than the others.

With nothing left, the elders agreed but Moshe had but one condition. Since he was not used to lengthy conversations, he requested that the debate be held in silence, with sign language as the only form of communication. The Pope, full of confidence, saw in it a challenge and readily agreed.

The day of the great debate finally arrived. The Pope, his chosen debater and his glorious entourage seated themselves on one side,

while Moshe and whomever from the Jewish community bothered to show up, sat opposite them. The crowd was hushed, and the debaters eyed each other for a full minute. Then, the Pope gave the signal, and the Christian priest suddenly raised his hand and held up three fingers. Moshe looked back at him and quickly raised one finger. The priest then waved his arms all around his head and in all directions and Moshe countered by pointing to the ground where he sat. Finally, the priest pulled out a wafer and a glass of wine. Moshe took an apple out of his bag. Suddenly, the Pope stood up and declared, "All right, that's it. The debate is over. The Jews may stay." And with that he stormed away with his entire following.



After a while, a member of the Pope's group mustered up the courage and asked what happened, why did he give up? The Pope explained, "I coached the priest and I told him that the first thing to do was to hold up three fingers to represent the Trinity. The Jewish man wisely responded by holding up one finger to remind us that there still is just one, common G-d to both our religions. Then, my man waved his arms all around to show that G-d was all around us; but the Jew answered by pointing to the ground signifying, and rightly so, that G-d was also right here with us. The priest then pulled out the wafer and the wine to represent that G-d absolves us from our sins. That brilliant Jew, on the other hand, pulled out an apple to remind us of the original sin. He had an answer for everything, and he was just too good. What could be done?"

Meanwhile, in the other part of town, Moshe simply went back to the synagogue and back to work. But the news travelled fast and instantly there was a large crowd converging on the synagogue and Moshe, wanting to know what really happened. How could a simple, feeble-minded old man do what all the great rabbis thought was impossible? "What happened?" they wanted to know, all shouting in unison to poor Moshe.

Finally, realizing that he couldn't get away from them without explaining, Moshe answered. "Well, this is what happened. At first, the priest motioned to me that the Jews had just three days to get out of the city. I was going to put up a tough front and I answered that not even one Jew was going to leave! Then, he motioned all over as if to say that this whole city was to be cleared of Jews. I let him know that we were staying right here!" Moshe turned to walk away, and one rabbi called out, "And then what happened?" "I don't know," Moshe shrugged, "Then he took out his lunch - so I took out mine!"

Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld –Learning when not to listen

One aspect of the tremendous love that the *Rebono Shel Olam* has for his people, is that even if the divine plan is to place *Klal Yisroel* in a difficult situation, the remedy to that affliction is created before the actual blow itself is given. As the *Gemara* tells us in *Gitin*, the *Rebona Shel Olam* creates the *Refuah* before the *Maka*.

There's a *Gemara* on *Yud Gimmel Amud Bais* in *Meseches Megillah* that tells us the classic example of this concept, and that is that the factor which eventually brought the downfall of *Haman,* was already in place prior to *Haman* getting into power. This was discovered by *Mordechai* of the plot of *Bigsan* and *Seresh* to kill *Achashverosh*. And as we famously know, *Mordechai* relayed this information to *Esther*, who warned the king about the attempt on his life. *Bigsan* and *Seresh* were caught, executed, and *Mordechai's*

noble deed was rewarded in *Achashverosh's* book of chronicles. As the *Gemara* continues, years went by until the fateful night in which the *Megilla* describes to us as the night when sleep alluded the king, and he ordered a reading of this book of chronicles, which set into motion a chain of events that brought down Haman himself. But how did *Mordechai* discover this plot against *Achashverosh*? Where did it all stem from? Where did it begin?

Rashi says in the *Gemara Megilla Yud Gimmel Amud Bais*, which language Bigsan and Seresh were speaking and how *Mordechai* discovered their plot. They were speaking in *Tarzion* language, which they assumed no one would know such an uncommon dialect. However they didn't realize that *Mordechai* was from the *Sanhedrin*, so he understood even this language. The *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin*, *Yud Zayen Amud Alef*, tells us that all 71 members in the *Sanhedrin* knew all 71 Languages. *Targam Sheini* offers a different opinion on how Mordechai became aware of the assassination plot. The conspiracy was revealed to him through *Ruach Hakodesh*, which he then passed the information over to *Esther*, who then told the king. How can we reconcile these two reasons?



Says ***Rav Pam Zt"l*** the following explanation. He brings a *Maasei* with ***Rav Dovid Luria, the Radal***, who was a tremendous *Talmid* of the *Vilna Goan*, from the *Peresh Hamedrish Raba*. The *Radal* was once arrested by the Sarian government, and was brought in front of judges. As he stood before these judges, the Judges were discussing his case in French, assuming that a Jewish Rabbi won't be familiar with the modern language.

However, the *Radal* was fluent in French, and he took a few steps back so he's not to hear their conversation. When the judges noticed he stepped back, they became infuriated

with him, and said, "You Jew! Don't you realize your life is in danger, how dare you step back without our permission".



The *Radal* replied, "Your Honour, please excuse me for stepping back without permission, you see I didn't think it was respectful for me to listen in to your deliberation in French, of which I am fluent". The judges were stunned with his honesty and decency. Especially how his fate was being discussed, and he could've benefitted tremendously from what they were saying about him. Realizing that such a righteous person could not be guilty, they dropped all the charges and released him.

This story can reconcile the two explanations of how *Mordechai* heard the plot against *Achashverosh*. As he sat at the king's gate, *Mordechai* heard the conversation between *Bigsan* and *Seresh*. Was it proper to eavesdrop on someone's conversation? He thought not. Mordechai then decided he was going to walk away and not listen to the conversation. He was then instructed through *Ruach Hakodesh* to pay attention to this conversation, because the salvation of *Klal Yisrael* was at stake. He returned and overheard the conversation.

This is the *Gemara* and the *Targum Sheni* complimenting one another. This interpretation says *Rav Pam Zt"l*, portrays an aspect of exceptional *Midos* that *Mordechai* has, which earned him the privilege of saving *Klal* Yisrael. He became the leader of *Klal Yisroel* not because of his knowledge, but rather due to his perfection of his character traits to the level that he had. This is a *Gadol B'Yisrael*, and something we all must emulate and strive for.



כי מרדכי היהודי משנה למלך אחשורוש וגדול ליהודים ורצוי לרב אחיו דרש טוב לעמו ודבר שלום לכל זרעו (10:3)

When Haman was promoted to second-in-command, the king ordered that every passerby must bow down to him. The Gemora (Sanhedrin 61b) explains that it was halachically permissible to comply with this edict, for there was no issue of actual idolatry involved. As a result, most Jews maintained that it was necessary to bow to Haman to protect themselves and their coreligionists. Mordechai, on the other hand, felt that it was appropriate to be stringent even where not strictly required to do so, and he refused to bow down. True to their worst fears, when Haman learned of Mordechai's intransigence, he was filled with rage and declared war on Jews around the world.

From the perspective of the Jewish people, their reasoning was proven to be correct, and it was Mordechai's misplaced piety that was responsible for the evil decree. Thus, when Mordechai approached them and asked them all to fast for three days (Esther 4:17), they could have easily refused by blaming his fanaticism for the predicament in which they found themselves and insisted that he find a way out of it on his own. Why indeed were they willing to agree to his request?

Further, the Megillah ends by recording that Mordechai was great among the Jews and found favour among his brethren, as he spoke peacefully and sought out their well-being. Seemingly, it would have been more appropriate to conclude with the preceding verse, which

sums up the Megillah by recounting that all the events of Mordechai's might and power are recorded in the historical annals of the Persian kings. Why was the final verse appended to this?

Rav Mattisyahu Salomon explains that the final verse in the Megillah holds the key to answering the first question and to understanding how the entire miracle took place. After the narrative has finished, we are left perplexed how Mordechai succeeded in persuading the Jews to accept the three-day fast that enabled Esther's successful intervention. The Megillah therefore concludes by telling us that the whole story happened **כי**– because – Mordechai was respected by the Jews as someone who conversed peacefully and sought their good. The reason they complied with his request was not his Torah knowledge or fervent prayers, but his ability to get along with others.

Along these lines, when Yaakov encountered a group of shepherds near a well, he rebuked them for ending their work prematurely (Rashi Bereishis 29:7) and implored them to continue caring for their flocks. Surprisingly, rather than reacting defensively to words of reproof received from a stranger, they expressed interest in complying with his instructions.

The Ponovezher Rav points out that Yaakov began (Ibid., 29:4) by referring to them as **אחי**– my brothers. Because they sensed that he spoke to them warmly, they were open to accept his criticism, just as the Jewish people agreed to Mordechai's fast because he was so close to them.

"The Torah does not measure a person by what he achieves, but by the battles he fights. There are people who appear small in accomplishment but are giants in struggle. In Heaven, the war is weighed more than the victory." ~ Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz.

Parsha Potpourri, by Rav Ozer Alport

The Megillas Esther stresses that our observance of Purim is not in commemoration of the fact that the Jews fought and killed their enemies because if it was, we would celebrate it on 13 Adar when that happened.

The Meshech Chochmah explains that in contrast to other nations which declare the days on which they achieved military victories to be national holidays, Judaism doesn't believe in celebrating the downfall of our enemies, as King Solomon writes (Proverbs 24:17) "Do not rejoice over the downfall of your enemy."



The Talmud (Megillah 10b) teaches that the angels wanted to sing a song of praise to G-d at the Red Sea, and G-d responded, "My creations and handiwork are drowning in the sea, and you want to sing!?"

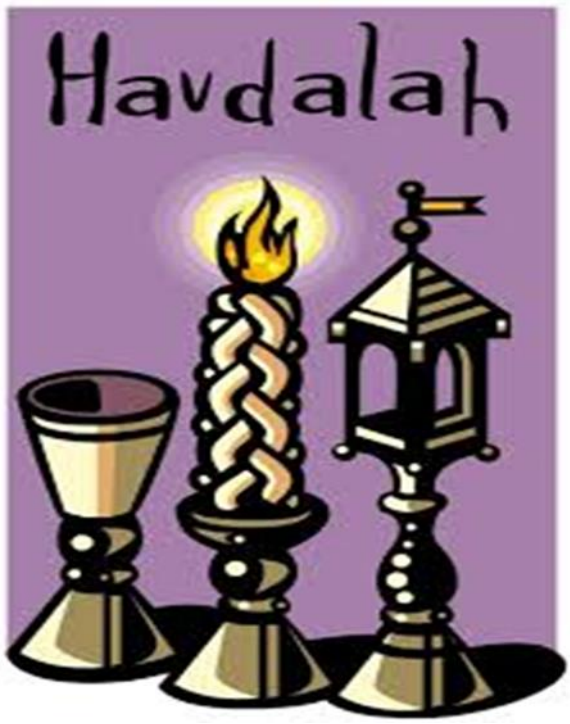
For this reason, the Torah doesn't describe Pesach as the Yom Tov when G-d punished the Egyptians, but rather as the Yom Tov when G-d freed us from Egypt. Similarly, on Chanukah our celebration is only due to the miracle of the oil that burned for eight days and of the rededication of the Holy Temple, but not of the military victory over the Greeks.

Similarly, Purim wasn't established to commemorate the death of Haman or the defeat of our enemies. Rather, we celebrate Purim on 14 Adar, the day when the Jews were able to rest and return to their normal lives of serving G-d without distractions. He adds that this had the additional benefit of not inspiring jealousy on the part

of our Achashverosh and our other non-Jewish neighbours. During the time between the original miracle of Purim and its enactment as a Yom Tov, the number of anti-Semitic enemies had surely increased, and the last thing Mordechai wanted to do was give them ammunition and reason to hate us more.

He adds that for this reason, the Torah commands us in Exodus 12:16 to make a Yom Tov on the seventh day of Pesach, while the Jews were still in Egypt and well before they had arrived at the Red Sea. The reason is that if G-d only told us to make a festival on the seventh day of Pesach after the splitting of the Red Sea, we might mistakenly think that it's a Yom Tov to celebrate the death of the Egyptians. Therefore, it was told to them in advance to make it clear that it is part of the celebration of the Exodus from Egypt, but not a commemoration of the downfall and suffering of the Egyptians.

ליהודים היתה אורה ושמחה וששן ויקר (אסתר 8:16)



After Haman was killed, Mordechai went out wearing royal garments, which caused the Jews in Shushan to rejoice. The Megillah records that they had light, gladness, joy, and honour, a well-known verse that is said each week as part of Havadalah at the conclusion of Shabbos. However, its inclusion is difficult to understand, for this verse does not appear to have any connection to Shabbos or Havdalah.

Rav Zelik Epstein notes that the Gemora (Megillah 16b) interprets each of these four expressions as a reference to a mitzvah that the Jewish people were now able to safely observe. "Light" refers to Torah, "happiness" describes Yom Tov, "joy" corresponds to

circumcision, and "honor" represents tefillin. The common thread linking these four mitzvos is that they all serve to separate the Jewish people from the other nations of the world.

The Gemora (Sanhedrin 59a) rules that non-Jews are forbidden to engage in Torah study (except for the laws governing the seven Noahide commandments). Similarly, gentiles are proscribed from observing Shabbos (Sanhedrin 58b), and the Yomim Tovim that commemorate the Exodus from Egypt are even more unique to the Jews. Circumcision represents a covenant between Hashem and the Jewish people (Bereishis 17:10-11). Lastly, the Gemora (Megillah 16b) says that when the nations of the world see us wearing tefillin, it inspires fear among them as they recognize that the name of Hashem is proclaimed on us.

Because each of the four mitzvos referenced in this verse act to differentiate Klal Yisroel, it is quite understandable and appropriate to say it in Havdalah, in which we thank Hashem for dividing between **ישראל לעמים**– the Jewish people and the nations of the world.

שושנת יעקב צהלה ושמחה בראותם יחד תכלת מרדכי



At the end of the public reading of the Megillah, we sing a song called Shoshanas Yaakov, which begins by expressing the tremendous joy the Jewish people felt when they saw Mordechai wearing turquoise garments. Although these words are well known, they are difficult to understand. Why was the colour of Mordechai's clothing a cause for simcha?

Rav Chaim Zvi Senter points out that the Torah (Bamidbar 15:38) instructs us to place techeiles threads on our tzitzis. The Gemora

(Menachos 43b) explains that when a person sees the turquoise threads, they should remind him of his spiritual obligations, for techeiles is similar in color to the sea, which in turn resembles the appearance of the sky, which is comparable to Hashem's Throne of Glory. Why did Hashem command us to apply a dye that is so many steps removed from its ultimate purpose instead of requiring the use of a different color that is directly like the Throne of Glory?

Rav Senter suggests that the indirect chain is intended to teach us that even when Hashem's Providence is not clearly visible, it is nevertheless present, even though the passage of a lengthy period of time is sometimes necessary for it to become revealed. As the Megillah unfolds, the veil of confusion is slowly lifted, and by the end, it has become clear that the entire series of events was Divinely orchestrated. Accordingly, the techeiles robes that Mordechai wore symbolized the awareness of Hashem's involvement and protection, even when it seems hidden, and it was this appreciation of Hashem's master plan that generated such happiness and celebration.

Like the Jews in Shushan, we also experience moments of doubt in our lives and dark periods that can feel insurmountable. At such times, it behooves us to remember the message of the techeiles, that even when there is no salvation in sight, Hashem is hiding just beyond the curtain, guiding every second of our lives with absolute precision.

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

Yeshivas Beis Dovid – Divrei Torah

Rabbi Moshe Eli Spitzer – behind the scenes



In every generation, the Goyim rise up against the Yidden, and Hashem saves us. As it says in the Hagada, "Shebichal Dor Vidor Omdim Alereinu Lichloseinu Vihakadash Baruch Hu Matzileinu Miyadam". We say in Hallel, "Hallelu Es Hashem Kal Goyim Shabichu kal Huamim". Why are the nations of the world praising Hashem for the miracles that happen to the Jews? Shouldn't we as the Jewish people be the one to praise him?

This is referring to the miracles that only the Goyim knew about. Meaning their plans against the Jews that Hashem foiled on multiple occasions. The answer lies in the Mitzvah of Mikra Megilla. Usually the miracle remains behind the scenes, leaving us to guess the master orchestrators plans. In the miracle of Purim however, Hashem took us "behind the scenes", and revealed to us his plans. The word Megilla hints to the word Ligalos - to reveal. The Hashgacha Pratis became part of the Tora Shebiksav.

Purim is compared to Yom Kippur. The Piaseczner Rebbe zt'l 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.)

Rabbi Eli Pinnick - The Power of Tefillah

וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לַהֲתָךְ 4:10 Esther called for **התך**. Who was **התך**? The Midrash says this was none other than Daniel!!! The famous Daniel that was saved from the lion's Den. Why was he called **התך** literally meaning "cut down" since he was cut down from his level of **רוחניות**.



How is it possible that someone who was thrown into a *bunch of growling and starved predators not having eaten* in a very long time with huge whet appetites willing to eat anything coming their way, and definitely when it is not just another "chicken for supper again" meal, able to remain alive until he is hauled out of the cage by the guards to the sheer amazement of **נבוכדנצר** and all the other spectators who had paid for tickets and had come to watch…. It is nothing less than a miracle. But how did he accomplish this?

Through his **תפילה**. Daniel Davened 3 **תפילות** a day where he would open the window in his private bedroom towards **ירושלים** and Daven. Which by the way is what landed him in the Lions Den in the first place! OUCH!

However, in comparison to the **תפילות** that the Heiligeh Yidden davened to rescind the decree of Haman with their tears, fasting and Repentance for 3 full days and nights they reached such spiritual heights that even Daniel in comparison to The Yidden …when compared to them he was no longer considered "on his same spiritual height" so great were their **תפילות**.

Lets learn from this the power of sincere and meaningful Davening and how much it can accomplish. May each and every one of us have a truly uplifting and Heiligeh Purim and may all our **תפילות** be answered and accepted on this Truly Holy Day!!!

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt – Hinting to Hitting



The Mateh Moshe tells us the reason for the custom to bang when Haman's name is mentioned in the Megila when we read it in Shul is to erase his name as in **מחה...זכר עמלק**, erase the memory of Amalek. Indeed, **R' Pinchas Koritzer** explains **מחה** as in **מחי ומסי**, to hit, bang. A hint to this custom is found in **והיה אם בן הכות הרשע**, if the wicked one is liable to get hit, in which the end letters spell **המן**.

The Kav Hayashar tells us that to fulfil this Pasuk, when R' Heshil would test his quill (pen) to see if it worked, he would write the name **עמלק** or **המן** and then erase it.

Rabbi Shaul Kagan, of blessed memory, Rosh Kollel of Pittsburgh, disliked hearing Jews say, "I am going to a party." "Yidden don't party!" he used to exclaim. "They gather, they rejoice, and they celebrate in the boundaries of the crown of the Almighty. A royal table should not only be set. It should also be crowned!

Pumping Party



It says when Achashveirosh displayed the riches of his glorious kingdom…180 days. Why was the party exactly 180 days? This seems like a random number.

1) Nevuchchadnetzar amassed vast treasures that were recovered by Coresh and then inherited by Achashveirosh. Nevuchadnetzar's treasures filled 1,080 storehouses. Achashveirosh wanted to show off each of these treasure chests but that would be unbecoming, to blatantly gather the people to display his wealth. He therefore made such a feast where each day when the festivities were at their height, he would invite them to view his treasures. He showed them six per day as the Midrash relates that Achashveirosh would open six treasure houses and show their contents to the people at his party each day. Showing off six treasures a day, it took 180 days to show off all 1,080!

2) The Yalkut Me'am Loaz explains based on the Yalkut Shimoni that these treasure houses contained the gold and silver vessels of the

Beis Hamikdash. The Pasuk says that the number of vessels Nevuchadnetzar looted from the Beis Hamikdash and that Achasveirosh later acquired was 5,400. It is clear from the Gemara that the term **אוצר**, storehouse refers to a place that contains no less than five vessels. Thus, if Achashveirsoh invited his guests into six storehouses of treasure each day, he showed them 30 vessels per day. Over 180 days he was able to show them all 5,400!

From the Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo



Purim is about revealing the hidden. The words Megillas Esther can be translated as **לגלות את ההסתר**- to reveal that which is hidden. In life there are so many blessings that are hidden because they are not so apparent. Other gifts are hidden from us because it is simply not what we choose to see. The simcha of Purim and true happiness in life comes from not just seeing what is on the outside but looking deeper and discovering the myriad blessings that Hashem bestows upon us. The word **מגילה**can be switched around to spell out **מילגה** which is an amount of money that we give out on Purim). It also spells **גלימה** which means a cape (that we dress up with on Purim). We also find the word **לגימה** an amount of drink (which of course is the mitzvah of the day!)

So many Purim secrets are hidden in the word MEGILLAH and so many more in the Megillah itself. Every one of our lives is a Megillah that Hashem is writing for us. The question is, what do we choose to

see? When a cup has half the amount of liquid in it than it can contain, there are some people who will say that the cup is half empty. There are others who will say that it is half full. Who is right?

The answer is, they are both right, but the question is who is smart? The first letters of חֲצִי כּוֹס מָלֵא- the cup is half full, is CHACHAM - a wise person. It is the smart choice to see our lives as full. Sometimes it means that we have to look deeper at a situation or person, or whatever it is that is causing us to feel down. As they say, "If you want to be happy as a wife, even with your strife, then you have to examine the Megillah of your life," and try to uncover the deeper meanings and hidden blessings that are with you all the time.

Just as the name of Hashem is not found even once in Megillas Esther, yet we all know He was there the whole time making everything happen, so too, may we be able to find Hashem's wondrous gifts to us and reveal the hidden power of happiness that we carry within us at all times.

A renowned Purim Rav was the famous Sigheter Badchan (jokester), R' Hirsch Leib Z"L, who once said, "I find that the greatest miracle of the entire Megillah is found in the words אֵין אֶסְתֵּר מַגֶּדֶת מְוֹלַדְתָּהּ- 'Esther did not speak of her birthplace.' (2:20) Since Chazal teach us that nine (out of ten) large quantities of speech came down to the world and were quickly grabbed up by the women, the fact that Esther 'did not speak' - is nothing short of miraculous!"

Achashverosh was a fool: first he killed his wife at the urging of his friend, and then he killed his friend at the urging of his wife. ~ Yalkut Shimoni

Concepts in Avodas Halev - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman

לַיְהוּדִּים הָיְתָה אוֹרָה וְשִׂמְחָה וְשָׂשׂוֹן וְיקָר 8:16

The Gemara (מגילה טז) writes: "Rav Yehudah said: **אורה**- 'Light' means the Torah ... **שמחה**- "Gladness" means Yom Tov ... **ששון**- "Joy" means Bris Milah .... **ויקר**- "Honour" means Tefillin...." At a Shabbos Sheva Berachos for an einikel recently, I discussed the difference between **שמחה** and **ששון** as it pertains to a wedding celebration, from the beracha we say: **אשר ברא ששון ושמחה חתן וכלה**.



Allow me to connect that machshava from simchas chosson v'kallah to simchas Purim. As we know, the Hebrew letters "Sin" **ש** and "Tzadi" **צ** are interchangeable. Thus, the word **שמחה** could also be read **צמחה**- meaning a flower. A flower blossoms beautifully and usually has a beautiful aroma; shortly thereafter, however, the beauty is reduced as a cherished distant memory. The root of **ששון** - **שש** is related to **ציץ**meaning budding, as the posuk says: **ויצא פרח ויצץ ציץ ויגמל שקדים** – במדבר יז:כג ***"It gave forth blossoms, sprouted buds, and produced ripe almonds."*** Aharon's staff brought forth a flower and a bud and thereafter it grew almonds. A bud may sprout either before or after the blossom, but it always lasts much longer and eventually bears fruit, as Moshe Rabbeinu had a special relationship with Klal Yisroel - like a parent to a child.

Let us display an equal amount of devotion to our own children like Moshe did for his people, and iy"H we will enjoy simcha and Yiddishe nachas from them.

Rashi and the Sifsei Chachomim explain there. A chosson and kallah look forward to a life filled with beauty and simcha, like a pretty

rose, and it should last a lifetime like a **ציץ**, a bud, which blossoms and bears fruit and children throughout their lifetime. Thus, Chazal teach us that **שמחה** refers to Yom Tov - an intense time of happiness - but fairly brief, whereas **ששון** refers to Bris Milah, which is the only mitzvah that endures throughout a man's lifetime. The beracha of **אשר ברא ששון ושמחה** we give to a chosson and kallah is meant to include both intensity as well as timelessness.

The Gemara in (**תענית כט**), says that when Adar begins, we increase our happiness because Purim and Pesach are on their way, celebrating great miracles with peaks of happiness. We want that **שמחה** to become a **ששון**- and last our entire lives because besides for Simchas Yom Tov, Purim is a **קימו וקבלו**- a day of Kabolas HaTorah, the joy of accepting the Torah is combined with the intensity of simcha and the enduring nature of **ששון** for a lifetime. **ליהודים היתה אורה ושמחה וששון ויקר, כן תהיה לנו**. B'ezras Hashem, may it be for us as well!

תִּמְחֶה אֶת־זֵכֶר * (זֵכֶר) עֲמָלֵק מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמָיִם לֹא תִּשְׁכָּח



His fame as a brilliant defender of the faith, allowed **R' Yonason Eibeschutz ZT"L** to be greatly esteemed by prominent non-Jewish scholars, among them Christian bishops and clergy leaders. On many occasions, he was called upon to defend his Jewish brethren before the leaders of the church, and his high reputation also stood him in good stead when he travelled to the emperor in Vienna, to intervene on behalf of his brethren in Prague and Bohemia.

During one debate that he had with the cardinal of Metz, he was asked the following: "The Bible states explicitly, '*Do not take revenge and do not bear a grudge*.' Is that not so?" R' Yonason nodded in assent. "Well, why then, do your people still celebrate the festival of Purim thousands of years after Haman's downfall? Why do you still bear him a grudge? Is this holiday not a contravention of your laws?"

"Your eminence, the purpose of our Purim celebration is not to rejoice over Haman's downfall," replied R' Yonason, with an ironic smile. "It is meant to remind modern-day Hamans, those evil men who tend to pick on the Jewish people, of the bitter end met by the original Haman!"

Every year, on Parshas Zachor, we publicly remind ourselves of who our real enemy is: Amalek. He is the enemy who fought against Hashem in the desert when no one else would dare do so, and he is the enemy that we face even till this very day. On a physical level and on a spiritual level. Yes, the uptick in anti-Semitism is alarming, and many terror groups abound. But they all have one thing in common: they are all the "Amalek" of today. They hate Jews because they hate Hashem. This Purim let us pray for a miracle of our own - and watch their downfall with glee.

One Purim, a bochur gave the Steipler, זצ"ל a list of requests. At the end of the note, the bochur wrote jokingly, "On Purim, one must give to anyone who reaches out to them."

After the Steipler read the note, he said, "You are correct, so let us both daven and plead to Hashem for what we need, and then Hashem will hopefully give us what we ask for."



R' Moshe Teitelbaum ZT"L (Yismach Moshe) would say: "When Klal Yisroel defeated Amalek in the desert, Moshe was told, 'Write this memorial in the book, and put it in the ears of Yehoshua.' Chazal say that the 'book' refers to Megillas Esther. Thus, Moshe was instructed to put the story of Megillas Esther in the 'ears of Yehoshua' - in other words, to whisper them quietly in his ear. Why was this done quietly? Since the people in the times of Mordechai and Esther were sinning and required repentance before they could have salvation, had they known the outcome of the story beforehand - because Moshe would have spoken it out loud to Yehoshua - they wouldn't have been afraid of Haman, and they never would have done Teshuvah!"



Chacham Rabbeinu Yitzchok Aramah ZT"L (Akeidas Yitzchok) would say: "Haman accused the Jews of being 'a scattered and separate nation,' for when our hearts are separated and our souls are distanced, accusation rules over us and the danger is great. Esther said, 'Gather all the Jews' with unity, love, brotherhood, peace and friendship, in order to nullify the decree. And that is what happened. Thus, today, on Purim, we send portions and gifts to the poor to increase the love and friendship in Klal Yisroel, something that will nullify all future accusations against us."

וְנֹחַ בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר בּוֹ וְעָשָׂה אֹתוֹ יוֹם מִשְׁתֶּה וְשִׂמְחָה 9:17



How did the biblical Noach manage to get himself included in the text of the Megillah? **R' Shlomo Alkabetz ZT"L** (Manos HaLevi) quotes a Medrash Pliah, that when Haman's wife Zeresh advised him to erect a pole 50 amos high on which to hang his enemy, Mordechai, Haman searched everywhere and could not find such a large pole.

His son Parshandasa, however, remembered that on one of his travels to the land of Turkey, he encountered the Ark of Noach, which had landed on Mt. Ararat. He travelled there again and retrieved a long piece of wood, 50 amos in length, and brought it home for his father's use.

It was this very same pole that was used to hang Haman, and his ten sons. As a result, while following the Almighty's command to build an ark years earlier, Noach played a large part in the Purim miracle as well. Shouldn't he then be mentioned?

וַיְהִי בִּימֵי אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הוּא אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ הַמֹּלֵךְ מֵהֹדּוּ וְעַד־כּוּשׁ 1:1

R' Eizel Charif ("Sharp One") ZT"L of Slonim once observed a man come rushing into shul one morning while the minyan was up to Krias Shema, hurriedly don his Talis and Tefillin, and fly through the davening, mumbling words incoherently at a dizzying speed! Then, before the rest of the minyan had even finished Shemona Esrai, he wrapped it all up, said a few parting words to his neighbour, slammed his siddur shut and gave it a loud and meaningful kiss!

After davening was completed, R' Eizel commented to another person standing nearby, "In Megillas Esther, we find that King Achashveirosh's empire spanned the world, 127 countries from Hodu until Kush. In the gemara, there is a machlokes between Rav and Shmuel if these two countries, Hodu and Kush, were near each other or far away. But after what I saw this morning, I believe the answer is clear: It doesn't take more than a few single minutes to get from Hodu **הודו לה' קראו בשמו** until that last final and decisive Kush!" ("Kush" means kiss in Yiddish)



R' Menachem Mendel Schneerson ZT"L (Lubavitcher Rebbe) would say: "Why was annihilation decreed upon the Jews of that generation? Because they enjoyed the feast of King Achashverosh. The problem was not their participation in the feast; indeed, Achashverosh supplied kosher food for his Jewish subjects. The problem was that they enjoyed the feast. With the royal kosher menu in hand, the exiled Jew felt he no longer needed Hashem for his survival. The decree of annihilation was not a punishment, but a consequence of this attitude. Putting his faith in mortals, the Jew denied his supernatural status - the status of a nation whose very survival belies the laws of history. The Jew was now lonely and vulnerable to the decrees of a mortal Achashverosh."

After WWII, the Polish authorities decided to build a highway through an old Jewish cemetery. The local Chevra Kadisha - Burial Society, was ordered to remove all the bones to a new resting place. To their amazement, however, they found one body that had not decomposed - a sure sign of great righteousness. But even more to their wonderment, he was buried in the robes of a priest! They made inquiries among the elders of the town, and this is the story that was told. R' Naftali ZT"L was the Gabbai Tzedakah - Overseer of Charities, of the town. He was well respected, and he would always distribute any funds he received fairly.

One day, after he had already collected quite a sum of money for a dire emergency, a man knocked on his door. "Naftali, please you must help, I have nowhere else to turn," he begged. The man, already burdened by the expense of a large family, had a child who was quite ill, and the medical bills were putting the family under tremendous financial distress.

Wordlessly, Naftali got up and went out to collect again; and people helped, but not like the first time. He returned home exhausted, but satisfied that he had done the right thing. Soon after, there was a knock on the door again. A man whose roof had caved in on his house was in the doorway. His family of ten souls was left homeless. Could Naftali please help.

R' Naftali thought to himself, "I can't go around collecting again," three times in one day - but he did! This time, he went to beseech the son of a wealthy merchant who was entertaining some of his friends at the local pub. "Don't tell me you're collecting again," he screamed in disbelief. Then, they all began to ridicule Naftali mercilessly.

Suddenly, the young man had an idea. "Naftali, we will give you the entire amount of 20 zlotys that you need. All you have to do is to walk through the main street of town wearing a priest's robes." Naftali, amazingly, agreed. They all walked behind him singing,

hooting, laughing. It was a terrible sight, but he got the 20 zlotys. Naftali went home a broken man. He threw the priest robes they had given him in the back of his closet and collapsed into bed.

A year later, the **Sanzer Rebbe, R' Chaim Halberstam ZT"L** passed through that same town. As he was passing the house where Naftali lived he exclaimed, "I smell the fragrance of Gan Eden - Paradise, here." They went into the house and began to question Naftali about what he could have done that would cause the fragrance of Gan Eden to descend upon his house. Naftali recounted the incident of the priest robes. R' Chaim commanded the Burial Society that when Naftali's time comes, he should be buried in those same priest robes. The angels of destruction will not dare to touch him. And they obviously didn't.

Torah Gems

יִנָּתֵן גַּם־מָחָר לַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוּשָׁן לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּדָת הַיּוֹם וְאֶת עֲשֶׂרֶת בְּנֵי־הָמָן יִתְלוּ עַל־הָעֵץ 9:13



The Shulchan Aruch paskens: "One should read the ten sons of Haman in one breath to show that they were all killed and hung together as one." The Targum Sheni on Megillas Esther describes in vivid detail how Haman and his ten sons were hanged. The height of the gallows was fifty amos. It was anchored three amos into the ground. Haman was hanged at the top, with his oldest son, Parshandasa, hung right beneath him, leaving a space of one amah between them. Each son was hung in succession with an amah of space between one son and the next. Each son took up a space of three amos, with the

youngest son, Vay'zasa at the bottom, hanging three amos off the ground. The problem is this: When we count up the total amount of amos listed above, we end up with forty-nine amos. (3-anchor, 3-off the ground, 33-the height of eleven people, 10-ten spaces between Haman and his ten sons = 49) What happened to the missing amah?

R' Chaim Kanievsky Shlit'a quotes Tosfos that a typical man is the size of four amos. The reason why the ten sons of Haman are listed as being only three amos high in the Targum is because they were killed the day before they were hanged and based on the posukim they were not just killed, but decapitated. Therefore, when they were strung up on the gallows, it was without their heads!

However, Haman did not get off so easily and did not lose his head in any sort of decapitation. In fact, he was killed through hanging, with a rope around his neck, on the gallows that he prepared for Mordechai, his mortal enemy and would-be victim of his evil ploy! And it is there that we find the missing amah. It is none other than Haman's huge and inflated head!



4:16 וּבְכֵ֗ן אָבֹוא אֶל־הַמֶּ֙לֶךְ֙ אֲשֶׁ֣ר לְֹא־כַדָּ֔ת וְכַאֲשֶׁ֥ר אָבַ֖דְתִּי אָבָֽדְתִּי



A frightful incident occurred not long ago, when an Israeli soldier was shot by an Arab terrorist. The bullet lodged directly above the soldier's spine, dangerously near his brain stem. The doctors sent an urgent message to **R' Yitzchok Zilberstein Shlit'a** with the following query: Should we operate right away with the on-call military surgeon, who is more than capable, albeit not the best in his field? With him, the soldier faces a 90% chance of survival. Or should we wait a number of hours, at the very real risk of infection or worse to the patient, until we can transport a top-level surgeon, whose rate of success in this situation is 100%. We need an immediate answer!

R' Zilberstein felt that for such a life-and-death situation, he needed to base his response on more than just a hunch. He recalled the debate between the two **נביאים** that took place in the Megillah. When the terrible decree of Haman became known, Mordechai sent an urgent message to Esther, urging her to go before the king and prevail upon him to annul the edict. Esther countered by saying that I cannot just go into his inner chamber any time I want, for I would be killed. Rather, if I wait, surely the king will call me in within the next thirty days and then I can plead our case. But Mordechai was adamant and in the end, we see whose opinion was followed. After a three-day fast, Esther took her life in her hands and went before the king, who graciously received her and acceded to her bidding.

Hurriedly, R' Zilberstein sent off his response: "This is a life-and-death situation. It is better to do it now and be 90% sure, then wait until who knows!"

Megillah Questions

1. How many countries did Achashverosh rule over? 127 (1:1)

2. How many days did the first feast last? 180 (1:4)

3. What are the names of Achashverosh's two servants who tried to kill him? Bigtan and Teresh (2:21)

4. How did Haman choose the date that he did for killing the Jews? With a lottery (3:7)

5. How many people did Esther invite to her parties? Two: Achashverosh and Haman (5:4 & 5:8)

6. Where did Mordechai live after Haman was hung by Achashverosh? In Haman's House (8:2)

7. How many beds did Achashverosh have? 6! (1:6)

8. How many mothers did Vashti have? Two! (1:9)

9. What position did Mordechai play in the Shushan Soccer Team? Goal Keeper! (2:21)

10. What job did Haman have in the Shushan Dairy Company? He made butter! (3:5)

11. How old was Achashverosh when Haman came to power? 12! (3:7)
6. What did Haman think was strange about Esther's face? She had no nose! (5:12)

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

Purim Torah!

The WORLD Famous STORY OF PURIM By Miesh Goldish

The story of Purim is an international tale. King Achashveirosh was **Finnish** with his disobedient wife Vashti. "You **Congo** now!" he ordered her. After she had **Ghana** way, the king's messengers went **Roman** the land to find a new queen. And **India** end, the beautiful Esther won the crown. Meanwhile, Mordechai sat outside the palace, where the **Chile** Haman would **Czech** up on him daily. "I **Haiti** you because you refuse to bow to me!" Haman scolded Mordechai. "**USA** very stubborn man. You Jews are such **Bahamas!** If you keep his up, **Denmark** my words! I will have all your people killed! Just **Kuwait** and see, you **Turkey**! " Mordechai went into mourning and tore his clothes-a custom known as **Korea.** He urged Esther to plead with the king. The Jews fasted for three days and grew very **Hungary**. Esther approached the king and asked, '**Kenya** please come to a banquet I've prepared for you and Haman?" At the feast, she invited her guests to a second banquet to eat **Samoa**. The king asked, "Esther, why **Jamaica** big meal like this? Just tell me what you want. Unto half my **United Kingdom** will I give you." Esther replied, "**Spain** full for me to say this, but Haman is **Russian** to kill my people." Haman's loud **Wales** could be heard as he carried **Honduran** this scene. "**Oman**!" Haman cried bitterly. "**Iraq** my brains in an effort to destroy the Jews. But that sneaky Mordechai - **Egypt** me! " Haman and his ten sons were hanged and went immediately to the **Netherlands**. And to **Sweden** the deal, the Jews were allowed to **Polish** off the rest of their foes as well. "You lost your enemies and **Uganda** friend," the king smiled. And that is why the Purim story **Israeli** a miracle. G-d decided to **China** light on His chosen people. So now, let's celebrate! Forget all your **Syria's** business and just be happy! **Serb** up some wine and **Taiwan** on!

Me'oros Hatzaddikim



Kabbola teaches that Esther was a reincarnation of Eve. Esther: Scent from Above From the teachings of **Rav Tzvi Elimelech (Shapira) of Dinov** The Midrash states: "Hadassa" [Hebrew for "myrtle"] is [another name for] Esther. In the same way that myrtle has a sweet smell but a bitter taste, so was Esther sweet for Mordechai, yet bitter to Haman. (Esther Rabba 6:5) ...Esther sweet for Mordechai, yet bitter to Haman.

The Chida wrote: Esther was a reincarnation of Eve, the Serpent was enclothed in Haman, and Mordechai was the reincarnation of Yaakov, as recorded by the students of the Ari HaKodosh. Thus, Esther (as Eve) was bitter to Haman, who was the Serpent, who had brought her to sin - and sweet to Mordechai, who, as a reincarnation of Yaakov, was also the reincarnation of Adam. (Dvash L'pi 5:2)

Every one of the five senses was recorded in the account of the sin of Adom - except that of the sense of smell. Therefore, understand that the sense of smell wasn't ever really blemished, and for this reason it is a thing which the soul gets pleasure from, as opposed to the body. Thus, the scent was sweet to Mordechai. Thus, "[Mordechai] shouted a great shout" (Esther 4:1) for "the voice is good for [the quality of] spices". (Yerushalmi Talmud, Yoma 23a) And the taste was bitter to Haman, for [it was him, as] the Serpent, who seduced Eve the sense of taste [and received his punishment from the reincarnation of Eve, measure for measure]. *[B'nei Yisasschar]*

Mordechai was the reincarnation of Yaakov and Haman the reincarnation of Esau.

From Yaakov to Mordechai from the teachings of Rav Chaim Yosef David Azulai

When Yaakov saw that Esau was coming he went ahead of his family and bowed down seven times until he reached his brother. (Bereishis 33:3)



It says in Sefer Hakinuyim that Mordechai was the reincarnation of Yaakov and Haman the reincarnation of Esau. Since Yaakov did wrong by bowing before Esau seven times, Mordechai came and repaired Yaakov's failing by refusing to bow down to Haman. Yaakov was guilty of giving a false impression…. [The question is:] how could Yaakov, the most perfect of the patriarchs, bow down to the wicked Esau? He surely knew that it is forbidden to greet an evildoer.

[The answer is:] Yaakov did not do anything wrong. When he prostrated himself, he was bowing down to the Shechina that was coming to meet him. Then why is it counted as a failing that needs rectification? Yaakov was guilty of giving a false impression to his wives and his children, causing them to think that he was bowing down to Esau. Mordechai repaired this misstep by refusing to bow down to Haman. **זכר צדיק וקדוש לברכה**.

מיחייב איניש לבסומי בפוריא עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי-



A bochur from the Radun Yeshiva decided to make it his business, one Purim day to fulfil the Rabbinic dictum of ***"A person is required to inebriate himself to the point that he is unable to distinguish between cursing Haman and blessing Mordechai,"*** to the greatest of his ability.



He started to drink early in the day and by the afternoon, he was quite intoxicated. Distinguishing between Haman and Mordechai was totally out of the question; unfortunately, there was little else that he was able to distinguish at that time, including an opportunity that would have been for him the decision of a lifetime.

In his overly intoxicated state, the young bochur staggered to the home of the great **Chofetz Chaim, R' Yisroel Meir Hakohen ZT"L**, and attempted to push his way inside. Flocks of people were entering and exiting the Chofetz Chaim's house, bringing him Mishloach Manos, basking in the joyous atmosphere and asking for blessings for themselves, their families and loved ones on this auspicious day.

It wasn't easy for him to get inside, but eventually the boy did manage to enter and immediately began to cause a ruckus.

The noise alerted the Chofetz Chaim and the bochur used this split-second opportunity to force his way right up to the great Rebbe. As only a shameless drunkard can, he blurted out, "I want a guarantee from the great and holy Chofetz Chaim that I will be zocheh - merit, to sit at his side in the World to Come!"

A shocked silence enveloped the room as the chutzpah of this bochur was ingested. Obviously not realizing the extent of his brazen words, the bochur once again called out, "I want a guarantee from the Chofetz Chaim that I will sit right next to him in Olam Haba!" This time, the people immediately surrounding the Rebbe grabbed the young boy and began to forcibly push him out of the room. A struggle ensued and surprisingly, the boy held his ground and would not be moved.

Suddenly, the Chofetz Chaim looked up and stared into the soul of the young yeshiva bochur. In a voice that was both strong and sweet, he said, ***"My dear son, if you will accept upon yourself fully to be careful and refrain from ever talking Lashon Hara, I personally guarantee that you will sit directly by my side in the next world."*** All was still, and a wave of sobriety swept over the bochur. The words of the holy Chofetz Chaim hung in the air and everyone was waiting to hear what the response would be. His glazed eyes focused, and his posture became erect, but no words came out of his mouth. He was simply unable to make such a monumental commitment, notwithstanding the incredible reward that he was just offered.

The Chofetz Chaim shook his head in disappointment. "This bochur was standing on the cusp of eternal wealth. This was his decision of a lifetime - an eternal lifetime in Olam Haba - and he let it slip away. He was given the chance and refused the opportunity to let himself in!"

Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter



משלוח מנות ומתנות לאביונים כנגד ניסי החג קרן ישועה - "Mishloach Manos and Matanos L'evyonim are K'neged the miracles of the Yom Tov of Purim. **משלוח מנות** "is two Manos to one person, while **מתנות לאביונים** are one Matanah to two people. Mishloach Manos is performed with one individual, while Matanos L'evyonim is performed with a Rabbim, more than one. Initially, the miracle happened with an individual, Mordechai, who was given great honour as he was clothed in the king's clothing and rode on his horse in his rise to power to become the viceroy; we have the Mitzvah of Mishloach Manos K'neged this miracle. After what occurred with Mordechai, a miracle happened with the Rabbim of Klal Yisroel, and they defeated their enemies. We have the Mitzvah of Matanos L'evyonim K'neged this miracle.

מנות הלוי – 9:22 ומשלח מנות איש לרעהו ומתנות לאביונים

"The purpose of the Mishloach Manos is to increase friendship and unity in Klal Yisroel. The purpose of Matanos L'evyonim is to make the day of Purim like a Yom Tov (in that there is a special obligation on Yomim Tovim to ensure that the poor have what they need for Yom Tov).

Trusting Hashem means having faith that He will guide us through the challenges of life, just as He guided the Jewish people in the story of purim. ~ Rabbi Moshe Feinstein.

Megilah Hilchos 2:17 רמב"ם – מוטב לאדם להרבות במתנות אביונים מלהרבות בסעודתו ובשלוח מנות לרעהו – *"It is better for a person to increase his giving gifts to the poor, than increasing his Seudah and his giving Mishloach Manos to his friends."*

There is no greater Simcha than to gladden the hearts of the poor, orphans, widows, and Geirim. One who gladdens the hearts of these people is compared to the Shechina.

9:22 ומשלח מנות איש לרעהו ומתנות לאביונים - קרן ישועה



Why is it called – **מתנות לאביונים** "gifts to the poor" instead of calling it **צדקה לאביונים** – "charity to the poor?" Haman said, "Paroah was a fool in that he only decreed that the boys should be killed, and not the girls." Haman decreed "two" deaths - to male and female. In the end, it was Haman who was hanged from a fifty-foot tree – fifty which is the Gematria of **נ**. Haman decreed "deaths" – **מתות**–and we stick a **נ** in middle of the word as a Remez to the great miracle that Hakodosh Boruch Hu performed.

Instead of those deaths, of the men and women of Klal Yisroel, Haman was hanged on a fifty foot tree. As a Remez to this, we use the terminology of **מתנות**–**מתות** with a **נ** in the middle to remind us of this great miracle.

Hadassah



וַיְהִי אֹמֵן אֶת־הֲדַסָּה הִיא אֶסְתֵּר And he (Mordechai) raised Hadassah who is Esther (2:7)

Her real name is Esther, yet she is called Hadassah.

1. Hadassah means myrtle **הדס** since she has a deep olive complexion which was very beautiful.

2. The myrtle is an evergreen that retains it foliage all year. Also Esther retained her religious morals the whole year whether in the Jewish quarters or in the palace.

3. In Kabalala, the name Hadassah is associated with an appreciation of beauty in nature and the arts, music, drama and literature.

4. Hadassah means myrtle, since she possessed the characteristic of the myrtle of being simultaneously sweet and bitter (the fragrance is sweet but the taste is bitter). So too Esther was sweet for Mordechai but bitter for Haman. (Megillah 13a)

The Day(s) After Purim

Rabbi Meir Shalom of Porisov would make it a point to distribute money to the poor on the day after Purim. He would say "Since there is a special obligation to give gifts to the poor on Purim, people neglect this commandment the day after Purim. It is especially important to perform a neglected mitzvah. ~ **Derech Tzadikim as quoted by R' Zelig Pliskin**

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings



The Chasam Sofer zt'l teaches that there's one part of the megillah that was supernatural. That was when Vashti was killed. The Chasam Sofer teaches, when Achashveirosh modified Haman's decree, in favour of the Yidden, it was natural, because Achashveirosh loved Esther, and he wanted to do her wishes. Especially, since the Gemara says that Achashveirosh was a **מלך הפכפך**, a fickle king (Megillah 15b), someone who changes his mind quickly. Therefore, it isn't so surprising that he changed his mind and helped Klal Yisrael. It's also not surprising that Hashem listened to their tefillos. As the Chasam Sofer writes, "Hashem accepted the teshuvah of the people of Ninveh, why wouldn't he accept the cries of Bnei Yisrael?"

The primary miracle, the Chasam Sofer teaches, is when Vashti was killed. Achashveirosh partied for 186 days, and everything was fine. On the final day, day 187, Achashveirosh got drunk and insane and demanded something abnormal from Vashti. Vashti also lost her sanity, and she answered back insolently. This resulted in Vashti's assassination and Esther becoming Achashveirosh's wife. As queen, she was able to thwart Haman's scheme.

This part of the miracle, the Chasam Sofer says, was above nature. The Chasam Sofer emphasizes that the wonder of this miracle is that it happened during the feast, when the Jewish nation were sinning. But Hashem never abandons His nation, and as the feast was taking place, Vashti was assassinated, to set the path for the salvation of the Jewish nation, if they repent.

Hashem's Name



Hashem's name isn't mentioned in the megillah even once. **The Kedushas Levi** explains, since Hashem's presence wasn't revealed in that era, so too, His name isn't mentioned. However, there are implications to Hashem's name.

The Arizal reveals several places where Hashem's name is alluded to in the megillah in the **ראשי תיבות** and the **סופי תיבות**. For example, the first letters of **יַבֹּה הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמָן הַיּוֹם** (5:4) spell Hashem's name Havayah (yud keh vav keh). The final letters of **וְכָל זֶה אֵינֶנּוּ שׁוֶה לִי** also spell Hashem's name.

The Kedushas Levi explains that Hashem's name is alluded to in several words, just as His presence is seen when looking collectively at several events. Looking at each individual episode, one doesn't see Hashem's hand, but by looking at several events, one is able to perceive Hashem's presence. That is the reason Hashem's name [in the megillah] is seen in a combination of words.

The Greatness of the Day

Rebbe Yitzchak Eizik of Kamarna zt'l (Nidvas Leiv) writes: "I received [from my teachers] that on the two days of Purim, someone with a small neshamah can go up to the heichal, hall in heaven, of a great tzaddik, without any disturbance. And also, all tefillos go up to the highest levels (Keser) without deterrence, without being checked whether he is worthy.

The Chasam Sofer zt'l teaches that Purim is greater than Pesach and Shavuous. It's greater than Pesach, because on Pesach we were

saved from slavery to freedom, and on Purim, we were saved from death to life. It's greater than Shavuos, because on Shavuos, we were coerced to accept the Torah. On Purim, we accepted the Torah once again out of love.

The Bnei Yissaschar also says that Purim is greater than Pesach, because on Purim we were saved from death to life, and the Bnei Yissaschar adds that this happens every year again, in the merit of the megillah and matanos le'evyonim.

The Arizal taught that what a Yid accomplishes when he says Keser (kedushah) on Yom Kippur can be achieved the entire day of Purim! It's a very exalted day, but it is also a much-concealed day. We don't say Kiddush and work is permitted. We also drink wine. Purim is concealed; people don't realize just how special Purim is. It's a day we can receive the greatest blessings from Above.

Someone once asked Reb Yeshayah of Prague zt'l,

"Why don't we make a berachah for yesurim, hardships, since they are good for us, and they atone for our sins?" Reb Yeshayah replied, "We do make a berachah for yesurim. The berachah is **שעשה לי כל צרכי** *'Hashem made me all my needs.'*"

A poor Yerushalayimer Yid was very worried. Pesach was around the corner, and he still didn't have money for matzah, wine, and certainly not for meat and fish etc. His wife was sharp with him lately, because she was also worried.

Dejected, he went to the shtibelach near his home to daven Minchah. His heart opened with this tefillah, and he cried out to Hashem. He had extra kavanah by **ברוך עלינו**, the berachah for parnassah, and then again, at the end of Shemonah Esrei, after saying **ויהי לרצון**, where people ask for their personal needs.

A wealthy American at this minyan noticed how this Yerushalmi prayed with so much kavanah. He also heard his tefillos, because this Yerushalmi didn't realize that he was davening somewhat out-loud,

as he begged Hashem for parnassah. After Minchah, the American introduced himself, "I overheard your tefillos. Why don't you come to my hotel room and I will give you something…" He gave him enough for Pesach, and money was left over for the following few months. This Yerushalmi told his friends about the yeshuah he experienced in the merit of his tefillos. "Did you get this man's address?" his friends asked him. "Why do I need his address for? I didn't ask him for money. I asked Hashem, and Hashem gave all my needs through this person. When I'm in need again, I'll know exactly the address to go to."

Pearls of Wisdom…



In Spain, there was a day called 'Purim Saragosa' which was celebrated on the 18th of Shevat in memory of a miracle that occurred to the Jews of the city. The king would sometimes visit the city of Saragosa, and the Minhag of the town was for everyone to go out to greet him together with the Sifrei Torah. However, the Rabbis of the town were concerned that bringing the Torah scrolls out into the streets was a desecration to the holy Torah, and they decided that whenever the king would visit, they would remove the Klaf from their holders in the Torah, and they would greet the king holding the Torah coverings, but without the actual Torah scroll.

One time, a renegade Jew whispered to the king and told him that the Jews were doing this, and it greatly angered the king. The king decided that he would not punish the Jews until he saw it for himself

with his own eyes, and he announced to the community that he would be coming for a visit.

The night before the king's visit, Eliyahu HaNavi appeared in a dream to all the leaders of the community and told them to leave the Klaf inside the Sifrei Torah and not remove it. The community listened and did as they were instructed. The next day when the king arrived, he asked for the Torah scrolls to be opened so he could see them, and he was surprised, but happy, to see that the community was indeed showing him honour. He understood that the Jew who had informed him had wrongfully tried to incite his anger, and ordered him to be executed.

That day the Jews of Saragosa realized they were saved, and they established the day as 'Purim Saragosa' as a holiday to give thanks to Hashem! *(U'matuk Ha'ohr)*

R' Shmuel Winzelberg- Torah U'Tefilah



Chazal teach us that some descendants of Haman actually studied Torah in Bnei Brak. However, this seems like an inconsistent reward. What merit did the wicked Haman have that allowed him to have such Nachas, spiritual pleasure?

Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlit"a, cites the **Dubno Maggid, zt"l**, who gives a Mashal that explains this reward. The prince of a region was eating, when suddenly a sharp bone became stuck in his throat. A robber who had intended to kidnap the prince and later kill him after collecting a large ransom, unknowingly grabbed hold of the

prince as he was choking. This caused the bone that was lodged in the prince's throat to become loose. Although it was inadvertent, the robber had saved the prince's life.

Since there was much attention on the prince as he was choking, the officers saw that there was an attempted kidnapping, and they were able to quickly apprehend the villain. The king now had to decide on the fate of this man. On the one hand, he had tried to kidnap and kill the prince. On the other hand, he had just saved his life. Therefore, the king decided to punish the robber for his intended actions, and to reward this man's children for the positive outcome.

Rav Zilberstein applies this to Haman. Haman's intentions were certainly evil, as he had tried to destroy the entire Jewish nation. His actions, however, had caused them to do Teshuvah, and return to Hashem. Therefore, for what he tried to do, he was punished for, but his descendants were able to be rewarded due to the positive reaction that he had brought about, even though it was entirely inadvertent!

Blotting Out Haman On Purim

There is a widespread custom to make noise when Haman's name is mentioned in the Megillas Esther (a total of 54 times). This custom has its roots in the biblical commandment "you shall blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven" (Devarim 25,19) since Haman was a descendant of Agag the Amalekite (Esther 3,1 and 9,24). What are the sources of this custom? Doesn't it cause a halakhic problem of not being able to hear the Megillah?

I) Blotting Out Haman's Name During the Megillah Reading

1. Make noise every time his name is mentioned: Rabbi Tzidkiyahu ben Avraham (Italy, 13th century, Shiboley Haleket p. 157) found in the name of Rashi (France d. 1104) that "they stamp with their feet or stone upon stone, and they break pots when they hear [the names]

Haman or Zeresh". In other words, they made noise in order to prevent people from hearing these names. It should be noted, however, that Rashi mentions this custom not in connection with the Megillah reading, but rather when Haman and Zeresh are mentioned in the piyyut after the Megillah reading.

2. Many communities limit the times to make noise: The Shelah haKodesh mentions that in his time noise was only made when mentioning the downfall of Haman while other communities only did so during the mentioning of the hanging of Haman and his 10 sons. Others (Chabad) have a custom to only make noise when mentioned Haman with a title. **Ben Ish Chai** mentions their custom to only make noise at the first and last mention of the name of Haman.

3. Bang the walls when his name is mentioned so that the demons will bang Haman in Hell: According to a manuscript of Sefer Assufot (fol. 95a), "the ruler of Regensburg once asked R. Judah the Pious (d. 1217) why the Jews bang the walls every time Haman's name is mentioned. R. Judah replied: “according to the number of bangs we bang, so do the demons beat him in Hell.” He then took the ruler to the gates of Hell to show him, and the latter said: 'if I were with you, I would help you'.

4. Writing Haman's name on stones which are banged against each other in order to erase his name: This was the custom described by R. Avraham of Lunel in his Sefer Hamanhig written in Toledo in 1204). He says that this is the custom of the children of France and Provence in order to fulfill the verse "may the name of the wicked rot" (Proverbs 10:7). This was quoted by Sefer Abudraham Hashalem (14th century) Bet Yosef to Orah Hayyim 690, s.v. katav b'Orhot Hayyim) and then in the Shulhan Arukh by the Rema (Cracow, ca. 1570, Orah Hayyim 690:17). The purpose of banging the stones is not to blot out Haman's name by making noise but rather to erase Haman's name from the stones.

5. Clap hands in order to make noise when Haman's name is read in the Megillah: This custom is reported by R. Yehudah Aryeh Modena (1571-1648) in his Ceremonies and Religious Customs of Various Nations of the Known World (London, 1733, Vol. 1, p. 69).

6. Write Haman's name on a large stone and break the stone with hammers during the Megillah reading: This custom was illustrated by Calmet in 1731 in a copper engraving of a synagogue in Amsterdam where he also explains the custom in Dutch.

7. Bang on benches with hammers: Calmet adds that children do this as the name of Haman is mentioned "making a terrible noise" and the children appear in his engraving. Children with hammers also appear in an engraving published in Nuremberg in 1724.

8. Write the word "Haman" on a hammer in chalk and then bang the hammer in order to erase the word: Johann Bodenschatz (1717-1797) was a German Protestant theologian who devoted a four-volume work entitled Kirchliche Verfassung der heutigen Juden to describing the Jewish customs in Germany at his time. He mentions this custom in his description of Purim (Vol. 2, Erlengen, 1748, p. 254, quoted by Sperber, 2002, p. 8). Interestingly enough, it is also mentioned by Rabbi Hayyim Falache who lived in Izmir, Turkey, in the nineteenth century

9. Write the word Haman on a bench and keep hitting it until it is erased: Bodenshatz relates that this was the custom of the adults in Germany in his day.

10. Every time the hazzan mentions Haman, say yimah shemo [may his name be erased] or also shem reshaim yirkav [may his name rot]: Bodenshatz (ibid.) also mentions this custom.

11. Write Haman's name on a piece of paper and erase it with a rubber every time his name is mentioned: This was the custom in the Sefardic synagogue in London in the early 19th century.

Pearls of Wisdom



When **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** became Bar Mitzvah, he learned how to read the Megillah so that he would be able to read it for his mother, who was hearing impaired. On Purim his mother would remove her hearing aid for the Megillah reading, so she would only hear an actual voice saying the Laining, and Rav Shlomo Zalman would read the Megillah very loudly with all his energy, very close to her ear, so that she could hear him and be Yotzei the Mitzvah.

Rav Shlomo Zalman did this for many decades. After many years, one of Rav Shlomo Zalman's children mentioned to him that he doesn't think his mother can really hear all the words despite his best efforts. Rav Shlomo Zalman answered him, "You should know that I never imagined that she hears the Megillah according to Halachah. Regardless, I continue to do this for my mother only to make her feel good and to honor her, because she is so happy that her son reads the Megillah to her in this way!" *(Halichos Shlomo, Orchos Halachah 2:29:1)*

Pearls of Wisdom

Rav Yisroel Salanter, zt"l, would often say about Purim, "A person who truly knows what he is doing, can accomplish more through his Purim Seudah than during Neilah on Yom Kippur!"

The Secret Behind The Mask - R' Moshe Kormornick



A so-called "simple" Jew was once travelling through a town when the sun began to set. He looked around and it was nearing nightfall when he finally found an inn. He banged on the door and after some time, an old man opened the door and apologized that there was no room for the simple Jew to stay because a group of soldiers were staying there.

The man pleaded with the innkeeper until the innkeeper admitted that there was one bed left, but it was in the room of the General who had already gone to bed. The only way that the innkeeper would consider allowing the Jew to stay the night was if the innkeeper would wake him at 5am, because he had already been asked to wake the General at 5:10am. If the Jew would hurry and leave, he felt, the General would not suspect a thing.

The Jew readily agreed to the deal and quietly went to bed. At 5am, the innkeeper woke the Jew who rushed to get dressed and leave the inn before the General would even wake up. The Jew thanked the innkeeper profusely and made his way to the train station. As he stood next to the train, he saw his reflection in the window – he was dressed in full army uniform! "Foolish old innkeeper" he said to himself, "he woke up the General instead of me!"

All too often, we identify people by the image that they portray. We take no more than a superficial look at them and immediately decide that we know everything there is to know about the person. One of the Mitvos of Purim is Mishloach Manos – a Mitzvah whose goal is to increase friendships; and in order to really increase a friendship, we need to see the real person in front of us, not just the image that

they are trying to portray. This is the reason why we wear masks and costumes on Purim – so that we cannot make superficial judgments, because, when someone is wearing a mask, we know that they are dressed up. We know that it is not the real 'them', and that the real 'them' is behind the mask, and we are therefore forced to relate to them accordingly.

This is the message of the Purim mask: To remind us that the people are deep, complicated and unique; and a genuine friendship cannot be based on externalities, because all too often, that is not the real 'them'; and Purim is all about making friends with the real 'them' – that which lies behind the mask!

Purim – Drunk a person get should? - Howard Jackson



Megillah 7b: Rava said: "One is obligated to become intoxicated with wine on Purim, until one does not know the difference between 'cursed is Haman' and 'blessed is Mordechai'."

Once, Rabbah and Rabbi Zeira had a Purim feast together and became intoxicated. Rabbah arose and slaughtered (Shechateih) Rabbi Zeira! The next day, Rabbah prayed for mercy and revived him. The following year, Rabbah extended an invitation to Rabbi Zeira: "Let master come and we will have the Purim feast together." He replied: "Not every time does a miracle occur." (Gemara Megillah 7b).

Why would our Sages instruct us to get drunk, when the Torah and Prophets clearly object to the associated lack of control? Have we

understood the above Gemara correctly? What is the significance of being unable to distinguish 'cursed is Haman' from 'blessed is Mordechai'? How could Rabbah make such a blunder? Is the story meant to be taken literally? What is the Gemara's intended conclusion?

Many of the pivotal Purim miracles, such as Vashti's and Haman's downfall and Esther's rise to power were associated with wine. Hence we should celebrate by drinking wine. **Chayei Adam** teaches that we are obligated to drink more wine than usual so as to recall these miracles, but we must certainly avoid becoming drunk. **Maharil** points out that one fulfils his obligation by drinking more than usual and then having a nap, because when one is asleep, he cannot distinguish between 'cursed is Haman' and 'blessed is Mordechai'.

Be'er Heitev explains that one should actually drink until he is unable to calculate the fascinating Gimatriya that Arur Haman (cursed is Haman) is the same as Baruch Mordechai (blessed is Mordechai)! Whereas **Maharsha** teaches that one should drink until he cannot decipher which was the greater miracle, Haman's downfall (Arur Haman) or Mordechai's elevation (Baruch Mordechai). This highlights the importance of discussing Torah thoughts while fulfilling one's obligation to drink.

With regards to the Gemara's anecdote, Meiri concludes that after Rabbah killed Rabbi Zeira the Sages forbade getting drunk on Purim. Rabbi Avraham (son of Rambam), however, quotes this passage as a classic example of the Gemara's occasional use of hyperbole in cases where it is absolutely clear that the literal meaning is not intended.

He elucidates that actually Rabbah dealt Rabbi Zeira a blow that wounded him grievously. Due to the seriousness of the wound (and possibly because it was located in Rabbi Zeira's neck), the Gemara describes it as Shechitah – a term which usually connotes the fatal slitting of the throat.

Maharsha agrees that Rabbah did not really kill Rabbi Zeira, rather he made Rabbi Zeira deathly ill by coercing him to imbibe too much and then prayed for his recovery. Finally, if we consider the simple meaning of the Gemara, it may well be that use of the word "Shechateih" alludes to the fact that drunkenness can lead to anyone (no matter how great) losing control and stooping to the level of an animal (concerning whom the term "Shechitah" is normally employed).

All About the Money Written by D Fine



One of the things which seems to make a non-insignificant appearance in the Megillah is the sum of money. Haman is constantly stressing the fact that he wants to give the king money to have the Jews killed, whilst Achashveirosh refuses such an offer. Why is the money an important part of the story that the Megillah sees it fit to tell us about it?

Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld gives a remarkable insight here. He writes that Haman had a cunning plan here. He would ask Achashveirosh for permission to kill off the Jews, but at the same time he would give Achashveirosh money so it would look like Haman was paying Achashveirosh for this right. When the various ethnic groups would see that Haman has paid Achashveirosh for the right to kill of a sect of society, they'd all get extremely worried; 'what if someone comes up with enough money to persuade the king to have us killed next?' they'd think. The outcome would be that there would

be a rebellion and Achashveirosh would be overthrown, with the convenient consequence of Haman becoming the new king. In other words, the money was part of Haman's plan to overthrow Achashveirosh – ultimately something that Achashveirosh did not fall for. And, Esther, having realised that this was Haman's intention via the money all along, does not forget to drop this into her claims against Haman to the king when she is pleading for her life – 'for my people have been sold.'



הַמֹּלֵךְ מֵהֹדּוּ וְעַד־כּוּשׁ שֶׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה (1:1) Written by Oizer Alport

The Medrash relates that Rav Akiva was once in the middle of teaching a class when he noticed his students beginning to doze off. He digressed from the subject he had been discussing and asked, "Why did Queen Esther deserve to rule over 127 countries? She merited this because she was descended from Sorah, who lived 127 perfect years." Why did Rav Akiva interrupt his class specifically to interject this tangent at this time?

The Chiddushei HaRim explains that a person could view Esther's kingdom as simply a collection of countries, and for each year of Sorah's life she merited to rule over another one. In reality, each country consists of states, cities, neighbourhoods, streets, and even houses. Similarly, a year can be subdivided into months, weeks, days, hours, minutes, and seconds. Rav Akiva explained that Sorah didn't live a "mostly" good life which allowed Esther to receive the same number of countries as the years of her life. If Sorah would have let up for a week or even a second, it would have resulted in a corresponding deficiency in Esther's empire, causing her to be lacking a city or even just a house. It was only because Sorah's life was equally good from the beginning until the end (Rashi Bereishis 23:1), every second of every day, for her entire life, that Esther's kingdom was complete.

Rav Akiva's students were obviously quite tired, and they assumed that if they would take a short nap and miss a little of the class, it wouldn't have any substantial ramifications. Realizing this,

Rav Akiva wanted to teach them that every second of our lives, every word that we say, and every action that we take, have very real and direct consequences.

How could Haman's daughter not recognise her own father? Written by Benjamin A Rose



When Haman pulled Mordechai on the horse in front of his own house, his daughter, sure that her father was on the horse and Mordechai pulling it, threw refuse on her father. Realizing her mistake she leapt to her death in horror over what she had done. **The Ben Ish Chai** asks how could she confuse the two of them? Did she not hear the voice of her father? Did she not see either of their faces?

He answers that Haman's voice was hoarse from screaming "Kacha Yei'aseh L'Ish" through the streets. His face was turned down in shame hoping no one would see him. Mordechai's face, he explains, was also not visible. Being so weak and tired from his fasting he needed to lean on his arms to support him on the horse and therefore his face was turned downward and not visible from the balcony of Haman's home.

How Speech Mix-Up Caused Vashti's Death - D Fine



One of the later authorities points out something remarkable about the events leading up to the execution of queen vashti by achashveirosh in the first perek of the megilla. As an intro, the word 'amira' always means soft words, whilst 'dibur' connotes harsh speech. If you look at the psukim in the megillah, when Achashveirosh orders his servants to bring Vashti to his banquet, he uses 'amira' ie. he asked her softly (pasuk 10) **אָמַר לִמְהוּמָן** . But when Vashti refuses to come, it says that she refused the 'dibur' of the king (12) **בִּדְבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ** . What happened was that the messangers reported Achashveirosh's pleasant request to Vashti as a harsh sharp order, and that's why she didn't want to come. And after Vashti refuses, Achashveirosh asks his advisors what he should do when vashti ignored my 'amira,'(15) **אֶת־מַאֲמַר הַמֶּלֶךְ** my pleasant request – he didn't know that his servants had made his request a harsh one. And this mix up in speech ultimately caused Vashti's death. As the **Ramban** says in his letter to his son; 'always speak calmly [/ & pleasantly] to everyone.' **תִּתְנַהֵג תָּמִיד לְדַבֵּר כָּל דְּבָרֶיךָ בְּנַחַת, לְכָל אָדָם וּבְכָל עֵת**

"On Purim every Yid has the power of tefillah, similar to the kohen gadol who davened in the Kodesh Kadoshim on Yom Kippur."
~ The Shinover Rav zt'l

Isn't Purim The Worst Possible Name? By D Fine



The festival is named purim ('lottery') after the lottery that Hamman cast to determine the day the Jews would all be killed. Is this not a rather inappropriate name for the festival? Apart from the fact that the lottery was only a tiny part of the story, there is a worse problem. The whole point of purim is that we see that things don't happen by chance; it's HaShem controlling it all -so why name the festival after a lottery, a thing which is by nature chance???

One can offer an answer via something **Rav Dovid Cohen** suggests. He notes that our months (tishrei, cheshvan, etc) are named after Persian gods. How are we allowed to do this? Because once the gods had vanished from being worshipped in history, us calling our months after them is really a mockery of them – that they no longer exist. So too, let's suggest, is the case with Purim. We call the festival purim [lottery, chance], because this is the day when we see that there is no such thing as luck. In other words, luck/chance became extinct on purim – and so, us calling the festival Purim, is a mockery of the concept of chance, just like with the months.

It states (Esther 3:2) ומרדכי לא יכרע 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. ~ R' Elimelech Biderman.

לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתָם יְמֵי מִשְׁתֶּה וְשִׂמְחָה (9:22) Written by Oizer Alport



The Rema rules (Orach Chaim 695:2) that the majority of the festive Purim meal must be eaten before sundown while it is still Purim.

A priest once challenged **Rav Yonason Eibeshutz** to explain why the custom of so many Jewish families is to start the meal just before sundown and to conduct the bulk of the meal during the night after the holiday has already ended.

Rav Yonason sharply responded with a question of his own. The most popular holiday in the priest's religion falls on December 25. If the non-Jewish day begins at midnight, why is it so prevalent among his coreligionists to begin the festivities the night before?

Having turned the tables and with the priest now on the defensive, Rav Yonason proceeded to brilliantly answer his own question. The holiday they are celebrating on December 25 is really the commemoration of the birth of a Jew. As such, it's only proper to celebrate it using the Jewish day and to begin at sundown on the evening before. Purim, on the other hand, commemorates the death of Haman, a non-Jew, and it is therefore fitting for our festive meal to be based on the non-Jewish day and continue into the night!

Tchelis Mordichai Written by Yossi Schwartz



"Shoshnas Yackov Tzehala Vasmacha Beroisim Yachad Tchelis Mordchai" Why is there a focus on the colour of his clothes? When was there "TZehala Vasmacha" when Haman and Mordchai were together "Beroisim Yachad". When was that? When Hamman was forced to march Mordchai through the streets saying "So shall be done to the man whom the king wishes to honour". Hamman had hatched an evil Plan. In order to save face, he said to himself when Mordchai takes off his clothes, I will switch them for my own. His plan was fooling everyone into thinking I am him.

We see our first "Vinoihopachu", as his own plan ended up killing his daughter. When his daughter dumps the garbage on his head thinking its Mordchai . That was a fatal mistake. It was her father, and when he looked up ,and she realized her mistake, out the window she went.

So how did they differentiate Between The evil Hamman and the righteous Mordchai? It was only through Tchelis Mordchai When they saw his Tzitzis which were "Tchelis" than they Knew. [*From Rav Yonsan Eibshatz in shlal rav On Purim.]*

The Satmar Rebbe zt"l said that it would be worthwhile for a person to live 70 years to go through all the hardships of life, to hear the megillah just once.

The Megillah still Amazes me! by Benjamin A Rose

Bigson and Seresh tried to kill the king, Achashveirosh. Actually, some bring down that to keep the authorities off track, they were going to kill Esther too, and make it appear as if there had been a domestic dispute that resulted in a murder/suicide, with Esther presumably having died by her own hand.

Later on, when the king couldn't sleep and had his records read back to him, the Megillah says "Bigsona V'Seresh" it calls Bigson "Bigsona," with an extra aleph at the end. Why?

The mefarshim answer that in order to lessen the greatness of debt owed to Mordechai, when the incident was recorded in the record books, it was written as if Mordechai helped capture only one of the conspirators, either Bigsan or Seresh, and the other was caught as a result of detective work.

Thus originally it was written "Bigsan oh Seresh" meaning one or the other, and Hashem separated the word "oh" (aleph vav) and placed one letter on each name to read Bigsana vaSeresh. That is why it says "they found written" – it wasn't what they had initially written. Instead, Achashveirosh's advisors found that the separated letters now read that Mordechai helped capture both Bigsan and Seresh.

Thus we see that we can learn something from each and every letter in the Megila.

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.

Why do we give Matanos L'Evyonim? - Benjamin A Rose

Why do we give Matanos L'Evyonim on Purim? **The Alshich HaKadosh** says in the name of the **Ralbag** that after Haman's decree to wipe out the Jews, Eliyahu went to Moshe and asked him to daven to Hashem to spare the Yehudim. Moshe Rabbeinu asked Eliyahu if there was a tzaddik down on earth who can help him with his tefilos. Eliyahu answered that there is tzaddik named Mordechai. Moshe told Eliyahu to tell Mordechai to daven and Moshe would daven at the same time. Hopefully between the two of them there would be a Geula.

In appreciation for Moshe Rabbeinu's help in bringing the Yeshua, Mordechai HaTzaddik instituted Matanos L'Evyonim in order that each person should give tzedoka on Purim L'Zecher Nishmas Moshe Rabbeinu.

Torah Tots



No discourse on Purim could be considered complete without mentioning the Purim delicacy,the hamantash or hamantaschen. The hamantash is a triangular cookie, with a poppy seed or fruit filling. At some point, someone got the idea of altering the German name of these cookies, "mohn taschen" ["poppy-seed pockets"], to "haman taschen," and invented the story that it represents Haman's hat. (Of course, three-pointed hats were all the rage in ancient Persia.)

Another view is that *Hamantaschen* means that Haman's force was exhausted *("tash Cocho")* when he came to harm the Jews, and it is inferred that this will be the fate of all those who try to do us harm.

With regard to the source of the name H----taschen.

Here is an email I received in Feb. 2000.

It is that time of the year again, when every kosher bakery and Jewish home is filled with that great Purim delicacy called the h---- tasch. As I pointed out last year, it is so absurd that we name a Purim gastronomic centrepiece after the arch villain who wanted to destroy the Jews, and for whom the obligation "timheh et zekher Amalek..." (obliterate the memory of Amalek) surely applies.

We got to this via an unfortunate error. A tasch is a pocket. The Purim pocket symbolized the essence of the Purim miracle as being of the camouflaged variety. It was a miracle cased in an unusual, intriguing, but nevertheless non-miraculous story. In Purim, what you get is much more than what you see.

In the tasch, you likewise get more than what you see. Since seeds, or "mann," were involved in the fateful meal, filling the pockets with "mann" was not an unusual way to celebrate on Purim. These pockets were called mantaschen. In Hebrew, when referring to "the mantasch," the word used would be "ha-mantasch."

From this derived the mistaken reference to all taschen as hamantashen. It is a serious error, because every time we refer to this delicacy, we give undeserved, even if unintended honour to an evil person.

There is no precedent for us doing this with any other villain in Jewish history. It is a mistake that we would be well served to correct. Our bakery in Ottawa does not sell h----taschen. But they do sell prune-taschen, man-taschen, blueberry-taschen, etc.

Admittedly, Judaism will not rise or fall on this issue, and there are obviously more pressing items on the Jewish agenda. But it strikes at the very core of all that we represent that we reject evil, that we give it no quarter, no honor, and certainly no posterity, as we do every time, we wrongly refer to that great delicacy.

So, please do your bit to correct this error, in your local bakeries, congregations, homes, and consciousness.

A very happy and taschen-laden Purim to you all. Rabbi Reuven P. Bulka, Congregation Machzikei Hadas,Ottawa, Ontario, Canada



Kreplach

Kreplach is ground meat wrapped in dough, also folded into a triangle. **(What's this obsession with triangular food?)**

"Kreplach" is Yiddish and is derived from the Hebrew names of holidays on which this food is eaten: *Yom Kippur* (K), **(not on, silly, but before and after, of course)**, *Hoshana Raba* (R), and *Purim* (P). These three holidays are also connected to each other because they involve some sort of beating or striking:

Yom Kippur - we beat our heart during prayer;

Hoshana Raba - we strike the *Aravot* (willow branches); and

Purim - we beat (and blast and cream and clobber) Haman during the reading of the *Megillah*.

Another reason (and this is not *PURIM TORAH*), is based on the verse in the book of *Devarim, Parshat Re'eh* (13:16): "*Hakeh takeh et yoshvei ha-ir*" (you will surely smite the inhabitants of that city"), again we're beating and striking:

HAKEH - The letters "*Hay, Kaf, Hay*" in the first word represent *Hoshana Rabba, Kippur*, Haman -

TAKEH - The second set of letters "*Taf, Kaf, Hay*" represent "*Tochlu Kreplach Harbeh*" (You will eat a lot of *Kreplach*!!!).

Purim Challah - A special, very large *challah* with raisins is baked for the *Purim* meal. Cakes are also baked, that have been kneaded with oil and butter, smeared with egg yolk and decorated with chocolate and sweets.

***Purim* fish** - Fish are not prepared on *Purim* in the same way as for the other festivals. They are usually cooked in vinegar, raisins and spices.

Seeds, Beans, Legumes - Some have the custom of eating different kinds of seeds -- pumpkin, sunflower, nuts, etc. This is in memory of Esther, who ate no forbidden foods while she lived in king Achashverosh's palace. All she ate was seeds. Others eat beans, legumes or cereals for the same reason. Esther adopted this vegetarian lifestyle while she was queen in order to ensure her observance of the kashrut laws. This is also another source of the custom of filling the H____tashen with poppy seeds. Additionally, beans symbolize sadness, as they are traditionally eaten after a funeral. We eat them on *Purim,* amongst all the merriment, to remind us that we are still in *Golut* (exile).

Turkey - It is customary to eat turkey ("*tarnegol hodu*" or "Indian chicken") on *Purim*. This is in "honor" of Achashverosh who ruled from India ("Hodu") to Ethiopia. How is this an honor? Well, it is well-known that turkey is considered a symbol of foolishness among the peoples of Europe, and especially among the Jews. So we remember Achashverosh as the "stupid" king (as mentioned in *Midrash Megilla* XII).

'Don't just try to find inspiring people. Try to find people inspiring.'

Curiosities Of Purim

-*Megillat* Esther is the only book in the scriptures which does not mention *Hashem's* name.

-*Megillat* Esther is unique in that it contains words which appear nowhere else in the Bible.These include:

***Tevet*:** the tenth Hebrew month.
***Kasher*:** fit.
***Patshegen*:** a copy of the (written) text
***Ahashdarpenim*:** Persian word for the King's officers.
***Pur*:** Persian word meaning "lot."
***Karpas*:** Persian word for cotton.

- All the letters of the Hebrew alphabet are found in *Megillat* Esther, ch. 3, v. 13.

- The Hebrew word *Mishteh*, meaning banquet, occurs 20 times in *Megillat* Esther (which is equal to the total of ALL the other times it is found in the rest of the Bible).

- The longest verse in the Bible appears in *Megillat* Esther. It has 43 words in Hebrew (and approximately 90 words in the English translation). It appears in ch. 8 v. 9.

וַיִּקָּרְאוּ סְפְרֵי־הַמֶּלֶךְ בָּעֵת־הַהִיא בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ סִיוָן בִּשְׁלוֹשָׁה וְעֶשְׂרִים בּוֹ וַיִּכָּתֵב כְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה מָרְדֳּכַי אֶל־הַיְהוּדִים וְאֶל הָאֲחַשְׁדַּרְפְּנִים וְהַפַּחוֹת וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינוֹת אֲשֶׁר | מֵהֹדּוּ וְעַד־כּוּשׁ שֶׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה וּמְדִינָתָהּ כִּכְתָבָהּ וְעַם וָעָם כִּלְשׁוֹנוֹ וְאֶל־הַיְהוּדִים כִּכְתָבָם וְכִלְשׁוֹנָם

"Then were the king's scribes called at that time, in the third month, that is the month Sivan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written according to all that Mordechai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies and rulers of the provinces, which are from India unto Ethiopia, a hundred and twenty seven provinces, unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing and according to their language."

- The Talmud instructs that on *Purim* one should drink until he knows not the difference between "Blessed be Mordecai" and "Cursed be Haman." Interestingly, the numerical value of the Hebrew letters in each of the phrases **ברוך מרדכי** and **ארור המן** amounts in each case to a total of 502.

- In Missouri and Louisiana there are towns called Esther.

- There is a "Queen Esther" Street in Jerusalem and in Tel Aviv, Israel.

- On January 30th, 1944, Hitler said: If the Nazis are vanquished, the Jews will be able to celebrate a special *Purim*.

- "Hadassah" was founded on *Purim*, in 1912. Hadassah is Esther's Hebrew name.

Rabbi Eytan Feiner - A Phenomenal Insight



Rav Nosson Greenburg once relayed to me first-hand testimony from Rav Yaakov Mordechai Greenwald about an incident he himself experienced years ago:

"Since the 1980s, the phenomenon of Torah Codes has become both famous and controversial. I personally enjoyed a relationship with **Rav Michoel Dov Weissmandl**, the Torah Sage from Hungary, known as the "Father of All Torah Codes." All of his work was done in his head without computers; he was truly a genius. So many of the Torah Codes we have now are to be found in his sefer called Toras Chemed.

Even way before computers existed, Rav Weissmandl thought of all the myriad calculations in his head.



Once, I visited Rav Weissmandl in Mount Kisco, New York in the month of Adar, a short time before Purim. Rav Weissmandl asked me, "Did I ever tell you how many letters there are in Megillas Esther?" "No, "I replied, "I have no clue."

"Well I know," said Rav Weissmandl, "I counted. There are 12,196 letters." Incredibly taken aback by the fact that he knew this, I asked if there was any significance to this number. Rav Weissmandl smiled and asked me to bring him a Chumash. Upon doing so, he told me that counting 12,196 letters from the first instance the letter Aleph appears in the Torah (the third letter in the word Bereishit), one arrives at the letter samech. Continuing to count another 12,196 letters one reaches the letter tav. And yet again, after another 12,196 letters, one arrives at the letter reish. These four letters, not coincidentally, spell the name Esther (**אסתר**).

Hearing such a phenomenal insight, I could not help but wonder why the name of Esther was alluded to but not the name of Mordechai. And so, I asked Rav Weissmandl, "Is the name of Mordechai also hinted to in the Megillah?" "I don't know," he replied, "try me again next year."

The next year I made sure to visit Rabbi Weismandel again. "Okay Rebbe," I said, "tell me about Mordechai." "I also found a hint to

Mordechai," he said. "If you count 12,196 letters in four equal intervals from the first instance the letter mem appears in the Torah, the name Mordechai (מרדכי) results." At this point, all I could think of was the probability of such odds. But I was not all too surprised for I knew fully well that the Megillah was written with ruach hakodesh (Divine Inspiration).

Several years later, a nice Jewish young woman came to my house. Although irreligious, she was interested in Judaism and had come to learn about it. Attending a Seminar in my community, afterwards, it was recommended that she come and spend some time at my home. And so, my wife and I invited her for dinner one night and to stay over.

After the meal, we entered into a discussion and, at her request, she began asking all the questions which were troubling her. When she mentioned that she did not believe that the Torah was given by G-d, I immediately knew what I wanted to say. I would tell her about the Esther and Mordechai intervals. Telling her this fascinating allusion, she paid close attention. It was only afterwards that she asked to be excused and retired to her room for the night.

The next morning, she returned red-eyed and looked exhausted. "What's the matter?" I asked. She proceeded to tell me that she had been up the entire night on her portable computer which she carries everywhere. Being that her expertise was in computer science and mathematics, she had determined to devise a program to calculate the probability of such a phenomenon occurring naturally. After many hours, the inescapable decision she was forced to conclude was that the odds were so astronomically vast that it had to be considered impossible.

Many years after the above incident, I attended a wedding and was invited to the Chuppah to recite one of the blessings. Afterwards, a woman called out, "Rabbi Greenwald!" I did not recognize her, and so I asked, "Excuse me, but do you mind telling me who you are?" "I am

Esther and Mordechai," she said. Not sure as to what she exactly meant, I stood there confused. But then she explained, "I came here because I wanted you to see that today I am religious, cover my hair, and have a husband who is very religious and studies in a Kollel. We have as well been blessed with many children who all attend yeshiva schools. I thought you would be pleased to know that. I guess this all happened because of Esther and Mordechai. I am the woman who you showed the Esther and Mordechai allusion to years ago. Because of that, I am here today."

While the Megillas Esther may seem to be just another story, as we all know, there is unbelievable profundity embedded in every verse. What may not have crossed our minds, however, is that its depth of meaning goes so far. But yes indeed, if we only choose to plunge deep enough, the Megillah reveals worlds of insight far beyond all imagination.

Rabbi Doniel Frank - Searching Deep



As the Megillah (Esther 1:12) relates, upon Achashveirosh's request for Queen Vashti to present herself at his lavish feast, she refused. But such a response only enraged Achashveirosh and caused his anger to burn within. It was not long before he was advised to kill her, to which he acceded to go through with.

But the Gemara (Megillah 12b) lends further insight into the story behind the story. Vashti, aside from rejecting the request to

attend the party, sent the following message to Achashveirosh, "You stable boy, my father (Belshazzar) drank wine the amount that a thousand people drink and didn't get drunk, whereas you became foolish from your wine."

It is interesting to note that the Gemara explains Achashveirosh's anger in an additional way aside from the simple reading of the Megillah. Why wouldn't Vashti's refusal to come to the party be enough of a reason to anger Achashveirosh though? Why does the Gemara feel compelled to search for a different reason?

After people let off steam, they typically calm down. Achashveirosh, however, continued to boil even afterwards. This is why the Gemara assumes, explains the **Vilna Gaon**, that something else was bothering Achashveirosh. Other than the fact that Vashti did not appear, there must have been a personal insult that Achashveirosh was too embarrassed to acknowledge. That was, as the Gemara explains, the inadequacy which he felt relative to Belshazzar. Such rage stewed within Achashveirosh and frustrated him.

Purim's overall theme is to live a profound life where we look to find the root and source of everything. Underneath our rage there is usually a lot of pain. But sometimes it is hard to admit to what is really bothering us. We therefore cry about the more obvious pain, leaving the real issue unresolved. Now this is an important concept, but why is it taught to us in the Megillah?

Purim's teaches us to search and dig deep in every area of our life. If we are familiar with Purim as it relates to world events, and how the hidden hand of Hashem drives all human history, the same extends to other areas of life as well, including our own behaviour. We are meant to go deep, beneath our personal mask and discover the true issues and motivations that drive our own decisions and reactions.

On Purim, we are prompted to think about what truly makes us tick deep down. What goes on within our internal self when we face

challenges or setbacks? These are the questions that will lead to greater self-awareness and allow us to be more attuned to ourselves. It is a golden opportunity over Purim to reach deep into ourselves and discover who we really are.

Rabbi Daniel Coren - Dressing Up



As has been the long-standing custom, individuals and families dress up in costumes and masks on Purim. While typical costumes consist of Mordechai, Esther and the like, there are those who have the practice of dressing up as Achashveirosh, Haman, Vashti or some other type of villain. What is the reason behind this?

One of the many reasons for the custom of dressing up is based upon the Gemara (Megillah 12a) which relates that the Jews were spared from destruction in the times of Purim for their external actions did not reflect their internal thoughts and feelings. They bowed to Haman, who had made himself into a figure of idolatry, simply out of fear. In light of that, Hashem lightened the retribution and performed a miracle on their part.

Similarly, we wear costumes and masks to highlight the same notion. Even though we may externally do actions unbefitting us, deep within us, we all have a pristine neshama which only wishes to do what is right and listen to Hashem.

But there is more to add. The Talmud Yerushalmi (end of Mesechta Berachos) states that the difference between Avraham Avinu and

Dovid Hamelech is that the former was able to channel his yetzer hara (evil inclination) towards the good and make it akin to his yetzer tov (good inclination). Dovid Hamelech, in contrast, out of fear that his yetzer hara would overwhelm him, completely suppressed all physical pleasure and drives, thereby ridding himself of it.

On Purim, we take the approach of Avraham Avinu and direct our physical, mundane lives towards serving Hashem. We eat, drink and rejoice – all physical acts – against the backdrop of tremendous closeness with Hashem. Purim is a time of "V'nahapoch hu," of turning things their opposite way. We turn physical acts into spiritual experiences and elevate ourselves to higher and higher plateaus.

Rabbi Zecharia Wallerstein - Meeting Sharon

רוח והצלה יעמוד ליהודים ממקום אחר Relief and deliverance will come to the Jews from some other place (Esther 4:14) A number of years ago, my father sat on a 747 El Al flight from New York to Israel. Seated in first class on the upper level of the plane, he and one other respectable gentleman had the entire section to themselves. No other guests were present. The name of this other man was Ariel Sharon, former Prime Minister of Israel.

My father, having previously served in the American army, was always dressed very respectfully with matching colours and a suit. Extremely well kempt and put together, his contour resembled the finest of high-class businessmen. Aside from this, he was seriously devoted to *Yiddishkeit*. One of his greatest hallmarks was the concentration and focus he had when davening.

And so, as morning arrived, my father took out his siddur and began davening. Seated a short distance away was Sharon, who gazed at my father intently mouthing the words of *tefillah*. My father went on to finish what he had to say, after which he sat back down for the remainder of the flight.

When it was later time to deplane, my father began gathering his belongings together when he felt a tap on the shoulder "I just want to tell you," said Sharon, "that I am so impressed. I thought only big rabbis pray like that." Sharon proceeded to take out his personal business card with his direct line, and hand it to my father. "If you ever need me, just give me a call."

Fast forward years later…

As was my father's *minhag*, he would every year visit the *kever* of his father in Petach Tikvah on the day of his father's *yahrtzeit*. Yet, before he would do so, he always had two stops to make: *Me'aras Ha'Machpeila* and *Kever Rachel*.

"I cannot go to my father before I visit my forefathers," he would say. And so, he would first stop off at the *Me'aras HaMachpeila* in Chevron where the Avos and Imahos are buried, and then *Kever Rachel* where Rachel Imeinu resides. He remained unwaveringly committed to this *minhag* every single year without fail.

One year, however, he confronted a slight issue. The city of Chevron and the *Me'aras HaMachpeila* were off limits due to Israeli-Arab fighting. The area was heavily clamped down with security and the army on all sides. There was absolutely no way that anyone would be getting near the *Me'aras HaMachpeila*. But my father had never missed a year where, before heading to his father's *kever*, he stopped off in Chevron and then at *Kever Rachel*. And he didn't expect this year to be any different.

Taking out the card he had received years ago, my father went on to call Ariel Sharon. "I need to go to Chevron," he said. "I'm very sorry, Mr. Wallerstein," Sharon replied, "but it is closed."

But my father was not ready to give up. "I have never missed going to Chevron for every *yahrtzeit* of my father. You have to help me!" That was all my father had to say.



"Okay, Mr. Wallerstein, where are you now?" "I'm in Jerusalem," he replied. "If you come out to Beit Lechem," Sharon told him, "we will pick you up by tank." So, on went my father to Beit Lechem, where he was picked up by the army in a half-track and privately taken to *Me'aras HaMachpeila* and then *Kever Rachel*.

Following this incident, my father, as a sign of *hakaras hatov*, inserted an ad into the Jerusalem Post publicly thanking Prime Minister Ariel Sharon for assisting him in this endeavour.

Where did this all begin? On that El Al plane when my father decided to daven. The positive impression my father gave off when davening deeply touched and moved Sharon. If my father would not have received Ariel Sharon's card, there would not have been even the slightest chance he would've gotten anywhere. And the same is true for us all. Without question, the positive image we project when dedicating ourselves to Torah and *mitzvos* has the greatest of impacts. It can take us places we never thought of getting to.

"I received from Reb Mendel Lilig zt"l, the Rav of Frankfort who received the tradition from the Sheiv Yaakov, that whoever studies Torah between the megillah reading at night and the megillah of the morning, it is certain that he will merit Olam HaBa." ~ Chasam Sofer

Rabbi Osher Chaim Levene - Zeresh and Esther: Demolishing and Building

ארורה זרש...ברוכה אסתר *Accursed be Zeresh… Blessed be Esther (Liturgical poem of Shoshanat Yaakov)*



While we are all familiar with the names of Mordechai, Esther, Achashverosh and Haman, there is one particular character who, although less well-known, plays an integral role. Zeresh, the infamous wife of Haman mentioned only four times in the Megillah, quietly stands behind the scenes yet nefariously schemes against the Jewish people. Examining her story in depth, incredible insights into the subtle layers involved in the Purim story are revealed.

After Esther invites Haman to the festive meal she plans to make for Achashverosh, Haman's good mood and high spirits are deflated as quickly as they came. Seeing Mordechai's adamant refusal to acknowledge him, Haman returns home frenzied and fuming with anger. Venting his frustration to his advisors and wife, he is advised to put an end to Mordechai. "Prepare gallows fifty cubits high," suggests his wife, "and hang Mordechai."

The Midrash expounds that Haman had three hundred and sixty-five advisors, corresponding to the days of the solar calendar, yet his wife was the greatest of them all. The Megillah therefore singles her out as the one to voice her opinion that the way to kill Mordechai is with a method of death no Jew has previously in history been saved from.

Using a fifty cubit beam once part of Noach's ark and ever since used as a foundation beam in Haman's home, Zeresh, explains the Midrash, had workers demolish her home in order to remove the beam and ready it for Mordechai. And of course, with the turning series of events and the gallows not being used for Mordechai, but Haman instead, the grand scheme of Zeresh is overturned. It is only then that frightened for her life, Zeresh flees and is eventually reduced to a life of begging and meets her own bitter death of execution.

The Midrash (Mishlei 14:1) commenting on the Pasuk, **חכמת נשים בנתה ביתה ואולת בידה תהרסנו** –***"The clever woman builds her home, while the foolish one tears it down with her hands,"*** explains that the 'clever woman' is a reference to Esther, while the 'foolish woman' is a reference to Zeresh.

In a similar vein, the liturgical poem Shoshanat Yaakov, sung after the conclusion of the Megillah reading, ends with the stanza, "Cursed is Haman who sought to uproot me; blessed is Mordechai, the Jew. Cursed is Zeresh, the wife of my terrorizer; blessed is Esther who sacrificed everything for me."

As clearly seen from the contrasts underscored in these two sources, Zeresh and Esther counterbalance one another. Zeresh with her plot to uproot the Jews is offset by Esther's relentless attempts to spare them from annihilation. What remains vague, however, is why exactly this is the parallel. Why is Esther measured up to Zeresh and not Queen Vashti?

In order to proper evaluate the character of Zeresh it is necessary to consider a cryptic statement made by the Arizal: "Zeresh was like the tail of a snake and the drawn-down leg in the Hebrew letter Kuf (ק)." What does this mean?

When Adam HaRishon, the pinnacle of creation, was infused with life, the Torah states that Hashem blessed him. Simply understood, Adam was to be the realization of blessing in the world.

The concept of a blessing, explains **Rav Chaim Volozhin**, is that one acknowledges G-d as the source of all blessing and the means by which beneficence flows to the world. In this respect, a righteous individual is praised for being the medium through which blessing descends to the world, while a wicked individual is condemned for achieving the opposite. The wicked man, pursuing his malevolent agenda, steers mankind away from reaching fulfilment and only introduces curse to the world.

Chazal teach that Adam and Chava were created together as one unit and only then separated (Eruvin 18a). Fused together in Gan Eden, it was Chava who would bring blessing to Adam and the world at large. This is because a woman through supporting and consolidating her husband and family suffuses holiness and beneficence to her home. R' Yossi accordingly was wont to refer to his wife as "My home" (Shabbat 118b) in recognition of her prominent role in creating its spiritual infrastructure.

In this sense, a woman can either make or break her home. If she is wise, as Shlomo Hamelech tells us, she will build her home; on the other hand, if she is foolish, she will tear it down and bring ruination to herself and her family. Esther, the epitome of an Eishet Chayil, is forever remembered as a wise woman for she loyally supported her husband, Mordechai, and preserved the lives of Klal Yisrael. Zeresh, on the other hand, did the exact opposite. Besides being unfaithful in her marriage to Haman, her scheme to kill Mordechai in fact provoked her husband's downfall. The quintessence of a foolish woman, her sadistic ploys literally devastated the lives of her husband and children.

She is for this reason compared to the tail of a snake and the leg of the letter Kuf. As the primordial snake successfully enticed Chava to sin by eating from the Tree of Knowledge in Gan Eden, curse was introduced to the world. What punishment did the snake suffer in

consequence? Its legs were cut off (Bereishit Rabbah 20:5). The snake would now have to slither its way around.

The tail of the snake is both the point of consolidation and vulnerability. It is the site with which it can manoeuvre or be taken advantage of by those seeking to trap it. The same is with the leg of the Kuf. In contrast to the letters spelling **אמת** (truth) which stand on two legs and are shaped with a supporting bottom, the letters for **שקר** (falsehood) all come to a sharp point. This is representative of the fact that honesty will endure while falsehood will topple and not last.

In this regard, Chazal have coined the phrase, "Falsehood has no legs" (see Shabbat 104a). This is why the snake lost its legs. Cunningly misleading Chavah to sin, it was punished by losing its supportive legs. Chavah as well, according to one opinion, was fashioned from a tail-like appendage attached to Adam HaRishon when Man was initially created (Eruvin, loc. cit.). As a wife, she too bears a resemblance to the tail in that she can either support her husband or cause him to topple and be led to ruination.

Herein exists the difference between Zeresh and Esther. Zeresh supplanted blessing with curse and instead of supporting her husband, engendered his demise. Esther, on the other hand, lived up to her pristine feminine role and galvanized Mordechai and the Jewish people to salvation.

Such is the unbelievable impact each and every woman can have. Consolidating her family and surroundings, she can choose to follow in the ways of Esther and graciously lead them to a life of blessing and "light and gladness and joy and honour" (Esther 8:16).

"The most dangerous thing of all is habit." ~ Kotzker Rebbe.

Rabbanit A Yaghoubi - Seeing G-d behind the Mask



In the early 1900s, while bleak financial situations beset Europe, it was hard to progress. Notwithstanding, many families worked on raising enough money to at least purchase one ticket to send one of their children, often the eldest, to America. It was in America where new vistas were available and the settling of a better life was hopeful.

One such family was finally able to save up their last nickels and dimes and send their eldest daughter to America. With tears in their eyes, the parents of Anya, a sixteen-year-old girl, said goodbye as the ship left the port. And so, all alone, young sixteen-year-old Anya journeyed across the ocean to the Golden Medina of America where a new life awaited her.

Arriving in Baltimore, Anya was met by her cousins who took her in and helped her adjust to a new life. She slowly began to learn the language, go to school and educate herself. As the years went by and Anya progressed in learning, found a job, and built herself up, she

wrote to her family at home, "Please come here to America. I will teach you everything you need to know." But no letter ever returned with a reply. The letters abruptly stopped. Waiting and wondering, "Why hasn't my family written to me?"

Anya heard rumours that there was a war in Europe. Letters were being censored. With the hope that she would one day reunite with her family, Anya was heartbroken to hear after the war that the rumours were more horrendous than ever imagined. From a passer-by who had resided in her hometown she learned that her entire family had gone up in flames. Anya didn't know what to do. Here she anticipated reuniting with her family and had been building a future in America for them, but now it all came to a halt. Anya was now left as a young woman alone without her entire family. Where was she to begin? Being a woman of determination, Anya decided that she would rebuild her family. She would get married and name each of her children after her lost siblings, some of which she never knew.

Quickly entering the realm of shidduchim, she found a lovely young man who shared the same dreams as she did and got married. Excited to begin building her family's life, she only awaited the birth of a child. But as one year went by, and then two years, and then three years and still no child, Anya began to worry.

After seeing a number of doctors, Anya was sadly informed that she could not have children. She was devastated. Here she was yearning to rebuild her family and now she would be unable. Continuing to pray, eventually after eight years she told her husband, "Maybe we should consider adoption." And so, they phoned the Jewish agency in New York, only to happily be informed that there was a new-born baby up for adoption. A teenage girl was giving birth and wished to give her baby up. Jumping on the earliest flight to New York, Anya and her husband excitedly made their way over. Elatedly holding this little new-born baby in their arms, they were disappointed to see the agency lady's face in a frown.

"I'm really sorry to tell you," the agency said, "but the grandmother has decided to raise the child. The infant is no longer up for adoption." "So you mean we came for no reason?" sighed Anya and her husband. "Well," the agent continued, "we do have another girl who is up for adoption. Her name is Miriam; she is eight years old."

Hearing of this other child, Anya said, "That is very nice, but we were looking for a new-born. An eight-year-old is already too old." "Maybe you should just meet her," persisted the agent, "she is very sweet." Prevailing upon Anya and her husband to meet this lovely little eight-year-old Miriam, she indeed is very sweet. She finds a place in their hearts, but they feel the same way.

"We really can't take her. We really want a little baby; someone who would only know us as her parents." And with that, they fly back to Baltimore.

A year later, still without a child, Anya turns to her husband and says, "Maybe we should have adopted that little girl. She really was sweet. Here we are a year later and still have no children. We are just getting older. Do you think she is still available?" "Why don't we call the agency and see," her husband says. And so they do.

Hello, we met one of your orphans a year ago. Her name was Miriam. We were wondering if she is still up for adoption?" "As a matter of fact, she is," replies the agency, "Not many people want an eight-year-old, and even less want a nine year old. No one has taken her." "Oh, that is great; we would like to take her." "You can do that," assures the agent, "but there is a complication. We found her brother and he is also in our orphanage. They are inseparable and we promised them that we would not separate them, but that they would go together."

"Okay," responds Anya, "we will come to meet them." Flying again to New York, they meet now nine-year old Miriam and her six-year-old brother Moshe. The two children are shy but adorable.

Immediately falling in love, Anya and her husband tell the agency, "We'll take both of them." Packing their suitcases with a few belongings, Anya, her husband and their new children, Miriam and Moshe, make their way back home to Baltimore. Arriving at their new home, Miriam and Moshe slowly and hesitantly enter inside as their new father takes their suitcases to their rooms.

Miriam starts to explore a little bit as Anya watches from a distance. Then all of Miriam stops and begins to stare. Turning to her new mother she says, "Why do you have a picture of my bubby (grandmother) on your piano?"

Anya, lovingly staring down at Miriam and the picture of her mother, assumes that Miriam must think all ladies from Europe look like that. She must be looking at the picture of an older woman and thinking, "Oh, my bubby!" Anya, clutching Miriam tight, gives her a big hug as she gently says, "This is a picture of my mother. Do you miss your bubby?"

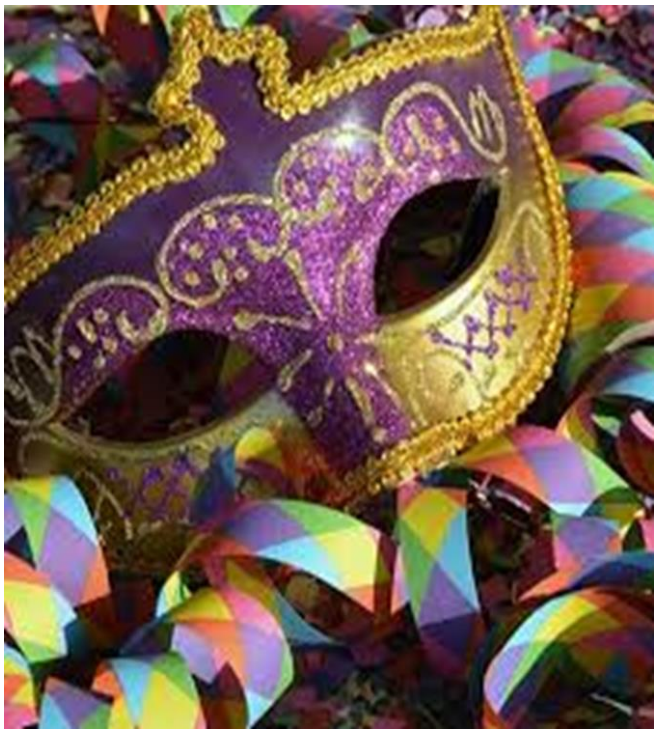
Miriam again repeats, "It is a picture of **my** bubby."

"It is okay," Anya soothingly reiterates, "you can miss your bubby."

As she is trying to comfort Miriam, she all of a sudden breaks away and runs to her room. Opening her suitcase, she grabs a pouch and runs back to Anya. "You have the same picture as I do," Miriam says. Pulling out a picture of her bubby, Anya looks at the picture incredulously, "This is my mother." "You want to see a picture of my mother?" asks Miriam. Taking out a tattered, old photo, she hands it to Anya. With tears in her eyes, Anya looks closer.

"Sara? This is my sister." Anya had unknowingly adopted her sister's two children. While we can never know for certain Hashem's plan, we can rest assured that He runs the world and is looking after us. Imagine if Anya and her husband would have immediately begun to have children. They would never have considered adoption and remaining alone in an orphanage would have been their own flesh and

blood. Putting our trust in Hashem and believing that in our personal lives and the affairs of the world there is a Divine plan, we may pleasantly be surprised to one day reunite with our long lost family.



The Megillah read on Purim is called "Megillat Esther," explained by Chazal to be a play on two words. Megillah stems from the word gilui, revealed, while Esther cognately relates to the word hester, hidden. The merging together of Megillat Esther balances the hidden and the revealed. It forces us to enter into our lives and examine everything we take for granted and recognize the hidden miracles.

Although we live during a time of hester panim when Hashem's presence is opaque, He is still always orchestrating the events of the world behind the scenes.

As Rabbi Avrohom Sutton observes, the word "history" is phonetically similar to the word "hester," hidden. "History" is "His story." It is G-d's story whereby global and personal events are guided by His Divine hand. Hidden within history is His story. The same is true on a personal level. Throughout our daily lives, Hashem appears every so often. We were supposed to receive a ticket from the police, but at the last minute we didn't. And when that happens, we come to realize, "Hashem, you are really looking after me." Living with such an inspirational high, we feel Hashem is inseparably a part of our daily lives.

This is the story of the Megillah. It is not a story which occurred centuries ago, but a story which occurs on a daily basis to each and every one of us. Trapped in the palace of Achashveirosh, we must

resiliently confront the vicissitudes of life. But we must always remember that from the bleakest of situations, the most hopeful result. From the union of Esther and Achashveirosh, Daryaveish, who went on to build the Second Beit Hamikdash, was born.

All our experiences –between us and G-d, interpersonally and between us and our neshama –are opportunities to uncover G-d behind the hidden mask. When we can succeed in finding Hashem behind the mask, we will merit miracles the likes of Kriat Yam Suf and experience G-d's full glory. His Name will then be pronounced in full for we will have attained full clarity of His existence. May the day when the hester in our lives is revealed and G-d's masterful plan of world history reach its climax with the heralded coming of Moshiach.

Shabbos Stories For Purim

The Wise Villager



There once was a man from a poor village who celebrated Purim the entire month of Adar with feasting and drinking much wine and liquor. Many people tried to explain to him that the mitzvah only applies to one day, not the entire month.

After much prompting, he finally explained his reasoning. "Think about it," he said. "Haman decreed that all the Jews throughout the 127 provinces of Persia would be killed on the same day. How is it possible to kill all Jewish men, women and children in one single day?

"In reality, Haman wanted to kill the Jews in the entire month of Adar. However, being the smart man that he was, he realized that if Hashem would save the Jews, they would celebrate the whole month of Adar as they do with the month of Nissan, after leaving Mitzraim. Haman was so wicked that he wished to prevent this possibility! He therefore held a lottery that only one day would be designated as the day of destruction.

"That way the Jews would only have one day to celebrate. I, however, knowing Haman's real plan, celebrate the entire month!" (Torah Tavlin II) (*Torah U'Tefilah compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg.)*

The Satmar Rebbe and His Donation To an "Undeserving" Recipient by Rabbi David Bibi



This morning we were discussing the misvah of Matanot LaEvyonim on Purim. which is the distribution of two monetary gifts, one to each of two paupers. One should distribute Matanot La'Evyonim generously and joyfully and fulfills his obligation by giving even a few cents per pauper, nevertheless, it is preferable to spend more on Matanot La'Evyonim then on the Purim feast or Mishloach Manot. One should preferably give enough so that the pauper will be able to make use of the sum for the Purim feast.

Different than the rest of the year where one can investigate one who asks for help, on Purim one is not strict with the poor in determining whether they are needy or not. "Whoever puts out his hand is to be given a gift."

In this zechut we pray that when we put forth our hand or request to Hashem, that he not turn us away and give us whether we are deserving or not.

I suggested that people tell over the following story from Aleynu LeShabeyach at their Friday night table this evening and ask ourselves how we would react in the same situation? And could we adjust our perspective to at least react differently on Purim?

The Satmar Rebbe was renowned as a magnanimous baal tzedakah, and all of the money that passed through his hands was distributed to the poor on the same day. Once, a pauper came to him and poured out his tale of woe, begging for the Rebbe's assistance. He cried to the Rebbe that he had lost his Wife, and was left alone to care for his orphaned children. In addition, his leg had been amputated.



The Rebbe gave him a handsome contribution, as he did to everyone who came to him for charity. Several minutes later, the Rebbe's gabbai entered his chamber, very distraught. "What happened?" the Rebbe asked.

"The pauper who was just here — the one who said that his leg was amputated — is not missing a leg. I saw him leave from here and walk on two feet like a regular person," the gabbai said indignantly.

When the Rebbe heard this, he rose from his seat, visibly agitated, the gabbai was sure that the Rebbe would tell him to run after the pauper and ask him to return the money he had received from the Rebbe. He was surprised, however, when he heard the Rebbe let out a sigh of relief and say, "What joy your words have brought me'.

Thank Heaven, the pauper was not lame!"

Several minutes later, the gabbai came into the Rebbe's chamber once again, this time to inform the Rebbe that the pauper was in fact not a widower raising orphan children on his own. "I saw his wife outside."

Again the Rebbe expressed his great relief and joy that the man had not been widowed after all. - A Jewish leader desires only good for Hashem's children.

Now, what would you do? Can hearing this story have an impact on your own behaviour? At least on Purim?



Preparations

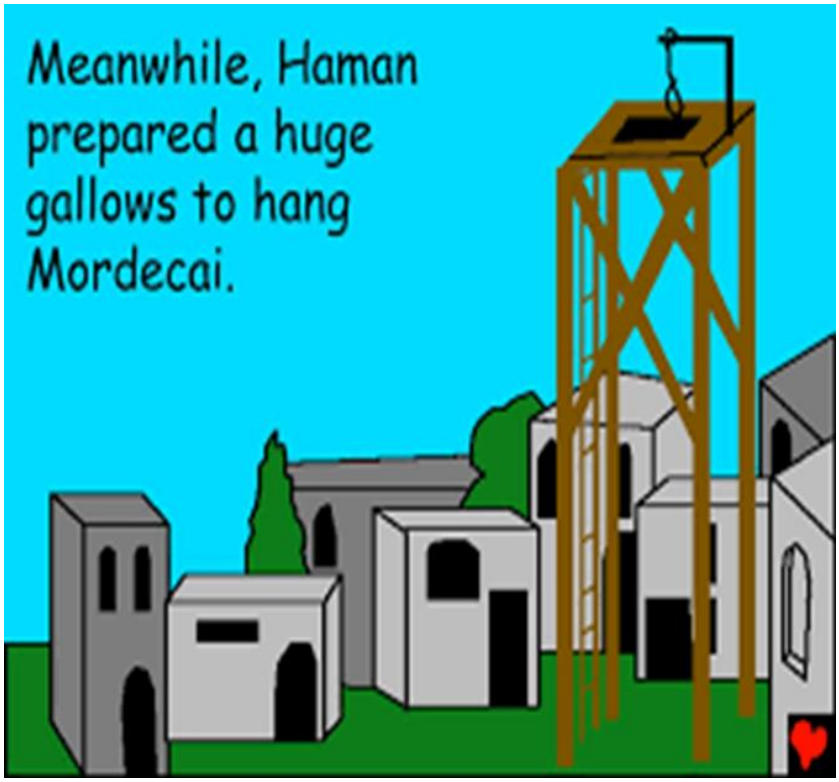
The Gemara (*Shabbos* 88.) tells us that when we received the Torah on Har Sinai, Hashem raised the mountain over the Yidden's heads and warned them that if they didn't accept the Torah, they will be buried underneath the mountain. Raba said, **מכאן מודעה רבה לאורייתא**. Rashi explains, "If they are brought to judgment as to why they didn't keep the Torah, they can answer that they received the Torah against their will."

Rava said **קבלוה בימי אחשורוש אף על פי כן הדור**, Nevertheless, they accepted the Torah again in the days of Achashveirosh. As it states (*Esther* 9:27), **קימו וקבלו היהודים** they accepted the Torah that they received beforehand." Rashi explains that they accepted the Torah again **מאהבת הנס שנעשה להם** because of their love for the miracle that was done for them."

We see that there is a correlation between Shavuos and Purim. On Shavuos, we received the Torah but were forced to do so, giving those who didn't want it an opportunity to claim that they never agreed to accept it. After the Purim miracle, however, Klal Yisrael accepted the Torah willingly, with love.

This could be the reason there are three days of preparation before Shavuos **שלשת ימי הגבלה**, as well there are three days of preparation before Purim, as Chazal (*Megillah* 2.) say that the *megillah* can be read on either **י"א י"ב י"ג אדר**, on the 11th, 12th, or the 13th of Adar. It isn't only that we can read the *megillah* on these days, but these are also days when we should prepare ourselves for the upcoming holiday of Purim.

The *gematriya* of **הכנה**, preparation, is 80, the same as **מח לב**, mind and heart.



The Yeshuos Moshe of Viznitz *zt'l* said that this hints that we should prepare our mind and our heart for the upcoming holiday.

It states (*Esther* 1:21), **ויעש המלך כדבר ממוכן**, which can be translated, **ויעש המלך**, the King of the world makes Purim, **כדבר ממוכן**, according to how we prepare for it. It states (*Esther* 6:4), **והמן בא... לתלות את מרדכי על העץ אשר הכין לו** "Haman came…to hang Mordechai on the [gallows] that he prepared for him." The Gemara (*Megillah* 16.) explains that we should turn around the last two words of the pasuk, and we should read it … **לו הכין** - that "Haman prepared the gallows for himself."

Haman thought he prepared the gallows for Mordechai, but really, he prepared it for himself. How did the Gemara know to read the Pasuk this way? What is wrong with the simple reading of the pasuk, **הכין לו**, that Haman prepared for Mordechai?

Rebbe Chanoch Henoch of Alexander *zt'l* explains that **הכנה**, preparation, applies to mitzvos only. Therefore, if the *megillah* tells us that Haman prepared, it was for a mitzvah, to hang himself. And hanging Haman is certainly a mitzvah!

Drink Wisely and In Moderation



Chazal state that on Purim one should drink, **עד דלא ידע בין ארור המן לברוך מרדכי** until he doesn't know the difference between "cursed Haman" and "blessed Mordechai". So, it seems that we drink on Purim until *we don't know*. Yet, the **Ahavas Yisrael of Viznitz *zt'l*** points out that the first letters of **עַד דַלא יַדע**, spell **ידע** *to know*. So, is our goal to know or not to know? That is the question.

Reb Efraim Zalman Margolios *zt'l* of Brod (*Yad Efraim* on *Shulchan Aruch* 695) writes, "In a dream, it was explained to me that the purpose of drinking is to enable people to be in a joyous mood, because (*Tehillim* 104:15), **ויין ישמח לבב אנוש** 'Wine gladdens the heart of man.' When one is happy…he will praise Hashem for the miracle with a complete heart… However, he shouldn't drink until his mind becomes confused because then he won't be thinking about the miracle at all.

When Chazal say one should drink until he doesn't know the difference between Mordechai and Haman this means, **בכלל עד ולא עד**, *until* he reaches that stage of intoxication, but never quite getting there. He should drink and be happy, but when he isn't able to differentiate between Mordechai and Haman, the purpose of

drinking is gone. Chazal are referring to drinking that leads to praising Hashem. When one's mind is confused, he certainly won't be able to praise Hashem for the miracles.

This was my dream, and I thought about it in the morning and realized that it is true." According to this approach, it is fitting that the word **ידע** is hinted at in the *roshei teivos* of **עַד דַּלא יַדע**This hints to us that one shouldn't lose his mind and rational thinking. We never want to get to that stage, *chalilah*.

Salvation through Joy

(4:1) **ומרדכי ידע את כל אשר נעשה ויקרע מרדכי את בגדיו וילבש שק ואפר ויצא בתוך העיר ויזעק זעקה גדולה ומרה** "Mordechai learned [about Haman's evil decree] and Mordechai tore his clothes and dressed in sackcloth and ashes. He went out to the middle of the city and he cried out loudly and bitterly."

Esther was very upset about this. As it states, **ותתחלחל המלכה מאד ותשלח בגדים להלביש את מרדכי ולהסיר שקו מעליו ולא קבל**, "Esther was very distressed. She sent proper clothing to dress Mordechai so that he will take off the sackcloth, but Mordechai declined the offer."

The Tiferes Shlomo asks, "Why did Esther send clothing to Mordechai…? Did she think Mordechai didn't have clothes to wear?" The Tiferes Shlomo answers that Mordechai and Esther were debating how they can annul Haman's evil decree. Mordechai decided on the direction of crying and mourning, as this would rouse Hashem's pity and sympathy. Esther maintained that they would accomplish more through joy. She sent clothing to Mordechai to imply that she thinks Mordechai wasn't following the correct path.

The Tiferes Shlomo writes that Mordechai also knew that joy was essential for Klal Yisrael's salvation, but he felt that one shouldn't

begin with joy. One needs first to pray, cry, and shout to Hashem, and afterward, the salvation will come through joy.



Similarly, the **Chasam Sofer zt'l** explains that Mordechai and Esther were debating whether tears and prayers, or joy was needed to annul Haman's decrees. Mordechai wore sackcloth, for he wanted to annul the decree with a broken heart and hot tears. Esther sent him clothes because she wanted to annul the decree through joy.

The Chasam Sofer adds that this is the reason Esther arranged parties; she wanted to annul the harsh decrees with joy. The Chasam Sofer concludes that Esther's approach was correct, and thus the salvation came about through her approach.

לֹא־הִגִּידָה אֶסְתֵּר אֶת־עַמָּהּ וְאֶת־מוֹלַדְתָּהּ כִּי מָרְדֳּכַי צִוָּה עָלֶיהָ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תַגִּיד

"Esther did not reveal her people or her kindred, for Mordechai had told her not to reveal it." (Esther 2:10)

It is well-known that Hashem's name doesn't appear a single time in the entire Megillah. This peculiarity is traditionally explained as hinting to the fact that the Megillah contains only "hidden miracles" but is lacking open miracles which more clearly demonstrate Hashem's Providence.

Rav Eizel Charif sharply suggested that nevertheless, one clear miracle remains. Mordechai told Esther not to reveal her religion or nationality - and a woman actually managed to keep a secret!

Trust in Hashem



Initially, the Yidden trusted that Esther would help them. When they heard Haman's decree, they said, "Esther will certainly speak with Achashveirosh and annul the decree." But then Esther invited Haman to her party. 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, 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 was when they placed their trust in Hashem. This shows us Hashem's compassion on the Jewish nation. Even when they sin, Hashem seeks ways to save them.

The Ben Yehoyada says that the Jewish nation had a merit as they were at Achashveirosh's party, and therefore Hashem prepared their salvation. Their merit was that on Shabbos, when the goyim were speaking foolishness and *nivul peh*, the Jewish nation was singing *zemiros* to Hashem and they were speaking *divrei Torah*. In this merit, Hashem prepared their salvation.

As it states (1:10), **ביום השביעי כטוב לב המלך ביין**, "On the seventh day, when Achashveirosh's heart was happy with wine… he called for Vashti…" The Gemara (*Megillah* 12:) says that this seventh day was Shabbos, the day the Jewish nation eats, drinks, speaks *divrei Torah*, and sing *zemiros* to Hashem, unlike the *goyim* who eat, drink, and speak *nivul peh*. The Ben Yehoyadah explains that Hashem prepared their salvation because of this merit.



Miracles Within Nature

Isn't it unusual that Hashem's name isn't mentioned in the megillah – not even once?

The Kedushas Levi (*Kedushah Rishonah*) explains that the megillah mirrors the situation at the time. Hashem's presence was concealed, and therefore Hashem's name isn't mentioned in the megillah. One can easily find Hashem by analysing the many events of the megillah, how each piece perfectly tied into the next one, to save Bnei Yisrael. Therefore, Hashem's name is found in the megillah in the *roshei teivos* and in the *sofei teivos* (as the Arizal teaches).

For example, the *roshei teivos* of **יבא המלך והמן היום** spell **הוי"ה**, and the final letters of **וכל זה איננו שוה לי**, spell **הוי"ה**. The Kedushas Levi writes, "The miracle happened with several episodes, and therefore, Hashem's name is written in *roshei teivos* or the *sofei teivos* of several words. For, Hashem's Kingship was seen…through the events that happened in the times of Mordechai and Esther, and each event is comprised of several words. Therefore, Hashem's name is found in the *roshei* or *sofei teivos* of several words, but Hashem's name, in one word, isn't found..."

There are other references to Hashem in the megillah. The holy *sefarim* say that whenever it states **המלך** in the megillah (without writing it in two words eg: **המלך אחשורש**, it refers to Hashem, the

king of the world. **The Maharal** adds that this is the literal translation of **המלך**; it isn't merely a hint.

The Mishnah (*Megillah* 1:1) states, **בי״ג בי״ד בט״ו לא פחות ולא יותר מגילה נקראת בי״א בי״ב**, "The megillah is read on the 11th, the 12th, the 13th, the 14th, and the 15th [of Adar], not earlier and not later." **Bris Kehunas Olam** writes that the total of the dates equals 65 (11 + 12 + 13+ 14 +15 = 65) the same numeric value of **אדנ״י**- Hashem's name that represents Hashem's running of the world through the rules of nature.

We read the megillah on these dates because the purpose of the Purim miracles is to remind us that even when the world seems to run by nature, it is being led by **אדנ״י**. The Mishnah adds, **לא פחות ולא יותר**. This means that we can only read the megillah on the above mentioned five dates, not on the day before or the day after. The day before is **י׳ אדר**, and the day after is , **ט״ז** which together is *gematriya* 26 (10 + 16 = 26), the *gematriya* of **הוי״ה**, Hashem's name that represents Hashem's leading of the world through miracles. We cannot read the megillah on these days because the lesson of Purim is that Hashem performs miracles within the rules of nature. The goal is for us to know that even when everything appears natural, Hashem is there, directing every detail, both major and minor.

The Mareh Yechezkel zt'l teaches that throughout the year, when one prays for things that are necessary, such as health, food, and the like, his tefillos will always be answered. However, when one davens for luxuries, such as wealth, or other matters one can live without, it is not certain that Hashem will grant his wishes. Heaven will weigh the pros and cons and his worthiness and decide whether to give it or not. - Purim is an exception. Even the tefillos for extravagances and luxuries will be answered!

Wearing Costumes on Purim



The Lubavitcher Rebbe was once asked, what can we learn from the custom of wearing costumes on Purim?

The Rebbe answered: On Purim, you see many people dressed in different types of costumes. One is a clown, one is an animal, and one you don't even know what he is wearing. Do you get angry or upset with them? No, because you know that it is just a costume.

In life, we meet many people. One is impatient, one is angry, one is apathetic…

This is not who they really are. This is just a "costume." *Deep in their heart they are all warm people full of purity and beauty.*

We just need to interact with them with kindness and tenderness and take off their *costume and* reveal the pure Neshama inside each one.

How can we connect the Divrei Torah about Purim to Parshas Tzav and Tetzave?

Based on the **Chassam Sofer**, it is very simple. The Chassam Sofer says that the word **צו** comes from the word **צוותא** which means together as one. Purim is the time for Klal Yisroel to connect and become one, which is clearly hinted in the word **צו** and **תצוה**.

Studying Torah on Purim



The Chasam Sofer (*Drushim* p.245) writes, "I received from Reb Mendele Lilig *zt'l*, the Rav of Frankfurt, who received the tradition from the **שב יעקב** that whoever studies Torah between the megillah reading at night and the megillah of the morning, it is certain that he will merit Olam haBa."

The custom is to study the laws of Pesach because Purim is thirty days before Pesach, and Chazal say that one should begin studying the laws of Pesach thirty days before Pesach.

Purim Pearls of Wisdom …A Word for the Ages

When **HaGaon HaRav R' Heschel, *zt"l*,** was six years old, he was already fluent in *Tanach*. Once, at a *seudas Purim*, his father was reading the *Megillah* and saying over its contents. When he reached the events of Bigsan and Seresh, his father asked him, "Why did Mordechai see fit to reveal the secret of Bigsan and Seresh to Achashveirosh? Why did it bother Mordechai if Achashveirosh was killed by them? The world would have been down one goy!"

The young boy instantly answered, "By killing Bigsan and Seresh the world was now down two *goyim*!" (*Chaim Sheyeish Bahem*)



Salvation through Joy

The Chazon Ish *zt'l* said, "Some people pass the seventy years of their life laughing and some pass them crying. You might as well live them with laughter." Similarly, **Reb Zalman Brizel *zt'l*** was fond of saying, "If you can be happy, why should you be the opposite." To a large extent, being happy is the result of a person's decision to be happy.

Esther invited Achashveirosh and Haman to her party; her goal was to plead for the Jewish nation. But Esther didn't ask for anything at the 1st party. Her only request was for Achashveirosh and Haman to come to a 2nd party the next day. Why didn't Esther plead for the Yidden's salvation at the first party? It seemed like an ideal time.

At the first party, Achashveirosh told Esther (*Esther* 5:6), **מה שאלתך ויינתן לך, ומה בקשתך, עד חצי המלכות ותעש**, ***"What is your request, and it shall be granted. What do you desire? Up to half the kingdom, and it will be yours."***

What better time is there to express her plea on behalf of Bnei Yisrael? The answer is, Haman was happy at the first party as it states, **וטוב לב ויצא המן ביום ההוא שמח**, ***"Haman went out that day happy and in good spirits…"*** Esther knew that she couldn't cause Haman's downfall when he was in a state of happiness, so she pushed it off until the next day. The next day Haman was sad, as it states (*Esther 7:12*) **אבל וחפוי ראש**… This was an ideal time to bring about Haman's downfall. During the party, Esther told Achashveirosh about Haman's evil plans, and Haman was hung that day.

The megillah elaborates on the honour that Mordechai received from Haman. Haman led Mordechai through the streets of Shushan,

and shouted before him, "This is what shall be done to the person who the king desires to honour." Mordechai was wearing the king's clothing while riding the king's horse.

Why is this part of the story important? **The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l*** answers, "[When Haman led Mordechai through the streets] people sang and played music before him. All this was to make Mordechai happy. Immediately following this episode, *klal Yisroel's* salvation and the wonderful miracle occurred..."

The time for salvation had arrived, but Simcha was the missing ingredient required to reveal the salvation.

The Megillah



The Munkatcher Rav *zt'l* tells that when **Rebbe Mendel of Riminov *zy'a*** was imprisoned, the police permitted him to take along one item. The Rebbe requested a megillah (although it was Tamuz). **Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz *zt'l*** said to Reb Mendel's students that they shouldn't fulfil this request. "If he has the megillah, he'll destroy the entire world."

We don't understand the meaning of the story, but we see the immense power that is within the holy words of the megillah. The Munkatcher Rav writes that Reb Mendel of Riminov could have done so much with the megillah during Tamuz, just imagine what he could have accomplished on Purim, when we have a mitzvah to read the megillah!

Mishloach Manos



The megillah states, **משלוח מנות איש לרעהו**, "to send gifts to one's friend." According to the Sfas Emes (*Megillah* 7: **ד"ה בגמרא, רבה שדר**) it isn't proper for a regular person to send *mishloach manos* to his rav or to his *rosh yeshiva* because the mitzvah is to give to a friend, and it isn't proper for a regular person to call his rebbe, "my friend." However, the Sfas Emes accedes, if a *rosh yeshiva* gives him *mishloach manos*, that means the *rosh yeshiva* considers him as a friend. Now he may reciprocate and send him *mishloach manos* back.

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

The custom of *mishlaoch manos* is to give the food *together* with the dish. (One doesn't ask for the dish back after delivering the food.) This hints that on Purim Hashem gives us His *mishloach manos* of bounty together with a dish. This means that even if one doesn't have a vessel to accept Hashem's bounty, Hashem gives him the vessel too, to enable him to receive the bounty.

Important Reminder:

To avoid catching the Achasvirus, please Vashti hands!

Purim A Day Of Holiness



The Imrei Yosef *zy'a* told the following story, and he said that it happened "to a chassidishe *yungerman* in Spinka," which means it happened to him. Because the Imrei Yosef's son, the **Chakal Yitzchak *zy'a***, said, "Whenever the Imrei Yosef told a story, he always told the names of the people involved in the story. But this time he said the story without a name. So, I'm certain he was referring to himself."

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

"After one's death, it can take a year before one goes to Gan Eden. As it states in *Megillas Esther* (2:12-13), **ששה חדשים בשמן המור וששה חדשים בבשמים ותמרוקי הנשים ובזה הנערה באה אל המלך** which hints that sometimes it takes a year of preparations before a *neshamah* can meet with the King in heaven in Gan Eden. And sometimes, even twelve months aren't enough, because the souls go to Gan Eden and they find the gates closed, because the gates of Gan Eden aren't always open. They open when Yidden read the megillah." The *neshamah* said,

"Every year, on Purim, when the megillah is read, *neshamos* line-up and wait their turn to enter Gan Eden. I also wait in this line, but the gates always close just when it is my turn to go to Gan Eden. This has been going on for many years.

This year, I decided that I would wait the entire year by the gates of Gan Eden. When the megillah is read, I'll be first in line, and I will be able to enter. I just heard you read the megillah, so I knew the gates of Gan Eden are open. I immediately knocked at the gates of Gan Eden and requested permission to come inside." The *malachim* at the door said, "You're right. The megillah was read. But it isn't Purim today." "But the megillah was read," the *neshamah* pleaded. "Open the doors wide and let me go to my place in Gan Eden."

The issue was debated, and the case was brought before the *beis din* of heaven. The *beis din* ruled that if the Imrei Yosef donates the merit of this megillah reading to this *neshamah*, the *neshamah* will be permitted to enter Gan Eden. The *neshamah* explained that he came to ask that the Imrei Emes grant him the merit of the megillah reading. The Imrei Yosef did so, and the *neshamah* went to Gan Eden.

We learn from this story that each year when we read the megillah, the gates of Gan Eden open. Therefore, we understand that this is a good time for tefillah and for attaining all types of yeshuos.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Someone once called **Rav Yaakov Kaminetzsky, zt"l**, and asked if he could call in sick for Purim so that he could miss work and spend the day with his family. He said, "Surely it is more appropriate to spend Purim with one's close family and friends than to be working in an office".

Rav Yaakov replied, "It is patently prohibited to lie and call in sick if one is not sick. It is dishonest. Besides, the Yom Tov of Purim is a holiday D'Rabbanan, from the Sages, and the Mitzvah to not lie is from the Torah!"

Megillah



There are many things that we must do on Purim. There is *mishloach manos*, *seudas Purim*, etc. For some people, hearing the megillah is something they just want to get over with, as quickly as possible, so they can get to the other parts of the holiday, which they enjoy more. Obviously, this isn't an ideal attitude.

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

Tefillah on Purim

We praise Mordechai in *Shoshanas Yaakov*, **מרדכי היהודי**"Mordechai the Yid." On Purim, the greatest praise is simply to be a Yid **יהודי**.

Chazal (*Taanis* 29:) teach that if one has a dispute with a non-Jew he should schedule the court date in the month of Adar because it is a good mazal for the Jewish nation. This advice is for every Yid, even Yidden who are on low levels. Because in Adar, especially on Purim, every Yid is on the highest level.

The Imrei Noam write , "On the days of Purim compassion and love abounds to the highest degrees," and therefore they are special days for *tefillah*.

Shushan Purim is also a day for tefillah. **The Ateres Tzvi *zt'l*** taught that one can accomplish with his *tefillos* on Shushan Purim more than on Purim.

The Pela Yoetz (HaKadmon) writes that on Purim, even the *tefillah* of someone davening *beyichudus* (by himself) is beloved and accepted. This is hinted at in the *Pasuk* (*Esther* 9:25), "*When she came [by herself] before the King… [she said] may Haman's bad plans be foiled…"* Implied here is, even when a person approaches Hashem alone, without a minyan, the *tefillos* are accepted.

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

Torah Tavlin

R' Yonason Eibeschutz zt"l (Quoted in Birchas Chaim) would say: **לך כנוס את כל היהודים**- When Mordechai told Esther to go and plead before the king, she told him to go and **קנס** (penalize) the Jewish people. Why did she want him to **קנס** the people? Why did they deserve such a penalty? The answer is that we hold like Rav Meir who rules: **כל מקום שיש קנס אין מכר**- whenever a fine is imposed, the sale is invalid. Thus, since Achashverosh had planned to sell the Jewish people to the wicked Haman, Esther imposed a **קנס** in order to invalidate the sale!"

Investment on Purim



The Gemara (*Megillah* 5.) says **רבי נטע נטיעה של שמחה בפורים**"Rebbe planted a plant of joy on Purim." Generally, planting doesn't cause joy. As it states (*Tehillim* 126:5), **בדמעה ברנה יקצרו הזורעים**, "Those who sow with tears reap with joy." This is because when one plants, he isn't confident it will grow. So why does the Gemara say that "Rebbe planted a plant of joy on Purim"? How can planting be joyous?

The answer is, whatever one plants and invests in on Purim, will undoubtedly grow and bear fruit. Therefore, even the planting is joyous. This means, when one invests in Torah, *tefillah*, and mitzvos on Purim, it will certainly bear fruit, so one is also joyous when planting.

Yaakov's Brachos

The following are some of the things that we do on Purim which comes from what occurred when Yaakov received the Brachos:

1) How did Yaakov receive the Brachos? Through dressing like Esav. This is one of the reasons given as to why we wear a mask; costume, on Purim.

2) Just as receiving the Brachos was done through a meal, we too have Seudas Purim.

3) Just as by the Brachos it says **ויבא לו יין וישת**, he drank wine, so too on Purim we drink wine.

Hope



It has been said that Mordechai is **איש**, which is *roshei teivos* **אַין שׁוֹם יאוש**, there is no reason to lose hope. (As we wrote above, Mordechai continued knocking at the gates of heaven; he didn't lose hope.)

ואיש is Haman, because the letters spell, **יאוש**, losing hope. Because Haman's way was to lose hope. But the way of Mordechai HaTzaddik is never to lose hope. Hashem can always help, turn everything around, and make matters good again.

Vechol Maaminim

וַתָּבֹואינָה נַעֲרוֹת אֶסְתֵּר וְסָרִיסֶיהָ וַיַּגִּידוּ לָהּ וַתִּתְחַלְחֵל הַמַּלְכָּה מְאֹד וַתִּשְׁלַח בְּגָדִים לְהַלְבִּישׁ אֶת־מָרְדֳּכַי וּלְהָסִיר שַׂקּוֹ מֵעָלָיו וְלֹא קִבֵּל 4:4

Mordechai's behaviour here is puzzling: Wouldn't it seem that the best hishtadlus, effort, he could make to annul the decree was to let Esther know what Haman was doing so that she could influence the king to annul it? Not only did Mordechai not do that, even when Esther asked him to remove his sackcloth so that he could come before her – he refused.

The Vilna Gaon explained: Mordechai knew that in order to annul the decree – one hour of tefillah in sackcloth was better than the best hishtadlus, and therefore he refused to remove the sackcloth.

Another explanation is offered by **Harav Avraham Yisrael Moshe Salamon, the Rav of Kharkov**: Mordechai was afraid that if his

Jewish brethren saw him removing his sackcloth to talk to Esther, they would pin their hopes on Esther and would become distracted from their tefillah and teshuvah. Therefore, he chose to send her the message about the decree through Hasach, without Am Yisrael knowing about it.

Bitachon





The Gemara (*Megillah* 15:) tells that one of the reasons Esther invited Haman to her party is so people should lose hope in her and place their trust in Hashem. Because faith in Hashem was what was needed to merit salvation.

The Gemara (*Megillah* 15:) states, "When Esther came to the king's courtyard, the *Shechinah* left her. She said (*Tehillim* 22:2), **,א-לי א-לי למה עזבתני** ***'Hashem, Hashem, why did You abandon me?'*** Esther said: Perhaps the *Shechinah* left me because I called Achashveirosh a dog, as she said (*Tehillim* ibid. 22:21), **יחידתי הצילה מחרב נפשי מיד כלב**, 'Save my soul from the dog....' She immediately corrected this and called Achashveirosh a lion, as she said (ibid.22:22), **אריה הושיעני מפי**, 'Save me from the mouth of the lion.'"

Why did the *Shechinah* leave her when she called Achashveirosh a dog?

The Maharasha explains that when one is attacked by a lion, he knows that he needs Hashem to save him. He knows that he can't battle a lion on his own. But when one is attacked by a dog, he feels

he can just grab a stick and hit the dog, or run away, etc. He doesn't feel completely dependent on Hashem.

When Esther called Achashveirosh a dog, this meant she wasn't totally reliant on Hashem. She thought she might be able to manage on her own. Therefore, the *Shechinah* left her. She immediately corrected herself and called King Achashveirosh a lion. She recognized that she wouldn't be able to succeed without Hashem's help. And when she, and the nation, trusted in Hashem, the miracles occurred.

Chasidim of ***Rebbe Dovid of Tolne zt'l*** *asked their rebbe, "Why are your chassidim wealthy, while the chassidim of your brother,* ***Rebbe Yochanan of Rachmistrifka*** *are poor?" Rebbe Dovid of Tolna explained that he has many chasidim, and he doesn't have time to speak to each one for a long time. "When they come to me and express their problems, I give them a brachah, but they leave feeling misunderstood. So, they say, 'The Rebbe isn't helping me, so please, Hashem, You help me.'*

But my brother, Reb Yochanan, has fewer chasidim, and the Rachmistrifka chassidim have long conversations with their rebbe, and they feel that their rebbe is taking care of them. They don't feel the need to pray. So, my chassidim end up praying more, which explains why they have more wealth than the Rachmistrifka chassidim."

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings

Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l* told someone who didn't have children, "On Purim, Hashem gives *mishloach manos*, and Hashem's *mishloach manos* is children." So, Purim is an excellent time to daven for good, successful children who fear and serve Hashem.

Achashveirosh's Banquet



Chazal tell us that one of the biggest *aveiros* of the Jewish nation, which caused the evil decree was that they celebrated at Achashverosh's banquet.

It states (*Esther* 1:8), **כרצון איש ואיש לעשות,** and the Gemara (Megillah 12.) explains that this refers to Mordechai and Haman, who were the ministers in charge of this party. If Mordechai was in charge of this celebration, obviously the Jewish nation was also permitted to attend, so why did they deserve to be punished?

This question can be answered with a story:

A Yid and a goy were once traveling together and stopped on the roadside, under a tree, to eat dinner. The goy took out his meat and wine and was enjoying a delicious meal. All the Yid had was a tuna fish sandwich. "Do you want some wine?" the goy asked. "No. Jews are not allowed to drink the wine of a goy." He replied. "How about some meat? I have plenty." "No thanks." "Why not? You aren't allowed to eat meat from a goy, either?" "The meat has to be slaughtered in a special way, and then it needs to be salted… We can't eat just any meat." The yid explained.

The goy found this conversation interesting, and he wanted to hear more about it. The Yid taught him some more on the topic. The Yid

added, "There is, however, a time when we are permitted to eat a goy's food. That is when the situation is *pikuach nefesh*.

Let's say if I don't eat your food, I will die, then I may eat it." The goy took out his knife and said, "If you don't eat my meat, I will kill you." The Yid began eating and drinking. It was a situation of *pikuach nefesh*, so it was permitted. The meat was good. The wine was sweet. He was enjoying the meal. But the goy regretted what he did. He said, "I'm sorry I scared you like that. I'm sorry I forced you to eat my food. I was just joking. I wasn't going to kill you, forgive me."

The Yid put down the food, and sobbed, "I don't forgive you!" "Why don't you forgive me? It was just a practical joke." "I don't mind the joke," the Yid explained. "But you should have told me that it was a joke **after** I finished the meal. Now, I can't eat anymore."

Similarly, the Yidden were permitted to partake in Achashveirosh's party. Mordechai's overseeing it proves that all Yidden were allowed to go. It was would probably be a situation of *pikuach nefesh* if they didn't attend. But the problem was that they ***enjoyed*** being there. They should have wished they weren't there.

This is Chazal's intention when they say that their sin was, **שנהנו מסעודתו של אותו רשע,** they ***enjoyed*** Achashveirosh's meal.

Similarly, the **Chasam Sofer** writes that the food at this party wasn't kosher. Nonetheless, they were permitted to eat there since it was a situation of *pikuach nefesh*. (If they didn't eat at the banquet, Achashveirosh would get angry at them, and their lives would be in danger.) So, what did they do wrong?

They should have eaten at home, before going to the party, so that the food at the party would be **אכילה גסה** (eating after they were full, when it is painful to eat, which isn't considered eating, according to halachah). Then it would be as though they didn't eat non-kosher foods at all.

Don't Desist from Tefillah Until the Whole Yeshuah Arrives

וַיָּשָׁב מָרְדֳּכַי אֶל־שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמָן נִדְחַף אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ אָבֵל וַחֲפוּי רֹאשׁ 6:12

"And Mordechai returned – he returned to his sackcloth and his fasting." *(Megillah 16a)*

The tzaddik **Harav Zev Edelman** related: At the height of the war of independence in 1948, there was a lull in the fighting between the two sides. **Harav Yitzchak Zev, the Brisker Rav** took advantage of the break to leave his home for some fresh air. On his way, he met my brother. When the Rav asked about the situation in the city, he was told that although the day before had been especially difficult, with very heavy bombardment, today, baruch Hashem, it was better...

When the Brisker Rav heard this he said: "Indeed, yesterday the situation was dreadful, but today we need tremendous Heavenly Mercy. That is because while yesterday, everyone felt the urgent need to daven because of the dire situation, the calm today means that people are distracted from their tefillos and they go back to routine. That is what we have to worry about..." The Rav then added: "That's the way of the world: When a person sees a bit of reprieve from his troubles, he calms down and rejoices, but really, he should not rejoice before he experiences a complete yeshuah.



That is what Mordechai Hayehudi did; even though there was reprieve when Haman began to fall before him, he was still not happy. Rather, he continued to daven with sackcloth and fasting until the yeshuah was complete."

The Brisker Rav's words are similar to what the **Malbim** says about the advice Zeresh gave Haman (ibid 13): "If Mordechai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish stock, you will not prevail against him, but you will surely fall before him." Because Mordechai is from the Jews, whose power is in their tefillah, he will not stop davening until he sees full salvation. Therefore "you will not prevail against him", and instead "fall before him" – make yourself as if you have fallen completely, and when he will think that he has been saved from this trouble and will stop davening, then you will be able to rise up again and defeat him.

Allusions to Amen for Purim



Adar is an acronym for **אמן דבר ראשון** as it says (Tehillim 119:160): "Rosh Devarcha Emes." And Chazal said (Devarim Rabbah 7a) "There is nothing greater before HaKadosh Baruch Hu than an amen that Yisrael answer."

The Miracle of Mordechai and Esther

Amen is an acronym for **נס מרדכי אסתר** as the Maggid of Kozhnitz said (Ner Yisrael – Kavanas Chanukah) that in the order of the alef beis, the letters after **א מ ן** are **ב נ ס** to teach us that after amen comes the miracle.

Mordechai Taught Esther to Answer Amen

ויהי אסתר אמן את הדסה היא אסתר בת דדו כי אין לה אב ואם (ב ז)

The Rema writes (Orach Chaim 124 7 according to the Gemara in Sanhedrin 110b): "And he should teach his young children to answer amen, because as soon as a baby answers amen, he has a share in the World to Come."

Harav Eliyahu HaKohein of Izmir author of Shevet Mussar, explained this passuk: Mordechai was "omen es Hadassah" – he taught her from a young age to answer amen and that was "ki ein lah av v'em, because she had no mother and father" – to teach her to do so, as halachah stipulates. It appears that even after she left Mordechai's home, Esther continued to be strict about this, as the passuk says of her (2:20): **ואת מאמר מרדכי אסתר עשה כאשר היתה באמנה אתו**

Weekly Wisdom



One of the most famous pesukim in Megillas Esther (2:5) says,

איש יהודי היה בשושן הבירה ושמו מרדכי בן יאיר בן שמעי בן קיש איש ימיני ***there was a Jewish man in Shushan the Capital and his name was Mordechai… a man of Shevet Binyamin."***

The Me'am Loez points out that Mordechai merited to save Klal Yisrael because Binyamin didn't participate in Mechiras Yosef. The words "**איש ימיני**" – "a man of Shevet Binyamin", can also be read to say, "a man of the right".

The Tiferes Shlomo says that this teaches us that Mordechai never swerved towards the left and stayed on the correct path. May we all learn the lesson of Mordechai and never swerve to the left and always stay on the correct path – the path of Torah and Mitzvos!

Value of Purim

The Seforim interpret the Halocho, **כל הפושט יד נותנים לו** - "whoever stretches out a hand, is given to" (on Purim) as also referring to a person's desires towards Shomayim. Unfortunately, many people do not appreciate the "value" of Purim. They still view Purim through their childhood lenses as a day "to let oneself go" but as one matures, one realises the importance and holiness of this day to which Yom Kippur is compared to and the opportunities which lie within.

The Baal Shem Tov was known to say that one should get up early Purim morning and say many tefillos and entreaties before Hashem for anything he or his relatives need, because the day is a very special time. Analogous to Yom Kippur, the gates of Shomayim are wide open, waiting for our heartfelt prayers to enter. One should daven for themselves, their friends and family and all of Klal Yisroel for a Shono Tovah U'Mesukoh.

Biur Tefillah – Bimai Mordechai

"והשבת לו גמולו בראשו" – ***"and turned his evil plan on its head"*** The miraculous salvation of the Jews from Haman came about through **ונהפך הוא**– *the tables were turned*.

When Klal Yisrael was foreordained to be wiped out on the thirteenth of Adar and Haman had built special gallows on which to hang Mordechai, all seemed lost. However, as the Jews davened to Hashem to annul this terrible decree, things began to turn around. King Achashverosh had allowed the Jews to defend themselves and Haman and his ten sons were hung. In fact, Haman was hung on the very same gallows that he prepared for Mordechai (see Megillah 16a)! The reason it is necessary to include this point in this tefillah is that it is vital to the lesson that we must take out of Purim. Even when all seems lost and one is against all odds, through the power of tefillah, all could change. We have a concept of Purim that **כל הפושט**

יד נותנים לו- *all who stretch out their hand must be given*. This shows that on Purim, Hashem will not deny any request, and we can even flip around such a bad situation.



Rav Avigdor Miller on Purim

Yaakov Avinu dealt with Eisav by sending him gift in order to appease him. Why in the time of Purim didn't we try to do our hishtadlus by trying to bribe Achashveirosh?

Achashveirosh was so wealthy that you couldn't bribe him. Haman offered him Ten thousand silver talents. Now a kikar is a talent, and a talent is a big amount of silver. Ten thousand heavy talents! And Achashveirosh said: You take it. They couldn't bribe Achashveirosh – he was too wealthy.

So why didn't they follow the lesson of Yaakov and try to escape to another country?

In the ancient times you couldn't just escape. Nobody was able to move around freely the way you imagine today. Every country had its ruler.

Today in America, it's somewhat easier. You just get into a car and you travel. But in those days, you couldn't just make a fast escape from the country. And therefore, they were caught in a trap with no way out.

How are we really supposed to see the neis of Purim if it was a neis nistar that was hidden in the natural events?

The answer is that sometimes a thing can be so startling that you just can't hide it. The American government is carrying out nuclear tests – nuclear explosions – and they're trying to hide it, but the scientists who have the proper instruments know what's going on, and they can tell you the details where it's going on and when. And

your mind is your instrument. With a little bit of thought, you see the hand of Hashem.

You can't hide certain things. And when Haman, who was the king's favorite, is now not only not a favorite, but he's wiped out – and not only that, but the one who took his place was the least likely person, so even the biggest dumbbell could guess Who is to blame for all this "The One who dwells in heaven is laughing." Hakodosh Boruch Hu was playing the joke and everybody could see it.

And therefore "All the ends of the world saw that it was a salvation from Hashem." It was very clear to everyone. Only that if you don't put your mind to it, you don't see anything and you'll remain the same person you were last Purim, and the year before that, and the year before that. But the wise person will use his Purim to see how Hashem is doing everything for the Am Yisroel, and he'll fall in love with Hashem. Because the person who is the same person on the day after Purim as he was the day before Purim, has wasted a tremendous opportunity.

Divrei Chizuk By: R' Yedidya Kramer



We know that 'Esther' comes from the word 'hester.' It was a 'hidden' story, a series of small events that happened over ten years. At the time, it was hard to understand what was happening and put two and two together. But we also know that the word megillah comes from the word 'gilui'— revealed. The megillah shows us how these small incidents formed Hakadosh Baruch Hu's plan to save the Jewish nation. In it, we see how everything was part of Hashem's strategy to benefit us. With the

wine of Purim still on our lips, we lein Parshas Tetzaveh, which discusses the Menorah's lighting in the Mishkan.

Rav Yitzchok Zilberstein tells a story about Rav Yehudah Assag, one of the Gedolim in pre-war Hungary. The shamash of his shul had a particular affinity with the mitzvah of lighting its Menorah. Each time he did so, he would beseech Hashem to view it like the Kohein Gadol's lighting in the Beis Hamikdash.

Moved by the shamash's sincerity, the butcher offered to buy the rights to this special mitzvah. Not wishing to part from it, the shamash refused. But the butcher didn't take no for an answer. He kept begging and begging. Eventually, the shamash went to Rav Assag for advice.

The Rav instructed him to give away the mitzvah in exchange for fixed payments made each day that that the butcher lit the Menorah. "But the money must be put aside," the rav told him. And so, the butcher happily paid $100 each day for the zechus. Two years later, the butcher's daughter became a kallah. But there was no money to pay for a dowry. Hearing about this, Rav Assag called in the shamash. "Take all the money the butcher paid for the mitzvah of lighting candles," he instructed, "and give it back to the butcher so he can pay for the wedding."

Rav Zilberstein makes a beautiful observation. The butcher assumed that he was merely giving up his money for a mitzvah. But unbeknownst to him, he was also enabling the shamash to do his own mitzvah — that of hachnasas kallah. And he was to be the recipient! In life, we don't always understand why things happen as they do. It's all part of Hashem's plan. Our job is to do what we can to bring another Yid closer to Hashem. As the Chovos Halevovos teaches, this is one of the most important things a person can achieve in This World. May we all be zocheh to yeshuos, both as individuals and as a nation with the coming of Mashiach **במהרה בימינו אמן**.

As The Wheel Turns - A Purim Story That Could Have Been



In a small town, there lived a young couple. The husband had learned in *yeshivah* before his marriage and continued to learn for a few years afterwards. Eventually, it came time to think about earning a living. He went into business, using his wife's dowry for his start-up costs. His efforts met with success, and within a few years he became very wealthy.

As the young man became richer, his commitment to his business became greater and greater, until it became the entire focus of his life. All that mattered to him was amassing more and more wealth.

In the same village, there were many people living in great poverty. Some had to beg just to keep body and soul together. Others in the village collected money to keep communal charities afloat.

The young wife was very generous, and no one asking for help left the house empty-handed. The husband, on the other hand, became very stingy. The richer he got, the more his wife's charity bothered him. Eventually, he commanded his wife not to give anything more to those needy people.

Of all the festivals throughout the year, Purim was the hardest for him. On Purim we are commanded to give gifts of food and charity to the poor (*mishloach manot* and *matanot la'evyonim*). Fulfilling these commandments didn't interest him at all. No one sent anything to him—they all despised him and his stinginess—and he didn't see why he should have to give them anything either. After suffering

with these commandments for a year or two, he found an innovative solution. He sent a simple *mishloach Manot* consisting of a baked potato and a *hamantash* to his business manager, and he tossed a few pennies to some beggars sitting in the doorway of the synagogue when he came to hear the Megillah reading. And with this, he considered his obligation fulfilled.

As he sat at a table that was overflowing with food, about to begin his eight-course Purim feast, he heard knocking at the door. He was extremely surprised. It had been a long time since anyone had approached him for money. He sent his wife to see who it was, and as soon as she opened the door he heard, "Happy Purim! Happy Purim! We're looking for donations in honour of Purim."

At the door was a group of masked charity collectors. They were going from house to house collecting money for "Passover wheat," the charitable fund that provides Passover supplies for the poor. (Making "Passover wheat" contributions is an ancient tradition that still takes place today.) There is only one short month from Purim to Pesach, and the needs of the poor at this time of year were great. And so, the town's young Torah scholars would dress up in costumes and collect money for the poor. No one in the village refused them.

Well, almost no one. When this man's wife returned to the table and asked her husband to give at least a small donation, he yelled at her and told her to send them away empty-handed. Bowing her head in humiliation, she was forced to turn them away and close the door.

The next day, when the rich man returned to work, he discovered that he had suffered a large loss from an investment that had gone bad. Within a few short weeks, this loss was followed by another sizeable loss, and his fortunes continued to plummet until he was forced to sell everything he had, even his wife's jewelry.

One day, he finally had to admit to his wife that he had no choice but to beg for charity. He gave her a stark choice: either don the

beggar's cloak and collect with him, or accept a divorce and relinquish his financial obligations to her.

His wife, who had suffered from his stinginess for years, decided to accept a divorce. In time, she married a young widower, a man with a pleasant personality who was well liked by his neighbors, and they lived a quiet, peaceful life together. They made their home in a nearby village and were known as decent, honest people. Her new husband didn't stop her from inviting guests into their home and even encouraged her, inviting the poor of the village in himself after he saw that she didn't mind. He was very generous and gave money to charity whenever he could.

Perhaps it was in her merit, or perhaps in his, but his business prospered, and they were also blessed with two beautiful children, a boy and a girl. It was a warm Jewish home, and they lived a happy life together.

The festival of Purim came around one year, and as the family was sitting down to their holiday meal they heard knocking at the door. The wife got up to see who it was and saw a poor stranger standing there. His clothing was tattered, and she could tell just by looking at him that he was starving. She invited him in, and her husband set an extra place at the table.



The beggar could barely keep himself from wolfing down the food. He ate from all the different dishes and delicacies until he couldn't eat anymore. As he finally put down his fork, there were tears in his eyes. It is unclear whether these were tears of gratitude or

tears of sadness at the contrast between this family's happiness and his own dire condition. But his hosts did everything they could to cheer him up so that he could be joyful on the happy festival. They also gave him money so that he could buy new clothes for himself.

After Purim, when they had finished cleaning up and putting their children to bed, the husband and wife sat down and talked about the events of the day.

"I really feel for that poor man," the husband told his wife. "I remember when I used to be poor like that. There was this one Purim when I was starving, and I was going to this rich man, not so far from here, in the hope of getting something to eat. He was supposed to be a real miser, but I figured that he might at least give me something to eat in honor of Purim, even if he wouldn't give me any money. As I was approaching the house, I met a group of collectors who had been sent away. He didn't even agree to talk to them. I lost hope of getting anything from him and didn't bother knocking.

"How wonderful the world is. Now, not only do I have plenty to eat and a happy life with you, but we're actually able to invite guests and give food and charity to others. At the same time, we should never forget that everything we have comes from above, and is only ours for as long as He wants it to be. He gave it to us as a present so that we can use it to help others, but if He wants He could take it from us and leave us as destitute as that poor man. Who knows? Maybe that man once had money, maybe he was even rich. G-d lowers the proud and raises the lowly. G-d turns the wheel of wealth, bringing people high and low."

"You're right on target, my dear husband," his wife said, wiping tears from her eyes. "That beggar was not only rich, he was the same miser you wanted to approach that Purim, the one who sent those charity collectors away in such disgrace."

"How on earth can you know this?" her husband asked in surprise.

"I know because I was there," she said softly. "As that man left our house today, it struck me. Our guest was none other than my first husband." (*Chabad.Org)*

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt – Smells Nice



Purim has a special connection to smell.

1) The Gemara tells us **מיחייב אינייש לבסומי** which is related to the word **בשמים**

2) Another name of Esther is **הדסה**- from **הדס**.

3) The Gemara tells us Mordechai in the Torah is found in **מר דרור** which Targum Unkolos translates as **דכיא מירא** (similar wording to **מרדכי**).

4) Purim is about defeating Amalek who removed the **ה** and **ו** of Hashem's name as it says **כס י-ה** Adding **ה** and **ו** we come to a total of 11-the number of Ketores - incense (smell) there are. It therefore is no surprise that Haman (who descends from Amalek) with his 10 sons totals 11.

Indeed, the **Imrei Emes** points out that **המן** yields the same sum as **חלבנה**- 95, the foul-smelling incense. Thus, the first letters of **על מזבחי להקטיר קטרת**- *to ascend my altar to burn incense*, is **עמלק**. Similarly, in regard to Ketores, **עשו קחו לכם מחתות**- take for yourselves fire-pans, are the initials **עמלק** : Amalek is the one who causes separation as they are the ones who cause doubt in **ה' אחד**.

In fact, looking closely at **תמחה את זכר עמלק**- you shall wipe out the memory of Amalek, we see something fascinating. The word **זכר** is the equivalent to 227 and **עמלק** to 240. Subtracting (**תמחה**- erasing)

227 from 240 gives us a result of 13. This equals **אחד** referring to **ה' אחד**! Additionally, **עמלק** is an abbreviation of **עול מלכות לא קבלו**.

Purim which is the idea of overcoming Amalek is about Achdus- unity as we give Mishloach Manos, **מתנות לאביונים** and so forth. Where there is Amalek we need unity. Hence, Amalek attacks when Ahron (who symbolizes unity as he is the **אוהב ורודף שלום**- loves and pursues peace) dies.

Purim in Nazi Hell By Pinchas Menachem Feivlovitz



Biesinitzer Grund (Goerlitz) concentration camp, a subcamp of Gross-Rosen, after liberation. Poland, May 1945.

Tired, starved, and downtrodden, we Jewish prisoners plodded into the barracks where we spent a few miserable hours on hard bunks before another day of backbreaking labor. We were too exhausted to think, but when our minds wandered back to times long gone, we could not help but wonder if it had all been a dream. Would we ever live again as we once had, before our parents and children had been murdered, and we were dropped into an unending hellish existence where death seemed to be a welcome (and inevitable) reprieve?

It was Purim eve, but what was there for us to celebrate in the German concentration camp of Gross-Rosen?

Suddenly, one of us leaped down from his small space on the bunk and began an impassioned speech that will forever remain in my memory:

"My fellow Jews," he called out, "dear brothers in suffering! Today is our Purim, when we remember the miracles G-d did for our ancestors. He who dwells in Heaven saved our nation from being decimated. The enemy fell into the pit that he himself had dug. Today we once again have a double-edged sword pressed against our necks. Our enemies are trying to destroy us, but do not allow terror into your hearts!

"The Haman of our day, Hitler and his lackeys, will not be able to overcome G-d's chosen nation. The eternity of Israel will not lie. The bells of freedom are already ringing in the distance. We will yet live to see justice meted out against our enemies, just like our ancestors in Shushan of old. Be strong, brothers, the Jewish nation lives on!"

Beads of sweat appeared on his face. His lips trembled, his eyes glinted, but he said no more. - Then another prisoner jumped down from his bunk and took his place next to the orator. Sweetly, with a voice laden with nostalgia and hope, he sang the words of the blessing said after the Megillah reading, in which we thank G-d "Who fights our battles and pays comeuppance to our mortal enemies."

As the rest of us absorbed the last echoes of the tune, the two men lithely climbed back into their spots on the tiered bunking and silence reigned once again.

In our minds, we were blissfully transported back to the happy Purims of years past, but we knew the joy would not last.

The following morning, the block commander stormed into the barrack: "Cursed Jews!" he shouted. "Last night someone here spoke

disparagingly of our Führer. Tell me who it was! If I do not know who it was, you will all be punished before the day is done!"

His words were met with defiant silence.

His face appeared angrier, and his voice became louder. "Dirty Jews!" he called our shrilly. "I am giving you 10 minutes to identify last night's speakers. Make no mistake about it, your lives are on the line."

Ten minutes passed, and no one uttered a word.

"Run, swine, run!" the commander barked, and we Jews began to run as fast as we could, while the guards rained down a shower of rifle butts and whips upon our heads and backs.

"Quick, quick," they shouted as rivers of blood spurted from our heads and our arms. Our backs sagged and our feet ached.

But we had only one fear: that last night's brave performers, who had gifted us with hope and courage, would give themselves up in order to save us from further suffering. One even tried to run out of line to identify himself, but his neighbors didn't allow it. "No, no," they hissed with clenched teeth, "Stay strong. We are all responsible for one another."

I have no way of recalling how long this went on, because every moment felt like eternity. We ran with our last strength, panting, with no air to breathe. Our tongues hung out, and tears mingled with sweat on our cheeks. But no one even considered ratting on the heroes of the previous night.

Yes, even the prisoners of Gross-Rosen merited their own Purim miracle—two miracles, actually: That no one dropped dead from the diabolic run we were forced to endure, and that we all had the courage to keep the identity of those two men secret.

The late Pinchas Menachem Feivlovitz was a Holocaust survivor who fought (and was wounded) in Israel's war of independence. An

adherent of the Gur Chassidic group, he devoted much of his energy to chronicling and telling the atrocities of the Holocaust, through his personal experiences of five years under Nazi rule. Together with his wife and fellow survivor Cipora (whom he met and married after liberation), he raised a family in Israel. At the time of his passing in 2007, he left behind dozens of descendants, devoted to Torah and Jewish life. This vignette was recorded by Feivlovitz in his (Hebrew) book, Odeni Zocher (I Still Recall).

Concepts in Avodas Halev - R' Chaim Yosef Kofman

וּמִשְׁלֹחַ מָנוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ וּמַתָּנוֹת לָאֶבְיוֹנִים 9:22



R' Chaim Yossel Kofman relates the following: I once called the Rosh Yeshivah of Brisk in Yerushalayim, to ask him to accept my grandson into his yeshivah. I decided to tell him over a vort.

I asked, "In Megilas Esther, the posuk mentions Mishloach Manos twice. The first time, it is spelled **משלוח** with a **ו**, while the second time it is spelled **משלח** without the **ו**. Why?"

R' Avraham Yehoshua said, "Nu ... do you have an answer?" I said yes and then proceeded to quote the **Rambam** (which, of course, is the way to a Brisker's heart!) in Hilchos Megillah it writes that it is a very good minhag to send Mishloach Manos to all your friends, but it's an even better minhag to spend less on Mishloach Manos and to increase your Tzedaka and Matanos L'evyonim to the poor, which take precedence. Based on this, this, I told the Rosh Yeshivah that the first time the Megillah mentions it (9:19), it is only discussing

the mitzvah of **משלוח מנות** by itself and therefore it says it **מלא** to indicate that we must send to as many friends as we can.

However, the second time (9:22), the posuk says: **וּמִשְׁלֹחַ מָנוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ וּמַתָּנוֹת לָאֶבְיוֹנִים**- it mentions both mitzvos in the same posuk. There, the word **מִשְׁלֹחַ** is missing the **ו** to teach us that with respect to the mitzvah to give to the poor, one should lessen his gifts to his friends and give it to the poor.

The Rambam is learning from these two posukim that a Yid should be **ממעט** in Mishloach Manos and be **מרבה** in Matanos L'evyonim. Be **ממעט** in gift-giving and **מרבה** in Tzedaka!" There was a pause on the other line, and then R' Avraham Yehoshua responded, "With such a vort, of course your einekel is accepted into the Yeshivah!"

The Brisker Rov Inspects Before Accepting The Mishloach Manos

Someone came late in the day to the Brisker Rov's home to give him Mishloach Manos. The Rov did not take the package but instead walked out of his front door and started to inspect the sky. The visitor was intrigued by this strange response.

The Brisker Rov explained to him that the pasuk says "Sonei Matanos Yichyeh", a person who hates gifts will live. Under normal circumstances I would never accept a gift, said the Brisker Rov. However today is Purim and there is a special Mitzva of Mishloach Manos Ish L'Rei'eihu which I am happy to participate in. However the hour is late so I needed to go outside and make sure the sun has not set on Purim, before I could accept your gift. - Chaim Sheyesh Bahem -

"Wisdom is to the soul as food is to the body." ~ Ibn Ezra.

Insights Into Taanis Esther

The *Seder HaYom* writes: "*Taanis Esther* was a day that was transformed from sadness to joy, and from mourning to *Yom Tov*. Instead of our enemies ruling over us as they wished — to kill and obliterate us as Haman *HaRasha* wished, all the Jews gathered together in the cities of the king to fight for their lives and take revenge against their enemies. Since this was a day that everyone was eagerly waiting for mercy of *Hashem* to save them from the hands of those who wished to do evil, and **הקב"ה** was there to help them and save them from their troubles, they have taken upon themselves every year to fast on this day of *Taanis Esther*, to give praise and thanks for the past, and to *Daven* and request for help for the future."

The *Kav HaYashar* writes (97): "*Taanis Esther* is a very opportune day for our *Tefilos* to be accepted in the *Zechus* of Mordechai and Esther. Anyone who is seeking mercy from *Hashem* for anything that he needs, should make time for himself to *Daven* on the day of *Taanis Esther*, and say the *Perek* of *Tehilim* (22), **לַמְנַצֵּחַ עַל־אַיֶּלֶת הַשַּׁחַר**, which *Chazal* teach refers to Esther who was called **אַיֶּלֶת הַשַּׁחַר** (*Yoma* 29a. The *Gemara* (*Megilah* 15b) also teaches us that Esther said this *Perek* when she was on the way to present herself before Achashveirosh. After one has said this, he should pour out his heart before *Hashem*, and request what he is looking for, and mention that he is asking in the merit of Mordechai and Esther, and in their *Zechus*, **הקב"ה** will answer him and open up the *Shaarei Rachamim*, , and his *Tefilah* will be answered with the will of *Hashem*!

We need to mention the merit of Mordechai and Esther, because the days of *Taanis Esther* and Purim are days of *Ratzon* and *Ahavah*, days of *Hashem's* good will and love. Therefore, one should grab this opportunity and *Daven* on *Taanis Esther*, and also on Purim. May the One who listens to *Tefilah* willingly accept all our *Tefilos* with mercy.

עֲשֶׂרֶת בְּנֵי הָמָן Dovid Bernstein-Matzav.com



Nowadays, the minhag is for each person to say the names of the sons of Haman by himself in one breath, and not to rely on the baal kriah and the din of shomei'ah ke'oneh that hearing is like saying. However, the Mishnah Berurah brings from the Chayei Adam that this is not correct and everyone should remain quiet and listen to the baal kriah.

Our *minhag* of saying it ourselves is based on a famous explanation of the **Rogatchover Gaon, Rav Yosef Rosen**, in *Tzofnas Paneiach*, who says that while the *baal kriah* can be *motzie* us with the words, he cannot be *motzie* us with the *neshima achas* – saying the names in one breath – and therefore we must say it ourselves.

Rav Moshe Shternbuch (2:358) questions the logic of the Rogatchover. Since the "one breath" is part and parcel of the reading of the names, says Rav Shternuch, there is no reason why we are not *yotzei* with the *baal kriah*'s efforts just like by *tekias shofar*.

Rav Shternbuch therefore offers an alternative reason why we read it ourselves. He says that since the *baal kriah* reads it quickly in order to say it in one breath, he may leave out letters and then we are not *yotzei*. Therefore, we read it ourselves before the *baal kriah*, just to make sure that we are *yotzie*. (This should be done even if you are not reading from a kosher *megillah*, because since

you've already heard most of the *megillah* from the *baal kriah* you are *yotzei*, even if a small part is read by heart.)

Note that while Rav Shternbuch takes issue with the Rogatchover's vort, it is actually consistent with the famous explanation of the Bais Halevi as to why a kohein can't be motzie another kohen with Birchas Kohanim. The requirement of kol rom – saying the Birchas Kohanim loud – is not included in the shomeiah ke'oneh and must be done by the kohein himself, similar to neshimah achas which is beyond the inclusion of shomeiah ke'oneh. For more on this, see the Bais Halevi, who also discusses shomeiah ke'oneh with regard to Kiddush as well.

Dvar Torah Questions and Answers on Purim By Moshe Bogomilsky

תענית אסתר - 13th of *Adar* — Fast of Esther

QUESTION: Why is the fast on the day before *Purim* called "*Ta'anit Esther*" — "the Fast of Esther"? (The three-day fast which Mordechai proclaimed upon Esther's request took place during *Pesach*, see *Megillah* 15a.)

ANSWER: Though Achashveirosh originally agreed to Haman's plan to kill *all* the Jews (young and old, little children and women, 3:13) on the 13th of Adar, he later instructed the Jews to defend themselves against the Persian armies. According to *halachah*, people defending themselves against enemies are forbidden to fast, so as not to weaken their strength (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 571:3). Consequently, on the 13th of *Adar* it was forbidden for any Jew to fast. Esther lived in the King's palace, and thus did not fear the armies. Hence, she was the *only* person able to fast while the Jewish people defended themselves against the Persians. Therefore, the day is known as *Ta'anit Esther*. (**לקוטי שיחות ח"ו, ע' 372**)

"ושמו מרדכי" - *"And his name was Mordechai."* (2:5)

QUESTION: According to the Gemara (*Menachot* 65a), Mordechai's real name was Petachya (**פתחיה**). There is a **מדרש פליאה** ("wondrous *Midrash*") that says that this can be understood through the *pasuk* **וְהָיָה רֵאשִׁיתְךָ מִצְעָר וְאַחֲרִיתְךָ יִשְׂגֶּה מְאֹד** — ***"Your beginning will be small, yet your latter end will greatly increase"*** (Job 8:7).

How through this *pasuk* is there a connection between **מרדכי** and **פתחיה**?

ANSWER: The first letter in the name **פתחיה** is a "**פ**", which equals 80. If you divide that in half, the result is 40, which corresponds to "**מ**". The second letter is a "**ת**", which equals 400, half of which is 200, which corresponds to "**ר**". The third letter is a "**ח**", equalling 8, which divided in half equals 4, corresponding to "**ד**". The fourth letter, "**י**", equals 10, which when doubled equals 20, corresponding to "**כ**". The last letter is a **ה** -5 — which when doubled equals 10 — "**י**". Thus, when the beginning (first three letters of **פתחיה**) is made smaller, and the end (last two letters) is made larger, **פתחיה** equals **מרדכי**. (**ר' שמשון זצ"ל מאסטראפאלי**)

"אם על המלך טוב יצא דבר מלכות מלפניו... להיות כל איש שרר בביתו"
***"If it pleases the King, let there go a forth a royal edict from him... that every man should rule in his own home."* (1:19-22)**

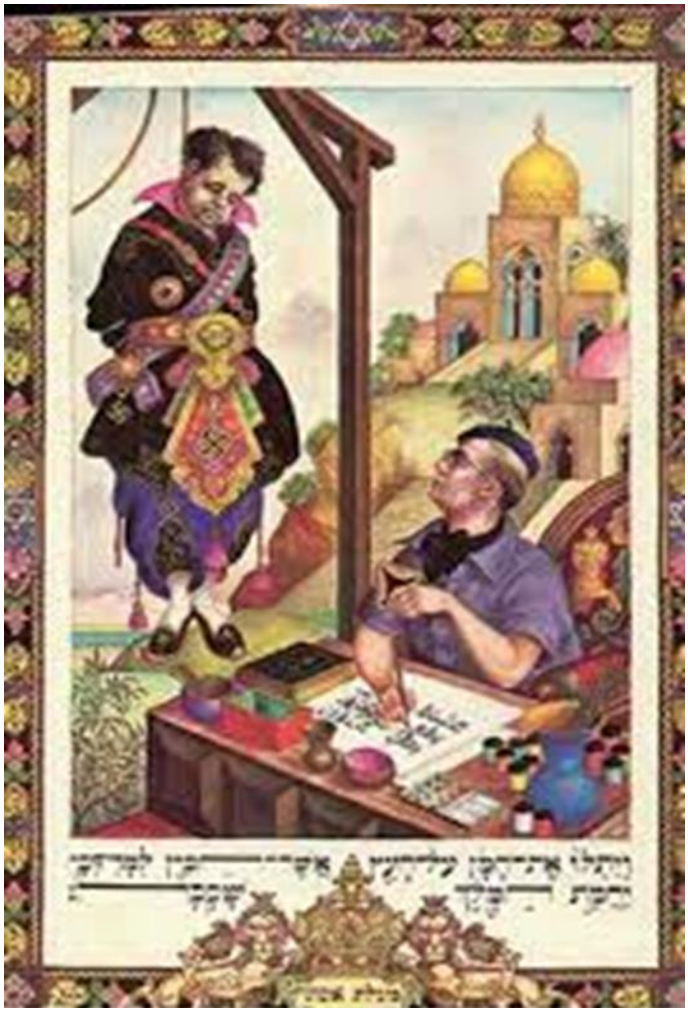
QUESTION: The King asked Haman only what to do with Vashti; why did Haman offer additional advice?

ANSWER: It was the custom in Persia that the King does not decide any issue of law on his own; instead, he would gather his advisers and seek their opinion (see Esther 1:13). Haman desired that this should be changed. Therefore, in addition to advising the King that Vashti should be killed, he suggested that from then on Achashveirosh should make all decisions on his own, without leaving room for appeal.

Additionally, from then on, every man should be the ruler of his home.

Everything recorded in the *Megillah* is connected to the Miracle of *Purim*. Were it not for these two recommendations made by Haman, Esther would not have become Queen, and Haman himself would not have been hung.

After Vashti was killed, a search began for a new queen. Had it not been the rule of the land that each man rule in his home, when agents would have arrived at the home of Mordechai searching for Esther, he would have told them, "I don't know where Esther is. She left without my permission and did not say when she would return." Thanks to Haman's advice, Mordechai was unable to hide Esther, and thus she was forced to come to Achashveirosh and eventually become the Queen.



When Achashveirosh heard from Charvonah that Haman had prepared gallows upon which to hang Mordechai, the King angrily said, "Hang him on it!" (7:9) Haman began to demand, "Before you hang me there must be a trial with a jury deciding if I am guilty." Achashveirosh told Haman, "Sorry! It was you who advised me some time ago that '*yeitzei devar malchut milefanav*' — the King should make decisions on his own and no one can appeal them." Thus, Haman was hung immediately. (**חתם סופר**)

קצף בגתן ותרש... ויבקשו לשלח יד במלך אחשורש: ויודע הדבר למרדכי ויגד האלה גדל לאסתר המלכה ותאמר אסתר למלך בשם מרדכי... אחר הדברים המן המלך אחשורוש את ***"After these things King Achashveirosh promoted Haman."*** **(2:21-22, 3:1)**

QUESTION: Why was Haman promoted and not Mordechai, who saved the King from Bigtan and Teresh?

ANSWER: Achashveirosh figured that if Mordechai was in fact concerned about his well-being, rather than telling Esther about the plotted assassination, he should have come directly to him. Therefore, he was in doubt as to Mordechai's true intentions. However, Esther, who revealed the secret plot to him, was indeed loyal and deserving of a reward. Since Esther as Queen had the maximum any woman could desire, Achashveirosh was faced with a dilemma: what more could he give her?

Achashveirosh concluded that Esther esteemed Haman very highly, because upon his advice Vashti was killed, thus making it possible for her to become Queen. Assuming Haman to be Esther's trusted ally, Achashveirosh rewarded Esther by promoting him. (**שו"ת תירוש ויצהר סי' ק"ה**)

"וצומו עלי ואל תאכלו ואל תשתו שלשת ימים" **-** ***"And fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days."*** (4:16)

QUESTION: Why did Esther tell Mordechai that the Jews should fast *three* days and nights?

ANSWER: To celebrate the success of his kingdom, Achashveirosh made a seven-day feast for the residents of *Shushan Habirah*. Unfortunately, the Jews attended and partook in the non-kosher festivities. The seventh and final day was *Shabbat*. Since the celebrations were held in a garden, the Jews refrained from coming, out of fear that they might violate the *Shabbat* by pouring liquids on the ground (*Gemara, Megillah* 12a).

The Jews' eating of non-kosher food for six days caused the rise of Haman. To counteract this, Esther told Mordechai to have the Jews fast for three days and three nights, which would atone for the six days of eating non-kosher. (יערות דבש ח״א, י״ז)

"ויהי כראות המלך את אסתר המלכה עמדת בחצר נשאה חן בעיניו" ***"When the King saw Esther standing in the courtyard, she found favour in his eyes."*** **(5:2)**

QUESTION: Why was the King so gracious to Esther?



ANSWER: After Achashveirosh married Esther he was struck with blindness *(Yalkut Shimoni* 1056:5). As soon as Esther walked in, an angel turned his head in her direction and suddenly he regained his vision and was able to see her. Thus, "when the King saw Esther," he realized that this miracle happened to him in her merit, and therefore, she found favour in his eyes. (אורה ושמחה)

"וכל זה איננו שוה לי בכל עת אשר אני ראה את מרדכי" ***"Yet all this is not worth anything to me so long as I see Mordechai."*** **(5:13)**

QUESTION: The word *"zeh"* — "this" — seems superfluous; it could have just said *"ve'eineno shoveh li"* — "and it is not worth anything to me"?

ANSWER: Haman told his wife Zeresh and his advisors about the royal treatment the King had afforded him. In the course of the conversation, he also expressed his fear of Mordechai and Esther, observing that together the numerical value of their names (**מרדכי-אסתר**) totaled 26 (in single numerals), which is the numerical value of Hashem's four-letter name, indicating that He was with them.

Zeresh comforted Haman that he had nothing to worry about, because their names, Haman (**המן**) and Zeresh (**זרש**), also added up to 26 (in singular numerals).

Haman responded, "Mordechai *alone* adds up to 13 as does Esther *alone*. 13 is the numerical value of the word "*echad*" (**אחד**), indicating that the *one and only* — Hashem — is with each of them. Also, there is unity among them, and in unity there is strength. However, my name alone adds up to 14 and I am short 12. Thus, the "*zeh*" (**זה**), which has the numerical value of 12, which you, Zeresh, contribute, is worthless because Hashem is not with us and there is also no unity among us." (**בית יעקב, לקוטים מפרדס**)

"וימצא כתוב אשר הגיד מרדכי על בגתנא ותרש" - *"It was found written what Mordechai reported about Bigtana and Teresh."* (6:2)

QUESTION: In the beginning of the *Megillah* (2:21), it is stated that the servants who plotted to kill the King were Bigtan and Teresh. Why in the records was the name spelled "Bigtana" (**בגתנא**)?

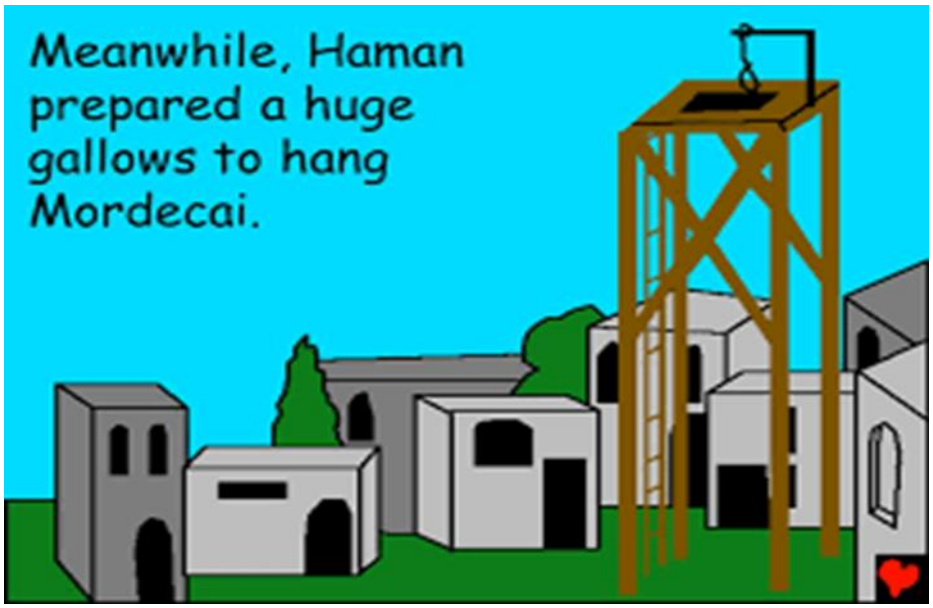


ANSWER: The secretaries who recorded the event were sons of Haman. They were concerned that someday historians would read the King's book of records and conclude that credit was due to a Jewish person for saving the King's life. Therefore, they falsified the records and wrote that Mordechai reported about Bigtan *or* Teresh (**בגתן או תרש**). This would mean that Mordechai was not really sure if it was Bigtan or Teresh who plotted to kill the King. Since both were put to death, an innocent person had been killed through Mordechai, and thus he did not deserve any reward.

A miracle occurred and the word "**או**" which means "or" separated itself and the "**א**" moved close to **בגתן** and the "**ו**" close to **תרש**. Thus, it read that Mordechai told about Bigtana ***and*** Teresh (**בגתנא ותרש**), that the ***two*** of them plotted to kill the King, and thanks to Mordechai's alertness the King's life was saved, rightfully entitling Mordechai to a great reward. (**מדרש תלפיות**)

ויאמר חרבונה.... גם הנה העץ אשר עשה המן למרדכי אשר דבר טוב על המלך עמד בבית המן גבה חמשים אמה *"Charvonah said, 'Furthermore the 50 cubit high gallows which Haman made for Mordechai who spoke good for the King, is standing in Haman's house.'"* (7:9)

QUESTION: When did Mordechai ever "speak good" for King Achashveirosh?



ANSWER: Haman's advisors told him to make a gallows and get the King's consent to hang Mordechai. Immediately, he hired one of the best carpenters in *Shushan Habirah* and instructed him to build a 50-cubit-high pole. The carpenter was not aware of its purpose, but, knowing Haman's wealth, he made it of the most expensive wood and adorned it with gold.

Upon completion, he handed Haman a hefty bill. Somewhat surprised, he said to the carpenter, "Who ever heard of paying such a huge amount for a 50-cubit pole?" The carpenter replied, "Why don't you look at what I made and then you will agree that my fee is reasonable." When Haman saw the golden pole, he became enraged

and shouted, "I wanted this to serve as a gallows for Mordechai; the one you made is *tov al hamelech* — good for the King!"

Upon hearing from Charvonah that *Haman said* the gallows "is good for the King," Achashveirosh immediately bellowed, "hang *him* on it!" (**שמעתי מהרב שמואל צבי שי׳ פוקס**)

לעשות אותם ימי משתה ושמחה ומשלח מנות איש לרעהו ומתנות לאביונים
***"That they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor."* (9:22)**



QUESTION: The Rambam in *Hilchot Megillah* (2:17) writes: "It is better to increase in gifts to the poor than in sending portions to one another." If so, why in the *pasuk* is sending portions to one another mentioned *before* gifts to the poor?

ANSWER: When giving *tzedakah* to the poor, it is very important that one should be extremely careful not to embarrass the recipient. (See Rambam, *Matanot Aniyim* 10.)

When Mordechai instituted *Purim* as a day of giving gifts to the poor, he was greatly concerned lest it become known as the *poor* man's day to receive handouts. Therefore, he also instituted the exchanging of portions among friends so that an observer would be unable to distinguish gifts to the poor from gifts to friends. To conceal the gifts to the poor, the *Megillah* preceded it with sending portions to one another. (**אפריון ועי׳ שו״ת תירוש ויצהר סי׳ קע״ב**)

לעשות אותם ימי משתה ושמחה ומשלח מנות איש לרעהו ומתנות לאביונים
***"They should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor."* (9:22)**



QUESTION: Why did Mordechai institute this as a way to celebrate the miracle of Purim?

ANSWER: Haman derided the Jewish people by telling Achashveirosh that though they were only *one* nation among many nations, they were **מְפֻזָּר וּמְפֹרָד בֵּין הָעַמִּים** — in total disharmony among themselves [3:8] . They lacked love and compassion for their fellow Jews. To counteract this claim, Esther said to Mordechai, "Go gather together *all* the Jews" (4:16), and stress to them the importance of unity and *ahavat Yisrael.*

Since the decree was caused by Haman's allegation that there was disunity among the Jewish people, Mordechai instituted that on Purim we exchange edibles with friends and give gifts to the poor to demonstrate our love for one another. (**מנות הלוי**)

"... ודבר שלום לכל זרעו - ויהי בימי" ***"Concerned for the welfare of all his posterity. And it was in the days…"* (10:3, 1:1)**

QUESTION: Torah is never ending, and the end and the beginning are linked together. What is the connection between the last and first words of the *Megillah*?

ANSWER: The first word (**ויהי**) has the numerical value of thirty-one, and the last word (**זרעו**) has the numerical value of two hundred and eighty-three. The two together total three hundred and

fourteen, which is exactly the numerical value of "Mordechai *Hayehudi*" (**מרדכי היהודי**). The first and last words are an indication that the *Megillah* was written by Mordechai from beginning to end. (**נחל אשכול, ועי' רש"י ט:כ**)

Purim Pearls of Wisdom …A Word for the Ages

How did Achashveirosh hint to Haman that he would never succeed in causing the downfall of *Klal Yisrael*?

The *Rokeiach* explains that when Achashveirosh surprised Haman by instructing him to do to Mordechai all that he had suggested be done to the person whom the king desired to honour, Achashveirosh said **אַל-תַּפֵּל דָּבָר מִכֹּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ** , ***"do not omit a single detail that you suggested"*** (*Esther* 6:10).

The word **תַּפֵּל** , *omit*, comes from the word **לִפֹּל**, *to fall*, and the *gematria* of the words **אַל-תַּפֵּל** *do not omit*, equals the *gematria* of **יִשְׂרָאֵל** , *Israel*. Taking it all together, Achashveirosh was unwittingly informing Haman —**אַל-תַּפֵּל יִשְׂרָאֵל - Israel** will not fall no matter how hard you try!

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember - Gifts to the Poor – מתנות לאביונים

Rebbe Meir Shapiro, *zt"l*, once went to the house of a great miser to ask for a donation, but before he could say anything the man shouted at him, "I am not giving!" Rebbe Meir was unfazed and he said to the man, "Calm down. The purpose of my visit is not to collect money, but rather, I came to be *mevaker choleh*, visit the sick.

The man was upset and he shouted, "I am not sick!" but the Rav claimed otherwise. "Shlomo *Ha'melech* says that you are sick, as it states (*Koheles* 5:12) **יש רעה חולה ראיתי תחת השמש עושר שמור לבעליו לרעתו** , ***There is a sickening evil I have seen under the sun; riches***

hoarded by their owner to his misfortune. Since you guard your possessions so religiously, this can only be a sickness."

"Why did the Rav come specifically to my house?", the wealthy man continued to wonder. "Right near my house is a hospital, and there you can really fulfill the mitzvah of visiting the sick, and in a much better way than here!"

Rebbe Meir smiled and said, "It states (*Nedarim* 39b): 'Rebbe Acha bar Chaninah said, whoever visits the sick takes away one-sixtieth of his suffering', and if this is so, then if I visit someone with a certain illness I will take one-sixtieth of his illness, and I will then contract one-sixtieth of the illness. But, if I take one-sixtieth of your sickness of wealth then this will be very beneficial for me!" (*Umatuk HaOhr on Megillas Esther*)

Purim Pearls of Wisdom …A Word for the Ages

Rav Yaakov Galinsky once commented that in Novardok, Purim was a more uplifting day than Yom Kippur. He explained that Yom Kippur was all about the past, with *Teshuvah*, and regret for our sins. Purim, on the other hand, was all about a bright future and how glorious things might yet be!

Rav Yitzchok Hutner once faced his *talmidim* after the sun had set on Purim, amidst rejoicing, and cried out, "On Purim, we don't recite *Havdolah* as we do after other festivals. This is because there is no 'after Purim', since Purim is meant to always stay with us!"

Purim Seudah

The Machzor Vitri (465) writes, "On Purim, when everyone conducts long meals, Hashem grants them all their hearts' desires." May we merit this.

Purim Thoughts - Ideas and Reflections by Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn

On the seventh day of Achashveirosh's party, he was happy from wine (*Esther* 1:10). The *Gemara* (*Megilah* 12b) notes that the seventh day connotes Shabbos, the seventh day of the week. It also emphasizes the difference between how Torah Jews spend Shabbos and how Achashveirosh spent his seventh day.

We spend Shabbos immersed in our families, eating and drinking responsibly, which leads us into discussions of Torah thoughts and praising Hashem. Achashveirosh and his colleagues drank and ate without restraint, which led them to pointless and embarrassing conversations which ultimately led to Vashti's death.

Rav Yaakov Galinsky commented that based on how a person conducts themselves on Shabbos indicates who he or she truly is and what they value!

Purim Pearls of Wisdom …A Word for the Ages

Why did Haman want to kill all the Jews in response to Mordechai's refusal to bow down? Wouldn't it have been more reasonable for Haman to want to kill only Mordechai for his 'trangression'?

The *Sfas Emes* answers that the *Megilah* says (*Esther* 3:2): **וּמָרְדֳּכַי לֹא יִכְרַע** , which literally translates as *'and Mordechai will not bow'*, in the future tense. This comes to hint that in every generation there will be one person in *Klal Yisroel* who will refuse to bow under pressure in this way. Haman understood this and realized that even if he killed Mordechai, there would always be some other Jew who would defy him. So he decided to not only kill Mordechai, but to also destroy the entire **עַם מָרְדֳּכָי** the 'nation of Mordechai' (*Esther* 3:6), so that the defiance would end!

Purim Pearls of Wisdom …A Word for the Ages

The *Nesivos Shalom* notes regarding drinking on Purim that the word "wine" is absent in the *Shulchan Aruch* when this *Halachah* is taught. The *Shulchan Aruch* states (*Orach Chaim* 695:2) that one is obligated to become inebriated until he doesn't know, but there is no indication of what someone should become inebriated on!

The *Nesivos Shalom* explains that the reason for this is clear. We must become inebriated with the *concept* of Purim, and *not* with wine. The concept of Purim is that *Hashem* is very close, and that we can achieve remarkable *Dveikus B'Hashem*, closeness with *Hashem* at this time. No matter how distant we may be, we can still become, specifically at this particular time of Purim, so much closer to *Hashem*!

Not Just Purim: Five Extraordinary Stories of Miraculous Redemption

Jewish communities around the world that were saved from the brink of destruction.

The Jews of the Purim story celebrated their delivery from destruction by having a festive meal, giving food gifts to each other and reading a specially written scroll, Megillat Esther, to publicize the miracle. Over the years other Jewish communities who have experienced being saved from the brink of destruction have also established their own mini "Purim."

Jewish law teaches "Whoever has had a miracle occur for them, all the more so the inhabitants of a city, can establish that day for themselves and those who come after them as a 'Purim'". Indeed, Rabbi Avraham Danzig, the famed Lithuanian Rabbi of the 19th century included a footnote in his halachic work, *Hayei Adam* the story of his own 'Purim' miracle.

In 1804, a gunpowder magazine accidentally exploded in the heart of Vilna. 31 people were killed in the courtyard where Rabbi Danzig lived, his own house collapsed, with two walls and a roof beam caving in, yet none of his family lost their lives. Rabbi Danzig instituted his family's own annual holiday on the 16th of Nissan corresponding to the date they were saved.

Purim Saragossa

The Jews of Saragossa, Spain had a long-held custom to greet a visiting king with a procession of Torah scrolls from all of the synagogues in the city. Over time, out of respect for the Torah, rabbis decided to remove the scrolls from their ornate boxes before they danced in the city's streets.

In the year 1420, ahead of a visit by King Alfonso V of Aragon, a known instigator named Marcus, a convert from Judaism to Christianity, informed the King about the removal of the scrolls from their boxes, claiming it was intended as an insult to the king. The king was infuriated and Marcus urged him to order the Torah cases opened during the royal visit.



A Megillah (Scroll) of Saragossa was written detailing the story of how the Jews were saved.

The night before the visit one of the leaders of the community was informed about Marcus' plot and the Torah scrolls were kept in their boxes. When the king arrived and ordered his guards to open the boxes, to his surprise the scrolls were there. Rather than punishing the Jews, the king's anger was vented at Marcus who was put to death.

The 17th of the month of Shevat was decreed as 'Purim Saragossa', with festivities and a megillah (scroll) written preserving the story. Such was the feeling of redemption in Saragossa that even after the expulsion from Spain in 1492, the tradition of celebrating Purim Saragossa continued for generations in Constantinople, Magnesia, Smyrna, Salonica, and Jerusalem.

Vinz Purim in Frankfurt

In 1616 the Jews of Frankfurt fell victim to an attack by the guilds of the city. Led by Vincent Fettmilch, later nicknamed Vinz, the ghetto *Judengasse* was ferociously attacked. Coining himself the "new Haman", Fettmilch's attacks resulted in the total expulsion of the Jews from Frankfurt with their property confiscated.

Several months later, the German emperor, infuriated by the attack on the Jews – which he considered as his property – ordered Fettmilch be executed for the injustice with his corpse hung on the gates of the city. Fettmilch's house was also razed, and an account of his crimes and punishment was engraved on a pillar in German and Latin at the site.

The first act of the Jews was to rebuild their synagogue which had been destroyed. A "Vincent Megillah" was composed in Hebrew and Yiddish by Frankfurt natives. Rabbi Moses Sofer (the Chasam Sofer, 1762–1839) was known to observe the Purim Vinz even after he had left the city.



Depiction of the execution of Vincent Fettmilch in 1616

The Plum Jam Purim

In 1731, David Brandeis, a grocery store owner in the town of Jungbunzlau, Bohemia, was thrown into prison along with his wife and son after the daughter of a Christian bookbinder bought a jar of plum jam from his store and fell ill. Her father, who also ate the jam, died shortly after and Brandeis and his wife were charged with poisoning Christians, and their store was shut down.

After a careful investigation by the municipal authorities it was found that the bookbinder's death had been due to tuberculosis, not the plum jam. Brandeis was pardoned and recorded the event in a Hebrew scroll which he called "The Song of Ascents of David", making it obligatory upon all his descendants to read this scroll every year on the 10th of Adar, and make it a day of rejoicing. The festival was observed by descendants of the Brandeis family well into the nineteenth century.

Purim Rhodes

The Jewish community in Rhodes was successful in the trade of sponge which was used mainly for bathing products. Rhodes had the greatest sponge yield across the Mediterranean and was a lucrative business. In 1841, Greek competitors accused the Jews of Rhodes of murdering a Christian child who had gone missing. The libel was believed, and the governor of Rhodes ordered the Jews to be jailed and tortured. The missing child was later discovered alive on the nearby island of Syra.



The Megillah of Esther from Rhodes, dated 1864, displayed at Rhodes Jewish Museum

The Ottoman Sultan, 'Abd al-Majid, was furious at the governor and issued a declaration that the accusations had been false. The date of this intervention coincided with the date of Purim itself, the 14th of Adar, and so the Jews of Rhodes celebrated a double holiday on that day. Special prayers were recited in addition to the usual Purim observances.

Purim at Goebbels' Castle



On March 8, 1945, a group of American soldiers observed Purim in Rheydt, Germany, vanquishing a modern-day Haman.

On March 8, 1945, a group of American soldiers observed Purim in Rheydt, Germany. The actual holiday had taken place the prior week; wartime required flexibility. And this was a Purim none of them would forget.

It was celebrated at Joseph Goebbels' vacation home, Schloss Rheydt, a Renaissance-era palace.

Schloss Rheydt was originally built in 1060 for a noble family. During World War II, the town of Rheydt spent an enormous sum renovating the castle. Swastikas and the letter "G" (for Goebbels) decorated many rooms of the house. A huge painting of Hitler hung over a fireplace. The citizens of Rheydt considered it crucial the castle ooze with luxury and Nazi symbols before they gifted it to the town's favorite son, Joseph Goebbels.

Goebbels was born in Rheydt in 1897. He joined the Nazi Party in 1924 and became Hitler's Minister of Propaganda in 1933. He understood that rigidly controlled, false information combined with

repetitive lies could shape a country's mindset. Goebbels said, "Think of the press as a great keyboard on which the government can play." He was one of the most influential men in the Nazi era.

Goebbels was also one of the greatest hypocrites of the Nazi era. He was an enthusiastic proponent of "*Lebensunwertes Leben*" or "Life Unworthy of Life" which pushed for killing babies born with disabilities. Yet Goebbels himself was born with a club foot and walked with a limp. He was rejected for military service in World War One because of this infirmity. Had Goebbels been born during the Nazi era, he would have been euthanized.

Goebbels' propaganda machine promoted the ideal Aryan image – blond hair, blue eyes, fair skin and a tall, athletic build – an image Goebbels himself could never live up to. In addition to his limp, Goebbels had dark hair and eyes and swarthy, pockmarked skin. He was also very short. By his own definition, he was an inferior creature.

His propaganda depicted Jews in the most horrifying ways, pushing the ancient libel that Jews killed Christian children. But it was Goebbels who was the actual murderer of Christian children. Goebbels had one son and five daughters (each of their names began with an "H" in honour of Hitler) and on May 1st, 1945, he and wife murdered them with cyanide before they committed suicide.

Did Goebbels know American soldiers used his holiday villa for Jewish celebrations that March of 1945? What would he have thought of an ark and Torah resting on a swastika-draped table in his dining room, celebrating the triumph of good over evil, vanquishing a modern-day Haman?

In *Yank: The Army Weekly* magazine, Cpl. Howard Katzander wrote that Chaplain Manuel Poliakoff assisted by Pfc. Arnold Reich and Cpl. Martin Willen "raised their voices in an ancient Hebrew hymn of jubilation sung at Purim to celebrate the deliverance of the Jews from an earlier Hitler–Haman of Persia."

Purim was not the only holiday observed at Schloss Rheydt. Three weeks later, hundreds of American soldiers celebrated Passover in that same dining room. If Goebbels *was* aware of these celebrations, he must have recognized the irony of Jews praying in his holiday villa.

The war was ending. Evil and hatred were not eradicated, but they were beaten. And at Schloss Rhedyt, a celebration cast a ray of hope in a damaged world.



Korbanos and Ketores

The *Zohar* (vol.2 218:) states that whoever says the *ketores* with *kavanah* will be saved from all types of bad things, and he will be protected from bad thoughts. "No harm will befall him the entire day because the Sitra Achara has no power over him."

The Gemara (*Megillah* 16.) tells us that on the sixteenth of Nisan, Mordechai HaTzaddik taught his students the mitzvah of *Korban HaOmer*. Haman arrived and asked them what they were learning. When he heard, he said, "Your handful of flour pushed away my ten thousand *kikar* of silver coins."

The Chofetz Chaim asks, how did Mordechai have the peace of mind to study Torah with students at the time when the entire nation was in danger? And why did he teach the children specifically about the *Korban HaOmer*?

The answer is, the Chofetz Chaim says, Mordechai wanted to teach them about the *korbanos* because saying *korbanos* silences all prosecuting *malachim* and brings salvation to Klal Yisrael.

Reb Shlomo Zalman Aurbach *zt'l* said that reciting *korbanos* before Minchah is *mesugal* not to have to go to doctors. For all those who claim that they don't have time to say *korbanos*, let them remember that the few moments it takes to say *korbanos* is a lot shorter than the time people spend waiting for a doctor, *r'l*.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt – *A Moving Mishloach Manos*

One idea of giving Mishloach Manos is to increase unity. What are some ways we can do this?



1) Instead of just giving the Mishloach Manos that we "must" give such as to our friends and neighbours, we should also think of people that we may have had a conflict or some friction with and give them. Perhaps giving to these people is even more important. Purim is a great day to do this because people's hearts are open and more receptive on this festive day. Someone once put it this way: Make a list of everyone you want to give Mishloach Manos to. Now rip up the list and give Mishloach Manos to those who didn't make it to the list.

2) Another idea is to think of someone who could use encouragement and uplifting. Send this person a Mishloach Manos. It is not about what you give rather about the fact that the person feels like they matter, that someone cares about them, that they were acknowledged.

3) Make something special that you know the person enjoys. We can extend this even further. For example, don't send a Mishloach Manos full of candies and cakes to an older couple that is health conscious. Similarly, if you know someone is allergic to certain foods, make a

special effort to send them that which they aren't allergic to. Then your Mishloach Manos has so much more meaning to them which truly increases unity.

4) Another idea is to write a letter or at least some nice words in the Mishloach Manos you send. For example, if you send to a teacher of your child, write how much you appreciate the teacher. Or if you give to a neighbour, you can write we are so lucky and grateful to have you as neighbours. This puts some "soul" into the "body" of your Mishloach Manos. This therefore brings feelings of unity.

Otzros Emunim - Pearls of Amen for Purim

Mordechai Raised Esther to Answer Amen



The Rema ruled (Orach Chaim 124 7): "And he should teach his young children to answer amen, because as soon as a baby answers amen, he has a share in the World to Come."

His words are based on the words of the Gemara in Sanhedrin (110b): "When does a child merit Olam Haba…Rabi Meir says: from when he says amen."

Based on this, **Harav Eliyahu Hakohen of Izmir**, author of Shevet Mussar, explained the passuk (Esther 2:7): **וַיְהִי אֹמֵן אֶת־הֲדַסָּה הִיא אֶסְתֵּר בַּת־דֹּדוֹ כִּי אֵין לָהּ אָב וָאֵם**

"Vayehi omen is Hadassah hie Esther bas dodo ki ein lah av v'eim." Because Esther, who is Hadassah, "did not have a father and mother" to teach her to answer amen, therefore, **וַיְהִי אֹמֵן אֶת־הֲדַסָּה** - Mordechai made sure to give her a chinuch from a young age to answer amen. (Minchas Eliyahu Chapter 32)

The page of Segulas and salvations

By Rabbi Rafael Avitan Shlita - Machatsis HaShekel



Hashem promises every single individual who accomplishes the mitzva of Machatsit HaShekel that he/she will merit a long life and will be saved from plagues, diseases… - from all bad things and is promised blessings of abundance and wealth.

This mitzvah is Zecher La Machatsit HaShekel, in memory of the Machatsit HaShekel that was given in the time of the Beit Hamikdash, which at that time was collected from the beginning of the month of Adar.

Today however, there are different customs as to when it should be collected. Some give it before Purim and some poskim say it is best to give Machatsit HaShekel before Shabbat Zachor because on Shabbat Zachor we erase the name of Amalek (the satan, and all the mekatregim – interceding angels).

It is written in Parashat Ki Tisa

וְלֹא־יִהְיֶה בָהֶם נֶגֶף בִּפְקֹד אֹתָם׃ זֶה יִתְּנוּ כָּל־הָעֹבֵר עַל־הַפְּקֻדִים מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל בְּשֶׁקֶל הַקֹּדֶשׁ ***'…then there will be no plague among them when they are counted. This they shall give, everyone who goes through the counting: half a shekel according to the holy shekel'.***

As stated in the parasha, this mitzva has the power to save a person from 'harmful' events.

The Holy Mekubal, the **Tiferet Shlomo of Radomsk** explains the concept. He says the word Machatsit (**מַחֲצִית**), starts with the letter

mem (מ) and ends with the letter tav (ת), which spells the word מת (dead). In the middle we find the word chetsi (חצי) - half, meaning that someone who gives the Machatsit HaShekel (equivalent to half a shekel of those times) – 'matsil mi mavet' - is saved from death.

The Machatsit HaShekel was used as a Kapara (atonement) for Am Israel to save them from death, plagues and all misfortunes. Even though we only do it Le Zecher – in memory of, the Tiferet Shlomo says that even though we do not have the actual mitzva of Machatsit HaShekel and we are actually going out of our way to do the Mitzva and giving, for some, more than they can afford and more than we have to, by that merit, Hashem protects us from bad plagues, diseases and all bad things.

Megilah Treasures

When **Rav Shlomo HaLevi Alkabetz**, the author of Lecha Dodi, was a Chasan, his mother grew increasingly distressed as Purim approached. In their circles, it was the custom to include in the Mishloach Manos, a piece of jewellery for the Kallah. But the Alkabetz family was very poor, and the Chasan's mother knew she could not afford to buy her son's Kallah such an expensive gift.

The sensitive young Chasan noticed his mother's sadness and hurried to reassure her.

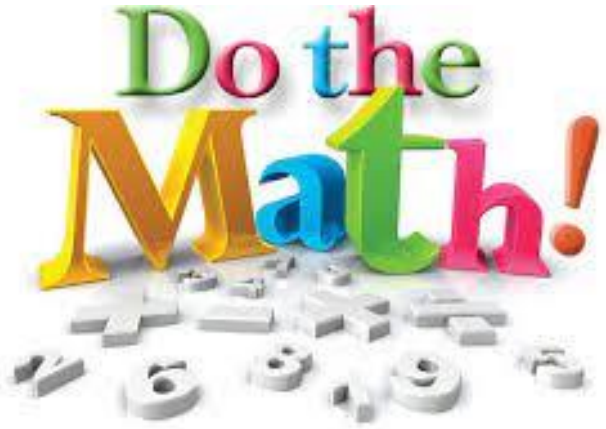
"Don't worry," he said. "I'll see to it that my Kallah receives a beautiful gift. Leave the matter to me." When Purim arrived, Rav Shlomo added his gift to the basket of baked goods and fruit that his mother had prepared. The gift was a commentary on the Megilah that he had written himself!

He told his mother, "My Kallah's parents are wealthy people, and she has many pieces of beautiful jewellery. I'm quite certain, though, that no one has ever given her a commentary on the Megilah."

Indeed, when the Kallah received the lovely Mishloach Manos, her joy knew no bounds. Later, when this commentary was printed as a Sefer, Rav Shlomo entitled it "Manos HaLevi", because originally, it had been sent as Mishloach Manos!

Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface By: R' Shmuel Winzelberg

חייב איניש לבסומי בפוריא One is obligated to become intoxicated on Purim



The Gemara (Megilah 7b) states: Rave said, "One is obligated to become intoxicated on Purim until he does not know the difference between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordechai.

It is highly unlikely that even if one is very intoxicated, that he will not know the difference between Mordechai and Haman.

How do we explain the Gemara? It is brought down in Be'er HaGolah that the explanation is that the Gematria [numerical value] of Arur Haman and Baruch Mordechai (cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordechai) are the same, as they both total 502. The intent is that a person has to drink so much that he will not be able to do the math, which is then quite likely. (MeiOtzroseihem shel Magidim)

"The joy of Purim comes from our deep faith that Hashem is always with us, guiding us through every step of our journey." ~ Rabbi Nachman of Breslov.

Purim Treasures



Before accepting his esteemed position as the Rav of Apta, **Rav Avrohom Yehoshua Heschel, zt"l, the Oheiv Yisroel**, served as Rav in the city of Yassi. On his first Purim as Rav, he received a beautiful Mishloach Manos arrangement from an esteemed member of the community.

One item in the arrangement was a bowl filled with golden coins. The Oheiv Yisroel's son was shocked to see his father toy with the coins, fondly caressing them as he rolled them around his palm. He knew his father had disdain towards money. What had caused the sudden change in his attitude?

So surprised and disturbed was the Oheiv Yisroel's son, that he gathered up the courage to question his father's puzzling behaviour. "Father," he asked, "how is it that you seem to be having so much pleasure from the money you received as a gift? You generally don't attach any importance at all to money, and you often refuse to even look at it or handle it!"

The Oheiv Yisroel smiled and explained, "That is indeed true all year round. On Purim, however, we have a special Mitzvah of Matanos L'Evyonim, giving gifts to the poor. Since I will be performing a Mitzvah with these coins, I wanted to first attach some importance to them on a personal level, to develop some fondness toward them. After all, how can I perform a Mitzvah with something I consider utterly despicable?!"



Chinuch

Parents must love their children unconditionally. Sometimes, logic isn't sufficient to love the children, but love doesn't have to be based on any rationale. It is a decision that each parent makes, to love their children unconditionally. And when we love our children unconditionally it rouses Hashem to love us unconditionally, even when logic and reason isn't sufficient.

The decree against the Jewish nation came because they participated in Achashveirosh's feast. Yet, even at this meal, Hashem prepared their salvation. Vashti was killed at this meal, creating a vacuum, which Esther filled, which led to the salvation. This shows us Hashem's compassion for the Jewish nation. Even when they sin, Hashem seeks ways to save them.

The Ben Yehoyada says that the Jewish nation had a merit at Achashveirosh's party, and this is the reason Hashem prepared their salvation at that time. Their merit was that on Shabbos, when the goyim were speaking *nivul peh*, the Jewish nation was singing *zemiros* to Hashem and were speaking *divrei Torah* (*Megillah* 12:).

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

Seeds



When a seed is planted in the ground it first rots, and then sprouts and grows. Similarly, the Jewish nation blossoms after they reach their lowest point. And this is because when they are at their lowest point, they trust only in Hashem to save them.

Zeresh said to Haman (*Esther* 6:13), **אם מזרע היהודים מרדכי... לא תוכל לו** , "If Mordechai is from the seed of Yehudah …you will not prevail against him." She told Haman that the Jews are like the seeds that flourish when they reach their lowest point. Therefore, you will not prevail.

Megillas Esther

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

The Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* said that it is worthwhile for a person to live seventy years (with all the hardships of life) if only to hear the megillah just once.

"Purim is the time to let go of our worries and trust in Hashem's plan. Just as He saved our ancestors from danger, He will protect us as well." ~ Rabbi Yitzchak Berkovitz.

Dressing Up



There's a custom to dress up (in costumes) on Purim. Perhaps the tradition is to remind us that things aren't the way they appear. It seems as if Achashveirosh did things, etc., but Hashem, above, directed everything.

And this applies to *tzaros*, too. They appear to be bad, but things are not the way they seem to be. Children in costumes look like bears or lions, but they are actually sweet children in disguise. Similarly, when we have problems, the problems are goodness in disguise.

Happy – Sad



Reb Eliyahu Meir Bloch *zt'l*, Rosh Yeshiva Telz in America, was dancing happily with his students on Purim, year **תש"ד**. The students assumed the joy wasn't real. "How could they be happy after what he suffered in the holocaust!?"

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

He proved this from the Chazal (*Megillah* 10:) that the *malachim* didn't sing *shirah* when the Yam Suf split because Hashem said, "My

creations are drowning in the sea, and you are singing *shirah*?" Yet, the Jewish nation sang *shirah* at that 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. But a Yid can do both. He mourned the loss of human life and simultaneously rejoiced in Hashem's salvation.

Similarly, it is possible to be sad and broken from the holocaust and be happy with Purim. There is room in a Yid's heart for both emotions simultaneously.

Hallel – Mazel

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

The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* writes that **מגלה** is *gematriya* **מזלא**. This hints that with the megillah one can attain the *yeshuos* that are dependent on one's mazal.

The Gemara (*Moed Kattan* 28.) tells us, **אמר רבא חיי בני ומזוני לא בזכותא תליא מילתא אלא במזלא תליא מילתא** , "Life, children, and *parnassah* aren't dependent on one's merits. They depend on one's mazal."

We can receive these benefits by reading the megillah.

"The goal of Bitachon is to cultivate a deep sense of inner peace, knowing that Hashem is always with us and will never abandon us." – Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe

The page of Segulas and salvations By Rabbi Rafael Avitan Shlita



Purim is the holiest day of the year. There is no other 24 hours in the entire year during which, with prayer, one can acquire as much as on Purim. Even the furthest, non-practicing Jew's prayer is considered as the prayer of a Tsadik who decrees, and Hashem implements.

The holy Arizal says there isn't another day in the year that reaches the level of holiness and holds blessings as Purim does.

The Holy Mekubal of Komarna who was known the get messages from the Heavens was given the message from above that on Purim the smallest soul (in respects to Torah) is considered a complete Tsadik and all his prayers rise straight up to Hashem's "Crown", so to speak, with absolutely no interference. Therefore, all prayers made on the day of Purim, are promised to be granted for the best.

Rabbi Levi Itzhak of Berditshov says that on Purim every person is given the power to flip their mazal (Lit. luck) and even if a bad decree was planned, one can annul it. Just as there was a bad decree signed and stamped by King Achashverosh and all the Jews were destined to be killed and the decree was annulled, we can eliminate anything bad that was G-d forbid was planned to happen.

Purim holds the most powerful and holiest 24 hours of the year during which we can acquire the biggest of miracles.

Be sure to spread Ahavat Israel (love for your fellow Jews) and pass this message around to as many people as possible so they too can be conscious of the holiness of Purim.

Short Story of The Week - Rabbi Mordechai Levin



In his later years, **the Ponovezher Rav, ZT"L**, was sick and though he suffered much, the Rav kept up his schedule travelling the world raising money for his beloved Yeshiva. Someone asked him what gives him the energy to work so hard, always be happy, and never grow tired. The Rav told him his secret: "Many years ago when I was a very young boy, on Purim, my parents would send Mishloach Manos to the Rav of our shtetel. There were a few brothers in the family and my father would hold a raffle to choose which one of us would have the honour of bringing the cake our mother baked for the occasion - together with a bottle of wine - to the Rav and Rebbetzin.

"Once, a peddler of seforim came to town. Among his seforim, he had a Gemara Bava Basra from the Vilna Shas. In those days, barely anyone owned a complete Shas, let alone the beautiful Vilna edition; even to have a single Vilna volume was a big deal. My father bought it to give to the Rav on Purim.

"My brother won the raffle to bring the Rav the cake and wine, but I was honoured with carrying that heavy volume and giving it to the Rav. As soon as I handed it to him and told him that it was Mishloach Manos from my father, he broke out in a wide smile. He held the Gemara high as if it were a Sefer Torah and began singing songs and dancing around the table with it as if it were Simchas Torah.

We stood on the side with the Rebbetzin, watching in awe as he danced and sang with supreme happiness. When he finished, he asked the Rebbetzin if she would agree to serve the seudah an hour later

than planned so that he could go into his room and study from the Gemara. 'That will be your Mishloach Manos to me,' he said to her. She readily agreed. He once again picked up the Gemara and began dancing."

Said the famed Ponovezher Rav, "I was but a child of nine years old and had no concept of why the Rav was so happy because he had a Gemara, but I made up my mind then and there that if Torah can make a person that happy, I was going to dedicate my life to Torah."

Saying Of The Week With Rabbi Menachem Lomner

"If you don't appreciate it, you might not deserve it."

King Achashveirosh couldn't sleep because he was wondering if Haman and Esther were plotting against him. He pondered: "If they were, why wasn't anyone else telling me about it? Maybe another time someone saved my life and I didn't show appreciation so now no one wants to help me." Achashveirosh meant that if he rewards "tattlers" then more people would do it, but in a different sense, this is true.

This is a concept that we should apply to our lives. If we want to keep receiving from Hashem, we must appreciate what we got. Thank Him for all the good that we have, and He will continue to shower us with blessings. Thank Hashem for saving us from Haman and He will save us from other calamities.

Reb Moshe Feinstein zt'l taught on the pasuk (Bamidbar 9:7) למה נגרע (why should we be excluded) - that a person should always do what he can. And if he can't do something in its ideal form, he should do what he can.

The Way of Emunah – Rabbi Meir Isamar Rosenbaum

A Joke From the Maasei L'Melech:

Sefer Avodas Hatzadikim The Way of Emunah 15 (Sipurim, Os 13) relates that the Maasei L'Melech of Veitzin zy"a was usually a very serious person and he would never say "vertlach" or jokes. In fact, he rarely even smiled. But on Purim, he would say jokes.

One Purim, a man brought the Rebbe a large round cheesecake for Mishloach Manos. The Rebbe asked the man, "Where should we cut into this first?" The chasidim answered that it makes no difference which part of the cake is cut first because it is a circle and has no start and no end.

The Rebbe wasn't happy with this answer and again asked, "Where should we start cutting this cake?" The chasidim offered different answers, but the Rebbe rejected them all and finally declared, "The answer is that I should start cutting this cake in the privacy of my own home, because if I would start cutting it here nothing will be left by the time I get home."

A Time That is Auspicious for Healing Like Matan Torah:

A man once came to the **Ahavas Yisroel of Vizhnitz zy"a** on Purim and asked him to daven for a certain sick person. The Rebbe told him that the day of Purim is an auspicious time for healing. Chazal say (Shabbos 88A) that Klal Yisroel reaccepted the Torah out of love during the time of Achashveirosh.

Since Purim is comparable to the time of matan Torah, it is a good time to be healed – just like at matan Torah when every sick person was cured.

Esther's Orphanhood Was The Key to The Salvation: The pasuk (Esther 2:7) says that Esther did not have a father or a mother. The Gemara (Megillah 13A) says that her father died before she was born and her mother died in childbirth while she was being born.



Why does the Gemara mention when her parents died? How is this related to the miracle of Purim? **Rav Yonason Eibeschutz zy"a** states that the fact that Esther was an orphan from both her father and mother was Divinely orchestrated, as this was "the key for the miracle". Chazal say (Kidushin 31B) that one who "never saw their parents" (meaning that they died before the person grew up) is fortunate. This is because it is almost impossible to perfectly fulfil the mitzvah of kibbud av v'eim and to properly honour one's parents and care for them at all times. - However, if someone doesn't have parents, he will be pained by the fact that he cannot do this mitzvah and, therefore, he will get reward as if he did it fully and perfectly. That is why he is fortunate.

The strength of Amalek comes from the fact that their ancestor, Esav, fulfilled the mitzvah of kibbud av by honouring Yitzchok in a great way. Therefore, when someone wants to overpower Amalek, he also needs to have the power of the mitzvah of kibbud av v'eim on the highest level. However, no one could claim that they performed this mitzvah perfectly until Esther, who had no parents, arose.

She had always been very pained by the fact that she had never had a chance to do the mitzvah of honouring her parents. Therefore, Hashem considered it as if she had done this mitzvah perfectly. Therefore, she was the only one who had the power to defeat Haman, the descendant of Amalek and Esav.

Haman Agreed to Accept Embarrassment in Order Not to Cancel The Decree:

Rav Pinchos Menachem of Piltz zt"l once asked his brother-in-law, the **Sefas Emes zy"a**, why Haman didn't commit suicide when he was commanded to lead Mordechai on the horse. He asked: Isn't it easier for a person to kill himself than to suffer such great shame in from of the entire town?

Haman certainly suffered incredible embarrassment when he had to do this. Why didn't he just throw himself off a roof?

The Sefas Emes answered, "There was a law that when a minister died, all the pending decrees were nullified. If Haman had killed himself, the decree to kill the Jews would have been cancelled. He was willing to suffer the embarrassment, rather than to cancel the decree to kill all of the Jews."

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky - Purim, Hear Conditioning

Whoever misses the Divine hand that touched the Purim story is not looking. And if he claims that he heard the Megilah, he probably was not listening. Imagine, the Prime Minister draws lots and decides to annihilate the entire Jewish nation. Within 24 hours he has approval from the ruler of the not-so-free-world, King Achashveirosh.

Within days, the plot is foiled, the Prime Minister is hanged and his prime target is promoted to replace him! Pretty political. Pretty miraculous. And definitely divine. Yet Hashem's name is not mentioned once in the Megilah. Why? Of course, the Megilah is replete with allusions. There are acronyms that spell the name of Hashem, and our sages explain that every time the word "King" is mentioned in the Megilah, it has a divine reference. But, still, why does the last book of the Prophets, a Divinely inspired Megilah, have only veiled references to Heavenly intervention?

It was a sweltering August day when the Greenberg brothers entered the posh Dearborn, Michigan offices of the notoriously anti-Semitic carmaker, Henry Ford.



"Mr. Ford," announced Hyman Greenberg, the eldest of the three, "we have a remarkable invention that will revolutionize the automobile industry. " Ford looked skeptical, but their threats to offer it to the competition kept his interest piqued. "We would like to demonstrate it to you in person." After a little cajoling, they brought Mr. Ford outside and asked him to enter a black Edsel that was parked in front of the building.

Norman Greenberg, the middle brother, opened the door of the car. "Please step inside Mr. Ford."

"What!" shouted the tycoon, "are you crazy? It must be two hundred degrees in that car!"

"It is," smiled the youngest brother, Max, "but sit down, Mr. Ford, and push the white button."

Intrigued, Ford pushed the button. All of a sudden, a whoosh of freezing air started blowing from vents all around the car, and within seconds the automobile was not only comfortable, it was quite cool!

"This is amazing!" exclaimed Ford. "How much do you want for the patent?"

Norman spoke up. "The price is one million dollars." Then he paused, "And there is something else. We want the name 'Greenberg Brothers Air Conditioning' to be stamped right next to the Ford logo."

"Money is no problem," retorted Ford, "but no way will I have a 'Jew-name' next to my logo on my cars!"

They haggled back and forth for a while and finally they settled. One and one half million dollars, and the name Greenberg would be left off. However, the first names of the Greenberg brothers would be forever emblazoned upon the console of every Ford air conditioning system.

And that is why today, whenever you enter a Ford vehicle you will see those three names clearly defined on the air-conditioning control panel: HI -- NORM -- MAX.

The writers of the Megilah left us with a message that would accompany us throughout our long exile. You will not always see G-d's signature openly emblazoned upon every circumstance. However, throughout persecution and deliverance, He is always there. And just like on Purim His obvious interference is undocumented; but we know and feel it -- and we search for it, and we find it! So, too, in every instance we must seek His name, find it, and recognize it. It may not be emblazoned on the bumper; it may be hidden on the console -- but it is there. For Hashem is always speaking. All we have to do is listen. Joyous Purim!

Don't Drink & Drive

People say, "It is forbidden to drink and drive." Drinking on Purim reminds us that we aren't in the driver's seat. Hashem is driving us.

Everything is in His hands. What we do and where we go is from Him.



Let us start with a vort that we say over every year. It is worthwhile to keep this vort in mind even after Purim. And once we learn about our tremendous power on this day, we can start preparing for Purim.

This is a vort from the **Shem M'Shmuel**. It is worthwhile to remember this remarkable vort and remain aware of the enormous power each of us has on this auspicious day.

The Pasuk in the megillah (5:14) says, **וַתֹּאמֶר לוֹ זֶרֶשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ וְכָל־אֹהֲבָיו יַעֲשׂוּ־עֵץ גָּבֹהַּ חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה וּבַבֹּקֶר אֱמֹר לַמֶּלֶךְ וְיִתְלוּ אֶת־מָרְדֳּכַי עָלָיו** "*Then his wife, Zeresh and all his friends said to him: There should be a gallows prepared that is 50 amos high, and in the morning **TELL** the king to have Mordechai hung.*"

The Shem M'Shmuel asks, is this the way one speaks to a king? – **TELL** the king? You can request of the king, or ask the king, but **TELL** the king?!

The Shem M'Shmuel continues the question: We see repeated again with Haman. When Haman came to the king to discuss his idea, it says, **וְהָמָן בָּא לַחֲצַר בֵּית־הַמֶּלֶךְ הַחִיצוֹנָה לֵאמֹר לַמֶּלֶךְ לִתְלוֹת אֶת־מָרְדֳּכַי עַל־הָעֵץ** "*And Haman came to the outer court of the palace to **TELL** the king to hang Morderchai….*" (6:4)

Again – to **TELL** the king!

What was going on here? How was Haman telling the king what to do?! He should have been asking, not telling!

The Shem M'Shmuel tells us something frightening.

Chazal tell us that when Achashverosh gave Haman power, he built a podium higher than all his officers with him. It was higher than his own! Achashverosh made Haman more powerful than himself!

The Gemara in Megilla says on the Pasuk וַיִּזְעַק זְעָקָה גְּדוֹלָה וּמָרָה "And Morderchai cried out a great and bitter cry." (4:1) Why did he cry out?

The Gemara brings two opinions, rav and Shmuel. Rav explains that he cried out because "Haman has become more powerful than Achashverosh", otherwise, Morderchai could have run to speak to Achashverosh. However, if Haman is more powerful, there was nothing that could be done about it. That was Morderchai's great cry. Achashveros could not help him!

The second opinion is even more shocking. It is hard to even say these words…. Shmuel says that Morderchai cried out because it was if to say, "The king on earth became more powerful than The King in Heaven."

It is hard to say this, but Hashem gave Haman extraordinary power, that he was able to tell The King (Hashem) what to do! Hashem was so hidden at the time; it was as if there was no one to speak to.

Therefore, the Shem M'Shmuel explains that Haman did not actually have to ask or request from the king, he was able to **TELL** the king! He was simply more powerful! That is why Haman came to **tell** the king what to do!

We learn from this, that on the very day when everything was reversed – Venahafoch Hu, and the house of Haman was given over to Esther, that power was given over to the Yidden.

On this day, every single Yid has the power to **TELL** The King (Hashem). Just like the evil Haman didn't need to ask the king, but rather, he was able to **TELL** the king what he wanted done. So too, on this day, the same power is in the hands of every Yid, to **TELL** The King/Hashem what he needs, in the form of a command. The

same way that a great tzaddik can demand what Hashem should do… and Hashem fulfils the tzaddik's command!

However, there is one caveat. You must yearn and daven to Hashem as much as Haman yearned and desired to have Morderchai hanged!

The Shem M'Shmuel concludes, that there is one condition to this. Your tefillos cannot be insincere and external, but you must call out to Hashem with your whole heart, with the same yearning and sincerity that Haman had! And then your tefilos will certainly bear fruit.. And this is what the early chassidim would say, ***"On Purim everyone can have everything that they daven for, fulfilled!"***

Rabbosai, we are going into such a special day, where each of us has such great power. Every *shmoigger* (simpleton) gets empowered like a Tzadik Gozeir! (A Tzadik who can make decrees that Hashem will listen to)

We can **TELL** The King!

How many Yidden desperately need this day?! Oy! We all know people who need a salvation. So many Yidden suffering..

Let us take advantage of such an amazing special day and utilise it to its fullest! Hashem wants to give us what we daven for!

Zerizim Makdimim L'Mitzvos:

Rav Avrohom Horowitz zt"l (quoted in Sefer Orchos Rabenu) related that over the course of many years, the **Steipler Gaon zt"l** would go over to him immediately after davening Vasikin on Purim morning and would hand him a nice piece of cake and cup of wine for him to eat and drink, saying that he wanted to fulfil the mitzvah of Mishloach Manos right after hearing the reading of the Megillah.

It is also related that the **Chofetz Chaim zy"a** would do every mitzvah with exceptional zerizus. In fact, not only did he run to do

mitzvos, he also ran like a young child to do any action that needed to be done.

When he was once asked why he ran so fast to get things done, he said, "Kohanim are zerizim (quick to act). It is good to always act quickly."

He was once seen stacking several crates on top of each other. Once he had them set up, he ran up and down the tower he had made a number of times. When asked what he was doing, he said, "I am teaching myself how to run up the ramp to the Mizbeach so that I'll be ready when the Bais Hamikdosh is rebuilt soon!"

Openly Hidden - By Rabbi Uri Lati

Hashem's name is not written explicitly in the megillah. Why?

Because you don't have to actually see Hashem to understand that He is really there, taking care of every detail of your life. Even though He doesn't always show you that He is there, Hashem is always there behind the scenes.

The halacha is **הקורא את המגילה למפרע- לא יצא** - that if a person reads the megillah backwards, you have not fulfilled your obligation. What is the symbolic meaning of this halachah?

A person shouldn't wait until everything makes sense and comes together in life. Don't wait until the end to realise that Hashem is there. You have to see Hashem in every event unfolding in your life. There is no such thing as a coincidence. Hashem is the mastermind behind everything. Coincidence in Hebrew is **מקרה** which spell out **רק מה'** – Everything comes on from Hashem.

This is the story and lesson of Purim and of life.

Open your eyes and see Hashem in your daily life.

Parsha Potpourri, by R' Ozer Alport

בימים ההם ומרדכי ישב בשער המלך קצף בגתן ותרש ... ויודע הדבר למרדכי (אסתר 2:21-22)

Sir Moses Montefiore once tried to convince the Chiddushei HaRim to introduce secular subjects, particularly the study of foreign languages, into the yeshiva curriculum. He brought a proof to his position from Megillas Esther.

One of the crucial events in the narrative was when Mordechai overheard Bigsan and Seresh plotting to kill Achashverosh and relayed the information to Esther so that their plan could be thwarted. Rashi writes that they were conversing in their native tongue. If Mordechai only spoke one language, he would not have been able to comprehend their scheme and put a stop to it. This teaches us the value of learning and being fluent in foreign languages.

The Chiddushei HaRim responded that a closer examination yields precisely the opposite conclusion. The only reason Bigsan and Seresh felt comfortable discussing their proposal in Mordechai's presence was because they assumed that as a Jew, he would not understand what they were saying, and they could freely speak in front of him without worry.

Although Mordechai was required to know 70 languages to serve on the Sanhedrin, it is clear that Bigsan and Seresh took for granted that the average Jew had no such familiarity. If the Jews of the time had studied foreign tongues, Bigsan and Seresh would have been on guard around Mordechai, and the Megillah may have had a much different ending. Thus, it was precisely because they were content to speak only their own language that they were able to be saved.

והימים האלה נזכרים ונעשים בכל דור ודור (9:28)

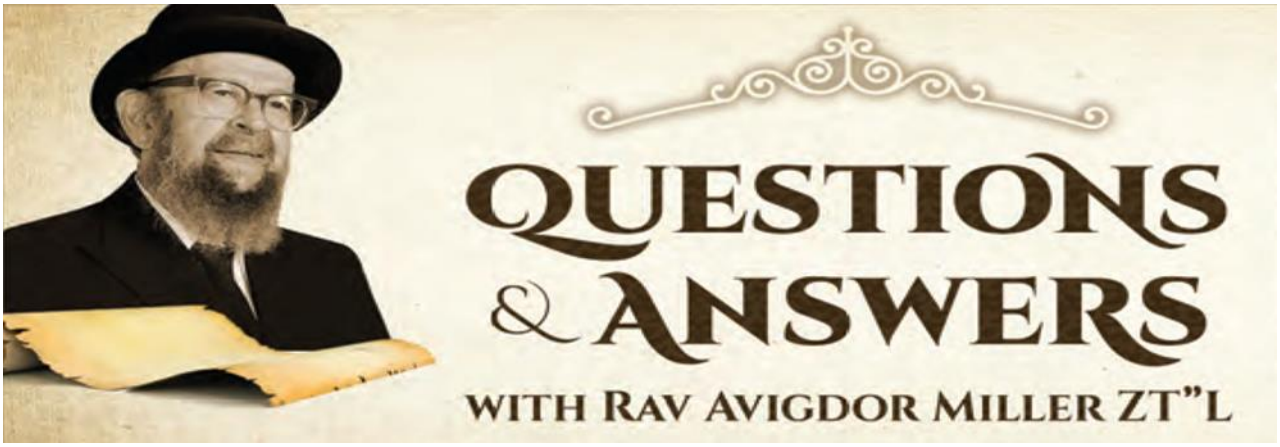
The Mishnah in Megillah (17a) rules that a person who reads the Megillah backward does not fulfill his obligation. **The Ostrovtzer Rebbe** questions why a person would ever consider reading the Megillah in reverse. He suggests that although most of us are familiar with the plot from a young age, someone who is encountering the story for the first time may quickly become frightened by the rise to power of the inimical Haman and his diabolical scheme to exterminate the Jews.

Such a person may quickly flip a few pages to see if the story ends happily ever after, as Hollywood has taught us to expect. Upon discovering that the Jewish people were saved, Haman and his sons were hanged, and Mordechai and Esther inherited Haman's estate, he then turns back to the beginning to continue with the narrative to discover how the suspenseful plot unfolds.

Every person's life is full of struggles and challenges. The Megillah teaches us that a Jew should face them with a deeply rooted conviction that an all-powerful and loving G-d is watching over him and will orchestrate the unfolding events in a way that is for his ultimate good.

The Ostrovtzer Rebbe explains that the Mishnah is hinting that a person who reads the Megillah "backward," only willing to relive the difficult and frightening events after he is already assured of the happy ending, has missed the point of Purim entirely and therefore failed to fulfill his obligation.

"Emunah means believing that Hashem is the ultimate source of happiness and fulfilment, and that by living a life of Torah and Mitzvos, we can tap into that infinite joy." – Rabbi Chaim Vital





It says that in the month of Adar we have to be marbim b'simcha. How does one acquire more happiness during this month?

So the question is where do you go to get simchah? Does it mean you have to order it from Kedem Wine Company? No. The answer is that it's right in here; you have it in you. You have to know that Hakadosh Baruch Hu has made in each person a fountain of simcha, a very deep fountain of simcha. Only that the pump has to be primed. Once you open up the fountain and it starts gushing forth you'll be surprised how much simcha there is in us. We are born with the ability to be full of happiness.

Now, once you start thinking how good it is this month of Adar when Hakadosh Baruch Hu showed us a picture of l'asid lavo, of what the future holds for the Am Yisroel – Haman is hanging with all his sons! That's what's going to happen l'asid lavo. That's the real truth – that's how it's supposed to be; all the reshaim should be hanging and the tzaddikim should be looking up and enjoying the sight. We have so many enemies today – we always had enemies but we have enemies today too – and the time will come when our enemies will be hanging. I'm not saying we will do it, but Hashem will do it for us. They'll be hanging and it will be a pleasant surprise.

That's what happened then. They took a look. "Who is hanging there? Haman is hanging!" It was a surprise, a shock. They went out of their

minds with happiness. So utilize that happiness; think about what happened then and about what's going to happen again in the future and experience that happiness.

In addition to that, enjoy the fact that spring is around the corner. We'll have nice balmy weather soon and soon the trees will have green leaves. You can also think about how good it is to be alive. Oh what a pleasure it is to be alive! It's a big simcha to be alive! So keep on thinking happy thoughts and Hakodosh Boruch Hu will open up the fountain of happiness that's in your mind and it will start gushing forth in the month of Adar.

The Way to be Happy

If one does not use all his strength and effort in serving Hashem, he falls. But if he serves Hashem wholeheartedly, no evil will have sway over him. The strategy of the evil inclination is to try to make the person lazy and depressed. Therefore, the joy of Purim is the essence of wiping out Amalek – who is the root of evil – in the greatest measure.

The Mashgiach said, it is no secret that our greatest weakness is hopelessness and depression. All this comes only because the individual does not put in all his effort in serving Hashem!

One who does put in his full effort is attached to the **עץ החיים** - tree of life. [**לקט רשימות בעניני פורים** by the Mashgiach of Lakewood **Rav Nosson Vachtfogel**.]

"When we place our trust in Hashem, we can experience a sense of peace and tranquillity even in the midst of chaos and turmoil." ~ Rabbi Chaim Vital.

Limuday Moshe – R' Moshe Harris

וְהַנַּעֲרָה יְפַת־תֹּאַר וְטוֹבַת מַרְאֶה "The maiden was shapely and beautiful." (Esther 2:7)



The Gemara in Megillah (13a) quotes the opinion of Rav Yehoshua ben Karcha, who maintains that Esther was not inherently beautiful. In fact, she was a yerakrokes – she had a green complexion – but Hashem miraculously caused her to find favour in the eyes of everybody who saw her.

The Gemara does not provide a source for Rav Yehoshua ben Karcha's opinion, and it seems difficult to understand. If the Megillah explicitly testifies that Esther was physically attractive, for what reason did he denigrate her?

The Vilna Gaon explains that specifically Rav Yehoshua ben Karcha had no choice but to reinterpret the Megillah's statement about Esther's appearance.

The Gemara in Bava Basra (15b) records a dispute regarding when Iyov lived, and it quotes several opinions. One of them is that of Rav Yehoshua ben Karcha, who maintains that he lived in the times of Achashverosh. His source for this is a pasuk in Iyov (42:15) which states: **וְלֹא נִמְצְאוּ נָשִׁים יָפוֹת כִּבְנוֹת אִיּוֹב בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ** – Iyov's daughters were the most beautiful women in the world.

When was there a time in world history that the entire world was searched and examined for beautiful women?

In the times of Achashverosh.

However, this explanation presented Rav Yehoshua ben Karcha with a difficulty. If Achashverosh set up a royal beauty pageant to seek

out the most beautiful woman to be his wife, why didn't he choose one of Iyov's daughters if the pasuk testifies that they were the most attractive women in the world at that time, and why did he choose Esther if she was less beautiful?

In order to resolve this question, Rav Yehoshua ben Karcha concluded that Esther's selection had nothing to do with her true appearance, as she was in fact naturally unattractive, but Hashem miraculously caused her to find favour in the eyes of everyone who saw her, which caused Achashverosh to select her over Iyov's daughters.

וַתְּהִי אֶסְתֵּר נֹשֵׂאת חֵן בְּעֵינֵי כָּל־רֹאֶיהָ "***Yet Esther won the admiration of all who saw her.***" (Esther 2:15)



In the spirit of Purim, **Rav Yechezkel Abramsky** jokingly questioned how Esther managed to find favour in the eyes of everybody who saw her?

As everybody knows that men have different tastes in what traits they find desirable and important in a woman, how could Esther manage to please them all?

Rav Abramsky explains that there was one unique quality that Esther possessed that they could all agree was desirable, something that they'd never before found in a woman:

The Megillah records that despite being given the opportunity to select anything she wanted to improve her appearance, Esther didn't ask for a thing.

When the men heard that there was a woman who didn't want or need anything to enhance her looks, they unanimously agreed that she was indeed unique and special!

בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם וּמָרְדֳּכַי יוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ קָצַף בִּגְתָן וָתֶרֶשׁ שְׁנֵי־סָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשֹּׁמְרֵי הַסַּף וַיְבַקְשׁוּ לִשְׁלֹחַ יָד בַּמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ וַיִּוָּדַע הַדָּבָר לְמָרְדֳּכָי - וַיַּגֶּד לְאֶסְתֵּר הַמַּלְכָּה וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לַמֶּלֶךְ בְּשֵׁם מָרְדֳּכָי

"***At that time, when Mordecai was sitting in the palace gate, Bigsan and Seresh, two of the king's eunuchs who guarded the threshold, became angry, and plotted to do away with King Achashverosh. Mordechai learned of it and told it to Queen Esther, and Esther reported it to the king in Mordechai's name.***" (Esther 2:21-22)



Sir Moses Montefiore once tried to convince the **Chiddushei HaRim** to introduce secular subjects, particularly the study of foreign languages, into the yeshiva curriculum. He brought a proof to his position from Megillas Esther.

One of the crucial events in the narrative was when Mordechai overheard Bigsan and Seresh plotting to kill Achashverosh and relayed the information to Esther so that their plan could be thwarted.

Rashi writes that they were conversing in their native tongue. If Mordechai only spoke one language, he would not have been able to comprehend their scheme and put a stop to it. This teaches us the value of learning and being fluent in foreign languages.

The Chiddushei HaRim responded that a closer examination yields precisely the opposite conclusion. The only reason Bigsan and Seresh

felt comfortable discussing their proposal in Mordechai's presence was because they assumed that as a Jew, he would not understand what they were saying and they could freely speak in front of him without worry. Although Mordechai was required to know 70 languages to serve on the sanhedrin, it is clear that Bigsan and Seresh took for granted that the average Jew had no such familiarity.

If the Jews of the time had studied foreign tongues, Bigsan and Seresh would have been on guard around Mordechai, and the Megillah may have had a much different ending. Thus, it was precisely because they were content to speak only their own language that they were able to be saved.

וַיִּמָּצֵא כָתוּב אֲשֶׁר הִגִּיד מָרְדֳּכַי עַל־בִּגְתָנָא וָתֶרֶשׁ "***There it was found written that Mordecai had denounced Bigsana and Seresh***." (Esther 6:2)



When Achashverosh's sleep was disturbed, he ordered his servants to read him his book of chronicles, where he found recorded that Mordechai had saved him from Bigsana and Seresh's plan to kill him, which led him to discover that Mordechai had never been properly rewarded for his actions.

Earlier, the Megillah says (2:21) that Mordechai saved Achashverosh from the assassination plot of Bigsan and Seresh. Why was Bigsan's name changed to Bigsana?

The Medrash Talpiot explains that Achashverosh's scribe was one of Haman's sons, who did not want Mordechai to be compensated for what he did. Therefore, when he recorded the episode in the royal chronicles, he wrote that Mordechai discovered that **בגתן או תרש**– Bigsan or Seresh – was plotting to kill Achashverosh.

In other words, one of them wanted to assassinate the king, but because it was not clear which one, there was no choice but to kill both to protect the king.

According to this version of events, Mordechai did not deserve substantial remuneration for his efforts, because at the same time he saved Achashverosh, he was also indirectly responsible for the death of an innocent man.

To ensure that Mordechai received the honour to which he was justly entitled, Hashem split the word **או** by attaching the letter **א** to the end of Bigsan's name and the **ו** to the beginning of **תרש**'s name.

As a result, the royal book of records now stated that Mordechai saved the king from **בגתנא ותרש**.

The Megillah alludes to this transformation when it says **כתוב וימצא** – and they found that it was written" – hinting that this was not the text that was originally written but was miraculously changed at this time.

The Chovos Halevavos (4:3) explains that in order to have Bitachon, a person must fully embrace the concept that Hashem loves me more than I love me. As much as I want what's best for me, Hashem wants it even more. As much as I want everything to turn out well, Hashem wants it even more. As much as I want my success, Hashem wants it even more. As much as I love myself, Hashem loves me even more.

מִי הִוא זֶה וְאֵי־זֶה הוּא אֲשֶׁר־מִלְאוֹ לִבּוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן "***Who is he and where is he who dared to do this?***" (Esther 7:5)

At the second banquet that Esther arranged, Achashverosh asked for her request. Esther replied by telling him that she and her nation had been sold to be destroyed, slain, and exterminated. She added that if they had only been sold as slaves, she would have accepted the decree and remained quiet, but since they were faced with annihilation, she had no choice but to beseech him to rescind the decree.

Achashverosh incredulously responded by asking who would dare to threaten the Queen and her people with mass extermination.



This is quite difficult to understand. Why did Achashverosh act so surprised and question who would do such a thing when he had personally given Haman permission to destroy the Jews only three days earlier?

Secondly, why did Esther say that if they had instead been sold as slaves she would have remained quiet, when nobody until this point had mentioned a word about becoming slaves?

The Apter Rav explains that when Haman initially approached Achashverosh with his plan, he was afraid to reveal his true intentions, so instead he told Achashverosh that he wanted to purchase the Jews la'avod **לעבוד** , with an ayin, which means to work with them - and he said that he was prepared to pay 10,000 talents of silver to buy them.

They wrote and signed a contract to this effect to complete the transaction. Haman then went and secretly changed the ayin to an aleph, so the contract said that he bought the Jews le'abeid **לאבוד**, with an aleph, which means to destroy them.

When Achashverosh's scribes saw the contract, they accepted it at face value and sent out edicts proclaiming that the king had decreed that the Jewish people should be destroyed, slain, and exterminated.

This explains what Esther told Achashverosh. If you would have proceeded with your original plan to sell us as slaves, I would have remained quiet, but now that Haman changed the ayin to an aleph and my nation is threatened with destruction, I have no choice but to speak up.

When Achashverosh heard this, he legitimately questioned in wonderment who would dare do such a thing, as he had certainly never agreed to this plan.

וּבַבִּזָּה לֹא שָׁלְחוּ אֶת־יָדָם "***And on the spoils, they never set their hands***." (Esther 9:10)



After the death of Haman, Mordechai issued a new decree sealed with the king's ring giving the Jewish people permission to kill all their enemies and plunder their possessions (8:11).

Although they adhered to Mordechai's instructions in slaying their foes, the Megillah stresses that they did not take any of the spoils. Why not?

The Ralbag writes that Shaul was commanded by Shmuel to destroy the Amalekites and their possessions but erred by keeping some of their animals alive (Shmuel 1 15:9).

The Jews in the Megillah rectified this sin when they were given explicit permission to take their enemies' belongings yet refrained from doing so.

Rav Aryeh Leib Tzintz offers an allusion to this explanation by noting that the first letters of the four words that record that they abstained from the spoils can be rearranged to spell Shaul.

The Imrei Emes adds that it took tremendous self-control for the impoverished Jews to restrain themselves and not take any of the booty. They had a legitimate opportunity to improve their financial circumstances, but they all passed it up for the sake of heaven. Hashem rewarded them by giving the mitzvah of matanos l'evyonim, which obligates us to seek out the poor and give them gifts to make up for what they declined to take in the times of the Megillah.



לְקַיֵּם אֵת־יְמֵי הַפֻּרִים הָאֵלֶּה בִּזְמַנֵּיהֶם "***These days of Purim shall be observed at their proper time***." (Esther 9:31)

The Megillah records that Esther and Mordechai instructed the Jews of their generation to establish the observance of the days of Purim in their proper times.

The Gemara in Megillah (2a) derives from the plural reference to "times" of celebration that the day on which walled cities observe their Purim festivities (15th of Adar) must differ from the day on which un-walled cities do so (14th of Adar).

Rav Zev Leff notes that Purim is known as the Yom Tov of achdus [unity], as we focus on joining together to hear the Megillah and eat the festive Purim meal, sending packages of food to friends and family, and remembering to help our poor brethren so that they may

also enjoy their meals. If so, wouldn't it have made for more of a sense of community for Chazal to insist that all Jews should specifically observe Purim together at the same time?

Rav Leff answers that if everybody is acting in the exact same manner at precisely the same time in an identical fashion, this can hardly be called true togetherness. The reason they would feel united wouldn't be because of any genuine, deep-rooted sense of identification with other Jews, but merely because they all happen to be doing the same thing at the moment.

True achdusis when one Jew is able to tolerate and accept that another Jew is conducting himself differently than he is, and to nevertheless recognize that each in his own unique way is equally fulfilling the will of Hashem. Chazal further obligated us to send mishlo'ach manos, which represents the concept that one Jew sends food from his personal kitchen, prepared according to his customs and preferences, to his friend, who in a demonstration of genuine unity happily partakes of it.

In order to teach us this lesson about the definition of authentic achdus, Esther and Mordechai specifically mandated that Purim be observed on different days.

כִּי מָרְדֳּכַי הַיְּהוּדִי מִשְׁנֶה לַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ וְגָדוֹל לַיְּהוּדִים וְרָצוּי לְרֹב אֶחָיו דֹּרֵשׁ טוֹב לְעַמּוֹ וְדֹבֵר שָׁלוֹם לְכָל־זַרְעוֹ

"***He sought the good of his people and interceded for the welfare of all his kindred***". (Esther 10:3)

The halachah is **הקורא את המגילה למפרע לא יצא** – if someone read the Megillah starting from the end, he does not fulfil his obligation properly.

The Ostrovtza Rebbe explains, when we read the Megillah in order, at the outset we don't seem to understand why we need to know that Achashverosh made a party and that Vashti also made a party and

that a new queen was chosen and so on. But when we get to the part where Achashverosh can't sleep one night and asks for his sefer zichronos to be read, that is when everything starts becoming clear. That is when we see how the hand of Hashem was working for years in advance to set the stage for that moment. Mordechai hearing the plot of Bigsan and Seresh, Esther relating it to the king in his name and so on.

To start from the end of the story and go back to see the hand of Hashem, anybody can do. In fact, the Megillah tells us, many people converted to Judaism after they saw this story in its entirety.

The job of the Jew, however, is to be able to say, "This is from Hashem," before he sees the bigger picture. We have to read the Megillah from its beginning and say the entire time, "This was from Hashem, and that was from Hashem," even before all the pieces are tied together.

Most of the time in life, we will not be able to see the full picture and there are many questions people have as to why things are happening. The best thing we could do is say, "This is also from Hashem for the best reasons. Just because I don't see how, doesn't mean it's not true."

Every question is going to have a great answer. If we can believe now, before we see the answer, that is where all the glory lies. The following two stories bring out this point perfectly:

Story #1 The first story which was told over by Dr. Meir Wikler is a story which took place in 1987 when Aish HaTorah sponsored a forum on how to achieve happiness, and they had **Rabbi Zelig Pliskin** as the featured speaker.

The event was held in the King David Hotel in Yerusholayim and drew a standing room only crowd. The rabbi explained to the audience how a person is free to choose the attitude in which he will view any situation. And if he chooses to adopt a positive perspective, he is

capable of achieving happiness in any situation. At the end of the class, there was a question-and-answer period. A middle-aged man stood up to ask the first question. He introduced himself saying his name is Steve and how much he enjoyed the class. Then he said, "Honestly, Rabbi, do you really expect us to believe that a person can re-frame any situation in a positive light?



Certainly, there are some situations that cannot be viewed positively. For example, you will not be able to find one in a million who will feel good about getting a flat tire on a highway."

During the brief pause that followed, Rabbi Pliskin thought about how to respond. What would he say that would be acceptable to Steve?

The hushed crowd waited anxiously for the reply. But suddenly, the man sitting right next to Steve, named Alan, asked permission to address the question and Rabbi Pliskin happily gave him the floor.

Alan said, "A couple of years ago I had a serious heart condition. After the doctor examined me, he said if I wanted to see my next birthday, I had to radically alter my lifestyle. I had to quit smoking immediately. He put me on a strict low fat salt free diet, and I had to cut back on my 12-hour work days at my law firm. I couldn't use the subway or drive in rush hour traffic, and I wasn't allowed to do any exercise or even lift a suitcase.

Believe me rabbi, I was scared so I followed my doctor's orders religiously. After twelve months, the doctor himself couldn't believe the recovery I made. He was so pleased, he told me, I was no longer in danger and could resume regular life again.

I was so excited! I was afraid I wasn't hearing him correctly, so I asked him to be more specific. 'Alan', he said, 'you can exercise now, and you can lift whatever you want. ***You can even change a flat tire if necessary***. Your electrocardiogram is excellent.'

"I floated home that night, I was on Cloud Nine. Two days later, on my way to work in a thunderstorm, I suddenly heard a loud thumping noise. I pulled over and saw I had a flat tire.

As I opened the trunk to get the jack and spare tire, I burst into tears. Tears of euphoria. It suddenly hit me, I'm allowed to change a flat tire! I was so grateful to have made such a complete recovery and then demonstrate to myself by changing my own flat tire."

Alan then sat down and Steve sat speechless, together with the rest of the audience. A question that Steve thought was impossible to answer – how could anybody be happy with a flat tire – was shown to have the simplest answer.

Every question we have is going to be answered even more simply than that. As an aside, Rabbi Pliskin observed that the one person who was capable of giving the answer happened to be at the class that night and happened to be sitting right next to the questioner.

The hashgocha of Hashem is amazing. As for us, we have to believe in the hashgacha of Hashem before we see the end of the story.

Story #2 A second story is a story I heard from **Rav Ephraim Wachsman**: Rav Wachsman relates that his wife's grandparents lived in Vienna when the Nazis invaded. They had three little children and they ran to France to escape the Nazi onslaught. They found themselves in the city of Bayonne and were trying to escape Europe. The streets were choked with thousands of refugees, and nobody knew where to go. How do you find passage, how do you travel?

He wanted to go to England, but he had no clue how to go about it. Then he saw a half drunken sailor. He went over to him and asked him are you traveling?

It turned out that he was a Yugoslavian captain, and he was sailing tomorrow to England. "You're welcome to come along with us, but you have to have a visa to get into England." Where do you get a visa?

He found out that in a nearby town was a British embassy, so he promptly travelled the long distance. He prepared himself to beg for mercy to stamp his passport and allow him into England. But when he got there his heart dropped. The gates of the embassy were swamped with thousands of refugees trying to get visas. They were all begging to get in, but the guards blocked the doors and let no one in. There was no chance he could fight through that crowd.

Suddenly it began to thunder and rain. It was such a heavy downpour that everybody began to run for cover. The guards also ran inside to seek shelter. He too began to run and suddenly he found himself inside the embassy. He looked around him and saw that right in front of him was a door with a sign, Consular General. The very person he needed to give him a visa!

He knocked and entered, and he was standing face to face with the person in charge of stamping the passports. "What are you doing here? What do you want?" he asked.

"I'm a Jew, I have a wife and three little children. I have passage tomorrow on a ship to England if only you'll help us and give us a visa. You are the only one who can save my life. Please have mercy!"

The Consul was very moved, and he said, "Sure, give me your passport and I'll stamp it." - He reached into his pocket and… He had left his passport at home. He fainted on the spot. This was the worst moment in his life.

They poured cold water on him and revived him. And the Consul asked what happened?" "Well, I don't know what happened, but it seems that I don't have my passport. I must have left it at home."

"Don't worry," he said. He took out a piece of paper and he wrote, "Those who are listed below on this paper have passage and have

permission to enter England." He signed his name at the bottom and stamped it and he gave him the blank piece of paper.

Rav Wachsman's grandfather went and found every single Jew he could find and filled the paper with names from top to bottom!

All the Yidden on that visa arrived safely in England. Today they all are living in England and have beautiful families. - This all came about from the worst moment in his life. Sometimes you see it the very next day, and sometimes it takes many years. But the Ribbono Shel Olam is weaving that tapestry, the Ribbono Shel Olam is writing a Megillas Esther, and eventually we will see how the plan of the Ribbono Shel Olam will triumph and the Ribbono Shel Olam wants only our benefit.

The lesson we must take from Megillas Esther is that we must believe in the hashgacha of Hashem before we see the end of the story.

Why do fast on Taanis Esther?

Most fast days commemorate the churban Beis HaMikdash, but Taanis Esther isn't about the churban. So why do we fast?

The Mishnah Berurah (686:2) explains, "In the days of Mordechai and Esther, the nation gathered on the 13th of Adar to wage a war, in order to protect themselves. They beseeched Hashem and requested His compassion that He help them avenge their enemies. [They also fasted], because Yidden always fast when they go to war.

This is what Moshe Rabbeinu did when he waged a war against Amalek. We are therefore certain that in the era of Mordechai and Esther, the nation fasted as they waged war.

This is the reason we fast on the 13th of Adar. It is our reminder that Hashem sees and hears every Yid in sorrow when he fasts and does teshuvah with all his heart, as Hashem did so in those days."

Another explanation given for Taanis Esther is to daven that we shouldn't sin due to the drinking and festivities on Purim.

The Kav HaYashar (perek 97, quoting the Beis Yosef's maggid) writes: "Hashem's hashgachah is always over Bnei Yisrael. They are His lot, His chosen nation, and He wants to grant them olam habah. Therefore, when the 14th of Adar is approaching, the day the Jewish nation will be extremely happy with the miracles Hakadosh Baruch Hu performed for them, and for bringing on the downfall of the rasha Haman, and of Haman's children, and of other resha'im of that time… And Chazal say, 'one is obligated to be happy with wine on Purim,' therefore, Hakadosh Baruch Hu said we should fast before Purim, because fasting is a segulah to be saved from sins. It protects us that the Satan shouldn't be mekatreg and lead the Jewish nation to sin due to the abundant eating and drinking.

Therefore it's important to have kavanah in the selichos of Taanis Esther .The final stanza of this selichos is: **שומע תיפלה והעביר תפילה** – "*Listen to our prayers and remove sins…*" etc.

When saying these words, one should have kavanah that he shouldn't sin, chas veshalom, due to the eating and drinking and festivities of Purim..."

Lottery

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l, suggests that the word Purim conveys a powerful message. Life is like a lottery. One can never be too sure, too certain of his tomorrow. There are no guarantees. Just because everything is going great, doesn't mean that it will always be that way.

"I want to"-this is neither here nor there." ~ Kotzker Rebbe.

Why Do We Eat Hamantashens And Why Are They Called Hamantashens



There is a widespread minhag that during Adar, people eat three cornered filled pastries called hamantashen.

One year, on the day before Purim, **Rav Yaakov Berlin**, the father of the famous **Rabbi Naftoli Tzvi Yehudah Berlin** (the Netziv), went to the market to purchase this special treat in honour of Purim.

He went from baker to baker, but no hamantashens were to be found. He found this situation to be quite odd, and he therefore asked one of the bakers why no one had any hamantashens.

He was informed that the year had been one of a serious drought. The price of flour skyrocketed, and bakers were only able to afford flour to bake challos for Shabbos . Flour for any other purpose, including hamantashens, was not even considered because it was so expensive.

As soon as Rav Berlin heard this, he immediately called for all the city's bakers. Once they were assembled he presented them with a large sum of money. Rav Berlin told them that the money was to be used to purchase flour so that they could bake Hamantashens.

Why did Rav Berlin feel so strongly about having hamantashens available?

He explained that these special cookies had for generations been consumed during Adar. Being that it was a long-standing tradition to have hamantashens, and it is forbidden to annul minhagim, hamantashens must be baked.

Rav Berlin then explained how hamantashens got their name. In Megillas Esther, we find that Achashverosh had never rewarded Mordechai for his role in saving the king from an assassination plot. However one night - **בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא נָדְדָה שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ** - On that night, the king's sleep was disturbed (Esther 6:1).

On that night, Achashverosh was reminded that Mordechai had not been rewarded, and he ordered Haman to parade Mordechai around in royal fashion. This marked the beginning of the yeshuah [salvation] of the Jews from the murderous scheme of Haman.

The Yalkut Shimoni tells us that Achashverosh was not the only one who had his slumber disturbed that night. On that night, the "slumber" of the avos Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov was disturbed because of the evil that was to befall the Jews. They pleaded with Hashem to spare the Jewish people from destruction.

In the merit of the avos, Haman's power weakened. When combined with the tefillah and teshuvah of the nation, this merit helped saved the people from destruction.

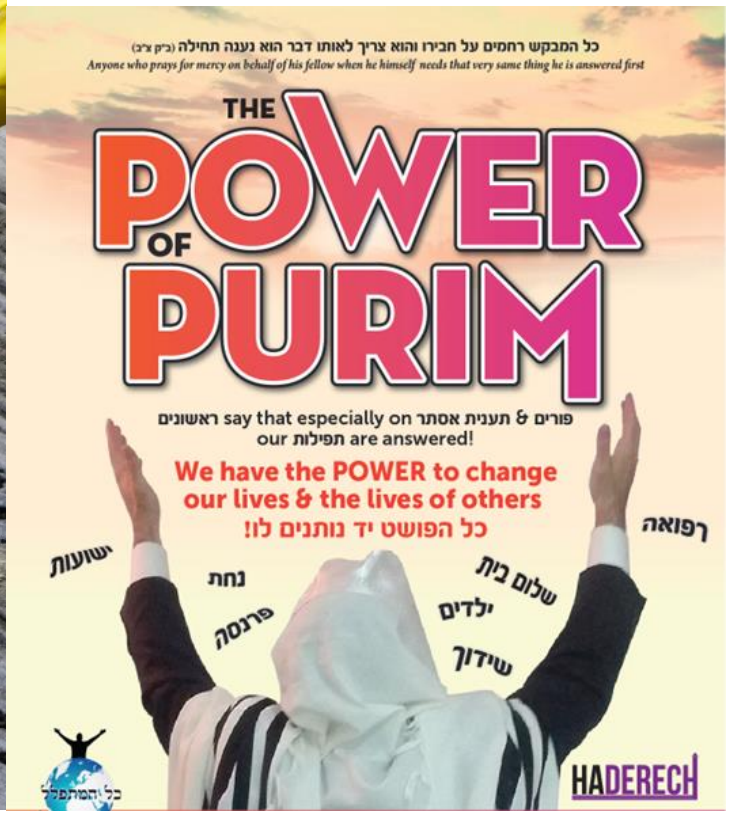
The word for "weaken" in Hebrew is "tash." Thus, the three cornered cookie, with each corner representing one of the avos is named "Haman tash," which means "Haman was weakened."

The presence of this highly symbolic cookie was a long standing minhag, and therefore Rav Berlin explained, the minhag must continue.

When we munch on our Hamantashens, we should make sure that we properly digest the reminder contained within!

"Whoever teaches his son teaches not only his son but also his son's son—and so on to the end of generations." ~ Talmud Kiddushin.





Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

Tefillah On Purim

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

It was tefillah that saved the Jewish nation in the days of Mordechai and Esther. Zeresh told Haman (6:13) **כי נפל תפול לפניו**, "*You will fall before him [Mordechai].*"

What was Zeresh saying? Was she telling Haman there is no hope for him and he will fall before Mordechai?

The Malbim explains that she was offering advice. She told Haman to humble himself before Mordechai. **נפל תפול לפניו** , act as though you are weaker than him because then Mordechai will stop davening,

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

Indeed, immediately after Haman led Mordechai through the streets of Shushan with immense honour, Mordechai returned to his tefillos, as it states **וישב מרדכי אל שער המלך** "*Mordechai returned to the king's gate*," (6:12) and Rashi writes **לשקו ולתעניתו**, that he returned to his sackcloth and fasting. He wisely didn't stop praying, and that is what brought about the salvation.

[**The Avnei Nezer zt'l** was ill, and when he began feeling better, he said that sometimes the yetzer hara causes people to feel a bit better, so they will stop davening.

The Avnei Nezer noted that Mordechai didn't make this mistake. He continued davening even after all the honour he received.]

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

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

The doctor concluded, "This is how it appears to me, but I want you to go to a specialist in Manhattan who is an expert in these matters." He gave them the specialist's phone number. They called the clinic and set an appointment in two months in Iyar.

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

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

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

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

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

How did it change? The doctor was looking at the same blood sample; now it isn't celiac, and before Purim it was celiac!

Such is the power of tefillah on Purim.



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

Reb Shmuel Yair has a good friend, Reb Shimshon Lieder, who lives in Elad, Eretz Yisrael. When Reb Shmuel Yair told him what happened and about his upcoming operation, Reb Shimshon told him, just last year, a story was printed from Reb Elimelech Biderman about a girl who had celiac. The mother said the entire Tehillim on Purim, and the

child was miraculously cured. Purim is approaching; perhaps you should do something similar."

Reb Shmuel Yair said the entire Tehillim on Taanis Esther, and on Purim, he said the entire Tehillim again. Purim was on Friday. Monday, after Purim, he took another x-ray, and it showed that one of the broken bones had wondrously cured on its own. The doctors didn't understand how it happened.

Due to this change (that he only had one broken bone), he didn't need the surgery!

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

These are examples of the power of tefillah these days.

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

This reminds us that if there's a problem and you have an opportunity to escape from it, you are a fool not to utilize it.

We are referring to tefillah on Purim. Look around yourself for a moment, consider all your neighbours' homes. Is there a family that doesn't have a serious problem? For one, it is related to health; for a second, it is about shidduchim; for a third, it is about nachas; and for a fourth, it is about parnassah.

But there's a solution. You can daven on Taanis Esther on Purim. Only a Vayizasa will be callous and not take advantage of these holy times.

Sometimes people say, "But I don't feel anything." They don't want to invest in Tehillim or tefillos on Purim and Taanis Esther because they say they don't feel anything (….as if everyone else *does* feel

something). It doesn't make a difference if you feel it or not. It is a special time for tefillah. Take advantage of it!

It can be compared to someone who enters an elevator, presses the button to reach the 100th floor, but refuses to exit the elevator when it stops.

"You reached your destination, why don't you leave the elevator," people asked. He replied, "I don't feel like I climbed a hundred flights."

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

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

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

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

It doesn't matter what you feel or if your heart is in the spirit of Purim or not. The fact is that these are incredibly holy days. So keep your feet in these days, even if your heart isn't there. Say Tehillim, and act according to the holiness of the time.

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

A simple person was among the crowd of onlookers. Suddenly, he jumped down, lifted the man off the tracks, and somehow climbed up with him back to the platform.

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



"I didn't do it to save a life," he replied. "I knew that if this man got hit by a train and died, there would be a delay for several hours, and I would miss hours of work and forfeit forty dollars. So, I jumped in to save him."

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

This story is worth remembering because we often make the same mistake. For example, a baalabusta is preparing and sending mishloach manos. She is doing a holy mitzvah. The rewards in both worlds will be enormous. She is making a nachas ruach for Hashem!

But if her primary intention is that the receiver should say, "Wow! Such a beautiful mishloach manos!", she is selling the most extraordinary deed for a mere compliment.

You can ask for so much on Purim, and your tefillos may be answered. You can ask for so many salvations on Purim, so why settle for forty dollars? Therefore, be wise, and do mitzvos l'shmah.

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



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

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

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

The same applies to Purim. Sometimes, on Purim, people run after dead things and become involved in trivial matters. Minor matters occupy their minds. But there are live things to achieve on Purim (such as simchah, deveikus, praise to Hashem, mitzvos, etc.).

Pursue the live, and don't get tied down with the dead.

Matanos l'Evyonim and Mishloach Manos

The Rambam (Hilchos Megillah 2:17) writes, "It is better to give a lot of matanos l'evyonim than to increase the Purim meal and to give many mishloach manos to friends because there is no greater and more beautiful joy than to bring joy to the hearts of the poor, the orphaned, widows and geirim.

When one brings them happiness, he is acting similarly to the Shechinah, as it states (Yeshayah 57:15) **להחיות רוח שפלים ולהחיות לב נדכאים** "***to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the crushed***."

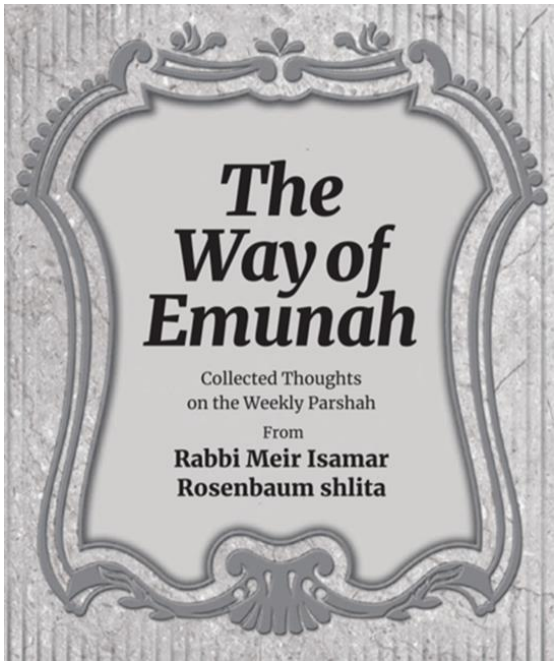
And in this generation, who isn't "humble" and "crushed"? Who doesn't need a kind word?

When one can't help with money, he should give whatever he can, perhaps a friendly word or a smile.

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

Reb Mordechai of Nadvorna zt'l said in his older years, "If I knew in my younger years what Purim is, I would go from person to person to get a smile out of them."

The Alshich HaKadosh teaches that this was the source of the Purim miracle. Mordechai and Esther cared for and helped one another, which aroused Hashem to act in that manner, to care and have compassion for the Jewish nation.



Wealth in The Merit of Mishloach Manos

Sefer Siparan Shel Tzadikim relates the following story in the name of **Rav Moshe Yosele of Gritza zy"a**, a son of the **Maglintzia Rebbe zy"a**, and grandson of the **Kozhnitzer Magid zy"a**:

A resident of a nearby village came to Kozhnitz on Purim one year, to hear the Megillah being read by the Kozhnitzer Magid zy"a. He loved hearing the Magid reading the Megillah, and it brought him a lot of joy. After davening, the villager went to give shalom to the Magid, and the Magid asked him, "You live in a town that is in my vicinity. Why didn't you bring me Mishloach Manos?"

The man didn't know what to answer. For one thing, he was a penniless pauper. He didn't even have bread in his house. What could he give the Magid for Mishloach Manos?

The Magid then said to him, "It is Purim today. Come with us and drink a l'chaim." The man walked with the Magid to his home, and he was given a shot of whiskey. The man was so happy to have been given the opportunity to spend time in the company of the Magid and his holy students. The whiskey also gladdened his heart and had an immediate effect on him.

He felt emboldened and he walked over to the home of a wealthy man named R' Litman Yona, who was a wine merchant. When he got to the door of the house, he called out loudly, "A gutten Purim! Please give me a good bottle of wine on credit. I will pay you back one day. And even if I don't, it's Purim today!"

The merchant agreed and gave him the bottle of wine. The villager then went into a store and again announced, "A gutten Purim! Please give me some fruit now and I'll pay you back later. But even if I don't it's Purim today!" The storekeeper also gave him the fruit.



Once he had the fruit and wine, he joyfully ran to the Magid and said, "Here is Mishloach Manos for the Rebbe!" The Magid said, "You did something very good!" He told him that he should come back to him every Purim and give him Mishloach Manos. Meanwhile, the man's family was sitting at home starving, with no joy in their Purim. He wanted to make them happy too, so he went to a store that sold whiskey and once again asked to purchase some wares on credit, saying that he would try to pay at some point, but if couldn't: "It's Purim today!"

Once again, he was given what he asked for. He went to bakery and procured some bread in the same manner. He went to another store, and got hold of some herring…

Once he had enough supplies, he went home. When he entered his house, he called out loudly, "It's Purim today. It's Purim today."

His wife and children weren't used to seeing him so happy. They thought that he had lost his mind. He proceeded to unpack his bags and display the bread, fish and whiskey he had obtained. He proclaimed, "Eat, drink and be happy because it is Purim today!"

They sat down together, ate and drank, and were filled with joy. After filling their stomachs, they got up and began to dance. They started singing the words, "It's Purim today", over and over again for many hours. Suddenly, they heard a knock on their dor. They asked, "Who's there", and heard a non-Jewish man answer. The villager told his wife, "Don't open the door. It's Purim today. Don't let him ruin our simcha." However, the non-Jew continued to knock.

His wife said, "I think it is the non-Jew who often gives me apples and other fruits. I should let him in." When she opened the door, the non-Jew staggered in. He was covered in bruises and dripping blood. He looked like he had been attacked and was near death.

They immediately bathed him and gave him some whiskey and bread to revive him. He ate and drank and said, "Thank you. If you hadn't helped me, I would have died."

He then told them that he had a son, his only child, whom he had planned on bequeathing all his money to when he died. This son had gotten mad at him and had mercilessly beaten him and kicked him out of the house. Had they not opened their door to him, he certainly would have frozen or bled to death.

He told them, "My son almost killed me, but you were kind to me. I have a hidden treasure of my life's savings that I was going to give to my son in my will but now I don't want to give it to him anymore. I

want to give it to you." He took the villager to the woods and showed him where he had hidden his fortune.

A few days later, this non-Jewish man died from the beating his son had given him. The villager went to the woods at night and took the treasure, which made him very wealthy.

The next time he went to the Magid, he was dressed as a rich man. Every Purim from then on, he would bring a fancy Mishloach Manos to the Magid, and his wealth was passed down to his children and lasted for many years.

Reading The Megillah Atones For Sins

The Sar Shalom of Belz zy"a notes that the word "Megillah" has the same gematriah as the word "mochel". This symbolizes that reading the Megillah leads to having one's sins forgiven by Hashem.

The Zohar Hakadosh states that when Klal Yisroel sings Shira, Hashem forgives their sins. Reading the Megillah is akin to singing Shira, as the Gemara says (Megillah 14A) that it takes the place of Hallel. The pasuk (Esther 3:8) states: "And their laws are different than every nation and the laws of the king they do not keep."

Rav Yeshaya of Ropshitz zy"a says that this is a hint that the main rule of being a Jew is to be different than all other nations. Even if we do not always obey "the laws of the King", we still keep the main law of being different than every other nation.

As long as we are discernibly different than the non-Jews, we are still called Yidden.

"You do not fall because you are weak; you fall because you think you are strong."

The Symbolism of Chalopshes

My father, the **Kretchnifer Rebbe shita** explained the minhag of eating chalopshes (stuffed cabbage) on Purim as follows:

It is known that milk symbolizes rachamim, as the word "chalav" is an acronym for "l'hagid baboker chasdecha", to relate Hashem's kindness in the morning. Meat, on the other hand, symbolizes strict judgment. Therefore, we cover the meat with cabbage in order to hide the judgment and coat it with sweetness. The reason we do this on Purim is because this idea is found on this day. The pasuk (Esther 9:1) says: "It was reversed, the Jews should rule over their enemies." The enemy being referred to is our mortal enemy, the yeitzer hara.



My great-grandfather, **the Kretchnifer Rebbe zy"a,** author of Sefer Raza D'Shabbos, would say that when Chazal say (Shabbos 31A): "What you hate, do not do to your friend", it can be read to mean: "What you hate, do not make your friend."

This is referring to the yeitzer hara and telling us that we should not make the thing we hate into our friend. We should remember that the yeitzer hara is trying to harm us, and is not our friend, even though it tries to act like it is.

On Purim, the Jews overcame their enemy, i.e., the yeitzer hara, and it is, therefore, an auspicious time to overpower our own yeitzer hara. Therefore, we eat meat that is covered by cabbage to symbolize overcoming the yeitzer hara and covering it with goodness.

One Who Acts Like a Yid Merits Divine Light

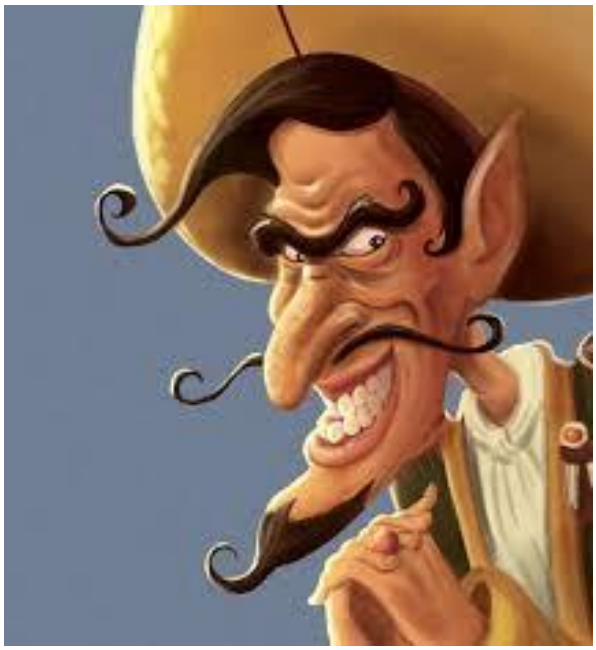
My grandfather, the **Kretchnifer Rebbe zy"a**, related the following words at his Purim tish (in 5764, printed in Gilyon Kol Emunah):

"The pasuk states (Esther 3:4): **כִּי־הִגִּיד לָהֶם אֲשֶׁר־הוּא יְהוּדִי** - '***Because she told them that she was a Jew***.'

When one says that he is a Yid, everything will be good! This is as pasuk states (ibid 8:15): **לַיְהוּדִים הָיְתָה אוֹרָה** – '***There was light for the Jews***.'

The only thing a person has to think about is how to behave like a Jew. If he does this, he will merit light and joy."

An Auspicious Time For Tefillos



The pasuk states (Esther 7:6): **וְהָמָן נִבְעַת** -"***And Haman became terrified***."

Sefer Sifsei Tzadik writes that this refers to all forces of impurity. On this day, they all are terrified and fearful. Therefore, this is a good time to daven for whatever we need.

The Gemara says (Rosh Hashanah 16B) that we blow the shofar in order to confuse the satan. So too, the satan is confused and worried on Purim, which allows our tefillos to be heard and accepted on this day.

"A person who has Bitachon is like someone who is walking with Hashem holding their hand," – Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk

Michael Winner <dvartorah@frum.org>

Last week I was listening to a talk given by Rav Reuven Leuchter, who I've come to really appreciate. He was discussing the concept of Emunah (faith) and the lesser-known concept of "Learning from the World." He explained that many (erroneously) treat emunah with two sayings, "This too is for the good." when things don't go the way we want, and "With the help of Hashem," when things go the way we want.

Being, that we "package" our response based on what we are "supposed" to say, when Hashem does something. And with that "packaging," we completely neglect to think about WHY something went the way we wanted or WHY something did not. We simply accept what happened (with our pre-packaged emunah) and move on, without trying to learn from it (and of course there are times we cannot learn from it, but we should at least try to learn something from it). We are in essence, allowing "nature" to run its course, and we along with it.

One of the big questions asked about Purim is, "Why is it called Purim?" Of course, "Pur" is a drawing or lottery, and it was through this drawing Haman was able to figure out the best time possible to destroy the Jewish nation. But still, we're left with the question, "Okay… so what?" Why, out of everything that happened in the story, do we name it after something so inconsequential?

Rav Pincus said that this "drawing" that we name Purim after, is not simply the drawing that Haman did. Rather, it encompasses the entire story of Purim.

We see that lottery systems are used in the Torah. For example, on Yom Kippur, a lottery is used to determine which goat goes to Hashem and which to Azazel. When, shortly after the Jewish nation entered Eretz Yisroel and somebody did not follow orders, a lottery

system was used to find that person. When parcelling out the land, a lottery system was used.

Why is this? Because, with a lottery system, things are being "left to chance," and are therefore fair and even. Of course, that's how the non-Jewish world views it. The Torah views it as a way for Hashem to do the selecting, without human intervention, yet keeping everything within the rules of nature.

This is what the entire Purim was about. Hashem working His ways, directing everything, within the guise of nature, not needing our "help" at all.

Any person reading the Megillah, cannot be blamed to say, "So, where was Hashem in all of this?" After all, we don't even see Hashem's name written anywhere! And, it does seem, on the surface, the Mordechai and Esther played their cards right and were able to save the nation themselves (with Hashem's '*help*').

However, real emunah does not allow that. Real emunah forces us to look deeper into things and see how (and if possible, why) Hashem did everything Himself.

And from how we learn this lesson with Purim, we need to also use throughout the year. Instead of using pre-packaged "emunah" statements, we should sit down and think of what happened, how it happened, how it has impacted our life, see how Hashem pulled it together, and perhaps try to see even why such a thing might have happened so we can even learn from that.

Nature is a mere cloak for Hashem to work. And it is our job to look through this nature and see and learn from Hashem's workings.

"Trust in Hashem is the key to unlocking the infinite potential within us." – Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson

TORAH sweets

Holiday Insights With Rabbi Zisha Kohn - Purim: The Greatest Realization We Must Have In Our Lifetime



Purim is a tremendous day. in fact, the holy day of Yom Kippur is compared to Purim (Yom Kipurim), which means that Purim is greater; this is because Yom Kippur is being compared to Purim and not vice versa. ***The Vilna Gaon*** *adds that the meal of Yom Kippur takes place on Purim. The day of Purim itself is very busy and many are involved in running around performing the various Mitzvos of unity, such as handing out Mishloach Manos and gifts to the poor. However, the power of the day can sometimes be overlooked, since the actual Mitzvos of the day may cause us to lose focus on the lesson of the day if not seen with the right lens. So, for us to truly get the right perspective, we must look at what actually happened during the events of the Purim story.*

Mordechai HaTzaddik knew about the danger (Esther 4:1) – the terrible decree of national annihilation – as it was written and signed by the king. Whenever the word "king" is said in the Megillah, it's referring to the King of Kings, Hashem, so this was a Heavenly Decree for the first time in history that the Jewish nation is to be wiped out. Hashem signed our terrible fate!

With that background in mind, we can understand the Purim events more clearly. Mordechai was a tremendous political personality in the Kingdom, while Esther was the queen. Yet (ibid.), instead of trying to use his power to influence the king, we see that Mordecai rent his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, which prevented him from being able to go to the king's gate. Instead, Mordechai went out into the midst of the city with a loud and bitter cry.

The obvious question is, why did he wear these clothing if they prevented him from going to the queen and putting in the effort to influence the reversal of the decree?

To understand, Mordechai understood the powerful reality that Hashem created the decree. Because of that, the greatest *Hishtadlus* we can do is Tefillah, crying out to Hashem, as He is the ONLY ONE Who can help us. Haman and Achashveirosh were just go-betweens; they didn't make actually concoct this decree. Melech in the Megillah is referring to Hashem, so why go to the messengers?

Mordechai was afraid that the people would get carried away by knowing that Queen Esther has our back in the palace. Therefore, he put on a sackcloth and told everyone, I am in the streets, and we can't go to Esther.

Through this approach, the Jewish people were able to overturn the Heavenly decree by turning to the right address! The Yom Tov of Purim is such an interesting day with many *chiddushim*. Where in Tanach do we see a scroll without Hashem being mentioned and only hinted at through a flesh-and-blood king? Also, why is there a custom for us to get dressed up and to drink on Purim (as it's not typically a Jewish pastime)?

Let's tie it all together. Perhaps, the reason we do all these things on Purim is as follows. Hashem set up a world that we think that the *Hester Panim* is the *tzaros* that we live in. The truth is that the biggest hiddenness that can be found is the way we think we can get

rid of our tzaros. We look at illnesses and we think they are the cause of our suffering. We look at a *parnassah* problem, and we think it's our job or our boss that's the source of our issue. If it's a legal matter, then we feel it's the government that is behind it.

On Purim, the greatest day of the year when we can reach the greatest of spiritual heights when we read the Megillah and concentrate that what seems to be Achashverosh is really referring to Hashem. Our Sages (Gemara, Megillah 15b) tell us, "No, it's all Hashem - He who can take care of all the issues." We get dressed up because so many times we think that we know who is who, and who can do what, but the truth is that our preconceived notions and expectations are not rooted in reality.

Our whole life is a "dress-up" with Hashem putting various people in the play called life, but none have actual control. We drink and get rid of our Da'as, since no opinions matter and no one has a mind. On every other holiday and day in Torah living, we make an effort and live as regular humans, not above this world. Only on Yom Kippur, when we don't eat, drink, or partake in earthly pleasures, we live like a *malach*.

Yet, Yom Kippur is a Mashal to Purim, since an angel is not the ideal creation. The greatest creation is a human being who is living in this world and understands that all physicality/materialism is here to serve Hashem.

On Purim, we live as a malach realizing all is from Hashem, but not through subtracting from pleasure. Instead, we delight in worldly pleasures. We might be angry at someone during the year because they wronged us, but on Purim, we realize it's all Hashem, so why be upset at another person? As such, we give the Mishloach Manos.

On a regular day, we may feel we cannot give out so much Tzedaka since we need to provide for ourselves, but on Purim, since we know Hashem takes care of us anyway, we give to others without reservations.

Everything is turned on its head. This Purim let's stay focused and realize that it's not about us, that we have the best costume or the nicest Mishloach Manos – or even that we distribute a lot of *Tzedaka* (charity). Rather, the day is about realizing that everything is from Hashem. So, let's give to others, focus on their needs and go straight to the Source of it all in the World.

It all starts by realizing that the entire salvation was initiated with the reality that there was no way out besides prayer, turning to the Only One who can make a difference. *Wishing all our readers and Klal Yisrael a Freilichen Purim!*



Kav Hayashar on Taanis Esther (97)

"For this is a very opportune day that our tefillos be accepted in the merit of Mordechai and Esther. And anyone who needs mercy on anything that he needs to daven for, should take time to himself on the day of Taanis Esther and say the twenty-second perek of Tehillim - L'menatzeiach al Ayeles Hashachar - which Chazal say refers to Esther who was called Ayeles Hashachar (Yoma 29a, Medrash Shochar Tov 22).

The Gemara (Megillah 15b) also teaches us that Esther davened this perek when she was on the way to present herself before Achashverosh... Afterwards, one should pour out his words before Hashem, and say his requests mentioning the merit of Mordechai and Esther, whom in their zechus, Hakadosh Boruch Hu will answer him and open up the shaarei rachamim - gates of mercy for him, and his tefila will be answered willingly....

Since on this day they gathered together to save themselves and they were in need of rachamim (mercy), therefore, it was set up as a day to say selichos and tachanunim (prayers of teshuva and

mercy). These prayers are very dear to Hakadosh Boruch Hu, and through these tefillos, tremendous mercy is awakened in the pamalia shel maalah (the heavenly kingdom)....."

משל למה הדבר דומה

לַעֲשׂוֹת אוֹתָם יְמֵי מִשְׁתֶּה וְשִׂמְחָה וּמִשְׁלֹחַ מָנוֹת אִישׁ לְרֵעֵהוּ וּמַתָּנוֹת לָאֶבְיוֹנִים 9:22

Before accepting his esteemed position as **Rav of Apta, R' Avraham Yehoshua Heschel zt"l**, better known as the **Ohev Yisroel**, served as Rav in the city of Yassi (Lasi).



His first Purim as Rav, he received a beautiful mishloach manos basket from an esteemed member of the community. One item in the arrangement in particular, seemed to catch the attention of the Rav; a bowl filled with golden coins.

His son watched in astonishment as his esteemed father toyed with the coins, fondly caressing them as he rolled them around his palm. He knew his father scorned money. What had caused the sudden change in his attitude?

After watching his father for a while, he finally mustered up the courage to question his puzzling behaviour.

"Father," he asked, "how is it that you seem to be deriving so much pleasure from the money you received as a gift? You generally detach yourself from all importance to money, often refusing to even look at it or handle it!"

The Ohev Yisroel smiled at his young child and explained: "That is indeed the case all year round. On Purim, however, we are especially commanded to perform the mitzvah of matanos l'evyonim. Since I

shall be performing a mitzvah with these coins today, I wanted to first attach some importance to them on a personal level, in order to develop a sense of fondness toward them. After all, how can I perform a mitzvah with something I am so repulsed by?"

The parshiyos of donating and building the mishkan are very much connected to the mitzvah on Purim of matanos l'evyonim, as both impart a message of intrinsic value: The importance of giving something that is precious to oneself, for the sake of Hashem.



Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

Rav Sholom of Belz, zt"l, the Sar Shalom, was once called to appear before the local governor. Apparently, a number of assimilated Jews had brought false charges against him, and he had to answer for them. The governor was only too happy to comply.

In an attempt to scare the Sar Sholom, he threateningly yelled, "Rabbi, you should be aware that I am Haman number two!"

The Sar Sholom calmly replied, "That doesn't faze me in the least, honoured governor. If you recall, the first Haman did not succeed with his plans."

The Sar Sholom's courage and confidence in answering as he did found favour in the eyes of the governor, and he was freed immediately!

Purim Treasures Compiled by Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg



Rav Gamliel Rabinovich said: One Purim, my father, **HaGaon Rav Levi Rabinovich, zt"l**, was walking in the street of the city. My father was a complete Tzadik, and as was his custom, he was walking quietly along the side of the road. A Shikur, one of the young men who had been drinking on Purim, walked towards him, and he was 'dancing', weaving back and forth on the streets as drunkards often do.

Without paying attention to his actions, he shoved my father, who fell to the ground. Because of his physical weakness and advanced age, he did not have the strength to get up by himself.

The drunk continued on his way and kept on dancing, and my father was left lying on the ground. He just laid there for a while, exhausted and weak. This was a side street that was not used by many people, so there was no one who could help him stand up.

A short while later, a certain Talmid Chacham passed by, and when he saw my father, he hurried over to help him get back up on his feet. However, he was surprised to see that not only was my father not upset about having to lay on the ground, but my father was even smiling a little. He was curious about this, so he asked, "Rebbe, please teach me, why are you so happy that you were lying on the street?"

My father replied, "Baruch Hashem, while I was lying on the ground, I was able to review several Perakim of Mishnayos by heart! And for this, I am very happy. Even while I was weak and lying on the floor, unable to stand up, I did not waste my time. I spent the precious moments learning Torah!"

Rav Gamliel said that conduct like this stems from always making proper use of one's time. When one lives in this way, with the awareness and understanding regarding the greatness and importance that just one moment of learning Torah is to Shamayim, then to live like this is simple, and one would never waste a free moment to learn the holy Torah.

He said, "From then on, my father, zt"l, would teach Bachrim and young men to master some part of the Torah by heart, and it should be fluent in their mouths. The reason for this is that if there is ever a time when it is difficult to learn from a Sefer, like when one is traveling, he can still learn Torah because he will have memorized the material.

Everyone can develop this Middah of not wasting time and utilizing any spare time. This comes from having a craving for the Mitzvos and a joy for the holy Torah, because when one cherishes this, he will treasure every moment like it is an expensive jewel. As it says in Tehilim (119:72), "The Torah of your mouth is better for me than thousands in gold and silver!"



What You Don't Know Won't Hurt You by R' Sender Haber

Knowledge is a dangerous thing, especially when it is biblical. To know something biblically is to become intimately and personally familiar with it in a way that we cannot separate ourselves from our knowledge.

We grow up knowing that everything G-d does is for the best, that G-d has a plan and that there is justice in this world. G-d gives us glimpses into His plan and we love to tell those stories. The plane that we didn't make, the job we didn't take, and the deal that fell

through. Those are our "Baruch Mordechai" moments. They are the moments when we thank G-d that there are people like Mordechai and Ester in this world to inspire us and to make sure that every story has a happy ending.

But that isn't all we know. We know suffering. We know pain. We know hypocrisy and death and illness. We know sadness in ways that make it hard to remember Hashem's plan and the confidence that it should inspire. Those are our "Arur Haman" moments. They are the moments when we become aware of a Haman, of an Achmedenijad, of illness and suffering and of righteous people dealing with pain.

Those cynicism laced moments of "Arur Haman" do not come from a bad place. They come from intelligence and experience. Our knowledge of evil gets in the way of our acknowledgment that all that G-d does is good.

We are, after all, intelligent people.

We celebrate the Purim story, but was it really that great? Genocide was legalized. The king and his Prime Minister wanted to kill us and the army and police force were making plans. Sure it ended well, but was it a happy story?

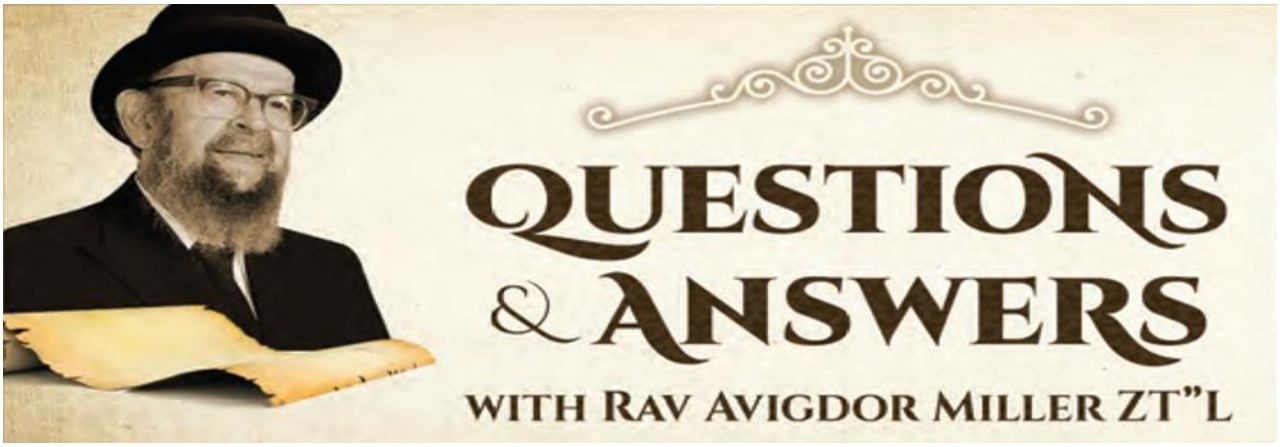
There will be people mourning this Purim. There will be people who are sick and people who need to accept those charitable gifts we so generously give. There is plenty of despair to go around. We know.

And for one day a year we are told to forget what we know. We are encouraged to suspend our intimate knowledge of the evil and sorrow that surrounds us and to be drunk with the thought that life is good and G-d is great.

For one day a year our intelligent and experienced and empathetic nation is enjoined to get to a point at which we no longer "know" the difference between "Arur Haman" and "Baruch Mordechai". We forget everything we know and rejoice in G-d.

Sometimes too much knowledge is a bad thing. This Purim we need to forget some of our knowledge and allow ourselves to get utterly lost in the bliss of G-d's grand plan.

(Based on Biur Hagra, Orach Chaim 695:3. See also Sifsei Chaim, Vol. II p.233 and Afikei Mayim, ch. 8)





Why is it that Haman tried to kill all the Jews but Nevuchadnezar, who was also a sonei Yisroel, didn't?

And the answer is, Nevuchadnezar, the Gemara says melech hagun hayah. He was a righteous king. Now, Nevuchadnezar is called Nevuchadnezar Harasha. He was a rasha. But he was a melech hagun, a real king. He wasn't a fool. Anybody who kills Jews is insane because Jews are not harmful to any government. In many cases, they're very useful. Hitler was a madman. The Jews of Germany were financiers, they were great scientists, and immediately there began an exodus. Einstein fled. There were better people than Einstein. Now, a ruler who'll lose such valuable elements is a maniac! Even if they weren't valuable, what harm did the Jews do to Germany? Nothing at all!

And so, we don't have to look for reasons why Nevuchadnezar didn't make any campaign against the Jews. But the truth is, it was just the opposite. He began a campaign of utilizing the Jews. He was a

melech hagun so he took Daniel and his three friends, Chananya, Mishael and Azarya, and immediately he put them in the palace. And he started training them and teaching them the language of Kasdim and the court manners because he wanted to utilize them.

Even before the Golus Tzidkiyahu, eleven years before the golus he took a thousand of the chorosh v'hamesger, the best of the Am Yisroel, back to his land because he understood that this is a great gain for his kingdom.

So it's no kashe why he didn't want to kill the Jews. Does the story of Purim mean everybody wants to kill the Jews?

Only that the time came when Hakadosh Baruch Hu saw that the teshuva wasn't going fast enough – the golus was supposed to be a convalescence to heal them from their great errors of before and many were convalescing, but not fast enough, so Hakodosh Boruch Hu staged this entire pageant of the nes Purim and it had the desired effect.

In מגילת אסתר Hashem appeared to be hidden.

It really looked like things were over for the Yidden.

But they davened hard, and this caused Hashem to be revealed.

And with that, המן 's fate was well and truly sealed.

Rather than חלילה never seeing yad Hashem at all.

We can aim to unmask Him at every call.

Davenning is the key to unlocking each and every door.

פורים – a most amazing time for תפילה to be sure.



Harav SF Zimmerman Rosh Av Beis Din Federation

We are about to reach **חג הפורים** and I would like to present the following thought which is necessary for our trying times. When you look in **מגילת אסתר**, when it introduces **מרדכי הצדיק**, it doesn't talk about his greatness as a **נביא** or as a member of the **סנהדרין**, or that he knows seventy languages.

All it says is he was a refugee who adopted his relative. Why is that so?

In the **מדרש רבה** on **איכה** when Klal Yisroel says **יתומים היינו ואין אב** - we are like orphans, we have no father, the **מדרש** explains that when Hashem heard this, He said **חייך** that you are going to have a **גאולה** one day via a person who is an orphan as the **פסוק** states **לה ויהי אומן את הדסה כי אין אב ואם** :

The question is what is the significance of **אסתר** being an orphan?

The Ramban explains why Hashem helps widows and orphans. It's not that he favours them more than other people. It's because they don't have someone to protect them and therefore they call out to Hashem. Hashem really protects anyone who calls out to Him.

By the Churban Beis Hamikdash, when Klal Yisroel came to the recognition that they were equivalent to orphans. They realised that they had no one to protect them, besides for Hashem. At that moment Hashem said don't worry one day there will be a salvation via Esther who also realises that she has no one to protect her besides for Hashem.

That's why when we introduce Mordchai, we are are not introducing and ascribing his greatness . We are expressing the uniqueness of Mordchai in this aspect. - He was a refugee. One should know that

when you are a refugee you lose everything that you ever relied on. Your house, your position, and your occupation. Such a person is rebuilding his own circumstance.

However, Mordchai even in this circumstance was thinking about others. He was thinking how he could possibly help someone who has even less than himself.

When Hashem sees that Klal Yisroel realises we have no one else to protect us and that they themselves help others that are less fortunate even when they have their own challenges, the time has come to bring the Geulah.

We are living in very difficult times. We must come to the recognition that there is no one to help us other than Hashem. When we come to that recognition and we are there for other people, in that zechus, Hashem will bring the Geulah Sheleimah.

7 Reasons To Trust In Hashem

1. Hashem loves you.

2. He's always there to help you.

3. He's able to solve any problem.

4. He knows what's best for you better than you do.

5. He's helped you before and will continue to help you.

6. Nothing can harm or help you without his control.

7. Hashem is always kind and generous, wanting to do good for you.

[Based on Chovos Halevavos, Shaar Habitachon.]

Jewish Education Program Queens [JEP]

The Most Powerful Weapon!



The evil Prime Minister, Haman, convinced King Achashverosh to annihilate every single Jew. Rashi (Megillas Esther 4:1) says that Mordechai, who was the leader of the Jews, was told about this terrible decree, in a dream. He was told that the punishment had been decreed because the Jews had bowed to the idol in the days of Nevuchadnetzar, and because they had enjoyed Achashverosh's feast.

Mordechai's response to this news was, "And Mordechai tore his garments and clothed himself in sack and ashes; and he went out in the midst of the city, and he cried out a great and bitter cry".

The Maharzu and Eitz Yosef (Midrash Rabbah Shmos 38:4) explain that Mordechai's "crying" refers to tefillah, prayer. Although the actual decree of annihilation was scheduled to take place in eleven months hence, Mordechai felt that the Jews were in an exceedingly dangerous situation. He sent a message to Queen Esther to immediately approach King Achashverosh and beg him to save the Jewish People.

Esther responded that there was a death penalty for anyone approaching the king without first getting permission. If she would go to the king now, she would be placing her life in danger. She felt that it was prudent to wait until the king called for her. She said that he would probably call for her sometime soon, as he had not seen her for almost 30 days.

Mordechai felt that the situation was so serious that he told Esther that she should go anyway, despite the danger to her life. Esther agreed to go but requested that the Jews fast for three days beforehand. In that merit she would be successful in her mission.

The last day of the fasting was the night of the first Pesach seder. If the Jews would be fasting, that they would not be able to fulfil the Torah requirement of eating matza at the seder. They would also be unable to fulfil the Rabbinic mitzva of drinking the 4 cups of wine and eating marror.

Despite that, Mordechai agreed that all the Jews should fast.

Later in the Purim story, there was a turn-around of events. Mordechai was honoured greatly while Haman was humiliated.

The Midrash (Esther Rabbah 10:4-5) tells us what occurred. "The king said to Haman: Hurry, take the garments and the horse as you have said. Do so to Mordechai the Jew who sits at the king's gate. Do not omit anything that you spoke of."



Haman went to Mordechai and told him to put on the royal garments. Mordechai responded, "Why are you dishonouring the monarchy? Is there any man who would put on royal garments without bathing?" Haman went and sought a bath attendant but could not find one. Queen Esther had declared a national holiday, closing all the schools and stores. She wanted everyone to witness Haman's humiliation. Since there was no bath attendant available, Haman who had previously been a bath attendant, was forced to bathe Mordechai himself.

After the bath, Haman told Mordechai to put on the king's crown. Mordechai said to him, "Why are you dishonouring the monarchy? Is there any man who would put on a royal crown without a haircut?"

Haman searched for a barber but could not find one. What did he do? Haman, who had been a barber for many years, gave Mordechai a haircut. Then Haman told Mordechai to mount the horse.

Mordechai said, "I do not have the strength [to mount it], for I am old." Haman responded that he too was also old. Mordechai said to Haman that he had brought this upon himself. Thereupon, Haman bent down on his hands and knees to allow Mordechai to step on him to mount the horse. Then Haman led Mordechai on the horse through the city square, proclaiming, "So shall be done to the man that the king wishes to honour!'" (Megillas Esther 6:10-11)

The Midrash continues that while Mordechai was riding the horse, he began praising Hashem. "I will exalt You, Hashem, for You have lifted me up and have not caused my enemies to rejoice over me. Hashem, I cried out to You, and You have healed me. Hashem, You brought my soul up from the grave. You have given me life that I not go down to a pit." (Psalms 30:2– 4).

Clearly, the tide was beginning to turn. It appeared that Haman's downfall had begun. When Haman returned home, even his wife and other advisors told him that his downfall was a foregone conclusion (Megillas Esther 6:13). Yet, as soon as Mordechai completed his ride, Rashisays (6:12) that he went back to wearing sackcloth and fasting.

We would think that at this point, Mordechai would not be praying with the same intensity as before. After all, he had experienced the beginning of the tide turning. Yet, the Maharzu comments on the Midrash Rabbah in this week's parsha (Shmos 38:4) that when Mordechai returned to sackcloth and prayer, he prayed with the same level of intensity as previously.

Mordechai's prayer at this time, despite the onset of Haman's downfall, was as powerful as when he had first found out about the harsh decree.

It is amazing that Mordechai was able to pray with the same deep feelings when he clearly saw Haman's downfall quickly occurring! It is also amazing that he felt the necessity to do so! He understood that the Jews were still in danger, and that Hashem could, just as easily, turn things back around if the Jews were not deserving.

When we are in need, we turn to our most powerful weapon, prayer. Sincere prayer from the depths of our heart is very powerful and productive. Hashem does not always give us the answer that we want. However, our prayers can make a difference now, and for our future generations. Our prayers may even help one of our future descendants in need. Even if we see that our prayers are beginning to help, we must not let up. We must continue praying with the same fervour and intensity as before. We cannot take anything for granted, as situations can quickly change and turn back around.

When, with Hashem's help, we do see salvation, we must continue our heartfelt prayers, expressing our thanks and appreciation to Hashem.

Segulot For Purim

Before the chazzan begins to read the megillah while he reads the brachot ask Hashem that you become a powerful vessel to receive the holy lights of Mordechai and Esther that come down at this moment. These lights stay with us until next Purim.

During the reading of the megillah the same holy lights begin to envelop us as if we were living through the episodes once again. Relate to the megillah as if you are praying to Hashem right now for difficulties you are going through in your present life. Reach into the context of the megillah and link it to your own personal life, i.e.

hanging of Haman can be looked upon as if you are hanging your sorrows, never to see them again B'H. At the end of the megillah reading ask for your soul mate or shalom bayit, marital peace.

After the reading, cover your table with a festive cloth (suitable for Shabbat or Yom Tovim) and once again light two yahrtzeit candles and place them on your table: one in memory of Mordechai HaYehudi Hatzaddik and one for Esther HaMalka bat Avichayil. The candles brings their holy light into our homes.

Erev Purim, is a most special time particularly at chatzot halayla, midnight, which falls in most places at 11:40 pm(ish). All seven gates in Shamayim are open. Just as Esther stood before Hashem at this hour, so should we. The yetzer hara will try to play this one down, distract, make you tired and aggravate you in order to stop you from taking advantage of this once-a-year unbelievable time to pray.

Don't fall for it. Mordechai stood with 22,000 children on this night and prayed to Hashem to annul the harsh decree against the Jewish people and was able to overturn it. Can you imagine the power embedded in this night? Don't miss out. No matter what, stand there at midnight, beseech, pray and beg Hashem like you have never done before… Hashem is handing out free gifts yes free…. just ask!!! Ask Hashem to annul all harsh decrees, c'v, against us and/or our beloved nation. Request that Hashem gift you with the same mesirut nefesh (self-sacrifice) that Esther HaMalka displayed and brought about the cancellation of the judgments against us.

The Purim seuda meal is to atone for enjoying ourselves at the table of Achashveirosh. It is recommended to prepare a festive table with many delectable food items and to eat from a long challah to remind us of the tall gallow from which Haman was hung. During the seuda say 120 times: Baruch Mordechai and 24 times: Brucha Esther bat Avichayil, this further brings down their holy lights to our meal. In addition, use this time to request anything on your mind, it is a time of great rachamei Shamayim. Some thoughts on what to pray

for: geula, something that 'appears' impossible according to natural law, yeshuot, to complete that which we are lacking, etc..

Do not get angry (anytime!) on Purim, be joyful. There should be calm, peace and happiness all day long. Put some kind of nut mixture onto your table during the meal since Esther HaMalka dined on nuts whenever she entered the chambers of Achashverosh.

B'H we will come out from Purim feeling more true with ourselves, more comfortable with who we are and have a stronger draw towards being continually joyful. May this be a time of joy for us personally and collectively as a nation, a time to annul any harsh decrees c'v and may we merit the ultimate joy – the redemption of the Shechinah and of the Jewish people b'karov, b'rachamim, Amen v Amen.



Divrei Torah on the weekly parsha and holidays from the teachings of Rabbeinu Shimshon Dovid Pincus zt"l

Never-Ending Simchah

"***Rav Shimshon Pincus zt"l put Purim on its feet***," Because the understanding and explanation of these matters is so beautiful and so simple that it really illuminates the whole chag wondrously.

Rav shimshon regarded purim as a special time to imbue emunah and Ahavas Hashem in the hearts of his kehillah. His impassioned Purim derashos overflowed with the theme of Hashem's enduring love for Klal Yisrael as revealed through the saga of our salvation.

The story of Purim, he further emphasized, is not merely an expression of Hashem's love, but also a propitious occasion for His love to increase exponentially, as a father toward a child who has just emerged from life-threatening danger.

Purim is likewise an opportune time to express our overflowing gratitude to Hashem with feelings of pure love. After a drink of wine and joyous dancing is the perfect time to unleash all our love and yearning for deveikus to HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

No One Leaves

Rav Shimshon's famous "mishteh hayayin" commenced approximately one hour after the megillah reading on the night of Purim. First, he returned home to read the megillah again for his family and join them for the seudah, while in the meantime, members of his kehillah eagerly prepared the annual Leil Purim Tisch in the shul's hall. Slowly but surely, crowds gathered outside the Rav's apartment building to escort Rav Shimshon from his home, singing and dancing their way to the festive tisch.

Rav Shimshon's Purim tisch embraced the entire kehillah of Ofakim in genuine simchah shel mitzvah and uplifted spirituality. Usually, he opened his tisch by extolling the awesomeness of the day and placing Purim in the context of the annual cycle of Yamim Tovim.

Before lifting the first glass of wine to his lips, he would loudly recite "Borei pri hagafen". The crowds would respond with "Amen" and recite the berachah after him.

"Everyone who drinks with us now will merit being present at the hour of our redemption!" he would sometimes cry out, to which all would answer with a resounding "Amen!"

In the course of the tisch, Rav Shimshon strove to elevate his congregation and, particularly, to bring simchah and solace to the hearts of all. The drinking was liberal and spiritually uplifting.

One year, he announced that the mitzvah of drinking on that Purim would be devoted to achieving four feats: ***health, parnassah, Torah, and zera shel kayama***. Before the congregation began to drink, Rav Shimshon davened and aroused everyone to beseech HaKadosh Baruch Hu to send a speedy recovery to all cholei Yisrael.

As the guests recited berachos and partook of the wine, they recited the names of dozens of cholim in need of salvation. Thereafter, once they had mellowed from the effects of the liquor, he exhorted them to entreat Hashem for bountiful parnassah for all of Klal Yisrael, after which he proclaimed, "L'chaim!" and downed another cup of wine as the community burst out in stirring niggunim related to parnassah, such as "Yehi hachodesh hazeh... v'Hu yishlach... berachah vhatzlachah."

Next, he proclaimed that it was time to beseech for Torah, that Hashem should unlock the hearts of Klal Yisrael to love and learn Torah. His declaration unleashed a chain of poignant melodies, all supplicating for ahavas haTorah. Then, climaxing the evening, he announced that everyone should drink a final kos as a merit for couples still waiting for children, and iy"H, Hashem would grant them zera shel kayama that very year.

Pain of the Shechinah

After the singing died down, Rav Shimshon then called for "a moment of solemnity," imploring each person in the room to, for a moment, forget his own needs and requests and simply focus on the pain of the Shechinah which is still in galus and daven for her.

"Shechinah! Shechinah!" he cried out in tears, "Who prays for You? We're all concerned about ourselves, but we forget You." Through his tears, he would then begin singing with tears and pain: "*Shechinah, Shechinah avu bistu? Galus, galus, vi lang bistu? Shechinah HaKedoshah, vi vite bistu!" (Shechinah, Shechinah, where are You? Galus, galus, how long will you be? Shechinah HaKedoshah, how far away You are*!)

He'd then cry out emotionally, "Ribbono shel Olam, what do we have when the Shechinah is so far away?!"

This heart-stopping shout, when Rav Shimshon's voice broke in anguish for the pain of the Shechinah, was the pinnacle of the evening. At that moment, he gave expression to raw emotion, and as the wine entered, the secret of his yearning for deveikus emerged full-force.

Even on a typical day, he would often repeat that every Jew has the power to hasten the arrival of the geulah, if he would only concede his own desires and concentrate his thoughts and tefillos on the Shechinah in exile. Yet specifically on Purim night, when hearts are open and engaged to accept his entreaties, his words penetrated hearts.

As he burst into tears and sobbed over the pain of the Shechinah, the entire congregation wept and prayed along with him.

Davening for Childless Couples

Another of the issues that occupied Rav Shimshon on Purim was the pain of couples who were not yet blessed with children. Identifying with their pain, he expended great efforts in tefillah for their salvation.

One avreich shares: I was married for several years and still waiting for children. Knowing that Purim was an eis ratzon in the eyes of Rav Shimshon, I waited patiently on leil Purim until the tisch ended. He was surrounded by exuberant bachurim and well- wishers eager to dance him back to the yeshivah when I approached him and requested a berachah.

In uplifted spirits from the drinking and the singing, he replied, "What? You think a day goes by that I don't think of you?"

Yet I refused to suffice with that and beseeched him for a berachah and even a promise for children, which he was reluctant to deliver.

Finally, when I burst into tears and begged him for a berachah, he surrendered and bentched me.

Baruch Hashem, slightly less than a year passed before we received the long-awaited news from the doctor. Knowing that it is best to keep berachos hidden, we told no one; the only ones who knew at the time were my wife and me.

In the midst of the leil Purim tisch, my friends literally dragged me over to the Rav for a berachah. Obviously, I didn't dare spill the beans or explain that it really wasn't necessary anymore, reflecting that an extra berachah from the Rav couldn't hurt in any case.

Yet as I approached, Rav Shimshon perked up suddenly and asked in a voice that could be heard by all, "Tell me, do you have good news?"

I was mortified. Unsure how to respond, I muttered something that resembled "No." Yet Rav Shimshon pressed me again and again, finally looking me straight in the eye and declaring, "You have to tell me, because if you don't, I'll have no choice but to break through the gates of Shamayim for you!"

With no choice, I shyly replied that, baruch Hashem, we had good news. His lips split into such a brilliant smile, and he erupted with such a glowing, "Yasher koach for the good news!" that my heart stopped pounding. Then, he gazed at me penetratingly and said, "You know, if you hadn't just told me that then I would have smashed the heavens open for you."

Sometime later, when the avreich mustered the courage to ask him how he'd guessed, Rav Shimshon replied with natural simplicity, "I just felt that my tefillah was answered."

Chazal teach, "Wine enters, secrets emerge," and indeed on that evening, two secrets emerged — the expectant couple's, and that of Rav Shimshon's greatness!

Longtime residents of Ofakim still reminisce fondly about those bygone days when the kehillah was still in its fledgling years, and they would cavort through the streets on Purim together with the Rav to visit and bring mishloach manos to the talmidei chachamim in the town.

One year, when the group finished singing and dancing in the home of a talmid chacham who had only a ben yachid for many years, Rav Shimshon took up his position at the front of the door and announced that no one was allowed to leave until each guest delivered his berachah that this house would soon be filled with the joyous voices of children!

On another Purim, a man once whispered to Rav Shimshon the names of a couple who were still waiting for children, and the Rav advised him to focus on their names while reciting "Hashem Tzvakos" during Kedushah, which is an auspicious time to daven for zera shel kayama.

As Long as I Didn't Hurt Anyone

While he freely spouted divrei Torah and berachos, he also remained keenly attuned to the halachos bein adam lachaveiro and bein adam la'Makom even after partaking liberally of wine on Purim.

Once, as visitors flowed in and out of his house in various states of intoxication, one man entered and, in the course of the visit, made a critical remark about someone else.

Rav Shimshon raised his finger and stopped him midsentence. "My friend, quiet! 'Dvash vchalav tachas l'shonech, Only honey and milk beneath your tongue'! (Shir HaShirim 4:11)."

Upset and more than a little tipsy, the man protested, "What's wrong with what I said? Can't a man say a word of criticism here or there?"

"Certainly you can," replied the Rav, "but when it concerns someone else, only milk and honey!" And with that, he grabbed the man by his

hands and began dancing energetically with him, intent on smoothing over the gentle rebuke with love and joy.

One leil Purim, one of his sons accompanied him home from the tisch after hours spent singing, dancing, drinking, arousing the hearts of his beloved kehillah to love and fear Hashem, and finding a good word and berachah for everyone who appealed to him.

Walking tiredly and slightly unsteadily up the path, Rav Shimshon suddenly burst out joyfully with a sentence that would remain with his son forever. "What's most important is that I didn't hurt anyone! We went through so much tonight, and no one was insulted!"

On Purim, the door to the Pincus home remained wide open as neighbours, friends, talmidim, and community members streamed in and out from early morning until long past sunset.

The Rebbetzin spent the day receiving and returning mishloach manos, asking young guests about their parents, and wishing everyone well. She greeted everyone warmly and graciously, although depending on the flow of guests, she sometimes barely found time to respond with more than a cheerful "A freilechen Purim!"

In contrast, when the heavy traffic lightened up, she would take the extra moment to walk the well-wisher to the door and even down the steps.

In the meanwhile, the Rav was busy distributing seemingly endless amounts of tzedakah together with his gabbaim, accepting and returning mishloach manos, and listening and responding to divrei Torah and berachos.

Despite the ceaseless flow of humanity and activity filling his home, Rav Shimshon somehow found the time to personally escort his children to visit the illustrious rabbanim and talmidei chachamim of Ofakim and deliver mishloach manos. He likewise took his younger sons to the homes of their rebbeim, whether they lived in town or in the surrounding communities, such as Tifrach or Talmei Eliyahu. In

doing so, he demonstrated his profound hakaras hatov and reinforced both to the rebbeim and his children that the rebbeim were his full-fledged partners in one of his premier goals in life — chinuch habanim, educating his children to strive and achieve in Torah.

Never did he forget his final "hakaras hatov stop" on Purim which took him to the far edge of town, to the home of the family's devoted housekeeper. Day after day, when the Rebbetzin left for school, this righteous woman came to the Pincus house to babysit the younger children and arrange the house for lunch, when the older children would return.

"How many times did I beg him not to go out of his way on Purim of all days!" she reminisces with a shake of her head. "But he wouldn't hear of it!

The Rebbetzin would put together a mishloach manos 'fit for a rosh yeshiva" — that's how she described it — "and the Rav himself would come to deliver it, accompanied by their adorable children."

A Superfluous Trip

There was one purim evening that Rav Shimshon never forgot. One year, he shared the story of that night with one of his sons:

"A person never knows how he will acquire a mitzvah," he exclaimed. "Sometimes one invests into a mitzvah and, instead, receives Torah; and sometimes, what happens is the other way around. And that's exactly what happened to me that long-ago Purim night."

The Pincuses were living in Bnei Brak then, and a rosh yeshivah of a yeshivah remote from the centre of the country implored Rav Shimshon to deliver a shmuess to his bachurim on Purim night. Rav Shimshon, who was well-aware that Purim night is not a fortuitous occasion for heavy shmuessen, was reluctant, and he explained to the rosh yeshivah both his position and the technical difficulties of

traveling so far on the night of Purim when the odds of his words impacting the bachurim were anyway so minute.

The rosh yeshivah, however, was adamant, persuading Rav Shimshon that his words would work wonders and penetrate his bachurim's hearts.

Rav Shimshon finally relented.

Purim night arrived, and after leining the megillah in shul and then again at home for his family, Rav Shimshon quickly broke his fast and then rushed off to the home of his rebbi Rav Yisrael Eliyahu Weintraub to bask in his kedushah on the eve of Purim. It was an uplifting evening of inspiration and Torah, yet the hectic schedule began to take a physical toll on Rav Shimshon, and he felt exhaustion getting the better of him. Still, ever faithful to his word, he eventually bid his rebbi, "A freilechen Purim!' and then set off up north as promised.

As soon as he entered the beis midrash, his heart sank, seeing that he'd been right on target. Only a handful of bachurim had even bothered showing up for the derashah, and those who did were already quite drunk and drooping before his eyes. There was no question in his mind that the derashah was doomed to failure and that the trip had been for naught. All that remained were feelings of disenchantment and regret for the wasted time and energy on the night of Purim, which is a consummate opportunity for kedushah and spiritual ascent.

Yet what was done was done. Without even opening his mouth to begin his carefully constructed speech, he spun on his heel and exited the beis midrash supremely disappointed, finding solace only in the timeless refrain of "Gam zu I'tovah"

Driving down the dark highway, he suddenly recalled an old friend who lived not far from this outlying area of the country. A brilliant talmid chacham, the man was well-versed in both the Revealed and

Hidden Torah, and Rav Shimshon had no question in his mind that, despite the late hour, this tzaddik would certainly still be awake and learning.

He turned into the entrance of the nondescript town. When his old friend opened the door, he was delighted to see Rav Shimshon, and before long, the two tzaddikim were delving animatedly into the secrets of Torah. The hours passed in sheer ecstasy and bliss as they toiled in sugyos dealing with Purim.

"We learned until streaks of colour appeared on the horizon. On that night," he divulged many a year later, "I touched, on my own level, the inner truth and emes of Purim, and I attained depth and insights that I never grasped before." This was likewise the night that the seeds of his famous Purim shmuessen were planted.

"Like I said," he concluded, "there are times when you invest in Torah and are repaid with chessed, and there are times when you invest in chessed and are remunerated with Torah.

And that's what happened to me that night. I invested superhuman energy to deliver a shmuess on Purim, and Hashem rewarded me with newfound understanding of Torah!"

The Essence Of Purim -Dayan Dovid Cohn

We wish everyone that they should have 'A Kosheren Pesach' and have 'A Freilichen Purim'. The truth of the matter is that some people get so nervous before Pesach that you have to wish them, 'A Freilichen Pesach'. And likewise, people get so carried away with the externals of Purim that you need to tell them that they should have 'A Kosheren Purim'.

What is Purim? What is there to be taken from Purim?

Purim is really an opportunity to get close to Hashem. Why so?

There is a Halacha explicit in the Ra'mah. You are supposed to wear Shabbos clothes when you come to the Megillah, both in morning and in the evening. Yes, we dress up. But underneath we wear Shabbos clothes. Why Shabbos clothes on Purim?

The answer is because Purim is the yom tov of neis nistar, hidden miracles. A neis nistar occurs when Hashem intervenes on behalf of Klal Yisroel while working within the laws of nature. Hashem's role therefore is in a sense, hidden- nistar - behind the laws of nature.

A neis nigleh is where Hashem intervenes on behalf of Klal Yisroel and changes and breaks the laws of nature. Pesach and Yetzias Mitzrayim are the classic examples of neis niglah, open miracles. On Purim, however, there were no open miracles. There are no supernatural events in Megillas Esther.

The Megillah is a reflection of those times. In that era, Hashem's presence was concealed, therefore Hashem's Name is not mentioned in the megillah.

When one studies each event of the Megillah individually, one doesn't see Hashem. However when one reads the entire story and sees the full picture of everything that happened in the Megillah, how each event led to our rescue, one discovers Hashem.

It is precisely to teach us this idea that even when we do not see Hashem in an open way, even when it is not clear that Hashem is involved, still Hashem is running the show.

The neis of the megillah is that all of these individual events fit together to save Klal Yisroel from destruction. That is what the megillah is all about. At each and every juncture of the Purim story it isn't clear. But when we stand back in hindsight, we can see the Shechinah. We can see the divine hand of Hashem guiding, protecting, inspiring and encouraging Klal Yisrael. That is what signifies a neis nistar. That is what Purim is all about.

The Rama quotes a custom to wear costumes on Purim. Many Meforshim say that this is based on the idea of neis nistar. The real person is hidden behind the mask and beneath the costume. This is a Moshol to Hashem's presence in the megillah being hidden behind the laws of nature.

Purim is a time for us to recognise and to strengthen our Emuna that Hashem runs the world. We should try and contemplate on the daily hashgachah pratis in world events and be inspired to give Hallel and praise to Hashem for all his constant Chasodim.

May we be zoche to see miracles in our days, Omen.



Parsha Potpourri, by R' Ozer Alport

בַּלַּ֣יְלָה הַה֣וּא נָדְדָ֣ה שְׁנַ֣ת הַמֶּ֑לֶךְ (Esther 6:1)

The Gemora in Megillah (19a) quotes the opinion of Rav Shimon bar Yochai, who maintains that when we publicly read the Megillah on Purim, we should begin from the verse that records Achashverosh's inability to sleep on one fateful night, as this represents is the turning point of the Megillah, when Mordechai and Esther's fortunes begin to overtake Haman's.

The Megillah records that Achashverosh's sleepless night occurred ba'laylah ha'hu - on that night - which implies that it happened on some well-known night. Rashi writes (Megillah 16a) that this night was 16 Nissan, the second night of Pesach. Why did the turning point of the Megillah specifically take place at this time?

Pesach is a time of redemption for the Jewish people. The night of 15 Nissan is well-known as a time when numerous miracles happened throughout Jewish history, as recorded in the piyut v'amartem zevach Pesach that we say at the end of the Seder. If so, why didn't the critical miracle of Purim also happen on 15 Nissan instead of on the following night?

Rav Dovid Feinstein explains that 16 Nissan is not Yom Tov in Eretz Yisroel. Only outside the land of Israel, where Jews in exile observe two days of Yom Tov, is this day also considered Yom Tov. In essence, the second day of Yom Tov perfectly symbolizes the concept of Hashem appearing to hide His face from us by reminding us that we are in exile.

Because one of the central themes of the Megillah is hester panim (Hashem's concealed face), the most appropriate time for the pivotal miracle to occur is on the "hidden" night of Pesach: 16 Nissan, which is only a Yom Tov for a person who is in exile and unable to experience Hashem's revealed Hashgacha.

Parsha Potpourri, by R' Ozer Alport

וְהָמָן נִדְחַף אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ אָבֵל וַחֲפוּי רֹאשׁ (Esther 6:12)

After Haman finished parading Mordechai through the streets of Shushan, he returned to his home mourning and with his head covered. - The Gemora (Megillah 16a) explains that when Haman was leading Mordechai through Shushan on the King's royal horse, Haman's daughter overheard what was going on. When she looked down, she could not discern who was who, so she naturally assumed that Mordechai was pulling the horse on which her esteemed father Haman was sitting as he was honoured throughout the streets of Shushan.

In her tremendous hatred for Mordechai, she took some garbage(!?) from her house and poured it onto the head of the person leading the horse, who she assumed was Mordechai. When he looked up, she was horrified to see that it was her father Haman. She was so overcome by emotion that she jumped out of her house to her death.

This well-known incident is difficult to understand. Everyone has done things to his parents that he later regretted, but it should not make him suicidal, especially if it was only an accident. Why did

Haman's daughter decide to kill herself when she realized what she had done?

Rav Yitzchok Sorotzkin beautifully explains that Amalek is descended from Eisav, who excelled in one mitzvah: honoring his father. Even though the commentators discuss the sins that the Jews committed that caused them to fall into the hands of Amalek, they add that Amalek also needs their own positive merit, and their primary good deed is the mitzvah of honouring their parents.

This explains why Moshe chose Yehoshua to lead the battle against Amalek at the end of Parshas Beshalach, as Yehoshua came from the tribe of Yosef, who did not hurt his father Yaakov through the sin of selling Yosef like the other brothers, so he was the best candidate to lead the battle against Amalek who excelled in the area of honouring their parents.

There was another tribe that had nothing to do with the sin of selling Yosef: Binyomin, from whom Mordechai and Esther were descended, making them perfectly suited to vanquish Haman.

Esther had the extra merit of having never caused any pain to her parents because she was born as an orphan from both her father and mother, and she was therefore the perfect foil to Haman.

In light of this insight into the strength and power of Amalek and his descendants, it is now quite understandable why Haman's daughter was so distraught over the pain that she inadvertently caused her father to the point that she committed suicide.

A (Drunk) Wise Man would say:

"Always borrow money from a pessimist. That way, he won't expect it back!"

Parsha Potpourri, by R' Ozer Alport

לְקַיֵּם אֶת־יְמֵי הַפֻּרִים הָאֵלֶּה בִּזְמַנֵּיהֶם (Esther 9:21)

The Megillah records that Esther and Mordechai instructed the Jews of their generation to establish the observance of the days of Purim in their proper times.

The Gemora (Megillah 2a) derives from the plural reference to "times" of celebration that the date on which walled cities observe their Purim festivities (15 Adar) must differ from the day when unwalled cities do so (14 Adar).

Rav Zev Leff notes that Purim is known as the Yom Tov of achdus (unity), when we are commanded to send gifts of food to our friends, help our poor brethren financially so they can enjoy the day, and join together to hear the Megillah and eat the festive Purim meal. It therefore seems incongruous that Purim is the only Yom Tov that is celebrated at varying times by different groups of Jews. Why was the Yom Tov dedicated to unity enacted in a manner that seems to promote division?

Rav Leff explains that if everyone acts identically at precisely the same time, this can hardly be called true togetherness. The reason they would feel connected would not be because of any genuine, deep-rooted sense of identification with one another, but simply because they all happen to be doing the same thing simultaneously.

True unity does not require us all to dress the same and talk the same. Real brotherhood is when one Jew accepts that another Jew is conducting himself differently, yet he recognizes that each in his own unique way is equally doing Hashem's will. To teach us this vital lesson about the definition of authentic achdus, Esther and Mordechai specifically mandated that Purim be observed on different days.

AT THE ArtScroll SHABBOS TABLE
A PROJECT OF THE Mesorah Heritage Foundation

Purim As A Yom Tov The Concealed And The Revealed By Rabbi Daniel Glatstein



When Klal Yisrael was victorious over Haman, they established the fourteenth of Adar as a day of festivity. Two pesukim in the Megillah relate how Purim was established as a day of celebration.

In actuality, when the festival was formally legislated and established as a day of celebration, the Jewish people were not willing to accept it as a Yom Tov. Mordechai was compelled to revise his plans, and the prohibition for melachah, establishing Purim's status as a Yom Tov, was not enacted.

This is quite surprising. Why wouldn't the Jewish people want another Yom Tov on the calendar? Why didn't they accept Mordechai's attempt to establish Purim as a day on which melachah is forbidden?

Rav Yitzchok Hutner offers an incredible explanation as to why the Jews were reluctant to accept Purim as a Yom Tov.

Had Klal Yisrael accepted Purim as a Yom Tov, it would have been forbidden to do melachah, as on all Yamim Tovim. Then, at the conclusion of Purim, we would have been required to make Havdalah in order to permit the performance of melachah.

Klal Yisrael could not accept having to bring themselves to make Havdalah after Purim. Formally ending Purim with Havdalah,

separating from Purim, was so objectionable that they could not accept Purim as a Yom Tov. The Jews felt such a close connection to Purim that they were unwilling to embrace Purim as a day of prohibited melachah from which they would have to take leave.

Rabbi Shimon Kaplin שליט״א



King **אחשורוש** invited the entire **שושן** to a **סעודה**. The **מדרש** explains **כרצון איש ואיש** - *according to every man's wish*, with the following: **אחשורוש** fulfilled every man's wish; meaning: there was **כשר** food at the **סעודה**. The **אידן** wanted **כשר** food, consequently, he fulfilled their wish. A **בד״ץ הכשר** – proper **כשר** food. The wine at the **סעודה** was **כשר** – since this was long before **חז״ל** established the **איסור** regarding **סתם יין**. The food was **כשר**, the wine was **כשר**, and certainly they sat together. What can go wrong when **אידן** sit together?



The **מנות הלוי** teaches that there was no music at the **סעודה**.

No problems – a "kosher-**סעודה**." Kosher food, kosher wine and no music. Moreover, it's the king himself inviting us personally; he will be insulted if we do not come.

Seemingly, there should be no reason not to go.

Says the medrash - **מרדכי הצדיק** announced, "You're not allowed to go!"

Although **מרדכי הצדיק** warned **כלל ישראל** not to partake, nevertheless, **חז"ל** teach that 18,500 people went to king **אחשורוש**'s **סעודה**. Amongst the 18,500 **אידן** there were **תלמידי חכמים, יראה מדקדקי במצוות** and **שמים**.

מרדכי says "no" – and the entire **עולם** say, "Yes??... we know better than **מרדכי** … after all, it's kosher food, kosher wine and a kosher atmosphere."

Continues the medrash **מיד עמד שטן** – immediately, the **שטן** stood up in **שמים** and spoke against **כלל ישראל**. It was then when **הקב"ה** wrote the gezeira - **להשמיד ולהרוג את כל היהודים**.

What caused the **גזירה** ? Because the **אידן** did not listen to the **גדול הדור** ; they thought they knew better.

Later in the megillah, **מרדכי** did not bow down before **המן הרשע** - **ומרדכי לא יכרע ולא ישתחוה**.

The **גמרא** in **מגילה** teaches: Once this angered **המן** the **אידן** held **טענות** against **מרדכי**! "You're instigating **המן** to establish a **גזירה** against us…" they said.

They blamed it on **מרדכי**. However, in **שמים** the truth was that the **גזירה** came because **כלל ישראל** did not listen to **מרדכי** and they were **נהנה מסעודת אחשורוש**.

We can learn from this a powerful message: The **גדולים** tell us things. What we can do and what we can't. Sometimes we don't understand. We think we know better. They say things we don't understand.

At **סעודת אחשורוש** I'm sure there too, there were people saying, "*ah… what does he know? He's from the old generation…*" **למעשה מרדכי** – whether we understand or not, we must listen.

We must understand to listen to our **גדולים** – because it's they who know better, not us.

Perhaps later – in a few years – we will understand. But even if we never understand, they nevertheless, know better. The **משנה** in

מגילה teaches, **הקורא מגילה למפרע לא יצא** – *one who reads the* **מגילה** *backwards, is not* **יוצא**. What's the **תנא** telling us? Who's going to read it backwards?

I once heard from the **ראש ישיבה שליט"א** a beautiful vort: If you start the **פורים** story from the end, you understand it all. All the details fit so nicely together.

Nevertheless, **לא יצא ידי חובתו** – we must go through life and understand everything is all from the **רבש"ע** . Move on – no need to understand. When you reach the end of the **מגילה** you will understand! You don't need to understand everything as it happens.

Let us take another message from the **מגילה**: Imagine, President Trump – a controversial fellow who very often does strange things. A very colourful character he was. One day he wakes up and says, "I want to move the seat of power from Washington to Lakewood."



If he says something, they have to listen. We can imagine the entire world for the next ten weeks, discussing, how, when, why, where, right, wrong…?!

If that will happen (with Trump it might happen), can we say it has a **שייכות** to **כלל ישראל** ?

When King Edward wanted to marry Mrs. Simpson there was a big debate in parliament whether it was permitted (since she was divorced). Backwards and forwards.

Then, **דיין אברמסקי זצ"ל** explained that it had a **שייכות** to the **אידן**, because everything happening in the world has a **שייכות** to the **אידן**.

The **מדרש** teaches, **אחשורוש** wanted to sit on the throne of **שלמה המלך**. He did not manage to sit on **שלמה המלך** 's throne, so he built a

duplicate one for himself. The only craftsman in the world who could build this lived in the little village **שושן**, far away from the capital city.

However clever the craftsman were, the practicality of moving the throne they miscalculated. It was **פשוט** too heavy to move back to the capital.

What did **אחשורוש** do? They spent three years building it?! - He moved the entire capital to **שושן** ! The entire **מלכות**.

Why did **הקב"ה** want to bring **אחשורוש** and his **מלכות** to **שושן**?

The **גאון** explains: Since "**איש יהודי היה בשושן הבירה**" – there was a **איד** called **מרדכי** living there. Later when there will be a **גזירה** on **כלל ישראל**, the **רבש"ע** didn't want to be **מטריח** the **גדול הדור** and **אסתר** to a faraway city where the king lived.

The whole move was so that **מרדכי** didn't have to travel anywhere!

This is one of the lessons of **פורים** says the **גאון** . From here we learn that everything happening in the world has a **שייכות** to the **איד**.

It once happened when the **בעל שם טוב** displayed a big smile on his face at **שלש סעודות**. His **חסידים** asked him why? He explained with the following, "There was once a prince who owned a tremendous amount of wealth. He didn't know what to do with his money, so he built himself a beautiful castle in middle of nowhere.

Once the prince died, the castle was left desolate for hundreds of years. A few days ago, a **איד** was traveling nearby. It was a very hot day. The sun was beating down and he needed shelter quickly. In the distance he saw this castle and went to use it as shelter."

Concluded the **בעל שם טוב** said, "I just received a **גילוי** that this castle just collapsed."

Everything is for the **איד**. The whole purpose of that castle was for this one **איד**. "That's why I laughed. This prince invested so much **כוחות** and spent so much money, all for one **איד**!"

The coronavirus. Of course it's got a **שייכות** to **אידן**. Everything is for the **אידן**. What's the **שייכות**? I don't know – I'm not a **נביא**. What happens? It affects the mouth; you have to isolate yourself and go into quarantine. Perhaps we're meant to be **מחזק** ourselves regarding the **איסור** of **לשון הרע**, which comes from the mouth and the **פסוק** says about such a person, "**ובדד ישב**", *he shall sit alone*. Stop the **הרע לשון**.- **הקב"ה** is sending us a message – He's inspiring us.

We think we're so secure. **הקב"ה** shows us who is in control. The airports are empty. The stock market is falling. We might be heading for a global recession.

It's all happening because of **כלל ישראל** – to inspire us. We're supposed to see the **רבש"ע**.

Right at the end of the **מגילה** we are told, **וישם המלך מס על הארץ** - king **אאחשורוש** put the taxes up. Why did he suddenly put the taxes up?

The **גאון** explains: Originally, when **אחשורוש** was trying to find out **אסתר** 's nation, every day at breakfast he would release one of his countries from paying tax. He would look carefully to see at which country **אסתר** would smile when she hears the good news.

Nevertheless, **אין אסתר מגדת** - Esther did not reveal anything even under tremendous pressure. She listened to the **גדול הדור** even though she did not understand.

Now that **אחשורוש** had found out which nation she belonged to, he could put all his taxes back up.

Why must we know that **אחשורוש** put the taxes back into place? What's the **מגילה** trying to tell us? Who cares?

Let me share with you a *moridicker* explanation: The **מגילה** is telling us a lesson: **אחשורוש** was the main character in the story of **פורים**. He was in every **פרק**, from **א** all the way to **י**. He saw it all. He saw the picture fit together. **ושתי** … then **בגתן ותרש** …**המן** … then **מרדכי**

and **אסתר**. He saw there was a **רבש"ע** there. He knew the story backwards – with every detail. The whole story was sown together so beautifully.

The next day after hearing that **אסתר** was Jewish, what was his first thing on his mind?! "TO PUT MY TAXES BACK INTO PLACE!!" Back to business – regular life.

The **מגילה** is teaching us how a **גוי** lives. He's not impressed. The entire story bounced off him like a ball.

We must not be like **אחשורוש**, but rather learn the lessons from the **מגילה**.

פורים is a time when people *mach-mishuga*. **פורים** is a **הייליגע'ער** time. The **תיקוני זוהר** famously teaches, **יום כיפור** is called **יום כיפור** since it is "**כפורים**" – like **פורים**, however, **פורים** itself is much greater, as the **בן יהוידע** explains it **על פי** the **גמרא** about **כ"ו הדמיון**.

I want to finish off with a story brought down by the **חידושי הרי"ם**: *A* **איד** came before the **בעל שם טוב** to ask for a **ברכה** for his wife who was lying in a terrible condition. She was in a terrible state.

"I'm sorry – I can't help you," said the Rebbe, "But if you go to **פלוני** in the distant village, he can give you a **ברכה**."

The **איד** travelled to the village, and he began to ask the people for the address of this person.

"Why would you want him?" they all asked, "he's the town's-*shicker*. He's drunk **יומם ולילה**."

Nevertheless, the **איד** was strong in his **אמונת חכמים** and he went to look for this person. He finds him lying in a gutter, drunk like never seen before. Lying in his sick, reeking of alcohol and wine. - He waits until he finds a time when the drunkard is sober.

Just before the drunkard is about to drink his next bottle, he runs over to him to ask for a **ברכה**.



"Why would you want a **ברכה** from me?" he asked.

"Just give me a **ברכה** … it's very serious…"

The drunkard gave the **איד** a **ברכה**.

He returns home and to his surprise, his wife is already feeling much better!

Immediately, he returned to the **בעל שם טוב** and asks, "Rebbe! What's **פשט**? You can't give a **ברכה** and this drunkard can?!"

"Let me explain," said the Rebbe, "This drunkard many years ago was a partner in business with someone else. Once, on his return trip from a distant fair, he stopped off in a small village. There, the two of them were awoken to the cries of a woman who just lost her husband.

Immediately, without second thoughts, this **איד** took out all the money he had and gave it over to this poor **אלמנה**.

That night in **שמים** there was a tremendous **רעש** . How can we reward such a person? - They decided to give him the power that whatever **ברכה** he gives will work!

The **מלאכים** however announced that such a power will be very dangerous. Who knows what will happen? He'll start giving crazy **ברכות**! - Accordingly, they decreed upon him to have a tremendous desire for **שכרות**.

He suddenly received this **תאוה** to drink, and therefore he was never able to utilize this tremendous **כח** he had. I couldn't give you a **ברכה**. But I sent you to him who could give you a **ברכה**."

Said the **חידושי הרי"ם** - Purim is a **היילעג'ער** time. **כל הפושט יד נותן לו**. On **פורים** since we give out to anyone who asks, **מדה כנגד מדה**, Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives to everyone who asks.

פורים is a time for a person to be able to be **פועל** *gevaldiga* **ישועות** for himself! **הקב"ה** is **משפיע** a **שפע רב** of good to **כלל ישראל** on **פורים** if we use the day well. We can ask for tremendous **ישועות**, for ourselves and the others around us.

The **שטן** however is very upset about this. He's out of business when **פורים** comes. Therefore, he comes and makes a big **בהלה** – he turns **פורים** upside down. He *machs-mishega* so that we miss out on the true **כוחות** of the day."

ונתנה תוקף את קדושת היום – of course we must enjoy ourselves – lift our spirits high. But leave in mind that it's a tremendous time to receive the most *gevaldiga* **השפעות** possible!

Just bear it in mind – it's a holy day. We want to use **פורים** as an **עליה** not heaven forbid as a **ירידה**. - Let us not be stupid and let us not waste it. Use the day for the right purpose.

Don't waste your **פורים** – don't allow this **הייליגע'ער** time to slip away without taking anything from it. If we use it in the right way, **אי"ה** we can bring down tremendous **השפעות** which will allow us to be **מצליח** over the coming year.

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

The Power of Simcha

When Queen Esther was asked by Achashveirosh, מַה־שְּׁאֵלָתֵךְ וְיִנָּתֶן לָךְ "***What is your request and it will be granted***" (5:6), she responded וּמָחָר אֶעֱשֶׂה כִּדְבַר הַמֶּלֶךְ - that she will let the king know the next day. Why did she think that pushing off her request to the next day would be more productive?

The Tzaddikim explain וַיֵּצֵא הָמָן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא שָׂמֵחַ וְטוֹב לֵב - that since, "Haman went out on that day happy and a glad heart", Esther knew that when one is full of joy, it is impossible to victorious over him.

No evil can come to one who is enveloped in the trait of simcha - joy. She had to wait a day until his joy subsided a bit.

Take this to heart: If the trait of simcha can be so effective for a rasha like Haman, how much more effective can it be for the Bnei Yisrael to remove hardships and troubles.



The Death of Stalin – The Untold Purim Story -Aish

Joseph Stalin, tyrant of communist Russia, was responsible for the deaths of approximately 20 million of his own people!

After World War II, his anti-Semitic campaign took a more aggressive stance. In 1947, he targeted thousands of Jewish scientists, politicians, and intellectuals. They were fired, arrested and tortured.

Then came Stalin's infamous Doctor's Plot, in which 6 Jewish doctors were arrested and tortured into making confessions that they were poisoning Russian children and killing babies in maternity wards. He spread these rumours about Jews to the public.

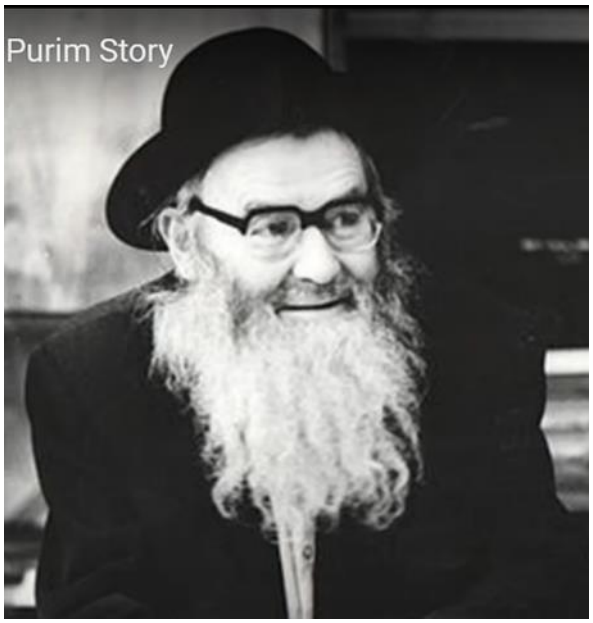
Stalin planned to eliminate Russia's nearly 3 million Jews, by deporting them to the freezing, uninhabitable regions of Russia! He planned to leave them there to die of hypothermia and starvation!

Newly discovered documents show that in February of 1953, Stalin commissioned the construction of four camps – in Kazakhstan, Siberia and the Arctic North.

A week before Purim of 1953, train cars all over Russia were being prepared to transport huge caravans of Jews into exile and slow death. The expulsion was set to begin on March 6th, just a few days after Purim.

Rabbi Yitzchak Zilber, imprisoned in Siberia, read out **מגילת אסתר** to a group of Jewish prisoners who were with him. He recounted the

miracle of Purim, in which Haman had plans to exterminate the Jews in Persia, when suddenly the tables were turned.



They said to him, "Who needs your tales about what happened 2,500 years ago? Isn't enough that Hitler finished 6 million – here they are about to be done with another 3 million?"

Rabbi Zilber replied, "True, our situation is difficult, but don't be so quick to eulogize us. Hashem will yet help… Stalin is a mere mortal… no one can know what will be with him in a half hour."


The Philadelphia Inquirer

CITY EDITION

STALIN IS DEAD

Soviet Dictator Dies in Kremlin Four Days After Stroke; Thirty-Year Rule Ends; No Hint Given on His Successor

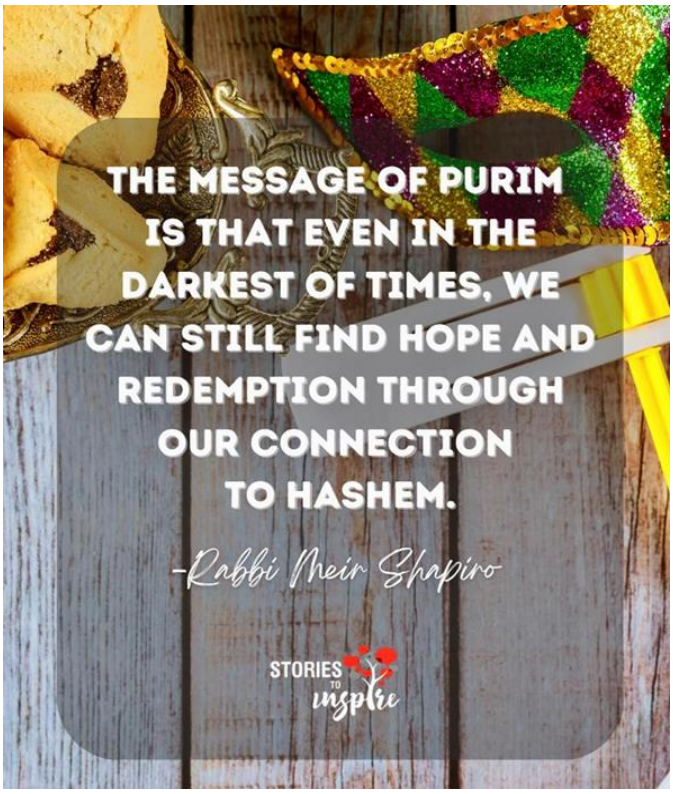
That Purim night- just 30 minutes after Rabbi Zilber's foretelling of Stalin's fate, Stalin was said to have 'collapsed in a fit of rage.'

This happened a few days before the doctors were to go on trial.

That Purim day, thousands of Jewish prisoners were freed! To the great relief of Russian Jewry, Joseph Stalin was no more. He died just a few days later, on March 5th – one day before his plan was to have been put into motion!

The downfall and death of Stalin is an untold, modern-day Purim miracle. When the tables are turned on the Hamans of the world, it reminds us that Purim is a time for hidden miracles, and their evil plans are destroyed.







The Alshich Hakadosh says, that when Haman came to the king's courtyard to tell the king to hang Morderchai, did you ever think about the exact timing of when Haman came?

He arrived at the exact moment he was needed! Not a moment too early and not a minute too late!

Let's think about what occurred.

Achashverosh couldn't sleep and asked to see the royal book of records – the royal charter. He then asked if Morderchai had ever been rewarded for saving his life. His servants replied that nothing had ever been done to repay him. Then the king asked, "Who is in

the courtyard?" – And it was Haman, coming to tell the king about his plans to hang Morderchai.



Let's think for a moment says the Alshich. If Haman would have arrived a minute earlier, he would have heard Achashverosh ask if anything had been done to reward Morderchai. He would have heard the name – Morderchai, and he wouldn't suggest dressing him in the royal garments, and parading him around the city on the king's horse… He wouldn't have said it, and he wouldn't have had to do it!

If Haman would have come a minute later, Achashverosh would ask, "Who's in the courtyard?" – Haman wouldn't have been there. Whoever was there would have been asked about how to reward Morderchai, and that's what would've been done. – Haman wouldn't have been the one who had to parade him around the city!

We see that Hashem arranged it that Haman should arrive at exactly that moment, to the exact second!

And we cry because we missed the bus… by just a minute! Don't you see that Hashem runs the show – even when it appears hidden?

Look at how Hashem orchestrated everything so that Haman would arrive at that specific moment! If he'd come a minute before or after, the entire thing wouldn't have happened!

Don't cry over missing something by a minute – realise that Hashem plans everything to the exact second!

Greater Than Yom Kippur By R' Tzvi Sytner

A person could be faced with the greatest monster – the worst decree ever, and your world is upside down, it's over, your finished. And yet a person could say, "Yes, that might be true – from **your** perspective, but **I** live in a different reality…"

Purim is a day that we can say, "Hey, hang on a second, I can break any decree, because that's the way Hashem has created the world." – And that is the power of Purim.

Purim is even greater than Yom Kippur. Yom Kippur has the ability to break decrees. But says the **Nesivos Shalom**, that Purim has the ability to break decrees that even Yom Kippur couldn't break!

This is why Purim will last forever as opposed to the other Yomim Tovim. It's a mercy from Hashem, that every year on Purim, that we will always have this day to gather together and be **מבַטֵל** (cancel) certain decrees that may be looming in the world. – This is the power of Purim!

The Secret to Gaining Inner Strength By R' Tzvi Sytner

Klal Yisrael is about to be destroyed by Achashverosh. Thankfully, Morderchai and Esther save us from total annihilation.

Now imagine if this happened today. I think that everybody would be, like "Wow, Morderchai, you are the man- you're a hero!" Everybody would be hailing him. Who wouldn't – right!

But, if you look at the end of the megillah, whilst spotlighting Morderchai, it says that he was second in command to the king, he only wanted the best for his people, he wanted peace for his nation, he was a great man, and yet, the last Pasuk in Megillas Esther says: **וְרָצוּי לְרֹב אֶחָיו** – he was accepted by **most** of his brethren! He was liked by **most** people!

'***Most, most***!' - He has just saved the entire nation! Seriously, there are still some people who dislike him?!

Moshe Rabeinu – he takes his people out of Mitzrayim and saves his people from hundreds of years of slavery. And we complain to him? We're mad at him?

The Ramchal – He wrote all his seforim, and he's threatened with being put into cheirem! And he must flee his country, for writing sefarim?

How did such great people stay motivated, whilst facing so much resistance?

The answer is that they had clarity. They knew that they were doing the Ratzon Hashem. And they also knew- as Chazal say: That when you want to do the Ratzon Hashem – there will be resistance!



So how can we stay motivated in the face of this resistance?

The answer is what I call the 'four C's' – CLARITY – CONVICTION – COURAGE & CONQUER.

First and foremost, we need to have clarity. The clarity that this is what Hashem wants from me. Any time that you are motivated to do something, and you face resistance, speak to your Rav/Rebbi/Rebbetzen/mentor, and gain the clarity. Get it crystal clear in your mind that what you are doing is exactly what you need to be doing.

Once we gain the clarity that what we are doing is right, that clarity gives us the unstoppable conviction and courage to forge forward and conquer any obstacle you face!

Machshava Tova - Rebbi Garfinkel Lakewood Cheder



After Haman came back from riding Mordechai around town, he was in bad shape **אָבֵל וַחָפוּי רֹאשׁ אסתר ו יב**. He was just a "shmatte"" This was no joke. He tried to get some sympathy from his wife and wise advisors, and what did they tell him! "Oh no, if it is Mordechai, who is a Yid, whom you started falling in front of, **נפול תפול לפניו** - you will surely continue to fall, it is over and you are finished."

The question is, why weren't they nice to him? Why didn't they encourage him and tell him not to worry? They should have told him to keep up the good work. What is the P'shat?

The answer is that they knew the truth and sometimes the truth has to be said even if it may hurt. They were telling him that he should admit defeat and stay far away. But no, he did not listen again and before long came his downfall.

Party Time

After fasting for three days, Queen Esther invited Achashverosh to come with Haman to a party. They all came to the party and Achashverosh asked Esther what she wishes. She asked for them to come back for a second party. The question is, why did she need a second party? What was wrong with the first party?

There are a few answers to this question. **The Even Ezra** says that Esther Hamalka was waiting for a sign from Hashem that she will be matzliach. By the second party she already saw the sign from the

fact that Mordechai was rewarded for having saved Achashverosh, and Haman had begun his downfall.

Other Meforshim say that until the first party the Yidden did not have full one hundred percent trust in Hashem. They still had some hope that Queen Esther, being in the King's palace, would save them. Only after the first party, which looked as if Esther was taking sides with Haman, because she invited him, only then did the Yidden put their complete trust in Hashem.

They then deserved to be saved and Esther Hamalka was ready to do what she could to try and save them.

There is one more question we would like to ask,

Why were parties needed for the task?

An answer for you is brought down here

And we will try our best to make it clear.

The parties were not just for drinking wine;

Not when the lives of the Yidden were on the line.

The true purpose of a Mishteh can only be one,

To thank Hashem Above for all that He has done.

There were separate reasons for making each feast,

As different as the west is from the east.

The second party was for the dreyi Hashem did send,

Which began with the beginning of Haman's end.

What about the first, Was it just for thirst?

Clearly not as we said before;

It was to thank Hashem for letting us "knock" three days at His door.

Three days of Tefilla can you imagine,

That must have caused a storm in heaven.

The Tefilla and fasting created a Z'chus so great,

That was surely a reason to celebrate.

For this reason Esther made the party on that day,

Because the Yidden all over had united to pray.

Machatzis Hashekel

Chaza"l tell us that when Hashem told Moshe Rabbeinu about the Machatzis Hashekel, it was very difficult for Moshe Rabbeinu. Then Hashem showed Moshe Rabbeinu a coin of fire and then it was all very clear.

All the Meforshim ask that this sounds almost like a Medrash Pli'ah - a wondrous Medrash. Why was it difficult for Moshe Rabbeinu? What did Moshe Rabbeinu not understand? And how did the coin of fire answer all of Moshe Rabbeinu's questions?

The Chasam Sofer explains that Moshe Rabbeinu was bothered by the fact that everyone gave the same thing and the same amount. He did not understand how it is possible to tell a person who wants to give more that he is not able. How can you hold back a person from completing his good will and bringing it to fruition?

This bothered Moshe Rabbeinu. To this Hashem showed him a coin of fire and the fire represents the Cheishek, Ahava and Hislahavus for the Mitzva. Hashem was showing Moshe Rabbeinu that if anyone wants to give more, he should give that small amount with more Kavana and more of a Bren. There is no limit to the amount of good-will one can put into even the smallest action.

This is a Nifla'dik'e Limud for every Yid for every day of the year, especially for Purim. The amount of Kavana and Simcha that one can put into a Mitzva is endless and infinite.

I told this over to my Chavrusa, Rav Avrohom Yaakov Teitelbaum Shlit"a and he added on a true diamond. He said that perhaps Moshe Rabbeinu was also bothered that the poor man who has such limited funds can also feel that he is stifled because he has so little money and he also wishes he could do more. To this end too, Hashem showed Moshe Rabbeinu that whatever a person has even the smallest amount, he should know that with his heart he can accomplish more than the richest man in the world.

It is all dependant on the Kavana, the geshmak, the Cheishek and the Ratzon Tov. Hafleh Vafeleh Mamish.

Overcoming the Yetzer Harah



We say in the Megilla, **וְנַהֲפוֹךְ הוּא אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלְטוּ הַיְּהוּדִים הֵמָּה בְּשׂנְאֵיהֶם** (9:1)- And it all switched around, and the Yidden who were supposed to be whatever, Rachmana Litzlan, now ruled over their enemies, Boruch Hashem.

Who is the greatest enemy of Klal Yisroel? It is none other than the Yetzer Harah himself. On the day of Purim we have that power to rule over all our enemies, especially the worst of all, the Yetzer Harah.

This is a great Chizuk for these holy days. And may they indeed be days of true Aliyah and overcoming all our Yetzer Harah's and evil inclinations, especially our bad Middos, Rachmana Litzlan.

Our Yetzer Tov should lead us and help us, and we should only have good Middos and do only good things today and every day.

Chizuk

There is a very famous story about a Bochur who needed Chizuk badly. He was a very good boy and a very nice boy, but he had a hard time accepting Mussar. He only liked positive words. This Bochur also had a very good sense of humour and liked to make many jokes.

One time on Purim, he went to his Rebbi on Purim and the Rebbi gave him some strong Mussar and he became very Tzubrochen, Rachmana Litzlan. His Rebbi called him a **לץ** and he was really upset. He did not want to go back to his Yeshiva and he did not know what to do.

He heard about a Chassiddishe Rebbe who was very positive and did great Mofsim. This Rebbe never said anything negative and everyone who came to see him saw a Yeshua right away.

This Bochur travelled to the Rebbe and told him his problem. Right away, the Rebbe listened and said, "Gevaldik, you did not understand your Rebbe. He said you are a Lamed Tzaddik; that stands for Little Tzaddik. Your Rebbe gave you the biggest compliment."

The Bochur heard this and was so happy. He ran back to his Yeshiva and he became a great Tzaddik.

This story is based on true facts which really happened. It is amazing that the Chassiddishe Rebbe would not even say the word Lamed Tzaddik.

This is a lesson which we can learn from especially around Purim. Our **כח הדיבור** is very precious and we must be careful with it. Let us try to say only nice words and words of encouragement.

There is a famous quote which became popular recently. It goes like this: "***If you cannot think of something nice to say, say nothing***." Perhaps we can change that to, "***If you are smart enough to think of something not nice to say, surely you are smart enough to think of something nice to say***!"

Simcha

Purim is one of the main times of Simcha of the year. Of course Simcha is necessary every day of the year, but Purim is extra-opportune. Even the **Orchos Tzaddikim** places the Simcha of Purim in a special category. The question is how to attain true Simcha?

There are many answers to this question and we would like to share one answer which we heard from **Rav Getzel Fried Shlit"a** when he was here in Lakewood. Rav Getzel Shlit"a said that he heard from **Rav Chaim Stein Zatza"l** an unbelievable vort based on a Targum in Tehillim.

The Possuk says **אוֹר זָרֻעַ לַצַּדִּיק וּלְיִשְׁרֵי־לֵב שִׂמְחָה**. (Tehilim 97:11)

The Targum on the words **וּלְיִשְׁרֵי־לֵב שִׂמְחָה** is **ולתריצי לבא חדוא** - *and the people who have the answers in their heart, will have Simcha.*

The way to have Simcha is by finding the answers. This means trusting Hashem in every way possible. Bitachon is the answer to all the questions - a true source of Simcha.

Adar

The Possuk says **פִּתַּחְתָּ שַׂקִּי וַתְּאַזְּרֵנִי שִׂמְחָה (תהילים ל,יב)** – ***You opened my sacks and you girded me with Simcha***.

The word **שַׂקִּי** is equal to 410, which is also the exact Gematria of Adar times two. This is a hint to the great gift of Adar. Hashem gives us two Adars which are filled with Simcha. Im Yirtze Hashem, this great Simcha should last for the entire year.

"With Emunah, we acknowledge that every moment is an opportunity to connect with Hashem." – Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev

Change Must Come From Within



It is hard to believe that Purim is only one day. The question is, what do we still have left with us after Purim? All the Mishloach Manos is finished, the house is back to normal, and everyone has gone back to work. What do we still have with us for the rest of the year?

This question can really be asked every day of the year - What do I have from yesterday? Did I learn any lesson yesterday that is making me a better person today?

Let us leave every day on the side for now and let us try to focus on Purim. One thing that every single person hopefully gains on Purim is some level of Simcha. This is universal and it is something which Chaza"l already tell us **משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה**. This is the Mitzva of Adar and it is because of Purim. (Rash"i tells us that this Mitzva of Simcha is connected to the month of Nissan too, but for now let us focus on Adar.)

We can understand that the whole month is special because of the miracle of Purim. The Possuk says that the whole month changed from a month of mourning, Rachmana Litzlan to Yom Tov Boruch Hashem - **וְהַחֹדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר נֶהְפַּךְ לָהֶם מִיָּגוֹן לְשִׂמְחָה וּמֵאֵבֶל לְיוֹם טוֹב** (9:22)

Rav Yaakov Galinsky Zatza"l tells us a very inspiring story which took place in Shanghai during the war. Besides for the Mir Yeshiva, there were some other groups there too, and one of the groups was led by the **Amshinover Rebbe**. The Amshinover Rebbe's daughter got married to one of the Choshuve talmidim of the Mir, **Rav Chaim Milikovsky**, who is the father of the present Amshinover Rebbe Shlit"a.

At the Simcha, one of the attendees commented that the Simcha is so great that any person who is witnessing it should change to become a better person.

The Amshinover Rebbe Zatza"l heard this comment, but he did not like it. He said that the Amshinover Chassidus comes from **Rav Yitzchok of Vorke** who was a talmid of the Rebbe **Reb Bunim of Peshischa**. Reb Bunim used to say "***If I thought miracles would work to make people change, I would make a miracle that trees of Dantzig should fly to Peshischa***."

"But miracles do not change people. After the miracles of Yetzias Mitzrayim and Krias Yam Suf, the Yidden came to Refidim and weakened their Torah learning. After Mattan Torah, they made the Aigel. After the fire came down from heaven and the Yidden called out **ה' הוא האלקים** (in last week's Haftora), Eliyahu Hanavi said **עזבו בריתך בני ישראל**. Change must come from within with toil - it needs to be internal."

This was the message of the Amshinover Rebbe. **Rav Chatzkel** was there and he was very excited. He said that this was exactly what they were always taught in Kelm!

"Hester" – Hidden

Rav Elya Svei Zatza"l brings the **Mahara"m Schiff** in Maseches Chullin which says that the name of Esther symbolizes "Hester" being hidden and Tznius.

Rav Yerucham Levovitz Zatza"l says that Hashem is Yoshev Beseiser. The Mahara"m Schiff says that Esther was able to reach Hashem because of her Tznius.

Mordechai is hinted to in the Torah in the Ketoress, **מרי דכיא**. This is also because the Ketoress was an offering which comes with Tznius - in the Ohel Moed and in the Kodesh Kadashim on Yom Kippur.

The Ketoress also has the power to save Klal Yisroel because of this. As the **Seforno** says, the Ketoress is a symbol of Kevod Shamayim. This is also the way to fight Amalek.

The Mahara"m Schiff there tells us that there are three ways for us to find the Name of Hashem hidden in the Megilla. The first way is in the **ראשי תיבות** of the words, יָבֹוא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמָן הַיֹּום. (5:4)

The second is the **סוף תיבות** of the words כִּי־כָלְתָה אֵלָיו הָרָעָה (7:7)

And the third is backwards in the **סוף תיבות** of the words וְזֶה אֵינֶנּוּ שֹׁוֶה לִי. (5:13)



How to serve vodka - The Power of a Giver by Rabbi Meyer Yedid

This powerful story reminds us that on Purim, matanos l'evyonim, and chesed in general, is not just about fulfilling an obligation, but about giving with a full heart and genuine care.

On a cold, rainy night during one of his travels, **R' Simcha Bunim of Peshischa** stopped in a small town and took a room at the local inn, a kosher hotel owned by a simple Jew. There was almost no one else staying there. After the innkeeper served Reb Bunim his dinner, he stopped by his table to talk about what was weighing on his mind.

"Rebbe, I am in trouble," he said. "Hardly anyone travels through this town anymore. Business is bad. I cannot pay my expenses, let alone make a decent living. I am on the verge of going bankrupt and losing everything I have worked for my whole life. What should I do?"

Before Reb Bunim could respond, there was a loud knock at the door. The innkeeper hurried to open it and found a man standing outside in shabby, drenched clothing, shivering from the cold.

"I need a place to stay," the man said, "and something to eat. Can I sleep here and also get a meal?"



"Of course," the innkeeper replied. "Come right in." The man stepped inside and added, "There is only one catch. I have no money. I am asking you to take me in as a favor. Is that all right?"

The innkeeper sighed. How miserable his situation had become! Finally, a guest arrives, and he has no money to pay. Still, he would never turn away a cold and hungry traveler.

"It's not a problem," said the innkeeper. "Sit down and I'll bring you something to eat."

Reb Bunim watched as the innkeeper served the man soup and then a main course. The traveler ate as if he had not eaten in days. When he finished, he wiped his mouth and called the innkeeper over. "You are being so kind to me," he said. "The food was excellent, but I am still shivering. Could I possibly have a glass of vodka to warm me up?"

The innkeeper nodded and went to the barrel. He poured a glass of vodka, looked at it, and spilled it on the ground. He filled another glass and spilled that one too. He did this a third time. Only the fourth glass satisfied him. He brought it to the traveler and walked away.

Reb Bunim, watching in amazement, called the innkeeper over. "What were you doing?" he asked. "Vodka is expensive. You tell me you have money problems, and then you spill three glasses on the ground?"

"Vodka is indeed expensive, Rebbe," said the innkeeper. "When the man asked for vodka, I was upset. Isn't it bad enough that I'm feeding him for free? But then I remembered that he is shivering, and that by giving him vodka I would be doing a chesed for another Jew, so I agreed."

"But when I poured that first glass, I did it with anger. It was not poured with a spirit of full generosity. I said to myself: Is that how you are going to do a chesed for another Jew? So, I decided that I'm not serving that vodka, and I poured it out. The same with the second and the third. By the time I poured the fourth glass, my anger was gone. I considered for a moment and was convinced I had no ill feelings, so I gave him the vodka."

When giving matanos l'evyonim or mishloach manos, think of the innkeeper. Don't just give—give with joy, give with all your heart, and give with all your soul.

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hoff Shlita

The whole Chodesh Adar centers around the focus on the Avodah and the connection to the Inyan of Purim. **מִשֶּׁנִּכְנַס אֲדָר, מַרְבִּין בְּשִׂמְחָה**

What does it mean? What are we supposed to do? What is the Inyan of **מַרְבִּין בְּשִׂמְחָה**? What is it telling us?

So part of the inyan of **מַרְבִּין בְּשִׂמְחָה** is, because a person has the chizuk, the message of the chodesh, that a person can always find his Yeshua, even in difficult and desperate situations, where he doesn't necessarily know how it's going to happen. - But the **רִבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם** is always close by. The **רִבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם** is close to hear our tefillahs. And that gives a person a chizuk in his life, and that's the

inyan of מַרְבִּין בְּשִׂמְחָה, never to be מִתְיָאֵשׁ. And I'd like briefly bring just one or two points from the Megillah.

The inyan of tefillah is a central theme in the Yeshua of Purim. It states in the Megillah, וּמָרְדֳּכַי יָדַע אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה וַיִּקְרַע מָרְדֳּכַי אֶת־ בְּגָדָיו וַיִּלְבַּשׁ שַׂק וָאֵפֶר וַיֵּצֵא בְּתוֹךְ הָעִיר וַיִּזְעַק זְעָקָה גְּדוֹלָה וּמָרָה - *And Mordecai knew all that had transpired, and Mordecai rent his clothes and put on sackcloth and ashes, and he went out into the midst of the city and cried [with] a loud and bitter cry. (4:1)*

Morderchai understood that this was the hishtadlus that was needed to bring about the Yeshua.

A few pesukim later, the Megillah tells us that Esther sent בְּגָדִים to Mordechai. וַתִּשְׁלַח בְּגָדִים לְהַלְבִּישׁ אֶת־מָרְדֳּכַי וּלְהָסִיר שַׂקּוֹ מֵעָלָיו וְלֹא קִבֵּל – '*And she sent clothing to dress Mordecai and to take off his sackcloth, but he did not accept [it].*' (4:4) - Mordechai came by the שַׁעַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ every day, and Esther wanted to give him suitable בְּגָדִים that he should be able to wear in order that he should be presentable.

Esther was of the opinion that Mordechai should enter the palace and plead for the Jews – i.e to do at least some Hishtadlus (which was impossible in sackcloth), Mordechai would have none it, Teffillo and only Teffillo would help and neither was he prepared to do even minimal Hishtadlus (which would distract him from Teffillo) and he therefore Morderchai refused to accept the clothes.

The Nesivos explains what was going on between Esther and Mordechai.

Esther's offer to Mordechai to change his clothes to appear respectable is rejected because Mordechai believed that external efforts without heartfelt prayer would be ineffective. Mordechai refused to change his mode of tefillah or his outward appearance in sackcloth, symbolizing steadfast faith and connection to Hashem.

Morderchai believed that spiritual effort is not about outward appearance but about sincere prayer and faith. - **כֹּחַ הַתְּפִלָּה** alone.

Everything that happens around us is only based on the tefillah that we do. - It's very important to see in the Megillah how Mordechai was able to hold himself with such conviction.- **וְלֹא קָם וְלֹא זָע**

The Megillah tells us Mordechai didn't allow himself to be persuaded, to move away from the conviction that he had about what the reason for the Gezeirah was and how to deal with the Gezeirah, despite so much that was going on around him which tried to persuade him otherwise.

עַל כָּל פָּנִים Mordechai said, no, I'm not taking away off the begodim and I'm not changing from the course of davening. Mordechai would have none it, Teffillo and only Teffillo would help and neither was he prepared to do even minimal hishtadlus and therefore he would not accept the clothes.


ספר שמן המור

בשאלוניקי

The **מָרִי אֲבוּהָב**, in **ספר שמן המור**, [**Rabbi Aharon אבוהב** Thessaloniki (Salonika) in 1596] explains the posuk as follows: The posuk says, **וַתִּשְׁלַח בְּגָדִים לְהַלְבִּישׁ אֶת־מָרְדֳּכַי וּלְהָסִיר שַׂקּוֹ מֵעָלָיו וְלֹא קִבֵּל**. Esther sent begodim to dress Mordechai, and to remove his sackclothes.

He explains that the posok should have said the other way around. First you remove your sackclothes, and then you put on the begodim. So it should have been, remove your clothes and put on these others.




The **מָרִי אֲבוּהָב** explains that Esther knew that Morderchai wouldn't remove his sackclothes. But she said, 'put these clothes on top'. He said, **לְהָסִיר** means 'to conceal' the sack clothes. Put the **בְּגָדִים** on top of the sack clothes, so that you'll be wearing them at the same time. - **וְלֹא קִבֵּל** - And even that Mordechai didn't want to do.

Mordechai's refusal to remove his sackcloth before donning new clothes indicated a conviction and desire to maintain his internal state of repentance and prayerfulness, even while outwardly preparing for redemption. He wanted to only rely on the **כֹּחַ הַתְּפִלָּה** alone.

I would just like to add based on the thoughts of the Nesivos and the **מָרִי אֲבוּהָב** that in The Megillah it says **וּמָרְדֳּכַי יָצָא מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בִּלְבוּשׁ מַלְכוּת תְּכֵלֶת וָחוּר וַעֲטֶרֶת זָהָב גְּדוֹלָה וְתַכְרִיךְ בּוּץ וְאַרְגָּמָן וְהָעִיר שׁוּשָׁן צָהֳלָה וְשָׂמֵחָה** – *'And Mordecai left the king's presence with royal raiment, blue and white and a huge golden crown and a wrap of linen and purple, and the city of Shushan shouted and rejoiced.'* (8:15)

The Brisker Rav asks, how do understand the pasuk? – Are the people rejoicing because they now understood that the Yeshua had come about, or are these two separate things?

The Brisker Rav brings a proof from **שושנת יעקב** that it says **שׁוֹשַׁנַּת יַעֲקֹב צָהֳלָה וְשָׂמֵחָה בִּרְאוֹתָם יַחַד תְּכֵלֶת מָרְדְּכָי** – *'The rose of Yaakov (**כְּלַל יִשְׂרָאֵל**) were thrilled with joy and exulted **when** they beheld Mordechai garbed in royal blue.'*

We can understand from this that especially now, seeing Morderchai bedecked in the royal clothing, that it was the stimulus for everybody's great ecstatic enjoyment and rejoicing.

The question is, what was so exciting about seeing Mordechai **בִּלְבוּשׁ מַלְכוּת? לְבוּשָׁה** it was seeing that the Yeshuah had come, and that was the excitement. The fact that **וּמָרְדֳּכַי יָצָא** was only a side issue to the excitement.

The fact that Mordechai was **now** prepared to wear these **בְּגָדִים** was the indication that **he** felt that the Yeshua had finally come about. He was now able to take off his sackclothes and able to wear the bigdei Yeshua and of Simcha, and that's what brought home to them the fact that the final Yeshua had come about and the Tefillos had been accepted. **שׁוֹשַׁנַּת יַעֲקֹב צָהֳלָה וְשָׂמֵחָה**.They could then gather themselves with Simcha to appreciate the Yeshua of the **רִבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם**.

We are encouraged to embody Mordechai's spirit: to daven with conviction and to trust that salvation will come, even if not immediately visible.

The month of Adar invites us to renew our connection to **הקב"ה**, increase joy, and trust in the **כֹּחַ הַתְּפִלָּה** in all circumstances. Observances such as the fast of Esther reinforce the role of communal spiritual preparation in bringing about miraculous outcomes. Ultimately, the message is one of hope: even in desperate situations, The **רִבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם** is near and responsive to heartfelt prayer.

"The yetzer hara does not approach a person and tell him to deny truth. It merely tells him to postpone it. 'Not now' is the language of destruction. A small delay in ruchniyus becomes a wall that blocks an entire life." ~ Rabbi Yerucham Levovitz.

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hoff Shlita

Why do we have two readings of the Megillah, when all the other mitzvos are done once?

The Gemarah Megilla 4a says: **חַיָּיב אָדָם לִקְרוֹת אֶת הַמְּגִילָּה בַּלַּיְלָה וְלִשְׁנוֹתָהּ בַּיּוֹם, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "אֱלֹקַי אֶקְרָא יוֹמָם וְלֹא תַעֲנֶה וְלַיְלָה וְלֹא דוּמִיָּה לִי"** – *'A person is obligated to read the Megillah at night and then to repeat it during the day, as it is stated: " Hashem, I call by day but You do not answer; and at night, I do not keep silent."* (Tehillim 22:3),

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi's statement means that one must repeat the reading of the Megilla by day after reading it at night.

Rashi says **זכר לנס שהיו זועקין בימי צרתן יום ולילה** - We repeat it during the day as a remembrance of the miracle, for Yidden would cry out to Hashem in the days of their distress, **day and night**."

Esther stood in the inner court of the king's house" (Esther 5:1). Rabbi Levi said: Once she reached the chamber of the idols, which was in the inner court, the Divine Presence left her. She immediately said: **רִבּוֹנוֹ שֶׁל עוֹלָם - קֵלַי קֵלַי לָמָּה עֲזַבְתָּנִי** *why have you forsaken me?*

Esther never gave up. She davened and then davened again, until her tefillos were answered. - A Yid must never give up davening – We must daven by day and by night.

אין דבר עומד בפני התפילה – Nothing stands in the way of tefillah.

לעולם יצעק אדם אל ה' – A person should always cry out to Hashem.

Rav Hutner said – 'Tefillah is not what you do after you've exhausted your options. - Tefillah is the option.'

Rav Dessler said – 'The moment you stop davening is the moment you declare that you believe the situation is fixed. But nothing is fixed except Hashem.'

The Power of "Jewish" Cookies



Rabbi Azancot told a tale about how a young man came to **Rabbi Gamliel Rabinowitz** to tell him his story of becoming a baal teshuvah.

A woman came to America after World War II and decided that after what she had endured, she would completely renounce Judaism. She got married and had children but didn't raise them with religion. She didn't fast Yom Kippur or abstain from chametz on Pesach.

Years later, just before Spring, her oldest child, Jerry, was in college, and he received a package from his mother. He opened it up and found a container with some triangular cookies filled with jam. He recognized them, as his mother made them every year in March, and he eagerly bit into one. He later brought the container to share with his friends while they ate lunch on the campus lawn.

Jerry's friend Joe took a cookie and said, "Hey, you're Jewish, like me!" "Jewish?" Jerry said, "I'm not Jewish." Joe asked, "Where did you get these cookies?" "My mother made them," Jerry answered.

"Well, then, you're Jewish! These cookies are called hamantaschen, and the Jews make them for the holiday of Purim," Joe explained.

Jerry called his mother and asked, "Mom, am I Jewish?" His mother was surprised. "Why do you ask?" "My friend explained that the cookies you make are Jewish cookies that they bake for some holiday." The mother answered, "As a matter of fact, yes, we are Jewish. My mother used to bake these with me every year for Purim, so I always made them for my kids because I looked forward to eating them as a child."

Just from that little cookie, Jerry went on to investigate Judaism and soul-search his way to Jerusalem, where he made aliyah, years later as a kollel scholar. His mother had such lovely experiences as a child, baking cookies with her mom for the holiday, that the excitement and enjoyment never left her, and she couldn't give up the tradition of baking hamantaschen for Purim.



Besamei HaTorah …Beneath the Surface By: R' Shmuel Winzelberg

A Talmid Chacham once made an interesting observation to the **'Pnei Menachem'** in regard to Mishloach Manos. It is all the same if a person sends a large cake and a small bottle of wine or a small cake and a large bottle of wine. It states regarding the sender (Menachos 110a): **אחד המרבה ואחד הממעיט, ובלבד שיכוון ליבו לשמים** - 'Whether one gives a lot or one gives a little, his offering is pleasing to Hashem, provided he directs his heart to Heaven'.

The Admor was very pleased with this observation and he told the Chosid: "My father, zt"l, author of the '**Imri Emes**', said, "There are two words in the Torah: **גם ואך** – 'also' and 'but'. One term means to increase, and one term decreases— they are opposites of one another. The word **גם** - 'also', comes to add on and the letters in the alphabet immediately before it are **ב-ל**, which spell **לב** 'heart'. The word **אך** – 'but', comes to diminish and the letters in the alphabet that follow it are also **ב-ל**, which also spell 'heart'.

Though these words are in direct opposition to one another and they have different purposes, yet, they hint at the same function: whether one gives a lot or one gives a little, provided he directs his heart to Hashem! (Niflaosecha Asicha, also quoted by the Hafla'ah)

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages



The Gemara in Megilah (7b) teaches **מְחַיַּב אִינִישׁ לִבְסוּמֵי בְּפוּרַיָא**, that one is obligated, which is usually translated as to drink wine on Purim, until he doesn't know the difference between 'Arur Haman' and 'Baruch Mordechai', cursed is Haman and blessed in Mordechai.

The Nesivos Shalom (Purim, pg. 57-58) offers a completely different understanding of this Gemara. He writes that the Gemara does not mean one should get drunk, 'Livesumei', with wine, rather 'Livesumei— B'Puriya', in Purim. Meaning, that one should get intoxicated from Purim itself, as the Pasuk in Yeshaya says, **וּשְׁכֵרַת וְלֹא מִיָּיִן** - "Drunk, but not from wine" (51:21).

On Purim, one must become so "Shikur", drunk on the elevated status in the Ruchniyus of Purim that he cannot tell between the 'Arur Haman' and 'Boruch Mordechai' of his Avodas Hashem. Meaning, his Bein Adam LaChaveiro, the way he interacts with others, and his Bein Adam LaMakom, the way he interacts with Hashem, become so uplifted that they are one and the same!

"Other festivals celebrate redemption from exile. Purim reveals the holiness that exists within exile itself. The joy of Purim is the joy of finding light inside darkness." ~ Pachad Yitzchok.



Q ***In practice, how should we act on Purim? What should we do to distance ourselves from the great michsholim (stumbling blocks)?***

A **HaRav Yitzchok Zilberstein:** "The only time of the year that we find that there is an issue to get tipsy is only on Purim during the day, and even on that, many disagree that it is not as simple as it seems. And it is impossible that Chazal gave us a mitzvah that causes a michshol.

Everyone should ask a Shailas Chacham on how to behave. But we must remember what is written in Chayei Adam: 'Anyone who knows about himself that he will be mezalzel (disrespectful) of any mitzvah at that time – Netilas Yadayim, a bracha, Birchas Hamzon, or not davening Mincha or Maariv – and he'll act frivolously, it is better not to get drunk, and all his actions should be l'Shem Shamayim."

One is obligated on this day of Purim to have an abundance of simcha and to eat and drink to contentment. However, we are not commanded to become drunk to the point of diminishing ourselves through the simcha. For the simcha that we were commanded to have is not one of frivolity or foolishness, but one of spiritual pleasure that brings us to the love of Hashem and praise for the miracles He performed for us. Me'iri, as quoted in the Bi'ur Halacha, Orach Chaim 695.

"Purim teaches that even when Hashem's Name is hidden, His presence is complete. The absence of open miracles reveals a deeper miracle — that nature itself is guided entirely by Him." ~ Sfas Emes.

A Purim Lesson???



We know that Purim is a time of great joy. It is also a time when people don't take things just as seriously as they do the rest of the year. It is in this vein that Rabbi Mendel Zlotnick, the guest contributor to this "special" Purim issue of YomTov, composed his thoughts. And just remember, you never know from where you can learn something!!! With that note... ***"Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall***

Humpty Dumpty had a great fall

All the king's horses and all the king's men

Couldn't put Humpty together again."

This passage has caused much speculation and debate amoung the commentators. What was so "great" about Mr. Dumpty's fall? Why did he sit on the wall in the first place? It is commonly accepted that Mr. Dumpty was an egg. That being the case, how does an egg sit, anyway?

These questions are really for men much greater than we to deal with. In this humble composition, we will attempt to deal with two other questions:

1) Considering that Mr. Dumpty was a giant egg, he must have literally shattered into a gazillion pieces and lost many pints of yolk. Why did they even attempt to put him together again? Even Krazy Gluing a vase that has broken into two or three pieces is beyond the ability of most mortals!

2) Whatever reason that the king's men might have had to attempt to reconstruct Humpty Dumpty does not explain the actions of the king's horses: Why did they bother to try and help the unfortunate egg? Everyone knows that horses do not have that much manual dexterity. They do not even have opposable thumbs! Or hands for that matter!

The answer is that we can learn a tremendous lesson from the entire Humpty Dumpty affair. We learn how far the Mitzva of Chessed - the commandment to do kindness to your fellow man (or fellow egg, as it were), goes.

Those of the earlier generations were so great that not only kings, but even the king's men - nay, even horses! - did whatever they could to help others. Even here, where it was clearly a futile attempt, an effort that was doomed to fail from the outset, they tried to help - so great was their desire to do kindness - the Mitzva of Chessed.

Limudei Moshe

Insight from the Maharal

The *Maharal* writes that the body and the mind are two opposites, when one rises, the other falls. On Purim, Haman wanted to wipe out the bodies of Klal Yisrael from the world, therefore days of feasting and joy were established, which gives pleasure to the body, and one must get drunk on Purim "*ad deloi yoda*", and drink to the extent that his intoxication is so great that his mind is completely removed, and the person becomes completely physical.

The opposite of this is on Yom Kippur, when the *sotan* is **המקטרג צר ואויב לאדם**, and tries to get rid of our *neshomas*, therefore, all bodily pleasures are forbidden, in order to nullify the power of the body and increase the power of the soul.



The Yerushalayim streets were filled with happy families in their colorful costumes. The spirit of Purim was everywhere—but not in Devorah's heart. Her engagement had just been broken. She wished she could lose herself in the day especially meant for ad d'lo yada, but there was no forgetting this sharp pain.

"Would you take me to **Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** for a brachah?" she asked her father, Yitzchak.

Knowing it would be an awkward intrusion on the gadol's Purim seudah, her father felt a moment's hesitation. But if this was what Devorah needed, he'd do it. They went to Rav Shlomo Zalman's house. "Wait here," Yitzchak told his daughter. "I'll go inside to speak to him and explain why we're here."

He entered the house and approached Rav Shlomo Zalman, apologizing for the intrusion. After explaining the situation, he asked if Devorah could come in and get a brachah.

"Please don't bring her in," the rav replied. "I'll go out to her."

"I wouldn't want to trouble the Rav!" Yitzchak answered. "Please let me bring her in. She's right outside by the door."

"Absolutely not. She will not come in," said Rav Shlomo Zalman firmly. He got up and went with Yitzchak outside. Not only did he give Devorah a beautiful brachah, but he also gave her encouragement as well. "Don't worry. Hashem will help, and you'll be engaged again and build a Jewish home with your chassan."

Touched to her core, Devorah burst into tears.

"You see," said Rav Shlomo Zalman to Yitzchak. "This is why I would not allow her inside. I knew she might cry, and she would have been embarrassed in front of all those people."

בס"ד

למודי משה

The Futile Revenge of a Bird – What It Means to Be a Yid



This year I came across a fascinating and enigmatic Medrash (Esther Rabbah 7:10) which describes the plot of Haman, the villain of the Purim story:

"What is a suitable parable for the vicious Haman? To what can he be compared? To a bird which made its nest on the shore of the sea, and then the sea came and swept away the nest. The bird said: I will not budge from here until the sea becomes dry land, and the dry land becomes the sea. What did the bird do? It took some water from the sea in its mouth and dropped it on dry land, and took dirt from the land and dropped it into the sea. Its friend came and stood alongside. He said to the bird: You ill-fated, hapless one! How do you ever hope to succeed in destroying the sea?

"Similarly, Hashem said to Haman the Evil One: Fool of fools! I myself planned to destroy the Jewish people and was unsuccessful, as it is written 'He intended to destroy them were it not that Moshe, His chosen one, stood before Him in the breach to return His wrath from destroying,' and you, Haman, think you will be able to decimate and annihilate them?! I swear by your life, that your head will be in place of theirs; they will be saved and you will be hanged."

At first glance, the Medrash is saying that the annihilation of the Jews is as impossible and ludicrous as the draining of the ocean, beak-full by beak-full, by a bird. The bird is so blinded by its anger at the sea for destroying its nest that it does not realize the absurdity of its quest.

This Medrash is perplexing:

The bird was quite foolish in its strategy to dry an ocean drop by drop. It is a ludicrous proposition. Whereas Haman – the viceroy of the greatest empire of the time, who had the full cooperation of the mightiest man in the world, King Achashveirosh – had a well-thought-out plan, and it came dangerously close to fruition. Why then is he compared to the bird trying to drain the ocean, defined as the "fool of fools?"

The Medrash relates that "Hashem said to Haman the Evil One: Fool of fools! I myself planned to destroy the Jewish people and was unsuccessful." How can Hashem be "unsuccessful?" Who can possibly stop Hashem from executing His plans?

There is a famous Gemara in *Berachos* (61b). The Gemara relates:

The Evil [Roman] Empire had prohibited Torah study. Pappus the son of Yehuda came and found Rabbi Akiva making large public gatherings and teaching Torah. Pappus said to him: Akiva! Aren't you afraid of the authorities? And Rabbi Akiva replied: I will give you a parable.

A fox is walking along a river. He sees the fish frantically scurrying from one place to another.

He says to them: From whom are you running?

From the nets and traps of the fishermen.

Why don't you come up to the dry land, and we will live happily together, just as our forefathers did!

The fish replied: Is it really you whom they call the cleverest of animals? You are not clever, but rather a fool! If we are afraid in the place of our vitality, how much more so in the place of our death!

Rabbi Akiva concluded: If the life is tough as we are sitting and studying Torah, about which it is written "It is our life and the length of our days," how much worse it will be if we cease to study Torah.

Hashem wanted to teach us an important lesson, and He wanted to teach us that just like fish can't survive without water, similarly, Klal Yisrael have no life, unless they are learning Torah (which is compared to water).

We see from the above that Torah is to the Jew what the water is to the fish. It is his necessary habitat, the source of his vitality, it is where he can live, breathe, thrive, and be most creative. Like a fish washed up ashore, the Jewish soul deprived of Torah, will struggle to find real endurable meaning on "dry land," in an environment unsuitable for his spiritual DNA to flourish and express itself fully. He, like the fish, will flip and flop, and may end up trying out all different ideas, however, ultimately will not be at peace until he returns to the water.

With this idea, perhaps we can better understand the plot of Haman, and can gain a deeper insight into what the Medrash is teaching us. We will explain:

Haman, understood that in order to destroy the Jews, what he had to do was dry up the sea; sever the relationship between the Jewish people and their Torah. His goal must be to antiquate the Torah, to teach the Jews how to become "land animals." He must invite them, in the words of the fox, to "live together with us in peace as our forefathers did." Once the fish was out of the water, it would be vulnerable to destruction.

Taking the Fish Out of the Sea

The Gemara in *Megillah* (12a) asks: "Why was annihilation decreed on the Jews of that generation?" and the Gemara answers: "Because they enjoyed the feast of that wicked man (Achashveirosh, the Persian king)." In the opening *perek* of *Megillas* Esther we learn that the Persian monarch threw a major feast, and the Jews of Shushan, the capital of the Persian Empire, enjoyed the feast.

Note the words: The Gemara does not state that they were guilty of eating non-kosher food (if so, it would not make a difference who was serving the meal – a wicked or a righteous person. Nor is death the penalty for eating non-kosher food). In fact, the Gemara relates that there was a designated kosher section at the king's feast. The issue was that "they **enjoyed** the feast of that wicked man." It was not the food; it was the psychological transformation of the Jewish psyche: Their dignity and sense of inner worth did not stem from their own soul and identity; it came from being invited to the Persian "White House," from rubbing shoulders with the Iranian celebrities and from having their photos appearing on the front pages of "The Shushan Times." As they took their places among the Persians, Medians, Babylonians, Chaldeans and the other nationalities at the feast, they felt that they finally "made it." After seventy years of exile, they had set themselves free from the "Jewish stereotype," they were now a member of equal standing in the family of nations at Achashveirosh's table.

Alas, the fish left the water and it was given a royal welcome! Everybody was cheering for the fish which finally made it out of its "prison," the fish was flipping and flopping to demonstrate its excitement. But inside – it was dying…

This, then, was Haman's strategy: Dry up the sea, take the Jews out of the water, introduce them to dry land, and they will become vulnerable to destruction.

So "Hashem said to Haman: Fool of fools! I myself planned to destroy them and was not able to do so… and you, Haman, thought you would be able to decimate and annihilate them?!"

This divine response captures the essence of Jewish existence. Hashem Himself, so to speak, could not destroy the Jews. Why?

Because the Jew is one with Hashem at his or her very core. that innate connection and oneness can never be obliterated because it is intrinsic and essential. Just as no one can destroy Hashem, no one can destroy His people, as the *navi* Malachi says, "I Hashem have not changed, and you have not been destroyed." Hashem says: Even I cannot destroy them, because at their core they are Divine; it is not something that anyone can change. It is who they are. The Jew is the manifestation of the Divine light in this world.

The relationship between the Jew and Torah is innate, intrinsic, and essential, and it can never be severed; only eclipsed. Unlike the fish, the Jew can never really leave the water. At Har Sinai the Torah become part of the very DNA of the Jew; he can love it, he can hate it, but he can't ignore it. He can embrace it, he can run from it, but he cannot stop being defined by it, if sometimes only negatively. This was the lesson that was being conveyed by the lack of there being any fish by Ma'amad Har Sinai, Hashem didn't want to make a special miracle and allow the fish to survive out of water, as He was hammering home an important lesson to Klal Yisrael, teaching them that Torah (water) is part of their very DNA and it's impossible to survive without it, and it's impossible to run away from it.

Haman's strategy was brilliant, but he failed to understand "*vos eiz a yid*," what is a Jew. He thought that if he would be able to sever the Jews from the Torah he would be able to win over them, however, he failed to realize that the Torah is in the DNA of the Jew, and even when they are severed they still intrinsically remain connected. If a fish is taken out of the water it will die, however, if somehow as much as you take the fish out of the water it still

remains connected to the water then it will survive, similarly, the Yidden are the same, they are intrinsically connected to the Torah and as much as you try to sever the connection it won't help as it's in their very DNA. Haman failed to realize that the fish will never fully leave the water, and the Jews will never die.

This gives us a new perspective on how we ought to view and embrace each Jew, no matter who he or she is. If he was Jewish enough for Hitler to send him to the gas chambers, he is Jewish enough for me to love him, embrace him and be there for him. We need to be here for each other unconditionally, and we ought to remember that as we become more saturated with Yiddishkeit and Torah, we bring light and salvation to each of our brothers and sisters.

Purim is a time of *achdus.* The *Manas HaLevi* famously explains that the idea behind the mitzvah of *mishlo'ach manos* is to demonstrate our unity and love for one another. Therefore, whichever sect of Yiddishkeit we found ourselves in, let's be there for each other, as ultimately, we are all one nation.

What the Rebbe Reb Hershel Did When Testing Out His New Pen

The *sefer Kav HaYashor* (end of *Perek* 99) brings that the **Rebbe Reb Hershel of Krakow *zt"l*** had the custom that when he wanted to try out his pen/ quill he would write the name "Amalek" / "Haman"/ "Zeresh" and he would then erase it, in order to fulfil the mitzvah of:**מחה תמחה את זכר עמלק אפילו מעל העצים והאבנים** – "Blotting out any remembrance of Amalek, even from wood and stones."

"If you only knew how Hashem looks at you, you would never stop smiling." ~ Rabbi Yaakov Galinsky (1921-2014).

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hoff Shlita



The Gemarah Megillah 7b says חַייב אִינִישׁ לְבַסּוֹמֵי בְּפוּרַיָא עַד דְּלָא יָדַע בֵּין אָרוּר הָמָן לְבָרוּךְ מָרְדְּכַי - *A person is obligated to become intoxicated with wine on Purim until he is so intoxicated that he does not know how to distinguish between cursed is Haman and blessed is Mordecai.*

There are many commentaries on this, but I heard a novel idea:

Some people speak negatively about others. Always quick to criticize, happy to say unkind words, etc. They find it difficult to say a nice kind word or compliment.

The idea of the above Gemarah is to drink enough wine to the stage where he can no longer differentiate between his negativity and positivity and will enable him to speak to others with kind words and compliments!

Why We Eat *Hamantashen* On Purim

Harav Yaakov Kamenetsky *zt"l* (cited in *B'mechitzas Rabbeinu* page 142) said the reason for eating *hamantashen* on Purim is that the consumed item is destroyed. When one eats a *hamantash* he is in essence fulfilling the obligation of erasing Amalek since we are getting rid of Haman (Amalek) by eating a *hamantash*.

"Always be a source of encouragement. One kind word can silence a thousand inner critics." ~ Inspired by the teachings of Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe (1914-2005)

I tell the Bochurim that their main goal is not to make money, but rather to make a kiddush Hashem. Every person you interact with should walk away with the impression of 'praiseworthy is the person who is taught Torah.' [Yuma 86]

Everything you do should always be with this mindset. Purim is no different. Purim is not defined by costumes or drinking, but by Kabbalas Ha'Torah Me'ahavah. ~ Rabbi Avraham Katz.

The Secret Agent at the Minyan - Rabbi Shlomo Landau

People who daven at a vasikin minyan are a rare breed. Their schedules shift with the sunrise — sometimes Shacharis is at 5:30 a.m., sometimes 7:45. It's not convenient. It's not casual. It's a lifestyle. The men who commit to vasikin are hardy. Close-knit. They share simchas. They know each other. It's almost like an elite unit — the green berets of Klal Yisrael.

The vasikin minyan in Stamford Hill was just such a group. And one morning, a random man showed up. You don't just randomly show up to vasikin. Maybe once, if you have insomnia. But this man came back the next day. And the next. He looked quiet. Serious. He davened with intense kavana. He didn't talk much.

"Shalom aleichem. What's your name?"

"Avi."

"Where are you from?"

"Eretz Yisrael."

"And what brings you here?"

"I'm here to daven vasikin."

That was it. He offered nothing more. There was one man in the minyan who possessed a powerful middah — curiosity. He wasn't going to allow someone to daven every morning in his minyan without

knowing who he was. He tried gently probing. No success. Finally, he decided on a different approach. After davening one day he asked, "Would you like to learn for a few minutes together after Shacharis?" The man's eyes lit up. "Of course."

They began learning together daily. And it was clear — this was no ordinary Jew. He knew how to learn. Sharp mind. Deep understanding. A true baal kishron. In another setting, he might have been sitting in a top yeshivah.

Weeks passed. A genuine kesher formed. One day the chavrusa said, "We've been learning together for over a month. Learning builds the deepest connection. I don't even know your full story. At least tell me your name properly."

The man paused. "You've earned it," he said. And then he added, "Now you'll want to know why I'm here in London."

He explained that his wife was very ill. There was a specialist in London. That's why he was there. And since he always davened vasikin in Eretz Yisrael, he continued the practice abroad. Then he said quietly: "I didn't grow up religious. I was completely secular. At seventeen, like most Israeli teenagers, I drafted into the army. "But they saw something in me." He wasn't suited for infantry. He was recruited into the Israeli Secret Service — the Shabak.

Years of training followed. Languages. Surveillance. Blending into foreign societies. Explosives. Intelligence work. Eventually, he became one of their top agents.

At one point, he and another agent were assigned to Zurich, Switzerland. Their mission: trail a particular Arab terrorist — and eliminate him at the right moment. They lived separately. No public contact. Communication only through secure channels. They studied the target meticulously. Where he shopped. How he walked. What he drove. His routines. His habits.

They discovered that every Friday night he would dine alone at a specific halal restaurant. No guards. No entourage. The perfect opportunity. The plan was simple. When he exited the restaurant, they would pull him into a nearby stairwell, eliminate him quietly, place him in their trunk, and he would disappear forever.

The Friday arrived. The agent was living in total isolation. He felt lonely. Craving something familiar — Israeli food. He found a small grocery in Zurich that stocked Israeli products and walked in. A Chassidic man looked at him carefully and suddenly said in Hebrew, "You're Israeli." He denied it in perfect German. The man smiled. "You can run, but you can't hide."

His cover was blown. The Chassid asked, "Are you eating a Shabbos meal tonight?"

"I don't keep Shabbos," he replied.

"When was the last time you had a real meal? Come to my house. Homemade challah. Fish. Kugel. Chicken. Israeli salads. The kids will love you."

He hesitated. But he was craving human contact. "I can come," he said, "but at 7:30 sharp I must leave. I have an important meeting." It was, indeed, an important meeting.

He arrived at the apartment Friday night. The house was glowing with light. It smelled like Gan Eden. The children were beautifully dressed. They seated him at the head of the table. The kids wanted to sit next to him. They sang Shalom Aleichem. Eishes Chayil. They explained everything. He soaked it in. He had never experienced anything like it. The warmth. The joy. The food. - He lost track of time. Suddenly he glanced at his watch. 7:45. He panicked. Apologized quickly. Ran down the stairs. Drove frantically.

When he arrived at the rendezvous point, it was 8:15. Police cars. Ambulances. A body on the ground. It was his partner. Someone had tipped off the terrorists. They were waiting. They killed the other

agent. He survived because he was late. Because he had been at a Shabbos meal.

He said, "After that night, something inside me broke." He could no longer function in the Secret Service. They thanked him respectfully for his service. They continued paying his salary. He returned to Eretz Yisrael. But he could not shake the Shabbos table. More than that — he could not ignore that the Shabbos meal had saved his life.

He enrolled in a baal teshuvah yeshivah. He learned. He grew. He became fully observant. He married. Built a Torah home. Children and grandchildren, engaged in Torah and mitzvos.

"That," he told his chavrusa, "is my story."

The chavrusa looked shaken. "Can I ask you something?" he said. "The house in Zurich — was it an apartment?"

"Yes."

"Do you remember a little clock on the mantel? Three pictures next to it?"

The man stared. "Yes." "Do you remember a little boy there?"

He nodded faintly.

The chavrusa leaned forward. "Look at me." It was him. The little boy from that Shabbos table. Twenty-five years later.

The Ribono Shel Olam had arranged the entire journey — the loneliness, the grocery store, the invitation, the saved life — so that one day that little boy would become his chavrusa. The story had come full circle.

And that is Purim. When we are children, we think the Megillah is chapter after chapter — Vashti falls, Esther rises, Mordechai overhears, Haman plots, the king can't sleep. But the Purim story spans over a decade. So many moving pieces. If you're not looking

carefully, it's just Persian history. But Megillas Esther reveals something else. Hashem's Name is hidden — but His fingerprints are everywhere. The coincidences. The delays. The timing. Hashem Melech. He was running the whole show. And sometimes, decades later, He lets you see it. - That is Purim.

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hoff Shlita

Chazal instituted that there should be a **משתה** – a special emphasis on the Seudas Purim, the Mitzvah of Seudas Purim. The Midrash explains that the Jews of that era originally sinned by attending and enjoying the feast of Achashverosh, which used vessels from the Holy Temple. By instituting a "**משתה**" for a Mitzvah, Chazal created a way to **rectify** that original forbidden indulgence by elevating physical eating and drinking to a holy act.

The Gemara Megillah tells us that because the Yidden enjoyed this feast, it was the cause and reason for the Gezeira of **לְהַשְׁמִיד לַהֲרֹג וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת־כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים**. - So how come Chazal instituted that nowadays we should have a seudah with which we commemorate the seudas Achashveirosh which was an aveiroh now with a Seudas Mitzvah?

The Nesivos explains, from a Gemarah (Shabbos 88a) The Gemara says: **"הַדָּר קִבְּלוּהָ — וְקִבְּלוּ בִּימֵי אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ."** Rava explains that although at Har Sinai there was an element of *kefiyah* (coercion), in the days of Purim they accepted the Torah again **willingly**, out of love and gratitude after the miracle. What happened at the time of the **גילוי נס** of Purim, Kal Yisrael, after the experience were **קִיְּמוּ וְקִבְּלוּ הַיְּהוּדִים**. There was an element of 'Yirah' – fear. But **הָדָר קִבְּלוּהָ בְּרָצוֹן** - They wanted to be m'kayeim the Torah willingly with their full volition. They did a **תְּשׁוּבָה מֵאַהֲבָה**.

The Gemara in (Yoma 86b) famously tells us, that when a person does **תְּשׁוּבָה מֵאַהֲבָה**, when one repents **out of love**, his sins become like merits. So the Nesivos says that nowadays we can commemorate

Achashveirosh's seudah with a **סעודת מצווה** which now turns that Aveiro into a zechus!

The Chasam Sofer (**דברי חת"ס דרשות, חלק א', דרוש לשבת שובה**) famously says based on the above Gemarah: **כשעושה תשובה מאהבה הזדונות נעשים כזכויות, עד שנחשב כאילו אכל קדשים** –

זדונות נעשות לו כזכויות - deliberate sins become merits *when teshuvah is done from love.* - A person who ate neveilah, and then does **תְּשׁוּבָה מֵאַהֲבָה**, it becomes like he ate kodshim! **תְּשׁוּבָה מֵאַהֲבָה** doesn't merely erase the sin, but it reverses the spiritual energy and elevates it. The act that was once an aveirah becomes a zechus because the fall itself became the catalyst for a deeper return to Hashem.

Faith Under Fire by Rabbi Shlomo Farhi



A young Israeli man named Moshe Avita lived in a town near Israel's contested borders, during a time of heightened violence. One night, he was driving on a dark road with his wife when a car behind him began flashing its lights aggressively. Flashing and flashing. Impatient. Persistent.

Assuming the driver wanted to pass, Moshe signalled and carefully pulled as far to the right as the narrow road would allow. The car pulled up on the left. As it drove alongside them, the driver rolled down his window and motioned for Moshe to do the same.

Moshe rolled his window down. In that instant, the man pulled out a machine gun and began firing directly into the car. It was a terrorist

attack. A bullet tore through Moshe's left cheekbone. He felt as if his face had exploded. Blood poured everywhere. He couldn't see. But instead of panicking, he did the unthinkable: he focused. He ducked, pressed the brakes, and slowly maneuvered the car toward the side of the road so he wouldn't lose control and kill both himself and his wife.

The terrorist circled around and fired again from behind. Bullets shattered the windshield and tore through the seats. His wife was screaming. Moshe was barely conscious. She realized he couldn't continue driving.

Afraid the attacker might return to "finish the job," she told him to scoot over instead of getting out. She ran around the car, jumped into the driver's seat, and sped toward the nearest settlement — Kochav HaShachar. On the phone with emergency services, she was told one thing: get him somewhere safe and lay him flat.

When they arrived, she pulled her husband out and laid him on the ground. Blood pooled in the back of his throat. She kept pulling his tongue forward, clearing his airway, desperate to keep him breathing.

Ambulances arrived. Emergency surgery followed. She paced back and forth in the hospital, praying that this would not be the last time she would see her husband alive.

Finally, he emerged from surgery, his head completely wrapped in gauze. Time passed. Eventually, the bandages began to come off. She leaned forward and asked the question she had been holding inside: "Moshe… can you see?"

He did not answer. Instead, he said, "Bring me a piece of paper." Her heart began to sink. "Moshe, can you see?"

"Bring me a piece of paper." She brought paper. He asked for a pen. She held the paper up. And he wrote: '***Everything that Hashem does is for the best***.' She began crying. She understood. Then he wrote

again: "I plead with you that you live with this." And again: "That you live with this knowledge."

The bullet had seared his optic nerve. He was completely blind in one eye, and in the other he could see only faint shapes in strong light.

Years later, as Moshe told this story to Rabbi Farhi's audience, he opened the floor for questions. Rabbi Farhi was sitting in the back, waiting. Finally, Moshe called on him. Rabbi Farhi asked one word: "How?" How do you get shot in the face… and that is your response? How do you lose your eyesight… and that is your first reaction?

Moshe answered: "I didn't." "I didn't think of that in the moment." "I did not have the strength or faith to create that response in that second." "I had said those words a hundred million times before."

When he spilled coffee and had to make another one, he said it. When he tore a brand-new suit on a nail, he said it. When he fell and skinned his knee, he said it. In every small inconvenience, in every minor frustration, he trained himself: Everything Hashem does is for the best. "When you say it in the easy moments," Moshe explained, "then when something requires Herculean faith — you are ready."

Rabbi Farhi connected this to Purim. Why is Megillah read at night and again during the day? We don't give mishloach manot twice. We don't give matanot la'evyonim twice. But Megillah is read both at night and by day. Because "Megillah" means revelation — revealing what is hidden. If you can reveal Hashem's hand in the daylight — in the clear, simple, everyday moments — then you can find Him even in the darkness. But to expect to see Hashem in the night without training yourself in the day? That is beyond human strength.

Moshe Avitan did not suddenly become a hero in a hospital bed. He became a hero in a hundred thousand small, unnoticed moments. That is how you build faith strong enough to survive the night.

TheYeshiva.net
BY RABBI YY JACOBSON

The Wireless Connection

One of the first and major technology revolutions was the train. For thousands of years you took a donkey, a horse, a camel. Suddenly you were on a train. Extraordinary 19th-century industrial revolution.



Then came the revolution of the telegraph. Extraordinary. A few letters and you used to have to wait weeks and months for a letter to be delivered from here to another country and the telegraph created swift communication. Then came the telephone.

You pick up a telephone and I'm talking to you in Australia. Extraordinary. So **גדולי ישראל** or some of the great masters spoke about it and they said everything is a lesson in life. What's the lesson from the train? They never had this lesson before.

You come one minute late, your horse doesn't run away. The horse stays there forever. The donkey doesn't run away. You come 20 seconds late to the train, you're done.

The value of time, the value of a moment. Came the telegraph, what did the telegraph teach? Every letter you had to pay money for. Every word was expensive. Ah, the value of a word.

Came the telephone, you speak here, they can hear you in Brazil, they can also hear you somewhere else.

וואס מרעדט דא הערט מען דארט. But the telephone **רבותי**, till just a few years ago, the telephone had a wire. Today the **חידוש** is wireless.

Today people look at themselves and they say I'm wireless, I'm not connected to anything anymore. You have people sitting here around the table and you'll ask them what are you connected to and they say nothing. I'm disillusioned from everything. I used to have a few wires, it's all severed.

People wake up in the morning and they feel alone. I can't trust, I'm not connected, I'm disassociated, I'm not even sure I believe in anything. I'm a wireless Jew. So today the **חידוש** is G-d says I don't need a connect to you if you have wires. I'm good with wireless. Just don't go to a dead zone. You have to be in the right places. Don't believe that since your wires were cut your telephone is not functional anymore.

That's not true. There's no such a thing as a person disconnected.

ויבז בעיניו לשלוח יד במרדכי לבדו כי הגידו לו את עם מרדכי.

המן understood killing **מרדכי** won't be the solution because they told him about **עם מרדכי**. Every child is a little **מרדכי**, even the child who appears to be disconnected, even the adult who appears to be wireless. - **נהנו מסעודתו של אותו רשע**.

המן understood there's a little **מרדכי** in that Jew, there's no such a thing as wireless. Ah, you say I'm in a **כלי** that's **מקבל טומאה**, I'm susceptible to impurity, there's toxicity in me, there's poison in me, everything was cut off, I'm cut off.

Let me tell you about my story, my experience. Comes **פורים** and says **עד דלא ידע**. Don't try to limit your purity based on your imagination. The connection and the relationship always remains, and not only that **ונהפוך הוא**, you'll be able to take everything that caused you so much impurity and trauma and transform it.

That the very day that for you represented doom, that day itself is metamorphosized to **אורה ושמחה וששון ויקר, לחיים לחיים**.



Expand Your Horizons

The **גמרא** tells a story, everybody knows this story, that **רבה** and **רב זירא** made a **סעודת פורים** together. In middle of the meal, **איבסום**, they drank, they became inebriated. **רבה. קם רבה ושחטיה לרב זירא**. **רבה** stood up and he slaughtered **רב זירא**.

The next morning he sobered up, he saw that **רב זירא** is dead. So he pleaded, he **דאוונד**, and he resurrected him. The next year he tells **רב זירא**, "Let's do it again! It's a great party last year." **רב זירא** says, "**לאו בכל שעתא ושעתא מתרחיש ניסא**. Miracles don't always happen. Do me a favor, you do your **פורים** feast yourself and I'll do my **פורים** feast somewhere else."

That's the story. Of course, throughout the generations, everybody struggles with the story, what's **פשט**? But I want to tell you one homiletical interpretation **על פי דרש**. What does **רבה** mean?

רבה means largeness, **רב**, greatness. What does **זירא** mean? Smallness.

When it comes **פורים**, everybody has to do the following thing: **קם רבה ושחטיה לרב זירא**. Your largeness, your **רבה**, has to slaughter your **זירא**, your pettiness. The challenge is we're petty, we're small, and we decide that we're **זירא'ס**. You deserve to be only a little happy, you deserve to have a small life, you deserve to have a little success, you deserve to have a little meaning, you deserve to have a little **דביקות**, you deserve to have a little connection, a little little little, a **מצטינגע**, don't think big.

Comes **פורים, חייב אינש לבסומי עד דלא ידע**. Stop allowing your thoughts to limit who you are and what you're capable of. Now I can't be happy, now I can be a little happy, now I have to be depressed, now I have to be angry. You're much bigger than you imagine.

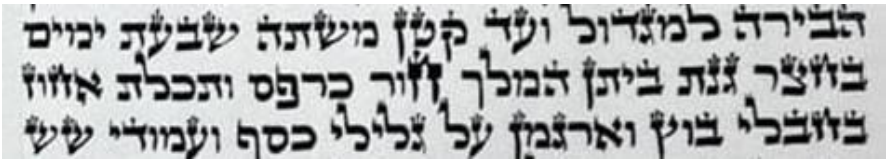
קם רבה ושחטיה לרב זירא. Let your **רבה**, your largeness, your infinite greatness, let it slaughter your **רב זירא**, your **זירא**, your smallness,

your pettiness, your perception of yourself and your soul as a preemie, as undeveloped, as tiny, as small, as underprivileged. That's how the **גמרא** illustrates what's **פשט עד דלא ידע**. Don't let your thoughts come in and say, "This is how happy I'm allowed to be.

If I would have this type of money, if I would have this type of car, if I would have this type of husband or wife or children or home or job or community, if I would have had this type of childhood, if I would have had these opportunities, if I would have had this IQ, then oh!"

But I look in the mirror and all I see is the **שלימיל**, worse, **א שלימזל**. So **ממילא** I'll be **יוצא פורים, פורים**, my kids don't have to see what I really think, so **ממילא** I'll give a few smiles, I'll make believe, I'll come for a few minutes, but then I go back to my smallness. But once a year, **געגוג** with the **ידע**, stop making **חשבונות**. I'm telling you, you're allowed to give yourself permission to be happy ad infinitum. - It's **עד דלא ידע, עד בלי גבול, עד אין סוף**.

לחיים, לחיים.



Understanding the Big ח

חָוּר כַּרְפַּס וּתְכֵלֶת – "***There were spreads of] white, fine cotton, and blue***" - 1:6

The *Rokeach* explains that the letter **ח** is written very large because the *Megillah* is alluding to Achashveirosh's attire at his party. The letter **ח** has the numerical value of eight; it is written large to inform us that, in an act of extreme impropriety and defilement, Achashveirosh wore the eight holy garments reserved specifically for the Kohen Gadol.

The Miracle Before Purim - R' Eliyahu Maksumov

There was a *Goyish* king, a non-Jewish king who hated the Jewish people. And he was a tyrant, he was a terrible person, he would always be very mean to the Jews, and he always found excuses as to how to make money out of them. And he would charge them taxes.

One day he came up with a clever idea. He called over the Jewish people, and he made a court case and he said I want to tell you something.

You know that you owe me *ten kikar* of silver. *Ten kikar* of silver is a lot of money. He said, 'I want you to pay me all this money up, like billions of dollars.' He says I want you to pay me up and I want you to pay me up until the 13th of *Adar*.

You know why? He says because my great-grandfather was *Haman*. And *Haman* paid *ten kikar* of silver to *Achashverosh* to destroy and to kill the Jewish people. But did he succeed? No. So all that money didn't end up being used for what it was meant for.

And in the end *Mordechai* and *Esther* did all their tricks and in the end *Haman* didn't succeed. All that money that he spent on destroying the Jewish people went to waste. So he says now you have to pay me back. You have to pay me back *ten kikar* of silver.

So the Jewish people said but our dear king, how are we going to pay back *ten kikar* of silver? It's so much money. We're never going to be able to pay you back. Even if we sold all our houses, all of our property, all our fields, it still won't amount to the amount that you want from us. We're not going to be able to pay you back.

And he started laughing. He says exactly. And therefore I'm going to kill you. Now I have a good reason to kill you.

So he was laughing to himself, he felt so good. He says now I'm going to kill the Jewish people or somehow they're going to borrow money and they're going to have to actually collect all this money I'll be a

very very rich king. And the Jewish people were so sad they didn't know what to do. And they went to their *shuls* and they started to *daven*, they prayed to *Hashem*.

And they *davened* and *davened* and *davened* and eventually the word came out and there was a great *Rabbi* his name was **רב יצחק לוריא אשכנזי**. He was known otherwise as the ***Arizal***. And the *Arizal* heard about this story and the *Arizal* said that the Jewish people, the reason it's happening to them is because they need to do *teshuvah*. If they do *teshuvah*, *Hashem* is going to take them out of the mess.

It must be they did something wrong and *Hashem* wants to wake them up. *Hashem* doesn't just send trouble for no reason. So he sent a letter to the Jewish leaders in Syria in Damascus where this happened and he said I want you to know that this is all happening because you need to do *teshuvah*. And the Jewish people started doing *teshuvah* and they fasted and they did everything they could.

And the 13th of *Adar* was coming closer and closer. And one night it was a very windy night, it was so windy that the wind was picking up the trees off of the ground and it was uprooting them. And that night the king went to sleep and in his dream, he found himself in the center of town. And he saw all of a sudden he notices where everyone's walking calmly, he sees there are twelve gallows.

And he notices eleven of them are used. There are eleven people hanging. And he comes up to somebody and says excuse me but do you know who those people are that are hanging? Can someone here guess who those people are? *Haman* and his sons. *Haman* and his ten sons.

So they said yeah, that's *Haman* and his ten sons over there hanging. He says that's my great-great-grandfather? He says yes, that's your great-great-grandfather. He says but what's that extra noose over there? Who's that for? That's for you. You deserve to be hung

along with *Haman* because you're no different than your great-great-grandfather *Haman*.

So he said what? So he realized the people want to hang him, so he was trying to run away in his dreams. And they caught up to him and they took a rope and they tied it around his neck, and they started pulling him and dragging him to the gallows.

And in his dream he was screaming please, have mercy on me! And they said yeah, we should have mercy on you? Did you have mercy on the Jewish people when you threatened them to kill them? When you wanted so much money from them and you knew that they're not going to be able to pay you back? And that was okay and we should have mercy on you?

And they were bringing him closer and closer to the gallows and he was screaming please, please, what can I do to get myself out of this? They said there's only one thing you can do. You have to take out a receipt and write on the receipt that the people already paid you *ten kikar* of silver.

The Jewish people don't owe you any more money and you have to make a promise right now that you're not going to bother them anymore.

So in his dream he was so desperate, he took out a receipt and he started writing on the receipt the Jewish people paid me *ten kikar* of silver. And as he's writing all of a sudden the wind came in his dream, and it picked it up and it flew and the receipt flew away.

And all of a sudden after this happened, he wakes up. And he realized it was all a dream. And he said ah, just nonsense. But you see this is not a regular dream. When you have a dream that you're eating ice cream, it's just a silly dream that you're eating ice cream. But in this dream you know what happened? Because he actually wrote it in his dream, it actually happened in real life. And as he was sleeping he didn't realize he was actually writing a receipt that the Jewish

people paid it back already. And that receipt the wind came and it picked it up and it flew it out the window. And it flew and it flew all the way to *Tzfat* where the *Arizal* was.

And it was blown right into the window of the *Arizal*. And the *Arizal* was praying for the Jewish people. And when the *Arizal* saw this receipt, he realized it was from *Shamayim*, it was from heaven. And he took the receipt and he sent it with a messenger all the way down to Damascus and he told the people over there hold on to the receipt, do not tell the king anything until the 13th of *Adar* when he's going to come and tell you payday, pay me up. You're going to show him the receipt and you're going to say listen, we already paid you. We have the receipt.

So the Jewish people were holding onto the receipt, and finally came the day where the king said, "Where's all my money? You have to pay me!" And he made a big court case, and he said, "You have to come in, and if you're not gonna pay me, I'm gonna kill all of you."

And the Jewish people came with the receipt, and they showed it to him, and he saw the stamp of the king. He saw the signature of the king.

He said, "This is my signature." And he recognized the receipt from his dream. He says, "Oh, it must be that *Hashem* loves the Jewish people. He takes care of them." And he remembered the promise he made in his dream, and he got scared, and he says, "I'm never gonna bother the Jewish people again." And he let them go.

You know what the lesson of the story is?

You do *teshuvah*, *Hashem* can make anything happen for you in an instant. **ישועת השם כהרף עין**, *Hashem* will take you out.



Torah Gems On Megillas Esther

ויהי בימי אחשוורוש...המולך מהודו ועד כוש וכו' (א-א)

Although this phrase is usually rendered "From India (**הודו**) until Ethiopia (**כוש**)" the Gemara records a dispute regarding their actual locations. According to one view, they were a world apart - **בסוף העולם** - at the ends of the world.

The second opinion, however, places them literally adjacent to each other, and just as **אחשוורוש** easily controlled two neighboring provinces, so did he exercise complete control over all 127 provinces.

The **Rema** explains this **מחלוקת** and manages to justify each view in light of the other. The actual distance between Hodu and Cush may be a stone's throw away from each other, but because the world is a globe - a round sphere - by moving in the opposite direction, they are separated by the entire world, of which King Achashverosh controlled most of.

R' Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev ZT'L would say:

'On Yom Kippur we afflict our bodies by fasting while on Purim we afflict our souls by drinking. Can there be a greater affliction than becoming drunk and losing one's power of discernment?'

"Purim is a time to let go of our fears and anxieties, and to embrace the joy and happiness that comes from being close to Hashem." ~ Rabbi Menachem Mendel of Kotzk.

Yom Kippur and Purim – Two Sides of the Same Coin - Rabbi Efrem Goldberg



We normally think of Yom Kippur as the holiest day of the year. We fast, refrain from physical pleasures, and spend the day in tefillah and teshuvah, rising above the physical world.

Yet the Torah calls it **יום הכפורים** – Yom HaKippurim, in the plural. Chazal connect this with Purim: Yom Kippur is like Purim – **יום כפורים**. The obvious question is: What could these two seemingly opposite days possibly have in common?

Purim is filled with food, mishloach manos, matanos la'evyonim, the Purim seudah, costumes, music and celebration. Yom Kippur is the exact opposite. Yet four great Torah thinkers explain that the two days are deeply connected.

1. Rav Hutner – Two Halves of One Complete Holiday

In Pachad Yitzchak, Rav Yitzchak Hutner quotes the Gra: **חציו לה' וחציו לכם** - Normally, a Yom Tov is divided between spiritual service to Hashem and physical enjoyment. But Yom Kippur is **כולו לה'**, entirely devoted to Hashem, while Purim is **כולו לכם**, seemingly devoted to the physical world.

The Gra explains: **יום כפורים הוא יום כפורים** - Yom Kippur and Purim together form the complete Yom Tov – half **לה'** and half **לכם**.

Rav Hutner connects this to the words of Chazal:

רצוננו לעשות רצונך, אלא ששאור שבעיסה ושעבוד מלכויות מעכב. We truly want to do Hashem's will, but two things prevent us: **שאור שבעיסה**, the yetzer hara, and **שעבוד מלכויות**, the pressures and distractions of the outside world.

Yom Kippur removes the first obstacle. By withdrawing from physical pleasure and becoming almost entirely spiritual, we overcome the **שאור שבעיסה**. Purim removes the second. The story of Purim demonstrates that even within the physical world, even when Hashem is hidden, He is completely in control. **נפל פחד היהודים עליהם** – suddenly everything was turned upside down.

That is the avodah of Purim: to reveal the **נסתר**, to see Hashem's hand precisely within the hiddenness.

Yom Kippur teaches us to transcend the physical. Purim teaches us to enter the physical world and elevate it. Together, they overcome the two obstacles that prevent us from fulfilling **רצוננו לעשות רצונך**.

Rav Hutner gives another expression of this idea. Yom Kippur and Purim represent two different paths to holiness.

One path is to withdraw from the physical world. On Yom Kippur we fast and become almost angelic.

The other path is to engage the physical world and elevate it. On Purim we eat, drink, give gifts and celebrate – but we can transform those physical activities into mitzvos, achdus, Torah and simchas Yom Tov.

That is why Purim can be even greater than Yom Kippur. It demonstrates that holiness is not achieved only by escaping the physical world, but by elevating it.

2. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik – Purim Contains Both Joy and Distress

In '*Days of Deliverance*', Rav Soloveitchik explains that Purim contains two seemingly opposite experiences. The Gemara gives two reasons for reading the Megillah both at night and during the day. One source reflects the cry of a person in distress; the other reflects the song of someone who has been saved.

Which is the Megillah?

The answer is: both. Purim contains both human anguish and Divine salvation. We remember how close the Jewish people came to destruction, while simultaneously celebrating the salvation that followed.

Therefore Purim is not merely a day of feasting and merriment. It is also a day of tefillah, introspection and recognition of our dependence on Hashem.

This is reflected in Ta'anis Esther. The fast is not an unrelated introduction to Purim. It represents the other side of Purim – the crying out to Hashem before the salvation.

Purim therefore contains both sides: distress and joy, tefillah and celebration, just as Yom Kippur combines fear and teshuvah with closeness to Hashem.

3. Rav Chaim Friedlander – Yom Kippur Through Yirah, Purim Through Ahavah

The Sifsei Chaim, Rav Chaim Friedlander, quotes **Rav Dessler** that the greatness of Yom Kippur is the tremendous closeness to Hashem achieved through yirah, awe and fear.

On Yom Kippur we confront our sins and stand before Hashem with tremendous seriousness: **ובכן תן פחדך ה' אלקינו על כל מעשיך**

Purim, however, represents a different and even higher form of connection: **אנו מתקרבים בו להקדוש ברוך הוא מתוך אהבה ושמחה**

On Purim we approach Hashem through ahavah, love and joy, recognizing His constant hashgachah even within the hidden events of our lives.

Yom Kippur is about yirah. Purim is about ahavah. And Chazal teach:

עשה דוחה לא תעשה - Rav Dessler explains that, in this sense, love can overcome fear. Purim represents the deeper relationship with Hashem that comes from love and recognition of His kindness.

4. Rav Pincus – כל הפושט יד נותנים לו

Rabbi Shimshon Dovid Pincus presents another connection.

On Yom Kippur and Purim we find the concept of **כל הפושט יד נותנים לו**– whoever extends his hand is given. On Yom Kippur, if someone asks us for forgiveness, we are expected to respond generously and reconcile. On Purim, when someone extends a hand for tzedakah, **כל הפושט יד נותנים לו**– we give.

The principle applies not only **בין אדם לחבירו**, but also **בין אדם למקום**.

Yom Kippur is a day when we turn to Hashem through teshuvah. Purim is also an extraordinarily powerful day for tefillah, because we experience Hashem's hidden hashgachah and recognize that He is the One who controls our destiny.

Rav Pinkus explains that the joy of Purim is therefore not merely joy over a miracle that happened thousands of years ago. It is the renewed feeling, in every generation, that Hashem is with us, cares for us, and hears our prayers.

We have seen four approaches to the relationship between Yom Kippur and Purim.

- Rav Hutner: Yom Kippur and Purim are two halves of one complete holiday – spirituality and physicality.
- The Rav: Purim contains both distress and salvation, tefillah and joy.

- Rav Chaim Friedlander/Rav Dessler: Yom Kippur brings us close to Hashem through yirah, while Purim brings us close through ahavah.
- Rav Pinkus: Both are days of extraordinary openness – **כל הפושט יד נותנים לו**– whether in our relationships with others or in our relationship with Hashem.

The common thread is that Yom Kippur and Purim teach us two complementary ways of connecting to Hashem. On Yom Kippur, we rise above the physical world and discover the neshamah within us. On Purim, we return to the physical world and discover that Hashem is there as well.

The challenge of Purim is not simply to have fun. It is to take the physical – the food, the drink, the mishloach manos, the seudah, the celebration – and elevate it. Purim teaches us to look beneath the surface and discover Hashem's hand even when He is hidden. That is why **יום הכיפורים** is **יום כפורים**– Yom Kippur is like Purim.

Together they teach us the complete path of avodas Hashem: to transcend the physical world when necessary, and, even more importantly, to bring holiness into the physical world and reveal Hashem's presence within it.

יום כיפור הוא כולו לה' ופורים הוא כולו לכם. Said the **Vilna Gaon, the Gra**, that Yom Kippur and Purim are two sides of a coin. In combination, they make a complete holiday.

Said the Gra - **כי יום כיפורים הוא יום כפורים, כלומר שניהם ביחד מהווים בענין זה מועד אחד** - when you combine Yom Kippur and Purim together, that's when you have a complete Jewish holiday, Each alone is **כולו להשם** and **כולו לכם**, but Jewish holidays have to be **חצי לכם, חצי להשם**, so only when you combine them together, do you have a complete holiday.









Amalek: Unfinished Business – Dr. Sholom Springer 15 Adar 2/03/2012

Good morning. Our first encounter with Amalek occurs in Parshas Beshalach, immediately after the episode of **מסה ומריבה**, when Klal Yisrael questioned whether Hashem was truly among them: **היש ה' בקרבנו אם אין?** "Is Hashem among us or not?"



Rashi explains, with a mashal of a father carrying his young son on his shoulders: whenever the child sees something he wants, his father fetches it for him, yet he asks a passerby, "Have you seen my father?" The hurt father puts him down, and a dog bites him. So too, Hashem had provided Klal Yisrael with everything, yet they questioned His presence, and Amalek came to remind them of their dependence on Him.

The lesson is clear: when our emunah and bitachon weaken, we become vulnerable to Amalek.

Dishonesty and Amalek

But there is another, less obvious connection. In Parshas Ki Seitzei, immediately before Parshas Zachor, the Torah warns against dishonest weights and measures: **אבן שלמה וצדק יהיה לך** -"You shall have honest weights and honest measures."

זכור את אשר עשה לך עמלק

Rashi makes the connection explicit: if you cheat with weights and measures, you should fear an attack from the enemy.

The Maharal, in his Gur Aryeh, explains that when Hashem created the world, He established precise boundaries for everything; nothing may encroach on the domain of another. Human society likewise depends on agreed standards: a kilogram must mean a kilogram, or trust collapses.

The nations too have been assigned their boundaries by Hashem. When we disregard the boundaries governing our own conduct, the enemy is no longer restrained within his. Honesty in business therefore touches the foundations of the moral order.

Amalek: Unfinished Business

At the end of Parshas Beshalach, after Yehoshua's battle with Amalek, the Torah declares:

מלחמה לה' בעמלק מדור דור

"There is a war for Hashem against Amalek from generation to generation."

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch explains that Amalek represents more than a particular nation. It represents a culture and an attitude that continually threaten the values of Klal Yisrael.

That is why the warning about weights and measures precedes Parshas Zachor: our actions have consequences beyond the immediate act, and some wrongs cannot be reversed. A man who wished to do teshuvah for lashon hara was told by his Rav to scatter the feathers of a pillow into the wind, and then to collect them all.

This is the unfinished business of Amalek: the struggle against attitudes and actions that undermine our relationship with Hashem and with one another.

Mordechai's Refusal to Bow

How, then, do we fight Amalek?

Rav Dessler, in *Michtav MeEliyahu*, develops a profound lesson from Mordechai's refusal to bow to Haman:

ומרדכי לא יכרע ולא ישתחוה - "Mordechai would neither kneel nor bow down."

Mordechai's behaviour appeared to endanger Klal Yisrael, yet he answered that the cause lay elsewhere: nine years earlier they had ignored the Chachamim's warning not to attend Achashverosh's feast, which desecrated the Beis Hamikdash.

Remarkably, Klal Yisrael accepted his explanation and asked what to do. Esther instructed them: **כנוס את כל היהודים** - "Gather all the Jews." They undertook teshuvah, and the situation was transformed.

This, Rav Dessler explains, reveals a central element of Purim: emunas chachamim — trusting the guidance of our Torah leaders, even when we do not immediately understand it.

But why was Mordechai so uncompromising towards Haman?

The Maharal explains that Mordechai could not honour a rasha when that would constitute a chillul Hashem. He belonged to Binyamin, the only shevet that had not bowed to Esav, and the place destined for the Shechinah had to remain unsullied by submission to wickedness. His refusal expressed an uncompromising commitment to the sanctity of Hashem's name.

When to Compromise — and When Not To

Yaakov Avinu prepared to meet Esav with both gifts and the possibility of war — **דורון ומלחמה**. Rav Dessler explains that our own struggle with the yetzer hara also requires both approaches.

Coming home exhausted, we may not feel like attending a shiur, but we can remind ourselves that it will earn us respect. Not the highest motive, yet it gets us through the door: **מתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה** - "Through acting initially for an ulterior motive, one can come to act for its own sake."

When our hashkafah is under attack, we cannot mix Torah with conflicting ideologies and hope for the best. Mordechai teaches that

the place reserved for the Shechinah must remain pure: we may accommodate in our personal struggles, but never at the expense of the foundations of our faith.

The Avodah of Purim: Emunas Chachamim

Several hundred years ago in Holland, during a violent storm, a crack appeared in one of the dykes protecting the flat land from the sea. The non-Jews rushed to their churches. It was Purim, and the Jews asked their Rav whether to fast and pray or continue celebrating.

The Rav replied that every Yom Tov has its own avodah, and on Purim it is simchah. They were to dance with all their strength.

The non-Jews were outraged and complained to the king, but the Rav explained that the Jews were simply fulfilling the avodah of Purim with complete commitment. The storm subsided, and the dyke was repaired.



The story concludes that a commemorative medallion was struck depicting the Jewish Purim procession.

The central point is the remarkable emunas chachamim displayed by the community. They trusted their Rav even when his instructions appeared counterintuitive.

The Final Redemption

We return to the closing words of Parshas Beshalach:

כי יד על כס קה, מלחמה לה' בעמלק מדור דור - Rashi explains that Hashem has sworn an eternal war against Amalek.

The Torah writes כס rather than כסא, and the Divine Name appears in its shortened form, קה, rather than its complete form. Rashi explains that Hashem's throne is incomplete and His Name is not complete until Amalek is entirely erased.

Our task is to strengthen our emunah, conduct ourselves with absolute honesty, respect the boundaries established by Hashem, remain faithful to Torah values, and place our trust in the guidance of our Chachamim.

May we merit to see the day when the struggle against Amalek is finally concluded, Hashem's Name and throne are complete, and the Beis Hamikdash is rebuilt speedily in our days. - אמן.

Believing and Achieving

When someone believes in another person, it can change the trajectory of their life. Ordinarily that person may not have mounted to anything special and because someone believed in them they became extraordinary. It can be a parent, mentor, a friend or someone else who believed in them.

The pasuk says, וַיְהִי אֹמֵן אֶת הֲדַסָּה, he had reared Hadassah who is Esther (Esther 2:7). Now, Esther had neither a father nor a mother, so how did she manage to accomplish extraordinarily with her life?

The word אֹמֵן hints to the secret behind her success. אֹמֵן is related to the word אֱמוּנָה - Mordechai believed in her. He looked beyond her difficult background and circumstances and conveyed a powerful message: "Your past does not determine your future. You can accomplish great things."

Sometimes, the greatest gift we can give another person is simply to believe in them—to see their potential even when they cannot yet see it themselves.


Wishing you all a
freilichen purim!!



"The message of Purim is that even in the darkest of times, we can still find hope and redemption through our connection to Hashem." ~ Rabbi Meir Shapiro.





May each and every one of you have a truly uplifting and Heiligeh Purim and may all your תפילות be answered and accepted on this truly holy day!!!

עִבְדוּ אֶת־ה׳ בְּשִׂמְחָה בֹּאוּ לְפָנָיו בִּרְנָנָה (Tehilim 100:2)



Have a zutten and geesen, freilechen [ברוחניות] and freilechen [בגשמיות] Purim and Shabbos, and an amazing, astonishing, awesome, beautiful, calm, delicious, delightful, elaborate, elegant, fabulous, fine, gutten, gorgeous, gratifying, happy, involving, inspiring, jovial, joyous, jolly, kovod'ik, kugelicious, lovely, musical, nice, organized, pleasant, prosperous, quacky, roaring, simple, super, tasty, toasty, uplifting, v'nahapoch-hoo'dik, wonderful, winey, x-citing, yummy, and zeesen Purim,

Wishing everyone a true Simchas Purim which should last the whole year, Amen! - Yitzchok

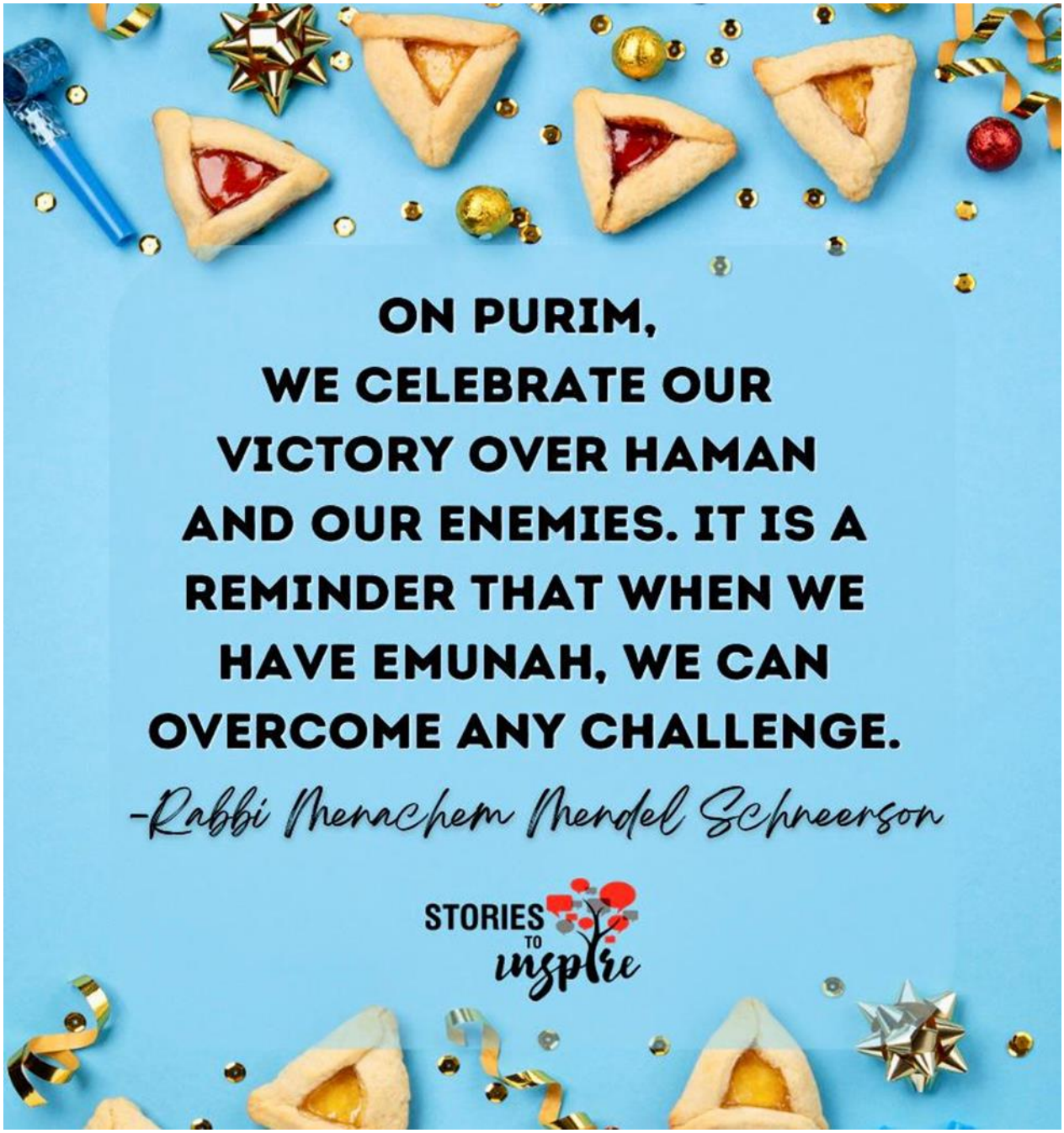







HAPPY
PURIM


HAPPY PURIM!


ON PURIM,
WE CELEBRATE OUR
VICTORY OVER HAMAN
AND OUR ENEMIES. IT IS A
REMINDER THAT WHEN WE
HAVE EMUNAH, WE CAN
OVERCOME ANY CHALLENGE.
-Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson
STORIES TO inspire