

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita*

Tetzaveh

Purim



Torah WELLSPRINGS

CONTACT INFORMATION

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USA OFFICE Mechon Beer Emunah
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Torah Wellsprings - Tetzaveh - Purim

Bigdei Kehunah

In this week's *parashah*, after discussing the clothing of the *kohanim*, the *parashah* discusses the *korbanos* that were brought to sanctify the *kohanim* (during the *שבעת ימי המלוכה*). Also, in *parashas Tzav*, after discussing the *korbanos*, the Torah discusses Aharon and his children donning the *bigdei kehunah*. The Gemara (*Zevachim* 88:) asks, "Why does the Torah put together the *korbanos* with the clothing of the *kohen gadol*? To teach you that just as the *korbanos* bring atonement, so do the clothes of the *kohen gadol*. The *כתונה*, the tunic, atones for murder (see *Bereishis* 37:31). The *מכנסים*, pants, atones for adultery (see *Shemos* 28:42). The *מצנפת*, turban, atones for arrogance. (Why? Let something worn high on the head atone for someone who feels high.) The *אבנט*, belt, atones for the heart's bad thoughts (because the *אבנט* was worn upon the heart). The *חשן*, breastplate, atones for [the courts'] errors in judgment, as it states (28:15) *ועשית חשן משפט*. The *אפוד* atones for *avodah zarah*. The *מעיל*, robe, atones for *lashon hara*. Why? Let a garment that makes sounds (the *מעיל* had bells along its hem) atone for *lashon hara*. The *ציץ* (the gold band worn on the *kohen gadol*'s forehead) atones for *chutzpah*..."

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

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

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

As we wrote, the *me'il* atoned for *lashon hara*. The bells sewn along its hem atoned for the sounds of *lashon hara*. There were also woolen pomegranates hanging at the edge of the *me'il*. As it states (28:34) *פעמן זהב*, "A golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell, and a pomegranate, on the bottom hem of the robe, all around." Some explain that the pomegranates didn't make any sound, which atoned for the times that one should have spoken – to give *chizuk*, a kind word, or counsel to his fellow man – but remained silent. Others explain that the silent pomegranates represent the virtue of being quiet, avoiding *lashon hara* and other forbidden speech.

The bells and the pomegranates were placed as a pattern one after the other, as the Rambam (*Kli HaMikdash* 9:3-4) writes, "...on the hems of the *me'il* will hang a bell, a pomegranate, a bell, a pomegranate."

If one would say "the pomegranate was between two bells," it would be true. But for that matter, it is also true to say, "a bell was between two pomegranates."

The Alshich HaKadosh asks, why does the Torah (*Shemos* 28:33) write *ופעמני זהב בתוכם*, that the *gold bells* were in the middle? It could have just as well stated that the pomegranates were in the middle!

The Alshich answers, "This *pasuk* is *mussar* from our Father in Heaven, teaching us that nothing is better than silence. The bells which have a tongue clanging inside them signify a tongue that bangs within one's mouth... It alludes to speech. The pomegranates... are hollow with closed mouths. They don't make any sound and are alluded to silence. Hashem teaches us that we should not look at each pomegranate

as being situated between two bells because that would imply that for every time of being silent, there is double the amount of talking. Rather, we should consider it as though each bell was between two pomegranates. This means one must be silent twice and speak only once.

"For this reason, Hashem gave a person one mouth and two eyes, to teach the person that he should speak only half of what he sees with his eyes. This will help him avoid speaking forbidden speech..."

This is also implied by Chazal (Megillah 18.) מלה בסלע משתוקא בתרין, "A word for a sela, and silence for two." This indicates that for every word spoken, be silent twice.¹

The Chasam Sofer teaches that we were saved by Mordechai and Esther's trait of silence, as it states (Esther 2:10) לא הגידה אסתר את עמה ואת מולדתה כי מרדכי צוה עליה אשר לא תגיד, "Esther didn't reveal her nation or her birthplace because Mordechai told her not to tell." The merit of their silence overcame Haman's *lashon hara*, and we were saved.

Vitur

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

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

HaMikdash. This time, the sin caused Vashti's death.

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

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

But Vashti wasn't *mevater*. She didn't let everyone do as they pleased. This is implied from the *pasuk*, גם ושתי המלכה עשתה משתה נשים בית, "Queen Vashti also made a feast for the woman in the royal house." She acted with royalty and power. She acted like a queen, and everyone had to do as she demanded. Therefore, she suffered the brunt of the punishment.

The *meforshim* add another explanation to why *Achashveirosh* didn't die at this meal, only Vashti did. It is because shame and humiliation save from death. *Achashveirosh* was shamed at this meal. His wife Vashti sent a message to him (Megillah 12:) "Listen here, my father's stable hand (*Achashveirosh* used to work in *Nevuchadnezzar's* royal stables): My father was able to drink with a thousand people and not get drunk. And you drink a drop of wine and become drunk and insane." This shame

1. Rashi explains the Gemara, "If you want to buy speech for a sela, instead buy silence for two."

It is customary to give *drashah geshank*, 'a *drashah* gift,' to a bar-mitzvah *bachur* as a reward for the *drashah* he delivered. The Rebbe of Ruzhin *zy'a* told his son at his bar-mitzvah, "You received many gifts for your *drashah*, but you should know that you will receive many more gifts for being silent."

The Imrei Emes *zt'l* asked someone, "Is it better to speak or to be silent?"

The man repeated the Gemara, which teaches that silence is twice as valuable as speaking. The Imrei Emes said, "Eh! You're not a businessman. When you're silent, you get two, and when you speak, you get one. But if you speak a lot, you get many 'ones', and many ones are worth more than just being silent and earning two." The implication is that speaking good things, such as Torah and *tefillah*, is even better than remaining silent.

saved *Achashveirosh* from death, and Vashti was killed instead. It says in the *megillah* כלים שונים, and מכלים can also be translated as shame. The shame saved Achashverosh.

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

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

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

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

Hashgachah Pratis in Nature

The uniqueness of the miracle we celebrate on Purim is that nothing outside nature occurred. It was natural for *Achashveirosh* to become angry at his wife, Vashti, and kill her, and it was natural that Mordechai overhear people planning to kill *Achashveirosh*, and so on. Every aspect of the *megillah* can be explained according to the rules of nature. But when we think about the entire episode, we are astounded at the wondrous miracle. It was a miracle within nature, but it was so clear that Hashem arranged everything until there was no doubt in the matter.

The Bnei Yissaschar (*Kislev* 4:83) writes the following *marshal*, told from early scholars, to describe the miracle of Purim:

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

"Is there no cure at all?" the family asked.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Just then, another person entered the room and announced that the great doctor from Spain had arrived.

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

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

With this information, we understand why Hashem's name isn't written in the megillah; only Hashem's name is seen in some words' *roshei teivos* and *sofei teivos*.

For example, surprisingly, there aren't *pasukim* like ויצעקו אל ה' "They shouted out to Hashem," or that they said, ברוך ה', to praise Hashem when the miracles occurred. Hashem's name isn't written in the megillah. But Hashem's name is found in the *roshei teivos* and the *sofei teivos* such as the *roshei teivos* of יבא המלך והמן היום spell הוי"ה, and the final letters of וכל זה איננו שוה לי spell הוי"ה. Kedushas Levi (*Kedushah Rishonah*) explains that this is because Hashem was concealed when this miracle happened. Just as Hashem was concealed in the world, Hashem's name is concealed in the megillah. But Hashem and His name are clearly seen and recognized when one looks at the series of events that occurred. Therefore, in the *roshei teivos* and *sofei teivos*, which represent a series, Hashem's name is clearly seen.²

The Maharal teaches that the simple translation of the word המלך in the megillah is Hashem. When we translate it to refer to Achashverosh, that is when we are using the

2. The series and combination of events can be compared to a jigsaw puzzle of many pieces. Each piece joins the others to create a picture. So, too, each event of our lives combines and merges to create a complete picture, a story of Hashem's hashgachah pratis.

This occurs in every generation, and to every Yid. Everything that happens to a person, from his youth until his final day, is part of a larger picture. A challenge he endured a month ago is connected to a hardship he went through a week ago, and so on; they form a single narrative. Therefore, a person should accept every situation in his life with love and joy, knowing it is all part of a larger picture, which is ultimately for his benefit.

Shulchan Aruch (690:17) teaches, "The minhag Yisrael is that when the megillah is read, it is opened like a letter, to reveal the miracle." This means that the megillah is entirely unrolled in front of the baal korei, folded in a particular way. We can explain that the megillah is opened in full to teach us that one can't look at any single event of the megillah as though it stands alone. Every detail is part of a larger and greater story.

It states (Esther 3:10) וַיִּסֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת טַבַּעְתּוֹ מֵעַל יָדוֹ וַיִּתְּנָהּ לְחָמָן בֶּן הָמַדָּסָא הָאֲגָגִי צֶרֶר הַיְּהוּדִים "The king removed his ring from his hand and gave it to Haman the son of Hamedasa the Agagi, the adversary of the Jews." The Gemara (Megillah 14.) says, "Achashveirosh's removing his ring [to give to Haman] accomplished more than what the forty-eight male neviim and seven women neviyos who prophesized to Yisrael accomplished. The neviim and neviyos failed to arouse the Jewish nation to teshuvah, but when Achashveirosh removed his ring, the Jewish people improved their ways."

Bris Kehunas Olam (מאמר הסתר אסתיר פרק ז) writes, "Achashveirosh's giving the ring accomplished more because it was a miracle concealed in nature, and the nation uncovered what was beneath the 'nature'. This brought them to teshuvah more than the forty-eight neviim and seven neviyos whose prophecies were above nature." The explanation is that the greatest level is to find Hashem within nature. That brings people to teshuvah.

path of *drush*. However, the simple and literal translation of המלך refers to Hashem.

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

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

It seems strange to us that Hashem should be alluded to when we mention המלך in the megillah, which refers to *Achashveirosh*. Why should Hashem be alluded to when we discuss this *rasha*? The answer is that the simple translation of המלך is Hashem.

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

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

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

The Mishnah adds, לא פחות ולא יותר, "not earlier and not later." This means we can only read the megillah on the five dates, not the day before or after. The day before is י, אדר, and the day after is ט"ז, which together is *gematriya* 26 (10 + 16 = 26), the *gematriya* of הוי"ה, Hashem's name alluding to miracles. We can't read the megillah on these days because on Purim, we aren't celebrating the revealed miracles, which are symbolized by Hashem's name הוי"ה. On Purim, we celebrate that even when everything appears natural, Hashem is with us, directing each detail.³

3. An indication that everything is from Hashem is the words ויהי בימי אחשורוש, "It came to pass in the days of Achashverosh..." Now, since the story of the megillah is about Achashverosh, why is it necessary to highlight that it happened in his lifetime?

Or Dovid (written by Reb Dovid Dov Meizlish zt'l) answers that the story is not about Achashverosh. It is about Hashem! Therefore, it is appropriate to write ויהי בימי אחשורוש, that the story happened in his lifetime.

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

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

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

Someone once asked Reb Yeshayah of Prague zt'l, "Why don't we make a *brachah* on *yesurim*? After all,

The halachah is (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 691:1) מגילה צריכה שרטוט, that when one writes a megillah, he needs to engrave lines (שרטוט) on the parchment as a guide where to write the letters. We can explain that the שרטוט is a hint for us to engrave into our hearts the lessons of *hashgachah pratis* that are written in the megillah.⁴

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*."⁵

Bnei Yissaschar (*Adar* 1:7) teaches:

"In Nisan [alluding to the miracles of yetzias Mitzrayim], we experienced revealed miracles. Everyone saw that Hashem can

change nature. However, many didn't know that even when the world is run according to the rules of nature, Hashem is also leading the world with *hashgachah pratis* over every detail. The *bnei Torah* knew it, but it wasn't known to most people... This was corrected with the miracle in the month of Adar. The miracle was within nature; all the rules of nature remained in place. Nevertheless, it was obvious to all that Hashem performed the miracle and didn't occur by chance. It became known that Hashem's *hashgachah* is also within nature...⁶ This became known to us through the miracles in Adar because the miracle was within the rules of nature, yet everyone saw that it happened with Hashem's wondrous *hashgachah*."⁷

afflictions are for our good, as they atone for our sins. Shouldn't we praise Hashem for them?"

Reb Yeshayah replied, "We do say a *brachah* on *yesurim*. The *brachah* is שעשה לי כל צרכי, 'Hashem provides all my needs.'"

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

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

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

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

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

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

6. The Bnei Yissaschar adds the following:

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

7. Chazal (*Taanis* 29.) state, משנכנס אדר מרבין בשמחה, "When Adar arrives, we increase joy." Rashi writes that this

Every Word of Megillas Esther Reveals the Miracle

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

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

The megillah begins with the words (1:2), כשבת המלך אחשverosh על כסא מלכותו אשר בשושן הבירה, "When King Achashverosh sat on his throne, which was in the capital city Shushan." Which aspect of the miracle is expressed here?

The Vilna Gaon *zy"v* explains that Shlomo HaMelech had a magnificent throne. Many kings wanted to sit on it but failed. Pharaoh Nakeh (Pharaoh the lame) sat on Shlomo HaMelech's throne, and one of the lions that decorated the throne bit him, thus causing him to become lame. Nevuchadnezzar wanted to sit on Shlomo's throne and failed.

Achashveirosh also desired to sit on a magnificent throne, which appeared like Shlomo's, so he sought craftsmen to fashion a replica of this unique throne. The only craftsmen who knew how to build such a majestic chair lived in Shushan. After it was built, it was too heavy to transfer the throne to Bavel, so Achashveirosh moved the capital city to Shushan. Shushan became the new capital city of the Persian Empire.

refers to two months, Adar and Nisan, because these are ימי ניסים לישראל – פורים ופסח, "Days of miracles for Yisrael – Purim and Pesach."

The Chasam Sofer (Drashos vol.1 p.162:) explains that the miracles of Nisan – such as yetzias Mitzrayim and kriyas Yam Suf – superseded nature. The miracles of Adar, on the other hand, were within nature. Nothing supernatural occurred. Nevertheless, when you take in the entire story of the Purim miracle and think about the megillah from the beginning of Achashveirosh's seudah until the end, you will see wonderful hashgachah. [These miracles continue because] Hakadosh Baruch Hu performs such miracles for us every day, only אין בעל הנס מכיר בניסו, those who constantly experience miracles don't recognize them. Therefore, we are very happy [in Adar and Nissin] because Hashem's hashgachah, which is upon us, is visible.... A person should arouse himself on Purim to recognize Hashem's wonders... These miracles continue in every generation."

A miracle isn't a matter of the past, rather (Esther 9:28) לא יעברו מתוך ה'יהודים, the miracles never leave us. To this day, everything in the world, which appears routine nature, is carefully planned for the benefit of Yisrael. This is the primary essence of our emunah, as the Ramban (end of Bo) writes, "Whoever doesn't believe in this doesn't have a portion in Hashem's Torah." מרבין בשמחה, we increase joy in this month because when a person believes that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is with him and that Hashem is our father Who has compassion on us and seeks the best for us, his heart becomes filled with joy and happiness.

The Beis Aharon (p.67:) explains the Gemara (Chagigah 5.) כל שאינו בהסתר פנים אינו מהם, "Whoever doesn't experience *hester panim* (that Hashem is concealed from him) isn't a Yid. The Beis Aharon translated the Gemara that הסתר פנים means to find Hashem's face (פנים) even when there is concealment (הסתר). If a person can't find Hashem's face and hashgachah even when Hashem is concealed, אינו מהם, he isn't a Yid, because a Yid must be able to find Hashem in every situation.

יוסף לקח (1:1) writes that Hashem's name הוי"ה is found twice in the megillah. Once in the *roshei teivos* of the words (Esther 5:4) יבוא המלך והמן היום, "Let the king and Haman come to day..." and in the *sofei teivos* of (Esther 7:7) כי כלתה אליו הרעה, "for he saw that evil was determined against him by the king." This hints that when one is in a high level, that he alone was called to be with the king, or when a person is at a low level, כי כלתה, at both times, he must know that this was decreed by Hashem Who leads him with hashgachah pratis at every moment and every step.

The Vilna Gaon writes, "This is the meaning of the *pasuk*, ... כִּשְׁבַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵירוֹשׁ. בְּשׁוֹשָׁן. *Achashveirosh* was the first king to live in Shushan. All the kings before him didn't live there... This is recorded in the megillah for us to recognize Hashem's wonders and understand that Hashem prepared every step leading up to the miracle for Bnei Yisrael. Mordechai and Esther lived in Shushan, so Hakadosh Baruch arranged that Achashverosh move his capital there.⁸

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

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

Achashveirosh was awake late at night, thinking how he could reward Mordechai for saving his life years before. Just then, Haman arrived, and Achashveirosh asked him (Esther 6:6) מַה לַעֲשׂוֹת בְּאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקָרוֹ, "What should be done to a man whom the king wishes to honor?" The Alshich points out that Haman came precisely at the right moment for the miracle to occur. Had Haman come a bit earlier, he would have heard from behind the window the reading of the Sefer HaZichronos and would have known that they were discussing the reward Mordechai

deserves for saving the king. If he had come a minute later, someone else would have thought about how to reward Mordechai.

This shows us Hashem's *hashgachah pratis* over the most minor detail.

Furthermore, the Malbim *zt'l* (Esther 2:23) asks why Achashverosh waited to reward Mordechai. Why did he forget to reward him? When Mordechai saved his life, all he did then was write the episode in his *Sefer Zichronos*. This was so Mordechai would receive the reward at just the right time.

Also, let's think about what would have happened if Haman had arrived just one day earlier to request permission to hang Mordechai on the gallows. *Achashveirosh* would have agreed, knowing *Achashveirosh's* feelings towards the Yidden. Haman came just at the right day and time so that the miracles could occur.

As we wrote, every word of the megillah reveals miracles. Therefore, if possible, read some commentaries on the *Megillah* and discover how each word is another facet of the miracle. Let yourself become astounded by the *nissim* Hashem performs, within the rules of nature, to save His nation, Bnei Yisrael.

Shabbos Zachor is Mesugal for Children

Rebbe Aharon of Belz *zt'l* told someone who didn't have children, "Purim Hashem gives *mishloach manos*, and Hashem's *mishloach manos* is children."⁹

8. This also reveals Hashem's love for His tzaddikim and the Jewish nation. Hashem had Achashverosh and his entire government move to Persia rather than make Mordechai and Esther move to Bavel!

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

9. There are two explanations שבת זכור as to why this Shabbos is called שבת זכור.

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

Toras Avos writes in the name of the Yesod HaAvodah that Shabbos Zachor is *mesugal* for the barren to be blessed with children because about Rachel it states (*Bereishis* 30:22), "ויזכור אלקים את רחל... ויפתח את רחמה", "Hashem remembered Rachel...and opened her womb." And by Sarah it states (*Bereishis* 21:1), "וזה", "פקד את שרה... ותהר ותלד", Hashem remembered Sarah... and she became pregnant, and she bore a child." The Beis Avraham teaches that זכור and פקד, which both mean "remember," are used in reference to Hashem remembering Sarah and Rachel to grant them children, and when discussing Amalek, the two terms זכור and פקד are used again. It states זכור את, and it states in the *haftarah*, אשר עשה לך עמלק, פקדתי את עשה לך עמלק, "I remember what Amalek did to you." This tells us that Shabbos Zachor is *mesugal* to be remembered for children.

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

Tefillah on Taanis Esther

The Kav HaYashar (ch.97) quotes the Beis Yosef's *magid*, "Hashem's *hashgachah* is always over Bnei Yisrael. They are His lot, His chosen nation, and He desires to grant them Olam Haba. Therefore, when the 14th

of Adar approaches, the day the Jewish nation is extremely happy with the miracles that Hakadosh Baruch Hu performed for them, that he brought the downfall of the *rasha* Haman and his children and the other *resha'im* of that time... and Chazal say, 'one is obligated to be happy with wine on Purim,' therefore, Hakadosh Baruch Hu commanded us to fast before Purim because fasting is a *segulah* to be saved from sin. Fasting causes that the Satan shouldn't be *mekatreg* and lead the Jewish nation to sin due to abundant eating and drinking.

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

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

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

listens to prayers will compassionately answer your tefillos, amen."

The Miracle Came from Tefillah

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

"The prophets with the beis din established and commanded that we read the megillah at its designated time to remember Hakadosh Baruch Hu's praises and the salvation He performed for us, and that He was near to listen to our shouts, so we will bless Him and praise Him and to let the upcoming generations know that what the Torah says is true [that Hashem listens to our tefillos]. As it states (*Devarim 4:7*), וְיָגִיד גְּדוּלַּת אֲשֶׁר לֹא אֱלֹהִים, 'Which great nation has a god as close to them like Hashem our G-d Who is close to us whenever we pray to Him.'"¹⁰

The Purim miracle came about through *tefillos*.

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

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

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

"The *avos* replied, 'If they transgressed Hakadosh Baruch Hu's laws and, therefore, the decree was signed, what can we do about it?'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Moshe repeated, 'Tell Mordechai about the decree.'

"Eliyahu went to Mordechai and told him. As it states (*Esther 4:1*) וּמֹרְדֵכַי יָדַע אֶת כָּל אֲשֶׁר נַעֲשָׂה וַיִּקְרַע מֹרְדֵכַי אֶת בְּגָדָיו, 'Mordechai knew everything that happened, and Mordechai ripped his clothing.'..." He knew about the decree because Eliyahu told him about it.

10. The Midrash tells about a ship that arrived at an inhabited island. They asked the only Yid aboard to disembark and to bring back fresh provisions for the passengers. The Yid asked, "Why do you send specifically me? I'm a stranger on this island, just like you. No one knows me here. I will be all alone there..."

The captain told him, "A Yid is never alone. As it states, וְכֵן אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּכָל קְרָאנוּ אֵלָיו, When you call to Hashem, Hashem is near you, and He will help you."

Moshe and Eliyahu davened in heaven, Mordechai davened from the earth, and the decree was annulled."

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

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

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

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

Tefillah on Purim

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

The Malbim, however, says that Zeresh 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*.

Immediately after Haman led Mordechai through the streets of Shushan with immense honor, Mordechai returned to his *tefillos*, as it states (6:12) וישב מרדכי אל שער המלך, "Mordechai returned to the king's gate." Rashi adds לשקו ולתעניתו, that he returned to his sackcloth and fasting. He didn't stop praying, and that is what brought about salvation.¹¹

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

Yet, we find Haman demanding things from King Achashveirosh.

Zeresh told Haman (*Esther* 5:14), ובבקר אמור, "In the morning tell the king and have them hang Mordechai on it." The language (אמור למלך) sounds almost like a command (she didn't say תבקש ממלך, request from the king). It seems that Haman was able to command Achashveirosh to hang Mordechai.

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

How could Haman demand things from Achashveirosh?

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

¹¹ 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 should stop davening. The Avnei Nezer said that Mordechai didn't make this mistake. He continued davening even after all the honor he received.

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

The Shem MiShmuel (תרע"ז) teaches that on Purim, a Yid can, *keviyachol*, demand matters from Hashem, and Hashem will listen and do as they request. He explains that the miracles of Purim occur again each year, and the special power of tefillah that we receive exists every Purim.

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.

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

It is written in *Segulos 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 ומווני*, 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.)¹²

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

It is also an auspicious time for tefillah. Today, many batei midrashim offer minyanim either on Purim night or early Purim morning to recite Tehillim.

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

Yungerleit from Lakewood put out the following letter:

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

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

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

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

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

And then came Purim. The bachur stuck his head into the aron kodesh, cried, and davened to Hashem -

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

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

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

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

Once, in Europe, in the era of the Baal Shem Tov zy'a, there was a drought, and everyone davened for rain, but the heavens remained sealed. The Baal Shem Tov's students asked their great rebbe to daven for rain. The Baal Shem Tov zt'l replied, "I can't annul this decree, but I know someone who can. He's an alcoholic. If you catch him at a sober moment, and he davens for rain, it will come."

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

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

The students told him, "No, we need you to daven for rain. The Baal Shem Tov said it is in your hands."

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

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

The Baal Shem Tov told them the following story:

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

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

"How much money do you need?"

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

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

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

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l repeated this story to explain why Chazal gave us the mitzvah to drink on Purim. On Purim, everyone has the strength of tefillah. Whatever we request is granted. To conceal this great gift that Hashem gave us, Chazal decreed that people should drink. People get involved in that and forget about the tremendous power of tefillah they possess on that day.

Sometimes, people say, "But I don't feel anything." They are lax with their Tehillim or tefillos on Purim

and Taanis Esther because they don't feel the kedushah of Purim (...as if everyone else *does* feel the kedushah!). To them we say, "It doesn't make a difference whether you feel it or not. It is a special time for tefillah. Take advantage of it!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A simple person jumped down, lifted the man off the tracks, and somehow carried him back to the platform, just moments before a train came speeding down the tracks.

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

"I didn't do it to save a life," he replied. "I knew that if this man got hit by a train and died, there would be a delay of several hours, and I would get to work late and forfeit forty dollars. So, I jumped in to save him."

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

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

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

Therefore, be wise and do mitzvos l'shmah.

For our present discussion, the nimshal is related to tefillah on Purim. You can ask for so much on Purim, and your tefillos will be answered. You can ask for so many salvations on Purim, so why settle for forty dollars? When you can gain a lot, don't settle for less.

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

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

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

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

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

The Mareh Yechezkel zt'l teaches that sometimes people daven for things they need, and other times they daven for luxuries. Throughout the year, our tefillos for things we need, such as health, food, and the like, will certainly be answered. However, when we daven for luxuries (such as wealth), it isn't certain that Hashem will grant our wishes. But on Purim, even our requests for extras are answered. He writes that this is alluded to in the *pasuk* (Yeshaya 65:24), וְהָיָה טָרֵם, יִקְרְאוּ וְאֵנִי אֶעֱנֶה, עוֹד הֵם מְדַבְּרִים וְאֵנִי אֶשְׁמַע. The *pasuk* alludes to two types of tefillos. When one prays for necessities (such as food, clothing, etc.) Hashem says, וְאֵנִי אֶעֱנֶה, “I will answer him and grant his wishes.” However, עוֹד הֵם מְדַבְּרִים, when one prays for עוד, extras and luxuries, Hashem says, וְאֵנִי אֶשְׁמַע, “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), וְמָחָר, בִּקְשָׁתְךָ עוֹד וְתַעֲשֶׂה. On Purim even, בִּקְשָׁתְךָ עוד, your requests for extras, וְתַעֲשֶׂה, will be answered.

One Purim, Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz zt'l was speaking with Rebbe Shalom of Belz

zt'l. A simple farmer came by and said to Rebbe Naftali of Ropshitz, “Rebbe, please bless me with a בְּרַכַּת הַדְּיוּט, a blessing of a simple person.” The chassidim laughed (because Rebbe Naftali's *brachos* were a בְּרַכַּת צְדִיק and not a בְּרַכַּת הַדְּיוּט, a blessing of a regular person). Rebbe Naftali Ropshitzer told them, “Why do you laugh? You didn't understand what he said. He was asking for the *brachos* that a הַדְּיוּט, a simple person, would ask for. The *ovdei Hashem* ask for success in Torah, to daven with *kavanah* and the like. But simple people ask for *parnassah*. He wants a בְּרַכַּת הַדְּיוּט, a *brachah* for the matters that a simple person wants.”

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

The Imrei Noam writes, בִּימֵי פִּזְיוֹת יֵשׁ הַתְּגַבְרוּת, “On the days of Purim, compassion, and love abound to the highest degrees.” Notice that the Imrei Noam writes בִּימֵי פִּזְיוֹת, the two days of Purim. This is because Shushan Purim is also a day for *tefillah*.

The Ateres Tzvi zt'l taught that a person could accomplish more with his tefillos on Shushan Purim than on Purim day.¹³

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

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

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

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

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

13. Rebbe Yitzchak Aizik of Kamarna zt'l writes, “We received a *kabbalah* from our teachers that during the days of Purim, a small *neshamah* can reach the *heichal* of a great tzaddik, and no one can stop it. All his

The Gemara (Megillah 4) states, "A person must read the megillah at night and repeat it in the daytime."¹⁴

The source for this is the pasuk (Tehillim 22:3) אֱלֹהֵי אֶקְרָא יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה וְלֹא תַעֲנֶה וְלֹא דוֹמִיָּה לִי, 'Hashem, I call out by day, and You do not reply, and at night I do not keep silent.' This alludes to the Yidden's tefillos at that time.

But there is a great question. This pasuk discusses times when our tefillos *are not answered*! Shouldn't the pasuk alluding to the miracle of Purim discuss times when our tefillos were answered?

Also, let's look at a pasuk before it (which also discusses the story of Purim). It states (22:2) אֲ"לִי לָמָּה עֲזַבְתָּנִי, "My G-d, my G-d, why have You forsaken me?" Once again, is this an accurate description of the miracles of Purim?

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

This is because tefillah is a process. It isn't that we daven and are answered immediately. Each tefillah brings the

salvation closer. Sometimes, we have to offer many tefillos before our requests are granted. The chapter discusses the two stages of tefillah: The first stage is when we daven and don't see results, and the second stage is when Hashem sends us our *yeshuah*.

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

After Purim passes, people often feel joyful that they had the opportunity to do so many mitzvos and daven to Hashem on this special day. But, simultaneously, they say, "I wish Purim would be longer; I would do so much more!"

It can be compared to someone who walked through a desert and found a mountain of diamonds. He fills all his pockets with precious stones (as well as his fists, socks, and shoes) and rejoices with his good fortune. But as he walks away from this unique mountain, he thinks, "I wish I had more pockets..."

This is hinted at in this chapter. It mentions our tefillos that were answered and addresses our requests that weren't answered. It is implying, "Baruch Hashem for what we grasped. If only Purim were longer, we could have gained so much more!"¹⁵

tefillos go up to *Keser* without any disturbance... I received this in a whisper, and I am revealing it like someone who is revealing a secret because of my love for the Jewish nation. I opened a crack; there are great secrets here."

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

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

This joke reminds us that if there's a problem, and you have an opportunity to escape it, you must be a fool not to utilize it. We are referring to tefillah on Purim. Look around yourself for a moment and think about your neighbors. You won't find a family that isn't dealing with serious problems. For some, it is health problems, r'l; for a second, it is shidduchim; for a third, it is nachas; and for a fourth, it is parnassah, may Hashem protect us. But there's a solution - davening on Taanis Esther and Purim. Only a Vayizasa doesn't take advantage of such holy times.

A girl from Williamsburg, New York, suffered from stomach pain for an entire winter. Erev Purim, her parents brought her to a local doctor, and a blood test showed that the girl suffered from celiac (gluten intolerance). The father was relieved because he had feared a worse diagnosis, but the mother was distraught.

Learning Torah on Purim

Numerous connections exist between Torah study and the Purim miracle.

It states (Esther 8:16) לַיְּהוּדִים הִתְאָוֶרָה, 'The Yidden had light...' Chazal say that this means they had Torah. Rashi explains that Haman made a decree against studying the Torah, and now that the miracles and the salvation began, they were permitted once again to study Torah. Yesod v'Shores HoAvodah (Hamifkad 6) writes, "We understand from this the great obligation for all people who know how to learn Torah to learn it and be happy with the Torah on Purim. You should praise Hashem with your mouth and thoughts that Hashem foiled Haman's plan, who wanted to forbid us from studying Torah."

The Gemara (Shabbos 88.) also tells us that when the miracle occurred, due to the nation's love to Hashem for the miracle, the Yidden accepted the Torah again. Years before, the Torah was given on Har Sinai, but then the nation was forced to accept the Torah. If they didn't accept the Torah,

Hashem told them they would be buried under the mountain. But at the time of the Purim miracle, they accepted the Torah again, this time out of love rather than fear. This source also indicates to us the connection between Purim and the study of Torah, and it is another indication that one should devote time to study Torah on Purim.

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

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

She couldn't make peace with the fact that her daughter would have to avoid gluten for the rest of her life.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Chasam Sofer zt'l (Drushim v'Agados p.245) writes, "I received from Reb Mendele Lilig zt'l who was the Rav in Frankfurt, who received it from the gaon Shev Yaakov zt'l, that whoever studies Torah between the megillah at night and the megillah in the morning, he is guaranteed to be a ben Olam HaBa. This is how I received it; I don't know the reason."

The Chasam Sofer (Drashos vol.1, Purim 5596) says that Purim should have been on the thirteenth of Adar because that is when the Yidden won the war against their enemies. Why do we celebrate on the following day, the day after the war ended? It is to ensure that there will always be a place in the world where Torah will be studied. If the celebration would be on the thirteenth, the day they fought the war, everyone would have Purim on the same day. And due to the many celebrations, the world would be without Torah. Therefore, Chazal established Purim on the day they *rested* from the war. Thus, Purim is celebrated on two days. Unwalled cities celebrate Purim on the fourteenth of Adar, and walled cities celebrate Purim on the fifteenth. In this way, there will always be people studying Torah. Because when it is Purim in the walled cities, those without walls aren't celebrating Purim, and vice versa. Thereby, there will always be some people studying Torah in the world.

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

Purim Seudah

When the megillah discusses Mordechai and Esther's declaration of the holiday Purim, it states (*Esther* 9:19) that they established Purim to be שמחה ומשתה ויום טוב ומשלוח מנות, "an occasion of gladness, feasting and *yom tov*, and sending *mishloach manos* to one another."

Afterward, when the *pasuk* discusses the holiday of Purim that the Jewish nation accepted, it states (9:22), לעשות אותם ימי משתה, "To observe them as days of feasting and gladness and sending *mishloach manos* to one another..." but it doesn't state Purim as being a *yom tov*.

The Gemara (*Megillah* 5:) answers that Mordechai and Esther wanted Purim to be a *yom tov*, a day when work is forbidden, but the Jewish nation didn't accept that aspect of the holiday. The first *pasuk* we quoted (which mentions *yom tov*) refers to what Mordechai and Esther wanted to establish, but the next *pasuk* we mentioned talks about the Purim that the Jewish nation accepted.

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

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

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

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

The Maaseh Rokeach 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 celebrated 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 Rokeach in high esteem, and since the worms vanished, he supposed that the Yidden may have acted correctly and that the salvation came from them.

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

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

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

One Purim, the Beis Avraham of Slonim *zt'l* was in Lodz and was eating the Purim meal with his chassidim. Suddenly, the chassid Reb Yidel Rivak *z'l* came in and said, "My son fell from a high place and hit his head on a stone. He's unconscious, and the doctors say his life is hanging on a thread."

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

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

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

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

Reb Yidel replied, "How can I go home? I can't see my son in this situation. He is battling for his life!"

The Rebbe repeated, "Go home."

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

There was once a *moser* (someone who slandered the Jewish community to the king), whom the Jewish community hated. 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 someone Haman.

But the children didn't give up. They found another way to humiliate him. They called him *Ben Hamdasa*. The *moser* went to the king and complained that children were chanting after him, "*Ben Hamdasa*". So the king decreed that it is forbidden to call anyone *Ben Hamdasa*.

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

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

The children found a solution. When they saw him, they sang the tune of *kadma v'azla*,

the tune that is on the words ויבא המן. They kept the rule and didn't call him Kadma v'Azla, but they sang the tune.

The *moser* complained to the king that children were singing when they saw him. The king said, "I didn't let them call you Haman, Ben Hamdasa, or *Kadma v'Azla*, but I can't stop them from singing."

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

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

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

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

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

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

Drink Wisely

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

Reb Efraim Zalman Margulies *zt'l* of Brod (*Yad Efraim* on *Shulchan Aruch* 695) writes, "In a dream, it was explained that we drink on Purim to be joyous, as it states (*Tehillim* 104:15), ויין ישמח ללב, 'Wine gladdens the heart of man'... So he can praise Hashem for the miracles with a full heart... One shouldn't drink too much until his mind becomes foggy because then he won't think about the miracles. When Chazal say one should drink עד דלא ידע, until he doesn't know the difference between Mordechai and Haman, this means, עד ולא ידע, that he must stop before he reaches that intoxicated state. He should drink and be happy, but if he drinks so much that he can't differentiate between Mordechai and Haman, the purpose of drinking is lost. Chazal wanted the kind of drinking that leads to praising Hashem. When one's mind becomes confused, he won't be able to praise Hashem for the miracles. This was my dream, and I thought about it in the morning and saw it was correct."

The *Ahavas Yisrael* of *Vizhnitz* *zy'a* says that the *roshei teivos* of עד דלא ידע spells ידע, to know. The *Ahavas Yisrael* of *Vizhnitz* explains that this tells us that one must know his limits when he drinks. If his drinking results in him embarrassing or harming others or causes him to be lax with any of the *mitzvos*, it is time to stop.

Based on the dream and lesson mentioned above, we can explain that the *roshei teivos* of ידע hints that even when we drink, our goal is always **to know** what we are celebrating. If you lose focus of the miracles, you went too far.

The *Gemara* tells the story of *Rabba* and *Reb Zeira*, who ate a Purim meal together, and due to the drinking, *Rabba* killed *Reb Zeira*. Afterward, *Rabba* resurrected him with his *tefillos*. Reb Efraim Zalman Margulies

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

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

The Kol Bo writes, "One must become intoxicated on Purim, but he shouldn't get drunk because that is forbidden. There is no greater sin than being drunk. Being drunk leads to *shefichas damim* (murder) and *giluy arayos* (adultery). Rather, one should drink a little more than usual so he will be happy. In his joyous mood, he should make the poor happy and console them. That is the proper way to be happy."¹⁶

Matteh Moshe writes that one must be cautious that drinking on Purim doesn't cause him to be lax in any halachah, such as washing for bread, *benching*, or davening correctly. He concludes, "All those who rejoice and praise Hashem for the miracles Hashem performed for our forefathers, their children will be like them, and Hashem will grant them success in all their endeavors."

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

day of the *omer* and the years of his life. Someone came forward and said, "On Purim, the Rema would dress up (so people wouldn't recognize that he is their Rav) and go from home to home to remind people to daven *maariv*." That was the 33rd praise.

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

The Chida (*Pnei David, Emor*) explains that when the *kohen gadol* came to the Kodosh Hakadoshim on Yom Kippur to do the *avodah*, he would say the שם המפורש – Hashem's name הוי"ה, as it is written. When the *kohen gadol* uttered this name, if he thought that someone should die, it would happen.¹⁷ If he would be permitted to marry a widow, he may choose to kill a husband when he uttered Hashem's name on Yom Kippur so he could marry his wife. To prevent this, the Torah says a *kohen gadol* may not marry a widow.

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

Indeed, Chazal (*Succah* 52.) say, כל הגדול מחבירו, יצרו גדול הימנו, "The greater a person, the greater his *yetzer hara*," and Reb Yechezkel Levinstein zt'l adds, "The greater the moment and time,

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

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

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

the greater the *yetzer hara*." Therefore, it could happen. The Torah understands the *yetzer hara* and knows that even this is possible.

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

But don't be surprised. Drinking excessively could be damaging and could lead to sin; therefore, fortunate are those who are cautious to drink with wisdom and know their limits.

Segulos of the Drinking

It states (*Esther* 5:6), ויאמר המלך לאסתר במשתה היין, מה שאלתך וינתן לך ומה בקשתך עד חצי המלכות ותעש, "The king said to Esther at the wine party, 'What is your request, and it will be yours... Ask for half the kingdom, and it will be granted to you.'" The Minchas Elazar *zt'l* says this *pasuk* means that on Purim, when we are at the משתה היין, wine party, the King of the world says to the Jewish nation, מה שאלתך וינתן לך, "What is your request? Ask for whatever you want, and I will grant it to you."

Chazal say, חייב איניש לבסומי בפוריא, a person is obligated to be happy with drinking on Purim. לבסומי isn't a very common word. It is written only a few times in Shas. Interestingly, the Gemara uses the word לבסומי twice on the same page (*Megillah* 7:), and it is used with two different translations. The Gemara says that on Purim there is a mitzvah לבסומי, to drink wine. A few lines above that, the Gemara uses לבסומי to mean sweet. The Gemara says, רווחא לבסומי שכיחי, "A person always has room to eat something sweet." The Gemara relates that one Purim, Abaya came to Mari bar Mar's home to deliver *mishloach manos*. Abaya said that he didn't feel hungry when he came to Mari Bar Mar's house. Mari bar Mar served him sixty plates

with sixty types of cooked dishes, and Abaya ate them all. The final course was pot roast, and Abaya said he had a great appetite; he even wanted to eat the dish. The Gemara says, היינו דאמרי אינשי כפין עניא ולא ידע, "This is as people say, 'The poor are hungry, and they don't know it.'" Or it is as people say, 'One can always find room for sweets.'"

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

The Imrei Emes said that לבסומי is *roshei teivos* for (*Tehillim* 119:120), סמר מפחדך בשרי וממשפטך, יראתי, "My flesh bristles from fear. I am afraid of Your judgment." This hints that one should drink wine with *yiras Shamayim*.

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

The Mishnah states (*Beitzah* 40.), משקין ושוחטין, we give the animals water to drink before we slaughter them. This is because it is easier to skin an animal after it drinks. We can explain that skinning an animal is akin to a human being shedding his animalistic nature and attitudes. Thus, we can explain משקין, by drinking on Purim, one sheds his animalistic self and becomes a more spiritual being.

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

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

A chassid often asked Rebbe Avraham Elimelech of Karlin *zt'l* for a *brachah* for

children. Each time, the Rebbe would bless him unenthusiastically, almost in a whisper, and the chassid understood that the Rebbe saw with his *ruach hakodesh* that his chances of bearing children were slim.

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

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

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

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

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

and a weekday. That is Purim. Purim is a *yom tov*, but it is also a weekday because work is permitted. The *pasuk* says, ויחל נח איש אדמה ויטע כרם, meaning ויחל נח, on the day that a weekday and a *yom tov* merge, or in other words, on Purim; איש אדמה, every person can attain all his needs, ויטע כרם, when he drinks wine on Purim.¹⁸

Happiness

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

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

The Sfas Emes (*Purim* תרנ"ב) answers that ועשה refers to Hashem. ועשה אותו יום משתה ושמחה, "Hashem made it a day of feasting and gladness."¹⁹

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

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

18. *Shulchan Aruch* (695:2) states, אחד המרבה ואחד הממעיט ובלבד שיכוין לבו לשמים, "Someone who drinks a lot and someone who drinks a little have equal merit, as long as their intentions are for Heaven." Drinking even a little can have all the benefits discussed in this section.

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

"Do not drink and drive" is a popular rule. Drinking on Purim reminds us that we are not in the driver's seat. Hashem is steering us. Everything is in His hands. What we do and where we go is from Him.

19. Chazal tell us that Haman's decree to annihilate Bnei Yisrael *ch'v* was also written and sealed in heaven. Due to their *aveiros*, Bnei Yisrael deserved this punishment, *r'l*. But the nation did *teshuvah*, and Hashem redeemed them.

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

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

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

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

Reb Yosef immediately stopped singing.

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

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

Haman tries to make us sad on Purim, and Mordechai comes to make us happy.

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

This vort is also taught by the Maharam m'Rottenberg, and he says that there's a custom to write the ו"ו with horns on top of it (the תנין appear like horns) to allude to the jumping

animals and our jumping for joy in praise of Hashem.²⁰

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

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

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 possesses the unique ability to be sad and happy at the same time.

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

Nevertheless, the Jewish nation sang *shirah* at this time. This is because a *malach* can only do one *shlichus* at a time. When he is happy and praising Hashem, he can't be sad simultaneously. But a Yid can do both. He mourns the loss of human life and rejoices in Hashem's salvation. Similarly, it is possible to be sad and broken from the holocaust and happy with Purim. There is room in a Yid's heart for both emotions.

Purim Miracle because of Joy

Joy brings salvation, just as the Purim miracle occurred because of happiness.

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

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

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

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

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

The Tiferes Shlomo writes, "When Esther heard Mordechai's loud cries for Klal Yisrael, she sent him clothing and asked him to remove his sackcloth. She implied that he should gird himself with joy and pray to Hashem with happiness. 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 felt they must begin with remorse. However, they both understood that for the salvation to come it had to be through *simcha*.

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

The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* explains, "Mordechai was asked to ride the king's

horse, dressed in the king's clothes. The people of the city sang and played music before him. All this was to make Mordechai happy. Immediately after Mordechai was filled with joy came *klal Yisroel's* salvation."

All honor accorded to Mordechai was to get him to be happy, and when that happened, the salvation arrived.

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

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

Ben Yehoyadah answers, "Haman knew that Mordechai was davening with sadness, and Haman preferred it that way. Haman thought, 'If I interrupt his *tefillah*, he will have 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.'"

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

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

was happy, so she pushed off pleading for the Jewish nation for the next day.

The next day, Haman was sad, as it states (*Esther* 6:12), אָבֵל וְחַפְּזֵי רֹאשׁ, "despondent and with his head covered." That was an ideal time to bring about Haman's downfall. Indeed, Haman was hung that day. This teaches us that joy brings success and sadness leads to failure.

Reading the Megillah

The Gemara (Shabbos 88.) says that at Har Sinai, Hashem placed the mountain over the heads of Bnei Yisroel and told them that if they didn't receive the Torah, they would be buried under the mountain. They were forced to receive the Torah. However, after the Purim miracle, the nation accepted the Torah again, this time with love. The Chasam Sofer (*Drashos* p.164.) writes, "Therefore, the megillah is more honored and greater than the Torah itself." It was accepted out of love and is therefore considered extremely great.

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

She'eiris Yisrael of Valednik *zt'l* (*Shaar HaZmanim* 2, Purim ד"ה אף) teaches that reading the

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

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

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

Fortunate are those who had the merit to hear the Satmar Rebbe read the megillah with an outpouring of his soul. When he came to the words (4:11), וְאֵינִי לֹא נִקְרָאתִי לְבוֹא אֶל הַמֶּלֶךְ, "I have not been summoned to come to the king for thirty days," he cried profusely, and it was hard to hear the words. He also cried copiously when he read (3:2), וּמֹרְדֵכַי לֹא יִכְרַע וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה, "But Mordechai would not bow and would not prostrate himself."²¹

Reb Yonason Eibshitz *zt'l* (*Yaaras Dvash* 1:3) writes, "Please listen, wise nation, whom Hashem chose from all other nations. Please, don't think *Megillas Esther* is a history book containing stories of what happened to our forefathers. If that is all the megillah is about, why must we read it twice on Purim? Baruch Hashem, we all know the story. Children make plays, acting out what happened. Rather, it is for the benefits that we get from the megillah. Additionally, there are many Torah secrets in the megillah, upon which the masters of kabbalah elaborate. It is called מגילת אסתר (which can be translated as "the hidden megillah") because it contains many hidden secrets of Creation. Furthermore, the megillah can be studied as a *mashal*, discussing the battle and struggle between Bnei Yisrael and the *yetzer hara*. There are many *mussar* lessons in the megillah, teaching us how to live."²²

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

22. 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

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

The Gemara (*Megillah* 7.) provides several proofs that *Megillas Esther* was written with *ruach hakodesh*. Every word of the megillah is precious.²³

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

The Kav HaYashar adds that when we recite the *brachah* מגילה "על מקרא מגילה", "We should remember that Hashem commanded us to bring forth this great light, and this is the translation of מקרא מגילה [to call to the revelation of this holy, world of compassion]. The congregation should answer amen with immense *kavanah*."²⁴

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

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

The Midrash (9:2) tells us that "Haman had 365 advisors, corresponding to the days of the year, but none of them knew how to advise him as well as his wife, Zeresh. She told him, 'If Mordechai is a Yid, you must plot and plan wisely how to defeat and kill him because if you don't plan wisely, you will fail. You must kill him in a way that nobody among his nation was ever killed. If you throw him into a furnace, Chananyah and his friends were saved from a furnace [so Mordechai will also certainly be saved]. If you throw him into a lion's den, Daniel was thrown into a lion's den and was saved. Perhaps you will put him in jail, behold

between the lines and understands the message. This is a *mashal* for the megillah. It is full of secrets and divine lessons, but one must look closely to find the messages.

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

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

Although we can't comprehend the depth of this story, we see the immense holiness that lies within the holy words of the megillah.

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

Yosef was released from jail. If you put him in a copper pot and light a fire underneath, Menashe prayed to Hashem and was saved from exactly that situation. If you exile him to the desert, Mordechai's ancestors lived in the desert successfully and thrived there. If you blind him, behold, Shimshon killed many Plishtim after he was bound. I suggest you hang Mordechai because we don't know anyone from his nation that was saved from hanging.' It states, (*Esther* 5:24), ויטב הדבר לפני המן, 'This suggestion pleased Haman, and he had the gallows made.'

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Sfas Emes answers that we are blessing Hashem for the miracles that happen each year on the 14th when we read the megillah.

The Eretz HaChaim (from the *Be'er Mayim Chaim*) explains the Gemara (*Megillah* 7.) that Esther requested from the Chachamim, קבעוני לדורות, that they should establish Purim as a holiday for all generations. She wanted this so that the miracles could recur each year. This is because when Yidden speak about a miracle that occurred, it causes the miracle to happen again, as it states (*Koheles* 1:9), מִה שְׁחִידָה הוּא שְׁחִידָה, if you discuss a miracle, that will cause it to occur again.

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

The Gemara (*Megillah* 4:) says, עיניהם של עניים, נשואות למקרא מגילה, that the poor look out for the megillah. The Tiferes Shlomo explains that the poor look forward to the megillah

because this is the time when they receive Hashem's blessings for *parnassah* and all their needs.

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

The megillah begins with וידי, which is an expression of distress, and ends with ודובר, "speaking peace to all his kindred", an expression of joy, to symbolize that even if before reading the megillah, we were in pain, after reading the megillah, there are *yeshuos* and joy.

The Gemara (*Moed Kattan* 28.) teaches, "Life, children, and *parnassah* aren't dependent on one's merits. They depend on one's *mazal*." The Tiferes Shlomo *zt'l* writes that מגלה is *gematriya* מזל. This hints that with the megillah, one can attain life, children, and *parnassah*, the *yeshuos* generally dependent on one's *mazal*.²⁵

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

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

Once, on Pesach, after the second Seder, the Imrei Yosef went to the bookcase and randomly took out a *sefer*. It was a *Megillas Esther*. He read the entire megillah, and

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

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

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

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

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

25. The Darkei Moshe (*HaAruch* (תרצ"ג ד) writes that when there's a *bris milah* on Purim, the *bris* should be performed before the reading of the megillah so that when we read (8:16), ליהודים היתה אורה ושמחה וששון וקיר, it will apply to the new-born child, too. As we know, a child is born a Yid even before his *bris milah*. Nevertheless, the child only receives the title יהודי after his *bris*. Therefore, we want the child to receive his *milah* before the reading of the megillah so that when we read ליהודים, it will include him too. This teaches us that the megillah not only discusses the past but the present, as well, as the miracles of the past replay themselves when we read the megillah.

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

From this story, we learn that each year, while we read the megillah, the gates of Gan Eden are open. Therefore, we understand this is a good time for *tefillah* to attain all *yeshuos*. The gates of Gan Eden are open, and we can merit salvations.

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

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

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

Miracles Today

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

The Chiddushei HaRim *zt'l* described a scene in Shushan. Somebody ran into the

beis medresh and said, "Did you hear the latest? Vashti was killed because she refused to attend Achashveirosh's party!"

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

Sometime later, someone else entered into the beis medresh and said, "Did you hear? Bigson and Seresh were hung!"

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

But these episodes weren't mundane at all. Eventually, the story of Vashti's and Bigson and Seresh's deaths became part of the holy megillah. In retrospect, we recognize Hashem's hashgachah pratis and miracles.

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

Reb Yechiel of Ostrovitz *zy'a* said that even goyim could recognize Hashem's kindness *when they look back*. As the megillah (8:17) states, ורבים מעמי הארץ מתייהדים, "Many gentiles were converting..." This is because when they looked back at everything that happened to them and the Jewish nation, they saw Hashem's miracles and converted to Yiddishkeit. But a Yid can identify Hashem's hand even before the puzzle is

complete. They understand that everything happens for a reason, for their benefit.

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 happiness to the hearts of the poor, the orphaned, widows, and geirim. When one brings them happiness, he acts similarly to the Shechinah, as it states (Yeshayah 57:15) *להחיות רוח שפלים ולהחיות לב נדכאים*, "to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the crushed."

And in this generation, who isn't "humble" and "crushed"? Who doesn't need a kind word? When one can't help with money, he should give whatever he can, certainly a friendly word or a smile.²⁶

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

A member of our *chaburah* (Reb Yosef Meir Mashinsky of Beit Shemesh) went to the *mikvah* in preparation for hearing the megillah. The *mikvah* was in the basement of a small beis medresh. When the son of the Rebbe of that beis medresh saw him, he said, "You are the ninth man for our minyan!" Reb Yosef Meir had planned to go to a beis medresh with a professional *baal koreh*, where they davened with a lot of kavanah, but he decided to remain there to perform this *chesed*. He also called his friend, Reb Yechezkel Deutsch, to come and complete the minyan.

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

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

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

This is because Chazal teach that two sins caused Haman's *gezeirah* of annihilation. The Yidden participated in Achashverosh's party and bowed down to Nevuchadnezzar's idol. The Alshich says that the poor people didn't commit these aveiros. Achashveirosh didn't invite the poor to his party, and Nevuchadnezzar didn't care whether the poor bowed down to his idol. So, the poor

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

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

were clean from aveiros; therefore, their merit and tefillos saved the Jewish nation.

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

Purim and Yom Kippurim

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

The *Mishnah Berurah* (90:28) writes, "If a person in jail was granted permission to daven with a minyan on any one day he chooses, he should choose to daven immediately, on that day, and not wait until Yom Kippur or Purim..." Notice that the *Mishnah Berurah's* examples of special days for a minyan are Yom Kippur and Purim! He didn't even write Rosh Hashanah. Purim and Yom Kippur are at the top of the list of days we should be in Beis Medresh.

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

About the *korbanos* on Yom Kippur, it states (*Shemos* 30:10), וּכְפַר עָלֵינוּ אֶחָד בַּשָּׁנָה... אֶחָד, "Aharon shall bring atonement...once a year... Once a year, shall he bring atonement upon it for your generations." Notice that אֶחָד בַּשָּׁנָה, "once a year," is written twice in this *pasuk*. The Imrei Noam (Dzikov) zt'l explains that this alludes to Purim and Yom Kippur. The difference between them is that the atonement of Yom Kippur comes from the *korbanos*,

while the *kaparah* of Purim is achieved even without *korbanos*.

We sing, וגם חרבוֹנָה זְכוּר לְטוֹב, which can mean that even those who are חרבוֹנָה, destroyed by sins, זְכוּר לְטוֹב, they are remembered for good on Purim because they can attain their atonement.

There are other similarities between Yom Kippur and Purim:

The Rashba (1 *Teshuvah* 93) writes that due to sins, there may come a time when Hashem will take away the *yomim tovim* from us, as it states (*Eichah* 2:6), שְׁבַת ה' בְּצִיּוֹן מוֹעֵד וּשְׁבַת, "Hashem made Tzion oblivious of holidays and Shabbos..." Purim and Yom Kippur, however, will always be with the Jewish nation. As it states (*Esther* 9:28), וַיִּמְי הַפּוּרִים לֹא יֵעָבְרוּ, "And these days of Purim shall never cease from among the Yidden, nor shall their memory perish from their descendants." Yom Kippur is also eternal, as it states, וְהִיְתָה זֹאת לָכֶם חֻקַּת עוֹלָם, "This law is forever..."

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), אֵין מוֹדֵקֵין בְּמַעוֹת, פּוּרִים אֵלֹא כָּל מִי שֶׁפּוֹשֵׁט יָד נוֹתֵנִים לוֹ, "One doesn't check out people for the *tzedakah* of Purim. We give to whoever requests." Generally, before giving *tzedakah*, we check whether the *tzedakah* is legitimate, but on Purim, we give *tzedakah* to anyone who asks. Some don't qualify for *tzedakah*, but if they stretch out their hand, we give them. On Purim, Hashem acts with us in the same way. Even if a person doesn't deserve atonement, if he asks for forgiveness, he will receive it.²⁷

27. *Shulchan Aruch* states לוֹ, כָּל הַפּוֹשֵׁט יָד נוֹתֵנִים לוֹ, "Whoever extends his hand, we give him." We can also explain these words to mean כָּל הַפּוֹשֵׁט יָד, even the hand of a simple פּוֹשֵׁט (pashute) Yid, when he wants to become close to Hashem, נוֹתֵנִים לוֹ, Hashem grants his wish.

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

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

It states (*Esther* 4:16), ובכן אבוא אל המלך אשר לא כדת, "Thus, I will come to the king though it is unlawful." The Sfas Emes zt'l (*Purim* תרנ"ז) explains that it is against the law for a regular person to come to the Kodesh Kadoshim, but on Purim, everyone is allowed inside (figuratively) to pray for his needs.

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

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

The Name "Purim"

Purim is named for the פור, for the lots that Haman drew. As it states (9:26), על כן קראו, הימים האלו פורים על שם הפור, "Therefore they called these days Purim, because of the goral..."

The goral was a painful moment for the Jewish nation. It was when Haman was planning their destruction. Shouldn't Purim

be named for the salvation, not the devastating goral?

The Bnei Yissaschar answers that Haman's goral was extremely beneficial for the Jewish nation. It was the root of their salvation. The Bnei Yissaschar explains:

"When one chooses an object from among others...he has a reason for his choice. But when one chooses through a goral, the choice can't be explained rationally. His choice is whatever the goral dictates, and there's no logic behind it. When Hashem created the world, He chose the Jewish people to be the purpose of Creation. It wasn't because of our mitzvos and good deeds, because *klal Yisrael* didn't exist yet. We don't know why Hashem chose us. It is simply because this was His will..."

The Baal HaTanya zt'l explains that on Yom Kippur, a *korban* was chosen through a goral — a choice without reason — to beseech Hashem to remember the time He chose us without reason — just because He desired us.²⁸

The Bnei Yissaschar explains that this also happened when Haman drew lots. Haman thought the lots were a tragedy for the Jewish nation, but it was the underlying reason for their salvation. Haman's choosing a date by a goral, without using logic, roused Hashem to remember that He chose us without logic and reason. Therefore, even if we sinned by bowing down to Nevuchadnezzar's idol or participating in Achashveirosh's feast, and even if we didn't deserve salvation, Hashem saved us.

As we say after reading the megillah on Purim night, כי פור המן נהפך לפורינו, "Haman's goral, turned out to be our good fortune."²⁹

28. This refers to the two goats that the Kohen Gadol brought on Yom Kippur. With a goral, it was decided which one would be לה, a *korban* for Hashem, and which one would go to לעזיזל, to be thrown off a cliff.

29. *Midrash Talpiyos* (Achashveirosh) writes that Haman made the goral with dice. Haman rolled three dice, and they fell on the numbers 1 3 3, the numeric equivalent of אג"ג, the king of Amalek, and Haman's ancestor. That made Haman happy. He took that as a sign he would succeed in his evil mission.

Trust in Hashem

We can offer another reason why Purim is named after Haman's lots.

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

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

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

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

positive moment for the Jewish nation because it brought them to place their trust in Hashem.

The Gemara (Megillah 13) states, "When Haman's *goral* fell on Adar, he was delighted. He said, 'The lot fell on the month that Moshe Rabbeinu died.'"

The Maharal (Or Chadosh) explains, "Everything has a limit as to how long it will endure. Haman drew lots to discover the date the Jewish nation would cease to exist, and it fell on the month that Moshe Rabbeinu was *niftar*. He thought that the last month of the year, Adar denotes, *chas veshalom*, the end of the Jewish people."

What was Haman's mistake?

The Maharal explains that Haman didn't know that when a Yid has troubles and feels that there is no hope, he places his trust in Hashem. And when a Yid trusts in Hashem he is immediately helped. We can now understand why Purim is named after the פור. The *goral* was a positive moment for the Jewish nation because the tragedy caused them to turn to Hashem. And when Yidden turn to Hashem, they are saved.³⁰

The Gemara (Megillah 15:) states, "When Esther came to the king's courtyard, the *Shechinah* left her. She said (Tehillim 22:2), אֵלִי,

Haman also realized that the numbers on the bottom of the dice represent a bad omen because they face down. Since 1 3 3 were on top, the bottom numbers were 6 4 4, the numeric equivalent of the word דו"ד. Haman was happy about that, too, because Dovid, the king of Yisrael, was at the bottom.

Haman was so excited about the Jewish nation's downfall that he picked up the dice to see the numbers representing דו"ד. And that was Haman's error because when he turned over the dice, דו"ד went to the top. This is as we say, כי פור המן נהפך לפורינו, "Haman's *goral* turned out to be our good fortune."

30. 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 Rachmastrivka, are poor?"

Rebbe Dovid 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 Rachmastrivka chassidim have long conversations with their rebbe. They feel that their rebbe is taking care of them, and don't feel such an urgent need to daven. So, my chassidim end up davening more and place their trust in Hashem, which explains why my chasidim are wealthier than the Rachmastrivka chassidim."

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), 'הצילה מחרב נפשי מיד כלב יחידתי', 'Save my soul from the dog....' She immediately corrected this and called Achashveirosh a lion, as she said (*ibid.* 22:22), 'הושיעני מפי אריה', 'Save me from the mouth of the lion.'

Why did the *Shechinah* leave her when she called Achashveirosh a dog?

The Maharsha 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 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. This is the reason 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.

Shushan Purim

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

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

kabbalas Shabbos begins with מזמור לדוד, so we should understand the importance of Shushan Purim.

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

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

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

The Minchas Elazar of Munkatch zt'l (Shaar Yissaschar, Yemei Sason 31) quotes the Tikunei Zohar (Hakdamah 13.) that says the two days of Purim, on the fourteenth and fifteenth of Adar, are alluded to in the pasuk that discusses the war against Amalek (*Shemos* 17:16) כי י"ד על כס י"ה. The second date, י"ה, the fifteenth, is Hashem's name. Therefore, it is understandable that it is a greater day.

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

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

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

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

miracles with his tefillos to the degree of techiyas hameisim.

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

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

A freilechen Purim and Shushan Purim to all!