

לעילו נשמת: פייגה בת הרב אהרן ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

לזכות רפואה שלמה: מלכה בת רחל, מיכאל בן שולמית, יעקב משה בן דבורה שירה, ואברהם יהודה בן שרה רבקה.

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
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Tetzaveh



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Table of Contents

Torah Wellsprings - Teztaveh

Tefillah	4
Everyone can Daven	7
<i>Bitachon</i>	9
Everyone Can Trust in Hashem	12
<i>Bitachon</i> without Shame	15
Achashveirosh's Banquet	20
Concealing Good Deeds	24
Hashem Gives Parnassah	29

Torah Wellsprings

Tetzaveh

Tefillah

The Rambam (end of מנין (המצוות) writes:

"We are obligated to read the megillah... so that the future generations will know that everything written in the Torah is true. The Torah tells us (*Devarim* 4:7), וְמִי גוֹי גָדוֹל אֲשֶׁר לוֹ אֱלֹהִים קְרוֹבִים, 'אלוהי כה' אלקינו בכל קראנו אליו', '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.'"¹

The Purim miracle came about through *tefillos*.

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

1. The Midrash tells about a ship that came to an inhabited island. They sent the only Yid aboard the ship to go to the island to bring back provisions. 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, כה' אלקינו, בכל קראנו אליו, when you call to Hashem, Hashem is near you, and will help you."

"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 Hakaodsh Baruch Hu in heaven.'

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

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

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

Moshe repeated, 'Tell Mordechai about the decree.'

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

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

It states (*Esther* 2:5), איש יהודי היה בשושן הבירה ושמו מרדכי בן יאיר "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 יאיר implies, בן שהאיר עיניהם של ישראל, בתפלתו "Mordechai was someone who enlightened the eyes of Yidden with his *tefillos*. בן ששמע implies, בן ששמע, א"ל תפלתו, he was a person whose *tefillos* were heard by Hashem. בן קיש means, שהקיש על שערי רחמים ונפתחו לו "He knocked at 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 יפתה, 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.

Zeresh understood that her husband, Haman, would fail if he was fighting Mordechai's *tefillos*. Once, she said to Haman (6:13), אם מורע היהודים מרדכי אשר החילות לנפול לפניו לא תוכל לו כי נפול תפול לפניו "If Mordechai, whom you began falling before him, is from the Yidden, you won't succeed. You will fall before him."

Was Zeresh discouraging Haman?

That is certainly a possibility,² but the Malbim explains that she gave Haman advice on how to overpower Mordechai. She explained to Haman that as long as Mordechai was davening, he would be unable to defeat Mordechai. But if Haman would act humbly before Mordechai, which would make Mordechai feel proud and stop davening, Haman would be able to be victorious.

We quote from the *Malbim*:

"Zeresh was telling Mordechai: The only way you can win over Mordechai

is by being humble before him (as it states, נפל תפול לפניו, humbly fall before him). You must be humble before Mordechai until Mordechai becomes arrogant and he stops praying. Then you will be able to win over him. But if you will battle with him (without using my strategy), he will raise his hands in *tefillah*, and then the Yidden will win."

Everyone can Daven

Rebbe Yechezkel Halberstam *zt'l*, the Shinover Rav, said, "When you hear that someone is sick, you should say a *kapitel Tehilim* for him. You don't have to be a great

2. It states (1:8) about Achashveirosh's party, לעשות כרצון איש ואיש, and the Gemara (*Megillah* 12.) explains that איש ואיש refers to מרדכי והמן. They were the ministers (*sar hamashkim* – Rashi) at this party.

It has been said that Mordechai is איש, which is *roshei teivos* אין שום יאוש, there is no reason to lose hope. (As we wrote above, Mordechai continued knocking at the gates of heaven; he didn't lose hope.) ואיש is Haman, because the letters spell, יאוש, losing hope. Because Haman's way was to lose hope. But the way of Mordechai HaTzaddik is never to lose hope. Hashem can always help, turn everything around, and make matters good again.

Rebbe to do that." Yes, everyone can daven, regardless of his level and deeds.

As we say in Shemonah Esrei, *כי אתה שומע תפילה כל פה*, "You listen to every person's tefillah." And *כל* is literal. All the Tefillos that people daven are accepted and listened to by Hashem.

Rebbe Hershel of Ziditchov *zt'l* adds that *פה* is pronounced "feh," the expression one would make at something disgusting. Hashem listens to *תפילה כל פה*, even when the *tefillah* and the person are disgusting, *r'l*.

The Divrei Shmuel *zt'l* says that Moshe Rabbeinu taught us through example that everyone can daven. Moshe was (Bamidbar 12:3) *עניו מאד מכל האדם אשר על פני האדמה*, the humblest person. He thought that everyone was greater than he was. Yet, he knew that he could daven. Many times, Moshe Rabbeinu davened for Klal Yisrael and for the individual (as he davened for

his sister Miriam, when she had tzaraas). In Moshe's mind, he was the lowest, and yet he knew that he could daven. Therefore, it is understood that everyone can daven, and Hashem will listen.

At the beginning of the parashah, Hashem told Moshe *ואתה תצוה*. Hashem was telling Moshe to tell the Jewish nation that they are worthy of davening to Him, The Divrei Shmuel explains that *תצוה* is *roshei teivos* for the phrase in Nishmas, *צעקת הדל תקשיב ותושיע*, "You listen to the shouts of the poor and You save them." The poor alludes to the Yidden who are lacking in their spirituality. Hashem told Moshe, *ואתה תצוה את בני ישראל*, tell the Jewish people that even if they are poor, spiritually, and they are at a low level, they can daven and I will save them, because *צעקת הדל תקשיב ותושיע*, Hashem listens to the shouts of the poor, too.

Chazal (*Avos d'Reb Noson* 9:42) say, "Twenty-four

kinds of שחין, boils/wounds are in the world, and Moshe was humbler than all of them." When people have שחין, they feel low and humiliated, because they aren't beautiful. Moshe was humbler than all of them.

Nevertheless, whenever Klal Yisrael was in a *tzarah*, Moshe davened for them. Hashem told Moshe ואתה תצוה, "You are the right person to tell Yidden that they aren't too low to daven."

Even *resha'im* can daven.

Tana d'Bei Eliyahu (ch.20) states that when Agag was captured by Shaul HaMelech, he prayed to Hashem. He said, "Woe to me! Maybe I won't have any children." *Tana d'Bei Eliyahu* says that Haman was born because of this *tefillah*. Agag was a *rasha*, the king of Amalek, but Hashem heard his *tefillos*.

Certainly then, all the *tefillos* of Bnei Yisrael will be answered.

Bitachon

In *Shoshanas Yaakov* we say, להודיע שכל קויד לא יבושו ולא, "To make it known that all those who trust in You will never be embarrassed, ever..." The Jewish nation trusted in Hashem, and Hashem saved them.

There were Yidden who weren't afraid of Haman's decree. They said, "We have a sister, Esther, in the palace. She will take care of us."

The Gemara (*Megillah* 15:) tells that one of the reasons Esther invited Haman to her party is so people should lose hope in her and place their trust in Hashem. Because faith in Hashem was what was needed to merit salvation.³

3. Chasidim of Rebbe Dovid of Tolne zt'l asked their rebbe, "Why are your chassidim wealthy, while the chassidim of your brother, Rebbe Yochanan of Rachmistrifka are poor?"

The Gemara (*Megillah* 15:) states, "When Esther came to the king's courtyard, the *Shechinah* left her. She said (*Tehillim* 22:2), א-ל-י א-ל-י 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 Maharasha explains that when one is attacked by a lion, he knows that he needs Hashem to save him. He knows that he can't battle a lion on his own. But when one is attacked by a dog, he feels he can just grab a stick and hit the dog, or run away, etc. He doesn't feel completely dependent on Hashem. When Esther called Achashveirosh a dog, this meant she wasn't totally reliant on Hashem. She thought she might be able to manage on her own. Therefore, the *Shechinah* left her. She immediately corrected herself and called King Achashveirosh a lion. She recognized that she

Rebbe Dovid of Tolna explained that he has many chasidim, and he doesn't have time to speak to each one for a long time.

"When they come to me and express their problems, I give them a brachah, but they leave feeling misunderstood. So, they say, 'The Rebbe isn't helping me, so please, Hashem, You help me.' But my brother, Reb Yochanan, has fewer chasidim, and the Rachmistrifka chassidim have long conversations with their rebbe, and they feel that their rebbe is taking care of them. They don't feel the need to pray. So, my chassidim end up praying more, which explains why they have more wealth than the Rachmistrifka chassidim."

wouldn't be able to succeed nation, trusted in Hashem,
without Hashem's help.
And when she, and the the miracles occurred.⁴

4. Recently, a family was preparing for their son's *chasunah*. Due to the coronavirus, most wedding halls are closed, so they were planning to hold the *chasunah* in a cheder building (such arrangements are common in this era) The father met with the *menahel* of the cheder and gave a deposit. The wedding date was marked down in the *menahel*'s planner.

A week before the *chasunah*, the *menahel* called the father and apologized, "I made a great error. When I rented the cheder to you, I forgot that I had already rented it to another family."

"But I gave you a deposit! And you wrote it down in your planner!"

"I know, but it was a mistake. Someone ordered it before you. I'm sorry."

The father tried to find another place for the *chasunah*, but nothing was available, and the *chasunah* was only a week away! The father was tempted to bring the *menahel* to a *din Torah* for causing him this distress, especially since he had given a deposit. But then he decided to be *mevater*, and trust in Hashem that all will work out.

They have an uncle, a rosh yeshiva, who agreed to lend the yeshiva campus for the *chasunah*...and he didn't charge them anything. So, from being *mevater*, and having *bitachon*, they got a place for the wedding free of charge.

Furthermore, on the night of the *chasunah*, the police paid a visit to the cheder (where they were planning, originally, to hold their *chasunah*). The police disrupted the wedding and sent everyone away.

When the family heard this, they praised Hashem that they were saved from this agony. They realized that had they not been *mevater*, it would be their simchah that the police raided. They realized that one never loses from being *mevater*, and that **לא יבושו בך**, if you trust in Hashem, Hashem helps you.

Everyone Can Trust in Hashem

One of the foundations of *bitachon* is the knowledge that *bitachon* is for everyone. It isn't only for the tzaddikim. Even when people who do *aveiros* trust in Hashem, Hashem will help them.

The Sfas Emes says that this lesson is hinted at in *Shoshanas Yaakov* in the word כל , as we say, כל קיך לא , "Everyone יבושו... כל החוסים בך

who trusts in You will not be embarrassed... *Everyone* who trusts in You." Similarly, it states (*Tehillim* 31:25), חזקו ויאמץ לבבכם כל המיחלים לה', "be strong and feel encouraged *everyone* who trusts in Hashem."

These phrases emphasize כל, which means that *bitachon* is available for everyone and Hashem will help them. Whatever level you are on, you can trust that Hashem will help you.⁵

5. The Midrash teaches: "When Haman's lots fell on the month of Adar he became very happy, because the mazal of Adar is *dagim*, fish. He thought, 'Just as fish are swallowed up, so too will I be able to swallow the Jewish people.

"A *bas kol* came and said: 'Rasha! Fish swallow, but they are also swallowed. Haman HaRasha and his children will be swallowed and burned every year in Gehinom."

When one cuts open a large fish and finds a small fish in the large fish's belly, we find that the fish was swallowed head first.

We would assume that the large fish swallows the small fish from its tail side. Because as the small fish is trying to flee and swim away from the large fish, the large fish catches up to it and swallows it from the tail side. But the fish are swallowed head first, as this is apparent from the small fish lying in the belly of the larger fish, their heads facing towards the back of the larger fish.

Apparently, the small fish turns around the last moment, and it gets swallowed headfirst.

Why is that?

Rebbe Yichiel Meir of Ostrovtza *zy'a* explains that the fish's eyes are always open. Therefore, fish feel secure that they won't be harmed from their head side. If they see danger, they can swim away. Their fear is that they may be swallowed from the tail side, because they cannot see the predator behind them. Since they can't protect their tails side, they trust only in Hashem.

Since they trust in Hashem to protect them from behind, Hashem helps them and they aren't swallowed tail first. But for their head's side, they trust in themselves. They don't trust in Hashem. Therefore, they are swallowed head first.

Last year, during Teves, two *bachurim* traveled from Eretz Yisrael to an Eastern European country. They were carrying four suitcases, and were stopped at customs, and were caught with contraband. (The naïve *bachurim* thought they could smuggle without getting caught.) The boys were immediately arrested and sent to jail.

Since the offenders were juveniles, it was assumed that the court would deal more leniently with them. But even if they got a reduced punishment, it was still expected to be somewhere between 1.5 to 5 years in jail.

They suffered in prison in many ways. For example, they weren't permitted to bring in kosher food, so the boys hardly had anything to eat.

Askanim (community activists) who lived in that foreign country and *askanim* in Eretz Yisrael immediately got involved in the case and tried to help the *bachurim*, but all they managed to accomplish was that one of the boys' fathers could visit them in the jail, and only for a short time.

The father invested a lot of effort to save the boys. Sometimes it looked as if there was light at the end of the tunnel, but these later proved to be failed attempts.

After ten days of trying hard, and after many failed attempts, the father decided that for hishtadlus he would hire a good lawyer, and he would devote himself to *tefillah* and *bitachon*. He told his

family, "I made more than enough *hishtadlus*. Now I'm removing myself from the matter, and I'm letting Hakadosh Baruch Hu take care of it. Hakadosh Baruch Hu is after all, מוֹרֵר אֲמֹרִים, saves the imprisoned."

The miracles began the very same day the father made this decision. The lawyer whom the father contracted told the father that the court agreed to let the boys out on house arrest, but only with a large bail.

The father managed to raise the money, and the boys were released from prison. But now they had to wait for the trial, which was scheduled for several months later.

The father requested an earlier hearing, explaining that he is away from work, in a foreign country, because he has to be with the boys until the court case. He waited to hear what the court would respond to his plea.

Around this time, someone told the father that for 10,000 Euros he can help the boys escape through a forest, and to cross the border. The father said that he needs time to think it over before he agrees to this wild approach. But then he reminded himself that he is letting Hashem take care of the freedom of his children and Hashem can help in simpler ways, too.

A week later, the lawyer told him that the boys' court case will be held the next Tuesday. The father was very happy, especially since Tuesday was *rosh chodesh Adar*. Chazal say that when one has a court case with goyim, he should hold it in Adar, because that is a good mazal for Bnei Yisrael. (see *Megillah* 29:).

On the day of the court case, the families of the boys were busy davening, saying *Tehillim*, giving *tzedakah*, hoping that in these merits the boys would be freed. The judges heard both lawyers, the two sides of the story, and the judges said that they need time to think it over. They left the court room to convene.

The judges returned an hour later and said, "the children are free."

The moral of the story is: When you place your trust in Hashem, Hashem will help. On the day the father decided to place his trust in Hashem, that is when things began turning around, until they were completely freed.

Bitachon without Shame

In *Shemonah Esrei* we say, לעולם לא נבוש כי בך בטחנו, "We shall never be embarrassed because we trust in You." Why don't we say, לעולם נצליח, "We will always succeed because we trust in You," or something like that? What is the connection between trusting in Hashem and not being embarrassed?

Similarly, it states (Tehillim 71:1), בך ה' חסיתי לא אבוש, "I trust in You Hashem, I shall never be embarrassed."

In *Shoshanas Yaakov*, we say, כל קויד לא יבושו, "Whoever trusts in You won't be embarrassed."

The Ben Ish Chai *zt'l* explains this with a story from Reb Moshe Galanti *zt'l* who was the Rav of Yerushalayim about three hundred years ago. The story is written in מסע ירושלים and in (עוד יוסף חי [בשלח]):

The people of Yerushalayim were anxious because the winter season

was almost over, and it hadn't rained at all that year. The skies were clear and blue, without a cloud in the sky.

The rain was crucial in Yerushalayim for the crops and even for drinking. Yerushalayim isn't near a river or sea. The few wells dry up quickly when there isn't rain. People were walking around sad and they feared the worst.

The Yidden (and *l'havdil*), the Arabs, and the Christians raised their hands in prayer and fasted. Many Yidden went to *kever* Rachel (in nearby Beis Lechem) and to the *kever* of Dovid HaMelech. *L'havdil*, the goyim went to the places they consider holy to them, but the heavens remained closed.

The *pasha* sent a message to Rav Moshe Galanti, the elderly rav of Yerushalayim: "We are certain that the drought is due to the sins of the Jewish community. We are considering

banishing all of you from Yerushalayim. You have until Tuesday to bring rain. If you fail to do so, we will enact the *geirush* (expulsion). You consider yourselves the Chosen Nation, and you say that Hashem is your Father. Prove that to us now, in this time of need. Show us that Hashem listens to your prayers. Otherwise, (he swore in the name of his prophet), I will do as I say."

Rav Moshe Galanti decreed a fast for three days (Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday). Men, women, and children were in the *beis medresh*, crying and praying nonstop for salvation. Tuesday arrived,

the last day they had to bring rain, and the skies were clear. Tuesday afternoon, as the sun began its descent,⁶ Rav Moshe Galanti told the community, "Dress in rain gear and come with me to the *kever* of Shimon HaTzaddik. We will daven there for rain. But make sure you bring along boots and blankets to protect yourselves from rain because when we return home, it will be pouring."

Everyone was shocked when they heard Rav Moshe Galanti's prophecy because the skies were totally clear. There wasn't a cloud in the sky larger than the size of a person's palm.

6. When the Satmar Rebbe *zt'l* lived in Hungary, he would go every year to the *kever* of Reb Isaac of Kaliv *zt'l* on his *yahrtzeit*, the 7th of Adar. He would always come towards evening when the day was almost over. Once he came to Kaliv in the morning, but he didn't go to the *kever* until it was close to nighttime. People asked him, "You are anyway in Kaliv, why not go to the *kever* earlier?"

He replied, "In a marketplace, the best deals are made when the market is about to close."

Nevertheless, they followed their rav's advice: They took along their rain gear, and they went with their rav to Shimon HaTzaddik's grave.

They lived in the old city of Yerushalayim, and they were passing through the gate of Yerushalayim called Bub El Amud en route to Shimon HaTzaddik's grave. The Arab guard at the gate couldn't contain his laughter. He found the scene to be hilarious. People dressed as though it was pouring rain when the sun was shining brightly. They told him about the rav's prophecy, and he got angry at the rav, who, in his view, was misleading his community and slapped Rav Moshe Galanti on the face. Rav Moshe looked at him in silence and didn't respond.

They came to Shimon HaTzaddik's *kever*. They raised their voices, they prayed, and they cried. Rav Moshe Galanti

whispered silently into the grave.

Suddenly, the winds blew forcefully. The olive trees on Har HaZeisim shook in the wind. The pure blue sky became covered with clouds, and heavy rain began to fall. Rav Moshe Galanti continued whispering into the grave, and the rain became stronger and stronger until the ground was flooded. The community watched the miracle that was occurring before their eyes. They protected themselves from the rain with the blankets and rain gear that they had brought along.

The Arab guard of Bub El Amud gate came running to the *kever* of Shimon HaTzaddik. He apologized to Rav Moshe Galanti for embarrassing him and for hitting him. Then the guard lifted Rav Moshe Galanti in his arms and carried him all the way to Rav Moshe's home.

The city of Yerushalayim celebrated with music for three days and three nights. The Arabs and the Christians admitted that the rain came due to the *tefillos* of the Jewish community. Embarrassed, they acknowledged that Hashem likes the Yidden's *tefillos* more than their own.

Wednesday, the day after the miracle occurred, the Arab guard came to Rav Moshe Galanti and requested that he convert him. He said that he wanted to be his servant forever.

As we contemplate this story, we understand that if it didn't rain, Rav Moshe

Galanti would be embarrassed, as he told everyone to bring along their rain gear, and nothing happened.

The Ben Ish Chai explains that there are two types of *bitachon*. There is *bitachon* that's alive in one's heart. No one sees it; it is in his heart and mind. Then, there's a level of *bitachon* when one is so confident that Hashem will help, he is ready to act on it.⁷ In this story, Rav Moshe Galanti didn't only trust Hashem in his mind and heart. He took action. He told the entire Jewish community to dress in rain gear because he was certain it would

7. There's a story of two chassidim who received a *brachah* from their Rebbe that they will bear children. For one chassid, the *brachah* took effect immediately. Within a year, he had a child. The other one didn't have a child. The chassid (without children) complained to the Rebbe, "Why did your *brachah* help him and not me?"

The Rebbe replied, "When I blessed him with children, he bought a crib." In other words, he was certain that the *brachah* would work. He acted, and his *emunah* and *bitachon* gave power that the *brachah* would come to be. "But you didn't buy a crib..."

rain. If he were wrong, he would be embarrassed. Therefore, we pray, לעולם לא נבוש כי כך בטחנו shouldn't result in shame.

People should not point at us mockingly and say, "You trusted in Hashem, and see what happened to you!"⁸

8. On the topic of shame, we tell here a couple of stories which express how careful we must be not to shame or humiliate our fellow man:

The Chebiner Rav's *zt'l* second wife once set a table for her husband for dinner, but the Chebiner Rav noticed that the silverware wasn't perfectly clean. The Chebiner Rav was an *istinis* (finicky, by nature) and he wouldn't be able to eat with a fork or spoon that was slightly dirty. However, he didn't want to embarrass his wife, so he put the silverware in his sleeve, went over to the sink, and he washed them there. To his wife it looked like he had to wash his hands, and in this way, he saved her from shame.

When the Maharil Diskin *zt'l* was elderly, the doctors told him that he should eat a lot of sugar, because he needed more sugar in his blood.

His *shamash* once prepared a tea for him, and accidentally put in a heaping spoonful of salt instead of sugar.

The Maharil Diskin drank that tea, and didn't express any sign that something wrong, so as not to shame the *shamash*.

When the Maharil Diskin's Rebbetzin discovered what happened, she exclaimed, "It isn't healthy to have so much salt!" (She added that since he drank the salt with a hot tea, the salt would be well absorbed in his body, and she was concerned for his health.)

The Maharil Diskin replied, "Chazal already spoke about such a situation. They said (*Brachos* 43:), נוח לו לאדם שיטיל עצמו לכבשן האש ואל ילבין פניו, חבירו ברכים "It is better for a person to throw himself into a fiery furnace than to embarrass his fellow man in public." The Maharil

Achashveirosh's Banquet

Chazal tell us that one of the biggest *aveiros* of the Jewish nation, which caused the evil decree was that they celebrated at Achashverosh's banquet.

It states (*Esther* 1:8), לעשות ברצון איש ואיש (Megillah 12.) explains that this refers to Mordechai and Haman, who were the ministers in charge of this party. If Mordechai was in charge of this celebration, obviously the Jewish nation was also permitted to attend, so why did they deserve to be punished?

This question can be answered with a story:

A Yid and a goy were once traveling together and stopped on the roadside, under a tree, to eat dinner. The goy took out his meat and wine and was enjoying a delicious meal. All the

Yid had was a tuna fish sandwich.

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

"No. Jews are not allowed to drink the wine of a goy." He replied.

"How about some meat? I have plenty."

"No thanks."

"Why not? You aren't allowed to eat meat from a goy, either?"

"The meat has to be slaughtered in a special way, and then it needs to be salted... We can't eat just any meat." The yid explained.

The goy found this conversation interesting, and he wanted to hear more about it. The Yid taught him some more on the topic. The Yid added, "There is, however, a time when we are permitted to eat a goy's food. That is

Diskin preferred to drink the tea, rather than to cause shame and humiliation to the *shamash*.

when the situation is *pikuach nefesh*. Let's say if I don't eat your food, I will die, then I may eat it."

The goy took out his knife and said, "If you don't eat my meat, I will kill you." The Yid began eating and drinking. It was a situation of *pikuach nefesh*, so it was permitted.

The meat was good. The wine was sweet. He was enjoying the meal. But the goy regretted what he did. He said, "I'm sorry I scared you like that. I'm sorry I forced you to eat my food. I was just joking. I wasn't going to kill you. Please forgive me."

The Yid immediately put down the food, and sobbed, "I don't forgive you!"

"Why don't you forgive me? It was just a practical joke."

"I don't mind the joke," the Yid explained. "But you should have told me that it was a joke after I finished

the meal. Now, I can't eat anymore."

Similarly, the Yidden were permitted to partake in Achashveirosh's party. Mordechai's overseeing it proves that all Yidden were allowed to go. It would probably be a situation of *pikuach nefesh* if they didn't attend. But the problem was that they *enjoyed* being there. They should have wished they weren't there. This is Chazal's intention when they say that their sin was, *שנהנו מסעודתו של אותו רשע*, they *enjoyed* Achashveirosh's meal.

Similarly, the Chasam Sofer (*Toras Moshe, Esther*, ד"ה איתה במילה) writes that the food at this party wasn't kosher. Nonetheless, they were permitted to eat there since it was a situation of *pikuach nefesh*. (If they didn't eat at the banquet, Achashveirosh would get angry at them, and their lives would be in danger.) So, what did they do wrong? They should have eaten at home, before going to the party, so that the

food at the party would be *אכילה נסה* (eating after they were full, when it is painful to eat, which isn't considered eating, according to halachah). Then it would be as though they didn't eat non-kosher foods at all.

Chazal (*Niddah* 31.) say, *אין בעל הנס מכיר בניסו*, when a miracle happens to a person, he generally doesn't recognize the miracle that occurred. Similarly, when a miracle happens to a nation, the nation often doesn't realize it. The Chasam Sofer (*Drashos*, ח"א דף *ה"א ר"ה* לבן) teaches that this is what happened in *Megillas Esther*. *ממוכן* advised Achashveirosh to kill Vashti because she didn't obey him. Chazal (*Megillah* 12:) tell us that *ממוכן* was actually Haman. "Why is he called *ממוכן*, because he is *מוכן*, prepared, *לפרענויה*, to be punished." Haman had a daughter, so Haman

wanted Vashti to be killed, hoping that Achashveirosh would marry his daughter. As it turned out, Achashveirosh married Esther, who brought about Haman's death. The Chasam Sofer writes, "The wise will understand that Vashti's death was a miracle as great as the miracle of *kriyas Yam Suf*, *אין בעל נס מכיר בניסו*, a person doesn't recognize when a miracle happens to them."

The Chasam Sofer (*Toras Moshe*, introduction to *Megillas Esther*) writes, "The biggest miracle was that Hakadosh Baruch Hu prepared the salvation, and Vashti was killed when Bnei Yisrael were still participating in Achashveirosh's party – which was the *aveirah* for which the decree of annihilation came as a punishment for."⁹

9. The Chasam Sofer says that Hashem heard the Yidden's *tefillos* and we were saved, but that isn't the primary miracle that we are

לא על (Esther 1:16), ממוכן
 המלך לבדו עוותה ושתי המלכה
 didn't sin only to the
 king..." The last letters of
 spell לבדו עוותה ושתי המלכה
 This means that everything

was arranged by Hashem.
 In addition, ושתי
 Vashti's cruel words to
 Achashveirosh, which
 caused her death, were also
 planned by Hashem. And

celebrating, because Hashem always listens to the prayers of Bnei Yisrael. As the Chasam Sofer expresses it, "Even the people of Ninveh, when they prayed to Hashem, Hashem listened to their prayers. So, certainly, Hashem will accept the *tefillos* of Bnei Yisrael!"

Perhaps you will say the climax of the miracle was that Achashveirosh changed his mind. Previously, he wanted to destroy Klal Yisrael, and later he issued decrees and wrote letters in their defense. The Chasam Sofer says that this is indeed a great miracle, yet it can be explained within the rules of nature. After all, Chazal say about Achashveirosh (*Megillah* 15:), מלך הפכפך היה, that he was a king that changed his mind often. So it isn't so surprising that one day he loves Haman, and the next day he goes against him. Additionally, he loved Esther and he wanted to appease her.

Therefore, the Chasam Sofer says, the primary aspect of the miracle was that Achashveirosh killed Vashti.

Achashveirosh celebrated for 180 days, there was a lot of wine, but nothing happened. Then, he made another party for seven days more, and on the 7th day, the final day of the celebrations, Achashveirosh lost his mind and he asked for ridiculous things. Vashti loses her mind and she speaks out degradingly of Achashveirosh. This all happened to save the Jewish nation. And this all happened at the banquet, which was the cause of their punishment. As Chazal (*Megillah* 12.) say, על שנהנה מסעודתו של אותו רשע, the decree came because they celebrated at Achashveirosh's meal. This shows us that Hashem loves the Jewish nation. בנים משהחיים, even when they sin, they are Hashem's בנים.

the purpose of it all was to save Bnei Yisrael.

Concealing Good Deeds

This week's parashah discusses the clothes of the kohen gadol, and among them the *me'il*, robe. The *me'il* had decorative pomegranates and bells sawn along its hem. According to Rashi, they were successive: a pomegranate, a bell, a pomegranate, a bell, etc.¹⁰ The Ramban, however, says that only the pomegranates hung off the hem. The bells were inserted *inside* the pomegranates. As the Ramban writes, "the pomegranates were hollow.... and the bells were hidden inside them..."

The Chasam Sofer (*Pekudei*) writes that both

explanations are correct (ואלו דברי אלקים חיים). The bells and pomegranates hung successively on the *me'il* (as Rashi taught), but it was also as the Ramban taught because each pomegranate had a bell inserted inside it.

So, according to the Chasam Sofer, there were two types of bells. Some bells hung directly off the *me'il's* hemline, and additionally, there were bells inserted in the pomegranates.

What do these two bells signify?

The Chasam Sofer writes, "The gemara says that the *me'il* atones for the sin of *lashon hara*. I think that it isn't only *lashon hara* [which the *me'il* atoned], but also for when one is proud and brags about the good things he does. [He

10. This is also how it appears from the passuk, *עֲמֻמָּוֹת זָהָב וְרִמּוֹן עֲמֻמָּוֹת זָהָב*, "a gold bell and a pomegranate, a gold bell and a pomegranate..." (28:34).

boasts] 'I did these good deeds,' [because] this is *just like lashon hara*... The bells atone for *lashon hara*, and the bells within the pomegranates atone for those who are filled with mitzvos like a pomegranate and announce their good deeds in public."¹¹

11. When a mitzvah is done in public, and people know about it, it is hard to do the mitzvah solely for Hashem's sake. Feelings of pride can easily enter the person's heart because he knows that people are praising him.

One time, the Rebbe of Husiaten zy"l hired a handyman to repair his sofa. After the repairman finished the job, the rebbe showed him that he missed a tear that was on the backside of the sofa. The handyman replied, "Why are you concerned with the backside of the sofa? No one looks there."

The Rebbe replied, "We were taught that it is most important to perfect where nobody sees." The best deeds are those performed away from the limelight, because they are performed solely for the sake of Heaven, without seeking other people's respect and admiration.

There are obviously several exceptions to this rule. Some deeds should be performed in public.

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov once said that Torah study shouldn't be done in hiding. He explained, "When a tax collector comes to someone's home, the owner of the home will hide his expensive belongings, so the tax collector will not suspect him of earning more money than he declares. However, the homeowner will not hide the bread and butter that are on the table, because those are needed to stay alive. The same is in regards to studying gemara. One may hide his good deeds, but Torah study is like his bread and butter. It is the basic essential, and there is no reason to conceal it."

Rebbe Moshe Tzvi Savraner zy"l taught that when a person knows

(Pomegranates represent good deeds, as the Gemara says, "even the empty yidden are filled with mitzvos like a pomegranate [is filled with seeds].")

It isn't proper to publicize one's good deeds. They should remain concealed and private, between you and Hashem. The Chasam Sofer considers publicizing one's good deeds as a form of *lashon*

hara. (Perhaps this is because people speak *lashon hara* to feel superior to others. Publicizing one's good deeds essentially accomplishes the same objective. It makes people feel good about themselves and better than others.) The bells on the *me'il* atone for *lashon hara*, and the bells inserted in the pomegranates represent the people who are rattling and announcing their good deeds.

that everything comes from Hashem, he will not feel pride and *gaavah* because of his good deeds.

He bases his lesson on the passuk, לְשׁוֹנִי עֵט סוֹפֵר מַהֲרִי "My mouth is like the pen of a quick scribe." הֶזַק חֵן בְּשִׁפְחוֹתֶיךָ "your lips are saturated with *chein* (charm). עַל כֵּן בֵּרַךְ אֱלֹקִים "this is a blessing from G-d" (Tehilim 45:2).

The Rebbe of Savran explains: There are very good speakers. People flock to listen to their *divrei Torah*, but this shouldn't cause them to feel pride, since it isn't their own talent or righteousness, it comes from Hashem.

When people tell him, "Your words are saturated with *chein*," he can reply, "It is a blessing from Hashem." He recognizes that he is like a pen in the hand of a scribe. The pen that writes the most beautiful *sifrei Torah*, tefillin and mezuzos doesn't have any feelings of pride because the pen knows that it isn't him, it is the scribe who is holding him. Similarly, the scribe should know, as should a speaker, that it isn't him; it is Hashem who is granting him these abilities.

Tzeddakah is an exception to the rule. Sometimes it is permissible and even advisable to publicize the *tzeddakah* one gives. The Rashba writes, "Someone who donated an item to *tzeddakah*, and wants his name to be on it, so his name will be eternally remembered, we stop him. On the contrary, it is proper to do so. This is the way of *chachamim* and the custom of the righteous, to reward those who do mitzvos" (*Teshuvos HaRashba*, quoted in *Darkei Moshe, Yorah Dei'ah*, 247:1).

The Rema, in *Shulchan Aruch* also states, "One shouldn't brag about *tzeddakah* that he gave. If he brags, not only does he lose his reward, he is also

punished from Above. Nevertheless, when one dedicates something for *tzeddakah*, he may write his name on it, so his name will be remembered, and it is proper to do so" (*Yorah Dei'ah* 249:13).

The Chasam Sofer explains that this is alluded to in the *passuk*, פֹּר נָתַן לְאֲבִיּוֹנִים, "he distributes [money] to the poor" (Tehilim 112:9). פֹּר is *roshei teivos* for פַּעֲמֹן זָהָב, "a gold bell and a pomegranate." The bell rings from within the pomegranate, representing someone who is publicizing the *tzeddakah* that he gave, but nevertheless, וְדַקְתּוּ עֹמֶדָה, לְעֹד, "his *tzeddakah* remains forever." The publicity doesn't harm it.¹²

12. A story is told about two very wealthy people, who were extremely stingy with their money. They weren't only tightfisted to others; they wouldn't even spend money on themselves. They preferred eating stale bread, rather than to spend a few pennies on better food.

One of them realized that they couldn't go on like this, so he said to his friend, "Our stinginess is causing us to lose both worlds. We

don't have This World, because we don't spend money even on the simple pleasures of life. We will also not earn *Olam Haba*, because we don't give any *tzeddakah*. We have to change our ways."

His friend disagreed. "The picture isn't as bleak as you're making it sound. We *do* have *Olam HaZeh*, because we derive pleasure from saving money. I'm not worried about *Olam Haba*, because I thought of a plan to protect myself. You see, I made a vow that I will never give my hand to another person. So, when heaven asks me, 'Why didn't you give *tzeddakah*?' I will answer, 'I couldn't. I made a vow. I can't stretch my hand out to another person.'"

The other replied, "I am doubtful that this will help you, but if it does work, I want to do the same. Therefore, if you die first, come to me and tell me whether heaven accepted your excuse."

The man agreed.

"Give me your hand in promise."

"I can't. I made a vow. But I give you my word."

A few months after this, he died and came to his friend in a dream. He was wearing ripped clothing; he was bruised and burnt to a crisp.

"Your plan didn't work," his friend said, stating the obvious.

"No," he replied, "actually, heaven accepted my excuse. But then they said to me, 'One time, you were swimming in the ocean and you almost drowned. Someone gave you his hand, you took it, and he brought you to shore. Why did you give him your hand? What happened to your vow?'"

"I replied, 'That was *pikueach nefesh*. My life was at stake.'

"Heaven said, 'Why didn't you realize that *tzeddakah* is also a matter of *pikuach nefesh*. There are hungry and ill people, and *tzeddakah* can save them.'

The miser concluded, "So the plan does work. Just don't go to the beach, so you won't need to give your hand."

This story demonstrates the foolishness of people, who don't recognize the value of *tzeddakah*. But *tzeddakah* is so precious, that even publicity at times, doesn't taint its inherent value.

Hashem Gives Parnassah

Rashi, at the beginning of the *parashah*, writes, כתיב למאור ולא כתיב למנחות, "Pressed olive oil is used for lighting the menorah but not for the *menachos*."¹³

כתיב (pressed) represents hard work.

The Chasam Sofer zt"l explains, כתיב למאור, one should toil hard to acquire the light of Torah, ולא כתיב למנחות, one need not work very hard to earn his *parnassah*.

A wealthy man came to Reb Chaim Brisker zt"l, bragging about how wise he is. He said, "Once, there was a fire on my street, and all the houses were burning down. Someone came over to me and said, 'Soon, your house and store will

probably burn down. Don't you see how the fire is raging, and no one can control it? You will lose everything. I am offering you the offer of a lifetime. Sell me your home and store for half the value."

"Do you think I listened to this crook?" the wealthy man said to Reb Chaim Brisker. "I immediately told him that my property isn't for sale, and I went to pour another bucket of water on the fire. I'm not a fool. I didn't sell it for half price.

"The fire continued to rage. The businessman approached me again and said, 'The fire is almost by your house. Listen to my offer. I'll buy your property for ten percent its value.' I didn't sell it to him.

13. Rashi writes, "The olives were pressed in an olive press. They weren't ground in a mill, because there may not be any pieces [of the olives in the menorah lamps]. After the first drop [of oil] comes out, the olives were brought to a mill where they were ground. This second oil is disqualified for the menorah, but is kosher for the *menachos* (meal offerings, made from flour and oil).

"Ten minutes later, the businessman came back and said, "The fire has reached one of your walls. It is now or ever. Do you want to remain poor your entire life? I'll buy your property for five percent of its value. That way, you will remain with at least something. Just sign this document..."

"I took his pen and drew a large X over the document. 'It is not for sale,' I told him.

"Just about then, the fire came under control. Aside from some minor damages, everything was saved. If I had listened to him, I would have lost everything. But I am not foolish. I kept my wealth for myself."

Reb Chaim said, "You are trying to convince me how wise you are, but I think you acted foolishly. In my opinion, you should have agreed to the businessman's first offer. You could have lost everything in the fire, and

he was offering you at least half its value. As the fire neared your home, I would have advised you to agree to his second and third offers. Ten percent and five percent are still better than nothing. So, I don't think you acted wisely at all."

Then, Reb Chaim turned towards his *beis din* and said, "But if Hashem wants someone to stay with his wealth, regardless of whether he is wise or not, that is what will happen."

This story reminds us that *parnassah* is from Hashem, and His plan always prevails, regardless of what the person does. This is why the Chasam Sofer taught that one doesn't have to work very hard to earn *parnassah*. It is anyway up to Hashem, and Hashem can support us with less *hishtadlus* as well.

Parnassah, the Chasam Sofer taught, doesn't require toil, but Torah study does. Even those

who don't have much free time for Torah study should designate whatever time they can for this essential toil.

In Bnei Brak, there was an *ehrlicher yungerman* who was a taxi driver. Once, he was driving the Steipler Gaon zt"l. As he drove the taxi, he complained to the Steipler that he works all day and doesn't have time for Torah. Even at night, when he isn't working, he doesn't go to a Torah shiur because he knows that as soon as he sits down, he will just fall asleep over the gemara.

The Steipler told him, "If you go to the shiur, and you fall asleep, you will be rewarded as if you heard the entire shiur because you did the best that you could."

There is, however, one form of *hishtadlus* that one should never attempt because it is useless. Rebbe Yechezkel of Kuzmir zy"a taught that for attaining *chein* (favor in the eyes of others), one shouldn't make *hishtadlus*.

Sometimes, people think, "If this wealthy person likes me, I will earn a lot of money from him," and he tries to find favor in that person's eyes. But it states in Tehillim, חן וכבוד יתן ה' "charm and honor, Hashem gives" (Tehillim 84:12). Why does Tehillim single out *chein* and *kavod*? Isn't everything from Hashem? The answer is that Hashem gives charm and honor, and *hishtadlus* doesn't apply to these matters at all.



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