

Vechol Maaminim

"A Weekly Leaflet From 'Bnei Emunim"



372

PURIM

תשפ"א

IN THE PATHWAYS OF FAITH

Pearls of Amen and Tefillah in the Megillah

One "Sack" Is Better Than One Thousand Efforts

"ותבואנה נערות אסתר וסריסה ויגידו לה ותתחלחל המלכה מאד ותשלח בגדים והלביש את מרדכי ולהסיר שקו מעליו ואל קבל" (ד ד)

Mordechai's behavior here is puzzling: Wouldn't it seem that the best *hishtadlus*, effort, he could make to annul the decree was to let Esther know what Haman was doing so that she could influence the king to annul it? Not only did Mordechai not do that, even when Esther asked him to remove his sackcloth so that he could come before her – he refused.

The **Vilna Gaon** explained: Mordechai knew that in order to annul the decree – one hour of *tefillah* in sackcloth was better than the best *hishtadlus*, and therefore he refused to remove the sackcloth.

Another explanation is offered by **Harav Avraham Yisrael Moshe Salamon**, the Rav of Kharkov:

Mordechai was afraid that if his Jewish brethren saw him removing his sackcloth to talk to Esther, they would pin their hopes on Esther and would become distracted from their *tefillah* and *teshuvah*. Therefore, he chose to send her the message about the decree through Hasach, without Am Yisrael knowing about it.

Bei'ur Hagr"u on Megillas Esther; Sifsei Chaim Moadim II p. 180; Nesivos Hakodesh al HaTorah Umoadim p. 125

Don't Desist from Tefillah Until the Whole Yeshuah Arrives

"וישב מרדכי אל שער המלך והמן נדחף אל ביתו אבל וחפוי ראש" (ו יב)

"And Mordechai returned – he returned to his sackcloth and his fasting." (*Megillah* 16a)

The **tzaddik Harav Zev Edelman** related:

At the height of the war of independence in 1948, there was a lull in the fighting between the two sides. **Harav Yitzchak Zev, the Brisker Rav** took advantage of the break to leave his home for some fresh air.

Be'er Emunim

Allusions to Amen for Purim

Rosh Devarcha – Amen

Adar is an acronym for **אמן דבר ראשון** as it says (*Tehillim* 119:160): "*Rosh Devarcha Emes*." And **Chazal** said (*Devarim Rabbah* 7a) "There is nothing greater before HaKadosh Baruch Hu than an amen that Yisrael answer."

Gam Ani Odecha – Purim, Introduction

The Miracle of Mordechai and Esther

Amen is an acronym for **נס מרדכי אסתר** as the Maggid of Kozhnitz said (*Ner Yisrael – Kavanas Chanukah*) that in the order of the *alef beis*, the letters after א.ב.ג.ד. are א.א.מ.נ. to teach us that after amen comes the miracle.

Gam Ani Odecha, ibid

Mordechai Taught Esther to Answer Amen

"ויהי אסתר אמן את הדסה היא אסתר בת דדו כי אין לה אב ואם" (אסתר ב ז)

The **Rema** writes (*Orach Chaim* 124 7 according to the *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin* 110b): "And he should teach his young children to answer amen, because as soon as a baby answers amen, he has a share in the World to Come." **Harav Eliyahu HaKohein of Izmir** author of *Shevet Mussar*, explained this *passuk*: Mordechai was "*omen es Hadassah*" – he taught her from a young age to answer amen and that was "*ki ein lah av v'em*, because she had no mother and father" – to teach her to do so, as *halachah* stipulates.

Minchas Eliyahu chapter 32

It appears that even after she left Mordechai's home, Esther continued to be strict about this, as the *passuk* says of her (2:20): "ואת"מאמר מרדכי אסתר עשה כאשר היתה באמנה אתו"

Chairman of Bnei Emunim **Harav Yaakov Dov Marmorstein, shlita**

On his way, he met my brother. When the Rav asked about the situation in the city, he was told that although the day before had been especially difficult, with very heavy bombardment, today, *baruch Hashem*, it was better...

When the Brisker Rav heard this he said: "Indeed, yesterday the situation was dreadful, but today we need tremendous Heavenly Mercy. That is because while yesterday, everyone felt the urgent need to *daven* because of the dire situation, the calm today means that people are distracted from their *tefillah* and they go back to routine. That is what we have to worry about..."

The Rav then added: "That's the way of the world: When a person sees a bit of reprieve from his troubles, he calms down and rejoices, but really, he should not rejoice before he experiences a complete *yeshuah*. That is what Mordechai Hayehudi did; even though there was reprieve when Haman began to fall before him, he was still not happy. Rather, he continued to *daven* with sackcloth and fasting until the *yeshuah* was complete."

The Brisker Rav's words are similar to what the **Malbim** says about the advice Zeresh gave Haman (ibid 13): "If Mordechai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of Jewish stock, you will not prevail against him, but you will surely fall before him." Because Mordechai is from the Jews, whose power is in their *tefillah*, he will not stop *davening* until he sees full salvation. Therefore "you will not prevail against him", and instead "fall before him" – make yourself as if you have fallen completely, and when he will think that he has been saved from this trouble and will stop *davening*, then you will be able to rise up again and defeat him.

Malbim Esther 6 13; *Sheal Avicha Veyagedcha* Vol. III, p. 100

"קיימו וקבלו היהודים עליהם ועל זרעם ועל כל הגוים עליהם ולא יעבור!" (אסתר ט כז)

The **Rema** (*Orach Chaim* 124 7) rules: "And he should teach his young children to answer amen because as soon as the baby answers amen he has a share in the World to Come."

Harav Eliyahu HaKohein Ha'itamari of Izmir writes that we learn from the *Megillah* that Mordechai did this with Esther, for whom he served as a father. The *passuk* alludes to this (*Esther* 4:7) "*Vayehi omen es...Esther ki ein lah av v'em*." It says "**אמן**" without a *vav*, that because she did not have a father to teach her this, Mordechai taught her to answer **amen**. (*Minchas Eliyahu* 31)



Birchos Hashachar

Aloud

With kavanah

Bechavrusa



Prayer of Faith

Explanations and Insights
into Birchas Hamazon

Al Hanissim – Bimei Mordechai

Gratitude for the Miracles

On the days of Chanukah and Purim, Chazal established that we pause in the middle of *Birchas Ha'aretz* in *Birchas Hamazon* in order to offer thanks for the miracles that took place on that day. A source for the obligation to do this is mentioned in the *maskanos* of the *Gemara* in Shabbos (24a) that one has to offer special thanks for the miracles in *Birchas Hamazon*.

The *Gemara* (ibid) asks whether it is necessary to mention the day in *Birchas Hamazon* and *Tosafos* (ibid beginning with *Mahu*) explains that in *davening*, it was clear to Chazal that *Al Hanissim* needed to be said, because it is said in a public forum, and there is a point to publicizing the miracles. Their question related to whether this also applies to *Birchas Hamazon*, which each person says himself. The *Sfas Emes* (ibid) adds that *tefillah* is said every day, but *Birchas Hamazon* is contingent on eating bread.

In any case, the *Shulchan Aruch* and the *Rema* ruled (187 4; 684 1) that it should be said. On both Chanukah and Purim the mention begins with "*Al Hanissim*" and then the continuation changes depending on which day it is. The wording of *Bimei Mordechai* recited on Purim is very ancient and is cited with minor changes already in the works of the Gaonim (*Seder Rav Amram Gaon*, *Purim*, and see *Machzor Vitri* 93).

The request of *Yaaleh Veyavo* is said on days when the *Korban Mussaf* was brought, therefore it was established that it is said in the *brachah* of *Avodah* (*Retzei*) in *tefillah*, and in the *brachah* of *Boneh Yerushalayim* in *bentching* – in which we also ask for the return of the *avodah*. In contrast, the mention of *Al Hanissim* is pure gratitude. Therefore, in *davening* we add it in the *brachah* of gratitude, and in *Birchas Hamazon* it is said in the gratitude we offer in *Nodeh Lecha*. (According to the *Gemara* ibid)

Bimei Achashveirosh or Bimei Mordechai?

The *Megillah* begins with "And it was in the days of Achashveirosh" but the *tefillah* begins with "In the days of Mordechai and Esther." Why is that?

The Abir Yaakov of Sadigura explains:

In contrast to all other Yamim Tovim, which were established as a "*zecher l'yetzias Mitzrayim*" and their essence is holy, the days of Purim are in essence regular days, and only after the miracle was their essence changed so that they are holy. Therefore, at the beginning of the *Megillah*, when Am Yisrael in that generation were mired in sin, and even attended the feast of the evil king, the days were considered the "days of Achashveirosh". Only after they repented and accepted upon themselves the yoke of *mitzvos* with love, was their essence improved and it became the essence of "the days of Mordechai." (*Abir Yaakov* beginning of Purim)

Four Corresponding to Four

The Gra says:

We thank Hashem in this *tefillah* for sparing us from the four intentions that the evil Haman had in his decree: "*L'hashmid, l'harog, l'abed...ushelalam lavos.*" "*Lehashmid*" corresponds to the

Torah, as he wanted to destroy bnei Yisrael by uprooting Torah from within them. "*L'harog*" – corresponds to the soul, as he wished to kill them. "*L'abed*" – corresponds to the body, as he wanted to completely annihilate their memory that even a body should not remain. And "*ushelalam lavoz*" – corresponds to the money he wanted to take from them.

But HaKadosh Baruch Hu thwarted these evil plots and repaid him in full, and on the contrary to what he planned, instead of losing the Torah, Haman was instrumental in adding *Megillas Eshter* to the Torah. Instead of losing their body, they were commanded to feed their bodies with a feast on this day. Instead of destroying their souls, they were commanded to rejoice, and the source of joy is in the *nefesh*. And instead of losing their money, they engage in *Mishloach Manos* and *Matanos L'Evyonim*, so that no one in Am Yisrael should lack for money on this day. (*Biur HaGra Eshter* 3:13)

Decree on the Money – Is For the Good

There is a special praise encapsulated in the mention of "*ushelalam lavoz.*" It would seem that if there was a decree on our souls, then why did we care of about our money? But if he would not have cast a decree on the money, we could have relied on the fact that we would bribe the king to annul the decree. As we find in the *Gemara* (*Gittin* 55b) even when the kings decreed that Am Yisrael would be destroyed, they were saved by giving bribes. But Achashveirosh derided their money and he was even repulsed by Haman's money (*Eshter* 3:11) and that is why "*ushelalam lavoz*" is such a praise. Because Achashveirosh didn't care about their money, they had no recourse of salvation through human hands. Only the salvation of Hashem saved them from the decree. (*Drashos Chasam Sofer*, Vol. 1, *Likutim L'Purim* [printed at the end of the *sefer*]).

A Thought That Was Refuted From the Start

From the words of the *tefillah* "*Vehashevosa lo gemulo berosh*" – *berosh* denotes the beginning, meaning that already at the beginning of the Haman's thoughts, the repudiation of his plans was evident. How is that?

Maharitz Dushinsky explained:

The *Midrash* (*Eshter Rabbah* 7 10) says: "HaKadosh Baruch Hu told Haman "fool that you are; I said to destroy them and *kaviyachol* I could not as it says (*Tehillim* 106:23): "*Vayomer lehashmidam lulei Moshe bechiro amad baperetz lefanav lehachiv chamaso meishachis*, He intended to destroy them [and would have] were it not that Moshe, His chosen one, stood before Him in the breach to return His wrath from destroying." And you, Haman, said you wanted "*lehashmid l'harog ule'abed?*"

It appears that Haman's "mistake" that was guided from Above was that "he wanted *lehashmid l'harog ule'abed* all the Yehudim." Such a plot had no chance of being actualized, as the *Midrash* says, and this is what it means "*Vehashevosa lo gemulo berosh*," that already at the beginning of his decree, HaKadosh Baruch Hu planted his downfall. (*Tehillos Maharitz Tehillim* 124)

A Story of Faith

A Weekly Story About
Amen and Tefillah

Purim A-Sharif

Throughout the generations, there have been several "Purim" days that were established in various communities to commemorate special miracles that the members of that community experienced. This story is about one of those Purim days that has been celebrated in recent generations on the 23rd of Teves among the Jews who originate in Tripoli, Libya. It is known as Purim A-Sharif.

It happened about three hundred years ago. At the time, power was acquired through force, and there were regions that were taken over by violent people who had no limits, and did what they wanted with their power. Tripoli, Libya, was conquered by an evil, wild person named Halil Bey, who used the position of power to fulfill his desires. Toward this end, he spent huge sums of money, while exercising violence and an iron hand on those who lived in Tripoli.

In order to fulfill his desires, he needed a large cash fund. The exorbitant taxes he imposed on the local population, which were a huge burden for them, were simply not enough. The ruler needed some additional income and he found a way to acquire it. He employed sea pirates who, from time to time, would depart from Tripoli's shores and take over commercial ships that were traveling at sea. They would loot everything on the ship and take the booty back to their ruler.

Like every wild adventure, this one too, ended up costing him dearly. It happened when the ruler of Egypt dispatched a royal ship loaded down with treasures as a gift to the ruler of Tunis. The pirates, working on behalf of the ruler of Tripoli, raided the ship and looted the treasures. The greedy ruler quickly used the treasures to fill his already swollen pockets.

When the ruler of Tunis heard this, he was fuming. He could not condone this total affront to his dignity and decided that brutal revenge was in order. He dispatched his top general, an evil bloodthirsty man named Ibrahim A Sharif, with ten thousand soldiers to Tripoli and ordered him to take revenge on all the residents of the city, young and old alike. A Sharif soon arrived near Tripoli and set up camp. The residents of the city were horrified to hear about the fate that was in store for them, and tried to send a delegation to appease the Tunisian general. They explained that they had nothing to do with the act, but the vengeful man closed his ears and refused to listen. They tried to offer him a lot of money as a ransom, but A Sharif remained firm in his refusal. Even high level diplomatic delegations from other lands were not able to resolve the crisis. A Sharif began preparing for the battle and the residents of Tripoli had no choice but to band together to fight. An emergency draft was declared and all the residents galvanized into action to defend their city and stockpile weapons. They worked day and night preparing for battle.

The Jews of Tripoli also had to get involved in the preparations for battle but they focused on a different front. At the time, the *mara d'asra* in the city was Harav Yosef Agiv, zy"va, and

as soon as he heard of the calamity, he quickly convinced the Jews of the city to fast and daven to Hashem.

Sounds of *tefillah* resounded throughout the city. The shuls were full of *mispallelim*, men, women and children, dressed in sackcloth and exhausted from fasting. Their cries rose on High to Hashem as they pleaded for salvation.

While preparing for the big battle, A Sharif wrought havoc on the towns surrounding Tripoli. He looted the homes to provide for his army, which was growing stronger with each passing day. As soon as he deemed his preparations complete, he began his attack on the city, pouring fire and brimstone on everything in sight.

The huge advantage of his army – about ten times the size of Tripoli's army and manifold more equipped and trained – should have given him an easy victory in a short time. But surprisingly enough, victory was elusive. The defenders of the city fought like lions, and the mutual bombardments continued. Throughout that time, the Jews of Tripoli did not cease their fasting and their *tefillos*, and did not desist from pouring out their hearts before HaKadosh Baruch Hu to lift the sword that threatened their existence.

When A Sharif saw that victory did not seem at hand, his resolve strengthened to triumph at any cost. He came up with a plan: In the dark of night, he sent two thousand soldiers dressed in enemy clothing into the city of Tripoli. But *bechasdei Shamayim* the plot was discovered in time and the locals in Tripoli learned that the soldiers were coming. The invaders had to flee back to A Sharif's camp, leaving behind a trail of dead and wounded soldiers.

The depleted A Sharif brigades could not stand the humiliation. Their morale plummeted and many of them dispersed and defected from the army. A Sharif tried to galvanize his last few loyalists for battle, but again, he was defeated. On 23 Teves, he fled by the skin of his teeth into the desert, and the Jews were able to rejoice at their new freedom.

It was a tremendous miracle in which A Sharif's legions of soldiers were defeated by a small band of soldiers from Tripoli. No one in the city, Jews and non-Jews alike, had any doubt that it was only the power of *tefillah* that helped them in their time of trouble, and the Name of Hashem was sanctified in public.

In memory of that miracle, the Jews of Tripoli established to celebrate the day of Purim A Sharif on 23 Teves each year, when they were saved from the destruction that the evil general planned for them. The community celebrates with festive meals, *Mishloach Manos* and *Matanos L'Evyonim*. On the Shabbos before this day they also sing a special *piyut* called *Mi Kamocha*, in which the miracle is described; it was composed by Dayan David Tayar, zt"l, in memory of the event.

"*Trabels Shel Ma'alah*" Vol. 32, p. 29