

# KOL TODA

Gateways to Gratitude: Giving Thanks to Hashem



## “UNTIL HE CANNOT TELL THE DIFFERENCE” – EVERYTHING IS FOR THE GOOD

The *Gemara* in *maseches Megilla* (7b) rules that “*Chayav inish livsumei b’Puraya ad d’lo yada bein ‘arur Haman’ l’baruch Mordechai’* – a person is obligated to become intoxicated on Purim until he cannot tell the difference between ‘cursed is Haman’ and ‘blessed is Mordechai.’”

The *Biur Halacha* (among others) asks: How can *Chazal* rule this way when we know from the Torah and *Nevi'im* the terrible consequences of intoxication?



The *Kedushas Levi*, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichov, explains (*Kedushos L’Purim, Kedusha Revi’is*): “The Miracle of Purim was so great, in that everything that Haman did for his own benefit or to harm *Yisrael* was ultimately for *Yisrael’s* benefit – such as advising to kill Vashti and preparing the gallows for hanging. All his actions turned out to be for *Yisrael’s* benefit and for Haman’s own downfall, as we find in *Tanna D’Bei Eliyahu (Rabba 21; Vayikra Rabba 5:4)*: ‘My cow’s foot broke for my own good.’”

“From this, we can see that if something seemingly detrimental occurs to a person, he should think it is all for the good. He needs to remember that everything comes from Hashem and that since this is true, it is surely for his benefit, for Hashem is a good King and certainly nothing bad will come from Him. This is the light of Purim – that from all of Haman’s evil, good things resulted.”

The *Berdichover* further tells us that when a person implants in his mind thoughts for the good, thoughts that all “bad” will turn into good just as Haman’s evil plans turned into good, nothing bad will come upon him. If he will rejoice in what seems to be bad and say “*Gam zu l’tova* – this, too, is for the good” – it will all turn out for the good. Then one will have nothing to fear, as it says in *Tehillim* (112:7): “He will not fear evil tidings; his heart is steadfast, trusting in Hashem.” It is all in the merit of thinking and saying that everything

is for the good, just as we see that in the days of Mordechai and Esther that it all turned out for the good.

This is the meaning of “A person is obligated to become intoxicated on Purim until he cannot tell the difference between ‘cursed is Haman’ and ‘blessed is Mordechai’” – that one is obligated to rejoice in this light of Purim. Which is to say, that he sees no evil at all in this world, that he sees no difference between the evil things – the ‘*arur Haman*’ – and the good things – the ‘*baruch Mordechai*.’ Both are good and there is nothing bad at all. Everything is from the Creator, Blessed is He, and everything is good.

We are instructed, “until he cannot tell the difference between ‘cursed is Haman’ and ‘blessed is Mordechai.’” This teaches us that all is for the benefit of *Yisrael*, as in the days of Mordechai and Esther, when all evil thoughts were turned into good. While throughout the year we live with a clear differentiation between good and evil, on Purim the demarcation lines are blurred, and we reach an appreciation that even the evil is ultimately for the good.

The *Sifsei Chaim (Mo’adim II, p. 230)* adds further that while the Aramaic word “*livsumei*” can mean “to become inebriated,” to become intoxicated with wine, it can also mean “to sweeten” (based on *Maseches Megilla 7b*, as *Rashi* explains at length).

Indeed, one is obligated “*livsumei b’puraya*,” to sweeten all the evil in the world. This sweetening is achieved with the understanding that on the Purim level there is no difference between the good and the bad – both are equally good and both are means to sanctify Hashem’s Name. As such, we see that the *gematria* (the numerical value) of “*arur Haman*, cursed is Haman,” is equal to the numerical value of “*baruch Mordechai*, blessed is Mordechai.”

When one has faith that even the bad is really good, and he thanks Hashem even for the “bad,” he sweetens the bad and causes it to become good, and then the good is revealed. The *Ba’al HaTanya* writes this explicitly (*Iggeres HaKodesh 11*): “Everything is ultimately good, but it is not revealed. With this faith [that everything is really good], everything becomes good even in a revealed sense. For with this belief that the entire lifeline of apparent evil draws from the good of Upper Realms, which is Hashem’s unfathomable Wisdom that is Eden above *Olam HaBa*, the apparent bad is mixed and included and uplifted to the upper goodness that is concealed.” May we merit the great revelation of goodness that we so await, speedily in our times, *Amen*.

## “THANK YOU” FOR WHAT I HAVE

A *Chassid* once said: “Hashem lends me a million dollars every single day! My friend paid ten thousand dollars for a surgeon to repair his eye, and I wake up each morning with two healthy eyes. I know of a Jew whose legs are paralyzed, *lo aleinu*, and he needs a caretaker for everything. He pays him a lot of money for his help. My legs are healthy, *baruch Hashem*, and I can take care of myself. All this wealth is in my pocket. My hands, ears, mouth, memory, heart, intestines – everything, everything, *baruch Hashem*, is healthy. A million dollars, a million dollars in my pocket...”

“Every night Hashem makes an accounting and finds that I wasn’t worthy of the loan. Every night I am in danger of not receiving another loan the following day – but then I wake up and, surprise, *baruch Hashem!* Hashem in His mercy decided to give me a loan again! How can I not rejoice, how could I not thank Him?”

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A father of many children lived in a tiny apartment and once sent a letter to the holy *gaon*, the *Lubavitcher Rebbe, zy”a*. He complained that their living conditions were unbearable and he was being strangled by huge loans with no money to pay them. He groaned that he and his wife were about to collapse from the pressure.

The *Rebbe’s* answer was surprising: “I read your letter and did not understand a single word of your question.

“You wrote that you have a wife. Did you know there are people who would be willing to pay anything in the world to find their soul mate? And Hashem has given you your soul mate. How can you complain?”

“Secondly, I read that you have children. And not one or two, but a large family, a home blessed with sons and daughters. Don’t you know

*cont’d on page 2*

## A WORD OF GRATITUDE

“It is known that if a person wants to make requests from Hashem, he first needs to give thanks for Hashem’s past kindnesses and only then can he draw down further kindnesses, as it is written (*Tehillim 136*): ‘*Hodu laHashem ki tov, ki l’olam chasdo* – Thank Hashem, for He is good, for His kindness is eternal.’ This means that when a person gives thanks for kindnesses of the past, for they are good, he brings new and wonderful kindnesses into the world.” (*Tiferes Shlomo, parashas Vayera*)

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there are people who shake the Heavens to merit having just one child, yet you walk around filled with Hashem's blessings and complain? I am surprised.

"Thirdly, you wrote that you were blessed with a roof over your head. You have a place to take shelter from the rain and the sun while thousands in the world are roaming the lands with nowhere to lay down their heads.

"Dear Yid, you were blessed with all great blessings! You are overflowing with Hashem's blessings, how can you lift up your head to request even more? But what – your livelihood? The house is too small, *baruch Hashem*?

Recognize all of Hashem's kindnesses to you until now. Only then can you hope for additional kindnesses in the future."

It is told that after this letter, the Chassid grew happy with his portion, and from there everything changed for the better.

(*Niflesav Livnei Adam*, part 1)

## RABBI SHABSAI DANCING AND THANKING ON THE HOLY SHABBOS

Rabbi Shabsai and his righteous wife were very poor. They were really bereft – both penniless and childless. Poverty shouted out from every corner of their home, and a heaviness rested on everything. More than their lack of money, though, what bothered them most was that they did not have any children, children that would follow in their holy ways.

Rabbi Shabsai had a tiny bookbinding business from which he tried to eke out a livelihood, but he made barely enough for their food. One Friday, the situation was especially dire. He had made almost no money that week and now, on Friday afternoon, there was nothing with which to honor the Shabbos Queen. Could it be that in a few hours, when the Shabbos Queen entered, their table would be covered by a bare white tablecloth and nothing else? No wine, *challos*, fish, or meat? He decided he would not ask for charity from other Jews.

That afternoon, his wife told him to go and learn Torah as he was used to and he should not worry – she would not ask for handouts from anyone. They would place their trust in Hashem.

Rabbi Shabsai left for *shul* with a heavy heart and his wife continued cleaning their home in honor of the Shabbos. Suddenly, she found an old garment with silver buttons. With a flash of understanding and buttons in hand, she quickly ran to the pawn shop. With the money received,

she then hurried to buy food for Shabbos from the few shops still open. Fish, meat, wine, *challos*... her baskets were full and she quickly made her way home.

Finally she hurriedly laid the table with all the new food and happily waited for her husband to return and behold the finest of sights – a Shabbos table laden with delights!

When Rabbi Shabsai returned from *shul* and found the Shabbos lights burning and their table laden with delicacies, he thought for a moment that his wife had not withstood the test and had asked for charity. But when she told him of the buttons, his heart filled with tremendous



joy, a joy that he hadn't felt in a very long time. With endless gratitude, they then turned to make Kiddush.

His happiness broke through to the Heavens. He wanted only to thank Hashem for the great abundance that He had sent to their home, to enable them to delight in the Shabbos. "Thank You, *Ribbono Shel Olam!*" he called out with unbounded happiness.

When his wife brought out the fish, he was overtaken with such powerful gratitude, that he jumped up from his place and burst into dance – an expression of his thanks to Hashem.

And so it was, that with each new dish that his wife served, Rabbi Shabsai jumped up and sang another song of thanks to Hashem, dancing in gratitude around the table. Three times, Rabbi Shabsai danced in honor of Hashem and the holy Shabbos.

On that *Shabbos kodesh*, the holy Ba'al Shem Tov, *zy"ta*, laughed three times. After the Shabbos, his *talmidim* inquired into the meaning of his laugh. The Ba'al Shem Tov simply answered, "Soon you will see for yourselves."

The Ba'al Shem Tov called for his wagon and traveled with his holy *talmidim* to the city of Apta. There, they went to Rabbi Shabsai's house to greet Rabbi Shabsai and his wife.

The Ba'al Shem Tov asked Rabbi Shabsai, "Tell us, what happened on Shabbos night?"

At first, Rabbi Shabsai was afraid to answer, for fear that he had done something wrong. But the Ba'al Shem Tov encouraged him to speak, telling him that his deeds had caused great excitement in the Heavens. Rabbi Shabsai then sat himself down and told them the story from beginning to end.

The Ba'al Shem Tov responded, "When you danced and gave thanks to Hashem, the entire Heavenly entourage came down to join in your happiness." The Ba'al Shem Tov then asked, "Which do you desire, riches or a male child?" Rabbi Shabsai and his wife both answered, "What do we need wealth for if we have no child?"

The holy Ba'al Shem Tov then blessed them with a son who would light up the world, and said they should name him Yisrael, like the Ba'al Shem Tov's own name. He asked to be notified of the birth and said he would come to Apta to be the *sandak* at the *bris mila*. And that was what happened – a year later, the couple was blessed with a baby boy who came to be known as the holy *maggid* Rabbi Yisrael MiKoznitz, the Koznitzer Maggid, *zy"ta*.

*If you would like to publicize your own personal story about giving thanks to Hashem and to mechazek et harabim, please send it with your name and phone number to: KolToda.Eng@gmail.com, or Fax: 02-580-8137.*

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