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THE TALE OF GRETA THUNBERG AND THE PRESIDENT

BY RAV ARI FAUST (ROSH KOLLEL)

וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם הַדּוֹנָלְד טְרַאמֵפּ - It came to pass in the days of Donald Trump, that The President couldn't sleep. So he asked Jared

Kushner to teach him some Torah. He proceeded to read from the Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni, 499):

Rebi Yitzchak said: the year that King Moshiach will be revealed, all the kings of the nations of the world will taunt each other. The king of Persia will taunt the King of Arabia. And the king of Arabia will go to Aram to get advice from them. And the king of Persia returns and destroys the entire world. And all the nations of the world tremble and are terrified and fall upon their faces and gripped with agony, like the agony of childbirth.

"Why are you reading this to me?" asked Trump.

"In order to remind you that there are important things to focus on, so you should stop trying to buy Greenland," replied Kushner.

So The President turned his attention to Persia. "We need to make a deal, Jared, a very good deal," He said. "We need to bring the Ayatollah to his knees and end his regime, then we can usher-in a new era of world peace."

"Do you really think he'll accept a deal?" Kushner asked.

"If he knows what's good for him, he'll take the deal," replied The President. "If not, we'll partner with the Israelis. They've done a good job, they've done a really good job. It was beautiful. Sinwar, Haniyeh, Deif, Nasralla. You got to give it to them, when the Israelis do something, they do a fine job of it. Like their wall in Jerusalem, it's a beautiful wall. I was going to build a beautiful wall..."

Trump's voice trails as he drifts into deep thought. (Sorry, not deep thought. In fact, questionably even thought.) "Do you think the Israelis will join us?" he asks his advisor.

"Mister President, listen to the continuation of the Midrash," replies Kushner, and proceeds to read:

Israel trembles and is terrified and says: to where will we come and go, and to where will we come and go? And God says to them: My children, do not be afraid! All that I have done, I have only done for your sake. Why are you afraid? Do

not be afraid, the time of your redemption has arrived! And the final redemption will not be like the first redemption. For the first redemption was painful for you and you were enslaved to other kingdoms after it. but the final redemption, there will be no pain and enslavement to other kingdoms after.

"That's what I love about you Jews, Jared," says Trump, "it's your resilience." Then The President remarked: "The Jews have always been a people of hope. They've been through the worst of times, but they don't give up. Just like their forefather Abraham - I like to call him Avraham, it's a really elegant way of saying his name, beautiful really. You know, Avraham went on a journey, and the Jews know that life is a long journey and they're not afraid of the long road."

"You know Jared, I think we should give the Jews a gift," said The President.

"That's very kind," replied Kushner, "But what should we give them?"

"I don't know."

Just then, Greta Thunberg entered the Oval Office to ask Trump not to buy Greenland.

"Greta," began Trump, "what gift should we give to someone we love?"

Greta, who only ever thinks about her own self-aggrandisement, replied without hesitation: "A private yacht with very high emissions to sail to Israel and get some of their delicious sandwiches."

"That's ridiculous," said Trump, "why would we give the Jews a boat and soggy sandwiches!"

"The Jews?!" exclaimed Greta, "but they ruin the environment!"

"What are you talking about?! They're world leaders in clean tech research and development. Their drip technology is used in water-scarce countries around the world. They literally make drinking water out of thin air!" retorted Kushner.

"Oh really?" said Greta, confused. "Well, I only base my opinions on what I see on Tik-tok."

"You're really annoying," said Trump. "But you

gave me an idea... We're going to threaten Khamenei that if he doesn't accept our deal, we're going to send Greta to Iran forever!"

Author's note: This story never actually happened. But the quote from the Midrash is direct. We live in frightening times, but also remarkable ones. Some Rabbis in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 98b) said, "May the mashiach come, but let me not be there for it!" We can't know if we are in messianic times, but we can be certain that they are historic ones of biblical proportions. And sometimes the redemptive aspect of our times may be lost to us due to all the chaos. Just like the name "Megillat Esther" connotes, the redemption is hidden to us, until we train our eyes to reveal it. This is the message of the conclusion of the Midrash quoted above, that teaches that even after the Beit HaMikdash has been rebuilt, we'll still need the mashiach to proclaim that the redemption has arrived since we won't notice it ourselves:

בַּשָּׁעָה שֶׁמֶלֶךְ הַמְּשִׁיחַ בָּא, עוֹמֵד עַל גַּג בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ וְהוּא מְשַׁמֵּעַ לָהֶם לִישְׂרָאֵל וְאוֹמֵר: עַנּוּיִם, הִגִּיעַ זְמַן גְּאֻלְתְּכֶם; וְאִם אֵין אַתֶּם מְאֻמִּינִים — רְאוּ בְּאוּרֵי שְׁזָרָה עֲלֵיכֶם.

At the time that the mashiach comes, he will stand on the roof of the temple and announce to Israel and say "Humble ones! The time of your redemption has arrived, and if you do not believe, look at my light that has shined upon you..."

Purim Same'ach!



THE BIG JOKE

BY CHAGAI SHREM

cracks – after all, there are many other women happy to cooperate, so why waste time on someone rebellious? Morderchai's plan seemed flawless. But, in practice the opposite of the desired result was achieved. According to our sages, the non-disclosure caused every nation to think that Esther belonged to them, and therefore this specifically caused her selection to be even more successful from Ahashverosh's perspective, which only strengthened her choice as a queen who was beloved by all nations.

This is the Divine conduct of “ונהפוך הוא.” Reality did not change; only our perspective on it changed.

The beauty of the Megillah of Esther is that the greatest soldiers of salvation were actually the enemies. Haman the wicked, with his own hands, built the infrastructure for the salvation of the Jews. Think about it: who designed the magnificent honor ceremony for Mordechai? Haman. If Mordechai had been asked to plan honor for himself, he would probably have settled for little due to his humility. It took an “expert in honor” like Haman to suggest a horse, royal clothing, and a crown, and to turn Mordechai into the hero of Shushan.

Who built the tree on which Haman was hanged? Haman himself. He invested in building a tree fifty cubits high so that everyone would see, and in the end, the stage he built became the place of his own downfall.

Even the “intelligence file” used by the Jews to fight their enemies was based on the precise lists Haman prepared for their destruction. It turns out that evil can be a

“secret agent” of the Holy One, Blessed be He. Evil works hard, plans plans, and in the end, it discovers that everything it did served the Divine plan.

Purim is a “joke” that the Holy One, Blessed be He, tells us. What is a joke? A situation where we walk in a certain logical path, and suddenly, in one moment, everything flips in an unexpected way and causes laughter. The People of Israel are the best joke in history. According to the laws of nature and statistics, we were not supposed to be here. They try to destroy us – and we grow. They persecute us – and we grow stronger. On Purim, we drink “עד דלא ידע,” to free ourselves from the narrow mind that tries to categorize everything into “good” and “evil,” and to reach the understanding that “אין עוד מלבדו” - there is none besides Him. The whole world is full of His glory, He fills all worlds and surrounds all worlds, and there is no reality besides Him at all. The good is His and the evil is His as well.

The message of “ונהפוך הוא” for us is a message of great hope. Sometimes we encounter difficulties in our lives. Purim teaches us that specifically within the difficulty itself, salvation is hidden. We only need to pray that the Holy One, Blessed be He, will enlighten our eyes to see the reversal, and to understand that even the most complex situations are messengers of good that has not yet been revealed.

When we merit to see the world through the glasses of “ונהפוך הוא,” we will discover that everything – absolutely everything – turns into good.

L'Chaim!

ונהפוך הוא אשר ישלטו היהודים המה בשנאייהם.

It was flipped over, and the Jews got their enemies in their power.

“ונהפוך הוא - it was flipped over”. This expression from the Megilla (9:1) may be the theme of Purim. What does it actually mean?

Simply, we would say that there was evil, and then the situation changed to good. The enemy wanted to kill, and in the end, he was killed. But if we look closely at the language of the Megillah, we discover a much deeper secret. It does not say “להיפך” - that the opposite happened. ונהפוך הוא teaches us that the thing itself, the reality as it is, did not change into another - it simply revealed new faces. In other words, the very thing that was bad is the thing that finally turned out to be positive in retrospect.

We will try to understand why this is so important, and also why we are meant to drink wine “עד דלא ידע” - until we don't know the difference between the evil of Haman and the righteousness of Mordechai (Masechet Megilla 7b).

The entire Megillah, from beginning to end, follows this theme of evil itself turning into good. Already at the beginning, Achashverosh holds an international beauty pageant. Think about it, why did he do this? Why not just betrothe a maiden from a royal background? The purpose was to show that in his kingdom there are equal opportunities for everyone. The new queen of the largest empire in the world can come from any nation and not from the royal house, and therefore one of the important parameters would have been to publicize from which nation the chosen woman comes from.

To avoid her being chosen, Mordechai advises Esther not to tell her nation. The goal was for Esther to fall between the



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HALACHIC Q&A

BY RABBI YOSEF ZVI RIMON - NASI, WORLD MIZRACHI

Question: If I know that my neighbor will not be home for Purim, can I fulfill my obligation of mishloach manot through leaving the food basket on his property?

Answer: There are two reasons given for why we give mishloach manot: to ensure everybody has food for the seuda or to increase friendship in Klal Yisrael. According to both understandings, the gift should be received during the day of Purim itself. In this case, it will be received only after Purim.

It is important to keep in mind that you only need to give to one person to fulfill your obligation, and it should not be too difficult to find one person on Purim to give to. Nevertheless, besh'a't hadchak (dire circumstance) you could fulfill your obligation by leaving it in their possession even if it will not be accepted on Purim.

Question: Is the proper reading "zecher" or "zeicher"?

Answer: Precision with nikud and punctuation in kriyat haTorah is very important. This is especially true during the reading of Parshat Zachor in which we fulfill a biblical commandment. The biggest question regarding this topic revolves around the word "zeicher" in the line "timche et zeicher Amalek" (Devarim 25:19). The Radak brings two options as to the proper nikud – "zecher" (two segols) or "zeicher" (tzere and segol). Ma'aseh Rav attests that the Gra held that "zecher" is the proper nikud, however, in almost all other kitvei yad (manuscripts), including the Aleppo Codex, the word is written as "zeicher."

In practice, it is sufficient to read Zachor once with the accepted nikud of "zeicher." However, the Mishnah Berurah (685:18) writes that both versions should be read. One should first read the less accepted version, "zecher," and afterwards repeat

with "zeicher." Rav Moshe Feinstein and Rav Kanievisky both write that one does not need to repeat the whole sentence, but rather can return to "timche et zecher Amalek" and repeat from there. Simply repeating "zecher Amalek" alone should not be done as it may lead to a mistake. One should be as precise with the rest of the reading of Zachor as we are with the proper pronunciation of "zeicher."

Question: I am Sephardic. Do I need to hear Zachor from a Sephardic Torah?

Answer: Some poskim (see Mikra'ei Kodesh) require that one must hear Zachor from a sefer Torah written in the way of their edut and read in their cantillation (Ashkenazic, Sephardic, etc.).

It does not seem that one needs to do this, however, it is more beautiful to fulfill the mitzvah in this fashion (Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach). If people from different backgrounds are davening together, it can be read once and everybody is yotzei. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach writes that multiple readings should not be done as it is not proper kavod hatzibur.

Question: Why don't we make a bracha when giving mishloach manot? Of the four mitzvot of the day, we only make a bracha

on one of them – megillah reading. Why do we not make a bracha on mishloach manot?

Answer: The Rashba (Shu"t Harashba 1:18) has a lengthy responsa about when brachot are made on mitzvot and when not. Different rules explain different mitzvot. One of the rules is that we only make a bracha on a mitzva which is dependent only on the doer of the mitzva. However, we do not make a bracha over mitzvot which are dependent on another person. The Rashba lists gifts to the poor amongst mitzvot in this category. Because the mitzva is only completed with the gift being received, no bracha is made as there is no guarantee that the gift will be accepted. The Pri Megadim notes that this is the same reason we do not make a bracha on mishloach manot.

The Seridei Eish provides a different answer to the question regarding mishloach manot. These gifts must be given out of love and friendship. Making the bracha over the mitzva would imply that the giving is only a result of a command. The love and friendship amongst Klal Yisrael, meant to be increased through this mitzva, would be much less apparent. Therefore, Chazal established the mitzva without a bracha so that the mitzva can best accomplish its goal.



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SHLICHUT IN MONTREAL: THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE FREEZING

BY EVYATAR KERNER

by how many red and white envelopes end up on the windshield. The signs here are not signs. They are a test of faith. Font sized for a legal footnote. French at the level of a native speaker. And rules that shift by day, hour, side of the street, and alignment of the stars.

On Monday parking is allowed on the right side. On Tuesday it is not. On Wednesday there is snow removal, even if it is July. At least we learned the days of the week in French. Education through penal fines is a pedagogical method we never knew back home. Of course we told ourselves: "This would never happen in Israel." Then we remembered, it would. We just would have negotiated with the parking inspector. Here you pay. You say thank you. And you move on.

But at least there are the Habs!

And now, a sensitive topic. The bagel. Yes, yes. The Montreal bagel. The myth. The local pride. The heritage. I stand before it with all due respect and ask one simple question: where is the salt? I know, this is almost sacrilege. But a bagel without salt is not a culinary revolution. It is bread with good PR. I eat it. I nod. I smile politely. And inside I think: overrated. Maybe in a year I will write a column of apology. Maybe my taste buds will undergo full conversion. But for now, give me a little Dead Sea at least. At least there is kosher pizza to compensate.

I think Montreal is the kosher pizza capital of the world - with approximately 2 kosher pizza places per Jewish person, and a new one opening every other week!

And then there are those subtle moments that tie everything together into something whole. You are walking down a snowy street. Speaking Hebrew. And hearing Hebrew all around you. For a second you forget. Your brain says: "Modi'in." Your eyes say: "Montreal." And you stop, grab your head, and say out loud: "Wait... we are not in Israel."

And that is the moment you understand something deeper. shlichut is not only about bringing warmth to a cold place. Sometimes it is about discovering that the warmth is already here. In a community that asks if you need heating. In a neighborhood that speaks Hebrew in the snow. And at a Shabbat table where someone will say to you: "Hey, about that bagel... you will come around." And you will smile.

Because between minus-30 and a bagel without salt, between six parking tickets, a calm Canadian smile and Cole Caulfield, you are already a little bit from here. And a little bit from there. And that is probably exactly the point.

Bonne fête de Purim!

There's something special about shlichut in Montreal. A special poutine sauce if you will. It's not found in the first snow. Nor is it in learning to say "bonjour" without sounding like you can't comprehend why a city in North America speaks French.

It's found at minus-30 degrees, during a power outage, when the house officially becomes a refrigerator and you do not panic. You see, in Israel, if the power goes out for even four minutes, there is already a WhatsApp group called "What is wrong with the electric company???" But here? The phone is bombarded with messages too, but in a completely different way: "Do you need a warm place to stay?" "We have a generator." "Come over, there is soup."

And then someone tells you that two years ago, on Passover, there was no electricity for four days. Four!! And in a completely calm tone: "Yeah, it was a little chilly." Chilly! That was the word they chose. Seriously, what's wrong with you people, just move to Miami already!

But since then, Tu Bi'Shvat has passed us by and I look at minus-7 and say with full confidence: "Honestly? Pretty nice out today." I think I'll open a window for some air. But a bit of perspective for a moment: when it's still minus-7 you can't honestly call it "spring" break!

And since we are talking about adjusting, let's talk about the biggest learning curve: parking signs. Let's talk about six parking tickets. Six! Some people measure success on shlichut by how many people show up to an event or how many make Aliya (not Israel, not Miami). Us Bachurim, we measure



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