

Fascinating INSIGHTS

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Holy Roots. Surprising Fruits

At times we may see that a wicked person comes from a tzadik. However, at a later point, we see that descendants of that wicked person return to Hashem and become great in their own right. We see this with Esav who had holy descendants like R' Meir.¹

How does such a thing come to be? The Chida explains because that wicked person was from a tzadik. Had Esav not been carried by the righteous Rivka in pregnancy, his descendants wouldn't have become who they were. Yishmael,

in contrast, didn't have such descendants like Esav, because his mother was Hagar, not Sarah.

We can translate this today where one may see a great person who doesn't descend from such great people. This may be due to the fact that an ancestor of his was righteous.



[Fingernails and Fire](#)

¹ See Gittin 56a and 57b.

Pirkei D'rebbi Eliezer² tells us that before Adam's sin, his body was covered with the same material as our fingernails which acted as the ultimate protection from harm. Just as evil was external to man at that time, so too was he physically protected from all external negative forces. However, after the sin, Adam became vulnerable to evil, both spiritually and physically. The protective material was removed, remaining only on his fingers and toes as a lasting reminder of what once was—and the spiritual level we strive to return to.

At the conclusion of that first Shabbos (although Adam sinned on Friday, Hashem allowed him to remain in Gan Eden until after Shabbos), darkness descended for the first time. Adam was frightened, suddenly grasping the gravity of his transgression and its consequences. Darkness and evil were now mixed in³ and a part of his world.

At that time, Hashem provided Adam two flints, with which he created fire. Upon doing so, Adam recited the bracha of *borei me'orei ha'eish*.⁴ This was the first fire, and its creation marked a pivotal moment in humanity's adaptation to a post-sin reality. The fire of havdala and its bracha are reminiscent of Adam at creation.

Each Motzaei Shabbos, as we recite this same bracha during Havdalah, we gaze at the light reflected off our fingernails. This gesture recalls Adam before the sin—when his entire body shone with that protective brilliance—and the ideal we yearn to return to. As we distinguish between the *kodesh* and *chol*, sacred and the mundane, *kodesh* and *chol*, we express our longing to return to the state of *yom shekulo Shabbos*.

The 43 Secret

We know that Hashem's name אלהים is associated with *Middas Hadin*, strict judgement. Now, אלהים has a gematria of 86. R' Tzvi Hirsch of Zidichov explains that the way to "sweeten" or diminish and weaken the force of judgement is with the pasuk טוב ה' Hashem is good.⁵ The gematria of טוב ה' (טוב י-ה-ו-ה) is 43. This is half of 86, which is symbolic of splitting the *din* in half.

86 - 43

Now, the longest pasuk in Tanach, found in Megilas Esther,⁶ reads: ויקראו ספרי המלך בעת ההיא בחדש השלישי הוא חדש סיון בשלושה ועשרים בו ויכתב ככל אשר צוה מרדכי אל היהודים ואל האחשדרפנים והפחות ושרי המדינות אשר מהדו ועד כוש שבע ועשרים ומאה מדינה ומדינה ומדינה ככתבה ועם כלשנו ועד כוש שבע ועשרים ומאה מדינה ומדינה ומדינה ככתבה ועם כלשנו, so they summoned the king's scribes at that time, in the third month, which is the month of Sivan, on its twenty-third day, and it was written as Mordechai had dictated to the Jews and to the satraps, the governors and officials of the provinces from Hodu to Kush, 127 provinces, to each province in its own script, and each people in its own language, and to the Jews in their own script and language. This pasuk contains 43 words! And what does it discuss? A matter that is good for the Jews (טוב ה'), as it speaks with the reversal of the decree of Haman and Achashveirosh!

With this we can explain the secret contained in the name גמ זו נחום איש גז, whose name comes from his response to adversity: גם זו לטובה, this too is for the good.⁷ Noting that the word גם has a gematria of 43, we can understand it as גם, which can weaken the force of judgement (as we mentioned earlier), and helps us recognize that its לטובה, all for the good.



Rabbi Alt merited to learn under the tutelage of R' Mordechai Friedlander ztz"l for close to five years and received semichah from R' Zalman Nechemia Goldberg ztz"l. Rabbi Alt has written thousands of Torah articles on numerous topics for various websites and publications and is the author of ten books including the recently released "Astounding Torah Insights about the Human Body." His writings, many of which have been translated into Yiddish, Hebrew, German, Spanish and French, inspire people across the spectrum of Jewish observance to live with the vibrancy and beauty of Torah. His shiurim can be found on various websites including Kol Halashon's. Rabbi Alt lives with his wife and family in Kiryat Yearim (where the Aron was for 20 years [Shmuel 1, 7:1,2]) where he studies, lectures, writes and teaches. The author is passionate about teaching Jews of all levels of observance.

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² Chapter 14.

³ The word ערב, evening also means mixed.

⁴ Breishis Rabba 11:2.

⁵ Tehillim 145:9.

⁶ Esther 8:9.

⁷ Taanis 21a.

