

The following is a speech written for a fellow being honored by a local religious organization.

It's a great pleasure to be here tonight, seeing many of the friends and neighbors we only get to see once a week on Shabbos. Let me tell you a story about what took place when two friends had their weekly Shabbos encounter.

Moshe and Yankel were heading home from shul one Shabbos morning. Suddenly a cab sped past, and their friend, Fishel, was running frantically behind it, flailing his arms wildly.

"Oh my goodness!" exclaimed Yankel, "I never imagined our good friend Fishel was a 'mechalel' Shabbos! Look at him running for that taxi."

"Hold on," Moshe replied. "Don't you know it's a mitzvah to judge other people favorably and give them the benefit of the doubt? I'll bet we can think of hundreds of excuses for Fishel's behavior."

"Yeah, like what?" snorted Yankel.

"Well," Moshe said "Maybe he's sick and needs to go to the hospital."

"Come on! He was running 40 miles an hour after that cab, he's healthier than Shimshon Hagibor."

"Well, maybe his wife's having a baby."

"Nope," replied Yankel, "She had one last week."

"Maybe he's running to the hospital to get a doctor."

"He IS a doctor."

Moshe tried again, "OK, maybe he needs supplies from the hospital."

"The hospital is a three minute walk in the opposite direction."

In desperation, Moshe suggested, "Well, maybe he just forgot that it is Shabbos."

"Of course he knows it is Shabbos," retorted Yankel. "Didn't you see his fancy tie?"

He never wears a tie during the week."

"Wow, you are really observant!" said Moshe, "I didn't even notice that he was wearing a tie."

"How could you not notice? It was caught on the back fender of the taxi!"

Sometimes, something can be right in front of our faces and we don't realize what we are seeing.

When people heard that I was being honored, they came to wish me Mazel Tov.

Many of them also added various comments, like:

“Great, now we *have* to go to the dinner”

“How much did they have to twist your arm for that?”

“At least you’re off the hook for next year”

“You’re lucky the Apprentice is a repeat,” and

“Now you’ll see who your real friends are”

It was that last one that got me. Yes, I guess I will get to see who my friends are.

The people who are happy for me, who care to be involved. And I realized something. Not everyone gets that opportunity to openly see who cares about us. We don’t get to focus on the wonderful things people do for us.

People are constantly doing things that can easily be missed. These quiet contributions of our friends, neighbors, and even spouses are easily overlooked. But, there are always good things happening and they’re being done by somebody, even if they aren’t bragging about it.

It got me thinking. Maybe I haven’t been properly focused. Perhaps I haven’t seen all the good around me because I wasn’t looking at the world that way. It’s easier to take the good for granted and move on, than to stop and recognize it for what it is.

We are on the eve of Purim now. HaShem's name doesn't appear in the Megilla; it is only referenced by the word "HaMelech." This is to signify HaShem's hidden role in the Purim story. Esther's name was really Hadassah but she was called Esther because HaShem's Divine Providence was acting as if behind a mask. There was so much happening behind the scenes and only in retrospect can we recognize the factors leading up to the Purim miracle.

Mordechai's not bowing to Haman, his saving of Achashveirosh's life, Esther's ascension to the throne, Haman's building of the 50-foot gallows upon which he was later hung, and Achashveirosh's insomnia were all part of the Divine plan for saving his people. Without any one of them, history might have been very different.

There are many different people in our lives, and each adds something to the mix which makes up the fabric of our existence. You just have to be looking at it properly to realize how blessed you really are.

As Mordechai told Esther, "Perhaps it was for this that you ascended to the throne," perhaps I was honored tonight so that I might stop and think about all the people and all the good I have to be thankful for, for it is truly abundant. Now I know what to look for, I won't miss it next time. Thank you, good night.