

Farbrengen

With The

Rebbe

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Farbrengen Purim 5733

would be necessary – declaring that a Jew must never be intimidated by any opponents, he must only see to it that “out of

the mouths of children and infants”– out of the mouths of small Jewish children – should come forth words of Torah and holiness, and that will guarantee the downfall of the “enemy and avenger.”

LESSON TO US: EVERY JEW IS OBLIGATED TO EDUCATE THE CHILDREN

As mentioned, this was Purim Katan, in a situation where he was literally putting his own life at risk – as ultimately he was arrested shortly thereafter after they collected all their evidence against him...

As for us, God has blessed us to live in a place and in a situation where we can work in this regard in a happy and free way, where Jews are not threatened – to the contrary, we will receive assistance even from those who, as of yet, do not understand the importance of this.

As stated earlier, this requires no interpretation, the instruction is plain and simple: every Jew without exception must attend to the upbringing of his own children and of his grandchildren and also of himself – if he is still a “child” or “infant,” if he still “young” in his knowledge of true Judaism, to work every single day with single purpose, and not be intimidated by any obstacle.

And those who have influence over community leaders, or if they themselves are able “doers,” and especially if they have a knowledge of how to deal with communal money which can be spent on any number of causes, they should resolve, and do everything dependent on them, so that their first “priority” will be to educate Jews about Judaism – true Judaism, which

traces back to Mount Sinai. “This Torah will never be changed” – it cannot be changed since Sinai, and it will not be changed, just like the Jewish nation will never be changed regardless of any Haman or Achashverosh, or their heirs...

MONEY SHOULD NOT BE A HINDERANCE

And as we’ve discussed many times, when it comes to money if there is a shortage today, it can be borrowed and paid back tomorrow. But a child who must

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be educated cannot be left for tomorrow, because the child is continuing to grow, and he lives in a country where there are influences which are destructive to the child.

So if they are not welcomed into a proper Jewish upbringing today no one can know what can happen to this child by tomorrow morning...

Therefore, if there is no money available in the accounts, it is a commandment and an obligation – more so, a holy merit – for anyone who is able, to borrow money wherever possible to increase the abilities of all those who are involved in Jewish education, in the upbringing of Jewish children in a Kosher way and in a Jewish way, so that they can bring in even more Jewish children. Until, as it says regarding the Exodus from Egypt, not one single child will remain without a Kosher education.

And when everyone works together in this direction we have Torah's promise: "Toil and you will discover success."

If it is only done with the proper toil, then not only will you succeed, but you will "discover success" – your success will be far beyond the toil you put in.

And then we can establish from children and grandchildren, "God's Legions" – soldiers and legions for God, who will speedily go out from this exile – and in their merit, their teachers will also go out of exile along with their parents and grandparents.

And we will all go together to greet our righteous Moshiach with the true and complete Redemption.

Sicha 6

ACHASHVROSH'S PARTY

The Megillah teaches us something else, as well.

As discussed earlier, we must not miss hearing any part, even a very small part, of the Megillah in order to fulfill the Mitzvah of reading the Megillah. And all the more so when the Megillah relates a narrative over several verses, an entire topic — we certainly must listen, pay attention, and experience it. And make it a lesson in our daily lives.

התוועדות פורים ה'תשל"ג

Now based on this, at first glance, it is not at all clear why the Megillah must relate, and we must read, all the details of how King Achashverosh arranged his royal feast. The Megillah tells where it was held: “the court of the garden of the king’s palace;” and how the seating and reclining were arranged, and that there were “hangings of white and blue fine cotton,” and the myriad details describing the hall’s appearance, the couches, the eating and drinking, and so forth.

It seems necessary for the Megillah to say only, that when “the king’s heart was merry with wine,” he instructed that Queen Vashti be brought. This is important as an introduction to how Esther became queen. To know that the king was merry is one thing. But of what significance are “hangings of white and blue fine cotton,” and golden couches, and the details of what the guests participating in the king’s feast received?

The Megillah does not simply say, “it was arranged in a grand style,” but it describes all the specifics. So certainly there must be a lesson, and, as mentioned earlier, since the Megillah is synonymous with great joy, and calls forth boundless joy — so, too, all of its aspects and details form a part of that unlimited joy.

THE LESSON TO US

The main point we learn from the narrative is that when a person does something, he must do it to the fullest of his abilities — not to calculate that since such-and-such efforts are sufficient for someone else, then it is enough for me to do only a little more. Rather, since your potential is greater, it is not enough to make ‘an ordinary celebration,’ but a celebration “in the court of the garden of the king’s palace.”

Now 180 consecutive days of partying and drinking indicates how brilliant Achashverosh was, and with what he occupied himself, but it hardly seems important enough for the Megillah to explain how Achashverosh spent those six months to warrant reading it every single year in the Megillah, and to recite a blessing beforehand. Between the blessing and the Megillah reading we may not interrupt, and here the Megillah describes, in one verse after another, how Achashverosh partied for 180 consecutive days, and how he seated his guests.

This is a lesson: When God gives you a capability and you are called upon to do something, you must do it in accordance with your potential. Don’t calculate that

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since you're doing something so good, if you've used even half of your potential, you've done your share. The Megillah tells us: Since Achashverosh had ruled for three years and he knew then that his rulership was secure, he wanted to show that he's making a celebration befitting a king of one-hundred-twenty-seven countries! It is not enough for the Megillah to write that "he made a big feast" — we would just know that it was a big affair. No, states the Megillah! There must be "white and blue hangings of fine cotton," "golden and silver couches," and alabaster flooring, with all the details — a spectacular event!

The lesson we learn from this: If Achashverosh, who was not overly intelligent, did all this on his own initiative in order to demonstrate the strength of his rule; then the person — who reads the Megillah and studies the Megillah and contemplates the Megillah's message and what it teaches him — must contemplate: He has a mission from God to do a Mitzvah!

It's not enough to do as much as someone else, who has less ability than he has; to say "I'll do no less, and maybe a little more than him..." No! You must use your full potential! You must measure your abilities — and then exceed them! And learn from Achashverosh: 179 days of revelry weren't enough for him — but 180 days.

Nor was his own personal drunken contentment enough. He made sure that all the subjects of his kingdom — those worthy of the courtyard should be seated in the courtyard; those worthy of the garden should be in the garden; and those worthy of the palace, should come into the palace — should be served, not as they are accustomed, but in accordance with the resources of King Achashverosh.

That is the reason behind the "white and blue hangings of fine cotton," and all the details.

EXCEED YOUR OWN ABILITIES

When you come to fulfill a mission from God, you must jump in with all of your abilities, all your skills, your full potential, without arguing: "Since I've done as much as my friend, or twice as much, three times, four times as much, what more can you ask for?"

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Rather, you should say, "I'm carrying out God's mission, for which God has given me these very abilities!"

Therefore, as mentioned earlier, if someone is a community activist or a spiritual counselor, and says, "since I have educated my children in the Jewish way, what more can you ask of me?" — he arranged a Cheder, a Talmud Torah, a Yeshiva in his neighborhood; he has certainly fulfilled his obligations to everyone, to God and the Jewish people.

The Megillah tells him: No! You must make "white and blue hangings of fine cotton," "golden and silver couches, and alabaster and marble." And only then can you be content, only then can you have an easy heart — when you know that "the court, the garden, and the king's palace" are filled with everyone for whom you prepared the feast; and you prepared it not according to their demands, to their standards, but in accordance with the potential that God granted you.

And since you're a community activist, and if you pound on the table, you'll raise a half-million dollars toward Jewish education, a million dollars toward Jewish education; while in truth, you could raise two million, then you've not fulfilled your obligation: not to yourself, not to God, not to the Jewish people. You have to raise two million dollars.

If someone else raises eighteen dollars, he's done all he can, because the most he could raise was seventeen dollars — and still, he gave eighteen. One who can give two million dollars and gives one million has not used the potential God gave him.

This is what the Megillah teaches us. We don't know it from Passover. We definitely cannot learn it from the ordinary state of exile.

One can think, he ought to worry: what will be tomorrow? After all, he's in exile.

The Megillah teaches us: Why are you thinking about tomorrow?! Today there is a Jewish child who needs a Jewish education, and you can raise two million dollars. You have to pound on the table? So pound on the table, don't sleep, don't rest; and work on it for 180 days until your heart can be "merry with wine"!

IF G-D GAVE YOU AN OPPURTUNITY USE IT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

So, too, one whom God has given the opportunity to write in a newspaper. True, he's been assigned to report the news on a war in a faraway land. But that is only on the surface, an external means, through which he can use his abilities to spread Yiddishkeit.

He must look for a way while reporting on the war to bring out an understanding of Divine Providence. The fact that he himself knows this, is not enough. He has the ability to influence all of the newspaper's readers — so by sharing this knowledge only with himself and his family, he hasn't fulfilled his responsibility.

The Rebbe said in the name of the Tzemach Tzedek: Something that is published remains for generations to come. One whom God has given a talent, an opportunity, to write a book; whatever the book's cover or its jacket — its external face, the book's premise and content — it must communicate to the reader the awareness that, “this palace has an Owner;” that there is Someone in charge of this turbulent world.

Observing the world, one cries out, “It's a jungle!” Everything in it defies logic. Wild men ruling a wild world. Where does one see the owner of this “palace”?

When God guided him to write a book, gave him the opportunity, and supplied him with a publisher for the book — then whatever the book's ostensible message, its inner dimension must be that, when the reader finishes part of the book, and surely when he completes it — he must take with him the conviction that notwithstanding the fools who think the world runs randomly, that anarchy rules and “might makes right” — that's only on the surface. In the end, righteousness and goodness are triumphant.

And, for Jews, Yiddishkeit is victorious.

And regarding his assertion that he lives a proper life and believes in God, and he expresses his beliefs in conversation so that others should also believe — Excellent. He has saved many people, many Jews. But that is not enough!

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If he has “white and blue wall hangings of fine cotton,” and books — more than one book, in many languages, and sold in numerous locations — then wherever the book reaches it should foster the realization that, when the reader puts down the book he has no doubt that there is a God Who guides the world, Who gives his attention to every individual and every Jew.

And it is important to God whether this Jew dons Tefillin, and whether he conducts himself appropriately as a Jew.

BY FULFILLING OUR POTENTIAL, WE BECOME CONTENT

And then, if the first book is successful in this way, he will succeed with a second and a third, until “the king’s heart is merry with wine,” and he becomes truly content. And then he goes from strength to strength — with greater and deeper influence, continually growing.

And as stated, this is one of the explanations. Everything in Torah is without limit; Torah’s interpretations and allusions have no end.

One of the explanations we take from the specific and detailed description of how Achashverosh conducted his celebration for 180 consecutive days with the greatest wealth and splendor, and only afterward could “the king’s heart be merry with wine” — only then was he content.

As mentioned, if this is the case with a non-Jew, then certainly for a Jew who is carrying out a mission from God: in everything a Jew does, the objective is to be an emissary of God, “to make a dwelling for Him in the lower world.”

Wherever his influence can extend, so must the knowledge and awareness that there is a God Who directs the world and its every detail, to whom the conduct of every individual — and, in particular, every Jew — is important.

And through this, the writer, the spiritual counselor, and the one who raises two million dollars, not less, for proper education — since he is capable of this much; and the person who can raise one million, raises one million — together they all create the golden chain of “One people.” And we go “from strength to strength,” until “his fame spreads throughout all the countries.” Throughout the world His

name is heard and celebrated, and this is accomplished in a manner befitting Purim: “with light, and gladness, and joy, and honor!” L’Chaim.

Sicha 7

HOW CAN AN “UN-CONNECTED JEW” SPREAD YIDDISHKEIT

On the subject discussed earlier, particularly the last topic, that “the greater the person, the greater his responsibility” — that every Jew must do his utmost, and more than his utmost, because he has a mission from God to spread Yiddishkeit and goodness wherever he can, and with the clarity that it is an assignment from God.

There is an argument often posed: How can this be expected of me, when “the chain was broken”? Either, he was once involved in matters of Yiddishkeit, and later drifted away, and it’s difficult to change one’s set ways, to turn oneself around — to return to one’s roots and heritage.

Or an even stronger argument: Those not fortunate to have been born to observant parents must understand that every Jew is connected. His great-great-grandfather stood at Sinai and said, for himself — and with him was the soul of his great-great-grandchild, “We will do and we will understand” — that he’ll do whatever God asks of him.

But he argues: Since then, so many generations have come and gone and his soul didn’t even see his parents acting with self-sacrifice. So how can you ask of him to serve God wholeheartedly, and use his full potential and skills to spread Yiddishkeit and goodness wherever he can reach, to the utmost of his abilities, and even more so, “with your whole being”?

A PECULIAR RASHI

But here, too, is a lesson from the Megillah which comes together with — as customary in the Farbrengens of recent years — an explanation of Rashi’s commentary: in this case, a comment of Rashi’s on the Megillah. The comment seems unclear at first, but later we see how we can only comprehend the subject through Rashi’s explanation.

התועדות פורים ה'תשל"ג

At the start of the Megillah there is a comment by Rashi that is connected with his explanation on the very last verse.

The Megillah begins: “And it came to pass in the days of Achashverosh, the Achashverosh who reigned from Hodu to Kush, one hundred twenty-seven lands.”

The simple meaning is: “And it came to pass in the days of Achashverosh...” Since we might think there were several Achashveroshes, or we might be unaware of his greatness, the verse tells us: this is the same Achashverosh who ruled over 127 countries, over the entire world. This is the simple meaning of the verse.

Rashi comments on, “Achashverosh, the Achashverosh” and states that the words “the Achashverosh,” are not read together with “the Achashverosh who reigned over 127 lands.” If that were the meaning, the verse could have read: “And it came to pass, in the days of Achashverosh who reigned over 127 provinces.”

What, then, is the meaning of the words “Achashverosh the Achashverosh”? The second “Achashverosh” is connected to the earlier. This is one and the same Achashverosh: as he was at the beginning, so was he at the end. He was the same Achashverosh throughout his whole reign, with the same behavior.

This is difficult to understand. Why must Rashi take the verse out of its simple meaning? We often find similar language in Chumash, for example, “They are Moshe and Aharon” followed by “They are Aharon and Moshe who spoke to the Jews,” in which the verse teaches that it is the same person.

Why does Rashi choose to bring the Midrash’s explanation instead — that Achashverosh was unchanged?

ANOTHER INTERESTING RASHI

The answer lies in a different explanation by Rashi, the last in the Megillah, which is not at all understood. There, in the last verse, the Megillah states that following the annulment of Haman’s decree, Mordechai became “viceroy to King Achashverosh, and accepted by most of his brethren.”

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Rashi asks, why only “by most of his brethren”? It could have stated, “accepted by his brethren,” just as the verse continues: “speaking peace to his people.” What does the word “most” mean?

Rashi tells us it means: “most of his brethren accepted him, but not all.” A portion of “his brethren,” his fellow members of the High Court, distanced themselves from him. To them, he was not “accepted.” Why wasn’t he accepted to them?

Rashi explains, so that even a five-year-old can understand: After Mordechai rescued Jews from the decree, why did some of his brethren not accept him, particularly when he was “viceroys to King Achashverosh”? What was the problem?

Rashi answers, since he was involved in the kingdom’s affairs, he was unable to study Torah as before. And since his Torah diligence diminished, a portion of the Sanhedrin was displeased with him.

RASHI’S QUESTION: WHY DIDN’T MORDECHAI DEVOTE HIMSELF 100% TO TORAH STUDY?

But this immediately raises a question on Mordechai. Mordechai was a member of the Sanhedrin and was well aware of Torah’s greatness; after all, earlier he had studied Torah like all the members of the Sanhedrin. Why, then, did he subsequently take the position of viceroy, which limited his ability to study Torah as in the past?

Certainly, before the decree was annulled, he had to be present in the king’s court and become involved in nullifying the decree. But once he already had become, as the verse states, viceroy to King Achashverosh, and more so, once there was no trace left of Haman’s decree — as the Megillah relates at length, “the fear of the Jews fell upon them” — it is perplexing how Mordechai involved himself with a position. True, a critical position, viceroy to King Achashverosh. But this is Mordechai, greatest of the Sanhedrin, how could he cut himself off from Torah study for any position, no matter what — even viceroy to King Achashverosh?

This is why, Rashi tells us, we have to explain at the start of the Megillah that even after Haman’s decree was annulled, and Achashverosh gave Haman’s ring

Sicha 4

PURIM KATAN IN MOSCOW

It was in 1927, before Purim, when my father-in-law, the Rebbe, traveled to Moscow.

Moscow back then– and still now – was the seat of the country’s government and consequently it was also the strictest in opposition to Judaism, and especially against the education of Jewish children. Once they received the news that the Rebbe was coming to Moscow the word immediately spread amongst the Jews there. Understandably, it also reached the highest offices of the government.

– Now we can already tell the story because so many years have passed, and more importantly, the Rebbe himself publicized and published it. I’m relating it now, because it’s related to what we spoke about earlier tonight. –

The Rebbe announced that since he will be in Moscow for Purim Katan he will recite a Chassidic discourse in the local synagogue – which is the only one remaining in Moscow today.

Suddenly a government emissary arrives – and he was actually Jewish and was also a good friend and he informs the Rebbe that even though he is sure that the Rebbe realizes it on his own, but he has specific information that spies will be present at the Chassidic discourse, and they will immediately report to their superiors about the content of the discourse. Therefore, he must weigh what the repercussions could be if he speaks well of the government, or if he speaks otherwise...

When my father-in-law, the Rebbe, arrived at the synagogue, the synagogue was packed, and he recited the Chassidic discourse built upon the verse: “Out of the mouths of children and infants You establish strength to destroy the enemy and avenger” – that the Torah that emerges from the mouths of children nullifies “the enemy and avenger,” all those who wish to fight against Judaism, all those who are enemies, who hate Judaism, and by extension, they also hate Jews.

Expounding on the verse, after elucidating many concepts in the teachings of Chassidism, the Rebbe explained in no uncertain terms so that no “interpretation”

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to Mordechai and appointed him over the house of Haman, and designated him viceroy to King Achashverosh — it didn't mean that Achashverosh had changed.

Had Achashverosh really changed, Mordechai could have returned to the Sanhedrin to sit and study. But Mordechai saw: "Achashverosh is Achashverosh"! "From beginning to end," it's the same Achashverosh. He had no choice, he had to give the ring to Mordechai. No choice, so he said, "Decree for the Jews as you please."

Mordechai saw through Achashverosh — he was the same Achashverosh who conspired with Haman. As the Midrash relates: Achashverosh wanted to get rid of the Jews no less than Haman. The Megillah states plainly: Haman didn't have to exert himself too hard to influence Achashverosh. A few dollars, and the deal was closed.

He wasn't even after Jewish wealth. In Spain, when they made anti-Semitic decrees, they were after their money. Mordechai realized that, no, Achashverosh said: "Plunder the Jews" — he wouldn't benefit from their wealth; he just wanted to be rid of them.

Mordechai saw that although the king had annulled the decree and had appointed him viceroy, nevertheless, "Achashverosh is Achashverosh, from start to finish." And if no one were around to watch him, to keep the connivers away from this foolish king, it was possible that the next morning there'd be another decree!

So Mordechai had no choice. And that's why most of the Sanhedrin supported him.

But a minority didn't. We have to say, then, since the verse states he was "accepted by most of his brethren" — a situation where a portion of the Sanhedrin was displeased — nevertheless, Mordechai obviously had a reason why he accepted the position with Achashverosh. What reason could there be, though, when the decree was annulled and "the fear of the Jews fell upon them, and many people of the land converted to Judaism"?

RASHI'S ANSWER AND A LESSON TO US: ACHASHVEROSH IS ACHASHVEROSH

So Rashi searches the Megillah, where does it explain this? And he found the answer right at the beginning of the Megillah, “It came to pass in the days of Achashverosh”: the entire period of his reign, “Achashverosh the Achashverosh, from start to finish.”

This is the lesson the Megillah teaches us regarding a Jew. As mentioned earlier, if Achashverosh, who wanted to make a celebration for his self-glorification, didn't arrange a party merely in excess of his guests' appetites, but in accordance with his own abilities; and if Achashverosh was just the same, “from start to finish” — then a Jew must know that “from start to finish” he is the same.

It can happen that one's Evil Inclination, “the old and foolish king,” can intrude with a commotion and tumult in a moment of weakness, and cause one's standards to slip. But to conclude, therefore, that he has, God forbid, forfeited his greatness?! Not at all!

If “Achashverosh is Achashverosh, from start to finish,” then all the more so, the Jew who reads the Megillah is certainly “the same from start to finish”!

“A JEW IS A JEW”!

If he was born into an observant family, learned the ABC's of Judaism in a religious cheder, then it's instilled for 120 years, “from start to finish”: he's rooted in the ABC's of Judaism. As the Rebbe says in a discourse, the Alef is connected with “I am the Lord your God,” which begins with Alef: the Alef of Anochi in the Ten Commandments.

And even one who, for whatever reason, was born to parents who had already strayed; nevertheless his great-grandfather and his own soul, his “beginning,” stood at Mount Sinai and proclaimed with a full heart, “we will do and we will understand!” And he experienced that same receiving of the Torah, as the Megillah states: “the Jews fulfilled and accepted — at Purim they fulfilled what they had accepted earlier, at Sinai.”

Purim once again renews and strengthens the “We will do,” just as the Jews accepted willingly at Sinai. “We will do and we will understand” to the end of time, and for every individual Jew to the end of his days — and in a manner of “light and gladness, joy and honor.”

WHY DID HAMAN SAY “PLUNDER THEM”?

Parenthetically, while we're already discussing the verse, two additional points: The reason the Megillah stresses “and plunder them,” as mentioned on Shabbos, is to point out the difference. For gentiles, the focus was “to plunder them,” while for Jews, the focus was to “assemble and stand up for themselves,” as Jews: “they didn’t extend their hands to plunder” — they had utterly no interest in it. This is the simple explanation.

There’s also an intriguing concept here connected to Jewish law. The possessions of someone executed by royal decree belong to the royal treasury. Now, had the decree not been, “to plunder them” we know what would have happened: their possessions would go to the treasury.

What difference does this make to the decree? When the non-Jews were told: “Look here, go ‘destroy, kill, and annihilate the Jews’ — and take their money, too,” they did so with pleasure. But if it weren’t written “and plunder them,” just, “kill the Jews,” and Achashverosh would take the money, they wouldn’t have agreed. Many of the gentiles would have dawdled or done nothing at all.

Therefore, in the Purim prayer the severity of the decree is emphasized: “In the days of Mordechai and Esther” the wicked Haman rose up and made it known that he would accept whoever wished to help him. He needed the support of other nations; he made every effort that they follow his orders. That is why he had to add, as emphasized in Al Hanisim, the notice “to plunder them.”

We saw, Heaven forefend, in the decrees and devastations of our generation that the incentive “to plunder them” caught up even those gentiles who, their entire lives, were friendly to the Jews in Germany, or Poland, or Lithuania, etc. Once they knew that they could plunder, they forgot everything else, just to carry out the wishes of this generation’s Haman!

WHY DID MORDECHAI ACCEPT THE POSITION?

And also, parenthetically, it is appropriate to explain here: If, in fact, Mordechai acted incorrectly, why was he “accepted by most of his brethren”? And if, in fact, he had acted properly to become viceroy to King Achashverosh, then why did “a portion of the Sanhedrin distance themselves”?

This indicates two viewpoints in Torah. Where do we find the two? It’s a dispute between the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds.

THE BAVLI’S VIEWPOINT

In Tractate Brachos it says, “The original pious ones would meditate one hour, pray one hour, and meditate one hour.” Each prayer lasted three hours. For the three daily prayers, morning, afternoon, and evening, they devoted a total of nine hours to the service of prayer.

The Talmud asks: “Since they spent nine hours in prayer, when did they study Torah and when did they work?” When did they find time for Torah, and when did they make a living?

The Talmud answers: “Since they were Chassidim” — since they engaged in acts of Chassidus, praying at length and such — they therefore received God’s blessings: “their Torah was safeguarded and their livelihood was blessed.” Those are the Talmud’s words.

In their merit of being Chassidim they did not forget what they learned. It was “safeguarded,” although they lacked sufficient time for review.

And, “their livelihood was blessed”: in return for relatively small effort they were quite successful.

What do we learn from this? The rule is, if you’re a Chassid, acting in a manner consonant with Chassidus, although your livelihood benefits, and “is blessed” — it transcends the natural order of things — regarding your Torah study, though, it does not state, “their Torah was blessed,” rather, “their Torah was safeguarded”: whatever you know, you don’t forget.

When Mordechai became viceroy and involved himself with matters of the kingdom, to be on guard against decrees — the question arises, “When did he study Torah and when did he work?” According to Bavli, his livelihood was “blessed” and not lacking. His Torah study, though, didn’t grow, it was merely “safeguarded” — so “a portion of the Sanhedrin distanced themselves from him.” That’s the way the Bavli presents it.

THE YERUSHALMI’S VIEWPOINT

The same Mishnah, the same question, appears in the Yerushalmi, but with a different wording in the response: “Since they were pious, their Torah study was blessed and their livelihood was blessed.” In other words, not only does he not forget Torah, but his Torah knowledge increases!

And as Rashi comments there, “with minimal study” — without much exertion, and time-consuming questions, debates or dialectics to learn the truth: as soon he begins to study, he immediately arrives at the correct understanding.

As a result, to those Sanhedrin members who followed the Yerushalmi, his Torah study “was blessed” — he had both qualities: both Torah and good deeds.

WHY THE BAVLI AND YERUSHALMI DIFFER?

We can also understand from this why the Bavli and Yerushalmi disagree.

Regarding their style of learning: The method in Bavli, as explained at length in the Mittlerer Rebbe’s Shaarei Ora, is through debate and dialectics. This is self-evident throughout the Bavli, as the Talmud states: “‘He has set me in dark places’: this is Talmud Bavli.”

When you begin to learn, you move through darkness. You must deliberate, ask questions, sort things out, until you find the true meaning. That is Talmud Bavli.

Talmud Yerushalmi has no “dark places.” You come to the correct understanding right from the start.

As discussed once regarding the difference between the Halachic responsa of the later and earlier scholars: In the earlier responsa we see very few lines written, as in Maimonides’ writings, and others. The question is stated, and the answer

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follows immediately. A final “and Moshe says,” and it’s finished. Whereas in the later responsa — true Torah scholars of later generations — we encounter great length and extensive discussion.

As discussed once in detail, the difference is: For the Rishonim, who were “like angels,” everything was illuminated. When you’re in a well-lit room and you’re searching for something, you see it instantly and retrieve it. You know this is a window, this is a door, that’s a table...

When the room is unlit, “He has set me in dark places,” you have to feel your way around. You come across an opening, you don’t know if it’s a window, a door, or maybe, a door of the buffet. You haven’t a clue what it is. So you check — one side, the other side — until you realize that it’s not a window or door. It’s a large pot, an open pot. And so you search further until you reach the truth.

This is why — according to the Yerushalmi, where they were accustomed to a system in which little effort led to a quick conceptual grasp — the Torah of those Chassidim was not only “safeguarded,” but also “blessed.”

MORDECHAI AND PART OF THE SANHEDRIN- MOIRRORING THE POSITIONS OF THE BAVLI AND YERUSHALMI

And Mordechai, “who had been exiled from Jerusalem,” followed their approach: He held that “their Torah was blessed.”

The Sanhedrin included members who, like Hillel, “came up from Bavel” — they likely arrived from other lands.

And therefore, “a portion of the Sanhedrin distanced themselves from him”: they followed the method of Babylon in which Torah study was only “safeguarded,” and therefore they “distanced themselves from him.”

This ends the parenthetical comment.

A JEW’S BEGINNING IS AT SINAI

Returning to our subject, the Megillah states right at the beginning: “And it came to pass in the days of Achashverosh.” Whatever the era — it may be the most difficult of times, as when Achashverosh “blackened our faces like the sides of a

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pot,” as the Midrash states, a “difficult king” — we must keep in mind that if one truly wants it, then “Achashverosh is Achashverosh.”

One can remain unaffected, not only by external factors, but by one’s own past, as well — his actions yesterday, two days ago and a year ago.

For since a Jew’s “beginning” is sound, then, if he truly wishes, from beginning to end he will remain unchanged — just like Achashverosh.

And as mentioned, how much more so, regarding a Jew — for every Jew’s soul is “a part of God above.” God does not change: “I, God, have not changed,” and this affects the Jew’s soul, so that “even at the time of transgression, it remains faithful to Him.”

So any Jew, however he is, or how he was half an hour ago, a minute ago, he’s fully a master over himself, to reconnect with his roots, to turn back to his source — how he stood at Sinai, where his very soul stated, “We will do and we will understand.”

And he then expresses it in his soul, in his body, in this time and in this place. And he studies Torah and fulfills Mitzvos, including, “Love your fellow as yourself” — spreading Yiddishkeit to every Jew he can reach, with happiness and a joyous heart.

And this leads to, “God illuminates both the giver and the recipient,” both experience “light, joy, gladness and glory!” L’chaim.

Sicha 8

THE MEGILLAH’S NAME: MEGILLAT ESTHER

Just as we can learn many lessons and details from the particulars of the Megillah, so, too, can we learn from its name.

“Rabbi Meir would expound upon names,” and as the Alter Rebbe notes in Tanya, quoting the Arizal: “The Hebrew name of everything is its life force” — its existence is revealed in its Hebrew name.

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Or as the Baal Shem Tov explained on the verse, “O God, Your word stands firm in the heavens” — that God’s “word,” the letters that make up the name written in Torah, “stands firmly in the heavens,” to create and sustain whatever that name applies to.

Or as the Maggid explained on the verse, “and that which man would call a living being is its name”: something’s name is its life-source — its very life is in its name.

THE MEGILLAH OWES IT’S EXISTENCE TO ESTHER

How much more so regarding the name of a book of scripture. The Megillah is called by the name, “Megillat Esther,” and it is called so throughout Torah.

The reason for the name, Megillat Esther, seems to be that Esther requested they “write it for future generations.”

Previously, they were unsure whether it should be written or if it should remain an oral tradition — as with Chanukah, when they wrote Megillat Antiochus, mentioned by many early sages but never included among the books of the written scripture.

It remained part of the Oral Torah — the entire Chanukah story including Megillat Antiochus — according to the early sages who state that it was read and studied, etc.

Conversely, Esther succeeded in having the Megillah written for generations to come — not as part of the Oral Torah, but as one of the 24 books of the written scripture. And since she accomplished this, it is named after her: Megillat Esther.

WHY DID ESTHER REQUEST IT AND NOT MORDECHAI

The miracle happened through Mordechai and Esther together, as the Megillah details at length. Moreover, the Megillah tells us, “Esther followed Mordechai’s order” — all of Esther’s actions conformed to Mordechai’s instructions.

Thus it would seem appropriate to attribute the miracle to Mordechai; he should have requested, “write it for future generations,” — or at least to name it after

both: “Megillat Mordechai and Esther,” or “Esther and Mordechai,” but certainly not Esther’s name alone!

When you read the Megillah, it tells of Mordechai first, and narrates how he raised Esther and taught her what to do, including how to defeat Haman’s decree. Yet when it comes to naming the Megillah, it’s named after Esther alone!

THE IMPORTANT THING: WHO DID THE DEED?

And who asks, “write it for future generations?” — Esther.

So what was the difference between Mordechai and Esther? Esther did, in fact, follow Mordechai’s instructions. But who actually carried out the plans? Esther.

She didn’t rely on herself; she acted only after asking first, but as the Mishnah says, “Action is the main thing.” The actual deed, the self-sacrifice to come before the king, knowing — as the Megillah describes — “it was common knowledge that anyone who came before the king uninvited was put to death, and I haven’t been called before the king now for thirty days.”

— Regarding this act of self-sacrifice: although she asked Mordechai first, who actually did it? Esther! And the action is the main thing.

WHY DO A MITZVAH LIKE A ROBOT? - A LESSON FROM THE MEGILLAH

From this we learn a second lesson. When a Jew comes along and someone tells him to perform a good deed, he may respond that he must first recognize it as proper; then he’ll have a passion for it. Once he understands and is convinced, and has a feeling for it — then it makes sense for him to don Tefillin, fulfill Mitzvos and do all good things.

When he’s told to do it mechanically: someone asked him, someone’s forcing him; he’s doing it as a favor — he himself has no feeling for it, so what does the act accomplish? He’s an intelligent person — a simple act can be performed by an animal, too.

God wants him to perform the Mitzvah because he is a person, because he is a Jew, because he received the Torah, and God asked him to study Torah and

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fulfill Mitzvos. And now we're asking him to act, as an animal would — without contemplation, without feeling, without enthusiasm — just a physical action!

The Megillah tells us that Mordechai did everything he could, and he spoke strongly to Esther, warning, “You and your father’s house may perish.” Mordechai used the strongest language, and then he himself did everything he could, including his defiant refusal to bow to Haman — also an act of self-sacrifice.

But when we want to describe how the decree against Jews was nullified, we must ask, “Who actually performed the action?” And when the answer is Esther, we don’t ask whether she was directed by Mordechai or not — as long as she caused the decree to be nullified.

G-d gave her this role, and she saved the entire Jewish people who lived in the countries under Persian rule. And for this, the entire Megillah is called Megillat Esther, for all generations!

WHY WAS THE MIRACLE THROUGH ESTHER

Now this itself requires explanation. Why, indeed, was it through Esther and not Mordechai? True, Esther was Achashverosh’s queen, and she had access to him, but God is not limited — He could have averted the decree through Mordechai.

Mordechai, too, had access to the King; he was a minister, and had an additional advantage which Esther didn’t have: when Bigtan and Teresh attempted to assassinate Achashverosh, it was Mordechai who had saved the king’s life. So it was possible for the miracle to come through him.

ESTHERS’ LESSON TO ALL JEWISH WOMEN: IN YOUR MERIT WE WILL OVERCOME THE EXILE

This proves, and the Megillah stresses, that ultimately, the rescue of a Jewish home, a Jewish family, depends on the self-sacrifice of the woman. And it is individual families that make up the Jewish nation. As the Megillah says: “family and family,” which comprise “all Jews living in all of Achashverosh’s lands.”

For this reason, Esther directed it to be written for all generations. All Jewish girls should know for generations to come the great merit they have, and the great responsibility they have. They cannot say, “My husband or my father is a

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‘Mordechai,’ and he sits on the high court. I have no responsibility, he will do everything.”

The Megillah says, on the contrary! To actually nullify the decree, for the child and the home to remain unique and special, “a singular nation,” depends on Esther’s acting on Mordechai’s direction.

But who must actually carry it out? Esther! And Esther says, this doesn’t apply to herself alone, but for all generations!

Esther did not seek to be, in today’s language, a “famous person” — to be remembered for generations for her great accomplishment. Esther wanted the Megillah to become a part of Torah — part of the Written Torah, which women are obligated to study.

There are differing opinions whether women must study the Oral Torah, but the obligation to study the Written Torah is undisputed.

Esther desired that the Megillah be a part of Torah that women study, and from which they derive a lesson. They should know that, when it comes to Judaism, they must not be hindered by any obstacles. “All that Mordechai instructed, Esther did”: You needn’t rely on yourself. Ask a rabbi for the ruling of Jewish law.

But to rely on the rabbi, or your father, your husband or brother to carry it out — we say, no, it is Megillat Esther!

And this Megillat Esther was written for future generations. A Jewish woman, a Jewish daughter, a Jewish girl — a Jewish baby in her crib must be told, or lulled to sleep with the words, “Torah is the best merchandise,” as the familiar lullaby goes.

She should be told, this is what happened to Queen Esther: Esther had a fine teacher, a fine guide, who knew and acted upon all these matters. But she was the one who merited through her self-sacrifice to nullify the decree for the entire Jewish people, bringing “light and joy, gladness and glory” for all future generations.

Because Jewish women and girls — and little girls still in their crib — were rocked to sleep with a lullaby of Torah, Yiddishkeit, self-sacrifice and miracles.

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And with this they grow up and become the foundation of their homes, the foundation of “family and family.”

And the families make up “city and city, country and country”: while Jews are “scattered among the nations” they remain “one people.”

And this unity fortifies them in overcoming the last hardships of the last days of exile. And very speedily, “with our young and our old, our sons and our daughters” we’ll go together, entire families, with children and grandchildren, to greet our righteous Moshiach, with eternal joy! L’Chaim.

לזכות

**ר' אליעזר חיים וזוגתו רבקה בתי'
יוצאי חלציהם וכל בני משפחתם שיחיו**

לפידות

בוענאס איירעס, ארגענטינא

Dedicated to the Rebbe with love.

Thank you for your teachings, devotion,
endless counsel, selflessness and for sharing
with us so many hours of your precious time.

May we merit to see you once again soon.

By Benjamin & Rochel Federman & Family
