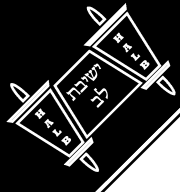




Volume XXII - Issue 16

The DRS Weekly Torah Publication



A New Genesis

By Joseph Cohen, 12th Grade

The Megillah introduces King Ahasuerus with a depiction of his military might: he is the King of 127 countries - the entire known world. After his conquest of the world, he believed he would be ready to sit on King Shlomo's throne. However, the throne turned him away and he decided to fashion a throne identical to King Shlomo's. It is said about King Shlomo's throne, that only one who is a cosmocrator can sit on his throne. A cosmocrator is defined as someone who is the king of the world, ruler of rulers, king of kings. If King Ahasuerus conquered 127 countries, the entire known world, how come King Shlomo's throne turned him away? How come he is not considered a cosmocrator? Perhaps, we can learn why Ahasuerus is not considered a cosmocrator from the reasoning why Shlomo is considered one. The Gemara in Megilla (11b) quotes a Pasuk from Divrei Hayamim (1, 29:23): "Then Shlomo sat upon the throne of Hashem as king." The Gemara learns from this Pasuk that Shlomo ruled over both the inhabitants of the heavenly worlds and the earthly worlds. For this reason, he is considered a cosmocrator, a man who sat on Hashem's throne and ruled in his stead over both worlds. Ahasuerus ruled over only the earthly world, but did not rule over the heavenly world. For this reason, he is not a cosmocrator and could not sit on Shlomo's throne.

After accepting the fact that he is not considered a cosmocrator and the completion of his new throne, King Ahasuerus held a seven day banquet after his already lavish 180 day banquet. Why? What is the purpose of King Ahasuerus having a new

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14 ADAR 5781
FEBRUARY 26, 2021

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The Humility of Mordechai

By Dani Rosner, 10th Grade

The individual who raised Esther. The man who saved King Achashverosh from an assassination attempt. The bane of Haman's existence. The person who exhorted Queen Esther to save her nation by using her power. A member of the Great Assembly of Sages. An advisor to King Achashverosh. All of these descriptions point to one man: Mordechai. The Medrash (Esther Rabbah 6:2) adds an even more meaningful dimension to Mordechai's character. "Mordechai, in his generation, was equal to Moshe in his."

Rav Yehonatan Eibshitz writes that the comparison between Mordechai and Moshe helps us better understand the Megillah. In the final portion of the Megillah, we are told that "Mordechai was great among the Jews...and spoke peace to all his descendants." What does it mean that Mordechai, "spoke peace to his descendants?" The Talmud (Bava Basra 98a) writes that "Rav Mari said One who is haughty is not accepted even by his household." If a person is arrogant, even those who are most likely to respect him, who may have an obligation to honor him, his family, will not do such. Moshe, the Torah tells us, was the most humble person to live. As Mordechai is compared to Moshe, it follows that Mordechai was the epitome of humility in his generation as well. It is the humility of Mordechai that the Megillah refers to when it states that Mordechai spoke peace to his descendants. His family accepted him, his children accepted him and respected his words.

Why? Because Mordechai, before addressing his family, spoke peace to them; he spoke in a humble, unpretentious, fashion so that his sincerity and pureness of motivation was evident to all. The evidence from the Megillah to the humility of Mor-

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Torah Teasers

By Rabbi Moshe Erlbaum, 9th Grade Rebbe

Purim Questions

1. Aside from Achashverosh, which other kings appear in the Megillah?
2. Which two people in the Megillah have names that begin with the letter "vav"?
3. Aside from wine, what else is mentioned in the Megillah and is served by the Pesach Seder?
4. The gallows that Haman intended to hang Mordechai on were fifty amos long (5:14). Where in the Torah do we find wood measuring fifty amos?
5. What golden item appears in the Megillah four times but nowhere else in Tanach?
6. What identical item is given to two different people? Where in Sefer Bereishes do we see this item being handed over?
7. Who is the first person in Tanach to make a Mishteh, feast?
8. Aside from the month of Adar, what other months appear in the Megillah?
9. What connection is there between the first Pasuk of the Megillah and the first Pasuk of Parshas Chayei Sarah?
10. I killed my wife because of my friend and killed my friend because of my wife? Who am I?

Answers

1. In (2:6), Yachniyah Melech Yehuda and Nevuchadnetzar Melech Bavel both appear.
2. The two names are Vashti Hamalkah and Vayzasa, the tenth son of Haman (9:9).
3. Carpas, the vegetable dipped into salt water is mentioned in the Megillah albeit with a different meaning (1:6)
4. In Parshas Noach, the width of the Taivah was fifty amos (Beraishes 6:15). Thus, wood of that length was needed.
5. A Sharvit Hazahav, a golden scepter, is mentioned four times in the Megilla (4:11;5:2;8:4) but nowhere else in Tanach.
6. The Tabas, ring of Achashverosh, is handed over to Haman (3:10) and later on the same ring is given over to Mordechai (8:2). In Parshas Mikeitz, Paroh hands over his ring to Yosef (Bereishes 41:42).
7. In Parshas Vayeira, the Pasuk states "Vaya'as Lahem Mishteh", "And he made for them a feast" (Bereishes 19:3). Lot makes a feast for the angels when they come to his home to save him and destroy the city of Sodom.
8. Esther was taken to the king in the month of Teves (2:16). Haman arranged the lottery in the month of Nisan (3:7). The letters of Mordechai to allow the Jews to destroy their enemies were sent in Sivan (8:9).
9. In the first pasuk it states that Achashverosh ruled over 127 provinces. In the first Pasuk of Parshas Chayei Sarah it states that Sarah lived 127 years (Bereishes 23:1).
10. Achashverosh kills his wife Vashti upon the advice of Memochan whom Chazal identify as Haman (Megilla 12b) and kills Haman upon the words of his wife Esther.

ALIYAH SUMMARY

First Aliyah: Hashem commands the Jews to use the purest olive oil for the daily lighting of the Menorah. Aharon and his sons are commanded to dress in special priestly garments. The Torah describes the making of the Kohen Gadol's ephod and its shoulder straps on which stones with the names of the shevatim were placed.

Second Aliyah: The Choshen, breastplate, contained four rows of three precious stones. Artisans engraved the names of the Shevatim into these twelve stones. The Urim V'Tumim (a paper with the name of Hashem) was placed in the fold of the cloth of the Choshen. The Choshen was attached by gold chains to the ephod.

Third Aliyah: The Kohen Gadol also wear the Me'il, a blue robe which was adorned with golden bells and pomegranates at its bottom. On his forehead he wore a golden band which said "kodesh L'Hashem", known as the Tzitz. The Torah then describes the four garments worn by both the Kohen Gadol and the regular priests: tunics, turbans, sashes and pants.

Fourth Aliyah: Aharon and his sons as Kohanim went through a process to be consecrated: they were brought to the door of the sanctuary, immersed in a mikvah, and dressed in the priestly garments. Moshe then offered various inaugural sacrifices on their behalf.

Fifth Aliyah: The Torah continues describing the procedure for the offering, and the consumption of the inaugural sacrifices. Hashem commands Moshe to repeat this inaugural service for a seven day period, after which the consecration will be complete. Also included in this section is a description of how future Kohen Gadols are to be inducted.

Sixth Aliyah: Hashem instructs the Jews to offer two burnt offerings daily: one lamb in the morning and one in the afternoon. Hashem promises to dwell in the Mishkan.

Seventh Aliyah: This section describes the golden Mizbayach which was placed in the Kodesh. Twice a day the Kohanim would burn ketores on this altar.

(adapted from chabad.org)

“Misha nichnas... Nissan, carry this happiness into next month.”

- David Nisanov, DRS GO President



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10-Minute Halacha Shiur

Given by *Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz*
on yutorah.org

Transcribed by
Joseph Cohen

This year, Purim falls out on a Friday, which leads to many major questions pertaining to the Seudah. Can we have a Milchik Seudah? What time should we have the Seudah?

The Gemara in Pesachim tells us that the Seudas Purim is critical when celebrating Purim. Rav Soloveitchik says that you don't need to eat meat at the Purim Seudah and can have a tuna sandwich, because the Shulchan Aruch doesn't explicitly mention that we must have meat. However, when the Rambam describes the seudah, he says we should have meat and wine. Additionally, when the Shulchan Aruch discusses an Onein, he mentions that at a Purim Seudah an Onein is allowed to eat meat. Maybe we can imply that he is saying that it is good for one to eat meat, but it is not a Chiyuv. Rav Shechter says that when Rav Soloveitchik said one can have a tuna sandwich for the Seudah, that only applies when Purim falls out on Friday. However, Rav Shechter still holds that a person should still eat meat at the Seudah, but finish before the 10th hour. So the bottom line is that you are allowed to have a dairy Seudah, but it is better if one eats meat.

In a normal year, you are allowed to eat the Seudah later in the day to extend late into the night. The Rama says that it is best to eat while it's still day. Therefore, the Rama says the Minhag is to eat after Mincha except when Purim is on Friday, then you should eat after Shacharis. Really, even on a normal year, there is nothing wrong with eating after Shacharis. The only reason why the Minhag is to eat after Mincha is because we are busy with the day's activities: Megillah, Shalach Manos, and Matanos L'evyonim. Rav Shmuel Kaminitzky paskins even Lichatchilah, it is perfectly fine to have your seudah in the morning. However, the Shlah writes that eating the seudah after Mincha has its downsides, because many people will be drunk by Maariv and which will either prevent you from getting a Minyan or will result in people davening while drunk. Therefore, the Shlah writes that it is best, even in a normal year, to eat the seudah after Shacharis.

So, for this year, if you eat earlier you should make sure you finish close to Mincha Ketanah (around 2:53 pm). R' Shechter says that in Yerushalayim, people have the practice to start the Purim Seudah, say Kiddush in the middle of the meal, and continue on. Perhaps this year we can practice such a custom in America. On the other hand, many people say that you should only do this B'Dieved and it would be best to withhold from doing this practice this Purim. However, there are those who say that Purim on Friday is already a B'Dieved situation, and can therefore do this practice.

SPARKS OF CHASSIDUS



*With Max
Blumenthal*

Purim is named after the “Pur”, the lottery that Haman did. Just like the Megillah says (9:26), "Therefore they called these days Purim, because of the goral (lottery)...". This goral was a very painful moment for Am Yisroel. It was when Haman was planning our destruction. So why is the holiday named for this? Shouldn't the name celebrate the Jewish people's salvation through the hands of Hashem?

The Bnei Yisaschar, Rav Tzvi Elimelech Spira of Dinov, answers that Haman's goral was actually very good for the Jewish nation; it was the root of their salvation. The Bnei Yissaschar explains that "When one chooses an object from among others... he has a reason for his choice. But when one chooses through a lottery, the choice can't be explained rationally. His choice is whatever the goral decides, and there isn't any logic behind it. When Hashem created the world, He chose the Jewish people as the purpose of Creation. It wasn't because of our mitzvos and good deeds, because Klal Yisrael didn't exist yet. We don't know why Hashem chose us. It is simply because this was His will..."

The Baal HaTanya, the 1st Rebbe of Chabad, explains that on Yom Kippur the korban was chosen through a goral, a choice without reason, to implore Hashem to remember the time when He chose us without reason. He chose us just because He wanted us. The Bnei Yissaschar explains that this also happened when Haman drew the lottery. Haman thought the lottery was a tragedy for the Jews, but it was in fact the underlying reason for their salvation. Haman's choosing a date by a goral, without using logic, caused Hashem to remember that He chose us without logic and reason. Therefore, even if we sinned by bowing down to Nevuchadnezzar's idol or by participating in Achashveirosh's feast, and even if we didn't deserve to be saved, Hashem saved us. We are the nation that Hashem chose, even when it defies logic and reason. We say after reading the megillah on Purim night, “Ki Por Haman Ne’hepach L’poreinu”, Haman's goral turned out to be our good fortune.

And to take this idea even further, the decree against the Jews came because they participated in Achashveirosh's meal. Yet, even at this meal, Hashem prepared their salvation. Vashti was killed at this meal, creating a vacuum which Esther filled. From all of this we see that even in times when things are looking down, we must remember that Hashem always has a plan. And if Hashem saved us in the times of Mordechai and Ester, why can't He help us and save us now!

EITAN SCHAFLER

9TH GRADE

WHAT DID YOU LEARN TO-DAY?

The Midrash Rabbah tells us that after Haman had the Gzeira Kasha, or evil decree, written and signed, Mordechai went out into the streets. However, on his way to the gates of the king, Mordechai passed by three children returning home from yeshivah and asked them, "What did you learn today?" The first child quoted the Pasuk, "Al tira mipachad pitom" : "Do not fear sudden terror." The second one answered with the Pasuk, "Utzu eitzah vetufar dabru davar velo yakum ki imanu keil" : "They will make plans, but it will be foiled, they will discuss thoughts, but it will not materialize, for G-D is with us." The third child quoted the Pasuk, "Ve'ad ziknah ani hu ve'ad seivah ani esbol... ve'amaleit" : "Until old age I am with you, to your aged years I will sustain you ... and deliver you". Upon hearing these responses, Mordechai became very happy. However, other than these Pesukim regarding eminent Geula, what specifically did Mordechai see in these children's learning that made him happy?

Three times throughout all of Jewish history were the Jewish people confronted by Amalek: The first being the most well-known, which was upon leaving Egypt, they were suddenly attacked by Amalek. The second encounter was years later as Amalek tried to disguise himself as a Canaanite and attempted to wage war against Bnei Yisroel. The final time is our case when Haman (who is a descendant of Agag, one of the leaders of Amalek) maliciously plotted the annihilation of the Jewish people. We can use these confrontations to help understand the reasoning behind Mordechai's happiness. Mordechai understood the first child's words, "Do not fear sudden terror..." as an allusion to Amalek's first attack. The second child's message, "they will speak, but it will not materialize" corresponded to the second confrontation and meant that regardless of Amalek's attempts to disguise himself and change his language or looks, it would be to no avail for Hashem was with us.

Nevertheless, what about the third instance when we run into Haman? How could Mordechai have possibly understood the third child's Pasuk to be regarding this current situation? Well, the Medrash explains that when Haman discussed his evil plans for the Jews with his advisors, they told him, "Don't be a fool, whenever someone sought to harm these people, their G-D came to their salvation and destroyed the enemy. Stay away from them, or you will suffer the consequences." To which Haman replied presumptuously by saying, "There is nothing to fear; their G-D is now old and weak and unable to help them." Mordechai understood the words of the third child as a message from Hashem. Although Haman thinks that I am old, I have not changed; I will carry, sustain, and save the Jewish people now and at all times. Hakadosh Baruch Hu should protect all of us through this pandemic and should bring about the coming of Moshiach Bimheira Biyameinu, bisoros tovos yishuos vinechamos amen amen amen selah vaed! A Freilichen Purim to all!!!



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Daniel Lebowitz

10th Grade

The Lots of Haman

In the ninth Perek of Megillas Esther it is written, "therefore they called these days Purim from the word Pur (lot)." Based on this we can ask the very basic question: why is it called Purim (plural) when there was only one Pur?

The Gemara in Taanis 5b teaches that Yaakov Avinu never died. One can explain this to mean that even though he is physically dead, he is living through his descendants. Parents continue to be "alive" through the mitzvos of their children. When someone's children and grandchildren do mitzvos, the people who led them on the derech of Hashem are positively affected.

This could help us understand the plural Lashon of the word Purim. The lot that Haman drew was not just one lot. It spanned multiple generations, both for the living Jews in this world, and one for those who are living through them in the next world. Had he succeeded, not only would it have wiped out all living Jews, it would have also eradicated the zechuyos of those who came before them.

Using this same idea we can say that the plural use of the word Purim can allude to a third lot. The third lot is derived from the complete destruction of the Jewish future, which would have been unable to occur if Haman had succeeded in his plan. All neshamos that were supposed to be born into this world wouldn't have had the opportunity to live, which would have been a tragedy of epic proportions. Once his plan was ruined, it allowed all three Purims to be reversed.

When the Gemara in Megillah 14a states that Jews were saved from life to death, it might not only be referring to those alive at that time. It may also be referring to the Jewish neshamos of the past and future.

This idea of the threefold Purim may explain the Pasuk in the Megillah which describes Haman's decree with three adjectives synonymous with destruction "Lehashmid, L'Harog, Ul'Abed Es Kol HaYehudim", to destroy kill and annihilate all the Jews. This may be referring to the Jews of the past, present, and future.

(Adapted from Purim Eternal by Rabbi Avi Feiner)

(Joseph Cohen- Continued from page 1)

seven day banquet on the heels of the extravagant 180 day banquet?

The reason King Ahasuerus is now having a seven day banquet is to show the Jews and the residents of Shushan that this empire is the new Genesis. Perhaps King Ahasuerus said something along these lines: This is the new world; the rebuilding of the Temple did not happen in its calculated time and G-d is not coming to save you. I, King Ahasuerus, am recreating the world. I will hold a seven day feast to commemorate the new seven days of creation, in which many will reside within my Garden - similar to the Garden of Eden. The Jews should no longer worship their G-d, but rather me, I am the new G-d, I am the new creator of worlds. I am the newly defined cosmocrator, who rules over all inhabitants.

At the tail end of the seven day feast, the Pasuk relates that " - לְבִי-הֵמָּלֵךְ - the King's heart was good." The Gemara in Megillah (12b) notes that this seventh day was none other than Shabbat. The fact the seventh day was Shabbat helps prove that King Ahasuerus wanted to emulate a new seven days of creation, a new Genesis starting from Sunday and ending on Shabbat. But not only does the order resemble Genesis, but the specific word choice of the Pasuk as well: - לְבִי-הֵמָּלֵךְ good. This word of לְבִי-הֵמָּלֵךְ is really a play on words from Genesis, where after creating light, Hashem says the words לְבִי-הֵמָּלֵךְ. The fact that the Pasuk here uses the word לְבִי-הֵמָּלֵךְ to signify the emulation of a new Genesis. And only after the seventh day - Shabbat - was King Ahasuerus לְבִי-הֵמָּלֵךְ because now he believed he would be recognized as G-d reigning over all, ready to sit in King Shlomo's throne.

Happiness in the Month of Adar

Mordechai Ostreicher

11th Grade

About Chodesh Av, the saddest month of the year, the Shulchan Aruch writes “when the month of Av comes we decrease our happiness.” He then goes on to list several different applications to this halacha. However, when Chazal discuss the halacha of “when the month of Adar comes, we increase our happiness”, they do not list any applications to this whatsoever. Why is that?

There are two approaches taken to this question. The first answer is given by the Minchas Elazar, the Munkachar Rebbe in Europe. He says that there is an Issur for a Jew to not be happy. Therefore the Shulchan Aruch had to list certain things one may not do in order to decrease his happiness, but the list is closed; in other words, we may only decrease our happiness by the actions mentioned on the list, but nothing more. Anything more would be a violation of the general Issur of a Jew not being happy. In contrast, the principle of increasing happiness in Adar is open-ended and infinite. “Ivdu Es Hashem B’Simcha”

A similar answer is given by Rav Moshe Feinstein. He suggests that the reason a list was not given by Adar was because a Jew knows how to be happy. A Jew is always naturally happy and does not need any instruction to increase his happiness. We may suggest that what Rav Moshe means is that a Jew always knows how to be happy, i.e. by serving G-d more. The more mitzvahs a Jew does the happier he will be. Famously, Rav Moshe was very against people saying, “It’s hard to be a yid”. NO! It’s great to be a yid with 613 Mitzvahs to fulfill daily! Hashem gave us the Torah which is a blueprint of how to live a happy life. Mitzvos guide us and following them is the key to real happiness.

So let us always remember, it is forbidden here for a Jew to not be happy, and let us increase our Avodas Hashem in the month of Adar to truly fulfill the inyan of increasing our happiness on Purim.

A Freilichen Purim!

(Dani Rosner- Continued from page 1)

dechai itself presents us with a unique insight into his personality. The Talmud (Megillah 7a) asks, “Was the Megillah written with Divine Inspiration?” One answer given to this question is that it must have been composed with Divine Inspiration, as the Megillah states “And the thing (the plot to assassinate Achashverosh) became known to Mordechai.” How would Mordechai have known if not for Divine Inspiration? Rav Eibshitz is puzzled by the line of questioning. Both Esther and Mordechai are listed in the ranks of the 7 prophetesses and 48 prophets, respectively, in the nation of Israel. How then could the Talmud wonder if the Megillah was written with Divine Inspiration? Of course, it was – just look at the authors!

What the Talmud is truly asking, R’ Eibshitz explains, is not whether the entire book was composed with Divine Inspiration, as it is clear that it was. What the Talmud is asking is whether each individual word we find in the Megillah was the result of Divine Inspiration, or was the choice of words to express the thoughts contained in the Megillah a product of Mordechai’s own selection process? The answer, the Talmud tells us, we see from the statement “And it became known to Mordechai.” This statement indicates that Mordechai would have only known about his plot because he was divinely inspired.

Mordechai achieved much in his lifetime. He was respected in the religious and secular worlds alike. Yet he did not let his achievements cloud his judgment. He did not let it affect his personality. He spoke with peace to the nation, and he spoke with peace to his family. Amidst the merriment of Purim, when we may get carried away with the happiness of the moment, the lesson of Mordechai, the message of humility, should remain clear. Treat with respect, and you will be respected. Act with humility and honor, regardless of the circumstance, and you will be accorded the honor.

Chag Purim Sameach!

STORIES OF GREATNESS

TOLD OVER BY: YOSEF SCHAFLER

Nissan was a wealthy man who lived in Yargin, a small town near Pressburg, the capital city of Slovakia. He and his wife were already married for many years, but still had not been blessed with children. When, finally, a son was born to him in 5583 (1823), it was no surprise that he honored his former teacher, the world-renowned scholar known as the Chatam Sofer, to perform the circumcision. Unfortunately, the brit had to be postponed because of the weak health of the baby. It wasn't till several weeks later that it was announced that it would take place on Purim!

At the brit, the Chatam Sofer was glowing with "light, happiness, joy and honor." Whether it was the joy of Purim, happiness for his student, or a combination of both, nobody knew. After completing the circumcision, he raised his voice and called out very loudly the Talmudic expression, *Nichnas yayin, yatza sod*—"When wine goes in, secrets come out."

The baby was given an appropriate name for a Purim brit: Baruch Mordechai, which means "blessed be Mordechai," from the paragraph recited after the megillah readings. At an early age, the child was already outstanding in character and religious observance. However, much to the distress of his parents, his ability to understand Torah was not at par. As a boy, he didn't seem any different than his age-mates, but after his bar mitzvah, when he entered the famous Pressburg yeshiva, it was noticeable that he was having major difficulties in his studies.

Although he was very diligent, whenever he was asked to repeat or explain anything, he was unable to respond, and could only sit silently. His less-sensitive classmates liked to make fun of him because of this. Once, when he left his place for a few minutes, they switched his volume of Talmud for one of another subject entirely, leaving it open to the same number page he had been on. When he resumed his seat, he didn't seem to notice the difference at all.

When Baruch Mordechai turned eighteen, the Chatam Sofer's son, known as the Ketav Sofer (who had succeeded his recently departed father as the head of the yeshivah) advised Baruch Mordechai's parents to send him to the Land of Israel. Perhaps there, where "the air of the Holy Land makes wise," his studies would prosper.

His parents decided to do it. They hoped it would also enable him to make a good match. Baruch Mordechai arrived in Jerusalem with a letter of recommendation from Rabbi Shraga Feldheim, *mashgiach* (study supervisor) at Pressburg, which said that he "is truly pious, prays with great devotion, and that his desire to learn Torah is sincere and enormous."

One of the scholarly leaders of the Jerusalem community then, Rabbi Yeshaya Bardaki, "adopted" Baruch Mordechai, concerning himself with all of his needs. He was impressed with the young man's sterling character and piety, but he could not fathom how someone who had done nothing but study Torah diligently all his life could have retained so little.

Eventually, Rabbi Bardaki found a bride for him: a simple girl from a good family in Jerusalem who wouldn't mind that her husband was an ignoramus. Several years after the wedding, Baruch Mordechai began to work as a water-carrier. He was honest to a fault, and as a result quickly became very popular. Every Rosh Chodesh, he would deliver water to his regular customers for free; he worried that over the course of the previous month water might have spilled, whereas he had charged for full buckets.

For more than forty years Baruch Mordechai toiled at his chosen profession, the whole time in joyous spirit and with gratitude to G-d for his lot. He took special satisfaction from serving the many Torah scholars within the walls of Jerusalem; he considered this a great merit, and refused to accept pay-

(Continued on page 9)

(Yosef Schafner- Continued from page 8)

ment from them. It anguished him that the great scholar Rabbi Yehudah Leib Diskin refused to take water from him. "I cannot allow myself to be served by the likes of Reb Baruch Mordechai," he would say—but refused to explain his words. On Purim 5653 (1893), at the time of the festive meal, most of the chassidim of Jerusalem crowded into the home of Rabbi Schneur Zalman Fradkin of Lublin. The atmosphere was exceptionally joyous: everyone was constantly erupting into lively song and dance, and there was a complementary flow of wine and wise words.

All of a sudden, Baruch Mordechai called out to the host in a loud voice from the midst of the swaying chassidim, "Rebbe! Today is seventy years exactly since my brit." Everyone smiled tolerantly, figuring that such an outburst from the simple water-carrier could only be a result of all the Purim wine he had imbibed. "If so," responded Rabbi Schneur Zalman, "you deserve an extra-large measure of l'chaim." Immediately a large tumbler of a special strong wine was poured and passed to Baruch Mordechai, who speedily dispatched it as commanded. It had an immediate effect. The elderly water-carrier began to sing and dance energetically.

The sage's reaction was surprising. He looked up at Baruch Mordechai and shouted over the crowd: "It would be nice if you would stop fooling around already, and honor the holy assemblage with some strong words of halacha and aggadah."

Suddenly there was silence. Everyone's gaze shifted in amused anticipation to the tipsy Baruch Mordechai, as he climbed up to stand on the table and began to speak. But then, all the grins slowly gave way to wide-eyed stares of astonishment as it penetrated their ears that the water-carrier was discoursing enthusiastically on scholarly Purim topics, and peppering his words with learned citations from the Talmudic tractate Megillah and a variety of midrashim and works of Jewish law. Indeed, if the strong wine hadn't finally taken its toll, it seemed that he could have continued indefinitely.

Even before the holiday was over, the news of the extraordinary scholarship of the unassuming water-carrier had spread throughout Jerusalem. The community was in an uproar. How had they allowed such an accomplished scholar to be disdained in their midst, and to labor as a mere water-carrier for so many years? And how had his erudition remained hidden for so long? A few of the elders of the community recalled hearing of the mysterious words of the Chatam Sofer seventy years before. Now, some clever minds were saying, they could finally be understood.

Adapted from Chabad.org

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JOSEPH ABITTAN

YOU CAN'T PLEASE EVERYONE

11TH GRADE

Mordechai was the lead- always going to be someone er and savior of the Jews. He who finds a problem with was also an exceedingly you, no matter how hard you righteous man. Who would- try to avoid it. Even the nic- n't love Mordechai? est guy on the block will

At the very end of the have people who get annoyed Megillah, it says: "And Mor- at him, or are jealous of him dechai the Jew was second-in sometimes. Simply put, you - command to King Achash- can't please everyone. Just veirosh... and pleasing to keep doing your best to be most of his brothers." Most? friendly and sensitive to other Why not all? Didn't Mor- people, but realize that uli- dechai just save the entire mately, winning people over Jewish people? How could is simply out of your hands. anyone NOT like Mordechai? Do your best to be nice; if

Our Rebbeim say that some can't appreciate it, you the Megillah is teaching us shouldn't worry about it too an important lesson. It's much as long as you know teaching us that you can't be you are doing the best you loved by everyone. There's can.

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