

## פרשת כי תשא-פורים

"איש יהודי היה בשושן הבירה ושמו מרדכי בן יאיר בן קיש איש ימיני"

The Pasuk in the Megillah describes Mordechai as both איש יהודי and איש ימיני. This means that Mordechai was from both the tribe of יהודה (איש יהודי), and from the tribe of בנימין (איש ימיני). How is this possible? How could he have been from two different tribes? The answer is that he was from Yehudah from his mother's side, and he was from Binyamin from his father's side.

In general we consider a person's lineage and tribe to be of his father's. We don't go after the mother when it comes to a person's tribe, or if he is considered a Kohen or Levi. For what purpose did the Megillah mention both the tribe of Mordechai's mother and his father?

The explanation is, that the Megillah was telling us something more than simply the tribal status of Mordechai. It was showing us the special traits that Mordechai had acquired from his holy ancestors of his respective tribes.

It is said that a person can actually pass down his good traits to his children and grandchildren. If he ingrains a certain good attribute deeply into his character, this attribute will many times be found in his children and grandchildren, even if they had never seen him! It's almost like something genetic that is passed down to his children without them even being conscious of it.

There was once a boy praying Shema and moving his head in a distinct manner during the word אחד, an elderly man came to him afterwards and asked; "are you so and so's grandson"? "Yes" answered the boy, "how did you know"? The man explained that the boy's grandfather would move his head the *same exact way* while he recited Shema! This boy had never even seen his grandfather!

The opposite is true as well. Our negative traits can be handed down to our children. We must therefore be very careful of our actions, and realize the long term effects that they have.

Mordechai's great grandmother was Rachel Imenu. Rachel had an amazing ability to keep silent at times when it was almost impossible to. We see this in the episode with the marriage of Yaakov to Leah. Yaakov had worked for Rachel, and had expected to marry her. Lavan tricked Yaakov and replaced Rachel for Leah. Yaakov had suspected Lavan would try and trick him so he had set up signs for Rachel to give him that night. These signs were the laws of Niddah, Challah (separating the proper amount of dough while baking bread), and Friday night candle lighting. Rachel was concerned that her sister would be greatly embarrassed if she were exposed, so she gave over these Halachot to Leah before the wedding *without telling her that they were the secret signals between her and Yaakov!!*

That night, when Yaakov asked Leah certain questions about these laws she responded correctly, without realizing that she had just "passed the test". In the morning Yaakov realized what had happened, and understood what Rachel had done. No where do we find that Yaakov had rebuked her for giving Leah the signs. It was understood that it was worth it in order not to embarrass her sister.

Later on, when Leah's son Reuven had brought to his mother some דודאים (flowers that promote fertility), Rachel requested of Leah to give her the flowers and Leah responded; "המעט קחתך את אישי..". "Isn't it enough that you took my husband now you want my flowers"?! Rachel upon hearing this could have finally unleashed on her sister what she held back all those years. You think that I took **your** husband?! Let me tell you something; I **gave** him to you!! You only have him because of me! The least you can do is to give me some flowers so that I may too have a child from him!! Rachel had the amazing strength to hold this back from Leah, and keep silent in the face of such a great test. (The credit for being silent is when you *do* have something to say but you don't say it).

We find this trait handed down to Rachel's son Binyamin. Binyamin knew of his brothers actions in selling his older brother Yosef. He witnessed his father's suffering all the years Yosef was away, and he refrained from mentioning anything to his father even though anyone else would have been tempted to. In the breast plate of the Kohen

Gadol there were 12 different stones representing the 12 tribes. The stone that represented Binyamin was called "ישפה" (a jade like color). The word ישפה can be broken up to spell י-ש-פ-ה "there is a mouth". This shows us that even when Binyamin had what to answer he would contain himself and keep quiet.

Binyamin's grandson Shaul Hamelech also received this power of silence. His father had lost his donkeys, and asked Shaul to go to Shemuel Hanavi to help him find them. When he arrived, Shemuel told him; "don't worry, the donkeys have been found", he then informed him that he would be the first king of Israel. Imagine the excitement of Shaul upon hearing this! Upon returning home, he told his father that the donkeys have been found, but mentioned nothing about becoming the king of Israel! In his humility he decided to leave that out and remain silent about it. Mordechai had inherited this great trait from his ancestors Binyamin and Shaul and his grandmother Rachel.

Esther as well was from Binyamin, and she too had this strength of being able to keep silent. It was through this power that she was able to refrain from revealing her religion from Ahashverosh, as Mordechai had instructed. She was pressured greatly to divulge this information, but she was able to resist, thanks to this strength of silence that she inherited.

Mordechai was a grandson of Yehudah from his mother's side. Yehudah was the son of Leah. What was the strength of Leah? She had the power to speak up when something needed to be said. When she gave birth to Yehudah she publicly declared "הפעם אודה את ה'" - "this time I will thank Hashem". Yehudah her son, when faced with the moment with Tamar, had the courage to answer publicly "she is correct"! Yehudah had this strength from his mother Leah, and this strength was passed down to Mordechai. Mordechai had the ability to stand up and speak when the moment called for it.

Mordechai had both the strength to be silent from Rachel, and to speak up from Leah. We see this in his name. The numerical value of מרדכי is 274, the numerical value of רחל & לאה is also 274, showing us that he possessed both of their strengths.

Mordechai's power to "speak up" is evident in the Megillah. He went to the center of town and donned sackcloth and lamented over the decree that faced the Jews. He shouted and cried like the Pasuk says "ויזעק זעקה גדולה" - "he cried a great cry".

He rallied the Jews to repent and return to the ways of Torah and Mitzvot.

What is not as clear in the Megillah is Mordechai's ability to keep silent. Where do we see Mordechai being faced with something that he needed to keep quiet about?? The answer lies in a Pasuk in the Torah (Shemot Chapter 17 Pasuk 14) it says "כתב זאת זכרון בספר ישנים באזני יהושוע". From the word בספר in this Pasuk the Gemarah (Megillah7a) learns that the obligation to fulfill the Megillat Esther is from the Torah. The obvious question is; how is it possible that we were obligated in the Megillah from the time of Moshe Rabeinu, when the story of Purim happened so many years later?! The explanation is, that Moshe Rabeinu knew what was destined to happen in the story of Purim. He knew that the Jews would be threatened with annihilation but would be saved in the end, and a great holiday would come from this. Moshe Rabeinu passed this information down to his student Yehoshua as a secret. It was not repeated to anyone as the Pasuk says "ושנים באזני יהושוע"-“place in the ears of Yehoshua”. Placing in the ears means to tell it only to him as a secret that is whispered in the ear. Yehoshua then passed it down to his student and it was passed down from generation to generation to only one man in the generation. It was crucial that this remained a secret, because if it was revealed to the Jewish nation that they would be saved in the end, they would not feel threatened enough to repent and change their ways. Mordechai was the one who knew this secret in his generation. He knew that in the end the Jews would be saved and a great salvation would come from Purim. The Pasuk says "ומרדכי ידע את כל אשר נעשה"-“Mordechai knew all that was done”. The Pasuk is telling us that Mordechai knew it all; he knew that the Jews would be saved. Mordechai witnessed the suffering and fear of the Jews but had the strength to remain silent. It was the power to keep this great secret that the Megillah attributes to his grandmother Rachel.

### **Wine and Smell**

The Gemarah in Yoma 76b quotes Rava that says; "חמרה וריחני פקחין"-“wine and smell cause one to be wise”. Simply understood Rava is saying that good wine and smell open up one's mind. We must however endeavor to understand the deeper message that Rava was trying to convey.

Wine represents silence. How do we see this? When producing wine the noise level must be kept low. The winemakers are very careful to keep things quiet, and to

keep the volume down as the wine ages in its casks. Noise “agitates” the wine.

Smell on the other hand, is *enhanced* by sound. We read this in the Ketoret every day when we say; "תניא רבי נתן אומר כשהוא שוחק אומר הדק הטיב הטיב הדק"-“Rav Natan said that while the one was grinding the spices of the incense he would say “grind it very fine, very fine grind it”. Rav Natan is telling us that one grinding the spices would say out loud as he was grinding the words "הדק הטיב, הטיב הדק". The sound of his voice saying these words actually brought out certain aromas in the incense. There is a certain perfume company who recently revealed that one of the secrets to their scent is the sound and rhythms that they play as they formulated the different ingredients of the perfume.

Wine represents silence. Smell represents speech (sound). Rava is teaching us that the secret to becoming wise is knowing when to be silent, and when to speak up. The wine and smell that Rava spoke of, stand for what wine and smell represent. There are times when we must keep silent (for example in the presence of a great man, one must keep silent in order to listen and learn from what he is saying, if one is too busy speaking he is unable to hear anything! “silent” has the same letters as “listen”).

There are also times when a person must be heard. He must give advice and guide others when he is needed.

We now understand an additional significance in the opening ceremony of Shabbat - the Friday night Kiddush. On Shabbat we are restricted in what we are allowed to talk about. We are not allowed to discuss business, nor can we discuss plans for after Shabbat. We also should not discuss things that agitate us. We are limited in our speech, and for this reason we begin Shabbat making Kiddush on a cup of wine. The wine symbolizes silence, and it reminds us that we have entered a time that we must be careful about what we say. When we end Shabbat we make Havdallah. In the Havdallah we smell the Besamim. This symbolizes that we are now free to speak about all those things that we were unable to until now. We end the Havdallah by drinking wine. This is to remind us that even though we are now permitted to speak as we wish, we still must be careful not to speak forbidden speech, such as Lashon Hara or embarrass others with our words.

The Kiddush and Havdalah - the wine and smell - signal to us when it is ok to speak and when we should keep silent.

The idea that smell represents silence and that Mordechai had mastered this silence can be seen in the Torah. The Gemarah (Chulin 139b) asks "מרדכי מן התורה" - "where is Mordechai hinted to in the Torah?" The Gemarah answers that the Pasuk in Parashat תשא - "כי תשא" says "ואתה קח לך בשמים ראש מר דרור" - "and take for you the best spices of pure myrrh". The Torah describes the Besamim as "מר דרור". The Targum Unkelos translates these words as "מירא דכיא" these words contain the letters of מרדכי's name. This is the allusion to Mordechai from the Torah. The Gemarah is not merely giving us a "play on words" that contains the name of Mordechai. The Gemarah is showing us that the Torah specifically hinted to Mordechai's name in the topic of smell, to show us that great power of silence - which is represented by smell - which Mordechai possessed.

### **Haman, the Snake, and the Sin of Chava**

The Gemarah asks (Chulin 134b) "המן מן התורה מנין" - "where is Haman hinted to in the Torah? The Gemarah answers that it is the Pasuk in Parashat Bereshit in which Hashem reprimands Adam for eating from the Eitz Hadaat "המן העץ אשר צויתך לבלתי" - "Have you eaten from the tree which I commanded you not to eat from?" The word המן from "המן העץ" - "from the tree" has the same letters as המן, and this is the hint to Haman from the Torah. The obvious question is, what is the Gemarah trying to tell us?! Is it just merely a "play on words" that המן and המן have the same letters?? What is the connection between Haman, and the sin of Adam and Chava eating from the tree?!

The answer lies in the ramifications of the sin of Adam and Chava partaking from the Eitz Hadaat. When they ate, Hashem decreed death upon the world. Originally, man was supposed to live forever. Now that they had sinned, death was introduced to the world. Haman realized that this sin was the source of death. He therefore tried to access it and reawaken its punishment. He witnessed the Jews partaking from the banquet of Ahashverosh. The food was obviously not on the "highest levels" of kosher standards. The Jewish people gathered to partake of the meal, and when Haman saw this he felt it was the perfect time to attack.

Why is this so? Since when does eating something Unkosher warrant death?!

Haman understood that when Jews gather to eat improperly, this reawakens the improper eating of Adam and Chava and reactivates the effects of that sin, thus bringing death onto them ו"ח! He tried to capitalize on this, and approached Ahashverosh and petitioned him to annihilate the Jews.

There was a good reason why he chose to go through Ahashverosh. Ahashverosh represented the wicked snake that coerced Chava to eat from the tree. He represented the זוהמת הנחש (venom of the snake) that entered Chava when she listened to him. The numerical value of אחשורוש is 821 which is exactly the same as the words זוהמת הנחש 821! Haman went to Ahashverosh to attempt to activate the venom of the snake, and reenact the effects of the sin of eating from the Eitz Hadaat! He even tried to hang Mordechai specifically on a *tree* in order to reawaken the sin of Eitz Hadaat!

Hashem protected us and Haman failed. Who was the integral figure in foiling Haman's plans? Esther Hamalkah. Esther was actually a reincarnation of Chava! Chava had erred by engaging the snake in conversation. This constituted a flaw in speech. Chava answered the snake's claims, and was eventually seduced into eating from the tree. Esther was coming to rectify the sin of speech that she transgressed in her previous Gilgul (reincarnation). She did so by keeping totally silent about her Judaism, and this led to the salvation.

(David Hamelech received his 70 years of life from Adam Harishon. Having Adam's years, David realized the dangers of involvement with the Yeser Hara even to the slightest desire. For this reason he began Tehilim with the Pasuk "אשרי האיש אשר לא הלך בעצת רשעים ובדרך חטאים לא עמד ובמושב לצים לא ישב" "if you *walk* with the wicked you will eventually *stand* with them and then you will eventually *sit* with them". What starts off as a seemingly innocent conversation eventually leads to being drawn to sin. David Hamelech knew this very well being from Adam Harishon.)

Esther asked the Jews to fast for three days on her behalf. "צומו עלי"-"fast **for me**". We now understand that Esther was asking the Jews to fast because of her sin in her previous Gilgul of Chava!

In the end, the Jews were victorious and repented with all their hearts. Haman was hung on a tree, symbolizing his failure to reawaken the sin of the tree (eating from the Eitz Hadaat). The Megillah says "קימו וקבלו"-“they ordained and they took upon themselves”. The Gemarah Shabbat 88a says "קימו מה שקבלו כבר"-“they reaccepted what they previously had accepted”. They reaccepted upon themselves the Torah, and it was like they had just received it again from Mount Sinai. At Mount Sinai the Jews reached such a high level that they actually had rid themselves of the "זוהמת הנחש"! Death had been abolished from the world! When the Jews sinned with the Eigel they fell from this high level and the זוהמה was reintroduced. Death was part of the world again.

The Pasuk in Tehilim says "אני אמרתי אלקים אתם ובני עליון כלכם" (Hashem) said that you are like angels and all higher beings”. The next Pasuk follows, "אכן כאדם" "אכן כאדם" "however like Adam you shall die”. This refers to when the Jews accepted the Torah they were raised to the level of angels but when they sinned they reverted back to being mortal. The Jewish people in the times of Purim were successful in eradicating (to a certain degree) the sin of eating from the Eitz Hadaat and it’s accompanying "זוהמת הנחש". This was the same aspect as Matan Torah when the Jews received the holy Torah and had rid themselves of the effects of the sin of the Eitz Hadaat. They were therefore now motivated to reaccept and reaffirm the holy Torah once again – just like by Mount Sinai.

### **בימים ההם בזמן הזה**

The spiritual benefits that the Jewish nation enjoyed during the days of Purim are available again to us every year during the holiday of Purim. It is a time for us to reaffirm and recommit ourselves to our holy Torah and Misvot. If we take advantage of this, we are blessed with a renewed enthusiasm and fresh spirit with which to serve Hashem. Let us be guided by the Torah to know when to speak and when to be silent, and may the Simchah of Purim permeate throughout the entire year. Amen!