

Bringing the Farbrengen Home

FROM BEGINING TO END

by Rabbi Shaul Wertheimer

The opening words from the Book of Esther: "It was in the days of Achashverosh he was Acheshverosh, who ruled from Hodu until Kush, 127 countries." Once a student from New Jersey asked me why we sing a tune with lyrics about the wicked king, who was all-too-happy to go along with Haman's plan to annihilate the Jewish people.

While I don't know the "official" answer, I would like to share with you a teaching on this opening verse of the Book of Esther, as explained by the Rebbe at a 1973 Purim gathering. Let's fast-forward to the conclusion of the Purim story. Haman's wicked decree has been annulled, and he is hanged on the same gallows that he prepared for Mordechai. After this miraculous turn-around, Mordechai is appointed viceroy in the court of King Achashverosh.

Sounds like Mordechai would be beloved to all. Yet, we read, Mordechai finds favor in the eyes of most of his colleagues. Most?! The man who, together with Esther, saved the entire Jewish people, is only liked by most of his colleagues?! How could that be? Rashi explains that after Mordechai became viceroy, he was very involved in the kingdom's affairs. As a result, he was no longer able to dedicate as much time to Torah study as he had previously been accustomed to, and this was the reason for his falling out with some of his colleagues.

It is obvious that Mordechai needed to dedicate a tremendous amount of time and effort to nullify the decree of Haman beforehand; but why would he need to



remain in the court of Achashverosh -- limiting his Torah study -- even after the great victory? Let's rewind back to the beginning: "It was in the days of Achashverosh he was Achashverosh, who ruled from Hodu until Kush, 127 countries." Why does the verse repeat the words "he was Achashverosh"? We know that he was the king!

The simple explanation is that the reader of the story may think that perhaps there was more than one king with that name, and therefore, the verse specifies that, "he was Achashverosh, who ruled from Hodu until Kush." Yet, Rashi does not offer this idea, explaining the words, "he was Achashverosh," Rashi writes, "He was equally wicked from beginning to end." Why do I need to know that the king remained wicked?

You see, Rashi knew that the reader would eventually arrive at the conclusion of the story. He knew that after reading of Mordechai's dedication and miraculous accomplishments, he would wonder why Mordechai was only liked by most of his colleagues.

To answer this question, he writes that "he was equally wicked from beginning to end." Even though the king ultimately annulled Haman's decree, he was really still the same wicked person who conspired with Haman in the first place!

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Just שׁו"ת Me A Question

Q: Shouldn't we say Hallel on Purim to thank Hashem for the miracles?

A: There are a few reasons why we don't say Hallel on Purim: 1. We don't say Hallel for a miracle that happened outside of Israel; 2. Reading the Megillah is itself Hallel (i.e., Hallel means praise, and reading the story of Purim is itself praise of Hashem); 3. The redemption of Purim was not 100% complete, for "we are still slaves to Achashveirosh." Rashi explains that this means that we were spared from death, but are still in exile (source: Megillah 14a).

Q: Will we know who the nation of Amalek is one day?

A: Rambam writes that the Jewish people were commanded to fulfill three mitzvos upon entering the Promised Land:

1. To choose a king, as Deuteronomy 17:15 states: 'Appoint a king over yourselves;'
2. To wipe out the descendents of Amalek, as Deuteronomy 25:19 states: 'Erase the memory of Amalek;'
3. To build the Beis HaMikdash, as Deuteronomy 12:5 states: 'Seek out His Presence and go there.'

☞ So yes, there will come a time when we know who Amalek is, and at that time the commandment to destroy them will once again be applicable (source: Mishneh Torah, Hil. Melachim 12:1).

א פרייליכען פורים!

A Jew is A Jew

Mordechai knew that if no one were to watch the king, there could be another decree against the Jews the following morning! He knew that it was worth sacrificing his personal Torah study in order to ensure that the king could not make a new decree.

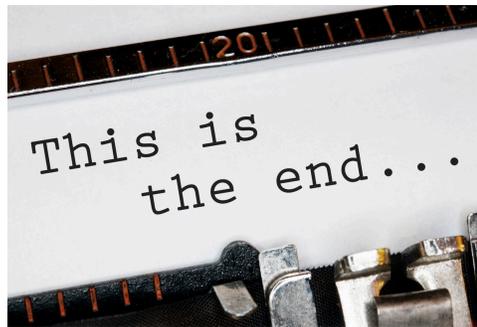
The verse can be read as if it says, "It was in the days of Achashverosh, who never changed and was the same wicked Achashverosh from beginning to end!" This is not just an explanation as to why Mordechai remained involved in the affairs of the kingdom, but rather it teaches us about who we are and what we are capable of.

If the wicked Achashverosh was the same "from beginning to end," then we must also learn that "from beginning to end," a Jew is a Jew!

It may happen from time to time that our Evil Inclination -- represented by the wicked king Achashverosh -- may disrupt us in a moment of weakness. Our standards may slip - temporarily. But should we conclude that we have forfeited our connection with our Creator? That we cannot repair the damage? Heaven forbid!

The Talmud teaches that "the measure of good is greater than the measure of bad." If Achashverosh remained unchanged in his wickedness, then certainly I am unchanged in my inherent goodness! This opening verse teaches us that we can remain unaffected -- not only by external factors of the world -- but even by our own past!

Every soul is "literally a part of G-d Above," and never changes. Even at the moment that one transgresses, he remains completely bound up with his Creator. Every one of us, no matter who we are, or who/how we were 30 minutes ago, or even a minute ago, is a full master over himself. We are capable of reinvigorating and reconnecting with our roots at any time. 



What's in a Name?

Tetzaveh is the only parsha since the birth of Moshe Rabbeinu that does not contain his name; yet his presence is alluded to in many ways.

Tetzaveh is always read around 7 Adar which is the *yahrzeit* of Moshe Rabbeinu. We commemorate 7 Adar in the first Adar (in a leap year), keeping the date in line with the parsha every year.

When the Jews sinned with the Golden Calf, Moshe rose to defend the people. He said to Hashem, "if You will not forgive the Jews, erase my name from the Torah" -- and the people were forgiven. The word of a *tzaddik* is so powerful that always materializes in some way. Moshe's name was therefore erased from one parsha. Tetzaveh is read around 7 Adar and thus contains a natural hint even without his name included explicitly.

The opening verse, "V'atah Tetzaveh" means YOU shall command. The YOU is Moshe himself as he is the subject of the phrase. In that way Moshe's essence is deeply embodied in the Parsha in an essential way that is deeper than his name. 



Chassidic Story

Moshe began pleading for mercy.

"Where did you get this lambskin?!" shouted the Count.

"Please have mercy, I didn't mean any harm!" responded Moshe.

The Count assured him that he would not harm him or his family, and that he merely wanted to know which artist had made such a stunning pattern on the lambskin.

"Artist? I don't know what you mean," responded Moshe. He then proceeded to tell the Count the entire story of how he had visited the Baal Shem Tov, received a silver coin, purchased the first thing that came his way in the market, and finally how he had brought the lamb skin to the Count.

Everyone realized that the Baal Shem Tov was behind this. They gave Moshe gifts to bring to the Baal Shem Tov so they could receive his blessings. The Count annulled Moshe's debt, and declared that he would never have to pay rent again.

Brandishing the lambskin, he said "This will make a beautiful fur hat!"

Since Moshe had now received so many gifts, the Count ordered his carriage to take him home, telling his servants to do whatever Moshe would request.

Arriving home, he told his wife the miraculous story, then continued straight on his way to see the Baal Shem Tov.

Hayom Yom

11 ADAR I

The following is well-known and is a tradition, regarding the *kavanot* (mystical "intentions") in davening: For those intellectually incapable of meditating on those *kavanot* (either because they lack knowledge, or because they cannot remember the specific *kavanot* during prayer) it is sufficient that they keep one general *kavana* in mind: That his prayer be heard by Hashem, with all the *kavanot* described in the Kabbala literature.

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שמעון בן מאיר
yahrzeit 13 Adar

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**רפאל מנחם בן
חנה גנענדיל**
yahrzeit 12 Adar

Refuah Shleimah

Monir Malka bat Zaghi