

Parsha Pearls

FROM THE WORDS OF THE GEDOLIM

Purim 5769

And all the servants of the king in the king's gate bowed and prostrated themselves to Haman, for so had the king commanded, but Mordechai would not bow and would not prostrate himself (Esther 3:2).

The Gemara asks why Mordechai was called (in 2:5) both a Judean and a Benjaminite. Rava answers that the verse is not coming to tell us what tribe he came from, but rather what tribes caused the near-tragedy in the time of Haman. It was a combination of two acts done hundreds of years earlier, one by King David, from the tribe of Judah, and one by Shaul, from the tribe of Benjamin. David spared the life of Shimi ben Geira, Mordechai's ancestor, and Shaul spared the life of Agag, Haman's ancestor. Thus Mordechai and Haman were born, Mordechai made Haman angry, and Haman decreed destruction on the Jewish people. The Jewish people cried out, "See what the Judean and the Benjaminite did to me!" (Megillah 12b)

The Maharsha asks: Why was the Jewish people angry at Mordechai? Didn't Mordechai save them from the decree through his fasting and prayer? He answers that this still did not make up for the fear Mordechai brought upon them by provoking Haman. It would have been better if Mordechai had never existed and the decree had never come about in the first place.

This seems very strange. We know that Haman himself was an idol and bowing to him was a form of worship. Or, according to one opinion, he hung idols around his neck so that those who bowed to him would be bowing to the idol (Sanhedrin 61b). So what was the righteous Mordechai to do? Of course he had to refuse to bow to Haman. Why did the Jewish people blame him for provoking Haman?

The Manos Halevi answers that Mordechai should have avoided being in the king's gate when Haman walked by. But then the question is how Mordechai could have done such a reckless act of provoking Haman and endangering the Jewish people. To this, the Manos Halevi answers that Mordechai thought that Haman would only punish him personally, not the Jewish people as a whole. He was trying to make a personal sacrifice to atone for the sin of the Jews in the previous generation who bowed to Nevuchadnezzar's statue.

When Haman decreed death on all the Jews, the Jews complained about what Mordechai had done, and even after the decree was annulled, they complained that he had brought fear upon them; it would have been better if he had never provoked the decree in the first place.

However, in the end they recognized that the miracle of Purim had been Hashem's plan – they determined that the Megillah should be included in the Tanach based on the interpretation of a verse (Megillah 7a). They also recognized that only after the miracle of Purim did the Jews accept the Torah wholeheartedly (Shabbos 88a).

Since their complaint against Mordechai was only temporary, why did Chazal tell us about it? What was their purpose in revealing something that reflects badly on such a righteous man? The answer is that Chazal wanted to teach us this important lesson: that if someone brings danger upon the Jewish people, even if later on he saves them, we are not thankful to him.

This is all the more true in the case of the Zionists, who have brought danger upon Jews and have not really saved the Jews at all. Thousands of Jews have died fighting in their wars, and innocent souls continue to perish all the time, may Hashem have mercy. The danger created by the Zionists is unfortunately still as present as ever! (Al Hageulah V'al Hatemurah, Chapters 38-41)

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