

THE SECRET OF MORDECHAI'S SUCCESS

by Rabbi Yehudah Prero

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 insight into the person Mordechai. "Mordechai, in his generation, was equal to Moshe in his."

The great scholar Rav Yehonasan Eibshitz writes that the comparison between Mordechai and Moshe helps us better understand the Megillah. In the last passage in the Megillah, we are told that "Mordechai was great among the Jews...and spoke peace to all his descendants." What does it mean the Mordecai "spoke peace to his descendants?" The Talmud (Baba 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 attestation of the Megillah to the humility of Mordechai itself presents us with a unique insight into his personality. The Talmud asks (Megillah 7a) "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 query 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.

We know that Moshe, when writing down the Torah upon the instruction of G-d, made a letter small, so that the passage "And G-d called Moshe" would appear as "And G-d happened to meet Moshe." In this way, Moshe was trying to reduce his actual stature from someone who G-d directly called to someone who G-d "happened upon." This was a manifestation of the humility which Moshe epitomized. Similarly, Mordechai would only testify that he was graced with Divine Inspiration if he had to. Only if each word of the Megillah was dictated by G-d would Mordechai include the fact that he was of such high spiritual level that he received information directly from G-d. Mordechai would otherwise never do such, as his humility would not allow it. By virtue of the fact that this information was included, it is evident to all that each and every word of the Megillah was dictated by G-d. Similarly, the attestation to Mordechai's humility that appears in the last passage of the Megillah is there solely because Mordechai was divinely compelled to include such.

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 judgement. 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 the circumstance, and you will be accorded honor.

Chag Purim Sameach!

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