



The Community

Boruch Hashem

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Rabbi's Article

Jeruslamites vs. Babylonians on Public Service

Upon the verse (-10:3), "For Mordechai the Jew was second to the king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted by the majority of his brethren." The Talmud comments (-Tractate Megillah 16b): "'By the majority of his brethren,' but not by all his brethren. This teaches that some members of the Sanhedrin (-[Link](#)) parted from him (because he occupied himself with community needs, and was therefore compelled to neglect his Torah study)." The Talmud does not suffice with this teaching from our verse in the Megillah, but continues with, "Rav Yosef said: *Studying Torah is greater than saving lives, as initially* (when listing the Jewish leaders who came to Israel), *Mordechai was mentioned after four other people, but at the end he was listed after five.* (This is taken to indicate that his involvement in governmental affairs, instead of in Torah-study, lowered his stature one notch.) *At first it is written* (-Ezra 2:2): 'Who came with Zerubbabel: (1) Jeshua, (2) Nehemiah, (3) Seraiah, (4) Reelaiah, Mordechai, Bilshan,' but in the end (in a later list) it is written (-Nehemiah 7:7): 'Who came with Zerubbabel: (1) Jeshua, (2) Nehemiah, (3) Azariah, (4) Raamiah, (5) Nahmani, Mordechai, Bilshan.'"

Let us understand what the Talmud is talking about: (i) Mordechai was one of the *Sanhedrin*, which served as the body from which all of Jewish Law came, and therefore, was occupied with studying Torah the entire time. However, (ii) after the story of Purim unfolded and Queen Esther revealed to King Achashverosh who Mordechai was to her (her uncle), then (-Esther 8:2), "The king took off his ring... and gave it to Mordechai," and (-ibid 10:3), "Mordechai the Jew was viceroy to King Ahasuerus... seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all their seed." Therefore, Mordechai, now a public servant, and was forced to lose from his Torah-study time. This is what the Talmud is talking about, that some (a minority; versus the vast majority) parted from him. Simply speaking, it seems that this minority disagreed with what Mordechai was doing, feeling that he shouldn't have accepted the position of public service, and remained completely occupied only with Torah-study.

Questions: (i) We are speaking of the *Sanhedrin ruling* that Mordechai shouldn't have given away his Torah-study for, "seeking the good of his people..." So why does the Talmud need to bring other verses of other Torah-books to prove, "Studying Torah is greater than saving lives"? (ii) Why was Mordechai demoted but one level (from listed as #5 to #6), when his being pulled away from total devotion to Torah-study should have removed him entirely from being in the *Sanhedrin*? Lastly, (iii) either Mordechai should have proven that his behavior is in accordance with Torah, or he should have resigned from public service, and returned to only studying Torah?!

The answer lays in the wording, "accepted by the majority of his brethren." Torah Law follows the opinion of the majority! However, (i) In Torah Law when there is a majority and a minority, the minority most subordinate themselves to the opinion of the majority, with one ruling remaining upon all of them. Hence, why did the minority still, "parted from him"?! (ii) The two statements of the Talmud are now in contradiction to each other, as the first rules that Mordechai was right ("accepted by the majority of his brethren") taking from his Torah-study time for, "saving lives," while the second statement says, "Studying Torah is greater than saving lives"?!

The Talmud states, "Some members of the Sanhedrin parted from him," not, "disagreed," or, "were not pleased with him." Because, they did not disagree with what Mordechai did, only that they felt, that it was not a way for them. Hence, they parted from what Mordechai was doing.

The Explanation: After departing from Russia, and settling in Poland, Rabbi Yoseph Yitzchok of Lubavitch (-[Link](#)) called a meeting of rabbis and community leaders to work for the betterment of the situation of the Soviet Jews. Among those who were invited to attend, and to get involved was, Rabbi Yoseph Rosen, the *Rogetchover Genius* (-[Link](#)). In response to the request being made of him to take from his Torah-study time for, "seeking the good of his people," the *Rogetchover Genius* explained: "The Talmud states (-*Babylonian* Talmud, Brochois 32b), 'The Sages taught: The early generations of pious men would wait one hour, pray one hour, then wait one hour again. Since (they) would spend nine hours per day in prayer (three hours each for the morning, afternoon, and evening prayers), how is their Torah preserved...? Rather, because they were pious (they merited that) their Torah is preserved.' However, in the *Jerusalem Talmud* (-ibid, C5 L1) the answer is, 'Because they were pious, a blessing was given within their Torah.' Rashi explains the, "is preserved," as, 'in their hearts, for they would not forget their studies.' While the *Pnei Moshe* explains, "a blessing was given," as,

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FRIDAY, MARCH 10, 2023 ★ ז' אדר תשפ"ג

[Shabbat Candle Lighting](#): 6:09 PM · [Kabbalat Shabbat](#): 5:30 PM

SATURDAY, MARCH 11, 2023 ★ יח' אדר תשפ"ג

TORAH READING: [Ki Tisa](#) (Exodus 30:11-34:35) & [Parah](#) (Numbers 19:1-22) · HAFTORAH: [Ezekiel](#) (36:16-36) [Shabbat Parah](#) · [Shacharit](#): 9:30 AM · [Mincha](#): 5:30 PM · [Shabbat Ends](#): North Miami: 7:02 PM

This Week...

Jeruslamites vs. Babylonians on Public Service (cont. from Page 1)

'The were successful in understanding and become wise immediately, and were not (needing to) to wait (until they understood).'" According to the *Babylonian Talmud*, while what they studied --and understood at a normal pace-- was preserved, nevertheless, there was no novel addition to their Torah-study, while according to the *Jerusalem Talmud* there was the unique novelty that what would normally take a while to understand, they would understand immediately. "However," concluded the *Rogetchover Goan*, "being that the law is as the *Babylonian Talmud*, hence, my participation would cause a lacking in my Torah-knowledge, hence, I cannot give up my time of Torah-study (even for this noble cause --being that there were others to do the work for Soviet Jewry)."

The difference of opinion between the *Babylonian Talmud* and *Jerusalem Talmud* is based on the different study approach of each. The methodology of the *Babylonian Talmud* is (-Sanhedrin 24a), "(-Lamentations 3:6), 'He has made me dwell in dark places...,' Rabbi Yirmeya says: This is the Talmud of Babylonia, --with an elucidation process of, "taking and throwing," questions, answers, and contradictions, as one who is searching in the dark." The study methodology of the *Jerusalem Talmud* is (-Shaarei Orah, d"h On the 25th of Kislev, Chapter 54), "As one who sees something in the light." Therefore, the *Babylonian Talmud* only speaks of, "their Torah is preserved," "they would not forget their studies," but not of, "successful in understanding and become wise immediately," which is contraire to the *Babylonian Talmud's* methodology. However, the *Jerusalem Talmud* speaks of, "successful in understanding and become wise immediately," which fits perfectly with its, "As one who sees something in the light," process.

Let us now return to Mordechai, "majority of his brethren," and, "some members of the Sanhedrin." The *Great Sanhedrin* (of 71 judges; presided in the Hewed Chamber of the Holy Temple) were appointed from the *Small Sanhedrin* (of 23 judges) that were based in Jerusalem, or at least of the *Land of Israel*. It is therefore logical to say --especially in the times of the *Mishna* (-[Link](#)) and the *Men of the Great Assembly* (-[Link](#))-- that they were aligned with the way of the *Jerusalem Talmud*. This was Mordechai and the, "majority of his brethren." However, there were also, "some members of the (Great) Sanhedrin," who came up from *Babylon* ("Hillel came up from Babylon," and, "Rabbi Nosson the Babylonian," and more), who would be aligned with the methodology of the *Babylonian Talmud*. Mordechai and the, "majority of his brethren," were of the opinion that Mordechai can be, "seeking the good of his people," and still remain on the *Sanhedrin*, being that, "Because they were pious, a blessing was given within their Torah." However, the, "Some members of the Sanhedrin," who were Babylonians, and would only have had the, "their Torah is preserved," "parted from him," not getting involved in the, "seeking the good of his people."

Nevertheless, Mordechai was, "lowered a notch," being that he lost of his, "whose Torah is their vocation," status, of which, "Studying Torah is greater than saving lives," even if, "a blessing was given within their Torah," For, "Studying Torah," in itself, "is greater than saving lives." And yet, Mordechai and, "majority of his brethren," felt that Mordechai should lose of his stature in order to save the lives of the Jewish people, being that (-Rashi, Esther 1:1), "He (King Achashverosh) was wicked, from beginning to end," --and no one but Mordechai could successfully save the lives of the Jewish people ("Mordechai the Jew was viceroy to King Ahasuerus").

So too, we find (-Tanna D'vei Eliyahu Rabba, Chapter 11), "They (the *Great Sanhedrin*) had to walk and tie iron ropes around their waists and raise their clothes above their knees and they would return to all the towns of... in all the places of Israel, and they would teach Israel..." Even though, that when the *Great Sanhedrin* left their place in the *Hewed Chambers*, the power of the *Great Sanhedrin* was weakened, nevertheless, the primary mandate of the *Great Sanhedrin* is to tend to the needs of the *public*. So too, Mordechai embraced a decent in his status among the *Sanhedrin*, in order to serve *Sanhedrin's* primary purpose of tending to the needs of the public.

The Lesson: The Rebbe guides us to devote of our Torah-study time to service of the public, even though we are but of the category, "their Torah is preserved." We must, "Live the *Megillah*," be a Mordechai, "viceroy to King Ahasuerus," and be, "seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all their seed." And if Mordechai did this to save the *physical bodies* of the Jewish people, how much more so, are we to sacrifice our own, "completion," in order to save the *spirituality* and *soul* of our fellow Jew!