



# Likkutei Sichos

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## Blessed Diplomacy

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## 1.

### STUDY VS LIFE SAVING

At the conclusion of the Megillah, it says,<sup>1</sup> “For Mordechai, the Jew... and found favor with most of his brethren....” On this verse, our Sages expound in the Gemara:<sup>2</sup> “**With most** of his brethren,’ and not all of his brethren. This teaches that a few members of the Sanhedrin disassociated themselves from him.” [“His brethren” were “his friends who were among the Men of the Great Assembly.”]<sup>3</sup> Rashi explains the reason that “a few members of the Sanhedrin” disassociated themselves from Mordechai — “because he had curtailed his Torah studies<sup>4</sup> and had entered governance.”<sup>5</sup>

The Gemara continues:

Torah study is greater than saving lives, because initially {when Scripture lists the names of the Jewish leaders who came to Israel}, Mordechai’s name was mentioned after those of four other people, but at the end, he was listed after five.<sup>6</sup> First it says... but at the end, it says....

In an earlier verse (in *Ezra*),<sup>7</sup> Mordechai is mentioned fifth, but in a later verse (in *Nehemiah*),<sup>8</sup> he is mentioned sixth. {Rashi explains:} “Since Mordechai had become a minister in the meantime, in the eyes of the Sages, he went down in stature.”<sup>9</sup>

It is unclear: Our Sages could have derived the rule that “Torah study is greater than saving lives”<sup>10</sup> from **a simple reading** of the verses in the **Megillah** itself: “**With most** of his brethren... this teaches us that a few

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<sup>1</sup> {*Esther* 10:3.}

<sup>2</sup> *Megillah* 16b; Rashi on *Esther* 10:3.

<sup>3</sup> *Chiddushei Agados Maharsha* on *Megillah* 16b.

<sup>4</sup> {In the original, “*shi'battel m'divrei Torah.*”}

<sup>5</sup> In Rashi’s commentary on the verse, **the order is reversed**: since Mordechai had become a confidant of the monarchy, [he] curtailed his intensive studies. This order conforms to the **straightforward** sequence of events.

<sup>6</sup> {This is taken to show that Mordechai’s involvement in government affairs instead of in Torah study lowered his stature one notch. The Gemara continues to prove this.}

<sup>7</sup> *Ezra* 2:2 {“Who came with Zerubavel, Yeishua, Nechemiah, Seraiah, Reeilayah, Mordechai, Bilshan”}.

<sup>8</sup> *Nehemiah* 7:7 {“Who came with Zerubavel, Yeishua, Nechemiah, Azaryah, Raamyah, Nachamani, Mordechai, Bilshan”}.

<sup>9</sup> Rashi on *Megillah* 16b.

<sup>10</sup> {*Megillah* 16b.}

members of the Sanhedrin had disassociated themselves from him”; and “they had disassociated themselves from him” because “he had curtailed his Torah studies” to save lives. Why does the Gemara derive the principle from the change in order,<sup>11</sup> which is taken from a different context, and from two verses found in two different books of Scripture?

Some commentators<sup>12</sup> answer that from the verses in the Megillah, we can only deduce that for those in the **Sanhedrin**, Torah study was more important than saving lives, but there is no proof that Hashem concurred. Therefore, the Gemara brings the above teaching, which explains that the **Torah itself** alludes to this point based on the positional change in the verses of Mordechai’s name.

According to *pshat*,<sup>13</sup> however, this solution is not smooth. Those who “disassociated themselves from him” were not ordinary folk. They were his “brethren” — **members of the Sanhedrin** — whose role and function was to adjudicate Torah rulings, so how could we say that there is no proof that Hashem concurred?

## 2.

### PROBLEMS

Also difficult:

a) Since “Torah study is greater than saving lives,” why is the name of Mordechai (who curtailed his Torah studies) only lowered one level in the order of the names (from fifth to sixth)? Seemingly, he shouldn’t have been mentioned at all among the members of the Sanhedrin, whose role was to adjudicate Torah rulings.

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<sup>11</sup> {In one place Mordechai is counted fifth, and one place, he is counted sixth.}

<sup>12</sup> *Rif* on *Ein Yaakov*, “*Megillah* 16b.”

<sup>13</sup> {A straightforward, simple reading of the verses.}

b) The verse implies that Mordechai's position as "viceroy"<sup>14</sup> lasted for some time, and during that time, "he had found favor (only) with **most** of his brethren" (consequently, "they disassociated themselves from him"). So either Mordechai should have quickly proven that his new conduct was consistent with Torah, or he should have resigned from his position. Then, automatically, he would have found favor with **all** of his brethren.

### 3.

#### MAJORITY SHOULD RULE

This can be clarified by examining the nuanced wording of this clause in the Megillah (as well as our Sages' exposition of this clause): "*He found favor with **most** of his brethren* — (only) **a few members** of the Sanhedrin had disassociated themselves from him." This implies that **most** "of his brethren" in the Sanhedrin **agreed** with Mordechai's conduct.

Therefore, it is understood, on a simple level, that the fact that "a few members of the Sanhedrin disassociated themselves from him" does not at all prove that Torah study is **greater** than saving lives. On the contrary, this exposition teaches us the opposite: Since he had found favor with **most** of the Sanhedrin, they actually supported him.<sup>15</sup>

On this basis, we can also explain why Mordechai was demoted by only one rank: It was because most of the members of the Sanhedrin agreed with his conduct.

Yet, this explanation is problematic:

a) Since most of the members of Sanhedrin agreed with Mordechai's move, they should have overridden the minority ("some {of the Sanhedrin}"). Why did

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<sup>14</sup> {"משנה למלך" in the original; *Esther* 10:3.}

<sup>15</sup> *Ben Yehoyada* on *Megillah* 16b.

they disassociate themselves from Mordechai and not defer (their minority opinion) to the majority?

- b) On this basis, it emerges that the two above teachings of our Sages quoted by the Gemara in **one** flow ([only] “**a few members** of the Sanhedrin had disassociated themselves from him,” and, “Torah study is greater than saving lives”) are contradictory!

#### 4.

##### PRESERVE VS BLESSING

To better understand this matter, we need to first examine another case of nuanced wording in this teaching of our Sages: It says that “a few members of the Sanhedrin had **disassociated** from him” — not that they “**disagreed** with him,” and not even that they “were displeased with him,”<sup>16</sup> or the like. “Disassociated from him” means (**not** a disagreement based on their opinion that Mordechai’s behavior was **inconsistent** with Torah, but) that they **separated** themselves from him, as they had a divergent outlook concerning the correct deportment for members of the Sanhedrin (or Torah scholars, in general). Mordechai’s outlook was not theirs. However, they also agreed that (for Mordechai himself) his behavior was consistent with Torah.

The explanation of this paradox will be understood based on a story involving the Rogatchover Gaon and his outlook — together with an explanation of the story.

After the Previous Rebbe left Russia and traveled to Riga, he arranged a conference of Rabbis, leaders, and community activists, etc., to help Russian Jewry. Among those invited was the Rogatchover. At the conference, they wanted to convene a board that would meet from time to time for the purpose of deciding how to carry out programs to aid Russian Jewry. The Rogatchover was asked to join. The Rogatchover, however, declined, explaining that the question

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<sup>16</sup> Note *Midrash Shmuel* on *Avos*, ch. 3, mishnah. 10, quoted in the commentary of *Yad Yosef* on *Ein Yaakov*.

of his joining the board hinged upon a dispute between the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud.

The Gemara says in tractate *Berachos*<sup>17</sup> that “the early Chassidim would spend... nine hours a day in prayer.” The Gemara asks: “How was their Torah preserved; how was their work accomplished?” (The Gemara answers:) “However, because they were Chassidim, their Torah was preserved and their work was blessed.”

In the Jerusalem Talmud,<sup>18</sup> the same exchange is recorded but with a variance: Instead of, “because they were Chassidim, their Torah was **preserved** (and their work was blessed),” the Jerusalem Talmud says: “Because they were Chassidim, their Torah was **blessed** (and their work was blessed).”

The difference between the phrases, “their Torah was **preserved**” and “their Torah was **blessed**” is understood. “Preserved” means only that “their learning was not **forgotten**,”<sup>19</sup> but nothing **new** was added. (They covered only as much Torah learning as possible in the small time that they were not occupied with prayer).

The statement in the Jerusalem Talmud, that “their Torah was **blessed**,” however, means that “they succeeded to understand and comprehend immediately, without faltering.”<sup>20</sup> In other words, not only did they not forget what they had learnt, but they also achieved a **broader** understanding and comprehension of Torah: In the short time they devoted to their study, they succeeded “to understand and comprehend **immediately**” what under normal circumstances would have taken a lot more time.

Similarly, in our case (as the Rogatchover pointed out): Agreement to join the board would leave him less time to learn Torah. True, according to the Jerusalem Talmud, “because they were Chassidim, their Torah was **blessed**”; consequently, he wouldn’t lack Torah knowledge. However, the law follows the

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<sup>17</sup> *Berachos* 32b.

<sup>18</sup> *Berachos* ch. 5, halachah 1.

<sup>19</sup> *Rashi* on *Berachos* 32b.

<sup>20</sup> *Pnei Moshe* on the Jerusalem Talmud, “*Berachos*,” ch. 5, halachah 1.

opinion of the Babylonian Talmud, which maintains that their Torah was only “**preserved.**”<sup>21</sup> Accordingly, the Rogatchover would be deprived of the additional learning and the Torah knowledge that he would have been able to gain if he were to have studied Torah instead of attending meetings. And this loss he was not prepared to incur.

## 5.

### BABYLON VS JERUSALEM

The above dispute between the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds can be explained based on their distinctive learning styles:

The learning style of the Babylonian Talmud involves a lot of back-and-forth, questions and answers, etc., as the Gemara says,<sup>22</sup> “He has made me dwell in **darkness**”<sup>23</sup>... — this refers to the Babylonian Talmud.” This style resembles someone searching in the dark. Coming up with the true meaning and conclusion requires a lot of examination and effort, questioning and analysis, etc. The Jerusalem Talmud, however, has a very direct style. Immediately, the correct rationale and solution, etc., is found, like someone who spots something in the light.<sup>24</sup>

Therefore, we must conclude that from the perspective (and the style of study) of the Babylonian Talmud, the abbreviated Torah study of the earlier Chassidim would only be effective in “preserving” their Torah — they would not forget the Torah they studied. However, this abbreviated study would not lead to their Torah study also being “blessed,” enabling them “to understand and

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<sup>21</sup> Note that this may be compared to *tzedakah*, through which “his mind and heart become a thousand times more refined” — *Torah Or*, 1b; *Likkutei Torah LeGimel Parshiyos* (3a, printed in *Or HaTorah*, “*Bereishis*,” vol. 6, 1026b ff.): Clearly, this is no exaggeration, but it is a thousand times, **literally**. Consequently, it is understood that there is no need to spend so much time {on Torah study}.

<sup>22</sup> *Sanhedrin* 24a; the implication of this source is that the reason is “Babylon” (“Their Torah is not like the Torah of Israel” — *Bereishis Rabbah* sec. 16, par. 4); it was even this way in the times of the *Tannaim*, and the the Men of the Great Assembly, etc.

<sup>23</sup> *Eichah* 3:6.

<sup>24</sup> See the lengthy explanation in *Shaarei Orah*, s.v., “*bechof-hei beKislev*,” ch. 54 ff.; *Hemshech* 5666, p. 90 ff.; *Maamar “Amar Rava.”* 5708, ch. 11; et al.

comprehend **immediately**,” which doesn’t align with the style of the Babylonian Talmud.

According to the approach of (and the style in) the Jerusalem Talmud, however, the conduct of the early Chassidim also enabled their Torah study to be “blessed” — “they succeeded to understand and comprehend immediately, without faltering.” This corresponds to the direct study style by which, very quickly, one sees the truth of an idea.

## 6.

### THEY WERE MOSTLY JERUSALEMITES

Accordingly, we could say that the difference between the outlook of Mordechai (which was acceptable according to [the outlook of] most of the Sanhedrin) and the outlook of “a few members of the Sanhedrin” is tied to the above dispute between the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud.

The venue of the Great Sanhedrin, whose members were selected from the members of the Small Sanhedrin,<sup>25</sup> was in Jerusalem. In any event, {when the Great Sanhedrin was not located in Jerusalem, it was located} somewhere, in the Holy Land.<sup>26</sup> So it stands to reason that their style of study (at least the style of most of its members) conformed with the study style of the Jerusalem Talmud, especially at the time of the Mishnah and the Men of the Great Assembly.

However, even then, there were *Tannaim*<sup>27</sup> who had arrived in Israel from Babylon, similar to what took place later: “Hillel came up from Babylon,”<sup>28</sup> Rabbi Nassan the Babylonian,<sup>29</sup> and others; especially, considering that over seventy years had passed since the time “the artisans and the gatekeepers”<sup>30</sup> had left

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<sup>25</sup> See *Sanhedrin* 88b; *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Sanhedrin*,” sec. 2, par. 8.

<sup>26</sup> See *Sanhedrin*, *ibid.*; *Mishneh Torah*, *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> {Sages from the mishnaic era had the title “*Tanna*,” or “*Tannaim*” in pl.}

<sup>28</sup> *Pesachim* 66a.

<sup>29</sup> He came up from Babylon — Rashi on *Gittin* (65b), *Bava Basra* (73a), s.v., “*Rabbi Nassan*”; et al.

<sup>30</sup> *Melachim II* 24:14; *Gittin* 88a; Rashi on the *Melachim II* 24:14. {The verse describes those exiled by Nevuchadnetzar from Jerusalem to Babylon: “He exiled all of Jerusalem — all the officers and all the men of war,



Jerusalem together with those exiled with Yechonyah to Babylon.<sup>31</sup> The Men of the Great Assembly were among those captives exiled to Babylon by Nevuchadnetzar, King of Babylon, and later returned to Jerusalem and to Judea in the first year of the reign of Cyrus, after being in Babylon for fifty-two years. However, among the “artisans and the gatekeepers” who were already in Jerusalem, there were also those already on this level (and who had this style of learning).<sup>32</sup>

Therefore, Mordechai (and most of the Sanhedrin) maintained that he must become the viceroy in order to save lives. But how could he remain a member of the Sanhedrin and of the Men of The Great Assembly, the purpose of which was Torah study and instruction? It was “because they were Chassidim, their Torah was **blessed**.” Therefore, he would succeed (not only in that his “Torah was preserved,” but also) to understand and comprehend **immediately**, to be blessed and **toil** in study more than his remaining time to learn allowed for.

However, among the members of the Sanhedrin, there were also (a “few”) whose learning style conformed to the style of the Babylonian Talmud, as discussed above.

Therefore, they (only) enjoyed the benefit that “their Torah was **preserved**.” This meant that by getting involved in communal work and “saving lives,” they would forfeit the **additional** Torah knowledge that was required of the members of the **Sanhedrin**. Therefore, “a **few** members of the Sanhedrin **disassociated** themselves from him”: Because Mordechai’s style of *avodah*<sup>33</sup> (and the style of most of the Sanhedrin) was not possible for them, they separated themselves from him by staying on their own course (as discussed above at the beginning of Section 4).

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ten thousand exiles, as well as all the artisans and the gatekeepers....” Rashi explains that the artisans and the gatekeepers refer to the outstanding Torah scholars; when one of them would open his mouth to speak, all would remain silent and all would sit before him and learn from him.}

<sup>31</sup> See *Seder Hadoros* regarding the timeframe of the Purim miracle.

<sup>32</sup> For all this, see the commentaries on the *Mishnah*, beg. of *Avos*; Rambam’s “Introduction” to his *Commentary on Mishnah; Ezra 2:1-2*.

<sup>33</sup> {Divine service.}

## LIFE TRUMPS EVEN STUDY

Even though according to the opinion of the Jerusalem Talmud, “their Torah was **blessed**,” and therefore, Mordechai also had the blessing and benefit of acquiring **additional** Torah knowledge, nevertheless, “in the eyes of the Sages, he went down in stature,” because he “had curtailed his Torah studies and entered governance.”

This is because there is a unique virtue in the path of those for whom “Torah study is their profession” — they do not suspend their learning for **any reason**<sup>34</sup> (even if, in reality, because “their Torah was **blessed**,” there would be **no loss** of additional Torah knowledge). This is what our Sages meant by saying, “Torah study is greater than saving lives...”: There is a “greatness” in a person who devotes himself **exclusively** to Torah study. Since **this** “greatness” was diminished in Mordechai, there was also a decrease (a descent) in his stature “in the eyes of the Sages.” So instead of being ranked fifth, he was ranked sixth.

Nonetheless, Mordechai (and most of the Sanhedrin) felt that he should accept the position of viceroy. Although the “greatness” linked with adage, “Torah study is great” would be **diminished** in him, it was worthwhile in order to save lives<sup>35</sup> and to be “seeking the good of his people and an advocate for peace for **all** their<sup>36</sup> descendents.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> See *Magen Avraham* (sec. 106, sub-par. 4; Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, sec. 106, par. 4): “Even for a moment”; Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, sec. 90, par. 17: “Such a person is not to stop studying at all except for necessities for the needs of the body and learning”; see *Tanya*, “*Likkutei Amarim*,” ch. 23.

<sup>35</sup> See *Taz* on *Yoreh De’ah*, sec. 251.

<sup>36</sup> {The descendents of the Jewish people (Rashi on *Esther* 10:3).}

<sup>37</sup> {*Esther* 10:3.} If not for the sake of “rescuing lives,” he would not have become involved in communal matters, due to the greatness of Torah study.

We can connect the Rashi in the **beginning** of *Megillas Esther*, “*He was Achashveirosh* — he was wicked from beginning to the end” to his commentary at the end of *Megillas Esther*, “*Most of his brethren* — and not all of them...” (the beginning is wedged in the end).

The reason why Mordechai “became close to the kingdom and curtailed his studies even **after** the miracle of Purim was because “*He was Achashveirosh* — he was **wicked** from the beginning until **his end**”; therefore, there was a concern that he might renew his decree.

## 8.

IT'S ALL WORTH IT

However, this doesn't seem to answer everything. It is true that "their Torah was blessed," and therefore, Mordechai did not lack even the **added** knowledge of Torah. True, there is a virtue in "saving lives" that makes the descent (that he won't be on the level of "his Torah is his craft") worthwhile, but how was he still able to remain a member of the **Sanhedrin**, whose sole purpose is, seemingly, **Torah study and guidance**?

In other words, how could the **Sanhedrin** itself (whose sole purpose is Torah, as explained) be obligated to give up their preoccupation with Torah study to save lives?

The explanation: It says in *Tanna DeVei Eliyahu*,<sup>38</sup> "They (the Great Sanhedrin) should have traveled and tied ropes of iron around their waists, lifted their clothing above their knees, and traveled to all cities in Israel... and taught Israel...."<sup>39</sup>

The law states that when the Sanhedrin was exiled from its designated place, the Chamber of Hewn Stone,<sup>40</sup> it was no longer empowered to adjudicate capital cases.<sup>41</sup> This means that by traveling "to all the cities in Israel," the strength and power of the Sanhedrin would have been **diminished**. Nevertheless, they had an obligation "to travel... to all cities in Israel...."

From this, we see that the primary purpose of the Sanhedrin is **public** Torah education (and to prevent the masses {from sinning}). To accomplish this mission, they needed to **step down** from their prestigious and powerful

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<sup>38</sup> *Tanna DeVei Eliyahu Rabbah*, ch. 11

<sup>39</sup> {This passage refers to the time before the Jews finished settling in Eretz Yisroel, before the Sanhedrin was stationed near the altar (of the *mishkan*).}

<sup>40</sup> {The permanent location of the Great Sanhedrin, in the Temple precinct.}

<sup>41</sup> *Avodah Zarah* 8b; *Mishneh Torah*, "Hilchos Sanhedrin," sec. 14, par. 11-13; according to Ramban (in his commentary on *Sefer HaMitzvos*, *mitzvah* 153), "All cases which required the High Court were canceled (not only capital cases).

position of the **Sanhedrin** in order to bolster the spiritual welfare of the **public**.

A **similar** explanation applies to our discussion: True, by becoming viceroy, Mordechai's stature (as a member of the Sanhedrin) had fallen from fifth to sixth because he lacked the virtue of "Torah study is their profession." Nevertheless, this demotion was worthwhile, even from the perspective of the Sanhedrin itself, since it was for the good of the **public**. (This is similar to the explanation of the teaching in *Tanna DeVei Eliyahu* presented above.)

## 9.

### LEADERS ARE DIFFERENT

The practice of the Previous Rebbe was that he would "steal"<sup>42</sup> from the time he could have spent studying Torah and serving Hashem for his own personal advancement, and instead, he involved himself with the public welfare and **rescuing lives**.

He also insisted that a considerable number of his disciples and devotees follow this path. He introduced the practice for yeshiva students to spend part of their time between study sessions **disseminating** Torah and Judaism. Occasionally, such effort meant a large amount of time was spent (not on actual Torah study with a study partner, but) on "the **needs** of the community," working on recruiting students, organizing a place to study, raising funds to cover the expenses, and so on.

This means that even those devotees who were only on the {spiritual} level that "**their Torah was preserved**" (the halachic ruling in accordance with the Babylonian Talmud) had to give of their time for the public good, even if it meant they would **lack** in their Torah study and *avodas* Hashem.

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<sup>42</sup> See *Zohar*, vol. 2, 93b.

This is because the above-described approach of the Rogatchover is only for select individuals in each generation who are on the level that “Torah study is their profession,” and who, like **a few members** of the Sanhedrin, had an **addition** in their Torah knowledge that was **constant**.

However, the **vast majority** of people (even Torah students) serve Hashem in accord with the halachic ruling that, nowadays, people are not on the level of “Torah study is their profession.”<sup>43</sup> And if people suspend their learning for other reasons, certainly they need to suspend their learning to **save lives** and for the public good.

To note, regarding the Previous Rebbe himself, can we really understand his manner of serving Hashem? There is a well-known teaching of the Baal Shem Tov<sup>44</sup> on the verse,<sup>45</sup> “*Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of Hashem has shone upon you – you, Nesiei Yisrael*”<sup>46</sup> who give up your Torah and *avodah* for the public good, what will be with you? Arise, shine with the personal light {which is a vessel} for the comprehensive light....”<sup>47</sup> This means that *Nesiei Yisrael* receive a special blessing so that their “Torah and *avodah*” is not diminished. On the contrary, “Your light has come and the glory of Hashem has shone upon you,” which is incomparably greater than “**their Torah was blessed.**”

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<sup>43</sup> On the level of **Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai** (who “does not stop learning to pray”) — *Shabbos* 11a; *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch* (and Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*), “*Orach Chaim*,” end of sec. 106. [There are some that have this idea on a lower level (and don’t need to go to *shul*) — *Rema*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 90, par. 18; *Alter Rebbe’s Shulchan Aruch*, sec. 90, par. 17.]

<sup>44</sup> From the seven known teachings that were said in *Gan Eden* on the festival of his birthday, *Shabbos parshas Ki Savo, Chai Elul*, 5652, as heard from the *Rebbe Rashab* (*Sichah* delivered on Shemini Atzeres 5697); printed in the addendum to *Keser Shemtov* (Kehot publ.), sec. 3, and in *Sefer HaSichos* 5697.

<sup>45</sup> *Yeshayahu* 60:1.

<sup>46</sup> {Lit., princes of Israel; this usually refers to Jewish leaders.}

<sup>47</sup> {*Personal light* refers to the divine light that resides in every Jew and that illuminates their practical divine service. *Comprehensive light* refers to the unique light that shines in the “comprehensive souls” — in *Nesiei Yisrael*.}

## 10.

### WE ALL MUST FOLLOW MORDECHAI

This is the practical lesson from Mordechai's conduct for us, which is similar to the well-known teaching of the Baal Shem Tov<sup>48</sup> on the mishnah,<sup>49</sup> "One who reads the Megillah backwards has not fulfilled his obligation": If a person reads the Megillah with the mindset that the Megillah's narratives are just **history** ("backwards") and have no current relevance, "he has not fulfilled his obligation."

We must demand similar conduct from ourselves, that we should exhibit at least a trace of Mordechai's conduct in accepting the position of "viceroy" in order to be "**seeking** the good of his people and speaking peace to **all** his seed" (even if this means a person will find favor only "with **most** of his brethren").

Although for many people, such conduct is considered a "descent" because it requires a person to forgo his own perfection, this descent is worth it for the benefit and the good of **the public**.

[We find the same principle concerning a person's personal life. His soul **descends** "from a high summit into a deep pit"<sup>50</sup> in order to become the ruler and controller<sup>51</sup> of his body, his animalistic soul, and his divinely allotted portion in the world. By conquering them, he makes a "home for Hashem."

Afterwards, besides what we said above, the person gets married, so that "every man should **rule in his home**."<sup>52</sup> (As our Sages say,<sup>53</sup> "Who is a fitting wife? One who fulfills the will of her husband.") And this "rule" is also associated with a **descent**, as our Sages advised,<sup>54</sup> "Descend a level to marry a woman,"

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<sup>48</sup> Addendum to *Keser Shem Tov* (Kehot publ.), sec. 78.

<sup>49</sup> *Megillah* 2:1.

<sup>50</sup> *Chagigah* 5b; *Reshimas HaTzemach Tzedek* on *Eicha* (*Or HaTorah*, "Nach," vol. 2, p. 1072 ff.).

<sup>51</sup> See *Tanya*, "*Likkutei Amarim*," ch. 9.

<sup>52</sup> *Esther* 1:22.

<sup>53</sup> See *Tanna DeVei Eliyahu*, ch. 9; *Rama*, "*Even HaEzer*," end of sec. 69.

<sup>54</sup> *Yevamos* 63a.

because a man must forgo his own personal needs for the good of his household.]<sup>55</sup>

This is also the reason that communal involvement has an advantage even over exclusive involvement in Torah study. Those for whom “Torah study is their profession” must still interrupt their studies to read the *Shema*<sup>56</sup> {in its proper time}, whereas those who are involved in communal matters do not interrupt their work even to read the *Shema*.<sup>57</sup>

Because although by being involved in communal matters **faithfully**, a person’s own Torah study and self-improvement is compromised, so much so that our Sages say,<sup>58</sup> “Place upon them the needs of community, and they will be obliterated on their own,”<sup>59</sup> nevertheless, it is only in and through doing so that one can attain the wondrous virtue that comes with working for the public good.

If Mordechai’s approach was needed to save the **physical** lives of Jews,<sup>60</sup> how much more so for saving Jewish **souls**! To save lives, we must forgo the pursuit of our own perfection, and, following in the footsteps of Mordechai, serve as “an advocate for peace for **all** their descendents.” Then, Israel will do *teshuvah*, “and **immediately**, will be redeemed,”<sup>61</sup> in actuality.

— Based on talks delivered on Purim, 5733 (1973), Purim and Shabbos *parshas Ki Sisa*, 5735 (1975)

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<sup>55</sup> It is specifically because of this that “he blessed them and he called them the name *Adam* (*Bereishis* 5:2; *Yevamos* 63a; *Hemsech Samach Tesamach* 5657, p. 5 ff.); see fn. 19 in the original, that through giving *tzedakah* “his mind and heart become... refined...”

<sup>56</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Kerias Shema*,” sec. 2, par. 5.

<sup>57</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, *ibid.*; *Shulchan Aruch* (and Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*), “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 70, par. 4; Alter Rebbe’s *Shulchan Aruch*, end of sec 93.

<sup>58</sup> *Sanhedrin* 17a; Rashi on *Bamidbar* 11:28.

<sup>59</sup> {The Gemara is speaking about the two prophets, Eldad and Meidad, who were prophesying without permission; Yehoshua suggested they should be inducted into communal affairs, and that way they would be too busy to prophesy.}

<sup>60</sup> As known, Purim marks the salvation of the **bodies** of the Jews (unlike *Chanukah* — *Levush*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 670, par. 2; *Taz*, “*Orach Chaim*,” sec. 103).

<sup>61</sup> *Mishneh Torah*, “*Hilchos Teshuvah*,” sec 7, par. 5; see *Tanya*, “*Iggeres HaTeshuvah*,” ch. 11.