

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 16

Purim, Sicha 3

The Verse:

Megilas Esther concludes with a description of Mordechai's position in the aftermath of the Purim story:

"For Mordecai the Jew was viceroy to King Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews and accepted by most of his brethren; seeking the good of his people and speaking peace to all their seed." (Esther 10:3)

The Talmud:

The sages noted the unusual phrase, "accepted by most of his brethren," and commented:

"The verse indicates that Mordecai was accepted only "By most his brethren," but not by all his brethren. This teaches that some members of the Sanhedrin parted from him." (Megillah 16b)

Rashi explains their rationale: By serving as viceroy to Achashverosh, Mordechai was compelled to neglect his Torah study, the

very foundation of a member of the Sanhedrin. Even though this communal advocacy was necessary, they felt it disqualified him from remaining on the Sanhedrin.

If this was the case, however, why did only "some members of the Sanhedrin part from him," and not all the members? Why did he still enjoy the support of the majority of the Sanhedrin if his advocacy caused him to neglect Torah study?

Preface to the Explanation:

The Talmud's language is precise. In saying, "some members of the Sanhedrin parted from him" and not "disputed with him" or "rejected him," the Talmud implies that this minority viewed Mordechai's path as legitimate, yet they did not feel that they could choose it themselves, thus they "parted from him."

What were these two reputable paths?

The Explanation:

The Talmud states that the "early pious ones would engage in prayer for nine hours a day." The Talmud then asks, "how was their

Torah study preserved? Rather, because they were pious they merited that their Torah was preserved..." (Berachos 32b)

The Jerusalem Talmud records the same discussion but with a slight alteration, "Rather, because they were pious they merited that their Torah study was blessed."

The Rogatchover explains the difference between the two versions: "Preserved" implies that their previous studies were not forgotten, but their current studies were limited by the time they had available. "Blessed" implies that their current studies were blessed so that they could miraculously reach greater insight and volume in a shorter amount of time.

This aligns with the general difference between the two Talmuds, where the Jerusalem talmud is associated with light and transparency, and the Babylonian talmud is associated with darkness and difficulty.

Most of the Sanhedrin was composed of exiles from Israel, while a minority were second generation Babylonians, born to those exiled from Israel seventy years prior.

Thus, the majority of the Sanhedrin followed the path of the Jerusalem Talmud

and maintained that a scholar could be involved in communal work and still have his Torah "blessed" with added insight befitting a member of the Sanhedrin. But the minority followed the path of the Babylonian Talmud and maintained that a scholar who spent most of his time in the king's court would only have his Torah study "preserved," and that was not acceptable for a member of Sanhedrin. Thus, this minority "separated themselves" from this practice of Mordechai.

Nonetheless, the Talmud concludes that "Torah study is greater than saving lives," for Mordechai was demoted slightly in his standing in the Sanhedrin due to his activism. There is still a value to unadulterated Torah study without any other concerns or distractions.

The Lesson:

It follows that Mordechai sacrificed his own spiritual values, of being dedicated solely to Torah, for the sake of others. So, too, we must be prepared to sacrifice our spiritual and scholarly growth for the sake of the material and spiritual wellbeing of our fellow Jew.
