

## Thoughts From The Lubavitcher Rebbe

### Purim - Jewish Identity

By Rabbi Yossi Groner

The study of Purim is told to us in the scroll of Esther (megillat Esther), which is read twice on Purim each year.

The miracle of Purim seems to start later in the story when Haman began expressing his anger on Mordechai and the rest of the Jews, which was the reason for his decree against all the Jews.

Why therefore, does the "megillat" tell us, in such great detail about the previous events, like Mordechai's 'sitting in the king's gate.' In those days this was not an unusual occurrence.

We also read about the special feast King Achashverosh prepared, where he made sure that everything should be done according to everyone's desire, that is even if a Jew

should request kosher food and drink.

The lesson from this is as follows: A Jew may think that when he is in the capital city or in a position of influence he should not openly display his Judaism. He should not, by asking for kosher food, show that he is different from other people. Why should he "stand-out?" Since we are a minority, a Jew may be happy to be in this position. Why touch on anti-Jewish sensibilities by showing that our religion is different from all peoples?

The megillat teaches us otherwise: Even when a Jew is in the capital city and knows that there is a Haman there, he must still openly display his Jewishness and ask for kosher food. Every person's desire is to show that he is a whole person. If he is ashamed of his

identity and tries to hide it, he is in a sense a cripple. To the non-Jew he is a hypocrite. Indeed, if one's wish is to get into the right circles and thereby be successful in the king's gate, he is to display his Judaism. Hence, when sitting at the king's table, one must demand to be given kosher food.

Such conduct wins honor and respect for a Jew also in non-Jewish eyes, to the extent that they pay attention to his views on governmental matters for they see he is a true person of complete trust. The above is applicable wherever he is. Whether he is influential in the capital, in his city or his neighborhood, he should openly conduct himself as a Jew. Through this he will have greater success in all his matters, finding favor in non-Jewish eyes.

### Children Learn About Tu B'Shvat



Children preparing Challah for Shabbat.



Children prepared their own food for their Chanukah party.

### To Correct A False Undercurrent

By Rabbi Hershel Fogelman  
Worcester, Mass.

It is with a sense of urgency that I feel a compulsion to correct an erroneous impression falsely conveyed by those who should know better.

In recent months articles and statements have appeared accusing the orthodox Torah community, and more particularly Lubavitcher, that they view Reform and Conservative Jews as being less than Jewish, or not really Jewish. Rabbis from pulpits and leaders of movements, continue with the bombardment that the "Orthodox" think we are not Jewish. Whether this is a ploy to arouse the masses to battle is difficult to ascertain. In any case, innocent laymen, and in some cases spiritual leaders, are left wondering as to this position.

It is, therefore, incumbent once and for all, to set the record straight irrespective of issues. While it is axiomatic that Jews with regard to observance and behavior are guided and bound by the G-d given Torah, Talmud, Shulchan Oruch - code of Jewish law, etc. it is however the same Shulchan Oruch that provides the Halacha as to how one views a Jew.

The Rambam - Maimonides codifier of Jewish law, in the second chapter of "Hilchos Gerushin," clearly states that even a Jew who rebels against the Halacha is considered not only a Jew, but a believer in the innermost portion of his Neshomo (soul). It is on this basis that the Rambam draws a Halachic conclusion that even in those areas where one's willful consent is needed, such as in certain cases of divorce, Korbonos, etc., and the Beth Din forces him to comply, it is predicted on the principle that he is inherently a believer and wants to fulfill the will of G-d.

Therefore, not only dare we not exclude any Jew from Klal Yisroayl, but further, all Jews according to Maimonides, irrespective of their religious orientation are considered Halachically "Maameenim Bnei Maaminim" - believers, children of believers, whose Jewish spark is just as important as any Jew.

Emunah belief is inherent in every Jew. In the words of the Rambam only his "Yetzer" (inclination) forces him to act rebelliously. One can quote hundreds of passages attesting to the axiom. We must, therefore, set the record straight that we are all truly one as Jews.

In conclusion, it is worthwhile also to convey an illuminating Midrash which tells of seven things that G-d caused to come into existence before creation, amongst them Torah and souls of Jews. Which of these two are first, asks the Midrash? "Jews are first because the Torah tells of G-d saying to Moses 'speak to Jews.'" This means that Jews precede Torah, concludes the Midrash. This Midrash is quoted and elaborated on extensively in Chabad Chasidic literature. From the point of view of the word Jew therefore, there is absolutely no difference between one Jew and another. I do not at this time wish to enter into the many complex issues that divide Jews because, to quote the famous American expression, "what unites us is far greater than what divides us."

If you, therefore, hear a

speaker or read an article, whether from the left or the right, creating an illusion or distortion about this subject, you should know that he or she is either ignorant or malicious. The unity and love of our people as a collective, and more so with regard to the individual, is the priority of priorities.

Rabbi Fogelman is director of Lubavitch Schools in Worcester, Mass., serving the community for over forty years.

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