

Thoughts From The LUBAVITCHER REBBE

PURIM

At the outset of the events of Purim, Mordechai "sat in the gate of the king," an expression denoting his position as royal counselor. This position, though important, was incomparably less than the advancement he received after Haman's downfall, when he became second to the king. Achashveirosh elevated him after discovering the full extent of Mordechai's unswerving loyalty to Judaism. When Achashveirosh heard that Mordechai would not bow to Haman, what was the king's reaction? Did he lose respect for Mordechai? Not at all! On the contrary; once Esther had told the king that Mordechai belonged to Israel, the noblest of nations, and that he was related to her, Achashveirosh saw that Mordechai was a person who could really be trusted. The king realized that Mordechai was totally sincere, and faithful to himself and to his beliefs under all circumstances and despite all social environmental pressures. Such a person, reasoned Achashveirosh, could safely be appointed second to the king, with all the responsibility that position entailed.

The lesson for our generation is obvious. People think that one should be an observant Jew in order to earn Olam Haba, the spiritual World to Come. Olam Haba? — of course; but one must be Torah-observant for Olam Haze, to live life to the full in this world. Do you want to earn the respect of the non-Jew? (Whether you should just assume you have this desire.) Rest assured you will not get it by running after him. If you run after the gentile he will not let you in, not by the front door nor by the back door. If you climb through the window he will throw you out! For when the non-Jew sees that you are running after him and courting his attention, he realizes that you are a syncophant, a "hanger-on" who imitates others and becomes their follower for the sake of money or honor. "Today he might be running after me, seeking my friendship," muses the gentile; "if tomorrow someone else will give him an additional dollar or an additional honor, he will run after him." Likewise if one wishes to occupy a position of eminence in "Shushan the capital" (or in the capital of any country) he must remain faithful to the laws which are "different than those of other nations;" he must not "observe the laws of the king" where they conflict with Torah. Remaining faithful to Torah is the only way to earn true respect and become "second to the king" — if this is indeed one's purpose in life, for if it is not his purpose then all efforts in that direction are a shameful waste of time.

A person should be cautious about pursuing a position of excessive power or material wealth under any circumstances, as the following analogy illustrates: The essence of man is spiritual. In Olam Haze (the physical world) this inner essence is covered, clothed in the material aspects of life like a garment. A garment, if too short, is undesirable. On the other hand, what if someone declares that since clothing is a good thing — "the more the merrier," and proceeds to make his clothing unnecessarily large, with an abundance of material? Naturally, the excessive cloth gathers under his feet, renders him awkward, and may trip him up; the sleeves are too long and hamper his hands; his oversize hat hangs over his nose. The outsize garments not only fail to improve his

appearance, but greatly detract from it.

If one tries to achieve more than is fitting for him in the way of material wealth or importance of position, not only does it fail to enhance his situation, it makes it much worse. The "garment," the external aspect of his existence, is too long. Let him entreat G-d to whom wealth belongs, for all his needs; then he can be sure of receiving exactly as much as is necessary for his needs.

People delude themselves that one must emulate fashion, follow the majority — or be ejected from society. They are in grievous error. Each person, Jew or gentile, must fulfill his mission. The non-Jew should not keep the Shabbos, but should observe the seven Mitzvos given to the descendants of Noah. It is demanded of a Jew that he should observe the precepts incumbent upon him, that which his inner nature demands. Israel's obligation is sensed even by the non-Jew who will eventually expect it of a Jew. The gentile does not understand compromise in this area; it must be one way or the other: If you are a Jew then you have to live like one, proudly. If you imitate them and run after them, they lose all trust in you and respect for you. They want nothing to do with you — and justifiably so. For they reason, "Just as this unfaithful person is deceiving himself, his essence, his being, his Judaism, his father, his mothers, his Zeida and Bobba, so will he eventually deceive me and his partner, his employees etc. How could he possibly be trusted with anything? He has no character, no belief or principle for which he will fight; he always lamely and tamely follows the majority."

Maintaining one's Judaism in the way that Mordechai and Esther did, is not only for the world to come but is vital for this world. The United States is a country which takes particular pride in people who had an innovative approach to problems, or who made new discoveries and built "empires" on the strength of their innovation. Expressed differently, this country takes pride in those who go against the stream against the majority, and hold steadfast to their own unique approach.

In conclusion, let us return to the story of Purim: King Achashveirosh at first wanted to destroy the Jews even more than Haman. However, once Esther brought it to his attention that Israel has existed for so many years, and that it was her people etc. than Achashveirosh drastically changed his mind. Not only did he reinstate Mordechai, but he elevated him to a far higher position. The king gave the house of Haman to Esther and his own ring to Mordechai. He elevated Mordechai to the position of "second to the king" and entrusted him with all matters of the kingdom.

The story of Purim carries a powerful lesson for each of us. When we walk in the way of the Torah it becomes a teaching for life. The Torah teaches us how to acquire life in the external world to come, and how to live — truly live — in this world — a world in which we are "scattered and dispersed among the nations." Torah shows us that Israel is as a fish in the sea of Torah and Mitzvos. When the sea surrounds it day after day the fish remains alive. It is not sufficient that the Jew find himself in

the sea of Torah and Yiddishkeit only on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kipur or Shabbos; he must be immersed in it every day and every hour. Then he remains a live creature who also imparts vitality to others and succeeds in establishing a family with "live" children and grandchildren who, like himself, fill their lives with the Torah.

PRAYERS FOR OUR TIMES

Due to the increasing state of instability in the world, Jews should increase in their prayers to G-d, prayers which express the ideas of love for a fellow Jew and peace in the world.

The following prayers were suggested by the Lubavitcher Rebbe Shlita:

בין ימים קודם התפלה (בשחרית)
הריני מקבל עלי מנחת עשה של
ואהבה לרעה קבוק.

It is proper to say before morning prayers:
I hereby take upon myself to
fulfill the mitzvah, "Love your
fellowman as yourself."

למחרת התפלה (בשחרית)
אך צדיקים יודו לשמך יישובו
ישורם את ענוך. (תהלים קטו)

It is proper to say after prayer:
Indeed, the righteous will extol
Your Name; the upright will
dwell in Your presence.

LUBAVITCH OF NORTH CAROLINA INC.

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Lubavitch of North Carolina in Charlotte is an organization devoted to Jewish education. We serve the local and statewide Jewish communities with many programs and activities, which help increase Jewish awareness and observance.

Through our various programs we have reached many affiliated and unaffiliated Jews in our community. Some programs are geared directly to our local university students.

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- **HOLIDAY PROGRAMS:** Community programs are held during the holidays such as a communal Pesach Seder, Succah Festival, Simchat Torah Hakofot, Hanukah Latke Parties, Purim Feast and other programs to enrich our Jewish holidays.
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