



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד **מרדכי מלכא שליט"א**
נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

מחבר ספרי שו"ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד
רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת"ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת"ת מאור ישראל,
ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ"ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים "לקח טוב" קופת "מפעל החסד" אלעד
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Parashat Ki Tisa

Remaining Honest Even When Under Pressure

Words of our Sages

Our *parasha* relates the Jewish Nation's sin with the golden calf. Our Sages wrote in the Midrash Tanchuma (Ki Tisa *siman* 19) that when Moshe Rabbeinu did not descend from Har Sinai when expected, the 40,000 Egyptian converts who joined the Jewish Nation upon leaving Egypt, as well as two Egyptian sorcerers, who performed sorcery in front of Pharaoh, gathered before Aharon. They said that it was the 6th hour of the fortieth day since Moshe had ascended Har Sinai, and they thought that he was not coming back. Aharon and Chur told them that Moshe would soon return, but they did not listen to him. Some say that Satan showed them an image of Moshe Rabbeinu's deathbed on the mountain, and this persuaded them. Chur rose and rebuked them, and they murdered him. When Aharon saw this he became frightened. They told him to make a false god for them. Therefore Aharon told them to take their wives' gold earrings. Aharon specifically told them to do something that would be difficult for them, for the women saw all of the miracles and wonders that Hashem performed for them at the sea and in Egypt. When approached, the women said, "*Chas ve'shalom*, we will not deny Hashem, who made all these miracles and mighty acts for us. Now we should worship idols?" When the women did not agree, the men took their own jewelry and brought them to Aharon. Aharon raised his eyes to Heaven and said to Hashem, "To you I turn my eyes, to the One Who sits in the Heavens." (*Tehillim* 123). You know all of man's thoughts and know that I am doing this against my will." He threw the gold into the fire, and the sorcerers came and performed sorcery... They took the tablet that Moshe used to raise the coffin of Yosef from the Nile, and they threw it into the fire amongst the earrings. A golden calf emerged and they started to say, "This is your god, Israel." The Heavenly angels asked, "Have the Jews forgotten Hashem, their Savior, who performed wonders for them in Egypt?" What did Aharon do? He said, "I am going to delay them until tomorrow." And therefore said to them, "Tomorrow will be a festival..."

Questions:

- 1) We must understand, our *parasha* (33:21) relates that Moshe blamed Aharon for the great sin of worshipping the golden calf. Why did Moshe Rabbeinu blame Aharon for this? Did Aharon cause it? The people did it against his will!
- 2) It is furthermore difficult, for Aharon responded that he was not at fault, but, rather, yielded to the pressure that the people applied. Then why does the *pasuk* (ibid. 25) say that Aharon had "exposed their disgrace," as if he was responsible?

A Leader Must be Able to Withstand Pressure

Let us try to understand Moshe's claim against Aharon. There is no doubt that he knew that Aharon did not sin *chas ve'shalom*, and that his intentions were only for the sake of Heaven. Since Moshe had been delayed according to their calculation, the Jews were frightened and pressured Aharon. Furthermore,



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they even killed Chur, who opposed their act. This is why Aharon acquiesced, thinking that in a few moments Moshe would return and everything would be fine. This is why he asked them to take their wives' gold, assuming that they would resist, and that this would delay them. But it did not. Rather, they took their own jewelry and brought it to Aharon. It was thrown into the fire and a golden calf emerged. Nevertheless, since Aharon had been appointed as the leader in Moshe's stead while he was up high, Moshe leveled a claim against him that he should have stood up to the pressure of the people. He should have refused their demands, not allowing any room for this wicked thought to manifest. This is why Moshe got angry at Aharon and claimed that he had brought the Jews to commit the sin, and if he would not have yielded to pressure, they would not have transgressed. Therefore even after Aharon explained his intentions, and how he had attempted to delay the people until Moshe's return, rather than fight with them, Moshe's claim still stood. He claimed that by yielding to pressure and requesting them to bring their gold, it brought about the sin. Moshe himself exemplified this trait, as we see that when he descended from Har Sinai he destroyed the calf and even forced all of the individuals suspected of sin to drink water that was mixed with it. Yet he people did not object, because Moshe was able to stand up to the people and would not be swayed from speaking the absolute truth. Rashi therefore explains that Moshe asked Aaron, "How much suffering did you have to endure for the people to cause you to do commit such a sin?" Because a leader must stand firm. We see therefore that that the true test of man's integrity and loyalty is when he is faced with pressure and trying to be coerced, but remains strong. This shows what he truly is. But when he gives in or even lies treacherously because of pressure, he is nothing but a lowly individual, who lacks a backbone and proper priorities in life. Sadly this is what we see taking place presently in our land.

Shaul HaMelech Lost His Kingship Because he Yielded to Pressure

The Navi (*Shmuel* 1 15: 1-26) states that despite being commanded by Hashem to wipe out the nation of Amalek, Shaul refrained from doing so completely, because he feared the people. Shaul was told that even though he was humble and small in his own eyes, he had nevertheless been chosen to be the king of the Jewish Nation. His first assignment as king was to entirely decimate the nation of Amalek, including every man, woman, child, and animal. Yet because of the nation's pressure, Shaul left Agag, the king of Amalek alive, as well as sheep and cattle. This enraged Hashem and as a result, He took away Shaul's kingship and gave it to David instead. We see from here how man is judged by how he acts in moments of pressure. Will he stand firm and not compromise on his values or will he yield to his evil inclination? This is why Shaul lost his kingship.

The Greatness of Esther

We are soon to celebrate Purim, days on which transpired a great miracle. These days were transformed from days of mourning to festivity, and saw the Jews overcome their enemies. When we contemplate the miracle that is related in *Megillat Esther*, we will realize that it was wrought through both Esther and Mordechai standing firm and not yielding to pressure. The Megillah relates (2:10) that Esther, despite constant pressure from the king, nevertheless, obeyed Mordechai and did not reveal her identity.



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Eventually, this enabled the miracle to take place. For if she would have revealed from the outset that she was a Jew, she may not have been chosen as the queen, and would not have been in the position to save the Jews from Haman's decree. If she would have revealed that she was a Jew, Haman would not have dared have issued a decree against her nation, but would have killed Mordechai alone, since he transgressed the king's law by not bowing to Haman. By not yielding to pressure, and refraining from revealing her identity until the second party, the process of redemption was enabled.

The Greatness of Mordechai HaYehudi

Similarly, the Megillah (3:1-13) relates how Mordechai stood firm against all of the pressure that was placed upon him, refusing to bow to Haman despite the king's command. This was despite the fact that Haman's anger flared and he decided to destroy all of the Jews. He listened to his advisors and prepared a tree on which to hang Mordechai. In the end, this is precisely what brought about his defeat. We see from here how man is tested by how he will react under pressure. If he stands firm and upholds his principles, he merits kingship, miracles, and redemption.

Story About R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt"l

In the *sefer Ha'ish al Ha'chomah* (volume 3, pg. 346) it is related that a group of thugs once burst into the house of R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld zt"l and threatened to murder him, but the Rav responded calmly to their antics. His response only riled them up even more, and when it reached its peak, the Rav ripped open his shirt and revealed his chest. He suddenly rose from his chair, stood opposite them, and in a firm voice said, "I am ready to sanctify the Name of Hashem. Shoot and kill me, but I will not budge one iota from the truth." Surprised, the bandits left the house.

Words of Mussar

We have learned how great a test it is for man when he under pressure. It is specifically then that we can gauge how steadfast he is in his values, both regarding his relationship between him and Hashem and between him and his fellow man. For when things are serene and running smoothly, there is no evidence that he is trustworthy, since nothing is deterring him from doing so. But when he is being pressured to betray the Will of Hashem, yet stands firm, similar to Mordechai and Esther, he merits enormously. The same holds true when he is being pressured to betray his fellow men, yet nevertheless, withstands the pressure – he merits greatness. However, one who yields to the pressure shows that he is not truly a man of principle. If an individual is willing to testify falsely for the State, simply in order to save himself, he reveals that he has no backbone. He becomes the lowest of men, and loses everything in the process. Even if he theoretically would have earned some noteworthy achievement, such actions prevent him from ever achieving it. This bears a similarity to Shaul HaMelech, who lost his kingship because he yielded to the nation's pressure. We must draw strength from Purim, to stand strong in every situation and perform the Will of Hashem, both regarding our relationship with Him and with our fellow man. By doing so, we will merit every blessing and salvation. *Amen ve'amen.*

Shabbat Shalom and Purim Sameach,



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With friendship and Love,
Rav Mordecai Malka