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RESEARCH UNIT

שבת..... *for Friday nights* קדש

Friday 26 February 2010 - 12 Adar 5770
Sedra Tetzaveh - Purim

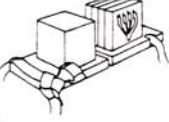
THE SELF-SACRIFICE OF LEADERSHIP

A HIGHLY VALUED PRIZE IN GENERAL SOCIETY IS THAT OF LEADERSHIP. Political figures strive their utmost to gain a key position. In Jewish teaching, by contrast, the process of leadership is often seen as one of self-sacrifice.

There is a hint to that in the Purim story, which will be read in the Megilah on Saturday night after Shabbat, and again on Sunday. We see this in the very last verse of the Megilah, which tells us that following the great victory of the Jewish people, “Mordechai the Jew was viceroy to King Ahasuerus; he was great among the Jews and accepted by most of his colleagues”.

What a strange way of putting it! Mordechai, the hero of the Purim story and honoured member of the Sanhedrin, is described as accepted by *most* of his colleagues, the other members of the Sanhedrin, not by all of them!

The reason for this is given in the Talmud¹. Mordechai had managed to save the Jewish people and, as viceroy to the King, he continued to work tirelessly on their behalf. However, this meant that he was not able to devote as much time to his own Torah study as he would have liked.



Celebrating the Bar Mitzva of
Avraham Leivi Yitzhak Endfield שלי
9 Adar 5770

As a leading member of the Sanhedrin and a major scholar his own right, he would have liked to spend a large proportion of his time exploring the depths of Torah. However, this was partly denied him because of his commitments in Court circles. He had to spend much of his time on the continuous struggle to protect the Jews and argue their cause in the many issues which arose, instead of immersing himself in the profundities of Torah study to the exclusion of all else. Of course, much of his time was spent in Torah study: but not as much as he would have liked. For Mordechai, this was felt as the sacrifice which had to be made for the sake of his efforts to protect the Jewish people.

Precisely this question disturbed some of his colleagues in the Sanhedrin. ‘Why does Mordechai spend so much time in the Palace?’ they wondered. They did not appreciate the significance of his work on behalf of the ordinary Jew. By contrast, the majority of the members of the Sanhedrin *did* appreciate both his efforts for the Jewish people and the daily self-sacrifice these entailed².

For Mordechai, leadership and political position was for the sake of others and meant a personal spiritual loss, which he felt keenly. The same is true of Moses. He too had self-sacrifice for the Jewish people in his own time, striving to defend them when G-d was angry with them and wanted to wipe them out for making the Golden Calf. This incident is described in next week’s Sedra. During Moses’ pleading with G-d to spare the Jewish people he says: “If you do not save them, wipe me out from the Book which You have written!”³

G-d responded to this plea, and the Jewish people were spared. But in response to Moses’ passionate words, his name was in fact blotted out: from *our* Sedra⁴.

This is because the words of a Tzaddik (righteous man) always have an effect. Our Sedra is the only one since the birth of Moses in which his name is not mentioned. As in the case of Mordechai, this too expresses the self-sacrifice of a Jewish leader on behalf of his people. And our response is to try to live up to the ideals which our leaders and teachers present to us as our goals in life.

1. Megilah 16b, and Rashi’s commentary. 2. See the Lubavitcher Rebbe’s *Likkutei Sichot*, vol. 16, pp.373-377. 3. Exodus 27:20-30:10. 4. Exodus 27:20-30:10. See the first comment by the Baal HaTurim.

Torah teachings are holy - please treat this page with care

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*SEDRA TETZAVEH - PURIM***DECISION**

The air was exciting! The air was electric! It was a time for celebration, it was almost Purim!

Steve was getting dressed up as a science fiction robot, Sam was going to be a rock player with a guitar and stuff. Those were the more adventurous ones. Other friends of Michael were being a police officer, a fireman, king Ahasuerus, nasty Haman, a doctor with a stethoscope, a professor with funny glasses.

But what about Michael himself? He still wasn't sure what to do. He wanted something original. His sister Leah was planning to dress up as a Chinese doctor, with herbs, potions and acupuncture needles. She had already been to the party shop to get a long flowing colourful dress. Michael had still not decided, and it was already Tuesday, a few days before the fast of Esther.

"Alright Michael" said his mother that evening, "what do you want to be for Purim?" Michael shook his head. His mother smiled wearily. She hoped that when he finally made his decision, it would be something easy to make.

Next morning, Michael was in school, and they were in the Sedra class. Mr Benson was speaking about the High Priest, called Kohen Gadol.

"He had eight garments," said Mr Benson. He switched on the computer projector and the boys watched a Power Point of diagrams and pictures of the garments of the High Priest. First came the clothes of an ordinary Priest. Dan, who sat next to Michael, was particularly interested because he was a Cohen.

There was a turban made of a long piece of linen, a full length white linen tunic, linen trousers and a long multi-coloured belt wound above his waist.

Those clothes were also worn by the High Priest but he had four extra garments. There was a cloak of blue wool, with gold bells and decorative pomegranates on the hem; then there was a kind of apron called an Ephod made of blue, purple and red-dyed wool, linen and gold thread; on his chest was the Breastplate of Judgement, which had twelve precious stones inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Finally there was a wide golden band worn on his forehead bearing the inscription "Holy to G-d".

Watching the pictures on the screen, it suddenly struck Michael: "I will get dressed up as a High Priest! It will be great... I can't wait to tell my mother about this!"

After school he came running home, barged in through the front door, zoomed past his sister Leah, right into the kitchen. "Guess what," he said, "I am going to be a High Priest". I knew it, thought his mother. He's chosen the most difficult costume possible.

"Oh really, that's nice" she said. "But I just wonder how we will be able to organise it all."

"Don't worry," said Michael. "I've got a good idea how to make everything. Like the Breastplate of Judgement, that will be a square of cardboard which I will spray-paint gold, and then make jewels out of silver foil and paint them different colours..."

"Yes," said Leah, who had overheard, "it will be easy! And I bet Dad will help as well. He likes that kind of thing." "Well" said their mother, "alright, but please do the spray-painting out in the backyard. And Leah, don't forget you also promised to help me make hamantaschen...."

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