

In view of the characteristics that each of these two stones encompass, we can understand the significance of building the walls of Yerushalayim with these stones. For the shoham stone signifies about that which Yeshaya had prophesied (ישעיהו י"א ט), מלאה - the entire universe will be full of Hashem's wisdom. Success and revelations will also become commonplace in those days. All this is signified by the characteristics of the shoham stone. The yashfeh stone as well, bears an association about the rebuilt Yerushalayim, in which Hashem's Compassion will always be aroused, constantly protecting His People from all harm.

זרע שמשון פרשתנו אות ד

Megillas Esther

Why Haman Did Not Want to Kill Mordechai Alone

וַיֹּאמְרוּ עֲבָדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְמֹרְדֵכָי, מָדוּעַ אַתָּה עוֹבֵר אֶת מִצְוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיְהִי כִּאֲמֹרָם אֵלָיו יוֹם וַיֹּם וְלֹא שָׁמַע אֲלֵיהֶם, וַיִּגִּידוּ לְהֶמֶן, לְרֵאוֹת הַיַּעֲמָדוֹ דְּבָרֵי מֹרְדֵכָי, כִּי הִגִּיד לָהֶם אֲשֶׁר הוּא יְהוּדִי: וַיֵּרָא הֶמֶן כִּי אֵין מֹרְדֵכָי כֹּרַע וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לוֹ, וַיִּמְלֵא הֶמֶן חֵמָה: וַיִּבֹז בְּעֵינָיו לְשַׂחַד בְּמֹרְדֵכָי לְבָדוֹ, כִּי הִגִּידוּ לוֹ אֶת עִם מֹרְדֵכָי, וַיִּבְקַשׁ הֶמֶן לְהַשְׁמִיד אֶת כָּל הַיְהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל מְלָכוֹת אַחַשְׁוֵירוֹשׁ, עִם מֹרְדֵכָי: (אסתר ג ג-ו)

The King's servants at the King's gate said to Mordechai, "Why do you disobey the King's command?" Finally, when they said this to him day after day and he did not heed them, they told this to Haman; to see whether Mordechai's words would endure, for he had told them that he was a Jew. However, it seemed contemptible to him to lay his hands on Mordechai alone, for they had made known to him the people of Mordechai; so Haman sought to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the entire kingdom of Achashveirosh - the people of Mordechai.

Mordechai told the King's servants that he was a Jew and was therefore unable to bow down to Haman. They in turn shared Mordechai's words with Haman, in order to see 'whether Mordechai's words would endure'. It would seem from this retort that there was a possibility that Mordechai's words would not endure. This needs to be understood; for all Mordechai stated was that he was a Jew, and that was indeed a fact which did not need to withstand the test of endurance.

Haman's immediate reaction was to lay his hands on Mordechai, but that seemed contemptible to him; he therefore sought to destroy all the Jewish People. We need to understand, firstly, why killing Mordechai alone would be so contemptible, and secondly, why did he seek to destroy the entire Jewish People; after all they all bowed to him, and it was only Mordechai who refused to bow.

The Gemara (מגילה יג ע"א) expounds on the Passuk in Megillas Esther (ב ה) which introduces Mordechai. איש יהודי היה בשושן הבירה ושמו מרדכי בן יאיר בן שמעי. There was a Yehudahite in Shushan, the capitol, and his name was Mordechai, son of Yair, son of Shimi, son of Kish, a Binyaminite. The Gemara is bothered by an apparent contradiction in this Passuk, for at first it refers to him as איש יהודי - a Yehudahite, implying that he came from the

tribe of Yehudah, yet at the end the Passuk refers to him as איש ימיני - a Binyaminite, implying that he came from the tribe of Binyamin.

The Gemara resolves this contradiction as follows. *Mordechai in fact descended from the tribe of Binyamin, which is why he is referred to as איש ימיני - a Binyaminite. Why then is he also referred to as איש יהודי - a Yehudahite? Because he rejected idolatry by not bowing down to Haman, who made himself into an object of worship, and whoever rejects idolatry is called יהודי - a Yehudahite, which is a reference to the 'absolute Jew'. In this vein, the Passuk also refers to Chaniah, Mishael and Azariah as Yehudahites, after they refused to bow down to the golden idol image that Nevuchadnezzar erected.*

Accordingly, it seems that the Passuk refers to Mordechai as a Yehudahite, in praise of his refusal to commit idol worship. This is very difficult to comprehend. Was Mordechai being praised for observing a most basic commandment?! After all, it is the most basic and fundamental obligation of every Jew to give up his life rather than to commit this most severe cardinal sin.

It would thus seem that bowing down to Haman, although had the appearance of idolatry, nevertheless was not an actual violation of idol worship for which one is obligated to give up his life. This is accordance to the Gemara in Sanhedrin (סא ע"ב) that explains that one who bows down to an idol merely out of fear, but does not actually accept the idol as a deity, is not liable. In view of this we can understand, firstly, why all the other Jews did indeed bow down to Haman, as it was not a transgression of idolatry, and secondly, we can understand why the Megillah praises Mordechai, referring to him as איש יהודי - a Yehudahite, as he was being praised for putting his life in danger in order to display his Jewishness and commitment to Hashem, by not bowing to anything that even resembles idol worship, even though according to strict Halacha he was not obligated to do so.



When Mordechai told the King's servants that he was a יהודי - Yehudahite, he was alluding to the idea that is referenced by this expression. He was expressing that he was an 'absolute Jew', and would thus not bow down to Haman although strictly speaking it wasn't considered idol worship. It was this notion that the servants shared with Haman, and to which they retorted, "let us see whether Mordechai's words will endure", as if to say, "let us see how long Mordechai will prevail in remaining an 'absolute Jew' and face danger while resisting to bow down to Haman".

When Haman heard this idea, his reaction was one of respect and admiration. He respected the consistency that Mordechai displayed when it came to his religious conduct, ready to sacrifice his life for the sake of his beliefs, even when they were just a slight veer from his principles. This was the reason why Haman felt it 'contemptible to lay his hands on Mordechai alone'. But towards Mordechai's people, the Jewish Nation, Haman grew very angry; for on the one hand, they refused to mingle with their non-Jewish neighbors, and always conducted themselves in manners which were so foreign to the other nations, but when facing pressure and resistance they demonstrated utter weakness and could not stand up for their beliefs. This is what aroused Haman's ire, leading him to seek to destroy all the Jews who were throughout the entire kingdom of Achashveirosh.

זרע שמשון מגילת אסתר אות ג

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