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SUGGESTED READINGS:

SEE THESE AND OTHER ARTICLES AT OUR SITE

Maimonides' 13 PRINCIPLES

THE BASIC FOUNDATIONS WHICH ALL JEWS
MUST KNOW AS TRUE. WE URGE YOU TO READ THEM:
www.mesora.org/13principles.html

God's Existence Belief or Proof?

www.mesora.org/belieforproof.html

God's Land Without God?

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE JEWISH COMMUNITY:
www.mesora.org/openletter/openletter2.html

Prayer

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

The preamble to prayer is "know before whom you stand." If one's ideas concerning the One he is praying to are corrupt his prayers must be equally corrupt. I think it should be made clear that one of the cardinal principles of our faith is that the Creator lacks nothing, needs nothing, and obtains nothing from his creatures. God gains nothing from our worship of Him. We recite this in our prayer of Neila on Yom Kippur "And even if he (man) is righteous what [benefit] does he give you?" This is based on a verse in Job (35:7). Nachmanides expands on this topic in Deuteronomy (22:6) and states, "our words [of praise] and remembrances of his wonders are considered as nothingness and emptiness to Him". He states unequivocally that all the mitzvos we do are only for our own benefit and

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Haman's Intolerance

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

In the Megillas Esther read on Purim, in chapter 3, verse 4, we learn that the other ministers had informed Haman that Mordechai was not following Haman's command to bow to him.

Why did these ministers in King Achashverosh's court need to inform Haman? Wouldn't Haman know this, seeing Mordechai perfectly erect?

Either Haman knew or didn't know about Mordechai's refusal. If Haman didn't know, then it makes sense in 3:5 that his anger flared upon hearing of Mordechai's deviation. As this is in line with Haman's nature. When he would first hear of something going against his egocentricity, Haman would be angered.

But perhaps Haman DID in fact know that Mordechai didn't bow to him. This is more plausible, as why should Haman alone be ignorant of Mordechai's behavior? This being the case, we must ask, "Why didn't make a big deal about Mordechai's refusal immediately upon his first encounter of Mordechai's disobedience?"

One possibility is that the very same ego which caused Haman to desire others to bow to him, would also cause him to avoid the reality of that one person disgracing him. This is intolerable to Haman, and perhaps why he didn't face it until it was brought out in the open in 3:4 (suggested by Eva Tavlin). Only now did Haman have to deal with it as he could no longer act for his own motives alone, i.e., suppressing this disturbing fact. Similarly, Pharaoh forgot Joseph after Joseph's death. A rabbi explained, Pharaoh could not tolerate the loss of Joseph. He was in great need of Joseph's insights as a security that he, Pharaoh, could successfully rule Egypt. Therefore, upon Joseph's death, Pharaoh feigned complete ignorance of the entire era of Joseph as a means to say, "I never needed him and I am a capable ruler independent of another's assistance". Such a denial allows Pharaoh to feel capable once again. Haman acted as Pharaoh, denying Mordechai's blatant opposition, but only to the point that the matter was no longer avoidable.

Reverting to the Megilla, the other ministers in the courtyard who brought this news to Haman did so as they didn't want to see Mordechai getting away with it. This is why the passage states "to see if Mordechai's position would stand". ■



ASK YOUR CHILDREN:

"How many stories within the Megilla happened because Haman was angry?"

Questions & Answers

E-mail us: questions@mesora.org

Reader: God gave us emotions for a purpose; however, if we are to approach His wisdom entirely from a rational standpoint, then what are the proper role of emotions and sentimentality in our lives and service of the Divine Will?

Mesora: The Talmud states that they once tied up the instincts - also referred to as the yetzer hara - and this resulted in chickens not laying eggs, and man not moving to accomplish anything. Emotions are needed to drive man. He needs the psychological design of an "energy source". This emotional energy drives man, motivates him, and is responsible in all its forms for man's accomplishments.

Emotions, or the yetzer hara, are comprised of feelings of hate, revenge, love, passion, rejection, anticipation, sensitivity, jealousy, dignity, and many others. God's plan is that man harness these instincts and use them in service of the Torah. Harnessing emotions for Torah's goals can be expressed positively as in loving your neighbor,

lending money to the poor, and negatively by speaking loshon hora. In some cases we must force ourselves to maintain more positive feelings, as in helping a friend....at the same time, we must subjugate our "natural" feelings of resistance of helping your enemy when his burden is great to the Torah's loftier goals.

Why God created man "this way" with instincts, is an area of knowledge which we cannot obtain answers. However, man can examine creation and understand God's wisdom from the perspective of the observer, as this is how He designed our minds to operate.

Besides being the fuel of man's actions, the emotions contribute to numerous enjoyments, such as learning, family, friends and experiences. God designed man to live in this happy state. God also designed man with a natural curiosity which propels man to appreciate Torah. New insights in turn encourage man to seek further understanding of the Creator. ■