



11 Adar 5781

Tuesday, Parshat Tetzaveh

23 February 2021

Distancing Oneself from Materialism

When Esther was about to approach king Achashverosh to plead for mercy on behalf of her people because of the wicked Haman's decree, she asked Mordechai to declare a fast of three days for all the Jewish people and she and her attendants would join them in this fast. During those three days, the entire nation would intensify their repentance, prayers, charity and good deeds and thereby Hashem will annul the bad decree.

However, three consecutive days of fasting is not something simple at all. The longer the fast endures, the more one's physical strength declines. If so, after three days of fasting the people will have less strength to repent and intensify their prayers and good deeds. So why did Esther ask Mordechai to decree three days of fasting and not make do with just one day, like the other fasts that are never longer than a single day?

One can say that Mordechai and Esther understood the secret of detaching oneself from materialism that requires three days of separation. At the time of accepting the Torah, Moshe Rabbeinu warned the people to separate from materialism for three days prior to the receiving of the Torah, "*He said to the people, 'Be prepared after a three-day period; do not draw near a woman'*" (Shemot 19:15). Also, when Moshe Rabbeinu asked Pharaoh to allow the people to leave Egypt to sacrifice to Hashem, he asked for three days. "*We will go on a three-day journey in the Wilderness, and bring offerings to Hashem, our G-d, as He will tell us*". Because three days is the time needed to detach oneself from the three things that bind man to materialism: Jealousy, lust and honor.

During the days of Purim, Am Yisrael once again accepted the Torah willingly and out of love. It was actually like a new Matan Torah, therefore Esther asked that now too Am Yisrael should separate en-

tirely from the three things that bind one to materialism. That is why she asked Mordechai to declare a fast of three days, for only once the people will be detached from any negative and materialistic trait, will they be capable of accepting the Torah upon themselves anew.

My esteemed father zya"á used to say that minimizing materialism leads to an increase in spirituality. He would quote the prayer, "*He makes the wind (חור) blow and He makes the rain (מטג) descend*" and quip that the more a person casts off materialism (a play on the word 'מטג', which has the same root letters as 'תוימשג', materialism), to that extent he brings 'spirituality (חור - תוינחור) upon himself.

My esteemed father zya"á was a true example of this behavior. Abba zya"á disregarded materialism and on the other hand, nurtured and elevated his spirituality. He guarded himself closely so that G-d forbid he should not stumble in any way. Throughout his life, he made do with little and saw the fulfillment of the verse (Tehillim 34:11), "*Those who seek Hashem will not lack any good*". Even when he possessed nothing he always felt that he was not lacking any good, for his heart was not drawn after the pleasures of This World. His clothes were modest and simple, his food was plain, yet he was always smiling and ready to encourage and help any destitute or down-trodden person.

Ima a"á told me that there were times when Abba only had a single shirt and when it would require cleaning he had no other shirt to wear meanwhile. So immediately after it was washed Abba would put it back on while it was still wet... Despite the poverty and lack he never complained about his situation, on the contrary, he was happy that the Creator merited him with toiling in Torah while being satisfied with little.

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