



## Purim Special

During one of the hot summers in Borough Park I entered an electrical appliance store where as it happened one of the vendors recognized me; "It is because of you that I have remained an observant Jew!" he exclaimed.

It turned out that he knew me from 30 years ago when I was on a trip in the US to promote Jewish heritage and identity.

I spent Purim in Cleveland with a group of Yeshiva students. Initially I turned down the invitation because of my schedule, but the host convinced me to come, saying that my presence may have an effect on the Yeshiva boys who were attending.

I spent the entire night with the students. I expanded on one of the Megillah's messages, that a Jew must not be deterred by a challenge. I was passionate with said my words, and it turns out that they had an effect.

Mordechai was one of the students who was at the Purim event. At the time, he was not sure about his Jewishness. He had joined a Yeshiva, and it was a difficult move, because he did not come from a religious family.

After two years of study his family requested that he come visit. He was aware of the difficulties of such a visit, but had ordered tickets to fly to them a day after Purim.

"And then you came to the Yeshiva," he recalled 30 years later. "You taught me not to bow to pressure, I felt like you were speaking directly to me."

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When speaking to the students I focused on lessons I learned in the study of the verse from the Megillah: "but Mordechai did not bow."

The verse in Hebrew is written in a future tense – why is that so?

The Ari Z"L's students explain that Mordechai rectified Yaacov's actions. Yaacov did bow to Esav. Mordechai is a

continuation of Yaacov, and Haman is a continuation of Esav, and Mordechai's actions were a *Tikkun* of those committed by Yaacov.

From here our Sages learn that when an order is given and it runs counter to the teachings of the Torah one should not obey them and clearly exhibit his defiant actions.

Mordechai disobeyed Haman's command to bow before him in public, and in doing so put his life in danger, but also taught a lesson for the generations to come.

Therefore, the verse was written in a future tense – an example for future generations that one should not fear challenging situations.

The outcome of Mordechai's actions were clear – not only was no harm done, but the Jewish People were ultimately redeemed.

One should not bow, but rather should proudly display his Judaism, and by doing so will merit redemption.

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"After the night long event I asked you why I was chosen to contend with such challenges."

He recounted how I took out a Sfas Emes book and read to him the verses about how those who are on the proper path are presented with obstacles. "If you face challenges it mean you are on the right path," I told him.

"I was on the proper path, I stayed in Yeshiva." He concluded.

It turns out that my words did in fact have an effect on one individual.

