

In מגילת אסתר, there are so many wonderful פשטים, so many different chap-vertlach, that it's truly a delight to read. However, one idea I heard a number of years ago, which I think is particularly appropriate, very יסודותדיק, and incredibly גשמק, goes as follows.

מרדכי learns of המן's edict. Naturally, he tears his clothing, dons sackcloth, and goes to the palace. However, he does not enter fully because one may not enter the palace gates while wearing sackcloth. אסתר sees him from her window and sends down הַתָּךְ to inquire about what is happening. מרדכי sends back המן's edict and tells her, "Look what he plans to do to the Jews! You must go in and plead for your people." אסתר responds, "I can't. I haven't been summoned to the king, and anyone who enters the throne room without being called - אַחַת דָּתוֹ לְהַמִּית - is finished, he's קפוט." מרדכי replies with one of the most dramatic פסוקים in all of תנ"ך (אסתר ד':י"ד): "אם הַחֵרֶשׁ תִּחְרִישִׁי בַעֲת הַזֹּאת רֹחַ וְהַצֵּלָה יֵצְמוּד לַיהוּדִים מִמָּקוֹם אֲחֵר וְאַתָּה - If you're quiet now, Hashem will save us, some other way, but you וּבֵית אָבִיךָ תֵּאבְדוּ. וּמִי יוֹדֵעַ אִם לָעַת כְּזֹאת הַגְעַתָּ לְמַלְכוּת - If you're quiet now, Hashem will save us, some other way, but you and your father's house will be lost, and who knows, maybe this is why you reached to be מלכות, to be the queen now."

There is a glaring problem with this אסתר פסוק. She had no parents. What does וּבֵית אָבִיךָ mean? What was מרדכי telling her?

To understand this, we must first ask: From which שבט did אסתר come? She was from שבט בנימין. שבט בנימין was known to be shy and reserved. When the brothers accused בנימין of stealing the גְּבִיעַ and treated him harshly, did he protest? Did he fight back? No. He remained silent. It was his nature - shy, retiring, quiet. Perhaps if there had been an ענין, a reason to speak up, he would have. But here, he saw no point, so he held his tongue.

This is precisely what מרדכי was telling אסתר: "If your instinct is to remain silent, you must overcome that. But if you understand when to be silent and when to speak up, that means you have mastery over yourself. It means you can control your fate rather than being controlled by your nature."

When מרדכי says, וּבֵית אָבִיךָ תֵּאבְדוּ, he is telling her: "If you remain silent now, then בנימין's legacy is lost. Perhaps בנימין never spoke because he simply could not. Perhaps it wasn't in him to speak. But if you stand up now and fight for your people, it will prove that you understand when to speak and when to remain silent."

What was the beautiful jewel in the חֶשֶׁן worn by the כהן גדול that represented בנימין? ישפה. ישפה means יש - there is a mouth. When you need to use it, you use it. When it's better to be quiet, you be quiet. If you speak up now, we will know that you are in control, that you understand how to use the מדות that הקודש gave you and the circumstances in which He placed you. But if you stay silent, your שבט's legacy will be lost forever. Have a פריילעכן פורים!

