

Purim Hebron

In the 1700's the city of Hebron was home to a small group of Jewish families. These families suffered under the hands of the Ottoman Turk Pashas who were constantly extorting money from them on pain of exile or execution. One day in the winter of 1740 the Pasha summoned the leaders of the Jewish community. He demanded an astronomical sum of money (50,000 gold coins in one version 100,000 in another). The community was given until the 14th of Tevet (3 or 30 days) to produce the money or they would all be killed. Raising this sum of money was an impossibility.

When they learned of the impossible demands placed upon them the Jews of Hebron turned to prayer and fasting. They knew that only a miracle could help them. The day before the deadline, the leaders decided to petition the Patriarchs buried in the Ma'arat HaMachpela Burial Cave in their city to beseech the Heavens on their behalf. They would do this by means of a note. They felt this was their last and only hope.

In those days, Jews were forbidden to enter the Tomb. In return for a generous bribe the watchman agreed to insert their note through the grating of the tomb. That night figures of three old men appeared to the Pasha. "If your life is dear to you," they warned him, "give us at once the very sum that you are demanding from the Jewish community." Gripped by fear, he scrambled out of bed, opened up his vault, counted out the amount and put it in a sack. The men took the money and disappeared. The Pasha dismissed the episode as a dream.

On the morning of the 14th of Tevet the shamash of the shul arrived and found a sack sitting in the window of the shul. Opening it he discovered that it contained the required sum of gold coins. When he received the coins the Pasha immediately returned them and promised to treat the community well in the future. A miracle had indeed taken place.

The Jews of Hebron celebrated the great miracle and established that day, the fourteenth of Tevet as a festival, calling it "Purim Taka or Window Purim".