

Purim- The Greatest Masquerade

Rabbi Eliyahu Maksumov

There is a startling statement by the Rambam, who writes that when Moshiach comes, all the books of the Prophets and Ketuvim will be nullified, and only Megillat Esther will remain. This means that while all the other holidays will fade away, Purim will remain forever.

The story of Megillat Esther appears to be simply a story of events with no open miracles. It's quite natural for a king to make a party, reward people for saving his life, and for people to want to assassinate the king—these things happen in every government. What makes this story so special that it deserves a whole day of joyous festivities?

To have a better understanding of the Purim “masquerade,” let’s delve a little deeper and see what really occurred...

The story begins with an impulsive king from Babylonia who moved his empire to Persia over a throne he set his eyes on which once belonged to Shlomo HaMelech. He replicated it and built it in Shushan, but because it was too heavy to transfer, he relocated his entire kingdom to Shushan. Imagine how bizarre it would be for the president to move the entire White House to Chicago! Yet G-d orchestrated the story to take place in Shushan because, as the megilla says, “Ish Yehudi Haya Beshushan”. The hero of the story can't save the day if it happens in Babylonia. Hence the story was brought to Mordechai and Esther!

The next step was to get Vashti off the throne and replace her with Esther. Vashti set up her own destruction by situating the party next door to the men's party with immoral intentions. One thing led to another and the men started comparing wives, which led Achashverosh to demand that his wife come out to impress the other men. Had Vashti complied, the Purim miracle may never have taken place. Yet she defied her natural immoral instinct, and suddenly became modest and refused to come out. Achashverosh asked his 7 advisers how to respond. The 6 highest officials said that Vashti was innocent, yet Memuchan, the lowest ranking, said “Guilty!” Memuchan, who happens to be Haman, had an ulterior motive—he wanted his own daughter on the throne. As such, Hashem arranged for Memuchan to vote against Vashti. Achashverosh should have not even taken the opinion of the lowest adviser over the other 6, yet he allowed him to overrule the majority opinion. Even more astonishing, rather than getting insulted, the others changed their minds to go along with Memuchan's opinion.

Achashverosh now needed to find a new wife but had no one from whom to ask advice. After Vashti was executed, Achashverosh regretted his decision, and his advisors ran away to avoid punishment. As a result, only the lowest advisers remained—lads in their teenage years! They advised him, as any teenager would, to marry the most beautiful woman and ignore background and pedigree. Achashverosh took their advice and threw a beauty pageant. Esther came begrudgingly, putting her life on the line. According to some opinions, she had a green complexion, was age 70, and had the audacity to disobey the king's request to reveal her identity. Despite all this, Hashem planted in Achashverosh's mind not only to not execute Esther, but to pick her as his queen!

Next, Hashem brought Mordechai into the story, through Esther advising Achashverosh to take him as his adviser. Achashverosh replaced Bigtan and Teresh with Mordechai. In retaliation, Bigtan and Teresh plotted to get rid of Achashverosh, speaking in a foreign language, not realizing Mordechai knew all 70 languages. Mordechai told Esther the plot, and Achashverosh executed Bigtan and Teresh, and placed Mordechai in his book of chronicles. In the meantime, Esther waited for the right moment to inform Achashverosh of Haman's evil plans.

Next Achashverosh was unable to sleep, and remembered that he forgot to reward Mordechai. Lo and behold, Haman barged in to the king's room at the perfect moment! If he'd come a moment earlier, Achashverosh wouldn't have recalled overlooking Mordechai. Achashverosh commanded Haman to have Mordechai honored on the king's horse. Haman's downfall finally begins.

The next day Esther set up the final meal between them, and accused Haman of wanting to kill her and her people. Achashverosh walked out onto his porch and found the gallows Haman prepared for Mordechai to be hung upon. Just the night before, Achashverosh had remembered Mordechai saving his life and was overwhelmed with gratitude. Now that he realized Haman wanted to kill the man who saved his life, his rage boiled over the top! Had Achashverosh rewarded Mordechai at the outset, Achashverosh's special feelings toward Mordechai would be long forgotten, and he may not have acted upon her words immediately, giving Haman a chance to escape.

As he walked back into the party, “coincidentally” Haman fell onto Esther, appearing as if he not only wanted to kill Mordechai, but Esther as well. Achashverosh had Haman killed on the spot and hung him on the same gallows which he'd prepared for Mordechai...and the rest is history!

If not for King Solomon's throne, Vashti's plan to place the women next door, Achashverosh's impulsive behavior, and all these other “coincidences,” this astonishing story would never have come to fruition.

Now we can understand why this sefer is even greater than any other story in Tanach and will remain with us forever. Although the miracles are hidden and Hashem's name is nowhere mentioned in the entire story, we find Hashem very much involved. G-d's name is hinted twice in the megilla, once at Haman's elevation and once at Haman's downfall. At Haman's highest point of elevation, when he was invited to Esther's party, the pasuk says “yavo hamelech ve'Haman hayom.” The first letters of these words spell out Hashem's name. Later when Haman falls, the pasuk says “ki chaleeta alav hara'a”, the last letters of each word spelling Hashem's name. Hashem is telling us, “I'm just as involved in your life in the bad times as I am in the good times, from beginning to end.”



In the days of Mashiach, we will realize how Hashem was always by our side throughout our exile, and in our own personal lives along our journey. The celebration of the times of Mashiach will be a celebration of seemingly natural occurrences. It will be the celebration of finally understanding our lives and the world around us, and what better book to bring out that point than one that rejoices in “natural occurrences” because everyone will be celebrating his own personal megilla that he lived through. We might not see open miracles on a daily basis, but the more we open our eyes and look for Hashem and recognize that He runs the world, down to the most minute detail, the more He will reveal himself to us from behind the great masquerade!