

Purim and the Beit HaMikdash – Tetzaveh

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וְעָשִׂיתָ בַּגָּדִי קֹדֶשׁ לְאַהֲרֹן אַחִידָה לְכַבוֹד וּלְתַפְאֵרֶת. (שמות כח, ב)

According to the Tur and the Shlah HaKadosh, when there is a festival during the week, it is hinted to in the parshat hashavua preceding it. The hint to Purim in this week's parsha is easy to find. The Gemara (Megila 12a) on the passuk from Megilat Esther (א, ד) בְּהִרְאֵתוֹ אֶת עֶשֶׂר כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ, explains "R' Yosi the son of R' Chanina says that he (Achashveirosh) wore בַּגָּדֵי כְהֵנָה", the same priestly garments described in this week's parsha, וְאֵלֶּה הַבְּגָדִים אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂוּ חֹשֶׁן וְאַפֹּד וּמַעִיל וְכֹתֶנֶת תְּשֻׁבָּץ מְצַנְנֶת וְאַבְנֵט וְעָשׂוּ בַּגָּדֵי קֹדֶשׁ לְאַהֲרֹן אַחִידָה וּלְבָנָיו לְכַהֵנוּ לִי (שמות כח, ד).

In this shiur, I would like to talk about Purim and specifically – the close connection between Purim and the Beit HaMikdash.

In parshat Emor (ויקרא, כג) the Torah lists all the chagim – Pesach, Shavuot, Rosh HaShana, Yom Kippur, Sukkot. Immediately following this, the Torah begins describing the oil for the Menorah, followed by the Lechem HaPanim. R' Eliezer of Germiza (סימן רמ) asks why does the Torah follow the description of the chagim מְדֻאוֹרְיָתָא with the parshiyot of the Menorah and the Lechem HaPanim? He explains that these are hints in the Torah to the chagim מְדֻרְבָּנָן, i.e. Channukah and Purim. The Menorah and the oil are hints to Channukah and the Lechem HaPanim is a hint to Purim.

Sefer Meir Panim (פרק יד, עמי קמט) brings additional hints to the connection between Purim and the Lechem HaPanim from the passuk -

... שְׁנַיִם עֶשֶׂר חֲדָשׁ כִּי כֹן יִמְלֵאוּ יְמֵי מְרוּקִיָּהוּן שֵׁשֶׁה חֲדָשִׁים בְּשָׂמֹן הַמֵּר וְשֵׁשֶׁה חֲדָשִׁים בְּבִשְׂמִים וּבְתַמְרוּקֵי הַנָּשִׂים (אסתר ב, יב)

The word שְׁנַיִם עֶשֶׂר חֲדָשׁ in gematria is שְׁוֹלְחָן. The word תַּמְרוּקֵי in gematria is שְׁוֹלְחָן בְּוֹד עֲרוּף. The words שְׁנַיִם עֶשֶׂר חֲדָשׁ hint to the twelve loaves of Lechem HaPanim, in two stacks of six - שֵׁשֶׁה חֲדָשִׁים ... וְשֵׁשֶׁה חֲדָשִׁים. The shape of the Lechem HaPanim סְפִינָה רֹקְדָת in gematria (with the kolel) is אַחְשָׁרוּשׁ הָמָן. The word סְפִינָה in gematria is אֶדָר.

In a previous shiur ([Tetzaveh 2023](#)) we discussed how Mordechai and Esther were in fact גְּלוּלִים of Adam and Chava and came to atone for the sin of the עֵץ הַדַּעַת (for which the Lechem HaPanim is also a tikun). The gematria of שְׁוֹשָׁן (with the kolel) is חֲטָא עֵץ הַדַּעַת. In today's shiur I would like to explore a completely different aspect of the connection between the Beit HaMikdash and Purim.

The story of Purim is seemingly all about the triumph of good over evil against all odds, but it has a hidden *subtext* that is emphasized throughout the megila – the Beit HaMikdash, or more accurately – *rebuilding* the Beit HaMikdash.

The first passuk in the megila says **הוּא אַחַשְׁוֵירוֹשׁ הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵהַדּוֹ וְעַד כּוֹשׁ שֶׁבַע וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה**.

Firstly, who is the "king" in the megila? The truth is that there are two kings, the *real*, only King, HKB"H and the puppet human king – Achashveirosh. This is hinted to in his name. The letters אַחַשְׁוֵירוֹשׁ rearranged make שׁוּחַי רֵאשׁ – speak to the "Head", the Head-Honcho, HKB"H. They also make וְשׁוּחַי רֵאשׁ – the head is swimming, the confused, conflicted Persian monarch. Chazal tell us that when it says הַמֶּלֶךְ in the megila, it means both at the same time.

Who cares whether he ruled over 127 countries or 153? Why does the megila need to state this in the *first* passuk? The answer is very simple - the number 127 is the gematria of **זָה אֵלֵי וְאַנְוָהוּ (שמות טו, ב)**, which Onkelos says is referring to the Beit HaMikdash. The megila is telling us right from the get go – *this is what this story is all about*, it is all about the Beit HaMikdash!

The 3rd and 4th psukim in the megila tell us that Achashveirosh held a party for 180 days –

בְּשָׁנַת שְׁלוֹשׁ לְמַלְכוֹ עָשָׂה מִשְׁתֵּה לְכָל שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו חֵיל פָּרַס וּמְדֵי הַפְּרָתַיִם וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינֹת לְפָנָיו. בְּהָרְאָתוֹ אֶת עֶשֶׂר כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ וְאֶת יָקָר תַּפְאֶרֶת גְּדוּלְתוֹ יָמִים רַבִּים שְׁמוֹנִים וּמֵאָת יוֹם.

We already saw above in the reference to Masechet Megila 12a, that during the party Achashveirosh was wearing **בְּגָדֵי כְהֵנָה**.

The Midrash (ילקוט שמעוני תתרמ"ח, ו) says that the כְּלִים used in the party of Achashveirosh were vessels from the Beit HaMikdash. The Tanach specifies how many כְּלִים there were in the Mikdash – 5400 (עזרא א, יא). The Midrash (ילקוט שמעוני תתרמ"ו, ה) says that each day Achashveirosh showed off 6 אוֹצְרוֹת from the Mikdash. The Gemara (שבת קכו, ע"ב) defines an אוֹצֵר as 5 כְּלִים. Let's do the math. If Achashveirosh showed off 6 אוֹצְרוֹת each day and each אוֹצֵר has 5 כְּלִים, and he did this for 180 days of the party, that is – $6 \times 5 \times 180 = 5400$. Every word in the megila is מְדִיָקָה.

How did these כְּלִים from the Mikdash end up with Achashveirosh?

One Midrash (אסתר רבה ב, א) says that when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the first Beit Mikdash, he took these 5400 כְּלִים as spoils of war. When Nebuchadnezzar saw that his hated son אֲוִיִל מְרוּדָךְ would succeed him as king,

he took all these treasures, loaded them all on large ships made from copper and sank these ships in the Euphrates River. To conceal this treasure, he temporarily rerouted the Euphrates River, buried these ships under sand and then restored the river to its original course. Many years later, part of the Euphrates River dried up. When Achashveirosh became king and began building his palace on the banks of the river, the excavations uncovered these ships.

Another Midrash (אסתר רבה ז, ה) tells a slightly different story. "R' Pinchas says – there were two exceedingly wealthy people in the world, one from Am Yisrael and the other from the goyim. For both of them, their wealth did them no good. The first was Korach, who uncovered the buried treasure of Yosef. The second was Haman, who uncovered the treasures of the Kings of Yehuda (from the Beit Mikdash, hidden by Nebuchadnezzar). When Achashveirosh saw Haman's wealth and that his 10 sons were following in his footsteps, he formed an alliance with Haman אחר הדברים האלה גדל המלך אחשׁוֹרוֹשׁ אֶת הָמוֹן בְּן הַמְּדֵתָא (אסתר ג, א) "הָאֲגָגִי וַיִּנְשְׂאֵהוּ (אסתר ג, א).

According to this second Midrash, the alliance between Achashveirosh and Haman took place *before* the 180-day party. It was an alliance between two people from similar humble backgrounds. Haman was once Mordechai's slave (ילקוט שמעוני תתרנ"ו, יח) and Achashveirosh was once a simple stable hand of Belshazzar, the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar. Belshazzar's daughter Vashti (great-granddaughter of Nebuchadnezzar) fell in love with the stable hand and married him (אסתר רבה ג, יד). This is how Achashveirosh became king.

Fifty years following the destruction of the first Mikdash (585 BCE) Ezra Hasofer returned from בָּבֶל to Eretz Yisrael after a beneficent decree passed by the Persian emperor Cyrus the Great (who had conquered בָּבֶל from the Babylonians) and together with Zerubavel they rebuilt the מִזְבֵּחַ and restored the עֲבוֹדָה. In the 30 years that followed, a struggle ensued between those who sought to rebuild the Mikdash and those who opposed it.

Haman and his ten sons were active in trying to *prevent* rebuilding the Mikdash (רש"י, אסתר ט, י). Achashveirosh too was opposed to rebuilding the Mikdash, but he was wily and did it in a surreptitious way, through Haman (ילקוט שמעוני תתרנ"ג, לו). Publicly he did not voice opposition to the enterprise.

It is against this backdrop that the story of Purim, related in the megila, takes place. This was not a simple case of venomous antisemitism by a single evil individual against the Jews, it was a political battle on a *national scale* that included the highest echelons of power, culminating with the king himself.

Achashveirosh was not the brightest bulb, he was not descended from royalty, but one thing he did know - how to remain in power. By maintaining his popularity rating, Achashveirosh guaranteed the support of the people. He held lavish, extended parties to which everyone was invited – free food and booze.

Nothing makes you more popular than that. Achashveirosh did not openly speak out against the Jews, he did it behind the scenes through third parties. Despite his popularity, Achashveirosh still had enemies, who tried to assassinate him and stage a coup.

Spearheading the movement to rebuild the Mikdash was מְרַדְּכַי הַיְהוּדִי. Mordechai was one of the heads of the Sanhedrin, who could speak 70 languages (מנחות סה, ע"א) – he was a bright bulb. Mordechai was not a separatist who secluded himself within the walls of his yeshiva, he was involved with current affairs and politics. Mordechai, as leader of Am Yisrael, represented them in the Persian court. He routinely sat at the gate of the palace and because he understood 70 languages was privy to all kinds of information that many thought was secret, like the assassination plot of Bigtan and Teresh.

If Mordechai knew that Achashveirosh was anti-Mikdash, why did he inform on the assassins and save him? The answer is because Mordechai saw with ruach hakodesh that Achashveirosh had a central role to play in achieving the rebuilding of the Mikdash. He adopted a policy of "keep your friends close and your enemies closer".

Mordechai had a slave named Haman (מגילה טו, ע"א-ב). In the time of king Cyrus, rebuilding of the Mikdash began. At the time in Eretz Yisrael, living in the area of Samaria, there was a sect of immigrants from Assyria who only partially accepted the Torah. They wanted to be partners with Am Yisrael in the new Mikdash, but Am Yisrael rejected them since they would not fully accept the Torah. In response, these Samaritans turned against the Jews and sent a representative (Haman) to the high court in Persia to accuse the Jews of rebelling against the empire. Am Yisrael sent a representative of their own – Mordechai.

While travelling through the desert on the way to Persia, Haman, who was greedy, ate his food too quickly and soon ran out. Starving, he begged Mordechai for a piece of bread, which Mordechai gave him on the condition that Haman become his slave. The contract was written on the sole of Mordechai's shoe (since there was no parchment around). The contract was never consummated, but Haman lived in constant dread that Mordechai would make it public. Haman hated Mordechai prior to this, but this hatred now mutated into something malignant.

The Samaritans had some knowledge of the Torah and Haman used this knowledge to spiritually harm Am Yisrael. Haman advised Achashveirosh to hold a party where the Jews would become intoxicated and would indulge in lewdness. Just as centuries before Bilam advised Balak אֶל-לִקְיָהֶם שָׁלַח אֵלָהּ שׁוֹנֵא (ירושלמי סנהדרין י, ב) זָמָה הוּא, so too did Haman plot the destruction of Am Yisrael. Haman donated a huge amount of money to Achashveirosh (10,000

talents of silver) to be used to give charity to poor Jews and thus arouse the prosecuting angel, that the Jews themselves were not supporting their own poor.

Mordechai, who was aware of Haman's diabolical plot, designed a counter plot of his own. He sent Esther into the lion's den as his secret, undercover agent where she succeeded in becoming Achashveirosh's queen. Obviously, Esther constantly concealed her true identity to protect the integrity of the operation. Similarly, Mordechai countered Haman's spiritual sabotage, by a spiritual initiative of his own, teaching his students Kodshim to keep the dream of the Mikdash alive and real.

When Haman encountered Mordechai's students studying הלכות קמיצה (which we recently studied in daf yomi) he asked them what it was. They responded that it was keeping in practice for bringing the Korban HaOmer on Pesach (this was around Pesach time) in the Mikdash. Haman said "What is in this handful?" thinking it must be something expensive. They replied – "barley flour worth a few pennies". Haman said אַתָּא מְלִי קִמְצֵי קִמְחָא דִּידְכוּ וְדַחֵי עֲשָׂרָה אֲלֵפֵי כַּכְרֵי כֶּסֶפָא דִּידְיָ (מגילה טז, ע"ב) "Your few pennies of barley flour have counteracted/cancelled my 10,000 kikar of silver".

The story in the megila is an intertwining of overt and covert political intrigue with covert spiritual intervention. Setting the arch-villain up to a position of seemingly unassailable power, only to bring him crashing down. Compelling the populist monarch to embrace destiny over which he never truly had any control over at any stage.

Less than 30 years later דָּרְיֹוֹשׁ, the son of Esther and Achashveirosh, assumed the leadership and gave the final approval to build the second Beit HaMikdash in the time of the prophets Zechariya and Chagai. The mission had been accomplished.

It is impossible to ignore the parallels between the above story in the "old" megila and the current events unfolding before us in the "new" megila. The eyes of the *entire world* are intently focused on the modern version of Shushan, Persia with the same modern versions of Haman, Mordechai and Achashveirosh. Before the ink is dry on this shiur, it is very possible that reality may change drastically in either direction. By the time you are reading this, the waiting may be over and the outcome known, or not.

Some of our enemies are plainly and openly visible in their venomous hatred towards us. Others are smarter and more surreptitious. They hide behind the veneer of civility and pretense, when in their hearts they seek the same as our visible enemies. They fund and fuel our visible enemies and are perhaps more dangerous than the visible enemies themselves.

As of the writing of this shiur, I have no idea whether we will be sitting in shul on Purim listening to the megila, sitting in bomb shelters or going up to Jerusalem to begin building the 3rd Beit HaMikdash. Instead of sitting glued to the TV and to our Youtube channels, listening to endless chatter by people who do not really know any more about what is going to happen than we do, we would be *better advised* to heed the rallying call of Esther לְךָ כְּנוֹס אֶת כָּל הַיְהוּדִים (אסתר ד, טו). To put aside our petty differences and intensify our acts of charity and chessed. To reconnect to the core of our nation and our values, to accept kabalot upon ourselves and to daven, daven, daven. Making a concerted effort to counteract the diabolical plot of our arch-enemies on multiple continents, both spiritual and physical, both visible and hidden.

This is the *only* way you and I can truly influence the outcome in a favorable way.

We leave the rest up to HKB"H in perfect faith to fill in the invisible blanks between the visible lines. We pray that just as back then, in Shushan of old, He will redeem us once again in our time and that this will herald the age of the Geulah and the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash speedily in our days.

Shabbat Shalom and Purim Sameach

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