

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Tetzaveh – Purim 5786

D. Mordechai Schlachter

Haman had a small problem, but didn't know how big that problem really was.

וְכָל-זֶה אֵינָנוּ שׂוּהָ לִי בְכָל-עֵת אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי רֹאֶה אֶת-מֶרְדֵּכַי הַיְהוּדִי יוֹשֵׁב בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ:

“And all of this is not worth it to me every time that I see this Mordechai of the Jews who sits in the King's gate.” (Esther 5:13).

Our psuk identifies Mordechai as a Jew. Zerash, Haman's wife, says to him, that he should mount a fifty-cubit gallows and ask the king to hang Mordechai on it. (Ibid 5:14). This pasuk appears to contradict a later pasuk. וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ חֲכָמָיו וְזֵרַשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ אִם מִגֵּרַע הַיְהוּדִים מֶרְדֵּכָי וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ חֲכָמָיו וְזֵרַשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ אִם מִגֵּרַע הַיְהוּדִים מֶרְדֵּכָי “And his advisors and Zerash his wife said to him, ‘If Mordechai, before whom you begun to fall, is from the seed of the Jews, you will not prevail against him.’” (Ibid 6:13). Zerash knew Mordechai was a Jew and still suggested that he be hanged. Why the sudden change that Jews are off-limits?

Some commentators suggest that Memuchan, who gave the advice to Achashveirosh in regards to keeping wives in check (ibid 1:16), was actually Haman. Even if he was a different advisor, a royal decree went out that husband should rule over their wives. (Ibid 1:19). It does not seem plausible that the advisor who rose to the top would go against an edict to dominate their wives, and not defer to them. However, when looking carefully, the edict was really only toward Vashti. Even though the pasuk says, “it should not be revoked” it only referred to that edict. The lesson to the wives was not a direct law. It was out of fear that they would hear about what Vashti did and they would become brash. (Ibid 1:17). No actual edict about women in general was enacted. Even when the pasuk says an edict went out so that the husbands should dominate their household, the Megillah only means that when wives hear about the edict against the queen the husbands will be emboldened to dominate their household. (Ibid 1:22).

There are two significant differences between the initial reaction Zerash had and then the reaction she had the next day. First, is the direction Haman's career was heading. Haman was promoted—seemingly out of nowhere—to be King Achashveirosh's top advisor. (Ibid 3:1). The pasuk says, “After these events.” When the Tanakh uses this term, it specifically means after certain events. It is making sure the chronology is understood. It also gives events that can only happen after the preceding events occurred. Hashem promised Avraham that he will have a biological son that will inherit him only after the gracious way he acted as victor over the Four Kings. (Bereishis 15:1). It was also only after how Avraham behaved with Avimelech that he was then tested with the Binding of Yitzchok. (Ibid 22:1). Yehoshua only passed away after his conquest, and instructing Bnei Yisroel. (Yehoshua 24:29).

Clearly, Haman was raised as top advisor after the events that preceded—the crowning of Esther. The Megillah states they occurred five years apart. (Esther 2:16 – year seven; ibid 3:7 – year twelve). It was specifically only after Esther became queen that

Haman was promoted. Without Esther in place, the events could not have occurred. It was precisely as Mordechai told Esther, that it may have been for this very event she was made queen. (Ibid 4:14).

Everyone had to bow to Haman. (3:2). The king blindly signed a decree – with signet ring – to eradicate an entire population based on Haman’s advice. (Ibid 3:11). Then the queen, the favorite consort of the king, invited Haman to an intimate party with her and the king. (Ibid 5:4). After enjoying the exclusive soiree, he was invited to a second one. (Ibid 5:8). Haman went home happy. (Ibid 5:9). He summoned his loved ones and his wife. (Ibid 5:10). He recounted to them his sonic rise and his great honors. (Ibid 5:11).

From the wording that he had to summon her, and that he seems to have first told her about his sonic rise to power then, it appears that Haman and his wife had two different households. It very well could be she lived out of town while he lived in Shushan to be part of the royal court. Either way, he summoned her to join his success.

Contrarily, the next day it all collapsed. He had to honor Mordechai. (Ibid 6:10). He had to parade Mordechai around town like a hero. (Ibid 6:11). The gallows prepared for Mordechai hung still and empty. (Ibid 6:4). Zerash reacted to the fact that instead of having Mordechai on the gallows as he went to Esther’s party, he spent all day honoring Mordechai. He was already falling. (Ibid 6:13). However, a simple change in circumstances does not fully vindicate Zerash for her sudden change in attitude. If Mordechai being a Jew was a problem, then it should have been the day before. If she wanted to do away with Mordechai the day before, a little set back should not have changed her mind.

It is the second significant difference that explains the change. Initially, it was Zerash and his loved ones that advised him on building the gallows. (Ibid 5:14). His adversary was Mordechai of the Jews. The word is יהודאי. Earlier, the Megillah called him איש ימיני and איש יהודאי. No letter heh/ha/the. He was a Jewish man or a Benjamite. Using “the” indicates he was just from Judea, the land. Avraham was called “the Ivri” from across the Euphrates. (Bereishis 14:13). Yosef is identified as an Ivri (no heh – ibid 39:14); and the Blasphemer was called a Yisraeli (no heh – Vayikra 24:10). In that case, there is no worry as Mordechai was a mere exile. The next day, though, it was *his advisors* and Zerash that spoke up. Day one, she led the advice. Day two, the advisors spoke first and she followed along. Further, it says, מִגֵּרַע הַיְהוּדִים “If he is from the Yehudis’ seed.” (Ibid 6:13). He was not just from the Land of Yehuda. He was *the seed of THE Yehudis*. And not just any Jew. He not only was Jewish himself, but he was from the actual seed of THAT Jew – Shaul HaMelech. As Haman was Agag’s seed coming to reign terror on Israel, Shaul’s seed was coming to finish the job the King of Yisroel left undone. It took the advisors so speak the truth. Loved ones will tell you what you want to hear. Real advisors can discern the circumstances from a distance and objectively, and offer proper advice. There is no contradiction. Zerash realized she was too quick to dismiss Mordechai as an exile. It is too easy to view your enemies as weak. She should have been more inquisitive and found out he was THE Jew that would defeat her husband.

HAPPY PURIM!

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