

FROM THE EDITOR

WWW.JEWISHLIFE.CO.ZA



If we pay careful attention to the events that comprise the Purim story, we'll notice something that is truly amazing and quite inspirational.

Haman desperately wanted to convince King Achashverosh to destroy the Jewish people. Achashverosh, however, was rightfully wary of starting up with them, having seen how Hashem had overcome their enemies for them time-and-time again throughout history. Eventually, however, Haman prevailed upon Achashverosh, having come up with a "fool-proof" plan to turn their G-d against them. The plan? Achashverosh would make an elaborate feast and fill it with enormous

opportunities for licentiousness, requiring everyone in the capital city of Shushan to attend, as well as ordering each attendee to enjoy himself however he saw fit.

Mordechai HaYehudi, the Gadol HaDor, the leader of the Jewish people at the time, realised what Achashverosh and Haman were up to and foresaw that, if the Jewish people would engage in behaviours that were against the Torah, they would arouse Hashem's strict judgment against them, thereby making the entire nation worthy of destruction. So, Mordechai spoke out, instructing the Jewish people not to attend the king's feast, despite the royal decree that required their presence. Mordechai explained that Achashverosh had only invited them for the purpose of placing stumbling blocks before them in the hope of bringing about their ultimate demise.

And lest we think that Mordechai's concern was because the Jews would be eating non-kosher food at the feast, nothing could be further from the truth. Our Sages teach that the meal prepared for the Jews was kosher – in fact it was mehadrin min hamehadrin, the strictest kashrus standard possible, under the supervision of none other than Mordechai himself!

Unfortunately, as has been too often the case throughout our history, the Jewish people thought they knew better than their leader, reasoning that the feast would be a great opportunity to cosy up to the king. They also feared that, if they didn't go, it would arouse Achashverosh's anger against the entire community since he'd gone out of his way to provide kosher food for them, with no concern whatsoever that they might instead arouse the anger of the King of Kings.

According to our Sages, it was our attendance at this very celebration and our subsequent promiscuous behaviour there that triggered the terrible events that followed.

But, if we take just a minute and look closely, we'll see something stunning.

At the very moment that we were behaving badly and going astray, at the very moment that we would expect Hashem to be angry with us and turn His back on us, so to speak, what we find instead is that Hashem was, like the loving Father that He is, busy sowing the seeds for our salvation.

While we were enjoying ourselves and doing things we shouldn't have been doing, Achashverosh was, at that precise moment, calling for Vashti, his queen, to come and show herself off before his guests. But, our Sages teach, Hashem made it so that Vashti was too embarrassed to appear, her physical beauty suddenly marred by tzara'as (a spiritual affliction with physical manifestations) and a tail. Outraged by her refusal, Achashverosh took counsel from his advisors, one of whom, Haman (aka Memuchen), advised him that Vashti should be immediately executed for her behaviour. It was this advice that paved the way for Esther to be brought into the palace as the new queen four years later, ready and waiting to save the day when the time came for it some five years after that.

What we see from all of this is that even during our darkest times, even when we're making terrible mistakes and miscalculations, Hashem is right there watching over us – and not just leaving a door open and a light on, but actually constructing and paving an entire path long in advance for us to walk down and return to Him with ease whenever we're ready.

When you realise that someone has your back, even when you don't really deserve it, even when you've messed up, it can't help but inspire you to feelings of profound love and gratitude. Perhaps, that's why our Sages teach regarding our miraculous deliverance on Purim that the Jewish people thereafter wholeheartedly re-accepted the Torah and renewed their commitment to Hashem. So too, in our days, may we be inspired similarly by the reading of the megillah each year to do exactly the same as the Jewish people did then, re-accepting the Torah and renewing our commitment to Hashem.

From everyone at JL, wishing you a freilichen (joyous) Purim!

ROBERT SUSSMAN,
EDITOR

Adapted from a sicha by the Sifsei Chaim, Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, ztz"l.

ON THE COVER: IT IS CUSTOMARY TO WEAR DISGUISES ON PURIM, LIKE THE MASK ON OUR COVER. THERE ARE VARIOUS REASONS FOR THIS CUSTOM INCLUDING THAT WE SEE "DISGUISES" USED IN THE MEGILLA (EG. ESTHER DID NOT SAY WHAT NATION SHE WAS FROM; MORDECHAI PUT ON SACKCLOTH AND LATER WORE THE KING'S ROBE; ELIYAHU HANAVI DISGUISED HIMSELF AS CHARVONA; ETC.) AND THAT HASHEM'S PRESENCE IN THE STORY IS HIDDEN.



CREDITS

PUBLISHER & MANAGING DIRECTOR

Martyn Samuels
martyn@jewishlife.co.za

EDITOR

Robert Sussman
robert@jewishlife.co.za

OPERATIONS DIRECTOR

Linda Superfain
linda@jewishlife.co.za

ART DIRECTOR

Rizelle Hartmeier
studio26@telkomsa.net

FEATURES WRITER

Chandrea Serebro

COPY EDITOR/PROOFREADER

Dovid Samuels

DIGITAL MANAGER

David Blumenau
david@jewishlife.co.za

CONTRIBUTORS

Alan Bender, Rabbi David Fohrman,
Rabbi Dr David Fox, Dean Furman, Bev Goldman,
Rabbi Yossy Goldman, Larry Hirschowitz,
Serenne Kaplan, Batsheva Lea, Ilan Preskovsky,
Dovid Samuels, Liz Samuels, Chandrea Serebro,
Rabbi Ari Shishler, Charisse Zeifert, Aron Ziegler

Printers Paarlmedia kzn

Distribution

Merle Jacobson
Marc Levitt

JEWISH LIFE is published by Total Publishing
(Pty) Ltd ©2008.

If you live within the boundaries of the
eruv, feel free to take this publication
home with you.

THIS PUBLICATION CONTAINS WORDS
OF TORAH. PLEASE TREAT IT WITH
THE RESPECT IT DESERVES.

ISSN 1994-8670

Total Publishing (Pty) Ltd

PO Box 52339, Saxonwold 2132

The views expressed in this issue of
Jewish Life are not necessarily those
of the Publisher or Editor.



Certified for the period
July - December 2017: 12 772