

FROM THE EDITOR

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Towards the end of the seventy years of *Galus Bavel* (the Babylonian Exile) that followed after the destruction of *Bayis Rishon* (the First Temple), a new king arose, Koresh, who, rather incredibly, granted permission for the Jews living in Bavel not only to return to Eretz Yisrael (the land of Israel), but to rebuild the Beis HaMikdash (Temple) as well. There was just one small problem: the majority of Jews, who had become perfectly content and comfortable during their many years in *galus* (exile), did not want to return to Eretz Yisrael. Only around 40 000 people wound up returning, with the majority of the Jewish people choosing to remain behind in Bavel, in exile.

Upon the return of this minority to Israel, the rebuilding of *Bayis Sheini* (the Second Temple) subsequently began, but was quickly sabotaged and eventually entirely disrupted by the Kutim (aka Samaritans), who succeeded in convincing Koresh to withdraw his authorisation for the Jews to rebuild. Following Koresh's short reign of 3 years, Achashveirosh became king, paving the way for Haman's rise to power and the unfolding of the well-known events of Purim.

So, we can ask: what made possible the ascendance of someone like the wicked Haman? In other words, what did the Jews do to deserve that someone who would seek the total and utter destruction of every Jewish man, woman, and child should come to power?

Rabbi Yisroel Moshe Sorotzkin, in his recently published seforim, *The End Illuminated* and its sequel, notes that the Chasam Sofer links these two events, explaining that the one was the cause of the other. Hashem put Haman in power precisely because the Jews had no desire to return to Eretz Yisrael – because they weren't looking forward to the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash (Temple). The Chasam Sofer further explains that this is the basis of the gemara (Sanhedrin 97b) that teaches that if we don't do teshuva (repent) to merit the coming of Moshiach, Hashem will place a king over us whose decrees will be as harsh as Haman's and we will be forced to do teshuva.

"We see from the Chasam Sofer how harsh the ramifications may be of not asking for the Beis Hamikdash, and for what purpose 'a king like Haman' will come at the end of our *galus*. Haman's entire purpose in threatening to wipe out *Klal Yisrael* [the Jewish People] was to make us feel uncomfortable in *galus* and thus compel us to beg for the Beis Hamikdash. Similarly, today, Hashem is using various means to cause us to feel very uncomfortable, like we are being backed into a corner in so many ways. The purpose of this is to push us to do *teshuvah* and draw closer to Hashem by begging for the *geulah* [redemption]."

And he connects this to what we have been experiencing recently: "We love our shuls and *batei Midrash* [study halls]. Their value is immeasurable and we recognize that they are the places of *hashra'as haShechinah* [where Hashem's Divine presence rests] while we are in *galus*. But certainly, they are not greater than the *Mishkan* [Tabernacle]. The Jews [of the generation of King David] who had a *Mishkan* were taken to task for not begging for a Beis Hamikdash [ie, a permanent home for Hashem]. Perhaps Hashem restricted our access to shuls and yeshivos in order to pain us over the loss of our places of *hashra'as haShechinah*. This way, we would awaken to the need to beg not only for our return to such temporary dwellings, but also for the Beis Hamikdash, the permanent home of the Shechinah."

Rabbi Sorotzkin makes a fascinating observation: why is it that Israel, Jerusalem, and *Har HaBayis* (the Temple Mount) are always in the news headlines, very noticeably the relentless focus of the entire world? He suggests that it's in order that the Jewish people "will constantly think about them, realize what we are lacking without them, and ask for them back."

One Haman and one Purim story were more than enough for all of us. Please G-d, may we learn from the lessons of our past, feel the pain of this exile, do teshuva, and beg for Hashem to bring the final redemption – to return us all to Eretz Yisrael, to bring Moshiach, to rebuild Jerusalem and the Beis HaMikdash, to restore the *avodah* (service) there, to return His *shechinah* to *Tzion*, and to once and for all experience the true *malchus* (kingship of) Hashem.

Wishing everyone a freilichen Purim.

For more excerpts from these amazing and very timely seforim by Rabbi Sorotzkin, see the article *There is Nothing Else* on page 14.

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