

Purim: The Ancient Battle Against Amalek and Its Modern Parallels

A Lesson for Our Time

Objective:

To explore the significance of Purim in Jewish history, its themes of survival, divine providence, and Jewish self-defense, and its relevance today, including the Holocaust, modern antisemitism, and the ongoing war involving Israel, Hamas, Hezbollah, and Iran.

I. Introduction

- **Opening Question:** *Why does Purim remain relevant beyond its historical origins?*
- **Overview of the Lesson:**
 - The historical context of Purim (Book of Esther)
 - Key themes: survival, divine intervention, Jewish unity
 - How Purim connects to Jewish history, including the Holocaust
 - The modern increase in global antisemitism
 - Israel's right and responsibility to defend itself against threats

Source:

- **Talmud, Megillah 6b** – *The war with Amalek is eternal until the coming of Mashiach.*

Germamya of Edom, i.e., Germany, which is near the land of Edom, i.e., Rome. **As, if the Germans would go forth, they would destroy the entire world.**

And Rabbi Hama Bar Hanina said: There are three hundred young princes with crowns tied to their heads in Germamya of Edom, and there are three hundred and sixty-five chieftains [*marzavnei*] in Rome. Every day these go out to battle against those, and one of them is killed, and they are preoccupied with appointing a new king in his place. Since neither side is united, neither side is able

to achieve a decisive victory. It is these wars between Rome and the Germanic tribes that act as a muzzle upon Esau-Edom-Rome and prevent it from becoming too strong.

II. The Biblical Background of Purim: The Story of Esther

- **Persian Empire (5th century BCE)**
 - King Ahasverosh (Xerxes I) and his rule over 127 provinces
 - Haman's plot to annihilate the Jewish people
 - Esther's courage and Mordechai's leadership
 - The establishment of Purim as a time of celebration and remembrance (Esther 9:20-22) -- 20 And Mordokhay wrote these things, and sent letters to all the Jews who were in all the provinces of the king Ahashverosh, both near and far, 21 to enjoin upon them that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same, year by year, 22 as the days on which the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned to them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning to holiday: that they should make them days of feasting and joy, and of sending choice portions to one another, and gifts to the poor.

Sources:

- **Esther 3:8** – Haman accuses the Jews of being disloyal and scattered, mirroring modern antisemitic accusations.

And Haman said to king Ahashverosh, There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are different from all people; nor do they keep the king's laws: therefore it is of no benefit to the king to tolerate them.

- **Midrash Esther Rabbah 7** – Some rabbis teach that Haman wore an **idol on his chest**, which is why Mordechai refused to bow to him.

III. The Root of the Conflict: Amalek and King Saul's Failure

- **Haman's Lineage as an Amalekite**

- Haman was a descendant of **Agag**, the king of Amalek
- The Torah commands the **complete destruction of Amalek** (Deuteronomy 25:17-19)

Remember what 'Amaleq did to thee by the way, when you were come out of Mizrayim: how he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, all that were feeble in thy rear, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God. Therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God has given thee rest from all thy enemies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God gives thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of 'Amaleq from under heaven; thou shalt not forget.
(Koren)

- King Saul's **failure to destroy Amalek** (1 Samuel 15)
- **Because Saul spared Agag, his descendants survived – leading to Haman's rise**

Sources:

- **Talmud, Megillah 12b(20)-13a(1)** – Haman's ancestry traces directly to Agag, whom Saul failed to kill.

Rava said: The Congregation of Israel at the time said this from the opposite perspective, not as a boast, but as a complaint, remarking: See what a Judean has done to me and how a Benjamite has repaid me. What a Judean has done to me is referring to the responsibility of Judah, as David did not kill Shimei, although he was liable to the death penalty. The grave consequences of this failure included that Mordecai was born from him, and it was he against whom Haman was jealous, leading Haman to issue a decree against all of the Jewish people. And how a Benjamite has repaid me is referring to the fact that Saul, who was from the tribe of Benjamin, did not kill the Amalekite king Agag immediately, from whom Haman was later born, and he caused suffering to the Jewish people.

- **Rashi on Shemot 17:16** – *Hashem's war against Amalek is for all generations.*

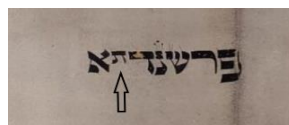
כִּי יַד עַל כִּסֵּי יְהוָה BECAUSE THE HAND IS UPON THE THRONE OF JAH — the hand of the Holy One, blessed be He, is raised to swear by His throne that He will have war and enmity against Amalek to all eternity. And what is the force of כִּסֵּי — why does it not say as usual כִּסֵּא? And the Divine Name, also, is divided into half (יה is only the half of the Tetragrammaton)! The Holy One, blessed be He, swears that His Name will not be perfect nor His throne perfect until the name of Amalek be entirely blotted out. But when his name is blotted out then will His (God's) Name be perfect and His throne perfect, as it is said, (Psalms 9:7) “The enemy is come to an end, he whose swords were for ever” — and this refers to Amalek of whom it is written, (Amos 1:11; the paragraph is a prophecy against Edom — Esau — the father of Amalek) “he kept his wrath for ever”. The verse in the Psalm continues: “and thou didst uproot enemies, their very memorial is perished”, What does it say immediately after this? (Psalms 9:8) “But the Lord (the Divine Name as given here is the Tetragrammaton) shall now remain for ever” — you see that the Name will be perfect (after Amalek is entirely rooted out as is mentioned in v. 7); “He establishes his throne (כִּסֵּא not כִּסֵּי) in righteousness” — so you see that His throne will then be perfect (Midrash Tanchuma, Ki Tisa 11).

IV. Purim and the Holocaust: The Hidden Connection in the Megillah

- **The Special Formatting of Haman's Sons' Names**
 - In **Megillat Esther (9:7-9)**, the names of Haman's ten sons are written in an unusual way:
 - **Three letters** (Tav, Shin, Zayin) are written **smaller than the rest**
 - **One letter** (Vav) is written **larger than the rest**



Large Vav



Small Tav



Small Shin



Small Zayin

- **Gematria Interpretation**

- Tav (400 = (ת
- Shin (300 = (ש
- Zayin (7 = (ז
- **Total: 707**
- In Hebrew dating, **707 corresponds to the Jewish year 5707 (1946 CE)**
- **The Connection to the Nuremberg Trials**
 - On October 16, 1946 (5707), **ten** top Nazi leaders were hanged
 - **Julius Streicher**, a Nazi propagandist, declared before his execution:
 - *“Purim Fest 1946!”* – acknowledging the parallel with Purim
 - Meanings of the 10 sons of Haman
 - Dalphon means “weeping self” or “self pity.”
 - Aspatha means “assembled self” or “self- sufficient.”
 - Poratha means “generous self” or “self indulgent.”
 - Adalia means “weak self” or more likely “humble self.”
 - Aridatha means “strong self” or “self assertive.”
 - Parmashta** means “preeminent self” or “self ambition.” (small shin)
 - Arisai means “bold self” or “I am bold.”
 - Aridai means “dignified self” or “I am superior.”
 - Vaizatha** means “pure self” or “self- righteous. (small zayin)
 - Parshandatha** means “curious self” or “I am curious.” (small tav)

V. Modern Antisemitism: The New Haman’s War Against Israel and the Jewish People

- **The Rise of Antisemitism Today**
 - Increase in **violent attacks on Jews** in the U.S. and Europe
 - Universities and media normalizing **antisemitic rhetoric**
 - The **delegitimization of Israel** – replacing religious antisemitism with political hatred
- **Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah: The Modern Amalek**
 - **Hamas & Hezbollah’s genocidal ideology** mirrors Haman’s decree
 - **Iran openly calls for the destruction of Israel**
 - **The October 7, 2023 massacre** – Hamas’s brutality against Israeli civilians
 - *Amalek’s hatred is irrational and eternal.*
 - *It seems that there is a Haman spirit in each generation.*

VI. Israel's Right and Duty to Defend Itself: Lessons from Purim

Steps Israel Must Take to Prevent Another Holocaust

1. Military Action:

- a. Preemptive strikes against terrorists (like Mordechai's preemptive action in Shushan)
- b. Elimination of Hamas and Hezbollah's leadership

2. Global Advocacy:

- a. Fighting propaganda and false narratives in the media
- b. Strengthening alliances with supportive nations

3. Jewish Unity & Strengthening Identity:

- a. Like Esther's call to fast and pray, Jews worldwide must unite
- b. Strengthening Jewish education and identity to resist assimilation

4. Zero Tolerance for Antisemitism in the Diaspora:

- a. Pressuring governments to crack down on antisemitic hate crimes
- b. Legal action against those inciting violence against Jews
- c. *One must not rely on miracles, but take action for survival.*
- d. *Israel has a halachic obligation to defend itself.*

VII. The Relevance of Purim Today: What Can We Do?

- **Strengthen Jewish Identity:** Learn and live Torah values
- **Defend Israel and the Jewish People:** Speak out against antisemitism
- **Support Jewish Unity:** Recognize that internal division weakens our defense
- **Trust in Divine Providence:** As in the days of Esther, Hashem will ensure our survival
- *The Jews were only saved because they repented and unified.*
- **Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, zt"l** – *The Jewish people must be proactive, not passive.*

VIII. Conclusion

- **Final Reflection:**
 - What does Purim teach us about Jewish survival?
 - How can we apply its lessons to today's global crisis?
- **Call to Action:**
 - **Celebrate Purim with meaning** – giving tzedakah, strengthening Jewish identity
 - **Support Israel and Jews in danger today**
 - **Pray and advocate for Jewish safety worldwide**