

Blood & Guts, The Two-Fold Miracle of Purim

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Purim is a party, but does anyone stop to think what it is we are celebrating? What was the miracle(s) of Purim? The historical record as recorded in the Megilat (Book of) Esther is very clear. In those days the Jews of ancient Persia celebrated their stunning victory over their enemies who the very next day had legal authority to kill them all.



This victory did not come about through the Hands of Heaven. No, every Jew had to get his hands “dirty” and fight and kill those who sought to fight and kill them.

The historical record is clear that although Haman was overthrown and his house defeated, nonetheless the Persian edict to kill all the Jews was not overturned. The edicts of the Persian Kings could not be overturned, period! There was no miracle that the edict to kill the Jews was cancelled. That edict stayed in force.

The real miracle was two-fold. The first miracle was that a new law was instituted that gave the Jews first crack at their enemies. Although the enemies of the Jews had full legal authority to kill them all on the 14th of Adar, the Jews were given full legal authority to kill those who wanted to kill them one day earlier on the 13th of Adar.

However, this first miracle alone would not have saved anyone. The second miracle required the Jews of those days and in those lands to actually rise up, arm themselves and physically seek out, fight with and kill those who wanted to kill them. If any of their enemies were to survive and live to see the day of the 14th of Adar, then the law would have been of their side to kill Jews with impunity. Therefore the Jews of the time had to be very thorough to make a quick finish of all their enemies.

In light of ancient hatred of Jews, not too dissimilar to today, the first miracle of receiving permission to kill their enemies was quite extraordinary. But the second miracle was even greater.

Jews in exile have long been a passive and weak people. As can be seen in Jews today, most completely lack any sense of self preservation and most certainly lack any sense or ability of self-defense. Indeed, for most Jews the mere thought of violence is frightening and abhorrent. Most chose any other option rather than to get “down and dirty,” to fight and especially kill their enemies.

This terrible lack of standing up for oneself in the proper and necessary way also existed in ancient Persia. For the Jews of those days to rise up, pick up arms and actually shed blood, even the blood of those who so clearly wanted to kill them, was a great miracle. Think of what it would take for today's Jews to rise up united as a single person to wreck havoc on the liars and murderers who

only seek Jewish blood. It was equally a miracle back in ancient Persia for such a thing to happen even as it would be a miracle for such unity and action amongst Jews to occur today.

Yes, the second miracle was greater than the first. The Jews themselves had to act as the agents of Divine vengeance against their enemies. For again, anyone who survived would have had the law on their side the very next day to kill Jews with impunity. **Self preservation is natural, but with Jews so many natural things have been lost, so for them to regain that which is natural was truly a miracle.**

So, when we celebrate this Purim, remember it is not supposed to be a Jewish "Halloween." Purim is not about childrens costumes and gifts of candy. Indeed, these practices however widespread they are detract us from the original meaning of the celebration and actually blind one's eyes from seeing the truth of what this day is supposed to mean.

This is a day which celebrates victory in battle. It is not a children's holiday, but an adult one. One celebrates it by giving gifts of food, but the food must be viable and ready for a meal, not just incidental candies and deserts. Children eat candy. Warriors eat real food.

Although this is a time to celebrate our having the courage, resolve and permission to shed the blood of ten of thousands, still we must not revel to the point of danger. Getting drunk on alcohol is not the right way to celebrate this victory. **Indeed, many Rabbis, to their credit have been publicly stating that it is forbidden to be drunk, for Purim or for any other reason or at any other time.** One drink may be fine, more may not be!

Serious warriors are always prepared for battle. They do not need to be told to take care of themselves. As for those who will not heed this message of common sense and still pursue a drunken stupor under the guise of being religious, let it be clearly said that not only are they not being religious, but if they were alive in the days of ancient Persia, their drunkenness would have led to them getting themselves killed. Who knows maybe today their drunkenness will in the future have the same effect.

Everyone knows that a drunk is a drunk and that his life is a curse and open to all types of demonic influences and destruction. This is not the way of the true warriors of Torah.

The Book of Esther has not even one mention of the Name of G-d in it and not even any suggestion of Heaven. The reason for this was to place emphasis on the need for the our personal investment of effort and hardship to act and thus serve as the Hand of G-d.

If we did not act, we would have been killed. We had to do it. Heaven was not going to do it for us. Heaven would bless the works of our hands, true, but unless our hands worked, there would be nothing to bless. **G-d stayed concealed in the background to teach us this mighty lesson that G-d helps those who help themselves. As it was then, so is it today. Remember, Amalek lives! And it is we who are commanded to "kill" him wherever he is to be found, in whatever form or disguise he may take.**

Purim is the celebration of what we can accomplish when we rise to and act to do the right things. Purim is not a celebration of talk, nor of thought; rather it is a celebration of brave deeds. As we celebrate, may we remember what is is we are really celebrating and learn the great lesson that great deeds require great resolve, but they can be performed even by people who themselves are merely normal. G-d is with us, but are we with ourselves? Watch how Purim is observed and you will see the answer, be it for good or for bad.