

THE PURIM ROLLER COASTER

The dramatic journey of the Jewish people in the Purim story—rising to the heights of power and influence, only to become targets of destruction.

What sparked this shocking reversal of fortune?

TEACHER'S MANUAL



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PURIM

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Before the miracle of Purim, the Jews experienced their best period in exile—Mordechai held a royal position, and a Jewish woman was queen, an exceptional occurrence in Jewish history. The Rebbe Rayatz notes that the Jews contributed to Achashverosh's victory in a great war and were rewarded with high-ranking positions and privileges (Source 1).

Yet, precisely at this time, they faced a decree of total annihilation—the most severe threat in Jewish history (Source 2). Unlike other times in history, where a decree against Jews in one place did not affect those elsewhere, in this case, Achashverosh ruled over the entire world, leaving them no place to escape.

B. Beyond Nature......6

How could such a harsh decree arise precisely at the peak of Jewish security? The Talmud explains that it was because the Jews enjoyed Achashverosh's feast (Source 3). This shows that the fate of the Jewish people is not bound to natural circumstances. Even though their political status was excellent, their participation in the feast led to the decree against them.

The annulment of the decree also occurred in a supernatural manner. Esther and Mordechai first took spiritual steps: Esther requested that all Jews fast for three days (even though one of the days was Pesach) (Source 4). Mordechai gathered 22,000 children, dressed them in sackcloth and ashes, and led them in prayer to annul the decree (Source 5). In fact, all the Jews strengthened themselves with a spirit of self-sacrifice for Torah and mitzvot (Source 6). Only afterward did Esther prepare to approach the king.

Another important detail: Esther herself fasted, even though this could have diminished her charm in the king's eyes. Why? Because she understood that the decree was not caused by natural reasons, and therefore, salvation depended on a spiritual cause. Fasting and repentance would bring about their rescue, while her approach to the king was merely the natural vehicle through which the salvation would manifest.

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The message for our times: Some believe that securing the survival of the Jewish people in exile depends on political and diplomatic efforts. However, the Purim story teaches that the fate of the Jewish people transcends natural laws and depends on their commitment to Torah and mitzvot. In times of trouble, we must first engage in spiritual introspection, and then natural efforts will serve as a vessel for the miracle.

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Esther asked Mordechai to gather all the Jews of Shushan to fast for three days (Source 7). The Rebbe explains that she emphasized including even those who had participated in Achashverosh's feast.

Mordechai initially thought it was sufficient for them to commit to eating in a holy manner from then on, but they were not worthy of joining the fast and prayers to annul the decree. On a deeper level, since they were the cause of the decree, they could not be the ones to annul it, based on the principle "A prosecutor cannot become a defender" (Source 8).

However, Esther insisted that Mordechai gather everyone, including those who had attended the royal feast. It was precisely this unity that led to the decree's annulment. Mordechai accepted Esther's view (Source 9), gathered all the Jews, and indeed, the decree was nullified.

Introduction

Today, we will explore one of the most fascinating periods in Jewish history—the time leading up to the Purim miracle. Although it was an era of prosperity and success for the Jews, it was precisely then that they faced one of the harshest decrees in history.

Together, we will examine what led to this dramatic turn of events and what we can learn from the actions of Esther and Mordechai. We will try to understand what truly ensures the survival of the Jewish people in exile—is it political power and diplomacy, or is the secret found elsewhere?

The story of the Megillah is not just a historical account. It provides us with tools and inspiration for today, teaching us about the power of faith, unity, and prayer in times of crisis.

השיעור לחג הפורים

משיחת חג הפורים ה׳תש״ז, לקוטי שיחות חלק א' עמ' 213

ומשיחת שבת פרשת תשא, ט"ז אדר, ה'תשל"א, בלתי מוגה תורת מנחם, כרך ס"ג עמוד 327 ואילך

A. The Golden Age of the Jews in Persia

Elite integration

>> The Rebbe

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The period before the Purim miracle was, by natural circumstances, the most prosperous time for the Jewish people during exile. Jews held prominent positions in the government—Mordechai, the head of the Sanhedrin, was among the king's ministers, sitting at the royal gate, and Esther was the queen. In all of Jewish history during exile, we find no other instance, aside from Queen Esther, where a Jewish woman was married to a ruler who reigned over the entire world. Logically, this should have been the time when Jews felt most secure in their existence.

התקופה שלפני נס פורים, היתה, בדרך הטבע, המאושרת ביותר לבני ישראל בזמן הגלות. היהודים תפסו אז מקום נכבד בשלטון המדינה; מרדכי, ראש הסנהדרין, היה בין שרי המלוכה היושבים בשער המלך; ואסתר היתה אשת המלך, והרי "אשתו כגופו". בכל דברי ימי ישראל בזמן הגלות איננו מוצאים, מלבד במקרה של אסתר המלכה, שאשה יהודי' תהיה אשת מלך שמלך על כל העולם². הרי שמובן, שלא היתה תקופה בגלות בה אמורים שלא היתה תקופה בגלות בה אמורים היו היהודים, על פי טבע, להיות בטוחים יותר בקיומם, מכפי שהדבר היה בימי אחשוורוש.

Source 1 Sefer Hasichot 1941, Purim

The Rebbe Rayatz describes the circumstances of the Jews in Persia at length.

Student's

In the year 3319, during the Babylonian exile, the Jews were spread through many lands, including Achashverosh's empire.

Achashverosh waged massive wars with other nations and defeated them. The Jews in various lands helped him achieve his victories, and he greatly appreciated them. They received awards and were appointed to key positions

בִּשְׁנַת שְׁלֹשֶׁת אֲלָפִים שְׁלוֹשׁ מֵאוֹת וּתְשַׁע עֶשְׁרֵה, בִּזְמַן גָּלוֹת בָּבֶל, הִיוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מְפָזָּרִים בְּהַרְבֵּה מְדִינוֹת, גַּם בָּמִדִינוֹת מֵלְכוּת אֲחַשְׁוָרוֹשׁ.

אַחַשְּוֵרוֹשׁ נְהֵל מִלְחָמָה נְּדוֹלָה עִם מְדִינוֹת שׁוֹנוֹת וְנִצְחָן. כְּנֵי יִשְּׂרָאֵל בְּמַלְכוּת אֲחַשְּׁוֵרוֹשׁ עָּזְרוּ רַבּוֹת לְנִצְחוֹנוֹ, וּבִגְלַל זֹאת הֶעֶּרִיכוּ אוֹתָם מְאוֹד. הֵם קְבְּלוּ אוֹתוֹת הִצְּטַיְנוּת שׁוֹנוֹת, וְנָמַסְרוּ בִּידֵיהָם תַּפְקִידִים שׁוֹנוֹת, וְנָמַסְרוּ בִּידֵיהָם תַּפְקִידִים

Student's in the regime. When Achashverosh returned to Shushan, riding on a victory wave, he threw parties for all his citizens, including the Jewish citizens. Royal edicts instructed that all guests be treated well, and supplied with all the food and drink they wished for. These banquets, accompanied with wild revelry, morally corrupted the Jews. Their war achievements, coupled with their royal awards, made them drunk with conceit. They lived in the most beautiful mansions as free birds. unshackled from their Judaism.

חַשׁוּבִים בַּמִּמִשֵׁל. כִּשֵׁחַזַר אֲחַשָּׁוֵרוֹשׁ מִשִּׂדֵה הַקְּרָב עֲטוּר נִצֶּחוֹן גַּדוֹל, עַרַךְ סְעוּדוֹת גִּדוֹלוֹת לְכֵל נְתִינֵיו, אֱלֵיהֵן הָזָמָנוּ עַל יִדִי וַעֲּדָה מַמְלַכְתִּית גַּם נְתִינֵיו הַיָּהוּדִים. הַהוֹרַאוֹת הַמַּמְלַכְתִּיוֹת הֵיוּ לְהַתְיַחֵס הֵיטֵב לְכֵל אוֹרֶחַ, וּלְסַפַּק לוֹ מִן הַמֵּיטָב כָּכָל אֲשֵׁר יִדְרשׁ, בִּמַאֲכָל וּבַמַשָּׁקָה. הַסְּעוּדוֹת, שֵׁהֵיוּ מִלְוּוֹת בָּהָתָהוֹלְלוּת פָּרוּעַה – הָשָׁחִיתוּ יוֹתֵר אָת בָּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל. זְכוּיוֹת הַמְּלְחַמַה הַגִּדוֹלוֹת שֵׁלָהֶם, בְּצֵרוּף מְכִתְבֵי הַתּוֹדָה הַמַּמְלַכְתִּיוֹת, שָׁכִּרוּ אוֹתָם. הַם הִשְׁתַּבְּנוּ בָּבְנִינֵי פָּאָר הַיַּפִים בִּיוֹתֵר, וּמַצְאוּ חֵן בָּעֵינֵיהֶם חַיֵּי הַחֹפֵשׁ וְהַדְּרוֹר.

The worst decree in history

>> The Rehbe

Student's

Yet, the opposite happened. Precisely when their situation seemed so secure, a decree of annihilation was issued against them—to destroy, kill, and wipe out every Jew, from young to old, including children and women, in a single day. This was the harshest decree ever placed upon the Jewish people. Never before had there been a threat of total destruction against the entire nation, as there was in the days of King Achashverosh.

אלא שלפועל, אירע בדיוק ההיפך. דוקא אז, כשמצבם היה כל כך בטוח, באה עליהם גזירת כליה. רחמנא לצלז. להשמיד להרוג ולאבד את כל היהודים. היו לא תהיה, "מנער ועד זקו טף ונשים ביום אחד", שזו היתה בעצם הקשה מכל הגזירות שהיו אי פעם על יהודים. מעולם לא היתה גזירת כליה, רחמנא לצלן, על כל עם ישראל, כפי שהגזירה היתה בימי אחשורוש.

Source 2 Megillat Esther 3:8-10: 13

Student's Haman

Achashverosh: told King is a nation spread out among the nations, in all the lands of your empire. Their laws differ from those of all other nations, and וַיֹּאמֶר הַמַן לַמֵּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ, "יֵשְׁנוֹ עַם אָחָד מִפְּזָר וּמִפֹּרָד בֵּין הָעַמִּים בָּכֹל מִדִינוֹת מַלְכוּתֶדְ, וְדַתִיהֵם שׁנוֹת מִכָּל עַם וְאֵת דָתֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינָם עשִׁים, וַלַמֵּלֶךְ אֵין שׁוֶה לְהַנִּיחָם. אָם עַל הַמֵּלֶךְ טוֹב, יְכַּתֶב

Student's pq. 3

they do not observe the king's laws. It is not worth the king allowing them to be. If the king is agreeable, let him issue a decree to destroy them, and I will have ten thousand silver talents brought to the king's coffers."

The king removed his signet from his hand and gave it to Haman, son of Hamedata, the tormentor of the Jews. The king replied to Haman: Keep the cash and do as you please to the Jews.

Letters shall be sent by courier to all the king's provinces instructing the citizens to destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews, from young to old, children and women, on a single day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, the month of Adar, and their spoils shall be plundered.

לְאַבְּדָם. וַצְשֶׁרֶת אֲלָפִּים כִּכֵּר כָּסֶךְ, אֶשְׁקוֹל עַל יְדֵי עֹשֵׁי הַמְּלָאכָה, לְהָבִיא אֶל גּנְזֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ".

וַיָּסַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת טַבַּעְתּוֹ מֵעַל יְדוֹ, וַיִּתְּנָהּ לְהָמָן בֶּן הַמְּדָתָא הָאֲנָגִי צֹרֵר הַיְּהוּדִים. וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהָמָן, "הַכָּסֶף נָתוּן לָךְ, וְהָעָם לַצְשׁוֹת בּוֹ כַּטוֹב בִּעִינִיךְ".

וְנִשְׁלוֹחַ סְפָּרִים בְּיֵד הָרְצִים אֶל כָּל מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶך: "לְהַשְׁמִיד לַהֲרֹג וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת כָּל הַיְּהוּדִים, מִנַּעַר וְעַד זְקֵן, טַף וְנָשִׁים בְּיוֹם אָחָד, בִּשְׁלוֹשָׁה עֲשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנִים עֲשָׂר הוּא חֹדֶשׁ אֲדָר, וּשָׁלַלֶם לָבוֹז".

A royal edict was sent to all provinces of Achashverosh's empire, which spanned most of the world, instructing the governors to murder all the Jews in their provinces, with the help of the antisemitic citizenry, on the 13th of Adar.

Total destruction

>> The Rebbe

Student's

In the other periods of exile, the Jewish people were not concentrated in one place. "G-d, acted kindly to the Jewish people by scattering them among the nations. As a result, if one nation sought, G-d forbid, to decree annihilation against the Jews within their borders, those in other lands would remain unharmed. Even the Jews in that particular country could potentially escape to regions where such the decree was not in effect.

בשאר הגלויות לא היו בני ישראל מרוכזים במקום אחד, "צדקה עשה הקב"ה בישראל שפיזרן לבין האומות"³. אם אומה אחת תרצה, חס ושלום, לגזור גזירת כליה רחמנא לצלן על היהודים שבתחום ממשלתה, עדיין ישארו היהודים שבשאר המדינות ללא פגע, ואפילו יהודי מדינה זו, יכולים הרי לנוס לשאר המדינות בהן לא קיימת הגזירה.

Student's

pg.

Even in the days of Pharaoh, when all the Jews were under his rule and escape from Egypt was impossible—as the sages state that not even a single slave could flee Egypt—his decree of annihilation was not directed equally at all Jews. Pharaoh's order targeted only the male infants.

By contrast, in the time of King Achashverosh, all Jews were under his dominion, and escape was impossible for several reasons: (a) Achashverosh ruled over the entire world, leaving no place to which they could flee. (b) Achashverosh's decree was to destroy the Jews "in a single day," meaning there was no time to escape. (c) The decree targeted all Jews, without exception.

אפילו בימי פרעה, כשכל היהודים היו תחת שלטונו, וגם לא היתה כל אפשרות לברוח ממצרים, כמאמר רבותינו ז"ל⁴ ש"אפילו עבד אחד אינו יכול לברוח משם", לא היתה אבל הגזירה על כולם בשווה, מכיון ש"פרעה לא גזר אלא על הזכרים"⁵.

לעומת זאת, בימי אחשורוש, היו כל היהודים תחת ממשלתו, ואף לא היתה כל אפשרות לברוח, מכיון: א) שהוא היה מולך בכיפה, מלך על כל העולם כולו, במילא לא היה לאן לנוס. ב) רצונו היה "להשמיד גו' ביום אחד", כך שלא היה נותר זמן לברוח. ג) הגזירה היתה "להשמיד גו' את כל היהודים", היו לא תהיה.

Even in modern history, we see that when the Jewish people experience terrible tragedies in one place, another part of the Jewish nation is able to live in safety elsewhere. Here, we will read about one example—the expulsion from Spain:

In 1492, one of the greatest tragedies in Jewish history took place—the expulsion from Spain. King Ferdinand II and Queen Isabella I expelled the Jews of Spain, and four years later, on March 24, 1497, the Jews of Portugal were also expelled.

At that time, the Ottoman Empire ruled over the Mediterranean basin and parts of Southern Europe under Sultan Bayezid II. Although at the beginning of his reign he restricted Jewish activities due to his devout Muslim beliefs, he later recognized the benefits that the Jews brought to the empire and gradually improved their status.

When the Jews were expelled from Spain, Bayezid wisely realized that the exiles from Spain, Portugal, and later Naples, were valuable to his kingdom due to their knowledge and professional skills. Bayezid openly mocked Ferdinand and Isabella's decision to expel the Jews. He would tell his court officials that Ferdinand was not a wise ruler at all, as he had impoverished his own kingdom while enriching the Ottoman Empire.

Bayezid issued a royal decree to all governors of the European provinces, commanding them to welcome all Jewish exiles into their territories and treat them with friendship, threatening the

death penalty for anyone who disobeyed this order. There is documented evidence that not only were Jews allowed to enter the empire's territories, but in some cases, they were actively assisted in settling there. Official requests were even made inviting them to come and establish their homes within the empire.

(The Holocaust also took place in Europe under Nazi rule, but in other parts of the world, Jews remained safe.)

B. Beyond Nature

The reason for the decree

>> The Rebbe

Student's pg. 5

How did it happen that at a time when the Jewish people seemed so secure, such a terrible decree was issued against them? The Talmud explains the reason: "Because they enjoyed the feast of that wicked man."

כיצד אכן אירע הדבר, שבהיות בני ישראל על פי טבע כל כך בטוחים, דוקא אז תבוא גזירה איומה שכזו? מספרת לנו הגמרא⁶ את סיבת הגזירה ⁻ "מפני שנהנו מסעודתו של אותו רשע וכו"".

Source 3 Talmud, Megillah 12a

Student's

The students of Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai asked him: What did the Jews do to deserve death at the time of the Purim story?

"You tell me," he responded. "Because they enjoyed the feasts of that wicked man[Achashverosh]," they said. שָׁאֲלוּ תַּלְמִידִיו אֶת רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחַאי, "מִפְּנִי מָה נִתְחַיְּיבוּ שׁוֹנְאֵיהֶן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל שֶׁבְּאוֹתוֹ הַדּוֹר בְּלָיָה?"

אָמַר לָהֶם, "אִמְרוּ אַתֶּם".

אָמְרוּ לוֹ, "מִפְּנֵי שֶׁנֶּהֲנוּ מִסְעוּדָתוֹ שֶׁל אותוֹ רָשָׁע".

>> The Rebbe

Student's pg. 5

We see clearly from this that the Jewish people and nature are completely separate entities. The fate of the Jewish people is not governed by the laws of nature, it depends solely on our adherence to the Torah and its commandments. Therefore, even though there was no natural reason for such a decree, the fact that they took part in the feast

מכך רואים אנו בבירור, שבני ישראל וטבע הם שני דברים שונים לגמרי, ההנהגה עמם אינה קשורה לחוקי הטבע, כי אם תלויה אך ורק בקיום התורה והמצוות. לפיכך, למרות שמצד הטבע לא היה כל מקום לגזירה, מכל מקום כאשר בני ישראל נהנו מסעודתו

Student's pq. 6

and formed a connection with something spiritually improper led to the terrible decree. של אותו רשע, ועל ידי זה נוצר קשר בינם לבין דברים שאינם כשרים, באה עליהם גזירת כליה רחמנא ליצלן.

The cause of salvation

pg. 6

Student's We see a similar clear lesson in the way the salvation came about. The decree was not overturned through natural means, but through repentance and reconnecting with G-d.

> When Mordechai and Esther learned of the decree, one might have expected their first response to be organizing a diplomatic effort to appeal to the king. However, the Megillah tells us that Esther's first instruction to Mordechai was: "Go and gather all the Jews in Shushan and fast for me; do not eat or drink for three days, night and day." This was the first step taken to nullify the decree.

הוראה ברורה דומה רואים אנו גם באופן הישועה וההצלה. ביטול הגזירה לא היה אף הוא על פי טבע, אלא על ידי תשובה והתקשרות לקב"ה.

כאשר נודע למרדכי ואסתר על הגזירה, היה עליהם, לכאורה, ראשית כל לארגן משלחת דיפלומטית להשתדל אצל אחשוורוש. מספרת לנו אבל המגילה, שלכל לראש אמרה אסתר למרדכי, "לד כנוס את כל היהודים הנמצאים בשושן, וצומו עלי, ואל תאכלו ואל תשתו שלשת ימים לילה ויום". זה היה הצעד הראשון שנקטו לביטול הגזירה.

Source 4 Pirkei Derabbi Eliezer 50:5

Student's

Esther told Mordechai: "Go and gather all the Jews of Shushan and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days and three nights." These days were Nisan 13, 14, and 15.

Mordechai replied: "But the third day is Passover eve!" Esther responded: "You are an elder, the head of the Sanhedrin and you are saying such a thing? If there will be no Jews to observe Passover, who will Passover be for?" Mordechai took her words to heart and conceded, fulfilling her wishes.

אָמָרָה לוֹ, "לֵךְ כִּנוֹס אֶת כַּל הַיִּהוּדִים הַנָּמְצַאִים בָּשׁוּשֵׁן, וְצוּמוּ עַלַי וְאַל תאכלו ואַל תִשָּׁתוּ שָׁלשֶׁת יַמִים לַיִּלָה וָיוֹם". וְאֵלוּ הֵן, י"ג בִּנִיסָן, י"ד בִּנִיסָן, ט"ו בַנִיסַן.

אָמַר לָה מָרְדְּכַי, "וַהַלֹא יוֹם שְׁלִישִׁי הוא יום ראשון של פַּסַח?" אַמַרַה לוֹ, "זַקָן שַׁבִּיִשָּׂרָאֵל וָאֲתַּה רֹאשׁ לַסַּנְהָדְרִין, וְאַתָּה אוֹמֵר דָּבָר זֶה? וִאָם אֵין יִשְׂרָאֵל לַצַשׂוֹת הַפֶּסַח, לִמִי הוּא בֶּסַח?" וִשְׁמַע מָרְדְּכֵי אֶת דְּבָרֶיהָ וְהוֹדָה לָה מָרְדְּכֵי וְעַשַּׁה לָה כַּל אֲשֵׁר צְוְתָהוּ, שֵׁנֵאֱמַר, "וַיַּעֲבֹר מָרְדֶּכֶי וַיַּעֲשׁ כִּכֹל אֲשֵׁר צְוְּתַה עליו אסתר".

Source 5 Esther Rabbah 8:7

Student's

What did Mordechai do? He gathered the children ... and they cried and screamed and studied Torah.

מָה עַשַּׂה מָרְדְּכַי? קְבֵּץ אֵת הַתִּינוֹקוֹת וְעָנָה אוֹתָם מִלֶּחֶם וּמַיִם, וִהִּלְבִּישַׁן שַׂק וְהוֹשִׁיכַם בַּאָפֶר, וְהַיוּ צוֹעֵקִים וּבוֹכִין וִעוֹסְקִין בַתּוֹרָה.

Source 6 Sefer Hasichot 1941, Purim

Student's

During those difficult times, Mordechai strengthened the Jewish education of children, and in Shushan alone he gathered 22,000 children to study Torah and observe mitzvot with selfsacrifice, showing that they were proud of their Judaism.

All the Jews, men, women, and children, young and old, Torah scholars and laypeople, were filled with the spirit of self-sacrifice. All, without exception, were prepared to be killed over their fight for Judaism: Shabbat observance, kosher, family purity, and tefillin. With immense Jewish pride, they mocked Haman and their persecutors.

בָּאוֹתֵם יָמִים מָרִים, הָגִבִּיר מַרְדְּכֵי אָת עַבוֹדַת הַחִנּוּךְ, וּבְשׁוּשָׁן הַבִּירַה בָּלָבַד אָסַף עָשִׂרִים וּשְׁנַיִם אֶלֶף יַלְדִים שֶׁלְּמִדוּ תּוֹרָה וְקִיִמוּ מִצְווֹת בַּמִסִירוּת נֵפַשׁ, וְכַךְ הֵרְאוּ שֵׁהֵם גאים ביהדותם.

כַּל בָּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֶל, יִהוּדִים, אֲנַשִּׁים וְנַשִּׁים זְקֵנִים וּצִעִירִים, יוֹדְעֵי תּוֹרָה וּפְשׁוּטֵי הָעָם, הָיוּ חֲדוּרִים בְּרֵגֵשׁ שׁל מִסִירוּת נֵפַשׁ. כַּלָם – לְלֹא יוֹצֵא מון הַכְּלֵל – הֵיוּ מוּכַנִים לְמִסֹר אֵת נָפָשַׁם לָהָהָרֶג לָהָדַקֵר וּלִהְשַּׂרֶף, עַל שָׁמִירַת שַׁבַּת, כַּשִּׁרוּת, טַהַרַת הַמִּשִׁפַּחָה, הַנַחַת תִּפִּלִין. וּבַנַּאוֹן הַיָּהוּדִי הַגָּדוֹל בִּיוֹתֵר לְגַלְגִּלוֹ עַל חַבוּרַת הַמַן וְרוֹדְפֵּי הַדָּת.

>> The Rebbe

Fasting before a party?

Student's Moreover, Esther added, "I and my attendants will also fast." Presumably, what made Esther valuable in the eyes of the king was that she had "found grace and favor before Achashverosh more than all the other maidens." Clearly, fasting for three full days would not enhance her appearance—on the contrary, it would naturally diminish her beauty. So why did she see it as the right thing to do?

יתירה מכך: אסתר אמרה למרדכי, "גם אני ונערותי אצום כו". לכאורה, חשיבותה של אסתר בעיני אחשורוש היה, "מכיון שותשא חן וחסד לפניו מכל ידי שעל ידי מובן מאליו שעל ידי צום במשך שלושה מעת לעת רצופים, לא יגדל חינה (על פי טבע), ואדרבה, עוד יתמעט⁷, ואם כן כיצד מצאה לנכון לצום?⁸

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The answer is that just as the decree itself did not come about through natural causes, neither did the salvation. The decree was a result of a spiritual failing, and therefore the way to overturn it was through spiritual means-repentance. One of the key aspects of repentance is fasting. Since all the Jews in Shushan were fasting, an individual is forbidden to separate themselves from the community, so Esther naturally said, "I and my attendants will also fast." As for the possibility that this might make her less attractive to the king-while one should not rely on miracles and must make efforts within the natural order, the natural efforts are merely externalities. Natural means are not the actual cause of the salvation. The externalities are therefore less important, because if the true cause of commitment to Torah and mitzvot is strong then even a weak natural effort will suffice.

Because these events took place in exile, where Divine presence is concealed, both the decree and the salvation appeared to happen through natural events. But the true causes were deeper. The decree came about because they participated in Achasverosh's feast, and the salvation came through fasting and repentance. אלא שהתשובה לכך היא: כשם שהגזירה לא היתה - כאמור - על פי טבע, כך גם הישועה לא באה מצד הטבע. הישועה באה על ידי תשובה, ואחד מעניני התשובה הוא התענית. ואם כל היהודים הנמצאים בשושן צמים, הרי שחל איסור על היחיד לפרוש מהם. וברור ש"גם אני ונערותי אצום כן". ואשר להפחתת החן שהדבר עשוי לגרום, והרי "לא סומכים על הנס"? - וחייבים לעשות גם בלבושי הטבע, מכל מקום איז זה כי אם לבוש ותו לא. ולא זוהי סיבת ההצלה. לפיכך אין נוגע כל כך הלבוש, שהרי אם הסיבה ־ ההתחזקות בקיום התורה והמצוות תהיה מספקת, גם לבוש שאינו חזק כל כך יספיק.

אלא שמצד ההעלם וההסתר של זמן
הגלות, היו לאחר מכן גם הגזירה וגם
הגלוה מלובשים בלבושי הטבע,
אבל הסיבות האמיתיות היו תורה
ומצוות. ה"נהנו מסעודתו של אותו
רשע" היווה את הסיבה לגזירה,
ואילו הצום והתשובה, הם שהביאו
לביטולה.

C. Diplomacy is Secondary

>> The Rebbe

Student's pg. 9

We can derive a lesson from this, a lesson that is especially relevant in our times:

Some argue that the primary means of ensuring the survival of the Jewish people in exile are diplomatic efforts and other natural strategies. They even cite Esther's efforts with King Achashverosh as proof. However, this is a complete misinterpretation of the story of the Megillah. Not only does it distort the truth about the Megillah, it also denies the very foundation of Jewish survival.

The Torah states, "You are standing firm today, all of you." The sages explain that even when the rest of the world is collapsing, the Jewish people remain standing. The survival of other nations follows the laws of nature, but the existence of the Jewish people is not bound by natural forces—it Torah and mitzvot.

When faced with difficult times or harsh decrees, we cannot rely on diplomacy or appeals to the nations of the world. That is not what guarantees our survival. Instead, we must examine our actions, correct what is lacking, and strengthen our commitment to our Torah and mitzvot. When we do so, our

ההוראה מכך, ובפרט בימינו אלה:

ישנם כאלו הטוענים שהאמצעים העיקריים לקיום עם ישראל בזמן הגלות, הם דיפלומטיים, וכיוצא בזה דרכים טבעיות, ומביאים לכך ראיה מהשתדלותה של אסתר אצל המלך אחשורוש. צריך לדעת, שמלבד לכך שהם מגלים פנים בתורה שלא כהלכה, היות ומפרשים את סיפור מגילת אסתר היפך האמת - הרי זו גם כפירה בכל ענין קיום עם ישראל.

בתורה נאמר "אתם נצבים היום כולכם"¹⁰, אומרים על כך רז"ל, שגם כאשר כל העולם מתמוטטים, אתם נצבים. קיום בני ישראל הוא שונה. קיום כל האומות הוא לפי חוקי הטבע, אבל בני ישראל אינם קשורים בטבע, הקשר שלנו הוא אך ורק בתורה ומצוות.

כשמגיעה עת צרה או גזירה, רחמנא ליצלן, אל לנו לסמוך על דיפלומטיה והשתדלות אצל אומות העולם. לא על ידי זה מובטח קיומנו. צריך להיות "יפשפש במעשיו", לתקן מה שהחסרנו ולהתחזק בקיום התורה ומצוות, ואז עוזרת ההשתדלות על פי הטבע. יתירה מכך: אפילו במצבים שאחרים היו בדרך הטבע נאבדים, עם כל זאת "אתם נצבים וקיימים".

10. דברים כט, ט.

Student's

natural efforts will be effective. Moreover, even in situations where, according to natural circumstances, survival seems impossible, we will still endure.

We must not panic due to the state the Jewish people appear to be in based on superficial observation of the natural circumstances. Our role is to strengthen our commitment to Torah and mitzvot. When we do so, any physical action we take will serve as a conduit for a miraculous salvation that transcends nature.

This lesson—that the Jewish people are not bound by natural forces—applies not only to the Jewish nation as a whole but also to each individual Jew.

We must always remember that everything in our lives depends on and comes directly from G-d, who is not limited by the laws of nature.

It is true that we make efforts in the physical world, as the verse states, "and G-d will bless you in all that you do," but these are only conduits through which G-d's blessing is channeled. The main thing is the Divine blessing, which comes through our connection to G-d by studying Torah and observing mitzvot. When this foundation is strong, success will follow, through any conduit.

אין להיבהל ממצב בני ישראל, כפי שאנו רואים אותו בעיני בשר על פי חוקי הטבע. ענייננו הוא להתחזק בתורה ומצוות, ואז, איזה לבוש שרק נעשה בגשמיות, תתלבש בו ההצלה הניסית הנעלית מהטבע.

ההוראה שבני ישראל אינם כפופים לטבע, אינה רק בנוגע לכלל ישראל, אלא אף בנוגע לכל יחיד. על היהודי לזכור שכל עניניו תלויים ומגיעים מהקב"ה בעצמו, שאינו מוגבל חס ושלום בחוקי הטבע.

נכון שצריך להיות "בכל אשר תעשה", שבזה מתלבש "וברכך הוי' אלוקיך", אלא שאין זה כי אם לבוש. העיקר הוא הברכה מהקב"ה, הבאה ע"י הקשר עמו באמצעות לימוד התורה וקיום המצוות¹¹. וכאשר ישנו העיקר, תהיה ההצלחה בכל לבוש שהוא.

משיחת פורים ופרשת צו, לקוטי שיחות חלק א' עמ' 213 (באידיש)

D. Gather Everyone

Source 7 Megillat Esther 4:15-17

Student's pq. 11

Esther said to respond to Mordechai: "Go, gather all the Jews of Shushan and fast for me for three days and three nights, do not eat or drink. I and my attendants will also fast, and so I will come to the king in breach of protocol. If I perish, I shall perish.

Mordechai did everything Esther commanded him.

וַתּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לְהָשִׁיב אֶל מִרְדֶּכָי,
"לֵּךְ כְּנוֹס אֶת כִּל הַיְּהוּדִים הַנִּמְצְאִים
בְּשׁוּשָׁן, וְצוּמוּ עָלֵי וְאַל תֹאכְלוּ וְאַל
תִּשְׁתוּ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים לַיְּלָה וְיוֹם, נַּם
אֲנִי וְנַצְרֹתֵי אָצוּם כֵּן, וּכְבֵן אָבוֹא אֶל
הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר לֹא כַדְּת, וְכַאֲשֶׁר אָבַרְתִּי
אָבֶרְתִּי

וַיַּצְבר מְרְדֶּכָי, וַיַּעֵשׁ כְּכל אֲשֶׁר צְּוְתָה עָלָיו אָסִתֵּר.

>> The Rebbe

Who wasn't invited?

Student's pq. 11

At first glance, it is difficult to understand: Why did Esther need to emphasize "all the Jews"? Even if she had simply said, "Go and gather the Jews," without specifying "all the Jews," Mordechai, as the leader of the Jewish people, "a lover of peace and a pursuer of peace," would have certainly gathered everyone. So why was it necessary for Esther to add and stress "all the Jews"?

From this it is clear that there were certain Jews whom Mordechai, on his own, would not have included in the fasting. This is why Esther specifically told him, "Go and gather all the Jews"—to ensure that even those he would have excluded were included in the effort.

לכאורה אינו מובן: למה הוצרכה אסתר להוסיף "את כל היהודים" - הרי גם אם היתה אומרת "לך כנוס את היהודים"), הנה כיון (ולא "את כל היהודים"), הנה כיון שמרדכי היה נשיא ישראל ומנהיג הדור, "אוהב שלום ורודף שלום"¹², היה בודאי אוסף את כל היהודים, ואם כן, למה הוצרכה אסתר להוסיף ולהדגיש "את כל היהודים?"

ומזה מובן, שהיו יהודים כאלו שמרדכי מצד עצמו לא היה כולל אותם בענין של "צומו עלי", ולכן הוצרכה אסתר לומר לו "לך כנוס את כל היהודים" -גם את אלו שמצד עצמו לא היה כולל אותם.

A prosecutor cannot become a defender

Student's pq. 12

The simple explanation for why Mordechai didn't want to include all Jews in the fast was that some of them had participated in the feast of Achashverosh. Since they had failed to resist the temptation to partake in the feast, Mordechai believed that they could not immediately shift to the opposite extreme of complete self-denial through fasting. It would be enough for them to commit, from that point onward, to only eating kosher meals with the appropriate blessings before and after, in a manner that befits "this is the table before G-d." But to expect these people to immediately embrace fasting, refraining even from permitted food, seemed unrealistic.

On a deeper level, since the purpose of the fasting was to annul Haman's decree—which had come about because they had enjoyed Achasverosh's feast—Mordechai believed that these individuals could not be included in the fast meant to overturn the decree. This was based on the principle that a prosecutor cannot become a defender. Just as, on the holiest day of the year, the High Priest could not enter the innermost sanctuary wearing gold garments—because gold, associated with the "prosecutor," the sin of the golden calf, could not serve as the "defender."

ובכן: ההסברה בפשטות מדוע מרדכי מצד עצמו לא רצה לכלול ב"צומו עלי" את כל היהודים - לפי שהיו ביניהם גם אלו ש"נהנו מסעודתו של אותו רשע"¹, וכיון שלא היו יכולים לעמוד בנסיון שלא ליהנות מסעודתו של אותו רשע, סבר מרדכי שאי אפשר לכלול אותם מיד בקצה השני "וצומו עלי". די בכך שמכאן ולהבא יזהרו לאכול רק סעודה כשרה, ולברך לפני' ולאחרי', באופן של "זה השולחן אשר לפני ה""; אבל אי השולחן אשר לפני ה""; אבל אי אפשר לכלול אותם מיד בקצה השני אפשר לכלול אותם מיד בקצה השני סעודה כשרה.

ובעומק יותר: כיון שהענין של "צומו עלי" היה בכדי לבטל גזירת המן שסיבתה היתה לפי ש"נהנו מסעודתו של אותו רשע", אי אפשר לכלול אותם בתענית שצריכה לפעול ביטול הגזירה, כיון ש"אין קטיגור בעשה סניגור" - כפי שמצינו בנוגע לעבודת הכהן הגדול ביום הכיפורים, שעבודת פנים לא היתה יכולה להיות בבגדי זהב, לפי שאין קטיגור נעשה סניגור."

Source 8 Leviticus 16:3-4

Student's

With this shall Aaron enter the holiest area of the sanctuary: with a young bull for a sin offering and a ram for a burnt offering.

בְּזֹאת יָבֹא אַהֲרֹן אֶל הַקּדֶשׁ, בְּפַר בֶּן בָּקָר לְחַטָּאת וְאַיִל לִעֹלַה.

Student's He shall wear a holy linen shirt and linen pants upon his flesh, and he shall gird himself with a linen sash and wear a linen cap; these are holy garments, and therefore, he shall immerse himself in water and don them.

קדש כַּתֹנֵת בַּד וּמִכְנָמֵי בַד יִהִיוּ עֵל בִּשַׂרוֹ, וכאבנט בד יחגר ובמצנפת בַּד יִצְנֹף – בַּגְדֵי קֹדֵשׁ הֶם, וַרַחַץ בַּמַיִם אָת בִּשַּׁרוֹ וּלְבֵשַׁם.

The High Priest would not wear his usual splendid garments, made of blue, purple, and gold and adorned with precious stones. Instead, he would wear the four simple garments, identical to those worn by the other priests. The entire attire was made of white fabric, and it seems that only the turban distinguished him from an ordinary priest, who wore a hat on his head.

Rashi

Student's pg. 13

Holy linen shirt: By listing only the four garments of a regular kohen, the Torah teaches us that the High Priest does not enter the Holy of Holies wearing the eight garments he wears for the service outside. This is because those garments contain gold, and "a prosecutor cannot become a defender." Meaning, since the High Priest enters on Yom Kippur to atone for all of Israel, he may not wear gold, because this recalls the sin of the golden calf. Instead, he wears four linen garments, like an ordinary kohen.

כתנת בד וגו'. שאינו מִשַּׁמֵשׁ לְפָנִים בשמונה בגדים שהוא משמש בחוץ, בהן שֵׁיֵשׁ כָּהֵם זָהָב, שאין נעשה קַטֶגוֹר אלא סנגור, בָאַרִבַּעַה כִּכֹהֵן הַדִיוֹט.

The High Priest does not enter the Holy of Holies wearing gold garments on Yom Kippur due to the principle "A prosecutor cannot become a defender"—meaning that something associated with sin cannot also serve as an advocate for mercy on behalf of the people.

Since gold recalls the sin of the golden calf, when the Jews worshipped a golden idol, it would be inappropriate for the High Priest to wear gold precisely at the moment when he seeks atonement for the nation's sins.

Therefore, on Yom Kippur, when the High Priest enters the Holy of Holies, he wears white garments—simple and modest clothing that symbolize purity, renewal, and cleansing from sin. After completing the inner service, he changes back into his gold garments to continue his duties outside.

Specifically them

>> The Rebbe

Student's

Therefore, Esther said to Mordechai: "Go and gather all the Jews and fast for me,"—to include even those who had enjoyed Achashverosh's feast, as the Talmud says, "Any fast that does not include the sinners of Israel is not a fast." Moreover, they should be given priority before the rest of the Jewish people, as indicated by the precise wording "Go and gather all the Jews," with the word "all" appearing before the word "Jews," even though there are other ways to structure the phrase in Hebrew. Specifically by including and prioritizing these people, the decree can be nullified for all of the Jewish people.

Student's pg. 14 Mordechai accepted Esther's words, as the verse states, "Mordechai passed and did all that Esther commanded him"—to gather all the Jews, and specifically in this order: first, "all"—those who need need to be specifically included, and then the rest of the Jews.

ולכן אמרה אסתר למרדכי: "לך כנוס את כל היהודים וצומו עלי וגו" - לכלול בזה גם את אלו ש"נהנו מסעודתו של אותו רשע", וכדברי הגמרא⁶: "כל תענית שאין וכדברי הגמרא⁶: "כל תענית שאין בה מפושעי ישראל אינה תענית", ולא עוד אלא שיש להקדים אותם לפני שאר בני ישראל, כמובן מדיוק הלשון "לך כנוס את כל היהודים" (ולא היהודים כולם וכיוצא בזה), שתיבת "כל" קודמת לתיבת "היהודים" ודוקא על ידי זה שכוללים ומקדימים אותם, מבטלים את הגזירה מכל בני ישראל.

והנה, מרדכי קיבל את דברי אסתר, כמו שכתוב¹⁷ "ויעבור מרדכי ויעש ככל אשר צותה עליו אסתר" - לכנוס את כל היהודים, ודוקא בסדר זה: תחילה "כל" - אלו שצריכים לרבות אותם, ואחר כך את שאר היהודים.

Source 9 Bereishit Rabasi, Miketz 11

Student's pq. 14 "And Mordechai passed by" (Esther 4:17) — Do not read it as "וֹיעֶבוֹר" (he passed by) but as "וֹיעֶבוֹר" (he forgave). This teaches that when Esther initially spoke to Mordechai in a manner that was not appropriate, he became upset with her and responded sternly: "For if you remain silent at this time..." (Esther 4:14). However, when she reconsidered and spoke to him appropriately, saying, "Go, assemble all the Jews..." (Esther 4:16), he accepted it and forgave her earlier words, as the verse states, "And Mordechai passed by."

וְיַצְבֹר מְרְדְּכֵי: אֵל תִּקְרִי וְיַצְבֹר אֶלְּא וַיַּצְבֵר מְלַמֵּד שָׁבְּשֶׁעָה שֶׁדִּבְּרָה אֶסְתֵּר עִם מָרְדְּכֵי דְּבָרִים שֶׁאֵינָם כְּדֶרֶךְ הָאָרֶץ קְצַף עָלֶיהְ וְהַשִּׁיב כִּי י"ד), וְכֵינָן שֶׁחָזְרָה וְדִבְּרָה עְמוֹ דְּבָרִים שֶׁהֵם כְּדֶרֶךְ הָאָרֶץ, שֶׁאָמְרָה לוֹ לְךְ כְּגֹס וּגו' (שם שָׁאָמְרָה לוֹ לְךְ כְּגֹס וּגו' (שם דַּבָרִיהָ שֶׁנָּאֵמֵר וְיַצְבֹר מֶרְדְּכֵי. מִיּדְ הוֹדָה וְהָעֶבֵר מְרְדְּכֵי.

>> The Rebbe

Student's pg. 14

Specifically by including all the Jews in the effort to annul the decree, they succeeded in not only nullifying Haman's rule, but in fact, the power over Haman's house was given to Esther and Mordechai. The Jewish people became masters over the nations, as the verse states, "and their spoil was for plunder," and the day became one of "light, joy, gladness, and honor."

ודוקא על ידי זה שכללו את כל היהודים בפעולת ביטול הגזירה פעלו ביטול הגזירה באופן שלא זו בלבד שבטלה שליטת המן, אלא אדרבה, השליטה על בית המן ניתנה לאסתר ומרדכי. ובני ישראל נעשו בעלי הבית על גוים - "ושללם לבוז"¹⁸, ונעשה יום של "אורה ושמחה וששון ויקר"י.

משיחת שבת פרשת תשא, ט"ז אדר, ה'תשל"א, בלתי מוגה תורת מנחם, כרך ס"ג עמוד 327 ואילך

Key Points:

- Student's During Achashverosh's reign, the Jews experienced unprecedented prosperity in their exile. Mordechai held a royal position, and Esther-a righteous Jewish woman—was the queen. The Jews were deeply connected to the ruling elite.
 - Yet, at the height of their success, a decree of total annihilation was issued against them—a decree so unprecedented that it defied natural logic, which suggested they should have been at their safest.
 - The reason for the decree: the Jews' enjoyment of Achashverosh's feast. This indicates that their fate was not dictated by natural laws but by their spiritual standing.
 - The annulment of the decree also occurred through supernatural means. Esther and Mordechai first took spiritual action: a three-day fast, Mordechai gathering children to study Torah, and the entire Jewish people awakening spiritually. Only then did Esther approach the king. Esther herself also participated in the fast, even though it could diminish her charm in the king's eyes.
 - This was because she understood that the decree was not triggered by

Student's natural causes, and therefore, salvation also depended on a spiritual causefasting and repentance. The natural diplomatic effort was merely a vessel for the salvation that would come from G-d.

> • Esther insisted that Mordechai involve all Jews in the spiritual efforts to annul the decree, including those who had sinned by enjoying the feast. She understood that divine salvation would come precisely through the unity of the entire Jewish people.

Takeaway:

Student's We must internalize that the existence of the Jewish people—and of every individual Jew—is not subject to the natural order, unlike other nations. In times of trouble, whether personal or communal, the primary path to overcoming challenges is by strengthening our commitment to Torah and mitzvot. These serve as the foundation for success in any natural efforts we undertake.