



SECRETS BEHIND THE HOLIDAY MASK

In the Purim story, there are no miraculous interventions, no sea splitting. In fact, G-d's name is not even mentioned. This is a tremendous revelation of G-d's omnipotence: within the natural world, within the free choices of human beings, G-d's plan is being completely fulfilled, step by step.

G-d has written a script and we are the actors in that drama. The question isn't whether we are going to play our parts, but how we will play our parts – whether consciously and willingly, or obliviously and with resistance. Whether we choose to work for G-d's plan of growth, love and oneness, or against it.

It is our choice.

Again, we see this illustrated dramatically in the story of Esther. Through a strange set of circumstances, Esther, who is secretly Jewish, marries the King of Persia. (Sound like fate at work?) Soon after, Haman the Prime Minister begins to execute his plot to destroy the Jewish people. So Mordechai, Esther's uncle, says to her: "We've got to save the Jewish people. Perhaps G-d has orchestrated things in this very manner so you could be queen and be in a position to save the Jewish people."

Esther isn't convinced. She tells Mordechai, "You know the rules of the palace. If I go to the king without being invited, he could have me killed!"

To that Mordechai says something bizarre: "If you don't do this Esther, the salvation of the Jews will come from someplace else."

What kind of argument is that? Is that going to spur her into action? Mordechai should have said to her, "If you don't do it, the Jewish people will be destroyed. This will be the end of Jewish history."

Instead he says, "If you don't do it, the Jews will be saved anyway, but you'll lose out on the starring role."

Mordechai was teaching Esther the secret of choice. In terms of G-d's great plan, it doesn't make a difference what you do. But in terms of your own life, it makes all the difference in the world.

Do you want to actively, consciously participate in G-d's plan, or not? If you don't sign on, it will still happen. But you'll lose out. You can be the star, or an extra on the set. That's your choice.

And Esther decides to do it. The Jewish people are saved, with Esther in the starring role, because she chose to play her part.

On Purim, we try to reach a drunken state in which we don't perceive a difference between "Blessed Mordechai" and "Cursed Haman." In *gematria*, the numerical equivalent of each phrase is the same, 502. In what way is the evil Haman equal to the righteous

Mordechai? They both serve the Divine plan. Haman, with all his foul machinations, initiated the process of repentance which saved the Jewish people from assimilation and eventually made them worthy to return to the Land of Israel and rebuild the Temple. That's why the sweet treats of the holiday are "Haman's ears." Because that bitter, destructive man turned out to be the source of sweetness and nourishment for Jewish survival.

That's Haman's greatest punishment: to realize he saved the Jewish people. The Talmud teaches that G-d's praise comes out of *Gehennom* the same way it comes out of Gan Eden. In other words, the evil ones also end up serving G-d's plan, albeit against their own will.

On Purim, we're celebrating that everything is going according to G-d's plan.

Whether we see it or not.

Rabbi David Aaron is the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Orayta, founder of Isralight and an author.



A member of the Mizrahi Speakers Bureau
mizrachi.org/speakers