

Parsha Ponders

Purim | March 20, 2019 | 14 Adar II 5779

The depth of ingratitude¹

וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיָּבֵא אֶת-אֶהֱבִי וְאֶת-זֶרֶשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ: וַיְסַפֵּר לָהֶם הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-כְּבוֹד עֲשָׂרוֹ וְרַב בָּנָיו וְאֶת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר גָּדְלוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶת אֲשֶׁר נִשְׂאוּ עַל-הַשָּׂרִים וְעַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְגו' וְכָל-זֶה אֵינְנוֹ שׂוֹה לִי בְכָל-עֵת אֲשֶׁר אֲנִי אֹרֵה אֶת-מֵרְדֵּכַי הַיְהוּדִי יוֹשֵׁב בַּשַּׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ

...[Haman] sent for and brought his friends and his wife Zeresh. He spoke to them about all of his glory, wealth, multitude of children, the promotions that the King had given him, how he was in charge of all the ministers and slaves of the King. Haman said [to them]: "...All of this is worthless to me, so long as I see Mordechai the Jew sitting in the gate of the King"²

Towards the end of the *Megillah*, Haman practically had a mental breakdown. His arch nemesis Mordechai was still alive, despite Haman's desire that all the Jews be killed. Haman himself delayed Mordechai's execution, in order to kill his entire people on the same day. It's clear that Haman had grown impatient, waiting for the decreed day's arrival. He complained to his family and friends that he felt like nothing in his life mattered, so long as Mordechai the Jew was alive.

How far was the depth of Haman's ingratitude? If we consider Haman's very humble beginnings, we'll glean a very clear picture. Haman wasn't always second in command to the King. Our Sages inform us³ that his original profession was a barber and bathhouse attendant. Although Haman later became the general of an army, he was eventually purchased as a slave, to none other than Mordechai⁴. Haman went from these circumstances to become an unstoppable authority over 127 kingdoms. The contrast is stark. Everyone was commanded to bow to him. How did Haman feel about his newfound position of authority, with all the perks that came with it? Since Mordechai refused to bow to him, it was all worthless.

The *gemarra* asks⁵ where we can find an allusion to Haman in the Torah. The answer is from the very beginning of the Chumash. Hashem asked Adam if he ate from the Tree of Knowledge with the expression: הֲמִן-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִיךָ לִבְלֹתִי אָכַר-מִמֶּנּוּ אָכַלְתָּ? The word הֲמִן, "from", can be read as Haman. Why is this *the* place to allude to Haman, in the entire Torah?

Perhaps it's to allude to the ingratitude that beset Haman. Haman's weakness was that the slightest lack clouded his appreciation for his abundant good. Where else do we see such a characteristic? With Adam and the Tree of Knowledge. In the Garden of Eden, we are taught that it was a complete paradise. Adam and his wife didn't need to worry about a thing. Their meals were prepared for them by Angels themselves⁶. They had roasted meat, and very fine wine. They didn't yet need to earn a livelihood. What was the one rule by which they had to live by? Not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge. This seemingly should have been a very easy test. However, since it was the one thing they were lacking, it overpowered all that they had. Haman was no different. Hopefully, from their ingratitude, we can learn to appreciate all the amazing blessings in our own lives. Have a freilichen Purim!

¹ Based on [Mishnas Rabbi Aharon](#) I pp. 103

² [Esther 5:10-13](#)

³ See [Megillah 16a](#)

⁴ [Targum I to Esther 3:2](#). See also [Megillah loc. cit.](#)

⁵ [Chullin 139b](#)

⁶ [Sanhedrin 59b](#)