

Parsha Ponders

Purim | March 3, 2026 | 14 Adar 5786

*Paving the way to salvation*¹

ביום השביעי כטוב לב המלך ביין

On the seventh day, when the king's heart was full of wine²

Our Sages derive³ that when the *Megillah* mentions *the seventh day*, that it was Shabbos. This was when Achashverosh's party was at its climax. He was so drunk that he ordered his wife Vashti appear before the men wearing nothing but her crown. Her refusal led her to the gallows and Esther becoming the new queen, paving the way for the Jews' salvation from sure destruction.

Our Sages don't stop there. They add a contrast between the festive meals of the Jews and those of the nations. The Jews, when they eat and drink, they delve into words of Torah and praises of Hashem. The nations, on the other hand, veer off into discussions of a lewd nature. The reference here is to Vashti's beauty, and this is what prompted her summons by the king.

The Sages are trying to explain the intent of our verse. It says that it was the seventh day. Sure, it's good to know that the seventh day here is a reference to Shabbos. However, why do we need this added detail about the nature of the meals? To understand the verse, why do we need to be taught the contrast between the meals of the Jews and the meals of the nations?

Rav Yosef Chaim of Baghdad, the renowned Ben Ish Chai, explains that something deeper is going on here. Let's not forget, what was the reason for the decree to destroy the Jews? We are taught⁴ because they benefited from the party of Achashverosh. How could it be then, that at this very meal, the salvation for the Jews could be put in motion⁵?

To this, our Sages explain that it all stems from the nature of the meal. Yes, they benefited from the party, against the wishes of Mordechai. Nevertheless, the nature of the Jewish people is that when they eat and drink, they begin sharing words of Torah and words of praise to Hashem. This merit, albeit seemingly insignificant, was tremendously powerful. It sowed the seeds of their eventual salvation, leading to the Purim miracle as we know it.

A freilichin Purim!

¹ Based on Ben Yehoyada to Megillah 12b

² Esther 1:10

³ Megillah *loc. cit.*

⁴ Megillah 12a

⁵ The Chasam Sofer (Toras Moshe I, end of *parshas Tetzaveh (L'Purim)*, to Esther 1:1, and Derashos I p. 106 col. 1) posits that this is really the biggest miracle of Purim