

Ki Sisa

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At first, it might not seem that there is very much connecting this week's *parsha* and Purim, other than the fact they are both on the same day this year. Until, that is, we recall that the *Machtzis-Hasbekel* collected at the beginning of the *parsha* is what the Gemora calls the "medicine before the illness" (*Megillah* 13b). Haman was prepared to spend 10,000 *kikar kesef* to buy the right to kill all the Jews, but it turned out that the *Machtzis-Hasbekel* given in the desert counteracted that about a thousand years in advance.

Okay, but what does one have to do with the other? Because of the way what we do in the physical world affects the spiritual world, which also answers another question from a different *parsha*, which is, what did Moshe *Rabbeinu* mean when he asked God, regarding Korach and his assembly:

"Do not accept their offering. I have not taken a donkey from a single one of them, and I have not harmed a single one of them." (*Bamidbar* 16:15)

What was he worried about? They were *reshayim*. What do we care if an evil person does something holy? If anything, they profane it because they *are* evil. The answer is, never under-estimate the power of a "good" deed, or what might even be considered to be one by God.

As the Gemora says, God never leaves any good deed unrecompensed. It could be that the person doing the act had no intention to do good and, perhaps, even the opposite. But every deed in and of itself has a very specific effect on the universe for good or for bad (at least what appears bad to us). If you throw a ball at a window, it will break the glass whether you meant to or not

Although Korach was deadly wrong about his right to be *Koben Gadol*, he still did the act of an Incense Offering, and with the intention to do it as prescribed by the Torah. Some of the people in Korach's assembly might have even thought they were doing a *mitzvah*. A lot of good might have been in with all the evil.

Moshe *Rabbeinu* understood that. Though he knew he was one hundred percent

correct about everything he had said and arranged, he was still worried about any acknowledgment of good by God, which would only confuse people. He wanted the final result to leave not even a single doubt in the minds of those who survived that everything had come from God, and not him.

But how does that compare to Haman's willingness to pay a lot of money, billions by today's standards, to eradicate the Jewish people? At least Korach and his assembly did something that resembled a *mitzvah*, the right act by the wrong people.

Haman's act was just *pure* evil, a wrong act by a wrong person.

But even the whitest of white paints becomes gray if you add enough black paint. In other words, had the Jewish people of Haman's time done nothing wrong, then Haman's act would have counted for nothing. But *Megillas Esther* starts off talking about how that was not the case, attending Achashveros's feast, among other anti-Torah activities. A major part of Ezra's job prior to returning to *Eretz Yisroel* after the Purim story was sorting out many mixed marriages.

When that becomes the case, then the Jewish people "legitimize" acts their enemies might commit to have the "right" to inflict harm on the Jewish people. As the Gemora says, Amalek is a "punishing belt" in the hand of God when the Jewish people need spiritual straightening out. The "*chov*" (debt) of the Jewish people becomes the "*zechus*" (merit) of their enemy.

Evil people will always be punished for what they do no matter how "deserving" their victims might be. Any punishment a person endures is between them and God only. A human perpetrator acting on behalf of God will have to answer for themselves as to why they were so available to be such an instrument for bad. But until they do, they can, and have done a lot of damage to a lot of otherwise good people.

Purim ended up being a success story for the Jews with a very happy ending. But through it God wanted to teach us a lesson about how He runs His world, and how easily our spiritual failures can lead to our enemies' successes. For all the Purims that have ever occurred, so many other national crises have not ended favorably for us.

This is why we have to include in so many prayers our wishes that

God block the plans of the evil against us. It's not what they plan to do that should worry us. It is what we do, as individuals and as a nation, to empower them to carry out those plans. We don't always have the foresight to know what to do today for the future, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't try.

As the Gemora says, a wise person is someone who considers the future implications of their current actions. The story of Purim vis-a-vis this week's parsha is quick review of just how wise it is to live that way.

Latest books, Haggadah: "*The Wise Son Says*," and "*Taking It Even Higher: Going Beyond Everyday Reality*." Available through Amazon.com.

Part One of KABBALAH & REDEMPTION was a success, b"H, and has been uploaded. Part Two is this Tuesday, March 11, b"H. To register, go to <https://www.shaarnunproductions.org/webinars.html>. For more details, write to pinchasw@shaarnun.org.

Good Shabbos,
Pinchas Winston