



**RABBI SHALOM**

**ROSNER**

Rav Kehilla, Nofei HaShemesh  
Maggid Shiur, Daf Yomi, OU.org  
Senior Ra"m, Kerem B'Yavneh

# Megillas Esther- Revealed Yet Concealed

Who is the protagonist of the Megillah? Perhaps at first glance one would surmise Esther or Mordechai. Yet, in *Megillas Esther* there is one character that is mentioned over and over again. References to the word King and the name Ahashverosh appear no less than 187 times!

King Ahashverosh seems to be a central personality. He is involved in every story. Everything revolves around him. The opening episode is at his party. There is a scheme to assassinate him. The king has to authorize Haman's plan to annihilate the Jewish people. The ability to change that decree is in his hands and Esther maneuvers carefully to be able to persuade him accordingly. As Rabbi Lamm (Majesty & Mystery) states: "the king is happy, the king is angry, the king is restless the king

is upset, the king is fuming, the king is drunk, the king commands, the king consents..." He is a central figure, yet, he seems somewhat weak, always seeking advice from others. He appears to be easily manipulated by others. Not one act of importance is initiated by Ahashverosh. He is constantly given advice by those around him and acts upon it. We are not informed of any of his creativity. He is a king who reigns but does not rule. How are we to account for this paradox? Is he a strong or weak individual?

The answer is that the Megillah promulgated by Mordechai and Esther was addressed to two distinct audiences. Primarily it was written to and for their fellow Jews of that era and beyond. However, secondarily, its content could not offend Ahashverosh and his royal court, as it was disseminated while he was still in power. The Jews of Persia were victorious, but they could not assert their independence as openly as the Maccabees were able to do generations later. They were still in *galus* (exile) and so the victory must be subdued. It must be written with such finesse that it could be understood on two levels: **revealed and concealed**, open and hidden, an outer and inner tale. Perhaps that is why it is referred to as the "*megillah*" from the term *legalos* to reveal, due to its hidden meaning that needs to be uncovered.

As Mordechai himself states: the words



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of the Megillah are “*divre shalom v’emes*” - words of peace and truth. It was indeed words of truth for the Jews, and simultaneously subdued to ensure that they are words of peace so as not to offend the ruling authority in the empire. This balance is a challenge we have faced while living under foreign rule in *galus*. We had to navigate between our belief and understanding of the hand of God, while being sensitive to the local governmental authorities. On the one hand Ahashverosh felt he was in command, but we know that he was merely a puppet whose strings were being manipulated from a higher authority. Although in the Megillah Ahashversosh is at the center and Judaism is deemphasized, we can decipher the *emes* despite the attempt at *shalom*. It is clear to us that the events that unfold are not mere circumstance, but carefully calculated maneuvers guided from above.

The message of the Megillah for us is that often we feel as if we are in charge, but we are just all actors in a great divine drama. There is a combination of *bechira chofshis* (*free will*) and *Hashgacha pratit* (*divine providence*). We must do our *histadlus*, while recognizing that there is a divine plan that will prevail. ■



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