

## Purim 5783 Vashti, A Forgotten Woman

When it comes to the celebration of Purim, the heroic woman that we all remember is Esther, and rightly so. However, the young Jewish woman called Hadassah only became Queen Esther because of a single decision of the previous queen named Vashti. Although Judaism does not see anything praiseworthy in this woman, when one carefully studies the events surrounding the Biblical account, there does indeed seem to be something commendable about her.

When the book of Esther begins, the reader is told it is in the third year of King Achashverosh. When the number three appears in the Scriptures, it frequently carries with it the idea of something which is to be revealed. The first two chapters take place in the third year of the king; but in chapter three it is stated that it is the 12th year of King Achashverosh. Therefore, what is being revealed? The answer is the transition from queen Vashti to queen Esther. This fact should cause the reader to pay close attention to all the circumstances related to this transition.

King Achashverosh gives two banquets in the first chapter. The first is for all his important officials, servants and military leaders throughout his 127 provinces. This banquet was for 180 days. The second one was for all those in the capital city of his empire and this celebration lasted seven days. The reason for these banquets is clearly stated,

בְּהִרְאֹתוֹ, אֶת-עֲשָׂרָה כְּבוֹד מַלְכוּתוֹ, וְאֶת-יְקָר, תִּפְאָרַת גְּדוּלָתוֹ...

*“When he showed the glorious wealth of his kingdom and the splendid honor of his greatness...”* Esther 1:4

Achashverosh was only interested in manifesting the greatness of his empire and exalting himself. This is in contrast with the Biblical commandment to demonstrate the righteousness of the Kingdom of G-d and to exalt Him. In regard to the drinking of wine at the banquet, the text states,

...לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּרָצוֹן אִישׁ וְאִישׁ:

*“...to do as the desire of each one.”* Esther 1:8b

This saying is most informative, as this truly summarizes the thoughts of those who have not been redeemed and who belong to the world. It will be a similar philosophy that the antichrist will utilize in order to attract people to pledge allegiance to his

empire. Whereas the Kingdom of G-d will be righteous and manifest the glory of G-d, the antichrist empire will be blasphemous (See Revelation 13:5-6). It is important to know that the empire which Achashverosh and Haman ruled over was antitype of the antichrist empire. Not only did Achashverosh hold a banquet for those in Shushan, but so did his queen do as well for the women.

When examining closely this first chapter of the book of Esther, the number seven appears several times. The purpose of this repetition is to inform the reader that the meaning of this number has significance when interpreting this passage. The number seven relates to holiness, which is found in the purposes of G-d. In other words, G-d is going to use the events of this chapter in order to fulfill His purpose. G-d is not causing these events, but He certainly can use all things to accomplish His purposes, i.e. His will. It is on the seventh day (Shabbat) while the king's heart was greatly influenced with wine that he commanded his seven eunuchs to bring his wife, Queen Vashti, before him.

לְהַבִּיא אֶת וַשְׁתִּי הַמְּלָכָה לְפָנַי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּכֹתֵר מַלְכוּת; לְהַרְאוֹת הָעַמִּים וְהַשָּׂרִים אֶת יְפִיָּהּ,  
כִּי טוֹבַת מְרָאָה הִיא:

*“To bring Vashti the Queen before the King with the crown of the kingdom; to show the peoples and the cabinet officials her beauty, for she is of a good appearance.”*

Esther 1:11

Although the king had commanded her to do this, she refused to obey his command. There are two important reasons provided by major commentaries for her refusal. The first is that there was even in this pagan society a cultural separation between men and women. This separation is related to both modesty and the distinction between men and women. Such a distinction is seen in creation as G-d created man both male and female. The insertion of Queen Vashti into the banquet which was just for men, would blur the distinctiveness between male and female that G-d established at creation. In essence, it was an act of rebelliousness against G-d and His divine order which He had instituted. It is not that Vashti was refusing her husband's order because she consciously wanted to submit to the G-d of Israel, but even within a pagan society, this divine order was acknowledged. The second reason is midrashic and is based on the traditional interpretation that being drunk, Achashverosh only wanted Vashti to wear only the royal crown and nothing else. Hence, she refused, as she did not want to expose herself. Here again, it is not that this culture embraced the Torah standards of modesty, but even in this society, such type of behavior was not done.

It was due to Queen Vashti's refusal to obey the king that there was a crisis throughout the empire, as no one could be allowed to disobey the king's command. The question which now presented itself was what to do with the queen. It was said that not only

against the king alone that she twisted עוותה, but against all the cabinet officials and all of the peoples who were in all of the provinces of the empire. This “twisting” represents a corruption of the will of G-d into the desires of man. Such pagan rulers demanded absolute obedience and so will the antichrist in the last days.

It was due to Queen Vashti’s refusal to obey the king, as she chose to maintain the order that G-d has established, that she was removed from being queen and perhaps even was put to death. Regardless of whether one thinks she was executed or not, one thing is clear and that is that a replacement was sought for her. This of course provided the opportunity for Esther to become queen and be used to deliver the Jewish people from the plot of wicked Haman to exterminate the Jewish people from the world.

I strongly believe that the emphasis today throughout the world in regard to gender confusion is a refusal to acknowledge the divine order of G-d—that it is He Who created man (humanity) male and female. G-d assigns gender and an individual cannot choose for oneself the gender that a person desires. All of this transgenderism is nothing more than pure rebellion against the authority of G-d. Purim is an excellent time for each of us to consider the changes that are taking place in the world and realize that there will be much more drastic ones coming. In light of this, how will you stand? Will you choose correctly and obey the truth which the Living G-d has established or will you turn aside from the Biblical truth and follow the deceit of the antichrist, whose spirit is already at work in this world?

May you have a blessed Purim!