

Dvar Torah for Purim

Based on *Likutey Halakhot, Hoda'ah* 6:12

"And it was turned upside-down..." (Esther 9:2).

Purim come early to the State of New York this year. Its law-and-order governor, who portrayed himself as a shining example of moral rectitude, was caught being naughty, maybe even with someone else's money. The irony was exquisite. From Albany to Wall Street you could hear people laughing.

Speaking of Wall Street, early the next week (the week of Purim), people whose stock in a certain investment bank was worth over \$67 per share on Wednesday discovered on Sunday that the company had been sold for a measly \$2 per share. No ironic laughter this time. More like fury. How would you feel if just like that your stake of \$100 million was ravaged? I thought so.

But Purim tells us that "just like that" life can change. Vashti was having a wonderful time at the party till her fool headed husband made a fool headed request (Esther 1:11). Her sharp retort got her neck introduced to the business end of sword. One morning, Haman comes to ask his friend the king to hang Mordekhai. Instead Haman finishes the day swinging from the wrong end of a noose.

And we Jews went from sackcloth and ashes to costumes and candies and from woe to wonder "just like that." No split seas, no thunder and lightning, only.... Only what? Divine providence correcting the short-sighted miscalculations by people who wanted to harm us.

But sometimes we make our own short-sighted miscalculations. We think we see the whole situation, have all the facts and can predict what's going to be. In fact, our vision is bounded and flat. We've got a left-handed\* perspective in a right-handed world. One of the lessons of Purim is that things can change without changing, and without changing things can change.

For such change(s) to happen, what has to change is our ability -- and our willingness -- to entertain points of view that seem incredible, perhaps even out of this world. To change the left hand of Judgement into the right hand of Mercy, requires pushing the mind to its limit, and then letting the mind venture into a fourth dimension, a Divine dimension, that we can touch just a bit, but never settle into.

Personally and nationally we've all tasted the bitterness and sadness of mixed-up Achashvarosh's table. The mitzvot of Purim can un-mix us. When we listen and hear the reading of Megilat Esther, we connect to the tzaddikim and gain some of their clarity. When we give *matanot l'evyonim* (gifts to the poor), we give ourselves the ability to hope even in rough times because "it could be worse," but it's not. When we give *shalach manot* (the gift of a meal), we are also gifting good points to others (and ourselves). When we imbibe with intentionality -- and responsibly -- we gain the clarity of Purim-drunkenness, so that all year long we can see the invisible Divine dimension of life. Amen.

*afreilekhen Purim!* (Merry Purim!)  
*Purim sameach!*

No offense meant, Lefty. Some of my favorite relatives are southpaws..

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