

# **Dvar Torah** by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

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## **Purim**

This coming week we will be celebrating the Holiday of Purim. There are many questions asked regarding the Holiday.

Why was a manuscript which did not contain the name of G-d canonized? More so, why, if Mordechai is indeed the major force and influence in the story, is not the Megila named after him? Rabbi Y. Geller once pointed out that the reading of the Megila is not simply a perfunctory act, but rather it has a very specific purpose. Firstly, to relate the full details of an actual event that took place many centuries ago in Greater Persia. More importantly, it comes to remind us that we should never lose hope in moments of despair, and yet to make us aware of the fear that existed at that time. In a sense, the Megila seeks to create a balance between the anticipatory pull of hope and the frantic rush of fear.

As we dissect the Megila we see that its two main heroes, Mordechai and Esther, present both poles. Mordechai the alarmist, haunted by trepidation and fear that Haman might be successful with the consent of the King.

"Mordechi rended his garments, put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out... in the midst of the city and cried with a loud and bitter cry."

The Jews witnessing their religious leader so distressed and in despair only added to their dejection and frustration.

Esther, on the other hand, was apparently motivated by hope, more than fear. She did not barricade herself in her private chambers due to fears. Rather, she arranged a big banquet to which she invited Haman. Certainly, anyone viewing this scene would have wondered how she could prepare such an elaborate feast with fine foods and the best of wines, at a time when the very fate of her people hung in the balance. She knew that Haman would be foiled in his dastardly plot.

Mordechai and Esther become the two protagonists of hope and fear. Who should we follow? The Megila does not arrive at any definitive decision. Both are considered valid and legitimate and most valuable in the struggle for survival.

During most of our history there was an abundance of fear, yet, despite it, there were moments of great hope as well.

**There were periods when hope lifted Jewish spirits giving courage to carry on. Therefore, the Megila became such a popular document although it does not contain the name of G-d. Even before the Sanhedrin could begin to discuss its canonization, the populace had already accepted it and celebrated Purim. Today we see both phenomena. Fear that our enemies will prevail, and at the same time hope that peace will come. Let Purim bring good tidings. 🏰**