

The Truth about Haman

Purim commemorates how the Jews of Persia were saved from the evil Haman, the king's right-hand man, who was planning to kill them all, according to the biblical Book of Esther. We are enjoined to commemorate this day by feasting and rejoicing, exchanging gifts of food, donating to charity, reading the Scroll of Esther, and shaking a noisemaker at every mention of the name of the evil Haman. One beloved custom is the Purim spiel, a humorous piece relating to the events of Purim. I have written one for you. Remember, it is just humor! So here goes.

Pity poor Haman. His annual demonization at the hand of the Jews is almost upon us. They paint him as the one-dimensional foaming-at-the-mouth genocidal maniac who wanted to kill all the Jews. But if you really understood the man, in all his complexity, you would not be so quick to label him. As they say, "Never judge a man until you have walked a mile in his shoes". (Because, by then, you are a mile away and you have his shoes.)

Haman was born in a rat-infested tenement on the wrong side of the tracks in Shushan. He was toilet-trained too soon and resented it deeply. His earliest recollections are of his parents quarreling nonstop. They never cuddled him. They clearly favored his older brother over him. He even caught his father once in a compromising position with their neighbor's wife. He reported it to his mother and she spanked the daylights out of him, before telling him to mind his own business and that he was really the neighbor's son. He grew up very confused about right and wrong.

Half his meals were the product of his incessant stealing -- an apple here, a loaf of bread there -- and when he was caught he was beaten black and blue. The only outlet for his anger was torturing the house

cats, who disappeared one after the other. He was, after all, simply following what he heard the neighbor say so many times, "One thing great-grandpa Amalek taught me: Always pick on the weak -- you'll get the most satisfaction that way".

His only break came when the king noticed him in the marketplace, took a strong liking to him, and promptly had him shipped to the palace. The young teenager was indeed exceedingly handsome. Haman allowed himself to be abused without protesting, especially because the king was rewarding him generously. One day he observed the king slowly strangling a small dog as part of his routine daily exercise. An expert on the matter because of his experience with cats, Haman suggested using different methods to make the dog's agony last longer.

The king was so impressed that he promoted Haman to chief torturer in the main Shushan jail. Haman was so good at making the enemies of the king talk that before long he became an official court advisor, and through superior cunning and ruthlessness, learned in the streets of Shushan, eventually became Grand Vizier. The king simply could not do without Haman. A grateful Haman, in turn, swore eternal loyalty to the king. Haman rightfully demanded respect by making ordinary people bow down before him. After all, he had *earned* that respect in the school of hard knocks.

Haman dutifully sent money to his frail elderly mother every month. By that time, she had shackled up with the neighbor after (he strongly suspected) poisoning his father. He was now old enough to understand these things, and even wondered how his mother had managed to live with that drunken wretch for so long. He felt good that his real parents were finally reunited.

Contrary to what you have been taught to believe, Haman really had nothing against the Jews. In fact, his best childhood friend was a Jew. But he remembered this childhood friend telling him that Jews were always persecuted wherever they were, because God was punishing them for their sins, and in the end they were better people for it. So, when the king needed a scapegoat to cover up massive economic problems in the land, Haman generously suggested the Jews, knowing he would thus be doing them a favor.

So, at last, here you have the real truth about Haman. He was the unhappy product of poverty, flawed genes, abusive parents, bad influences, sex abuse, a despotic tyrant, lack of democracy, self-hating Jews, and society's callous neglect of its less-fortunate members. So don't blame him. It's not his fault. He couldn't help what he did. He, too, is a victim.

So, if you must shake that grogger, at least shake it at the REAL culprits.

Chag sameach.