

## Shabbos Zachor

Some of my sermons have not aged too well,  
To some of my poems, time hasn't been kind,  
Like when I said COVID just needed Purell,  
It wasn't so serious, don't lose your mind

Well, it turns out Corona was really severe,  
Leaving illness and death in its path of destruction,  
Thank God we are open and healthy this year,  
But the road here has not been devoid of obstruction

I was wrong about COVID, I'll freely admit,  
But it made everybody, on all sides, insane,  
What passes for discourse is losing your...cool,  
About masking and schooling and boarding a plane

Putin is torching a sovereign nation,  
The chinese are trying to kill every Uighur,  
And, not to equate, but there's awful inflation  
And supplies on the shelves in our markets are meager

So we are all nervous and pushed to the brink  
Of conflict it seems there's abundant supply  
The Megillah says something about this, i think  
If we look at the text with a fresh, open eye

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, in his usual style  
Offers an insight that made my jaw drop  
Achashverosh and haman were awfully vile  
But without other people would totally stop

Throughout the megillah, when matters were prickly,  
The interested parties never got it resolved  
Others stepped in and it escalated quickly,  
And spread even faster the more were involved

Consider Vashti, the queen, who was not enthused,  
When told to appear at the banquet, undressed  
In her crown, an offer she flatly refused,  
The king got quite angry, a monarch possessed

Faced with a choice that he needed to make,  
At this critical point in his marital journey,  
Would he offer the queen a benevolent break,  
Or contact the kingdom's most vicious attorney?

Choosing none of these options, the king thought, was wiser  
In pondering Vashti's eventual fate,  
Instead, he contacted every advisor,  
Who told him that this was a matter of state,

“Your highness, this isn't a conflict between  
A regular couple (you mouth-breathing fool)  
When the parties involved are the king and the queen,  
If affects every marriage that's under your rule

If women insult men like this, to their faces  
They will undermine and usurp all your power,  
You must sign a decree and put them in their places  
And lock Vashti up in a far away tower”

You can only imagine the kind of dysfunction,  
That reigned in Achashverosh and Vashti's strange marriage  
But if others had not intervened at this junction  
They might still be riding in the same royal carriage.

Or Haman, who wanted to kill all the Yidden,  
Because of the chutzpah of that Jew Mordechai,  
Who refused to bow down to him even when bidden,  
This was an order he had to defy

Haman was angry, indeed he was furious,  
But how did he know Mordechai was a Jew?  
It was the servants, who were quite bored and curious,

Who told it to Haman, to see what he'd do

As you can imagine, the king's royal eunuchs,  
Didn't have much in the way of job perks  
Standing around in their long flowing tunics,  
To ward off their boredom, they acted like jerks

Conflict is heightened in so many ways,  
But it is through others that it spreads unabated,  
It needs fuel to grow, so it's just like a blaze,  
Without others, it might become deactivated

But Haman's story is also extremely instructive,  
Because fighting can seem like it's righteous, or fun  
But that is why conflict is deeply destructive,  
you can only control it *before* you've begun

In his head, when he went through the mental rehearsal,  
*He* was the star of a royal parade,  
He never considered there might be a reversal  
With Mordechai wearing the kingly brocade

I'm sure Haman had quite a different impression,  
At the time he began to create all that noise,  
Of what exactly was meant when he used the expression,  
"Today I am going to hang with my boys"

Now Haman was really a world class nudnik,  
To whom this most critical message applied,  
But Achashverorsh was also a first rate no-goodnik,  
Who claimed to the queen that his two hands were tied

Once a decree was signed, sealed and delivered,  
And sent with the satraps throughout the king's lands,  
He told the queen as she groveled and shivered,  
That genocide was not any more in his hands

See, that is the thing, when we start to make trouble,  
We cannot control how and whether it ends,  
We think all is good, we live in a bubble,  
But it can hurt everyone, both families and friends

Once it has spread and we're filled with deep sadness,  
With people doing things that we want to condemn,  
There is no end to the subsequent madness  
And of course, above all, to the Chillul Hashem

Maybe that's why at the Megillah's conclusion,  
Esther and Mordechai send out more scrolls,  
The story was done, but they had no illusion,  
That all was now well, they'd accomplished their goals

There were no more threats to adults and to youth,  
Which was reason enough to be fully delighted,  
But they sent out "scrolls of peace and of truth"  
So the Jews would be truly, completely united

That is our challenge, let us think twice,  
Before starting a conflict or helping it spread,  
If we do, we'll be taking the Megillah's advice  
Into our heart and into our head

And when we get angry, may our worst instincts bend,  
Whether outside or when we are at home,  
As the verse in the Megillah says at the end,  
We'll be like Mordechai who was *Dover Shalom*.

