



Yahadut Zmaneinu, Moreshet Ha'am

YOZMA

AN ISRAELI JEWISH INITIATIVE IN MODI'IN



Why isn't Purim celebrated twice weekly?

At YOZMA, as in most communities around the world, Purim is celebrated with feasting and joy.

וַיְהִי, בַּיָּמִים אֲחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ: הוּא אֲחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ, הַמֶּלֶךְ מֵהַדָּוָר וְעַד-כּוּשׁ... בַּשָּׁנָה שְׁלוֹשׁ, לְמַלְכוֹ, עָשָׂה מִשְׁתֵּה, לְכָל-שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו... לְכָל-הָעָם הַנִּמְצְאִים בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבֵּיכָרָה לְמַגְדוֹל וְעַד-קֶטָן מִשְׁתֵּה שְׁבַעֵת יָמִים ...

Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus--this is Ahasuerus who reigned, from India even unto Ethiopia... in the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants... the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the castle, both great and small, seven days...

The seven days of celebration have been condensed into the one symbolic day of Purim - a day to "lose oneself". Purim provides a legitimate and publicly-sanctioned once-a-year opportunity, to reinvent ourselves in a fantasy world

Every year we ask ourselves: why don't we celebrate Purim twice a week? If twice a week is too much to ask, then why not at least one more time each year? The answer seems to stem from complex social norms associated with certain times of the year.

The subliminal social context, appearing repeatedly in *Megillat Esther*, for example in the story of Vashti,

”לֹא עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ לְבַדּוֹ, עָוְתָה וְשָׂתִי הַמַּלְכָּה: כִּי עַל-כָּל-הַשָּׂרִים, וְעַל-כָּל-הָעַמִּים, אֲשֶׁר, בְּכָל-מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲחַשְׁוֶרֶשׁ. כִּי-יֵצֵא דְבַר-הַמַּלְכָּה עַל-כָּל-הַנָּשִׁים, לְהַבְזוֹת בְּעֵלֵיהֶן בְּעִינֵיהֶן...”

'Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the peoples, that are in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus. For this deed of the queen will come abroad unto all women, to make their husbands contemptible in their eyes...

... is that of general social order, appropriate government management, and legitimate and illegitimate regulations in these frameworks.

Those of us here in the State of Israel - in spite of our broad diversity and even with the elections still fresh in our minds - are by and large content with the social frameworks we have set. We are content too with "one-time" annual festivities and we are even more content with the "irregular" routine that is and has always been our reality. The kind of democracy that we have succeeded in creating over the last 60 years is the answer to our enemies who aim to destroy us.



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When *Megillat* Esther relates that...

”יִשְׁנוּ עִם-אֶחָד מִפְּזָר וּמִפְּרֹד בֵּין הָעַמִּים, בְּכָל מְדִינֹת מְלָכוֹתֶיךָ; וְדָתֵיהֶם שְׁנוֹת מִכָּל-עַם, וְאֶת-דָּתֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵינָם עֹשִׂים, וְלִמְלַךְ אֵין-שׁוֹה, לְהַנִּיחֵם...”

There is a certain people scattered abroad and dispersed among the peoples in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from those of every people; neither keep they the king's laws; therefore it profiteth not the king to suffer them

... this is no different than the many attempts over the course of our history when our enemies set decrees to annihilate and destroy our people. Not only did we not succumb to these powers, but we exhibited spiritual and moral fortitude, and from a people feeling helpless and with no recourse ["...and if I perish, I perish" - וְכִאֲשֶׁר אֲבָדְתִּי, אֲבָדְתִּי"], we emerged triumphant and worthy [.. and who knows whether you are not come to royal estate for such a time as this? אִם-לָעֵת כִּזְאֵת, הַגַּעַתְּ לַמְּלָכוֹת] - a people that takes responsibility and leads its community along a challenging path to new heights and achievements.

Obligations must not be "worn and shorn" for only one day but rather become those realities of our Sisyphean daily lives that we must guard and protect every day of the year. Our hearts must not be arrogant; our spirit must remain focused even while finding the occasional reprieve, as in the Purim celebration, but we must not allow things to descend into chaos. We must guard against both individuals and society as a whole from shirking their responsibility beyond the legitimate boundaries we have set, such as those set by Jewish tradition by allocating only one annual Purim celebration.

Wishing you a joyous Purim,

Rabbi Nir Barkin and Rabbi Kinneret Shiryon