TAANIT ESTHER: Why Do We Fast Today?

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When Queen Esther was informed of Haman's decree, the Persian prime minister, in order to eliminate the Jewish people, she decided to speak to King Ahashverosh and persuade him to reverse that royal edict. But this mission was not simple. Rabbi Moshe Almosnino explains that Esther did not know if Ahashverosh and Haman thought alike, and both wanted to carry out this genocide, or if the king had been tricked by Haman to write that terrible edict. Esther, then, decided to invite the king along with Haman to a banquet (5: 4) to obtain the information she needed: if she discovered that Ahashverosh was in complicity with Haman, she would try to dissuade Haman. And if she discovered that Ahashverosh had been deceived by Haman, then he would expose Haman before Ahashverosh, hoping to gain the favor of the king. This was undoubtedly a high-risk mission.

But there was a previous step to this mission, which was even MORE risky: Esther had to speak to the King. We probably think that for Esther this was the easiest part of her mission, since she was the Queen, and lived in the palace. But in the Persian Empire no one could approach the king without being invited. Why? Because it was the king's exclusive prerogative to summon his subjects, including the queen. And Esther had not been called by the king for a month (4:11). The only option left to Esther was to appear directly before the king. But this, which also seems simple, was very risky! If someone entered the area of □□maximum security of the king (hatser hapenimit) without being called by the king had to be executed before reaching the king. Let me explain: The Persian kings had next to them their "Praetorian guard" armed with long axes, ready to execute on the spot any person who might threaten the physical integrity of the king. The Persian emperors were obsessed with their personal safety, and with good reason. Ahashverosh himself ended up being killed by one of his own bodyguards, Artabano. The Persian law (dat)

established that anyone entering the security zone of Ahashverosh should be executed immediately (4:11), unless the king himself, once he detected that person's presence, stop his guards before execution and extended his scepter as a sign of royal pardon. This rule also affected the queen. Since not few times the Queens were part of the plot to assassinate the king.
Esther also knew that this king, Ahashverosh, had already dethroned (and perhaps executed) the previous queen, Vashty (1:19) and that he would not hesitate to get rid of her if he thought it was necessary.
In other words, "approaching the king" to talk to him and ask for a hearing was a suicide mission. Esther, with good reason, feared for her life and for the success of her delicate mission: to save her people from genocide, but she had no other choice. There was no one else who could do anything to access the king and try to stop Haman's decree.
To save her people, Esther decided to risk her life (4:16) and she embarked on a suicide mission. But before that, Esther asked all the Yehudim to fast with her and for the success of her mission for three days (tsumu 'alai, 4:16) on the 13th, 14th and 15th of Nisan. Fasting, along with Tefila, is what our Tora and our rabbis instructed us to do in difficult circumstances. At the request of Esther, all Jews fasted for three consecutive days and prayed for the success of Esther. As we all know, with the help of HaShem, Esther's "mission Impossible" was successful.
Eleven months later, on the 13th of Adar, a day like today, when the Yehudim had to fight and defend themselves against the enemies who sought to eliminate them, they also prayed to HaShem and fasted for the success of their mission. The custom of fasting before battle is very old, and according to our Sages it goes back to the wars waged by Moshe Rabbenu. Why fasting before the battle? To demonstrate and declare our belief that victory in the battle does not come from our physical strength but from the help of HaShem, our God.
In memory of the fasting days mentioned in the Megilla (□□□□ □□□□□□ □□□□□□) we observe today the fast of Esther. The fast concludes at nightfall, after reading Megillat Esther.