ESTHER 5:4: Black Knight Down

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Esther 5:4

Last time, we explained that Queen Esther risked her life by entering the area of □□maximum security of the King –a crime that was punished by execution on the spot. However, providentially, when the King saw her, "she found grace in his eyes" and he spared her life.

Now, we have assumed that as soon as Esther gets the King's attention, she would inform the King about the genocidal plan of the wicked Haman, and beg for mercy for her people. But surprisingly Esther did not ask for any of that…. When the King saw Esther he asked: "What's the matter with you, queen Esther? What is that you want? " This question coming from the King must be understood with drama. "Esther, I see that you risked your life to get my attention. I'm sure that whatever you want to ask from me must be very important to you. What is that you want Esther?"
Esther's answer was absolutely unexpected for the king: "If it pleases the King… let the king, and Haman come today [tonight] to the banquet that I have prepared for him."

The King must have wondered why Esther would risk her life for a dinner, and particularly, why would she risk her life to have Haman present at the dinner.… This must have bothered the King a lot. Why? Imagine how ridiculous (and suspicious!) It would sound if the wife or Mr. A says to her husband: "I want you to take me to dinner tonight … and bring with you Mr. B". Why would and wife, and particularly Esther that had not seen her husband in a month, invite a third party to a dinner?

With the sophistication of a chess-master the Queen planted in the head of the King the seeds of suspicion and jealousy towards his most trusted man. Rabbi Moshe Almosnino

explains that this point was subtly mentioned in the Megilla. When Queen Esther invited the King to the first banquet she said: “Let the King, and Haman come …to the banquet that I have prepared for him”. The words “for him” could be interpreted as referring to Haman! In other words, it is as if the Queen wanted the King to think that she risked his life to ask the King to attend a banquet that she would do … for Haman!” The King must have though that something did not make sense! And that Haman must be planning something against him!

Rashi, following the opinion of Ribbi Yehoshua ben Qorha, explained that Esther’s intention was to eventually sacrifice her life. She was sure that at the moment that Ahashverosh would suspect the existence of some kind of connection between Esther and Haman, he would execute the two of them.

Be that as it may, Esther’s strategy consisted in awaking in the King feelings of “jealousy and suspicion” toward Haman, instead of presenting her request directly to the King. Why? Because Esther knew that she had only one chance to convince the King. And she reasoned that if she simply informed the King about the edict and asked for compassion, this King, famous for his chauvinism, could have told Esther that it was not her place to interfere in matters of state, or in the best case scenario, that he would discuss the issue with Haman, and then, Esther will not have a second chance to avoid the genocide of the entire Jewish nation.

Esther then decided that the best move would be to make from this issue a “personal matter”. Making the King think that there was some kind of common interest between her and Haman. The Queen knew of the extreme narcissism of the King (chapter 1), she also knew that this King saw women as his possessions (chapter 2), and she correctly calculated that it would not be difficult to arouse the jealousy of such a man. And although the plan did not go exactly as Esther planned (it actually worked out better) we see that Esther was very right. In the end, at the culminating moment of the second banquet, when

King Ahashverosh reacts to the news of Haman’s plan, he did not make his decision to execute Haman based on political considerations.

The King sentenced Haman to death because Haman “knelt in front of Esther’s bed to beg for mercy.” And when the King saw Haman so close to Esther, he reacted with jealousy and said: *“And now, what else do you want? Conquering the Queen right under my nose? “*

Those were the last words that Haman, the Black Night, heard from King Ahashverosh.

Checkmate!