# PURIM: E pluribus unum (Out of Many, One!)

The 13th of Adar of the year 474BCE, in the twelfth year of Xerxes, King Achashverosh's reign, was likely the most crucial day in Jewish history. On that day, Haman's decree was supposed to be carried out. The royal edict indicated that "whoever killed a Jew throughout the Persian Empire would not be prosecuted for a crime and could keep the victim's possessions". The imperial police would not intervene. The law enforcers would allow "free zones" for these crimes to occur without their interference. Thanks to this legal impunity and to the irresistible economic incentive for the executors, this decree would have meant the end of the Jewish people.

But providentially, and thanks to the audacious actions of Queen Ester, the collective extermination sentence was avoided.  King Achashverosh, this time urged by Mordechai and Esther, signed a second decree. This decree could not cancel the previous one because the King's edicts could not be suspended, reversed, or modified according to Persian Empire laws. The second decree, thus, allowed Jews to carry weapons, counterattack and defend themselves. With no legal consequences if they killed someone in the process. The police and the Persian army would stay out of the conflict.

The question was: how did events unfold when that day arrived? How did we defend ourselves? Our enemies were likely more numerous than us and probably better armed. How did we manage to counterattack? The Megillah clearly states □□ □□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□ "They gathered together and stood up for their lives." All Jews throughout the Persian Empire united and collaborated to fight against the enemy. We realized that although we were not stronger, we were more organized than the enemy, and thus we were able to defeat them.

Imagine a town in Turkey with 1,000 Jews and a few kilometers away, a village on the Syrian border with only 10 Jews, who would have been an easy target for the anti-Semitic enemies. Normally, there was no collaboration between the two Jewish communities. But on Purim, we decided to unite □□□□□ and defend each other: the community in Turkey sent a delegation of 100 armed Jews to defend their 10 brothers in the Syrian town. We realized that if we united and helped each other, we could defeat the anti-Semitic enemy, and that's what happened. Jewish communities worldwide mobilized and sent protection, food, and resources to other communities that were not as strong. *Hence the emphasis of the Megillah on the word "ve'niqhalu," the Jews acted united as a 'qahal,' that is, as a community.*

That's why on the day of Purim, all the mitsvot we do are around the idea of "niqhalu." We give money to the poor, reminding us that we helped and collaborated with Jews with fewer resources.  On the other hand, we exchange gifts with other Jews, perhaps representing gratitude to our Jewish brothers for having helped us in the past and indicating that when we are in dire straits, we can always rely on each other.

*Inspired by the Dibre Tora of my children in today's Family Chat*