

Purim, the prime minister and the president

Twenty-five hundred years ago, Queen Esther violated protocol and appealed to the king to intervene against a threat to annihilate the Jewish people. This week, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu violated protocol and appealed to the United States Congress to intervene against a threat to annihilate the Jewish people. In both cases, the enemy threatening the people of Israel was Persia (today, Iran).

In the days of Esther, the deliverance of the Jewish people led to the institution of the holiday known as Purim. Today, just one day after Netanyahu's speech, it is Purim again.

Truth sometimes is stranger than fiction, especially at this time of the year.

In Esther's day, she had to approach the king without being called for, a violation of protocol that could have cost her her life. Netanyahu came to America to address Congress despite President Obama's strong objections, potentially risking his nation's relationship with our country, not to mention potentially endangering his own re-election campaign.

Odd things often happen in conjunction with Purim, including:

- In 1991, the Gulf War against Saddam Hussein ended after just 100 hours of battle, coinciding with the beginning of Purim. During the war, despite Hussein raining down 39 SCUD missiles on Israel, casualties were so minimal that even non-religious Jews called it miraculous.
- In 1953, during Purim, Josef Stalin died suddenly, putting an end to his infamous Doctors' Plot aimed at slaughtering Jewish doctors. Ultra-orthodox Jews of the Lubavitch, Chasidic sect, believe that it was just as their grand rabbi (the Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who died in 1992) was reciting an inspired (and mystically relevant) discourse that Stalin was smitten.
- Although it was not on Purim in 1946 when Julius Streicher, the notorious Nazi propagandist, was being led to the gallows for his war crimes, he cried out in mockery, "Purim-fest, 1946!" meaning, the Festival of Purim, 1946. His point was that just as Haman, the instigator of the plot against the Jews in Esther's day, was hung on the very gallows he prepared for his Jewish enemies, so Streicher was hung for his crimes against the Jews.
- Tragically, Purim was also a time when the Nazis would carry out public Jewish executions to ridicule the biblical story of Jewish deliverance.

Twenty-five hundred years ago, Haman, raised to high command by the king of Persia, devised his plot to exterminate the Jews. Today, Ayatollah Khamanei, the supreme leader of Iran, has offered a 9-point plan to "eliminate" the Zionist regime, explaining that, "During its 66 years of life so far, the fake Zionist regime has tried to realize its goals by means of infanticide, homicide, violence and iron fist while boasts [sic] about it blatantly."

The most conspicuous difference between Esther's day and our day is that the king of Persia responded favorably to her request to spare her people (she herself was Jewish, but that was unknown to the king before she approached him to plead for deliverance), whereas thus far, the president of the United States has turned a deaf ear to the appeals of the prime minister of Israel.

In fact, just one day before the speech to Congress, President Obama, dismissed the accuracy of Prime Minister Netanyahu's previous warnings, almost as if Iran was more to be trusted than Netanyahu.

Worse still, immediately after the speech, those in the president's own Democratic Party vilified Prime Minister Netanyahu, claiming that he was guilty of "fear-mongering," with Rep. Nancy Pelosi saying she was "near tears" throughout the speech, "saddened by the insult to the intelligence of the United States. ..."

Not to be outdone, Rep. John Lewis stated that the speech was "an affront to the president of the United States, to the Democratic leadership of Congress and the Department of State."

Perhaps the real affront and the real insult was that Netanyahu openly addressed the elephant in the room, namely, "militant Islam," referring to it four times in his speech, while our president refuses even to acknowledge its existence.

Not only so, the prime minister rightly located the origin of many of the world's most dangerous Islamic groups today, namely, Iran, beginning with the rise of Ayatollah Khomeini in the late 1970s.

To quote the prime minister directly, "... the ideology of Iran's revolutionary regime is deeply rooted in militant Islam, and that's why this regime will always be an enemy of America."

And he warned: "Don't be fooled. The battle between Iran and ISIS doesn't turn Iran into a friend of America.

"Iran and ISIS are competing for the crown of militant Islam. One calls itself the Islamic Republic. The other calls itself the Islamic State. Both want to impose a militant Islamic empire first on the region and then on the entire world. They just disagree among themselves who will be the ruler of that empire."

This may be an inconvenient truth, but it is a truth nonetheless.

Netanyahu continued, "In this deadly game of thrones, there's no place for America or for Israel, no peace for Christians, Jews or Muslims who don't share the Islamist medieval creed, no rights for women, no freedom for anyone.

"So when it comes to Iran and ISIS, the enemy of your enemy is your enemy."

My personal opinion is that in years to come, Prime Minister Netanyahu will be the hero of this episode and President Obama, while certainly not the Haman, will be the anti-hero.

After all, it's Purim.

by Michael Brown, March 5, 2015