

## Purim and After

BY DR. SHMUEL HIMELSTEIN

So who needs miracles anyway? All you need is a little bit of luck and before you know it, everything will turn out just fine. Take this Purim story, for example. Funny book, that Book of Esther - it doesn't even mention God. All it is is a bunch of lucky coincidences, the turning of the tables a few times - and before you know it, we have the whole story ending with them all "living happily every after."

Let's see. Ahasuerus asks Vashti to appear before him. Vashti refuses. Result: Vashti is out and Esther is in. Pure luck, but just at that crucial juncture in history a Jewish girl makes "the big time."

Bigtan and Teresh plot against the king. Mordecai, just happening to overhear their plot, gets word to Esther. Bigtan and Teresh go the way of all traitors. Bigtan and Teresh out; Mordecai's name is in.

The villain - Haman - enters, and the plot thickens. Before he has time to worry about running the 127 provinces of the king, Haman first has to take care of this nation which is "scattered and dispersed throughout the kingdom," by having Ahasuerus declare a date for the annihilation of the Jews - the 13th day of the month of Adar. Haman is in, and Mordecai and all his fellow Jews are very much out.

Haman decides to kill Mordecai early. He hurries off to King Ahasuerus late at night -- such a plan cannot be delayed. Unfortunately, that just happens to have been one of the king's "off - nights." The king has been suffering from a classic case of insomnia, and instead of counting sheep, has been listening to his chief archivist read him the history books. There the king has been told how Mordecai once saved his life. "And what was his reward?" says the king. "Reward? Sorry your majesty, there is no mention of any reward to Mordecai."

At that auspicious moment Haman enters, all aglow with his great new plan to save the world from Mordecai. But the king has other plans, and before you can say "Jack rabbit," Haman is leading Mordecai, arrayed in the king's robes and riding the king's horse through the streets, crying out "This is what is done to one whom the king wishes to honor." Haman is not quite out, but then again, neither is Mordecai. Here we have a pause, the calm before the ultimate storm.

Esther invites the king and Haman to two dinners, at the second of which she reveals her identity. While the king does not call "off with his head," he takes steps which are just as effective: he has Haman hanged on the gallows which Haman had constructed to "take care" of Mordecai. Haman is finally completely out, and Mordecai, how appointed in his place, is very much in.

Luckily, the plot had been caught in time, and the king had managed to send the proper instructions to all 127 of his provinces. Instead of being the victims, the Jews rise up

and get rid of all their oppressors and tormentors. The Jews are thus in, in a big way (many of the non - Jews even convert) and Jew - baiting dies down as the national sport.

All in all, as I told you, this is just a whole list of lucky coincidences, and with coincidences like that on your side, who needs miracles anyway?

Oh yes, I forgot. The story doesn't end thousands of years ago. We Jews have this rather lucky habit of enjoying coincidences. In fact, if it weren't for these lucky breaks, where would we be today: This is how some observers see the whole saga of the founding of the State of Israel, for example. We Jews have had many "friends," one of the most notable having been Stalinist Russia. By some lucky coincidence, Russia and all its satellites went along with the U.N. resolution calling for the founding of the State. This was one of the few occasions in decades when the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. voted together on a major international issue in the U.N. What a lucky coincidence!

And in those gloomy days when even Arab armies were poised to launch an all - out attack against the fledgling state -- when the entire "air - force" consisted of three Piper Cub planes that "bombed" the enemy by throwing Molotov cocktails overboard; when the ammunition that existed had been brewed in various cellars -- that was the time when our Russian "friend" had Czechoslovakia decide to sell modern arms to Israel. Without that lucky

coincidence our forces would never have fought and won.

And when all the professional "advisors" told David Ben - Gurion not to try the patience of the U.S., and to delay the proclamation of the State, by a lucky coincidence Ben - Gurion ignored them all - and what had been a two thousand year old dream suddenly became a reality.

And wasn't it all a big coincidence that the president of the United States was not the man elected to that term - Franklin Roosevelt - but that after his death he was replaced by a rather unknown senator from Missouri? And wasn't it a lucky coincidence that that same Harry Truman had once had a Jewish partner Eddie Jacobson, who managed to arrange for a crucial meeting, which secured the Negev for Israel, between Harry Truman and Chaim Weizmann - after Truman had decided not to see anyone else about the entire Middle Eastern problem?

And moral of the story? Our history is full of these "lucky coincidences" that have kept us alive for all these years. And as we said, with "lucky coincidences" like these, who, G-d willing, needs miracles anyway?

WASHINGTON (WNS) -- Sen. Robert Byrd (W. Va.), the Senate Majority Leader, has warned that it would be "unwise" for Israel to oppose a proposed multi - billion dollar arms program for Egypt which includes F-16 jet fighters and other sophisticated U.S. military equipment.



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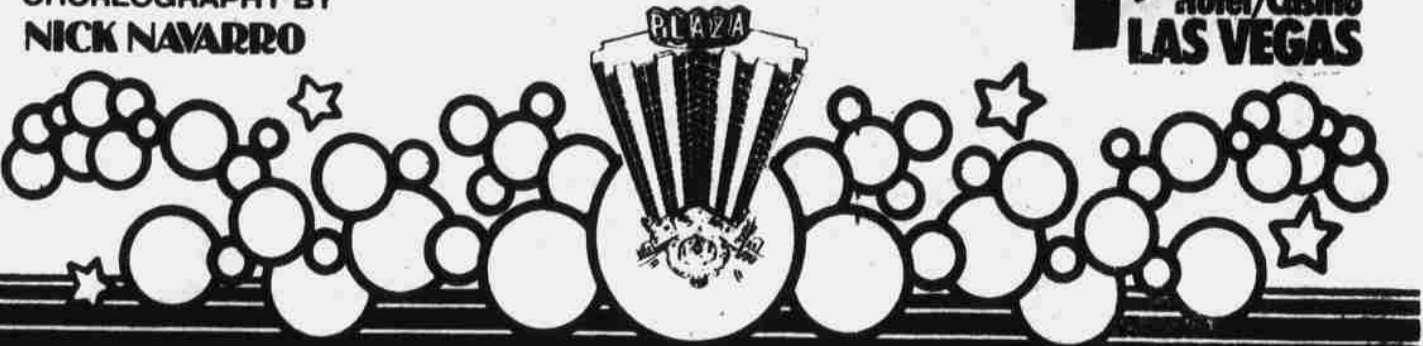


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