

Purim: The Legend Of Esther

By Dvora Waysman

(WZPS) — Purim, which falls on the Hebrew date of 14th Adar, is the time of merriment, masquerade and miracles, celebrating as it does the deliverance of the Jewish people from their oppressor, Haman.

The Megillah

The heroine of the story is Esther, a modest, virtuous girl who became queen during the reign of Ahasuerus, King of Persia. There are a lot of mysteries surrounding the whole episode, the main one being that no one knows when it occurred. The Book of Esther mentions no dates and although scholars place it in the Second Temple period, it is first referred to only after the year 100 B.C.E.

The Book of Esther is read every Purim and it is incumbent on every Jew, male and female, young and old, to listen to the Megillah. However, the story narrated in the Book of Esther (in which, incidentally, God's name is never mentioned) only tells part of the story. Esther's real name was Hadassah, but when she replaced the disobedient Vashti as queen, she was given the Persian name for Venus, which was Esther.

Her origins are revealed in the Aggadah, which tells us that she was a descendant of King Saul. Her father, an exile at Susa, died before she was born and her mother, Abihail, at her birth. She became the ward of her cousin Mordechai, who is often misrepresented as her uncle.

Beauty and Courage

Esther was described as one of the four most beautiful women in the world (Ibid, 15a) - of ideal height, lovelier than Median or Persian women although her complexion is also described as "sallow." We are told that the king would compare the women who entered his bedchamber with a statue of Vashti which stood near his bed. Later, he replaced it with a statue of Esther.

Beautiful and chaste as she was, she nevertheless was required to undergo a twelve-month purification program, six months of which she had to spend anointing herself with oil of myrrh. Myrrh (called "mor" in Hebrew) is a gum resin which, together with frankincense, was an ancient treasure almost as precious as gold. It was put in anointing oils and the Israelites scented their garments, beds and bodies with it. It was a rare ingredient because the trees and bushes which produced it grew only in the mountains of Southern Arabia, Somalia, eastern Sudan and parts of Ethiopia.

Esther was the inspiration of many dramatists, artists and musicians throughout the ages who were drawn to the legend of her beauty, her virtue and her courage. However, she is truly immortalized in her own Scroll of Esther where her greatest honor lies in having saved the Jewish people of Persia from extermination.

ADL Appeals To Syria

NEW YORK, N.Y. — The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith appealed to the government of Syria to free five Jews who are being detained in Syrian prisons "for so apparent reason other than their religious affiliation."

In a cable to Bashra Kanafani, charge d'affaires of the Syrian Embassy in Washington, Abraham H. Foxman, ADL's associate national director and head of the League's International Affairs Division, listed the five as Eliahu Lalo and his son, Marco, who have been incarcerated since December 1986; Rabbi Leon Guindi and Toufik Khalif and his son, Dibo, who were arrested in November 1986.

Mr. Foxman asked the Syrian envoy to forward his request to Syrian authorities in Damascus.



NOW PRE-OPENING IN LAS VEGAS

A LUXURIOUS

FAMILY FITNESS CENTER

High-Tech Fast Fitness



Ten gyms in one! Plus 40 Lifecycles and a 5,000-foot Super Padded Aerobic dance floor.

FEATURING THE FOLLOWING FULL LINES OF EQUIPMENT ...

- NAUTILUS • CAM III (Air Pressure Equipment)
- HYDRA FITNESS (Hydraulic) • LADY NAUTILUS
- DAVID EQUIPMENT (from Finland) • SPRINT (Space Age Equipment) • CAM STAR (Advanced Equipment)
- OLYMPIC FREE WEIGHTS • NEW COMPUTERIZED LIFEROWERS • EAGLE UPPER BODY ERGOMETERS
- FORTY LIFECYCLES (Model 9000)

Ray Wilson (age 59), is founder of Family Fitness Centers, Southern California's largest fitness chain. Ray keeps in shape with 3-30 minute equipment workouts and 3-12 minute rides per week on Lifecycle.

~~PHASE 1 COMPLETED~~

NOW ENROLLING ON PHASE 2

ONLY \$8 MONTHLY DUES
PLUS A LOW ONE-TIME ENROLLMENT OF \$159

PHASE 3, 4, 5 and 6 will have substantial cost increases.

(Above rates on first visit only. Dues on bank debit.)



Located within 15 minutes of the majority of Las Vegas businesses and residences.

3055 S. VALLEY VIEW BLVD.
(Golden Showcase Center)
½ MILE SOUTH OF SAHARA AVE.

368-1111
CALL NOW FOR A FREE TOUR