

May His Bones be Ground!

As any experienced *Keriyat HaMegillah* attendee knows, *Klal Yisrael* possesses a very prominent and popular *minhag* to “blot out” *Haman*’s name by making noise after his name is recited. This practice is idiosyncratic; when are Jews ever *encouraged* to interrupt normal *shul* proceedings with halachically unquantified and uncontrolled commotion? Not surprisingly, there have been several halachik authorities over the ages who have taken issue with this *minhag* (see *Mishnah Berurah* 690:59). Nonetheless, the *Rama* (*Orach Chaim* 690:17) and other very prominent *poskim* enthusiastically encourage this practice and identify its source. Children used to carve *Haman*’s name into blocks of wood and would slowly shave away the letters by rubbing the blocks together. This eventually led to the practice of “blotting out” his name through ruckus and noise when it was pronounced in the *megillah*.

But the *Magen Avraham* (690:21) notes an even more surprising practice of the *Levush*. When *Haman*’s name was pronounced, the *Levush* would actually recite the verse שם רשעים ירקב (Mishlei 10:7), “the name of wicked ones should rot” (*Mishlei* 10:7). It is absolutely clear that it is prohibited to make unnecessary interruptions when reading the *megillah*, especially when one has recited a *beracha* over the *mitzvah* (*Orach Chaim* 690:13). Banging on tables and booing is already considered a borderline *hefsek* (halachik interruption) in *Keriyat HaMegillah*. But, astoundingly, the *Levush* would actually insert his own words! What could possibly sanction such a disruption?!

The *Magen Avraham* already alludes to a potential source for the *Levush*. He points to a passage in *Midrash Rabbah* (*Esther* 6:4 and *Yerushalmi Megillah* 3:7), where the rabbis discuss the practice of *Rebbe Yonatan* when hearing the *Megillah* verse describing the exile from Jerusalem caused by *Nevuchadnetzar* (2:6). Upon hearing *Nevuchadnetzar*’s name, *Rebbe Yonatan* would cry out, “may his bones be ground!” The grinding of bones represents utter annihilation; even many years after *Nevuchadnetzar*’s death, *Rebbe Yonatan* would pray that this wicked one and his legacy have no reconstitution forever. Many commentators assume that *Rebbe Yonatan* would do this even while he was fulfilling the *mitzvah* of reading the *megillah* on *Purim* (see *Igrot Moshe O.C.* 1:192).

This possibly provides the precedent for the *Levush*’s practice. The *mitzvah* of *megillah* is not simply retelling a story; it is the epic narrative depicting the downfall of *Amalek* due to his machinations against us. Many sources indicate that the reading of the *megillah* can actually serve as a formal fulfillment of the *mitzvah* to remember *mitzvat mechiyat Amalek*. An interruption is only problematic when it is not related to the essence of *Purim* (אינו מענינו של יום). But when the “interruption” fulfills the essence of *Mikra Megillah*, it is not viewed as a *hefsek* at all.

For all their differences, *Nevuchadnetzar* and *Haman* share a fundamental common denominator: a deeply rooted desire to undermine *HaKadosh Baruch Hu*’s divine plan for *Klal Yisrael*’s ascension. At the center of this divine plan is *Yerushalayim*. The ultimate symbol of, and catalyst for, *Klal Yisrael*’s supremacy is a rebuilt Jerusalem. The *Arizal* explains that *Haman* was obsessed with preventing the construction of the *Beit HaMikdash* (see *Shem MiShmuel* to *Purim* and our article from last year). His hatred for the Jewish people demands that Jerusalem remain in ruins. The *Alshich* (to *Daniel* 2) notes that the *navi* counts the beginning of

Nevuchadnetzar's reign from when he conquered Jerusalem. He wasn't truly king until Jerusalem had been subdued. *Nevuchadnetzar* has a frightening dream of a small stone that will destroy the most powerful of kingdoms and grow into a mountain that fills the entire earth. This stone represents *Mashiach's* reestablished seat of kingship in Jerusalem, the ultimate downfall of *Nevuchadnetzar's* reign.

These *reshaim* desperately attempt to prevent the inevitable. But their names and legacies will be blotted out as the rock of Israel fills the entire world. *Keriyat HaMegillah* perfectly captures the inevitable fate of these misguided fools. The utter destruction of their legacy is part and parcel of what the *Megillah* is all about. ארורים כל הרשעים, cursed are all those who try to interfere with *Klal Yisrael* and *Yerushalayim's* destiny. ברוכים כל הצדיקים, blessed are all those who eagerly facilitate *Hashem's* plans for His holy city and His people.