



## THE ALUMNI PERSPECTIVE

by Josh Eisner



It is *Purim* in Jerusalem and I am not there. If you ask anyone from Orayta last year what their favorite three-day span of the year was, I'm sure that they would all say *Purim* – and I'm not speaking in superlatives. Knowing that nothing could compare to what it was like last year, I tried to do as much as I could here at Stanford to make sure that my *Purim* had some memory of last year. I want to share with you an unbelievable *Dvar Torah* that I learned last year with Rabbi Wruble.

In the beginning of his reign, *Achashverosh* was given a prophecy that there would be a Jewish resurgence in the 70th year of their exile. The Jews were commanded to do three things upon their return to Israel. The first was to rebuild the temple; the second - to destroy Amalek. And the third was to appoint a Jewish king. *Achashverosh* had little issue with the first two, as they did not affect him; but he feared for his life from the last one. How could a Jew ascend to the throne without killing the king? If the prophecy was correct, the third commandment implied that *Achashverosh* must be killed.

*Achashverosh* believed that he began his reign in the 67th year after the Jewish expulsion. It was for that reason that he waited until the third year of his reign (when the 70th year had finished) to throw his party. The prophecy had been proven wrong, and he could finally celebrate his kingdom without paranoia. But he still had a lingering fear of the Jews.

Thus, when *Haman* approached *Achashverosh* with his evil plan, *Achashverosh* welcomed the idea as a way to permanently rid his fear of the Jews. He would finally be at peace with himself, free of his paranoia; no longer will a Jew be able to overthrow him and gain control of the kingdom.

But we know how the story goes. *Haman's* plan was thwarted by *Esther* after she revealed that she is Jewish. *Achashverosh*, after he realizes this, immediately orders the hanging of *Haman* and his family, and the Jewish people were saved.

How does *Esther* being Jewish solve *Achashverosh's* problems? What possible benefit could he have had from this information, which stopped him from killing all the Jews?

As mentioned above, *Achashverosh* began his rule in fear of a 70 year old prophecy. He interpreted the 70 years mentioned in the prophecy as commencing from the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash*. But the true prophecy began at the beginning of the Jewish exile, several years after the destruction of the Temple. There were still a number of years until this would happen.

Familiar with Jewish law and tradition, *Achashverosh* realized that *Esther's* Judaism provided a different option for his succession on the throne. Jewish law states that the child of a non-Jewish man and Jewish woman is a Jew. Thus, the child that *Achashverosh* would have with Esther would be Jewish. Instead of being killed and overthrown by the Jews, *Achashverosh* would be able to pass on the reign to his own son, and begin the Jewish redemption. The fact that we can read articles every week from students in Israel testifies to the lineage of Esther and the amazing power that her courage had. The Jewish redemption is still happening, and we are closer than ever to achieving the full redemption, where we can spend every *Purim* in *Eretz Yisrael*.

*Shabbat Shalom,*

Josh