

## Megillat Esther and its Hidden Message

Is the Megilla a satire? It certainly sounds like one, but why would a satire be included in the Tanach? In the following shiur, we attempt to 'unmask' the message of this satire by considering the historical (and prophetic) setting of the Megilla.

### Introduction

We begin our study with one of the most well-known psukim of the Megilla:

"Ish **Yehudi** haya b'**Shushan HaBira**, ushmo **Mordechai**..." ([Esther 2:5](#))

Even though this pasuk is proudly read aloud by the entire congregation, most people do not appreciate its 'sting.' However, an ear tuned to the prophecies of Zecharya and familiar with Tanach immediately catches its irony:

**Ish Yehudi** - implies **more** than simply someone who is Jewish;

**HaBira** - does **not** mean 'the capital city'; and

**Mordechai** - is **not** a Jewish name!

◆ The phrase "**Ish Yehudi**" is mentioned only **one** other time in Tanach – in [Zecharya 8:23](#). There it describes a Jew leading a group of non-Jewish followers seeking God in Jerusalem.

◆ The word "**HaBira**" in Divrei HaYamim I describes specifically the **Bet HaMikdash** (Temple) that King David has prepared for his son Shlomo to build ([see 29:1](#) and [29:19](#)). Prior to the time period of Megillat Esther, the Hebrew word **Bira** finds no other mention in Tanach.

◆ The name **Mordechai** is probably the most provocative word in the entire Megilla, for it stems from the name of the Babylonian deity - Marduk ([see Yeshayahu 39:1](#)). No decent Jew (prior to the Babylonian exile) would have dared giving his son such a 'goyishe' name.

This is not the only pasuk in the Megilla that is filled with irony and satire. In fact, the style of the entire megilla is satirical. Nonetheless, the Megilla is part of the Tanach, and as such, it must contain a **prophetic** message. How are we to 'uncover' a prophetic message that is 'hidden' by satire?

To decipher the prophetic message of the Megilla, we must take the following steps:

- I. Base our approach on the assumption that the Megilla must contain a prophetic message.
- II. Review both the historical and prophetic setting of the time period of the

Megilla.

**III.** Search for a thematic connection between this setting and the story in the Megilla.

**IV.** Support this theme with both Midrashim and textual and thematic parallels from other seforim in Tanach.

**V.** Explain **why** the Megilla employs this unique style.

**VI.** Explain how the celebration of Purim relates to this theme.