

## **FAMILY SHARINGS AROUND PURIM☺**

**From:** Nancy Wayne [mailto:nswaynekc@aol.com]

**Sent:** Thursday, March 01, 2018 7:51 PM

**To:** Shapiro, Deane

**Cc:** desidoo; james; JENA; Shapiro, Johanna; josh; shauna sl shapiro; liam; Tom Shapiro

**Subject:** Re: purim, Queen Esther, women's march: you go women!!!!:)

What a timely recounting of Queen Esther's bravery, conviction, and chutzpah not just for Purim but for all the Queen (and King) Esther's who are taking a stand. I believe we have all had some Queen Esther moments in small ways when we have stood up for others and in every day life trying to be the best person we can be.

I know you probably don't know this because I am so modest but.....I was cast as the lead in the production of "My Fair Esther" at Temple B'nai Jehudah in Kansas City. And, yes, there was singing. And, yes, I was 12 and had quite a fan club. And, no, I decided not to pursue a career in musical theater. And, yes, I have regrets. ☺

- Love

And no, I didn't know about your star turn as QE and yes, you are absolutely adorable ☺ Hugs, Joie

Joie - I believe that it is okay to have chocolate chip cookies to represent the King's bad skin rather than the Hamantaschen which made fun of his ears. Just a thought.....

Sent from my iPad

Laughing out loud! Nancy you are so funny. Love you! (shauna)

On Feb 28, 2018, at 10:12 AM, dhshapir <[dhshapir@uci.edu](mailto:dhshapir@uci.edu)> wrote:

Hi Precious Family, Tonight is Purim. The enclosed shares one women's take on it, and its relation to the women's march; and the bending the arc of history toward justice. Here's to all the strong women (and men) in this amazing family! Each doing our little part toward bending the arc of history toward justice. I'm so happy to be interwoven with you all,

love love poppers IN awe....

<purim and you go women!.pdf>

Beautiful! (Shauna)

Wow, this is great! I must confess, I've never really got into the spirit of Purim - for one thing I don't drink, and for another I don't like hamentoschen (spelling optional, the cookies :-)). So I especially love this frame - a brave woman speaking in her authentic voice! Go Queen Esther! Go 750,000 women in LA and 4 million women

around the world standing up to bigotry, ignorance, and hate! We are all Queen Esther, and Skyla is a little Queen Esther in the making. In fact, I think we should make Dad, Brett, and Josh honorary Esthers, because of their love for us and their willingness to speak up for their Queens. Thanks, sweetie, I've become a Purim lover! Love, Mom/J

Read: causes for which you would give up privilege, position, lifestyle; willing to risk life (like Esther); that doesn't seem me; position fine, privilege, fine; but like my lifestyle (home); etc; I'm pretty conflict avoidant (e.g., picking up litter is pretty non controversial!)...trying to be kinder, better person, again, it's inside out....

What follows is a meditation on the complexities of Purim, a holiday that was celebrated last week. I wanted to share these thoughts but read only if you like. Lots of love always, Mom/MamaJo/Jo/Johanna/Grandma/J

In the midst of our family revelry, I missed saying something last shabbat about the Festival of Purim (last Sat and Sun). As a reminder, Purim is the holiday that commemorates the saving of the Jewish people from annihilation in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE at the hands of an advisor, Haman, to the Persian king Asahuerus, thanks to the interventions of the king's Jewish wife, Esther, and her cousin Mordecai, who had refused to bow down to the king, but after Haman's execution, became the Persian prime minister.

To express our gratitude for this unlikely deliverance, it is customary to give tzedakah (usually translated as charity) on Purim. But here's an interesting thing: the root of tzedakah is tzedek, which translates not as charity, but as justice. Helping those in need is therefore not an act of goodness that redounds positively on the giver (what a nice person I am!) but is merely doing what is right (dispensing justice).

Another interesting thought I've had is that, just as Buddhists respond to the suffering and evil in the world with practice of meditation and mindfulness, the Jewish response is joy. Celebrations like Purim, where people let loose, dress up in masks and costumes, and generally dance and make merry are not simply partying. Rather they are conscious, sacred acts in which people take an intentional stand against the miseries of the world. In effect, affirming joy is an act of resistance and defiance, as well as hope and resilience. We laugh and sing not to ignore suffering, but rather to remind ourselves of all that is good in life.

Because the Jews almost all bit the dust in Persia, another important teaching on Purim is to think of all the places in the world where the massacre of innocents is taking place, and do something to stop it. We were saved, so let us remember that and try to help those suffering a similar fate. Sounds great, right? Merciful and compassionate, right? Gosh, golly, gee whizz, what comes to mind right here, right now? Gaza, anyone?

Purim is a great story, sort of like Chanukkah – the destruction of the Jews seems assured, but a few courageous souls manage to defeat the forces of evil and everyone parties down. What's not to like? Yet there is a part of the Book of Esther that is often skipped or glossed over: In addition to the probably justified death of the wicked Haman, the ninth chapter notes that the triumphant Jews killed 75,000 "enemy" Persians, including women and children, and rejoiced afterwards. Ouch.

There are many rationalizations for this slaughter: Maybe it didn't really include women and children. Maybe it was necessary self-defense. But, in an insightful article Jane Eisner, the former editor in chief of the Forward, a national Jewish news outlet, and the former director of academic affairs at Columbia Journalism School, she reads it as a "warning of the extremes a formerly oppressed

people can go to when given a rare opportunity to exercise political and military might." It forces us to ask questions like, does one trauma justify another? What is proportional self-defense? What do we do with understandable, overwhelming needs for vengeance? Where do we draw the line between measured response and revenge?

I don't know the answers, but like Eisner, I think nothing is served by ignoring ugly things, even if the traditions we love and honor. Rather, it is better to confront them, discuss them, wrestle with them, as Jacob wrestled with the Angel (Genesis 32:25).

Maybe the lesson of Purim is that joy, not vengeance should be our response to suffering.

More love to everyone, Mom/Grandma

Purim -

hope, relief from oppression, redemption from tyrant. Hanon, being at  
auspicious & tumult.

Ester: her special place had a responsibility, & risk.

Purim - fulfillment of Pesach & Shewot - for Tardot & Serhans

Be alle to act ad (control, out of control)

Hanon's clo & cl:

Honans to frequent (God hidden). Ester = hidden

Purim Torah: we never learn to bring out our own redemption

Haftrah Ezekiel

36 23 (God manifests his holiness through us)

25. God cleanses us ---

Purim and you go women, sent 2018 to family© (see next page)

# The Un-quavering Voice

What I'll celebrate this Purim.

**THIS MONTH WE** celebrate Purim, a holiday commemorating the triumph over a vain, sexual predator of a king whose closest confidant was a wicked anti-Semite.

A very beautiful Jewish woman was called upon to change the king's mind about committing genocide against the Jews in a country that had long allowed us to prosper and flourish. We use noisemakers to drown out the name of this evil advisor and eat special cookies designed specifically to make fun of his weird ears. (Ancient Persia didn't have Twitter, but it did have bakeries.)

We dress up as the brave, beautiful queen and the unfit, risible king. We get a bit sauced as we recount the story of how we were all nearly murdered -- but for the courageous voice of one young woman.

This woman, our Queen Esther, looked into the eye of certain death and didn't blink. She told the king, "I'm a Jew. If you kill them, you have to kill me, too."

Each year we celebrate our triumph, but we don't really spend much time contemplating the mind-boggling bravery of Queen Esther. She saved us. And all she used was her voice.

In January, I had the honor and privilege of adding my feet to Women's March in Los Angeles. The day before, rain was coming down in sheets -- and the day after the march was equally wet.

But there was not a cloud in the sky when 750,000 of us took to the streets of downtown Los Angeles to declare, unequivocally that civil rights are not negotiable. That women are not objects. That our bodies are our own. That black lives matter. And that Christianity is a religion, not a litmus test of how "American" someone is.

Esther had to face the king alone, but the Women's March was nearly 4-million strong and could be found on every continent (yep, even Antarctica).

Can you imagine what 750,000 people would have looked like to an ancient Persian king? I don't know much about ancient Persian military forces, but I'm guessing we could have overwhelmed their army with nothing more than our witty little placards.

But we did not overwhelm Los Angeles. On every



bumper-to-bumper standstill street we spilled onto, we were met with cheers from drivers. Motorcyclists cranked up their radios, creating mini dance parties around their bikes. It was a celebration.

In many ways it was a lot like Purim. Colorful costumes, pointy-eared mockery (though ours were in hat, not cookie, form), singing, reveling and booing at the name of those who would threaten the security of others.

The march changed the way I see political involvement. It changed the way I see my role as an active citizen. And it changed the way I see Purim.

This Purim, I won't just celebrate the triumph of the Jews over Haman. Triumphs are for future historians to find. People die along the path toward freedom, never knowing whether justice will eventually prevail.

Instead, I'll celebrate the march. The one-step-at-a-time approach to weeding out evil where it creeps.

I will celebrate the way Queen Esther went to the king even though approaching him uninvited could have gotten her killed. I will celebrate the way she cleverly got Antiochus to see that his right-hand man was a murderous bigot. I will celebrate the strength it takes to declare who you are.

And I will celebrate the way a woman can change the course of history, bending its arch toward righteousness, using nothing but her un-quavering voice. ✧

*Mayrav Saar is based in Los Angeles.*

THE MARCH  
CHANGED  
THE WAY I SEE  
POLITICAL  
INVOLVEMENT.

