

We are having a different kind of service today as we celebrate Purim. I am going to be giving a shorter Torah Meditation and Purim message addressed to both the adults and children of our congregation. After the sermon, we will have a presentation by the shabbat school and then we will have a Purim Parade, where we line up behind the Torah scroll and go out the side door and in the front door. Then we will put the Torah away, celebrate Kiddush (with announcements), sing happy birthday, say the final blessing and then go downstairs for our Purim Oneg. Are you ready to celebrate?

Torah Meditation: **Tzav!** **Command:** Leviticus: 6:1(8)- 8:36. I will leave the reading of the Haftarah and Brit Chadashah portions to your private study. This portion is one of technical ones which are both hard to read and hard to find applications for in our personal spiritual lives. It deals with the final preparations of the priests and with the consecration of the Tabernacle, before the Presence of G-d took up residence behind the veil.

The consecration of Aaron and his sons was kind of different. Along with being anointed with oil, blood was applied to three parts of their bodies: their right big toe, their right ear lobe and their right thumb. This meant that wherever they went and what ever they heard and whatever they handled, belonged to G-d and they were called to be holy in every area of their lives. The same applies to us. G-d's objective for each of us is to be holy in every area of our lives.

The sacrificial system was set up so they could recover from their failures and receive strength to rise above them and learn to do a better job. Our Messiah is ready to do the same for us today. There were several kinds of sacrifices designed to keep them in a good relationship with G-d and they were divided into two broad categories. There were those which were consumed by fire and those which were eaten as part of the ritual. Grain offerings which were to be completely burned had to be unleavened. Grain offerings which were to be eaten, were just waved before the L-rd and they could be leavened, like our challah bread. The priests got their portions as did the worshippers.

There is an interesting rule about the offerings which could be eaten. They could not be eaten in the tabernacle, but only on the porch, which was still a holy place. In our shul, we have a similar rule. We do not want people to eat in the sanctuary, but only in back hall or in the fellowship area. Food is not part of worship and they should be kept apart.

The final part of the portion deals in detail with the actual consecration of Aaron and his sons and of the tabernacle itself. Aaron and his sons had to spend seven days getting ready for the transfer of the presence of G-d from the mountain to the tabernacle. They did not leave the entrance of the tent of meeting for seven days, so that no distraction could prevent them from welcoming the presence into the new home which had just been consecrated to receive it. We need to take the time we need to get ready for the presence of G-d in our lives so that nothing in our world could distract us from His Word.

Sermon: Do You live Your Life For Such a Time as This?

Today, I want to tell you the story of an old Jewish man and his young niece as they struggled against an evil man who wanted to destroy them. His name was Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo!) They lived in the royal city of Susa and just wanted to mind their own business. But like many people today, Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo!) hated his Jewish neighbours and plotted their destruction and told horrible lies about them.

In our world today, there have been too many horrible acts of violence against Jewish people by many modern-day Haman's (Y'ma Sh'mo!) I hope this never happen to us, but if it does, we need to be ready to trust the L-rd and not be afraid. G-d and His Word are always greater than any Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo!) who tries to hurt us and lie about us.

Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo!) actually got the king's permission to kill all the Jews, throughout the Persian empire by making false accusations about us. If you ever hear terrible things said about Jews, tell your parents and you rabbi, because none of them are true. Well, Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo!) fooled the king and prepared to kill all the Jews on a specific day, about a year after the permission was given. He actually rolled dice (purim) to find the best day to kill all the Jews. That's where we get the name for the festival from.

The young Jewish girl, Esther, was married to the king, but was first afraid to speak up, because she had not told the king she was Jewish. But she knew she was where she was for such a time as this. Instead of wondering why we are where we are, G-d wants us to ask Him what He wants us to do where we are. Are you doing what G-d wants you to, right where you are? Are you asking Him what you should be doing? Read His Word to find out more! We are here to do His will and not that of any Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo!).

Esther and her uncle, Mordecai, knew that they had to outsmart the evil Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo!) because the king could not take back his permission to kill the Jews. Esther outsmarted Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo!) by inviting him and the king to attend banquets in her quarters. When Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo!) least expected it, she told the king that Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo!), was trying to kill all the Jews like her.

The king arrested Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo!) and executed him on the gallows which Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo!) had prepared for Esther's uncle Mordecai. But here was a problem – what could be done about the permission to kill all the Jews, which could not be taken back? Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo!) was dealt with but, all the Jews were still going to be killed on the day which Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo!) had selected.

Mordecai got permission for the Jews to attack their enemies, on the day their enemies were going to attack them. They did not want to do it, but they had no other choice. The king gave the Jews a special permission to kill their enemies and Haman's (Y'ma Sh'mo!) evil plot was foiled. It was still several months after Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo!) was killed before the Jews were going to be able to defend themselves against their enemies, on the day which Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo) had selected.

When many people saw how the Jews had escaped their fate, they joined our ranks and began to worship the only true G-d, the G-d of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

When the Day came and the enemies of the Jews prepared to attack them, the Jews attacked first and among the enemies who were killed, were the ten sons of Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo!) who had been taught to hate the Jews for no good reason. They were killed as they were preparing to kill the Jews. Once their enemies were dealt with, the Jews went back to being good citizens and wanted to remember this great deliverance which G-d had provided them with. Esther and Mortdecai sent letters to all the Jewish communities in the world so that the Festival of Purim would be celebrated every year to remember how the people of G-d triumphed over evil Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo!).

On this special day, we retell the story of Purim. We dress in costumes and rejoice that wherever we are, we are there for such a time as this. And as long as we listen to G-d through His Word, we will always be allowed to outsmart any evil Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo) we encounter and live peaceful lives, full of holiness and joy.

Our Messiah taught us to be as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves. We are not to hate our enemies. We do not desire that any modern-day Haman's (Y'ma Sh'mo!) should die, but there is a big difference between defending yourself and plotting evil against your neighbours. Hatred is always wrong, but defending yourself against those who hate you is not wrong.

The Jews did not take the law into their own hands when they defended themselves against Haman's (Y'ma Sh'mo!) plot and Jews who defend themselves today never indulge in acts of terrorism or violence. As we celebrate Purim today, it is my prayer that our enemies will stop hating us, so that we can learn to live in peace.

Sometimes our enemies may get the upper hand and use the law to hurt us and even kill us, but we will never do the same. We will never become like Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo) and we will pray for those who hate us and show them that they are wrong because we do not want to do them any wrong. We are children of light, not children of darkness.

Standing up to bullies is not wrong, but becoming a bully is always wrong. Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo) had no reason to hate us and no one anywhere has any reason to hate Jews, because the Messiah has called us to be light and salt, as Messianic Jews and Gentiles.

Racial hatred, violence and terrorism are always wrong and people who fall into this kind of behaviour are under the influence of the enemy of our souls. He was the one who inspired Haman (Y'ma Sh'mo!) to hate Jews and this same enemy is behind anyone and everyone who hates Jews in our modern world.

Many modern Haman's (Y'ma Sh'mo!) also hate the followers of Messiah Yeshua, Jew and Gentile, because we want to lead them out of their darkness and into G-d's light. May our lives be salt and light in this dark world and may we never let any modern Haman's (Y'ma Sh'mo) lead us into hatred of anyone. We want to share the love of our Messiah and not the hatred which the devil inspires. Chag Purim and shabbat Shalom.