

Remembering Purim During the Messianic Age

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The Rambam in the last halakha in *Hilkhos Megilla* 2.18 writes:

All the books of the prophets and all the writings will no longer be valid in the days of the Messiah except for Megillat Esther which will remain together with the five books of the Torah and the laws of the Oral Torah that will never lose their validity. Even though all memory of troubles will be dropped as Yeshayahu (65) writes "All the earlier troubles will be forgotten, they will be hidden from my eyes," the days of Purim will remain, as it is written in Esther (9) "These days of Purim will not pass from the Jews and their memory will never disappear from their descendants." The Ravad objects: "These are the words of a non-scholar: no biblical text will be removed from the cannon; every work has something to teach. What was said was that even if other writings would no longer be read publicly, Megillat Esther will continue to be read in public."

כל ספרי הנביאים וכל הכתובים עתידין ליבטל לימות המשיח חוץ ממגילת אסתר והרי היא קיימת כחמשה חומשי תורה וכהלכות של תורה שבעל פה שאינן בטלין לעולם, ואע"פ שכל זכרון הצרות יבטל שנאמר (ישעיהו ס"ה) כי נשכחו הצרות הראשונות וכי נסתרו מעיני, ימי הפורים לא יבטלו שנאמר (אסתר ט') וימי הפורים האלה לא יעברו מתוך היהודים וזכרם לא יסוף מזרעם. השגת הראב"ד כל ספרי הנביאים והכתובים עתידין ליבטל. אלא דבר הדיוטות הוא זה, כי לא יבטל ספר מכל הספרים שאין ספר שאין בו למוד, אבל כך אמרו אפילו יבטלו שאר ספרים מלקרות בהם מגילה לא תבטל מלקרות אותה כצבור

The source of the Rambam is the Talmud Yerushalmi in Megilla:

Rav Yohanan and Reish Lakish: Rav Yohanan said the books of the prophets and the writings will become invalid in the future but the five biblical books will remain forever as it is written (Devarim 5.19) "A large sound that does not end." Reish Lakish added that Megillat Esther and the laws will also remain. It is written here "A large sound that does not end" and there (in Esther 9.28) it is written "their memory (the days of Purim) will never end (be forgotten) by their descendants."

Yerushalmi Megilla Chap. 1

ר' יוחנן ורשב"ל ר' יוחנן אמר הנביאים והכתובים עתידין ליבטל וחמשת ספרי תורה אינן עתידין ליבטל מה טעמא [דברים ה יט] קול גדול ולא יסף רשב"ל אמר אף מגילת אסתר והלכות אינן עתידין ליבטל נאמר כאן קול גדול ולא יסף ונאמר להלן [אסתר ט כח] וזכרם לא יסוף מזרעם
תלמוד ירושלמי (וילנא) מסכת מגילה פרק א

What differs between the Rambam and the earlier source is Rambam's second part about earlier troubles. Rabbi Yitzchak Zev Soloveitchik suggests that the addition teaches us that not only

will the celebration of Purim continue, but the fast of Esther will as well.¹ The Rav (Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik) similarly understands that the fast of Esther differs from the other fasts, which commemorate tragedy and will no longer be observed in the Messianic era, because it is an integral part of Purim.² The joy of Purim can only be appreciated if one contrasts it with the threat that the Jews faced and the recognition of how vulnerable they were in the kingdom of Achashveirosh.

The question about the source of the expansion of the Yerushalmi by the Rambam remains. If we examine the description of the Messianic era by the Rambam the extension becomes clear.

One should not think that during the Days of Mashiach, the natural order will be change, or that there will be any innovation in the original creation of the world. Rather, the world will continue to follow its ways. Although Yeshayahu [Yeshayahu 11:6] states, "The wolf will with the sheep, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat," these [words] are an allegory and a riddle. They mean that the Jewish people will live securely among the evildoers of the world who are likened to wolves and leopards, as in the verse [Yirmeyahu 5:6], "A wolf of the deserts despoils them, a leopard watches over their cities." [In this era, all nations] will return to the true faith and no longer plunder or destroy. Instead, at peace with Israel, they will eat that which is permitted, as it is written [Yeshayahu 11:7], "The lion shall eat straw like the ox." Similarly, other prophecies of this nature concerning Mashiach are analogies. In the Era of the King Mashiach, everyone will realize what was implied by these metaphors and allusions.

Rambam, Hilkhos Melachim 12.1

אל יעלה על הלב שבימות המשיח יבטל דבר ממנהגו של עולם, או יהיה שם חידוש במעשה בראשית, אלא עולם כמנהגו נוהג, וזה שנאמר בישעיה וגר זאב עם כבש ונמר עם גדי ירבץ משל וחידה, ענין הדבר שיהיו ישראל יושבין לבטח עם רשעי עכו"ם המשולים כזאב ונמר, שנאמר זאב ערבות ישדדם ונמר שוקד על עריהם, ויחזרו כולם לדת האמת, ולא יגזלו ולא ישחיתו, אלא יאכלו דבר המותר בנחת עם ישראל, שנאמר ואריה כבקר יאכל תבן, וכן כל כיוצא באלו הדברים בענין המשיח הם משלים, ובימות המלך המשיח יודע לכל לאי זה דבר היה משל, ומה ענין רמזו בהן.
רמב"ם הלכות מלכים יב:א

According to the Rambam, the natural world will not change after the coming of the Mashiach. The laws of nature will continue with the only change being in the condition of the Jews. The Jewish king will rule the world and it will be an era of world peace and knowledge of Hashem. Free of worries and threats, study will flourish and wisdom will increase.

What is missing in such a glorious time is that which can be gained from overcoming adversity. Purim's survival is precisely because it is the holiday that was created in exile when Jewish existence was threatened and Hashem's overt presence not felt. The actions of Esther and Mordechai and the remarkable reversal could not have happened during Messianic times. That memory adds a dimension to Jewish religious life. The Rambam understood that the source was not merely derived from the language used but reflects a part of Torah that can only be fully appreciated through the story of Purim.

¹ Cited in *Harerei Kedem*, Vol. I no. 188.

² *Ibid.*