

OF MICE TRAPS AND MEN

by Rabbi Label Lam

One who reads the Megillah out of sequence has not fulfilled his obligation. (Megillah 17A)

The Sefas Emes asks, "Why is "Purim" not called "Pur"?" Why is it called plural - Purim for lots and not lot in the singular since Haman is described as having cast a "pur" to reckon the most favorable day to attack the Jews?

Michael Behe introduces in his book "Darwin's Black Box" the concept of "irreducible complexity". The explanation is as follows. Take for example a simple mouse trap. It has a number of functional parts that make it a mouse trap. Any component piece of the trap is useless and meaningless without the other small number parts. It could never have evolved gradually. Of what use would a spring be without cheese for bait or a board for it to slam its gait upon. The unadorned mouse trap needs all the parts present to be functional. The parts of it would have to have been created with the finished end in mind.

Similarly, a snake with poisonous venom would need a hypodermic needle for a tooth to inject its payload. Of what use would the tooth be without the poison and why would the creature need such a potent poison to kill a horse in seconds if it was lacking the sophisticated delivery system?

One of the keys to understanding the Megillah lies in appreciating how a sequence of seemingly simple events form an organized chain- with an eerily predetermined result. In the end, it can be observed how the aggregate is "irreducibly complex". Minus any small piece in the puzzle and history would have looked so much different. If the King would have taken a sleeping pill instead of reading from a book of remembrances, had Esther not found grace in the eyes of the king, had the king not sent out his first foolish decree, had the king not relocated his capital in Shushan where Mordachai was quietly minding his own business before destiny backed up to his doorstep, then things would have turned out much different and the world would be unrecognizably different.

There is a growing paradigm in science that may help explain what is so deficient about reading or hearing the Megillah out of order. Surprisingly it is called, "Chaos Theory". It does not aim to demonstrate that things are random and meaningless. Quite the contrary, it postulates the notion that all matters of seeming wild randomness display surprisingly complex and beautiful order. Even the way cigarette smoke dissipates throughout a room leaves a delicate trail of artistry. One of the proponents of this theory, Joseph Ford, refuted Einstein's statement, "G-d doesn't play dice with the universe!" He says, "Yes, G-d does play dice, but the dice are loaded."

In the end Haman's toss of the "pur" happened within a grander context of a more profound "pur" -or lot for the Jews. Haman not only could not derail the Divine scheme of things but perversely he furthered and promoted it in the most profound way. Our sages tell us that more than all the words of all the prophets were effective in returning the Jews to G-d; Haman was the catalyst to accomplish this when he received the royal signet ring of the king. His ultimatum resulted in the opposite of what he intended with his "pur". Why? Because another "pur" dominates incorporating and adjusting to all the smaller Machiavellian moves making rather a prefect sense of this nice game of dice - a grand Purim play of mice-traps and men. Text Copyright © 2006 by Rabbi Label Lam and **Torah.org**.