

## Idea for Purim -- 3/16/95: Collective Guilt

There is a subtle message in the Megillah that is worth noting: when the Persians and Medes are hostile to an individual, they blame *all* members of that person's group. There is an easy assumption of collective guilt because of the presumed sins of one of their number.

Thus, note how Ahaseurus, furious at his incumbent queen, Vashti, takes it out not only on her but on *all women* who are assumed to share her guilt and, therefore, must bear the brunt of her punishment as ordained by the king at the suggestion of his advisors.

Then, when Haman is furious at Mordecai, he plans revenge not against Mordecai but against עם מרדכי, the entire people or race to which he belongs!

And now compare this to Mordecai and Esther and their reaction when the tables are turned and they emerge victorious: Haman and his sons are hanged, but there is *no vindictiveness* displayed against Haman's ethnic group-- the Amalekites, *despite the ancient enmity between Israel and Amalek*.

The last point bears looking in to, namely, the halakhic justification for not proceeding to enforce מחה תמחה את זכר עמלק. But whatever the reason, it speaks volumes about the ingrained character of the Jew *not* to take revenge on a whole group, not to indulge in collective guilt and therefore collective punishment.