

A Freilichen Purim Everyone. This coming Sunday is Purim, which celebrates our miraculous victory over the Persians who sought to destroy the Jewish Nation, well over 2000 years ago. It is interesting that the Sages chose to call this holiday Purim, which means "lots", a reference to the lots that were drawn by the enemy to determine the day to exterminate every Jewish man, woman and child. Other holidays such as Chanukah and Pesach are named for the positive events which occurred on those occasions. Why should the Sages refer to this holiday by such a negative event; namely, the method used by our enemies to determine the day on which to wipe us out?

The answer to our question is the following: The Sages wanted us to understand the true happiness of this holiday. Namely, that we as Jews believe in Hashgacha Pratis - divine intervention. That is to say, that we believe that everything that happens in life is orchestrated by Hashem. Our enemies, the evil Persians, believed that everything is chance - like casting lots. Therefore, to show that we believe the opposite, namely that we believe in divine intervention, the Sages chose a name for this holiday which reminds us of the Jewish belief in divine intervention. The following amazing true story illustrates the exacting divine intervention with which Hashem guides the Universe.

Dana Streeves (not her real name) grew up as a typical Bais Yaakov (religious school) girl in New York about 30 years ago. Unfortunately however, Dana did not have the happiest childhood. Even though she had many friends and was popular, she had mixed feelings about her Judaism. On the one hand she could see the benefits of being observant; on the other hand, she had unexplainable thoughts of being uncomfortable with the do's and don'ts of the religion. Due to the fact that she had been raised in an orthodox family, the orthodox lifestyle was all that she knew. So, inevitably, she sweep her mixed feelings "under the rug," and continued to lead her life as an orthodox teenager. One Purim, however, all of this was to change.

On Purim that year, she and her friends put on bright blue wigs and a deluge of makeup, (as is the custom for some to dress up on Purim.) Dana's mother however did not approve of her outlandish costume because of its immodesty. Dana's mother told her that she looked like a "shiksa." Dana thought nothing of it and continued celebrating with her friends.

The night after Purim, the Rabbi who had arranged for Dana's adoption as a child, appeared suddenly at the Streeves family house. Dana had always known that she was adopted, however, she was not prepared for the news which the Rabbi told them. The Rabbi sat at the table crying, as he told of the horrible mistake, which had recently come to light, regarding Dana's adoption. Dana's birth mother "Martha" was not Jewish; which, according to Jewish law, made Dana also not Jewish.

The news hit Dana's family like a bomb. Her adopted mother fell ill and her adopted father could not speak out of shock. Dana was terrified! She had grown up a Jew and now they said she was not! All these years had been a farce. She now understood why she lacked feeling for Judaism.

Soon after, "Martha", Dana's birth mother, came to New York from Tennessee. Dana had mixed feelings. Dana, however, refused to see her. After weeks of crying and of not knowing where to turn, Dana and her adopted parents went to a leading Rabbi to ask for his advice. The Rabbi advised Dana that she could surely convert, should she want to do so. He told her to think about it and then make a decision. Dana was torn between two worlds.

Soon after, Dana decided to meet with her birth mother Martha. Martha was very kind and did not pressure Dana with her decision. Dana decided to go back to Tennessee with Martha, where she stayed a month. When she came back to New York, she said "goodbye" to her adopted parents. She would not convert. She realized that if she were to convert, it would only be out of guilty feelings and the desire not to offend her adopted parents. But she knew in her heart that she had no feelings for Judaism, beyond an appreciation of the culture and lifestyle.

Eventually, Dana got married and settled down in Michigan and had a baby girl whom they named "Heather." Several years past and Heather was young lady. One day, three years ago, before Purim, Heather brought home a young man Simon, who was a self-proclaimed "once-upon-a-time-Jew." Simon and Heather had dated for a long time.

Simon was a very animated fellow. Simon explained to Dana and her daughter that the Jewish holiday of Purim was approaching. Dana feigned ignorance, as Simon proceeded to entertain Dana and her daughter Heather with a one-man "Purim show."

In a surprise move during his skit, Simon asked Dana for permission to marry Heather. Dana told Simon that she forbade him from marrying Heather because he was Jewish, even if totally secular! And, a Jew must not marry a gentile!

It was now Simon's turn to be surprised. Why would a gentile woman forbid Simon who was Jewish from marrying her daughter? Dana proceeded to explain the events of some 30 years previous. Simon left their home and moved away soon after.

A few years later, once again before Purim, Dana was surprised to see that she had received Mishloach Manos (a gift of food given to others on Purim.) Inside the package were hamataschen (Purim cookies) which Dana had not tasted for some 30 years. More surprisingly however, were the pictures and the wedding invitation which were in the package. The picture depicted a young man with a beard and yarmulke. The only thing familiar about the picture was the eyes. It was Simon, now called "Shimon." He had been inspired by Dana's speech a few years earlier. He had looked into his heritage and eventually he became a Ba'al Teshuva - a Torah observant Jew. And Shimon was now inviting Dana to his chasuna - wedding! (From HaModiah 10 Adar Beis, 5763)

Nothing in life is a coincidence! Hashem runs the world with an exact calculation. **A Freilichen Purim Everyone.**