

Shushan Purim Shmuel Gordon

Purim is a special type of holiday, much different than all the others in Judaism. Most holidays have a Shabbat mentality, with all of the melachot in place, long Tefilot, with a serious feel to the day. Purim however is different for a few reasons. The obvious differences of hearing the Megillah, drinking, and the mitzvot of giving gifts to friends and the poor, there is one aspect of Purim which we find only attached to this holiday- Shushan Purim.

At first glance, the halachot of Purim and Shushan Purim don't make sense. Why would you celebrate the holiday on different days depending on what city you live in? Why isn't there one day established as Purim for everyone like there is by every other holiday?

The simple answer is that we find it this way at the time of when the miracle of Purim took place. In all the cities, the battle took place on the 13th of Adar, while they rested and celebrated on the 14th. However in Shushan, they had an extra day of battle (the 13th and 14th) and then rested and celebrated on the 15th. Although Shushan Purim is celebrated on the 15th like in Shushan because this is the place where the miracle happened, the Rabbis also established that we celebrate it on the 15th in Jerusalem, the holiest city, in order to give honor to the day. All other cities that had walls surrounding them in the times of Yehoshua Ben Nun are given the status of Shushan and celebrate on the 15th also, but nowadays Jerusalem is (basically) the only city that follows Shushan Purim. Even though there are cities outside of Israel that have been surrounded by walls since the times of Yehoshua, since they were not important in those days, Purim is only celebrated on the 14th.

A different answer can also be suggested. At first glance, Purim appears to be the most physical holiday. It's a mitzvah to eat a feast, get drunk, and dress up, while most other holidays the main idea is spiritual (davening, shofar, learning, etc.). If you look at it deeper, Purim is more than just a party to eat and drink and have fun. Everything we do on Purim is because it's a mitzvah and we are able to elevate everyday things like eating and drinking, and make it holy by using it to serve Hashem and celebrate our salvation against our enemies.

Therefore, Shushan Purim isn't just another day to have fun, it's another day to celebrate and thank Hashem for saving us. By establishing this day for a walled city that has been around since the times of Yehoshua, we are strengthening our point. Despite all the hardships the Jews have been through over the years, Hashem will never forsake his people.

In the times of Purim, we were not worthy of being saved, but Hashem decided to save us anyway. Therefore we celebrate by doing physical things to show that just like when you are drunk, you are not in control of your actions, so too in the times of Purim, even though we didn't do enough to try to save ourselves and we weren't worthy, Hashem still helped us.

Shushan Purim isn't just a different day to celebrate, it's another day to elevate the physical in our lives, and show that Hashem is always in charge and will protect us. When we celebrate in Jerusalem, which is a walled city and has been around since the times of Yehoshua we are celebrating a lot more than just Purim. Even though Jerusalem hasn't always been in Jewish hands and the Jews have been through many hard times there, it is still the holiest city and Hashem won't forget his city and his people.