



The Rema (OC 696:8) writes that it is permissible to wear masks on Purim, and even for men and women to wear clothing and accessories of the opposite gender, since the intention is part of the Simcha of Purim. Although the Mishnah Brurah (696:30) cites other commentaries such as the Ta"z, Ba"ch, Sh"ah and others who speak out against cross dressing, there seems to be a universal custom to wear a costume or disguise on Purim. The question arises, where did this custom emanate from?

"Haman entered and the king said to him, 'What should be done for the man whom the king wishes to honor'. Haman thought, 'Who would the king want to honor more than me'? So Haman said to the king, 'For the man whom the king wishes to honor, bring the royal attire that the king wears, and a horse upon which the king rides, and the royal crown to be placed on his head. Then let the clothing and the horse be given to one of the king's most noble officials, and let them dress the man whom the king desires to honor. And have him ride on the horse through the city square, and let them proclaim before him: This is what shall be done for the man whom the king desires to honor' (Esther 6:6-9)

The Chasam Sofer suggests that when Achashveirosh surprised Haman by revealing that his intention was to honor Mordechai and that Haman would be the 'noble official' to carry out this task, Haman tried to avoid embarrassment. Therefore, as Mordechai was changing into the royal garb, Haman came up with the idea to wear Mordechai's 'Jewish' clothes and to keep his head down so that no one should recognize him.

The Gemara (Megillah 16a) tells us that when Mordechai's procession reached the home of Haman, his daughter was watching from up on the roof. From her vantage point, she presumed that the one dressed like a Jew leading the horse was Mordechai, and her father Haman was riding atop the horse. After she poured a bucket from the bathroom on the head of the one leading the horse, it caused Haman to look skyward. Upon the shock of seeing her father covered in human waste, she fell off the roof and died.

According to the Chasam Sofer, the custom developed to dress in costume to remember this specific aspect of **וְהָיָה הַיּוֹם לְיוֹם הַפֶּחַךְ הַזֶּה** (Esther 9:1), the miraculous reversal of that day mentioned in the Gemara

While reading the Haftarah of Shabbos Zachor (Shmuel I 15), which describes how the Malchus was taken away from King Shaul, because of his mistake in the war against Amalek, I wondered what would have happened if Shaul had killed the animals and King Agag, as he was commanded. If Shaul would have remained king, what effect would this have on the Kingdom of David?

We know that Dovid HaMelech wanted to build the Beis HaMikdash (Shmuel II 7), but Hashem told Dovid that his son would build it instead. Later in Tanach (Divrei HaYamim 22:8) we find out from Dovid that Hashem did not allow him to build the Beis HaMikdash, a place of peace, because Dovid was a man of war, who had fought many battles. Perhaps if Shaul continued as king until all the wars had ended, Dovid would have been able to build the Beis HaMikdash himself when he became king.

Yaakov did not consider leaving Charan to face Eisav, until Rachel had given birth to a son, since Yaakov received a tradition that Eisav would be defeated by the sons of Rachel (Pesikta Rabti 13). Amalek, the grandson of Eisav, was defeated by Yehoshua (Shemos 17:9-10) from the tribe of Ephrayim (Bamidbar 13:8), by Shaul (Shmuel I 15) from the tribe of Binyamin (Shmuel I 9:1-2)), and by Mordechai from the tribe of Binyamin (Esther 2:5).

As the Gemara (Sanhedrin 20b) explains, three Mitzvos were activated when Bnei Yisroel entered Eretz Yisroel: (a) to anoint a king; (b) to annihilate the offspring of Amalek; and (c) to build the Beis HaMikdash. Shaul paved the way for the kingdom of Dovid to build the First Beis HaMikdash. Mordechai paved the way for the Second Beis HaMikdash to be completed. May it be Hashem's will that the Moshiach ben Yosef will come soon to wipe out the enemies of Bnei Yisroel, the spiritual heirs of Amalek, and pave the way for the Moshiach ben Dovid to rebuild the Third Beis HaMikdash, speedily in our days.