

## **“Down with hatred!”**

### *Thought for the Day*

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Here's a little conundrum to help kick-start the brain:  
What do ancient Persia and modern Scotland have in common?

Well, this coming weekend, Jewish communities throughout the world will be celebrating Purim, a festival that commemorates the failure of a plot to exterminate the Jews, more than 2000 years ago.

The story is told in the Book of Esther, of how the evil Haman, the prime-minister of Persia, built his personal grudge against the Jewish leader Mordechai into a programme of genocide; and how Esther, Mordechai's niece, became queen, ingratiated herself with the king, and had the decree annulled.

In synagogues everywhere, this story is read aloud, while children boo and hiss whenever Haman is mentioned. It's a simple tale: good triumphs over evil, the baddies meet their come-uppance, and the goodies live happily ever after!

But Jewish tradition sees it not just as a single historical event, nor just as a metaphor for the struggle between good and evil, but as symbolic of the persistence of anti-Semitism.

That might sound a bit paranoid, but Haman's successor as president of Iran, as Persia is now known, can't be ignored when he calls the Holocaust a "myth", and declares his desire – no, his intention – to 'wipe Israel off the map'.

So what's all this to do with Scotland?

Many researchers have suggested that our cosy image of a friendly, inclusive Scotland is self-delusion. Recent reports, one from a parliamentary all-party group, reported a large increase in the number of anti-Semitic attacks in the UK. The political will is there, but it has yet to eradicate anti-Semitism – or for that matter sectarianism, xenophobia, islamophobia, and other hate crime – from our streets.

I don't want to think that we have to go on living with mindless hatred. As people who believe in the dignity of each individual, of any faith or none, we need to find ways to make Scotland live up to its self-image as a place where many cultures are truly welcome.

*Ephraim Borowski*

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