

MEGILLAH WITH COMMENTARY

The Book of Esther

CHAPTER I

1 And it came to pass in the days of **Achashverosh**, the same **Achashverosh** who ruled from **Hodu to Cush**, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces.

2 In those days, when King Achashverosh sat on his royal throne, which was in Shushan the capital—

3 In the third year of his reign, he made a feast for all his ministers and servants; the army of Persia and Media, the nobles and all the ministers of the provinces in his service.

4 For many days, one hundred and eighty days, he displayed the glorious wealth of his kingdom and the splendid beauty of his majesty.

5 And when these days came to an end, the king made a seven-day **feast** in the courtyard of the king's palace garden, for all the people in Shushan the capital, nobleman and commoner alike.

6 There were hangings of **white, green and blue**, held by

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AND IT CAME TO PASS IN THE DAYS OF ACHASHVEROSH (ESTHER 1:1)

Achashverosh succeeded Cyrus as ruler of the Persian Empire, toward the end of the Jews' seventy-year exile in Babylon (*Rashi*). On the mystical level King Achashverosh alludes to G-d, the King of the World. The Midrash reads the name Achashverosh as an acronym for *acharit veraishit shelo*, alluding to the One Whom "the end and beginning are His."

FROM HODU TO CUSH (1:1)

Usually translated as "from India to Ethiopia." The location of *Hodu* and *Cush* is the subject of debate in the Talmud: Rav says these countries were at opposite ends of the world, thus the verse teaches that Achashverosh ruled the entire world. Shmuel says they were adjacent to one another and the verse teaches that he ruled the entire world as easily as he ruled these two countries.

(*Talmud, Megillah 11a*)

A SEVEN-DAY FEAST... FOR ALL THE PEOPLE IN SHUSHAN THE CAPITAL (1:5)

Why was annihilation decreed upon the Jews of that generation? Because they enjoyed the feast of the wicked [King Achashverosh].

(*Talmud, Megillah 12a*)

ords of linen and purple wool to silver rods and marble pillars. There were **divans of gold and silver** on a floor of alabaster and marble [arranged in patterns of] rows and circles.

7 Drinks were served in golden vessels, vessels of assorted design, and the royal **wine was in abundance** as befitting the king.

8 The drinking was **by the law**, without force, for so had the king ordered all the stewards of his household—to comply with the **will** of each **man**.

9 Queen Vashti, too, made a feast for the women in the royal palace of King Achashveirosh.

10 On the seventh day, when the king's heart was merry with wine, he ordered Mehuman, Bizzeta, Charvona, Bigta, Avagta, Zeitar and Charkas, the seven chamberlains who attended King Achashverosh,

11 to bring Queen Vashti before the king wearing the royal crown, to show her beauty to the nations and ministers, for she was indeed beautiful.

12 But Queen Vashti refused to appear by the king's order brought by the chamberlains, and the king grew furious and his wrath seethed within him.

13 So the king conferred with the wise men, those **knowl-**

Was "enjoying the feast of the wicked King Achashverosh" so grave a sin that it warranted a decree of annihilation upon "all the Jews, young and old, children and women, on one day"?

But the problem was not so much their participation in the feast; indeed our Sages tell us that Achashverosh had supplied kosher food for his Jewish subjects (see below). The problem was that they *enjoyed* the feast. With the royal kosher menu in hand, the exiled Jew felt he no longer needed G-d for his survival.

The decree of annihilation was not a punishment, but a consequence of this attitude. Putting his faith in mortals, the Jew denied his supernatural status—the status of a nation whose very survival belies the laws of history. The Jew was now lonely and vulnerable to the decrees of a mortal Achashverosh..

(*The Lubavitcher Rebbe*)

HANGINGS OF WHITE, GREEN AND BLUE... (1:6)

The event catered to all but one of the five senses: The feast was in an aromatic garden; there were beautiful hangings of white, green and blue; the food was suited to each person's taste, and the divans were delightful to the touch. But there is no mention of music, since what is music to one ear is noise to another.

By elaborating upon the vast power and riches of Achashverosh, the Megillah emphasizes the magnitude of any decree issued by him, and consequently, the magnitude of the miracle.

(Akeidat Yitzchak)

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edgeable of the times—for this was the king's custom, to [bring such matters] before those who were versed in every law and statute..

14 Those closest to him were Carshina, Sheitar, Admata, Tarshish, Meress, Marsina and Memuchan. These were the seven ministers of Persia and Media, who had access to the king and ranked highest in the kingdom.

15 [He asked them:] "By law, **what should be done** with Queen Vashti for failing to obey the order of King Achashverosh, brought by the chamberlains?"

16 Memuchan declared before the king and the ministers: "It is not against the King alone that Queen Vashti has sinned, but against all the ministers and all the nations in all the provinces of King Achashverosh.

17 "For word of the queen's deed will reach all the women and it will belittle their husbands in their eyes. For they will say: 'King Achashverosh commanded that Queen Vashti be brought

before him, yet she did not come!'

18 "This very day, the noblewomen of Persia and Media who have heard of the queen's deed will repeat it to all the King's nobles and there will be much disgrace and anger.

19 "If it please the King, let a royal edict be issued by him, and let it be written into the laws of Persia and Media and let it not be revoked, that Queen Vashti may never again appear before King Achashverosh, and let the King confer her royal title upon another woman who is better than she.

20 "And the King's decree which he shall proclaim will be heard throughout his kingdom, for it is indeed great, and all **the women will respect their husbands**, nobleman and commoner alike."

21 The idea pleased the king and the ministers, and the king did as Memuchan had advised.

22 He sent letters to all the king's provinces—to each province in its script and to each nation in its language [saying] that every man shall be master in his home and that he speak the language of his nation..

CHAPTER II

1 After these events, when King Achashverosh's wrath had

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(Midbar Kodesh)

THE DRINKING WAS BY THE LAW (1:8)

By the law of Torah, which states that a person should eat more than he drinks. (The amount of food "consumed" by the altar—the animal sacrifice and flour offering—exceeded the amount of liquid it "drank" with the wine libation).

(Talmud, Megillah 12a; Rashi *ibid.*)

This rule applies to spiritual nourishment as well: "food", alluding to the laws of the Torah that relate to one's physical day-to-day existence, must be the main staple of one's spiritual diet; "wine", alluding to the esoteric secrets of the Torah, ought only be ingested on a full stomach.

(Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)

TO COMPLY WITH THE WILL OF EACH MAN (1:8)

Literally "with the will of each man and man"—the wishes of Mordechai and Haman who are referred to in the Book of Esther as "man" (in 2:5 and 7:6). To comply with their wishes, Achashverosh instructed that both kosher and non-kosher foods be provided..

(Talmud, Megillah 12a; Maharsha, *ibid.*)

This as an allusion to freedom of choice: The King of the World instructs that every person be given the choice to follow either the path of Mordechai or that of Haman.

THOSE KNOWLEDGEABLE OF THE TIMES (1:3)

Astrologers, or those familiar with past court protocol.

(Ibn Ezra)

WHAT SHOULD BE DONE WITH QUEEN VASHTI? (1:15)

The commentators raise numerous questions regarding this event. Disobeying a king was considered *the* most serious offense and was always punished by death. Indeed, later in the story even Queen Esther attests that were she to appear before the king uninvited she would be put to death. Certainly Vashti who had defied the king's explicit command deserved the death penalty. What room was there for leniency?

Furthermore, Memuchan's argument that this would influence the women of the kingdom seems insignificant in the face of Vashti's act of rebellion.

The answer lies in the Megillah's description of the nature of this feast. Unlike the first feast, which was to show off the king's wealth, this feast was to please the people. Thus no one was forced to drink more than he wished, "for so had the king ordered." Indeed "all the stewards of his household," the bakers, butchers and butlers were to "comply with each man's wish."

Thus Vashti's refusal to appear *against her will* is less sinful when

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abated, he remembered Vashti and what she had done and what had been decreed upon her.

2 So the king's attendants advised: "Let beautiful virgin girls be sought for the King.

3 "And let the King appoint officers in all the provinces of his kingdom, and let them gather every beautiful virgin girl to Shushan the capital, to the harem, under the charge of Heigai, chamberlain of the King, custodian of the women, and let their cosmetics be provided.

4 "And let the girl who finds favor in the King's eyes become queen in Vashti's stead." The plan pleased the king and he acted accordingly.

5 There was **a Jewish man** in Shushan the capital, whose name was Mordechai, son of Yair, son of Shim'iy, son of Kish, a Benjaminite,

6 Who had been exiled from Jerusalem with the exiles that had

been exiled along with Jechoniah, King of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, had sent into exile.

7 He raised his cousin Hadassah, also called **Esther**, for she had neither father nor mother. The girl was of beautiful form and beautiful visage, and when her father and mother died, Mordechai **adopted her** as his daughter.

8 Now when the king's order and edict became known, and many girls were gathered to Shushan the capital under the charge of Heigai, Esther was **taken** to the palace under the charge of Heigai, custodian of the women.

9 The girl found favor in his eyes and won his kindness, so that he hurried to provide her with her cosmetics and meals, and the seven maids that were to be given her from the palace. He also transferred her and her maids to the best quarters in the harem.

10 [All the while] Esther did not divulge her race or ancestry, for Mordechai had instructed her **not** to tell.

11 And every day Mordechai would stroll in front of the harem courtyard to find out how Esther was faring and what would be done with her.

12 Now when each girl's turn came to go to King Achashverosh, after undergoing the prescribed twelve-month

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viewed in the context of that particular feast.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

AND MEMUCHAN DECLARED (1:16)

Memuchan is Haman.

(Talmud, Megillah 12b)

Achashverosh was a fool: first he killed his wife at the urging of his friend, and then he killed his friend at the urging of his wife

(Yalkut Shimoni)

SPEAK THE LANGUAGE OF HIS NATION (1:22)

If his wife spoke another language, he was entitled to force her to learn his own.

(Rashi)

THERE WAS A JEWISH MAN IN SHUSHAN (2:5)

In *galut* ("exile") the Jewish conscience lies dormant, the soul unable

to express and actualize its G-dly awareness and feelings. The cure to this state of spiritual coma is the Jew's selfless submission of the role he must play in the Divine plan—a role that transcends emotion and intellect. It is this simple loyalty to G-d that restores the Jew's essential relationship with Him..

Though Mordechai was a Benjaminite, he is called *Yehudi* ("Jew") which literally means a descendant of the tribe of Yehudah (Judah). Likewise, throughout the Megillah, the entire Jewish people are called *Yehudim*, without distinction of tribal origin. For *Yehudi* is of the same root as *hoda'ah* which means "to acknowledge" and "to accept". This title describes the core of the Jew, his untouchable essence.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

HE RAISED HIS COUSIN HADASSAH (2:7)

Mordechai had been engaged in the restoration of the Temple and the Holy Land, but he decided that "It is better that I go to the Diaspora to raise Esther than remain in the Land of Israel."

(Targum Sheini)

ALSO CALLED ESTHER (2:7)

The name "Esther" from the Hebrew word for "concealment," conveys the essence of the Purim story. On Chanukah, G-d defied the laws of nature to save us, while on Purim the salvation came about in what could be perceived as a series of coincidences. On Chanukah the divine salvation came "from above," while on Purim it came "from below,"

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care for women—for only then would their period of beauty-care be completed: six months with **oil of myrrh** and six months with perfumes and women's cosmetics—

13 With this the girl would appear before the king; she would be provided with whatever she requested to accompany her from the harem to the palace.

14 In the evening she would go [to the king], and in the morning she would return to the second harem, under the charge of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, custodian of the concubines. She would not go to the king again, unless the king desired her, whereupon she would be summoned by name.

15 And when the time came for Esther, daughter of Avichayil uncle of Mordechai, who had taken her as a daughter, to go to the king, she **did not ask** for a thing other than that which Heigai, the king's chamberlain, custodian of the women, had

advised. And Esther found favor in the eyes of all who saw her.

16 Esther was taken to King Achashverosh, to his palace, in the tenth month, which is the month of Tevet, in the seventh year of his reign.

17 And the king loved Esther more than all the women and she won his favor and kindness more than all the virgins; he placed the royal crown on her head and made her queen in Vashti's stead.

18 Then the king made a grand feast for all his ministers and servants, "The Feast of Esther." He lowered [taxes] for the provinces and gave presents befitting the king.

19 And when the virgins were **gathered a second time**, Mordechai was sitting at the king's gate.

20 Esther would [still] not divulge her ancestry or race, as Mordechai had instructed her. Indeed, Esther followed Mordechai's instructions just as she had done while under his care.

21 In those days, while Mordechai sat at the king's gate, Bigtan and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains from the threshold guards, became angry and planned to assassinate King Achashverosh.

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disguised in ordinary events. Chanukah celebrates the fact that our commitment to G-d, and His to us, transcends all natural bonds. Purim celebrates the fact that our relationship also pervades the most ordinary, everyday details of our lives. This theme is reflected in the Chanukah *dreidel* and Purim *gragger*. Whereas the *dreidel* is held from above, the *gragger* is held from below.

(Bnei Yissaschar)

To allow for freedom of choice, G-d created the world with an equal balance of light and darkness. Thus Haman is mentioned in the Megillah exactly as many times as is Esther (54 times).

(Rokeach)

ESTHER WAS TAKEN (2:8)

Against her will, and despite her attempts to hide.

(Targum; Targum Sheini)

FOR MORDECHAI HAD INSTRUCTED HER NOT TO TELL (2:10)

Mordechai hoped that from Esther's refusal to divulge her origin they would assume she was of lowly descent and release her (Rashi). Or, as long as her Jewishness was unknown, she would be free to observe the Torah in secret (Ibn Ezra).

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi interpreted this verse as a metaphor for the preparation necessary for *yechidut* (a private audience with a Rebbe): "Six months with oil of myrrh" refers to six months of meditating on one's deeds in a way that induces *merirut* (sincere contrition); "and six months with perfumes" refers to six months of immersing the mind in contemplation of G-dliness

SHE DID NOT ASK FOR A THING (2:15)

The *Zohar* writes that every soul is furnished with an angel that guides it and leads it from one level to the next. Certain souls, however, do not need an angel, as the Talmud says of Rabbi Chiyah's throne, that, unlike the thrones of the other Sages which travel with the help of angels, "Rabbi Chiyah's throne ascends and descends on its own."

Thus Esther, who was also on this level, "did not ask for anything" to accompany her to the King.

(Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)

AND WHEN THE VIRGINS WERE GATHERED A SECOND TIME... (2:19)

With the great honors bestowed upon her on the one hand, and by threatening her position by gathering maidens for a second time on the other, the king hoped to persuade Esther to reveal her origin. But with the help of Mordechai who "was sitting at the king's gate" to encourage her, she did not give in.

(Rashi; Talmud, Megillah 13a)

SIX MONTHS WITH OIL OF MYRRH AND SIX MONTHS WITH PERFUMES (2:12)

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22 The matter became **known to Mordechai** and he informed Queen Esther. Esther then informed the king of it in Mordechai's name.

23 The matter was investigated and found [to be true] and the two were hanged on the gallows. It was then recorded in the Book of Chronicles before the king.

CHAPTER III

1 After these events, King Achashverosh promoted Haman, son of Hamdata, the **Agagite** and advanced him; he placed his seat above all his fellow ministers.

2 All the king's servants at the king's gate knelt and bowed before Haman, for so had the king commanded concerning him. But **Mordechai** would not kneel or bow.

3 The king's servants at the king's gate said to Mordechai, "Why do you transgress the King's command?"

4 And when they had said this to him day after day and he did not listen to them, they informed Haman to see if Mordechai's words would endure, for he had told them that he was a Jew.

5 When Haman saw that Mordechai would not kneel or bow before him, Haman was filled with wrath.

6 But he thought it contemptible to kill only Mordechai, for they had informed him of Mordechai's nationality. Haman sought to annihilate **all the Jews**, Mordechai's people, throughout Achashverosh's entire kingdom.

7 In the first month, which is the month of Nissan, in the twelfth year of King Achashverosh's reign, a **pur**, which is a **lot**, was cast before Haman, for every day and every month, [and it fell] on the twelfth month, which is the month of **Adar**.

8 Haman said to King Achashverosh, "There is one nation, **scattered and dispersed** among the nations throughout the provinces of your kingdom, whose laws are unlike those of any other nation and who do not obey the laws of the King. It is not in the King's interest to tolerate them.

9 "If it please the King, let [an edict] be issued for their

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THE MATTER BECAME KNOWN TO MORDECHAI (2:22)

Mordechai gained a position at the king's gate, thus displacing Bigtan and Teresh, who then plotted to poison the king. Speaking their native tongue Tursi, they assumed nobody would understand them. Mordechai, who as a member of the *Sanhedrin* (Jewish Supreme Court) understood seventy languages, overheard their plot and reported it to Esther.

(Targum)

AFTER THESE EVENTS... (3:1)

G-d always prepares the remedy before the affliction. Thus only "after these events"—after Esther was enthroned and the king owed his life to Mordechai—did G-d send the challenge of Haman's promotion and his subsequent decree.

(Rashi)

HAMAN, SON OF HAMDATA, THE AGAGITE (3:1)

Agag, an ancestor of Haman's, was the Amalekite king killed by Samuel the Prophet (as related in I Samuel 15).

BUT MORDECHAI WOULD NOT KNEEL OR BOW (3:2)

The Midrash relates that when Mordechai would not kneel, Haman

said to Mordechai: "Are you better than your ancestors, who bowed to my ancestor Esau?" (as per Genesis 33:3) To which Mordechai replied, "My ancestor, Benjamin, was not yet born at the time, and did not bow."

Mordechai was a reincarnation of Jacob, and Haman of Esau. Mordechai's refusal to bow rectified Jacob's bowing to Esau.

(Rabbi Isaac Luria)

HE THOUGHT IT CONTEMPTIBLE TO KILL ONLY MORDECHAI, FOR THEY HAD INFORMED HIM OF MORDECHAI'S NATIONALITY (3:6)

Mordechai attributed his refusal to bow to his Jewishness—to the essence of the Jewish soul which cannot be separated from G-d for even a moment. Hence, Haman wished to kill all the Jews..

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

A PUR, WHICH IS A LOT (3:7)

Casting lots is a method of determining something by "chance" rather than by reason. By casting lots, Haman hoped to remove his plan from the limitations of human endeavor and elevate it to the plane of inexorable fate.

An extraordinary effort, something beyond reason and human limitations, was required to counteract Haman's lots. This came in the form of intense *teshuvah* and self-sacrifice by the Jews at that time. For the duration of almost an entire year (Haman's decree was issued in the first

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destruction, and I will pay ten thousand silver talents to the functionaries, to be deposited in the King's treasuries."

10 The king removed his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, son of Hamdata, the Agagite, persecutor of the Jews.

11 The king said to Haman, "The money is yours to keep, and the nation is yours to do with as you please."

12 The king's scribes were then summoned on the thirteenth day of the first month, and all that Haman commanded to the king's satraps and the governors of each province and to the nobles of each nation was written—to each province according to its script and each nation according to its language. It was written in King Achashverosh's name and sealed with the king's signet ring..

13 Letters were sent with couriers to all the provinces of the

king: to annihilate, murder and destroy all the Jews, young and old, children and women, on one day—the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar and to **plunder** their possessions.

14 Copies of the edict were to be proclaimed as law in every province, clearly to all the nations, so that they should be ready for that day.

15 The couriers hurried out with the order of the king and the law was proclaimed in Shushan the capital. Then the king and Haman sat down to drink, and the city of Shushan was in turmoil.

CHAPTER IV

1 Mordechai **knew** all that had occurred, so Mordechai tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and ash. He went out into the city crying loudly and bitterly.

2 He went up until the king's gate, for it is improper to enter **the king's gate** wearing sackcloth.

3 And in every province, wherever the edict of the king and his law reached, there was great mourning among the Jews, with

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month, Nissan, and conclusively defeated in the twelfth month, Adar) the Jews displayed supernatural determination in the face of death, and remained steadfast in their adherence to Torah.

(Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)

ON THE TWELFTH MONTH, WHICH IS THE MONTH OF ADAR (3:7)

Our Sages tell us that G-d caused the lot to fall on Adar, a propitious month for the Jewish people, for it is the month during which Moses was born. According to *Arizal* (master Kabbalist Rabbi Isaac Luria) every month corresponds to a specific part of the head. Adar is related to the nose and the sense of smell. Smell is a lofty sense, as it is the only sense that was not involved in, and thus not influenced by, the sin of Adam.

The relationship between Adar and scent is demonstrated in the names of the Purim heroes: The Talmud (Chulin 139b) relates the name Mordechai to *Mor dror* (pure musk), and Esther's other name, Hadassah, means "a myrtle."

(Bnei Yissaschar)

SCATTERED AND DISPERSED AMONG THE NATIONS (3:8)

Haman wished to imply that the Jewish people were not united and thus vulnerable. The Jewish response was, "Go gather all the Jews"

(Esther 4:16). Jewish unity would be the antidote to Haman's slander. This is also the theme of the specific practices of Purim: sending presents to one another and gifts to the poor. Purim is a holiday one cannot celebrate alone.

(Shelah)

TO PLUNDER THEIR POSSESSIONS (3:13)

Normally, the Jews' possessions would have become property of the king. So Haman publicized that their possessions would be free for the taking, thereby insuring that all would participate in the massacre.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

MORDECHAI KNEW ALL THAT HAD OCCURRED.... (4:1)

He knew the sins that had caused the affliction, and the cures that would bring it to an end.

(Yalkut Shimoni)

In his efforts to nullify the decree, Mordechai responded by calling upon the Jewish people to turn to G-d. He focused first on improving the spiritual condition of his people, and only then did he employ natural means by asking Esther to approach the king.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Noticing Haman's good cheer, Mordechai sensed an evil conspiracy.

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fasting, crying and wailing; sackcloth and ash were spread out for the masses.

4 Esther's maids and chamberlains came and told her about it and the queen was terrified. She sent garments with which to dress Mordechai so that he would remove his sackcloth from upon him, but he did not accept them.

5 Esther summoned **Hatach**, one of the king's chamberlains whom he had placed in her service, and she commanded him to go to Mordechai to find out the **meaning** of this and what it was about.

6 Hatach went out to Mordechai, to the city square that was in front of the king's gate.

7 And Mordechai told him about all that had happened to **him**, and about the sum of money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the right to destroy the Jews.

8 He also gave him a copy of the law that was proclaimed in Shushan calling for their annihilation, to show Esther and to tell her about it, and to instruct her to go to the king to beseech him and to plead with him on behalf of her nation.

9 Hatach went and relayed the words of Mordechai to Esther.

10 Esther told Hatach to relay to Mordechai:

11 "All the king's servants and the people of the king's provinces know that any man or woman who goes to the king and enters the inner courtyard without being summoned, his is but one verdict: execution; except for the person to whom the king extends his golden scepter—[only] he shall live. And I have not been summoned to come to the king for thirty days now."¹

12 They relayed Esther's words to Mordechai.

13 And Mordechai said to relay to Esther, "Do not think that you will escape [the fate of] all the Jews by being in the king's palace.

14 "For if you will remain silent at this time, **relief and salvation** will come to the Jews from another source, and **you** and the house of your father will be lost. And who knows if it is not for just such a time that you reached this royal position."

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Mordechai stopped three Jewish children coming out of school and asked them what they had learned that day.

The first child quoted the verse (Proverbs 3:25): "Do not fear sudden terror, nor the destruction of the wicked when it comes." The second quoted the verse (Isaiah 8:10): "Contrive a scheme but it will be foiled; conspire a plot but it will not materialize, for G-d is with us." And the third quoted the verse (ibid. 46:4): "To your old age I am with you; to your hoary years I will sustain you; I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and deliver you." Hearing the children's "prophecy," Mordechai rejoiced.

Mordechai gathered twenty-two thousand Jewish children, prayed with them and taught them Torah. He taught them how the Omer was offered in the Holy Temple. Suddenly, Haman arrived and threatened to harm the children. The children declared, "We shall stay with Mordechai, no matter what!"

(Midrash)

FOR IT IS IMPROPER TO ENTER THE KING'S GATE WEARING SACKCLOTH (4:2)

From here we learn that one should not enter the synagogue or study hall ("the King's gate") with a sad face ("wearing sackcloth"). Thus it is written (I Chronicles 16:27): "Strength and joy are in His presence".

(Eretz Hachaim)

ESTHER SUMMONED HATACH, ONE OF THE KING'S CHAMBERLAINS WHOM HE

HAD PLACED IN HER SERVICE (4:5)

Hatach is another name for the prophet Daniel. He was called Hatach (related to the Hebrew word for "cut") because he was "cut down," demoted from his position of greatness, which he held at the courts of the previous kings

(Talmud, Megillah 15a)

Daniel's greatness was his selfless commitment to his faith while serving in the courts of pagan kings. But when the entire Jewish nation demonstrated this same devotion for an entire year, by reconnecting to their faith instead of abandoning it to spare their lives, Daniel was "demoted from his greatness"—his extraordinary feat was revealed to be in the nature of every ordinary Jew.

(Meshech Chochmah)

THE MEANING OF THIS AND WHAT IT WAS ABOUT (4:5)

"The meaning of this"—what trouble had caused him to grieve; "and what it was about"—what sin had caused the trouble. .

(Alshich)

MORDECHAI TOLD HIM ABOUT ALL THAT HAD HAPPENED TO HIM (4:7)

His refusal to bow to Haman, which caused the decree.

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15 Esther said to relay to Mordechai:

16 "Go and gather all the Jews who are in Shushan and fast for my sake, do not eat and do not drink for three days, night and day. My maids and I shall also **fast** in the same way. Then I shall go to the king, though it is unlawful, and if I perish, I perish."

17 Mordechai then left and did all that Esther had instructed him.

CHAPTER V

1 On the third day, Esther donned [garments of] royalty and stood in the inner courtyard of the palace, facing the palace. The king was sitting on his royal throne in the palace facing the palace entrance.

2 When the king saw Queen Esther standing in the courtyard she found favor in his eyes. The king extended to Esther the golden scepter that was in his hand and Esther approached

and touched the tip of the scepter.

3 The king said to her, "What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? [Even if it be] half the kingdom, it will be granted you."

4 **Esther said**, "If it please the King, let the King and Haman come today to the feast that I have prepared for him."

5 The king said, "Tell Haman to hurry and fulfill Esther's bidding." And the king and Haman came to the feast that Esther had prepared.

6 At the wine feast, the king said to Esther, "What is your plea? It will be granted you; what is your request? [Even if it be] half the kingdom it shall be fulfilled."

7 So Esther replied and said, "My plea and my request:

8 "If I have found favor in the King's eyes, and if it please the King to grant my plea and fulfill my request, **let the King and Haman come today** to the feast that I shall prepare for them, and tomorrow I shall fulfill the King's bidding."

9 That day Haman left happy and content. But when Haman saw Mordechai at the king's gate and [Mordechai] neither rose nor trembled before him, Haman was filled with wrath against Mordechai.

COMMENTARY

(TARGUM)

RELIEF AND SALVATION WILL COME TO THE JEWS FROM ANOTHER SOURCE, AND YOU AND THE HOUSE OF YOUR FATHER WILL BE LOST (4:14)

Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch once told his father, Rabbi Shalom Dovber, that he had done someone a favor. "You are mistaken," said Rabbi Shalom DovBer, "you did *yourself* a favor, not your fellow. Your fellow was done a favor by the Almighty, Who made use of one of His many agents. Relief and salvation will come if not from you then from another source, but "you," which according to Kabbalah refers to the soul, and the house of your father, the source of the soul, will have lost out on the opportunity to be an agent of the Holy One."

MY MAIDS AND I SHALL ALSO FAST (4:16)

If approaching the king uninvited was a capital offence, it would seem that Esther's only hope was to charm the king into not killing her and to turn him against his favorite minister in favor of her people. The last thing for her to do under such circumstances would be to approach the king looking like a woman who hasn't eaten for three days!

But Esther understood that the salvation of Israel hinged upon restoring their special relationship with G-d. She knew that her pleading at the feet of a mortal king was merely a formality, a facade with which to disguise the Divine miracle. The true vehicle of the salvation would be repentance and prayer.

With her three-day fast, Esther rectified the error which had made the Jewish people vulnerable to Haman's decree in the first place. They had "enjoyed the feast of the wicked Achashverosh"—a joy which demonstrated that they regarded their political position as the source of their security, thereby forfeiting G-d's special providence over their fate. Esther took the very opposite approach, favoring the spiritual cause of the miracle over its material "garment", even to the "garment"'s detriment. Thus she negated the original cause of the decree, making herself and her people worthy of redemption.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

AND ESTHER SAID, "IF IT PLEASE THE KING, LET THE KING AND HAMAN COME TODAY TO THE FEAST THAT I HAVE PREPARED FOR HIM" (5:4)

Why did Esther invite Haman?

Rabbi Eliezer said: She set a trap for him, as it is written (Psalms 69:23): "May their table be a trap for them."

Rabbi Joshua said: She learned this from her father's house: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him bread" (Proverbs 25:21).

Rabbi Meir said: So that he shouldn't have an opportunity to get advice and overthrow the king.

Rabbi Judah said: So that they shouldn't realize that she is a Jew.

Rabbi Nechemia said: So that the Jewish people should not say, "we have a sister in the palace" and refrain from praying to G-d for mercy. (When the Jews would learn that Esther was befriending Haman, they

MEGILLAH WITH COMMENTARY

The Book of Esther

continued...

10 Haman restrained himself and went to his house and sent for his friends and his wife Zeresh.

11 Haman told them of his glorious wealth and his many sons, and all about how the king had promoted and raised him above all the king's ministers and servants.

12 Then Haman said: "In addition, along with the king, Queen Esther invited only me to the feast that she prepared. Tomorrow, too, I am invited to her [feast] along with the king.

13 "Yet all this is worthless to me whenever I see Mordechai the Jew sitting at the king's gate!"

14 Then his wife Zeresh and all his friends said to him, "Have gallows erected fifty cubits high, and tomorrow tell the king to have Mordechai hanged on it. Then you will be able to go in good spirits with the king to the feast." Haman was pleased with the idea and erected the gallows.

CHAPTER VI

1 That night, the king's **sleep** was disturbed. He ordered that the Book of Records, the Chronicles, be brought, and they were read before the king.

2 It was found written that Mordechai had informed on Bigtan and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains from the threshold guards, who had planned to assassinate King Achashverosh.

3 The king asked, "What splendor and honor has been accorded to Mordechai for this?" "Nothing was done for him," the king's attendants replied.

4 "Who is in the courtyard?" asked the king. And just then Haman had come to the outer courtyard of the king's chambers to tell the king to hang Mordechai on the gallows he had prepared for him.

5 "Haman is standing in the courtyard," the king's attendants answered him. "Let him come in," said the king.

6 Haman entered, and the king said to him, "What should be done for a man whom the king wishes to honor?" Now Haman said to himself, "Who would the king wish to honor more than me?"

COMMENTARY

would no longer rely on her to save them.)

Rabbi Yosi said: So that he should be available to her at all times (and she'd be able to utilize every opportunity that comes up to turn the king against him).

Rabbi Shimon ben Menasia said: To induce G-d to perform a miracle.

Rabbi Joshua ben Karchah said: She said to her self: I will act nicely toward him so that Achashverosh's jealousy would be aroused and he'll kill us both.

Rabbi Gamliel said: Achashverosh was a king who was constantly changing his mind (thus she needed that Haman should be there when she turned Achashverosh against him).

Rabbi Elazer Hamoda'i said: To make the king and the ministers jealous of him.

Raba said: "Pride comes before destruction" (Proverbs 16:18).

Abayei and Rava both said: "In their heat I shall make them drunk..." (Jeremiah 51:39, where the prophet describes how G-d destroys the wicked as they drink and feast).

Rabbah bar Avuha met Elijah the Prophet and asked: According to which of these sages was Esther's reasoning? Replied Elijah: According to them all.

(Talmud, Megillah 15b)

LET THE KING AND HAMAN COME TODAY (5:8)

Though G-d's name is not mentioned explicitly in the Megillah, it is alluded to in various ways. Thus, for example, the first letters of the above phrase (in Hebrew) make up the Name of G-d. This is the deeper meaning of the Mishnaic law: He who reads the Megillah backwards (out of sequence) does not fulfill his obligation; for the allusions to G-d's Name will not have been read in proper sequence.

(Sfat Emet)

THAT NIGHT, THE KING'S SLEEP WAS DISTURBED (6:1)

The sleep of the King of the universe was disturbed.

(Midrash)

Galut (the state of exile and spiritual displacement in which we find ourselves following the destruction of the Holy Temple) is referred to as "night", a time of spiritual darkness. It is also a time when the world is in a state of "asleep".

In sleep, there is a diminution and distortion of the bond between body and soul. The sleeper's higher faculties (such as his reason, sight, hearing and speech) are muted and garbled, while his lower faculties (e.g. the digestive system) are unaffected, and even function better during sleep. This, of course, is but a superficial description of the state of sleep: in truth, sleep actually rejuvenates and enhances the fusion of body and soul. But such is the direct experience of the sleeper and those in contact with him.

MEGILLAH WITH COMMENTARY

The Book of Esther

continued...

7 So Haman said to the king, "For a man whom the king wishes to honor,

8 "let them bring a royal garment that the king has worn, and a horse upon which the king has ridden, and upon whose head the royal crown has been placed.

9 "And let the garment and the horse be entrusted in the hands of one of the king's noble ministers, and they shall dress the man whom the king wishes to honor and lead him on the horse through the city square, proclaiming before him, 'So is done for the man whom the king wishes to honor!'"

10 The king said to Haman, "Hurry! Take the garment and the horse just as you have said, and do just so for Mordechai the Jew who sits at the king's gate. Do not leave out a thing from all that you suggested."

11 So Haman took the garment and dressed Mordechai, and he led him through the city square and proclaimed before him: "So is done for the man whom the King wishes to honor!"

12 Then Mordechai returned to the king's gate while Haman hurried to his house, miserable, his face covered.

13 Haman told his wife Zeresh and all his friends about all that had happened to him. And his wise men and his wife Zeresh told him, "If this Mordechai, before whom you have begun to fall, is of **Jewish** descent, you will not prevail over him, for you will certainly fall before him."

14 While they were still talking with him, the chamberlains of the king arrived, and they rushed to bring Haman to the feast that Esther had prepared.

CHAPTER VII

1 The king and Haman came to drink with Queen Esther.

2 And again on the second day the king said to Esther during **the wine feast**, "What is your plea, Queen Esther? It will be granted you. What is your request? [Even if it be] half the kingdom it will be fulfilled."

3 Queen Esther replied and said: "If I have found favor in your eyes, O King, and if it please the King, let my life be granted me by my plea, and the life of my people by my request."

COMMENTARY

(Rashi)

Thus, *galut* can be described as a time when G-d is "asleep." "As the soul fills the body," say our sages, "so G-d fills the world," and *galut* is a time when the flow of divine energy into our world seems diminished and distorted. G-d seems remote and disaffected; the righteous suffer while the wicked prosper. The deeper purpose of *galut* cannot be discerned through the veil of the divine slumber.

This is the state of affairs that prevails in the first five chapters of the Megillah. But on "that night" the sleep of the King of the universe was disturbed. The soul of the soul began to waken, and then G-d's providence over his nation began to manifest itself.

(The Chassidic Masters)

IF THIS MORDECHAI, BEFORE WHOM YOU HAVE BEGUN TO FALL, IS OF JEWISH DESCENT (6:13)

Zeresh said: "This nation is compared to the stars and the sand. When they fall, they fall all the way to the sand. And when they rise, they rise all the way to the sky and the stars."

(Rashi)

AND KING ACHASHVEROSH SPOKE AND SAID TO QUEEN ESTHER (7:5)

Until this point, the king spoke to Esther through an intermediary. Now that she revealed that she was a descendant of King Saul, he spoke to her directly.

THE FACE OF HAMAN WAS COVERED (7:8)

Covered in shame (Targum) or, the king's servants covered his face "for it was the custom in the Persian court to cover the face of one with whom the king was displeased." (Ibn Ezra)

THEN CHARVONAH, ONE OF THE CHAMBERLAINS THAT ATTENDED THE KING, SAID...(7:9)

Cursed be Haman who sought to destroy me; blessed be Mordechai the Jew. Cursed be Zeresh, wife to the terrible; blessed be Esther who interceded on my behalf. Cursed be all the wicked; blessed be all the righteous. And may Charvonah also be remembered favorably.

(Purim prayer)

THE KING'S SCRIBES WERE THEN SUMMONED... (8:9)

This verse describes the reversal of that which is described in 3:12, where the issuing of the edict to *kill* the Jews is described in almost identical language. This verse, however, contains 3 more words than its counterpart, alluding to the three days of fasting which countered the decree. Also, because of its significance, this verse is the longest verse in the Torah (43 words).

(Rokeach)

MEGILLAH WITH COMMENTARY

The Book of Esther

continued...

4 "For my people and I have been sold to be annihilated, killed and destroyed! Had we been sold as slaves and maidservants I would have kept silent. But indeed the persecutor is not bothered by the King's loss."

5 And King Achashverosh **spoke and said** to Queen Esther, "Who is this, and which one is he, that has the audacity to do such a thing?"

6 "A man who is a persecutor and an enemy: this evil Haman!" Esther replied. And Haman shuddered in the presence of the king and the queen.

7 The king arose in wrath and left the wine feast [and went] to the palace garden, while Haman stood up to beg Queen Esther for his life, for he realized that the king's hostility towards him was irrevocable.

8 And the king returned from the palace garden to the wine-feast chamber, and Haman had fallen upon the divan upon

which Esther was reclining. The king said, "Does he even intend to seduce the queen while I am in the palace!" As soon as these words left the king's mouth the face of Haman was **covered**.

9 Then **Charvonah**, one of the chamberlains that attended the king, said, "In addition, there is the gallows that Haman erected for Mordechai, who spoke for the King's good, standing at Haman's house, fifty cubits high!" "Hang him upon it!" said the king.

10 And they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordechai and the king's wrath abated.

CHAPTER VIII

1 On that day, King Achashverosh gave Queen Esther the estate of Haman, persecutor of the Jews. And Mordechai came before the king, for Esther had told [the king] how he was related to her.

2 And the king removed his signet ring which he had taken from Haman and gave it to Mordechai, and Esther put Mordechai in charge of Haman's estate.

3 Esther again spoke before the king and fell before his feet

COMMENTARY

FOR THE JEWS THERE WAS LIGHT AND HAPPINESS, JOY AND PRESTIGE (8:16).

"Light" refers to Torah, "happiness" to the festivals, "joy" to circumcision, and "prestige" to Tefillin (Haman had prohibited observing these four mitzvot, and now that he was gone the Jews were again able to perform them—Rashi)..

(Talmud, Megillah 16b)

FEAR OF THE JEWS HAD FALLEN UPON THEM (8:17)

Or, "that which the Jews feared fell upon them"—the awe of Heaven experienced by the Jews was of such intensity that it infused even their countrymen, inspiring them to convert..

(Rabbi Moshe Isserles)

A DAY OF FEASTING AND REJOICING (9:17)

Chanukah celebrates the triumph of the Jewish soul. The Greeks did not seek to kill the Jew; they sought to destroy him spiritually by indoctrinating him with Hellenism. Thus Chanukah is celebrated with the kindling of lights, a symbol of spirituality.

Purim celebrates the deliverance of the Jew's bodily existence from the plot of Haman who sought to destroy the Jews physically. Thus

Purim is celebrated with physical feasting.

(Levush Mordechai)

A DAY OF FEASTING AND REJOICING (9:17)

Rava said: A person is obligated to drink on Purim until he does not know the difference between "cursed be Haman" and "blessed be Mordechai".

(Talmud, Megillah 7b)

There are four levels of joy:

1) "Serve G-d with joy." This joy is secondary to the primary objective: serving G-d.

2) "Rejoice in your festivals." Here the joy itself is the *mitzvah*, but the joy is related to a specific cause, to the festival.

3) "When the month of Adar commences we increase in joy." The joy of Adar is not attributed to any *mitzvah*, rather it connotes a general joy that imbues even mundane activities.

4) "The joy of Purim." On Purim one is not only oblivious to the source of the joy, but even to the joy itself.

The joy of Purim is an expression of the deepest dimension of the soul that transcends awareness of self. It was this level that was revealed during the days of Mordechai and Esther and led to the salvation that likewise transcended the natural order.

MEGILLAH WITH COMMENTARY

The Book of Esther

continued...

and she cried and begged him to nullify the evil decree of Haman the Agagite and his plot that he had plotted against the Jews

4 The king extended the golden scepter to Esther and Esther rose and stood before the king.

5 She said, "If it please the King, and if I have found favor before him, and the idea is proper to the King, and I am pleasing in his eyes, let [an order] be issued ordering the withdrawal of the letters containing the plot of Haman, son of Hamdata, the Agagite, in which he ordered the destruction of the Jews throughout the King's provinces.

6 "For how can I behold the calamity that will befall my people? And how can I behold the destruction of my race?"

7 King Achashverosh said to Queen Esther and Mordechai the Jew, "See, I have given Haman's estate to Esther, and he himself was hanged on the gallows for raising his hand against the

Jews.

8 "Now you can issue decrees concerning the Jews as you please, in the King's name and sealed with the King's signet ring. For an edict written in the King's name and sealed with the King's signet ring cannot be withdrawn."

9 The king's scribes were then summoned, in the third month, which is the month of Sivan, on its twenty-third day, and an edict was written according to all that Mordechai instructed the Jews, the satraps, the governors, and the nobles of the provinces from Hodu to Cush, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces to each province according to its script and to each nation according to its language, and to the Jews according to their **script and language**.

10 He wrote it in King Achashverosh's name and sealed it with the king's signet ring. He sent the letters by couriers on horseback, riding mules bred of mares from the king's stables:

11 That the king had allowed the Jews of every city to gather and stand up for their lives; to annihilate, kill and destroy every army of any nation or province that might attack them, [including their] children and women, and to plunder their possessions,

12 on one day in all the provinces of King Achashveirosh, on

COMMENTARY

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

(Maharal)

GIFTS TO THE POOR (9:22)

Not charity, but gifts. Charity implies money given to the poor out of pity. Gifts, in contrast, are exchanged between equals as an expression of gratitude or friendship.

By using the word "gifts," the Megillah reveals to us that charity is not one-way. Indeed the giver receives more than the taker.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

THE JEWS ESTABLISHED AND ACCEPTED (9:27)

Before giving the Jews the Torah, G-d held the mountain over them like a vat and said to them, "If you accept the Torah, fine; if not, your burial place will be there."

But they accepted it again [voluntarily] in the days of Achashverosh, as it says, "The Jews established and accepted"—they established in the days of Achashverosh what they had already accepted at Sinai.

(Talmud, Shabbat 88a)

The miraculous events of Sinai consumed the Jew with fire and love. Thus any "acceptance" during that intense condition could not be regarded as freely chosen. In the days of Purim, however, the Jew remained committed to Torah despite the G-dless environment of the

time.

AND THESE DAYS ARE REMEMBERED AND OBSERVED (9:28)

Literally, "remembered and made"—when a festival is "commemorated" properly, when it is truly relived, one can access the spiritual influences that were manifest on the original holiday, "making" and actualizing them every year anew..

(Rabbi Isaac Luria)

AND THESE DAYS ARE REMEMBERED AND OBSERVED IN EVERY GENERATION (9:28)

One of the laws governing the reading of the Megillah is that, "One who reads the Megillah backwards has not fulfilled his obligation" (Talmud, Megillah 17a). The simple meaning of this law is that the Book of Esther must be read in order, not, say, beginning with chapter 10 and ending with chapter 1.

Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov explained the deeper significance of this law: One who reads the Book of Esther "backwards"—as the account of an event that happened thousands of years ago—has missed the entire point of the Mitzvah of reading the Megillah. The story told by the Megillah—of the hand of G-d concealed within the most "circumstantial" occurrences, of a people awakening their intrinsic commitment to G-d and deriving from that the strength to persevere against all odds—is the story of our everyday lives, in all times and under all circumstances.

MEGILLAH WITH COMMENTARY

The Book of Esther

continued...

the thirteenth of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar.

13 Copies of this edict [were sent] to be proclaimed as law in every province, clearly to all the nations, so that the Jews would be ready for that day to take revenge upon their enemies.

14 The couriers, riding mules from the king's stables, left urgently and hurriedly with the king's edict, and the law was proclaimed in Shushan the capital.

15 And Mordechai left the king's presence wearing a royal garment of blue and white, a large golden crown, and a shawl of fine linen and purple wool. And the city of Shushan celebrated and rejoiced.

16 For **the Jews** there was light and happiness, **joy** and prestige.

17 And in every province and city to which the king's edict and law reached, there was happiness and joy for the Jews, a celebration and a holiday. Many of the gentiles converted to Judaism, for **fear of the Jews** had fallen upon them.

CHAPTER IX

1 On the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, when the time for the carrying out of the king's edict and law had arrived, on the day the enemies of the Jews had thought they would dominate them, everything was **overturned**: the Jews

dominated their enemies.

2 The Jews gathered in their cities throughout the provinces of King Achashveirosh to attack those who sought to harm them. No man stood in their way, for fear of them had fallen upon all the nations.

3 And all the ministers of the provinces, the satraps, the governors and the king's functionaries honored the Jews, for fear of Mordechai had fallen upon them.

4 For Mordechai was prominent in the king's palace and his fame was spreading throughout all the provinces, for Mordechai was growing in power.

5 And the Jews struck at all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying, and they did with their enemies as they pleased.

6 In Shushan the capital the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men.

7 And Parshandata, and Dalfon, and Aspata;

8 and Porata and Adalya and Aridata;

9 and Parmashta and Arisai and Aridai and Vaizata,

10—the ten sons of Haman, son of Hamdata, persecutor of the Jews, they killed; but they took none of the spoils.

COMMENTARY

THESE DAYS OF PURIM (9:28)

Yom Kippurim (Yom Kippur) can be translated as "a day like Purim". This implies that the loftiness of Purim transcends even that of Yom Kippur.

(Zohar)

It would seem that one could hardly find two more dissimilar days in the Jewish calendar. On Yom Kippur we dress in angelic white, disavow food and drink and a host of other physical pleasures, and devote ourselves to prayer and repentance. In contrast, Purim is celebrated in a very physical manner—giving money to the poor, sending gift of food to friend, feasting and drinking—in celebration of a miracle that demonstrated G-d's involvement in the world *within* the context of nature, and manifested the intrinsic oneness of the universe that is rooted in the Oneness of its Creator.

But, in truth, Yom Kippur *is* "a day like Purim"—both are points in physical time that transcend the very laws of physical existence. Yom Kippur achieves this by rising above the physical; Purim is the day that the physical itself is shown to be miraculous. Thus Yom Kippur is only

"a day *like* Purim", for Purim achieves the greater feat of empowering us to live a physical life that is the vehicle for a supra-physical, supra-rational commitment to G-d.

(The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

AND THESE DAYS OF PURIM WILL NEVER PASS FROM AMONG THE JEWS, NOR SHALL THEIR MEMORY DEPART FROM THEIR DESCENDANTS (9:28)

Thus our Sages have stated: Even if all the festivals become obsolete, Purim will remain. In the Messianic Era, the joy and tranquility of the festivals will be a daily experience. Their light will be like that of a candle in the light of day. Yet even in that spiritually advanced climate, the loftiness of Purim will still be something to celebrate.

(Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi)

MEGILLAH WITH COMMENTARY

The Book of Esther

continued...

11 That day, the number of the slain in Shushan the capital was relayed to the king.

12 The king said to Queen Esther, "In Shushan the capital, the Jews killed and destroyed five hundred men and the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the other provinces of the King? What is your plea? It will be granted you. What is your additional request? It will be fulfilled."

13 Esther replied, "If it please the King, let the Jews of Shushan be allowed to do tomorrow what was lawful today, and let the ten sons of Haman be hanged on the gallows."

14 The king ordered this done, and the law was proclaimed in Shushan, and the ten sons of Haman were hanged.

15 So the Jews of Shushan gathered again on the fourteenth day of the month of Adar and killed three hundred men in Shushan, but took none of the spoils.

16 And the rest of the Jews of the king's provinces gathered and stood up for their lives to relieve themselves of their enemies and killed seventy-five thousand of their foes, but took none of the spoils.

17 On the thirteenth day of the month of Adar, and they rested on the fourteenth day and made it a day of **feasting and rejoicing**.

18 And the Jews of Shushan gathered on the thirteenth and fourteenth [of Adar], and rested on the fifteenth and made it a day of feasting and rejoicing.

19 Thus the *prazi* Jews, those who live in unwallled cities, make the fourteenth day of the month of Adar a holiday, a day of feasting, rejoicing and sending portions of food one to another.

20 Now Mordechai recorded these events and sent letters to all the Jews living throughout the provinces of King Achashveirosh, near and far

21 [instructing them] to obligate themselves to celebrate annually the fourteenth and fifteenth days of the month of Adar,

22 like the days upon which the Jews were relieved of their enemies, and the month which had been transformed for them from one of sorrow to joy, from mourning to festivity—to make them days of feasting, rejoicing, sending **food** portions one to another and giving **gifts** to **the poor**.

23 And the Jews accepted [as an obligation] that which they had begun to observe, and that which Mordechai had written to them.

24 For Haman, son of Hamdata, the Agagite, persecutor of all the Jews, plotted against the Jews to destroy them, and he

cast a *pur*, which is a lot, to shatter them and destroy them.

25 But when she came before the king, [the king] said—and ordered letters to be written to the effect—that [Haman's] evil plot against the Jews be returned upon his own head, and he and his sons were hanged upon the gallows.s.

26 For this did they call these days "Purim," **after the *pur***, because of all of the events of this epistle, [which explains] what happened to them and why they saw fit to [establish the holiday].

27 The Jews **established and accepted** upon themselves, and upon their descendants, and upon all who might convert to their faith, to annually celebrate these two days in the manner described [here], on their proper dates never to be abolished.

28 And these days are **remembered and observed in every generation**, by every family, in every province and every city. And these days of Purim will **never pass** from among the Jews, nor shall their memory depart from their descendants.

29 Queen Esther, daughter of Avichayil, and Mordechai the Jew, wrote about the enormity of all [the miracles], to establish [the holiday] with this second Purim epistle.

30 And he sent letters to all the Jews, to the one hundred and twenty-seven provinces of Achashveirosh's kingdom, words of peace and truth,

31 [instructing them] to observe these days of Purim on their proper dates, in the manner established for them by Mordechai the Jew and Queen Esther, just as they had accepted upon themselves and upon their descendants the observance of the fasts and their lamentations.

32 And the word of **Esther** confirmed the observances of these Purim days, and [the story] was included in Scripture.

CHAPTER X

1 King Achashverosh levied a tax upon the mainland and the islands of the sea.

2 And the entire history of his power and strength, and the account of Mordechai's greatness, whom the king had promoted, are recorded in the Book of Chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia.

3 For Mordechai the Jew was second to King Achashverosh, a leader to the Jews, and loved by his many brethren. He sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace for all their descendants.