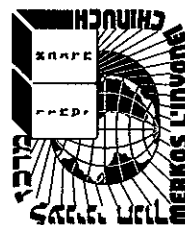


מגילת אסתר

MEGILLAT ESTHER

with a New Translation
and Selected Insights



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PREFACE

Traditionally read aloud in the synagogue on the Purim festival, the Book of Esther is rich with many layers of commentary. These deserve to be studied in the same manner as all Scriptures, where each word and vowel can be turned upon itself over and again to uncover yet new levels of meaning both to the literal text, and to the message of the narrative.

This edition of Megillat Esther offers a new translation with selected commentary culled primarily from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory. These are included here to give the reader a general familiarity with the various interpretations offered by Midrash, Talmud, Kabbalah, Chassidism and other Rabbinic writings on the Megillah. In particular, this volume hopes to clarify obscure phrases and passages and provide the reader with an appreciation of the timeless relevance of the Megillah.

The Megillah was translated by Rabbi Yosef Marcus. The commentary is the work of Rabbi Yosef Marcus and Rabbi Shmuel Marcus. Special thanks to Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman for his editorial guidance. Thanks to Rabbis Zalman Lent, Yaakov Tauber, Eliyahu Friedman.

Merkos L'Inyonei Chinuch

25 Adar I, 5760
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The Miracle of Purim

Another enigma: The other festivals commemorating miracles of deliverance recall the fact by their names. Purim, instead of being named after the deliverance from Haman's decree, is named after the danger itself: The lottery which Haman cast to fix the day when he intended to destroy the Jews, God forbid.

THE NAME OF GOD

Another feature peculiar to the Megillah: The Name of God is not mentioned once. All other books of the Torah contain God's Name many times. This remarkable omission is suggestive of an extreme concealment. Every Jew, even when speaking about secular concerns, has the Name of God familiar on his lips" (*Rashi, Bereishit 27:21*). Indeed, it is a universal Jewish custom to preface a letter with the words "With God's blessing," "With the help of Heaven," or the like. It is striking, then, that one of the books of the Torah should be entirely devoid of God's Name!

CONCEALMENT AND REVELATION

The name of a thing conveys its essence. Thus the name Esther suggests the concealment that we find in the Megillah. "Esther" comes from the same root as "hester," or hiding. Indeed it alludes to a double hiding, as we find in the Talmud (*Chulin 139b*): "Where is the name Esther indicated in the Torah? (In the verse) 'I will hide, yes hide My face'" (*Devarim 31:18*). But revelation is also implicit in the name "Megillat Esther," for Megillah means "revelation" (*Pri Etz Chayim*).

Just as the title of the book conveys two opposites, concealment (Esther) and revelation (Megillah), so does the festival itself. On the one hand, the idea of concealment lies behind the name of Purim, a Persian word, and one connected with the decree against the Jews. On the other hand, it is a festival which in its celebration and rejoicing surpasses all others, going so far as to enjoin drinking "until one does not know the difference between 'Blessed be Mordechai' and 'Cursed be Haman'" (*Megillah 7b*)—a celebration without limit.

THE ACTIONS OF ESTHER AND MORDECHAI

To understand these apparent contradictions, we must first consider one feature of the story of Esther.

At the time of Haman's decree, the Jewish people had highly hon-

THE MIRACLE OF PURIM

There is something strange about the name of Purim. Firstly, it is a Persian word (meaning "lots"—the lots that Haman cast in deciding when to issue his decree against the Jews). And secondly, its reference is to the danger with which the Jews were confronted, rather than to their ultimate deliverance. Added to this, the Megillah, the Book of Esther, is unique amongst the books of the Torah in not containing a single mention of the Name of God. All this suggests that Purim is a symbol of concealment, of the "hiding" of the face of God. And yet Purim celebrates a miracle, a revelation of Divine providence. In resolving this apparent contradiction we need to explore the idea of a miracle, and whether it is a natural or a supernatural event. The underlying question is one which the modern mind finds particularly urgent: Does the disappearance of supernatural revelations mean that the age of miracles is past?

PURIM AND THE PRESENT

"If one reads the Megillah out of sequence (literally, 'backwards'), he has not fulfilled his obligation" (*Megillah 17a*).

The Baal Shem Tov explained that this refers to a person who reads the Megillah believing that the story it tells occurred only in the past (that is, he reads it "backwards," as a retrospective account) and that the miracle of Purim does not endure into the present. Such a man has not fulfilled his obligation, for the purpose of the reading of the Megillah is to learn how a Jew should behave in the present.

If this applies to every verse of the Megillah, and more so to the Megillah as a whole, it applies still more to the verse which explains how the festival of Purim acquired its name.

THE NAME OF PURIM

The verse (*Esther 9:26*) says: "Therefore they called the days Purim ('lots') because of the lot" which Haman had cast to determine when the Jews should be destroyed.

The word "pur" is not Hebrew but Persian (*Ibn Ezra, Esther 3:7*). Thus the Megillah (*Esther 9:24*), when mentioning it, translates into Hebrew: "Pur: That is, the goral (lot)." Why is the festival called by a Persian name, Purim, instead of the Hebrew equivalent, *goralot*? All other festivals, including Chanukah (the other festival to be instituted in Rabbinic times) have Hebrew names.

through natural channels. The real cause of the deliverance lay not in the King's decision, but in the fasting and repentance of the Jews. And so, although Mordechai and Esther used natural means, the emphasis of their concern lay in the underlying spiritual causes.

NATURAL AND SUPERNATURAL BLESSINGS

The moral is plain. In a time of adversity there are those who believe that the first and crucial step must be to try by all natural means to combat it. The Megillah teaches otherwise: The initial act must be to strengthen one's bond with God, through learning Torah and keeping the commandments. Only then must one seek some physical channel through which the deliverance may flow. Such behavior elicits supernatural deliverance—in whatever natural guise it is revealed.

The effort by natural means is analogous to writing a check, which is of no use if the check is not covered by funds in the bank. The "funds" are the spiritual acts.

The Jew is committed to the knowledge that he is linked to God, and that God is not bound by the laws of nature, even though He sends His blessings in the form of natural events. Man must prepare this channel, "through all that you do." But since this is no more than a channel, its main aim must be to prepare to receive the Divine blessing through studying and fulfilling the Torah.

ABOVE, YET WITHIN

One might think that this applies only to an age when God's presence was manifest; that now, in exile, when instead of revelation there is "doubled and redoubled darkness," God has entrusted His Providence to the domain of natural law.

Purim comes as the refutation of this doubt. For the miracle of Purim occurred when the Jews were in exile, "scattered and dispersed amongst the peoples" (*Esther* 3:8). Nor did exile cease afterwards. But the deliverance came—not through natural causes, but because of the three-day fast of the Jews.

This explains why Purim suggests concealment—in its Persian name, in its being called after the decree of Haman, and in the Megillah being devoid of the name of God. It is to bring home the truth that the Jew is not bound by natural law, not only in his spiritual life, not only in his dealings with fellow Jews, but even in his relation to the secular

The Miracle of Purim

ored representatives in the royal court. Mordechai used to sit at the gate of the King, and, our Sages tell us (*Megillah* 13a), was consulted by Achashveirosh for advice. Besides, he had saved the King's life. Esther was queen and had found the grace and favor of King Achashveirosh. On the face of it, when the Jews heard of the decree, they should have immediately used these representatives to try and sway Achashveirosh to abrogate it.

Yet Mordechai's first action was to clothe himself in sackcloth and ashes. He turned to repentance, and urged the rest of the Jews to do likewise. Only then did he send Esther to go and plead with the King for her people.

Esther herself behaved in the same way. When it became necessary for her to go to the King, the first thing she did was to charge Mordechai to gather all the Jews and have them fast. In addition, Esther said that she herself would fast likewise.

At first glance it would seem essential for her to have found favor in Achashveirosh's eyes. Her entry into the King's inner court was against the law. It involved the risk of death: "Whoever . . . shall come to the King into the inner court, who is not called, his is but one verdict: execution" (*Esther* 4:11). Esther could not be sure of royal favor. Indeed she had not been summoned for thirty days. If so, how could she contemplate fasting for three successive days, an act which in the normal course of events would have detracted from her beauty?

CAUSE AND CURE

Mordechai and Esther knew that Haman's decree was not an accident of history, but a consequence of failings within the Jewish people. Since one cannot completely remove an effect (the decree) without destroying the cause, their first action was to call the Jewish people to repentance and fasting. It was not an undefined call; it articulated the specific sin which had to be rectified. The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni, Esther*) commenting on Esther's words, "and they shall fast for me and neither eat nor drink," explains them thus: "You are fasting because you have eaten and drunk at Achashveirosh's feast."

Only then did they go to Achashveirosh to seek his annulment of the decree, because God desires to bless man "through all that you do" (*Devarim* 15:18)—through natural means. Going to Achashveirosh was no more than a way of allowing Divine deliverance to be achieved

THE READING OF THE MEGILLAH

during the Evening Prayer—After the Amidah, Complete Kaddish is recited, followed by the reading of the Megillah.

during the Morning Prayer—After the Amidah, Half Kaddish is recited. The citation "And Amalek came . . ." (Exodus 17:8-16) is read from the Torah scroll followed by the reading of the Megillah. It is Chabad custom to return the Torah scroll to the Ark after the reading of the Megillah and the saying of *Ashrei* (Happy. . .), *U'vo tzion* (And a redeemer. . .), and Complete Kaddish.

Blessings For The Reading Of The Megillah

Before reading the Megillah, the reader recites the following three blessings:

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשֵׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוֵּנוּ
עַל מִקְרָא מְגִלָּה.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us concerning the reading of the Megillah. (Cong.—Amen.)

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ, בְּיָמֵינוּ
הֵימָּה בְּיָמֵינוּ הַזֵּה.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who performed miracles for our forefathers in those days, at this time. (Cong.—Amen.)

during the morning reading of the Megillah, remember that the following blessing pertains to the other Purim mitzvot as well: the sending of food portions, gifts to the poor and the Purim feast.)

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהֶחֱזַקנוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגַּעְנוּ לְיוֹם הַזֶּה.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has granted us strength, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion. (Cong.—Amen.)

The Miracle of Purim

world—even when he is forced to speak another language, when decrees are issued against him, when he is afraid to write God's Name lest it be defiled.

THE TRUE "I"

It is in the deepest concealment that revelation is found. In the name Megillat Esther, alongside the Esther (concealment) is Megillah (revelation). In the lottery (Purim) is found a symbol for the unpredictable, the supernatural. When God says, "I will hide, yes hide My face," He is saying: "Even when My face is hidden, you can still reach the 'I'—I, as I am beyond all names." And as past redemption gives strength for future redemption, from Purim the Messianic Age will flow, when concealment will be turned into revelation, and "night will shine like day" (*Psalms* 139:12).

Torah Studies, adapted from Likkutei Sichot,
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II. **A**nd it came to pass in the days of Achashveirosh—the same Achashveirosh who ruled from *Hodu* to *Cush*, one hundred and twenty-seven provinces.² In those days, when King Achashveirosh 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.

THE ROYAL
FEASTS

⁴ For many days, one hundred and eighty days, he displayed the glorious wealth of his kingdom and the splendorous 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 cords 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 each man's wish.

1 Achashveirosh. Achashveirosh succeeded Darius as ruler of the Persian Empire, toward the end of the Jews' seventy-year exile in Babylon (*Rashi*). On the mystical level King Achashveirosh alludes to God, the King of the world. The Midrash reads the name Achashveirosh as an acronym for *acharit veraitshit* (1:8). The problem was that they enjoyed the feast. With the royal kosher menu in hand, the exiled Jew felt he no longer needed God for his survival.

Hodu to *Cush*. Usually translated as India and 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 Achashveirosh ruled the entire world. Shmuel says they were adjacent to one another and the verse teaches that he ruled the entire world as fully as he ruled these two countries.

—Megillah 11a

1:5 A feast for all. "Why was annihilation decreed upon the Jews of that generation? Because they enjoyed the feast of the wicked [King Achashveirosh]" (*Megillah* 12a).

The problem was not their participation in the feast; indeed Achashveirosh had supplied kosher food for his Jewish subjects (*Targum*, 1:8). The problem was that they enjoyed the feast. With the royal kosher menu in hand, the exiled Jew felt he no longer needed God 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 Achashveirosh.

—*Likkutei Sichot*, vol. 31

א ויהי בימי אחשורוש הוא אחשורוש המלך מדהו ועד כוש שבע ועשרים ומאה מדינה: ב בימים ההם בשבת המלך אחשורוש על פסא מלכותו אשר בשושן הבירה: ג בשנת שלוש למלכו עשה משתה לכל־שריו ועבדיו חיל פרס ומדי הפרתמים ושרי המדינות לפניו: ד בהראתו את־עשר כבוד מלכותו ואת־זקן תפארת ודולתו ימים רבים שמונים ומאת יום: ה ובמלאות [ובמלאות כ] הימים האלה עשה המלך לכל־העם הנמצאים בשושן הבירה למגדול ועד־קטן משתה שבעת ימים בחצר גית ביתו המלך: ו חזר פרס ותבלת אחוז בחבלי־כוז וארגמן על־גלילי כסף ועמודי שש משות זקב וכסף על רצפת בהט־נש ור וסחרת: ז והשקות בכלי זקב וכלים מפלים שונים ויין מלכות רב פיד המלך: ח והשתתה בדת אין אנס פירכן יסר המלך על כל־רב ביתו לעשות כרצון איש ואיש: ט גם ושותי המלכה עשתה משתה

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.

—*Akeidat Yitzchak*

1:8 By the law. By the law of Torah, which requires eating to exceed drinking (*Megillah* 12a). The amount of food "consumed" by the altar (the animal sacrifice and flour offering) exceeded the amount of liquid it "drank" (the wine libation) (*Rashi ibid.*).

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.

—*Maamaréi Admur Hazaken* 5566

To comply with each man's wish. Literally "with the wish of each man and man"—the wishes of Mordechai and Haman who are both called "man" (2:5; 7:6) (*Megillah* 12a).

To comply with their wishes, Achashveirosh instructed that both kosher and non-kosher foods be provided (*Maharsha*). *Midbar Kodesh* (see also *M'chir Yayin*) interprets 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.

1:1-8 By elaborating upon the vast power and riches of Achashveirosh, the Megillah emphasizes the magnitude of any decree issued by him, and consequently, the magnitude of the miracle.

—*Akeidat Yitzchak*

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 Achashveirosh, 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 sages, those knowledgeable 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 Achashveirosh, 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 Achashveirosh. 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 Achashveirosh 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

¹³ Knowledgeable of the times. These were either astrologers, or those familiar with past court protocol.
—*In Ezra*
¹¹⁻²² Vashti's offense and the king's response. 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

נשים בית המלכות אשר למלך אחשורוש: ביום השביעי כטוב לבידמלך בין אמר למחזמן בותא חרבונא בותא ואבנתא ותר וכרפס שבעת הסריסים המשרתים אתפני המלך אחשורוש: י להביא אתינשתי המלכה לפני המלך בכתר מלכות להראות העמים והשרים אתינפיה פריטובת מראה היא: י ותמאן המלכה ושתי לבוא בדבר המלך אשר בגד הסריסים ויקצף המלך מאד וחרטו בערה בו: י ויאמר המלך לחכמים ידעי העתים פירכן דבר המלך לפני כל ידעי דת ודיו: י והקרב אליו פרשנא שתר אדמתא תרשיש מרס מרסנא ממוכן שבעת שרי פרס ומדי ראי פני המלך הישבים ראשנה במלכות: י כדת מדהלעשות במלכה ושתי על אשר לאעשתה אתמאמר המלך אחשורוש ביד הסריסים: י ויאמר ממוכן וממכן לפני המלך והשרים לא עלהמלך לבדו עותה ושתי המלכה כי עלכלהשרים ועלכלהעמים אשר בכל מדינות המלך אחשורוש: י פריצא דבר המלכה עלכלהנשים להבנות בעליהן בעיניהן באמנם המלך אחשורוש אמר להביא אתינשתי המלכה לפני ולא באה: י והיום הזה תאמנה שרות פרסיומדי אשר שמעו אתידבר המלכה לכל שרי המלך וכדי ביזין וקצף:

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 (*Rashti*) were to "comply with each man's wish."
Thus Vashti's refusal to appear against her will is less sinful when viewed in the context of that particular feast.
—*Likkutei Sichot*, vol. 36

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 Achashveirosh, 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 significant, 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.

II.

¹ After these events, when King Achashveirosh's wrath had 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 Then 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'i, son of Kish, a Benjaminite, ⁶ who had been exiled from Jerusalem with the exiles that had been exiled

1:1-20 Significant (*Targum*). Or, "though [the kingdom] is vast" (*Ibn Ezra*).

1:22 To speak the language of his nation. If this wife spoke another language, he was entitled to force her to learn his own. —Rashi

2:5 A Jewish man. While in exile the Jewish conscience lies dormant, the soul unable to

יִסְרְעֵל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יָצָא דְבַר-מַלְכוּת מִלְּפָנָיו וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּרִיתִי פְרַסְיוֹמִי וְלֹא יַעֲבֹר אֲשֶׁר לֹא-תִבָּא וְשִׁתִּי לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ וּמַלְכוּתָהּ יִהְיֶה הַמֶּלֶךְ לְרֵעוּתָהּ הַטּוֹבָה מִמֶּנָּה: כ וְנִשְׁמַע פִּתְגָם הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר-יַעֲשֶׂה בְּכָל-מַלְכוּתוֹ כִּי רָבָה הִיא וְכָל-הַנָּשִׁים יִהְיוּ יָקָר לְבַעֲלֵיהֶן לְמַגִּדוֹל וְעַד-קֶטָן: כא וַיִּטֵּב הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַשָּׂרִים וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ כְּדִבְרֵי מַמְּכָן: כב וַיִּשְׁלַח סָפְרִים אֶל-כָּל-מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה בְּכַתְּבָהּ וְאֶל-עַם וְעַם כָּל-שׁוֹנוֹ לֵדְוֹת כָּל-אִישׁ שָׂרָר בְּבֵיתוֹ וּמַדְבֵּר כָּל-שׁוֹן עַמּוֹ:

פֶּרֶק ב אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה כִּשְׁנֵי חֲמֵת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ זָכַר

אֶת-וְשִׁתִּי וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂתָה וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-יָגֹר עָלֶיהָ: ב וַיֹּאמְרוּ נַעֲרֵי-הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁרָתָיו יִבְקְשׁוּ לַמֶּלֶךְ נַעֲרוֹת בְּתוּלוֹת טוֹבוֹת מְרָאָה: ג וַיִּפְקֹד הַמֶּלֶךְ פְּקִידִים בְּכָל-מְדִינוֹת מַלְכוּתוֹ וַיִּקְבְּצוּ אֶת-כָּל-נַעֲרֵי-הַבְּתוּלָה טוֹבַת מְרָאָה אֶל-שׁוֹשַׁן הַבֵּית אֶל-בֵּית הַנָּשִׁים אֶל-יַד הַגָּאָרִים הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁמֹר הַנָּשִׁים וְנָתַן תַּמְדִּיקָתָן: ד וְהַנַּעֲרָה אֲשֶׁר הִיטֵב בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ תַּחַת וְשִׁתִּי וַיִּטֵּב הַדָּבָר בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיַּעַשׂ כֵּן: ה אִישׁ וְהוּדִי הָיָה בְּשׁוֹשַׁן הַבֵּית וּשְׁמוֹ מֹרְדֵּכַי בֶּן יָאִיר בֶּן-שִׁמְעִי בֶן-קִישׁ אִישׁ יִמִּינִי: ו אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָה מִירוּשָׁלַיִם עִסְיָה גִלְגָּה אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָתָהּ עִם יִכְנִיָּה מֶלֶךְ-יְהוּדָה אֲשֶׁר הִגְלָה נְבוּכַדְרֶצַּר

Verses 5 is read aloud by the congregation followed by the reader.

2:6 Who had been exiled. "It is better that I go to the Diaspora to raise Esther than remain in the Land of Israel" (*Targum Sheni*). Mordechai had been engaged in the restoration of the Temple and the Holy Land, but he considered the education of an orphan girl in the Diaspora to be more important than even these lofty endeavors.

—Likkutei Sichot, III

Verses 5 is read aloud by the congregation followed by the reader.

along with Jechoniah, King of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, had sent into exile.⁷ He had raised his cousin Hadassah, also called Esther, for she had neither father nor mother. The girl was shapely and beautiful, 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 also 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 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 Achashveirosh, after undergoing the prescribed twelve-month 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 which 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

ESTHER IS
BROUGHT
TO THE
PALACE

7:7 Esther. Esther's name, from the Hebrew word "concealment," (*Chulin* 139b) conveys the essence of the Purim story. On Chanukah, God defied the laws of nature to save us, while in 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," disguised in ordinary events. Chanukah celebrates the fact that our commitment to God, 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

Esther. To allow for freedom of choice, God 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

מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל; וְנִהְיָ אִמֵּן אֶתְהַדְסָה הִיא אֶסְתֵּר בְּחִידָהּ כִּי אֵין לָהּ אָב וְאִם וְהַנֶּעֱרָה יִפְתִּיהָ תֹאֵר וְטוֹבוֹת מְרָאָה וּבְמֹת אֲבִיהָ וְאִמָּהּ לְקוּחָהּ מְרֻדָּכִי לֹא לָבַת: ח וְנִהְיָ בִּהְשָׁמַע דְּבִרְהִמְלֶךְ וְנָדְתוּ וּבִהְקָבֵץ נִעְרוֹת רַבּוֹת אֶל־שׁוֹשֵׁן הַבִּינָה אֶל־יָד הָגִי וְתִלְקֹחַ אֶסְתֵּר אֶל־בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־יָד הָגִי שִׁמְר הַנָּשִׁים: ט וְתִיטֵב הַנֶּעֱרָה בְּעֵינָיו וְתִשָּׂא חֶסֶד לִפְנֵי וְיִבְהֵל אֶתְהַמְרוּקֶיהָ וְאֶתְמַנּוּתָהּ לָתֵת לָהּ וְאֵת שִׁבְעַ הַנְּעָרוֹת הָרִאשׁוֹת לְתַת־לָהּ מִבֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ וְיִשְׁמְרָהּ וְאֶת־נַעֲרוֹתֶיהָ לְטוֹב בֵּית הַנָּשִׁים: י לֹא־הִגִּידָהּ אֶסְתֵּר אֶתְעַמָּה וְאֶתְמַזְלָתָהּ כִּי מְרֻדָּכִי צִוָּה עָלֶיהָ אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִגִּיד: יא וּבְכָל־יוֹם וַיּוֹם מְרֻדָּכִי מִתְהַלֵּךְ לִפְנֵי חֹצֵר בֵּית־הַנָּשִׁים לְדַעַת אֶתְשִׁלּוֹם אֶסְתֵּר וּמִמָּה־יַעֲשֶׂה בָּהּ: יב וּבִהְגִּיעַ הַרְ נִעְרָה וְנִעְרָה לְבוֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ מִקֵּץ הַיּוֹם לָהּ כְּדַת הַנָּשִׁים שְ�נַיִם עָשָׂר חֹדֶשׁ כִּי כֵן יִמְלֹאוּ יְמֵי מְרוּקֶיהָ שְׁשָׁה חֳדָשִׁים בְּשִׁמּוֹן הַמֶּר וְשִׁשָּׁה חֳדָשִׁים בְּבִשְׁמִיִם וּבְתַמְרוּקֶיהָ הַנָּשִׁים: יג וּבָזָה הַנֶּעֱרָה בָּאָה אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר יִנָּחֵן לָהּ לְבוֹא עִמָּה מִבֵּית הַנָּשִׁים עַד־בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ: יד בְּעֶרְבׇּ הָיָא בָּאָה וּבִבְקָרָהּ הִיא שָׁבָה אֶל־בֵּית הַנָּשִׁים שְׁנֵי אֶל־יָד שְׁעִשְׁגוּ סְרִיס הַמֶּלֶךְ שִׁמְר

2:8 Taken—against her will, (*Targum*) and despite her attempts to hide (*Targum Sheini*).

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*).

2:12 Six months. Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi interprets this verse as a metaphor for the preparation necessary for *yechidut* (a pri-

vate 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 *merit* (sincere contrition); "and six months with perfumes" refers to six months of immersing the mind in contemplation of Godliness."

—*Sefer Hasichot* 5700

2:13 To accompany her. Every soul that seeks to go to the King—to come close to God—is provided with its particular *mitzvah* through which it can cleave to its Source.

—*Maamarei Admur Hazaken, Ketuvim*

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 Achashveirosh, 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 Achashveirosh. 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 gal-

^{15:15} She did not ask for a thing. 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 (B.M. 85b) says of Rabbi Chiyah's throne, [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,

"needed nothing" to accompany her to the King. —*Maamarei Admur Hazaken, Ketuvim*

^{2:17} Why did Esther merit to rule over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces? For the Almighty said: In the merit of Sarah who lived one hundred and twenty-seven years, her descendant Esther will rule over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces (*Midrash*).

Such is the power of the Jewish woman.

הפילגשים לאתבוא עוד אל־המֶלֶךְ כִּי אִסְחָפָן בָּהּ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְנִקְרָאָה בָשֵׁם: טו וּבְהַגִּיעַ תִּרְאֶסְתָּר בִּתְרֵיבִיחַיִּיל דָּד מְרֻדְכִי אֲשֶׁר לִקְחִילָהּ לְבֹא אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ לֹא בִקְשָׁה דָּבָר כִּי אִם אֶת־אֲשֶׁר יֹאמֶר הִנֵּי סְרִיד־הַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁמֵר הַנָּשִׁים וְתָהִי אֶסְתֵּר וְשֵׁאת חֵן בְּעֵינֵי כָל־רָאִי: טז וְתִלְקַח אֶסְתֵּר אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁוֹרוֹשׁ אֶל־בֵּית מְלָכוֹתוֹ בַּחֲדָשׁ הָעֲשִׂירִי הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ טֵבֵת בְּשָׁנ־שֵׁשֶׁבֶּעַ לְמַלְכוּתוֹ: יז וַיָּאָהֵב הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־אֶסְתֵּר מִכָּל־הַנָּשִׁים וְהַשָּׂאֵן חֵן וְחֹסֵד לְפָנָיו מִכָּל־הַבְּתוּלֹת וַיֵּשֶׁם כְּתֹר־מַלְכוּת בְּרָאשָׁה וַיִּמְלִיכָהּ תַּחַת וְשֵׁמִי: יח וַיַּעַשׂ הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁתָּה גָדוֹל לְכָל־שָׂרָיו וְעַבְדָּיו אֵת מִשְׁתָּה אֶסְתֵּר וְהִנָּחָה לְמִדְּיוֹת עֲשָׂה וַיִּתֵּן מִשְׂאֵת כִּיד הַמֶּלֶךְ: יט וּבְהַקְבֵּץ בְּתוּלוֹת שָׁנִית וּמְרֻדְכִי יָשָׁב בְּשַׁע־הַמֶּלֶךְ: כ אֵין אֶסְתֵּר מִגִּידַת מוֹלְדֹתָהּ וְאֵת עֲמָה בְּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה עָלֶיהָ מְרֻדְכִי וְאֵת־מֵאֲמֵר מְרֻדְכִי אֶסְתֵּר עָשָׂה בְּאֲשֶׁר הִיָּתָה בְּאֲמִנָּה אֹתוֹ: כא בְּיָמִים הָהֵם וּמְרֻדְכִי יָוֵשׁ בְּשַׁע־הַמֶּלֶךְ קֶצֶף בִּגְטָן וְתִרְשׁ שָׁנִי סְרִיטִי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁמָרִי הַסֵּף וַיִּבְקְשׁוּ לְשַׁלֵּם יָד בְּמֶלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁוֹרוֹשׁ: כב וַיִּוָּדַע הַדָּבָר לְמְרֻדְכִי וַיַּגִּד לְאֶסְתֵּר הַמֶּלֶכָּה וַיֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר לְמֶלֶךְ בָּשֵׁם מְרֻדְכִי: כג וַיִּבְקֶשׁ הַדָּבָר

Hundreds of years after her passing, Sarah's pious life ruled the world of Achashveirosh. And as heirs of Sarah and Esther, the Jewish women of today have the power to change the world. —*Sicht Purim 5721*

her, she did not give in. —*Rashi; Megillah 13a*

^{2:21-2} 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*

^{2:18-20} With his magnanimous gestures, as well as his gathering maidens for a second time, 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

וַיִּמְצָא וַיְתִילֻ שְׁנֵיהֶם עַל־עֵץ וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּסֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ:

א אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה גָּדַל הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁוֹרוֹשׁ אֶת־הַמֶּן

בְּרֹהֲמָדָתָא הָאֲגֻנִי וַיִּנְשְׂאֻהוּ וַיִּשֶׂם אֶת־כִּסְאוֹ מַעַל כָּל־
הַשְּׂרָפִים אֲשֶׁר אָתוּ: ג וְכָל־עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲשֶׁר־בְּשַׁעַר
הַמֶּלֶךְ כָּרְעִים וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לְהַמֶּן בֵּיכֵן צֻוְּהָלוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ
וּמִרְדֵּכָי לֹא יִכְרַע וְלֹא יִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה: ד וַיֹּאמְרוּ עַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ
אֲשֶׁר־בְּשַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְמִרְדֵּכָי מַדּוּעַ אֵתָּה עוֹבֵר אֵת מִצְוַת
הַמֶּלֶךְ: ז וַיְהִי כִּאֲמָרָם וּבְאָמְרָם כִּי אֵלָיו יוֹם וַיֹּם וְלֹא שְׂמַע
אֲלֵיהֶם וַיִּגְדּוּ לְהַמֶּן לְרֹאוֹת הַיַּעֲמֹדִי דְּבָרֵי מִרְדֵּכָי כִּי־
הָיָה לָהֶם אֲשֶׁר־הוּא יְהוּדִי: ח וַיֵּרָא הַמֶּן בֵּי־אֵין מִרְדֵּכָי
כָּרַע וּמִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לוֹ וַיִּמְלֹא הַמֶּן חֲמָה: ו וַיָּבֹז בְּעֵינָיו לִשְׁלַח
יָד בְּמִרְדֵּכָי לְבָדוֹ כִּי־הָיָה לוֹ אֶת־עַם מִרְדֵּכָי וַיִּבְקֹשׁ הַמֶּן
לְהַשְׁמִיד אֶת־כָּל־יְהוּדָיִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־מְלָכוֹת אַחֲשֵׁוֹרוֹשׁ
עַם מִרְדֵּכָי: י בַּחֲדָשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן הוּא־הָיָה נִסָּן בִּשְׁנַת
שְׁתִּים עָשָׂרָה לְמֶלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁוֹרוֹשׁ הַפִּיל פֹּרֵה הוּא הַגּוֹרֵל
לִפְנֵי הַמֶּן מִיּוֹם לִיּוֹם וּמִחֲדָשׁ לְחֲדָשׁ שְׁנֵים־עָשָׂר הוּא־

his Jewishness—to the essence of the Jewish soul which cannot be separated from God for even a moment. Hence, Haman wished to kill all the Jews. —*Torat Menachem, Purim 5744*

3:7 A *pur*, which is a lot. 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 al-

most an entire year (Haman's decree was issued in the first month, Nissan, and reversed in the twelfth month, Adar [Esther 3:7]) the Jews displayed supernatural determination in the face of death, and remained steadfast in their adherence to Torah. —*Torah Ohr*

Adar. God caused the lot to fall on Adar, a propitious month for the Jewish people, the month during which Moses was born (*Midrash*). According to *Arizal*, 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. (Rabbi Schneur

lows. It was then recorded in the Book of Chronicles before the king.

III. After these events, King Achashveirosh promoted Haman, son of Hamdata, the Agagite and advanced him; he placed his seat above all his fellow ministers. 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. The king's servants at the king's gate said to Mordechai, "Why do you transgress the King's command?" Finally, 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 [would never bow because he] was a Jew. When Haman saw that Mordechai would not kneel or bow before him, Haman was filled with wrath. 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 Achashveirosh's entire kingdom. In the first month, which is the month of Nissan, in the twelfth year of King Achashveirosh'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.

3:4 That he was a Jew. Mordechai told them that he, Mordechai, is a *Yehudi*, a Jew. On a deeper level, Mordechai was saying that even he, Haman, is a *Yehudi*. Our Sages relate the word *Yehudi* to *yechidi*, which shares a root with the word "oneness." Even Haman would eventually come to recognize the oneness of God, and that to Him alone is it fitting to bow. As the verse says of the Messianic era (*Zephaniah* 3:9): "I will then change the nations [to speak] a pure language, so that they will all proclaim the Name of God and worship Him as one assembly."

—*Darchei Ha'emunah*

3:6 Mordechai attributed his refusal to bow, to

1:1 After these events. God always prepares the remedy before sending the challenge. Thus only "after these events"—after Esther was enthroned and the king owed a favor to Mordechai, did God send the challenge: Haman's promotion and his subsequent decree. —*Rashi*

2:2 Mordechai would not kneel. Haman said to Mordechai: "Are you better than your ancestors, who bowed to my ancestor Esau (*Gen.* 33:3)?" To which Mordechai replied, "My ancestor, Benjamin, was not yet born at the time, and did not bow" (*Midrash*). *Arizal* explains that Mordechai was a reincarnation of Jacob, and Haman of Esau. Mordechai's refusal to bow rectified Jacob's bowing to Esau.

Esther 3

⁸ Haman said to King Achashveirosh, "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 destruction, and I will pay ten thousand silver talents to the functionaries, to be deposited in the King's treasures." ¹⁰ The king removed his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman, son of Haman, 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 Achashveirosh'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, while the city of Shushan was in turmoil.

Haman of Liadi once commented on the habit of inhaling snuff: The nose is by nature not a donist, yet they seek to indulge it too! The relationship between Adar and scent 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 "artle."

—Bnei Yissaschar

Scattered and dispersed. 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

3:13 Destroy all the Jews. Despite the fact that

ח ויאמר המן למלך אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ: חָדָשׁ אֶדְרָ: יִשְׁנוּ עִם־אֶחָד מִפְּנֵי וּמִפְּנֵי בֵין הָעַמִּים כָּל מַדִּינֹת מְלָכוֹתָ וְדִתֵּיהֶם שְׁנוֹת מִכָּל־עַם וְאִתְּדִיתִי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲנִים עֲשִׂים וְלִמְלֶךְ אִידִישׁוֹה לְהַנִּיחָם: ט אִם־עֲלֵה־מֶלֶךְ טוֹב יִתֵּב לְאֶבֶדָם וְעֲשֶׂרֶת אֲלָפִים כֶּכֶר־כֶּסֶף אֲשָׁקוּל עֲלֵי־י עֲשִׂי הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַבִּיא אֶל־גִּבּוֹי הַמֶּלֶךְ: י וְיִסֵּר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־טִבְעֻתּוֹ מֵעַל יָדוֹ וְיִתְּנָהּ לְהֶמֶן בֶּן־הַמֶּדְתָּא הָאֲגָגִי צֶדֶק הַיְּהוּדִים: יא וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהֶמֶן הַכֶּסֶף הַזֶּה לָךְ וְהָעַם לַעֲשׂוֹת בּוֹ כְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֶיךָ: יב וַיִּקְרָאוּ סִפְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בַּחֲדָשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן בַּשָּׁלִשָּׁה עֶשֶׂר יוֹם בּוֹ וַיִּכְתֹּב כָּכֶל־אֶשְׁר־צִוָּה הֶמֶן אֶל אַחֲשֶׁר־פָּנִי־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֶל־הַפָּחוֹת אֲשֶׁר עַל־מְדִינָהּ וּמְדִינָהּ וְאֶל־שָׂרֵי עַם וְעַם מְדִינָהּ וּמְדִינָהּ כַּכְתָּבָהּ וְעַם וְעַם כָּל־שְׁנוֹ בָּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֶׁוֹרוֹשׁ נִכְתָּב וְנִחְתָּם בְּטִבְעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ: יג וְנִשְׁלַח סִפְרִים בֵּין הָרָצִים אֶל־כָּל־מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהַרְג וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת־כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים מִנֶּעַר וְעַד־זָקֵן טָף וְנָשִׁים בְּיוֹם אֶחָד בַּשָּׁלִשָּׁה עֶשֶׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנִים־עֶשְׂרֵי הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ אֶדְר וְשָׁלָלָם לְבָז: יד פְּתִישְׁנוּ הַכְּתֵב לְהַנִּיחַ דָּת כָּכֶל מְדִינָהּ וּמְדִינָהּ גִּלּוֹי לְכָל־הָעַמִּים לְהִיּוֹת עֲתוּדִים לְיוֹם הַזֶּה: טו הָרָצִים יֵצְאוּ דְחוּפִים בְּדָבָר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְיִתְּנָהּ נִתְּנָה בַּשְׁוִשָׁן הַבִּיזָה וְהַמֶּלֶךְ וְהֶמֶן יִשְׁבוּ לַשְׁתּוֹת וְהַעִיר שׁוֹשֵׁן נְבוֹכָדָ:

the decree was expressly aimed at Jews as Jews, so that any Jew could have saved himself by abandoning Judaism, none sought this "easy" escape. Such extraordinary self-sacrifice day after day for almost twelve months defies reason.

So was the consequence beyond reason and expectation. For not only were the Jews saved from the fate threatened by Haman, but there was a reversal of the situation, resulting in the complete triumph of the Jews over their enemies.

—Torah Ohr

To plunder their possessions. Is this detail not insignificant in the face of the decree of annihilation?

This detail was integral to the decree. 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.

—Sichat Purim 5723

3:15 Noticing Haman's good cheer, Mor-

IV. Mordechai knew all that had occurred, so Mordechai tore his clothes [in mourning] 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 fasting, crying and wailings; 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

chai sensed an evil conspiracy. Mordechai happened three Jewish children coming out of school and asked them what they had learned at day.

The first child quoted the verse (*Proverbs* 25): "Do not fear sudden terror, nor the destruction of the wicked when it comes." The second quoted the verse (*Isaiah* 8:10): "Conceive a scheme but it will be foiled; conspire a plot but it will not materialize, for God is with us." And the third quoted the verse (*Ibid.* 48:4): "To your old age I am with you; to your old age I will sustain you; I have made my covenant with you and I will carry you; I will sustain you

and deliver you." Hearing the children's "prophecy," Mordechai rejoiced. —*Midrash*

4:1 Mordechai knew all that had occurred. He knew the sins that had caused the affliction, and the cures that would bring it to an end (*Yalkut*).

In attempting to nullify the decree, Mordechai responded by donning "sackcloth and ash," by calling upon the Jewish people to turn to God. 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. —*Likkutei Sichot, VI*

א ומרדכי ידע את־כל־אשר נעשה ויקרע מרדכי את בגדיו וילבש שק ואפר ויצא בתוך העיר וינעק ועקה גדולה ומרה: ב ויבוא עד לפני שער־המלך כי אין לבוא אל־שער המלך בלבוש שק: ג ובכל־מדינה ומדינה מקום אשר דבר־המלך ודחו מגיע אבל גדול ליהודים ויום ובכי ומספר שק ואפר יצע לרבים: ד ותבואנה לתבאנה ב נערות אסתר וסריסיה ויגידו לה ותתחלחל המלכה מאד ותשלח בגדים להלביש את־מרדכי ולהסיר שכן מעליו ולא קבל: ה ותקרא אסתר להתן מסריסי המלך אשר העמיד לפניו ותצווה על־מרדכי לדעת מה זה ועל־מדינה: ו ויצא התן אל־מרדכי אל־רחוב העיר אשר לפני שער־המלך: ז ויגדלו מרדכי את כל־אשר קרהו ואת פרשת הכסף אשר אמר המן לשקול עלי־גוגי המלך ביהודים ופיהודים ב לאבדם: ח ואת־פתשגן כתב־הדת אשר־נתן בשושן להשמידם נתן לו להראות את־אסתר ולהגיד לה ולצוות עליה לבוא אל־המלך להתחנן־לו ולבקש מלפניו על־עמיה: ט ויבוא התן ויגד לאסתר את דברי מרדכי: י ותאמר אסתר להתן ותצווה אל־מרדכי: יא כל־עבדי המלך ועם מדינות המלך ידעים

4:2 The king's gate. One ought not enter the King's gate—the *shul* or *beit midrash*, when wearing sackcloth—with a sad face. For "might and joy are in His presence" (*Chronicles I*, 16:27).

4:5 Hatach. 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 (*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. What trouble had caused him to grieve, and what sin had caused the trouble. —*Alshich*

4:7 Happened to him. His refusal to bow to Haman, which caused the decree. —*Targum*

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." 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." 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.

W. ESTHER GOES TO THE KING

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 re-

4:14 Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak of Lubavitch once told his father, R. Shalom Dovber, that he had done someone a favor. "You are mistaken," said R. Shalom, "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 Kabalah 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." —*Sefer Hatoldot Maharash*

4:16 My maids and I shall also fast. Esther knew that three days of not eating would cer-

אשר כל-איש ואשה אשר-יבוא אל-המלך אל-החצר הפנימית אשר לא-יזכר אחר דתו לקומית לבד מאשר יושיט-לו המלך את-שרביט הזהב ואני לא נקראתי לבוא אל-המלך זה שלוש-ימים: י נהנידו למרדכי את דברי אסתר: י נאמר מרדכי להשיב אל-אסתר אל-תרמי בנפשו להמלט בית-המלך מפל-היהודים: י כי אסתר-החדש החדשי בעת הזאת רוח והצלה יעמוד ליהודים מקום אחר זאת ובית-אביה תאבדו ומי יודע אסלעת כזאת הגעת למלכות: י ותאמר אסתר להשיב אל-מרדכי: י לך כנוס את-כלי-היהודים הנמצאים בשושן רצומו עלי ואל-תאכלו ואל-תשתו שלשת ימים לילה ויום גם-אני ונערתי אצום פן ובכן אבוא אל-המלך אשר לא-יכרת וכאשר אבדתי אבדתי: י ויעבר מרדכי ויעש ככל אשר-צוהה עליו אסתר:

פרק ה א יהי ביום השלישי ותלבש אסתר מלכות ותעמד בחצר בית-המלך הפנימית נכח בית המלך והמלך יושב על-כסא מלכותו בבית המלכות נכח פתח הבית: ב יהי כראות המלך את-אסתר הפלכה עמדת בחצר נשאה חן בעיניו ויושט המלך לאסתר את-שרביט הזהב אשר בידו ותקרב אסתר ותגע בראש השכרביט: ג ונאמר לה המלך מה-לך אסתר המלכה ומה-בקשתך עדי-הצי

tainly make her less attractive; yet she knew that the survival of her people hinged upon restoring the Jew's supernatural status. She knew that her crying at the feet of a mortal king was merely a formality, a facade with which to disguise the Divine blessing. The real salvation would come through prayer.

4:17 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!"

—*Likkutei Sichot*, vol. 31

—*Midrash*

quest? [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 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.

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 spir-

^{14:4} Why did Esther invite Haman? The Talmud (*Megillah* 15b) offers 12 reasons. Below are two: 1) By inviting Haman, Esther hoped to arouse the jealousy of Achashveirosh and the ministers. 2) When the Jews would learn that Esther was befriending Haman, they would no longer rely on her to save them and would pray to God.

^{15:8} Let the King and Haman come today.

Though God'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 God. 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 God's Name will not have been read in proper sequence. —*Sfat Emet*

הַמֶּלֶךְ וְיָתֵן לָהּ י' וְהָאָמֶר אֶסְתֵּר אִם-עֲלֵה-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב יָבֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמָן הַיּוֹם אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתֶּה אֲשֶׁר-עָשִׂיתִי לוֹ: ה' וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ מָה־רָאִיתִי לַעֲשׂוֹת אֲתִידָבֵר אֶסְתֵּר וַיֹּבֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמָן אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתֶּה אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂתָה אֶסְתֵּר: וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאֶסְתֵּר בְּמִשְׁתֶּה הַזֶּה מָה-שְּׂאֵלָתְךָ וְיָתֵן לָךְ וְיָמַד-בְּקִשְׁתְּךָ עַד-חֲצֵי הַמֶּלֶכּוֹת וְתַעֲשֶׂי: ז' וְהָיָה אֶסְתֵּר וְהָאָמֶר שְׂאֵלָתִי וּבְקִשְׁתִּי: ח' אִם-מִצָּאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאִם-עֲלֵה-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב לָתֵת אֶת-שְׂאֵלָתִי וְלַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת-בְּקִשְׁתִּי יָבֹא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמָן אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתֶּה אֲשֶׁר אָעֲשֶׂה לָהֶם וְיָמָחַר אָעֲשֶׂה כְּדִבְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: ט' וַיֵּצֵא הָמָן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא שְׂמֵחַ וְטוֹב לֵב וְכָרְאוֹת הָמָן אֶת-מִרְדֳּכָי בִּשְׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ וּלְאִיָּקָם וּלְאִיָּזַע מִמּוֹנֵי וַיִּפְּלֹא הָמָן עַל-מִרְדֳּכָי חֲמָה: י' וַיִּתְאַפֵּק הָמָן וַיָּבֹא אֶל-בֵּיתוֹ וַיִּשְׁלַח וַיִּבֹא אֶת-אֲהֻבָּיו וְאֶת-יָדִישׁ אֲשׁוּרֹ: י"א וַיִּסְפֹּר לָהֶם הָמָן אֶת-כְּבוֹד עֲשׂוֹר וְרַב בָּנָיו וְאֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר גָּדְלוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר נִשְׂאוֹ עֲלֵ-הַשָּׂרִים וְעַבְדֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: י"ב וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן אִפֹּי לֹא-יִבְיָאָה אֶסְתֵּר הַמֶּלֶכָּה עִם-הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל-הַמִּשְׁתֶּה אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂתָה כִּי אִם-אוֹתִי וְגַם-לְמָחָר אֲנִי קָרוֹא-לָהּ עִם-הַמֶּלֶךְ: י"ג וְכָל-יְהוּדֵי יוֹשֵׁב בִּשְׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ: י"ד וְהָאָמֶר לוֹ יָרֵשׁ אֲשׁוּרֹ וְכָל-אֲהֻבָּיו יַעֲשׂוּ-יָצֵץ גְּבוֹהַּ חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה וּבִבְנֵךְ אָמֹר

חצי הספר
בפסוקים

5:13 Haman, an Amalekite, inherited his hatred for Mordechai and the Jews from his ancestors. After the Jews left Egypt amid wondrous miracles, the nations of the world stood back in awe. All except for Amalek, who, in the ultimate display ofchutzpah, attacked the Jews in the desert.

Spiritually, Amalek represents the voice of doubt and hesitation that attacks us whenever we are inspired to do good. The verse

(Deut. 25:18) says of Amalek, "עָדָר"—"he encountered you." עָדָר can also mean "cooled you down." Amalek dulls our spiritual sensibilities. Indeed, Amalek is numerically equivalent to safek, doubt. The antidote to Amalek is Mordechai the "Yehudi" ("the Jew"). The name Yehudi represents the loyalty of the Jew which transcends intellect and emotion (see comm. to 2:5).

—*Likkutei Sichot*, III

its with the king to the feast." Haman was pleased with the idea and erected the gallows.

VI.

At this point, the beginning of the miracle, the reader raises his voice.

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 Bigtana and Teresh, two of the king's chamberlains from the threshold guards, who had planned to assassinate King Achashveirosh. 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?" 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

MORDECHAI IS REWARDED

^{5:1} Afraid that Esther and Haman were conspiring against him, Achashveirosh could not sleep.

—Rashi

The king's sleep was disturbed. "The sleep of

the King of the universe" (*Midrash*). Exile is referred to as night, a time of spiritual darkness. During the night we are asleep and the soul loses its control over the body. While asleep, man's thoughts are distorted, while his

לַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּתְּלוּ אֶת־מִרְדֵּכָי עָלָיו וְבֹא עַד־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־הַמְּשֻׁתָּה שָׁמָּה וַיִּסַּב הַדָּבָר לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיַּעַשׂ הָעֵץ:

א בַּלַּיְלָה הַהוּא נִדְּדָה שְׁנַת הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיֹּאמֶר לְהֵבִיא אֶת־סֵפֶר הַזְכוּרוֹת דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים וַיִּדְּוּוּ נִקְרָאִים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: **ב** וַיִּמְצָא כְּתוּב אֲשֶׁר הֵגִיד מִרְדֵּכָי עַל־בִּגְתָּנָא וְתֶרֶשׁ שְׁנֵי סֻרְיָסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁמֹרֵי הַסֵּף אֲשֶׁר בִּקְשׁוּ לְשַׁלַּח יָד בַּמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֻׁרוֹשׁ: **ג** וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ מַה־נַּעֲשֶׂה וְלֹךְ וַגְּדוּלָה לְמִרְדֵּכָי עַל־יָדוֹ וַיֹּאמְרוּ גַּעְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ מִשְׁרָתָיו לֹא־נַעֲשֶׂה עִמּוֹ דָּבָר: **ד** וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ מִי בְּחֹצֵר וְהָמָן בֹּא לְחַצֵּר בֵּית־הַמֶּלֶךְ הַחַיְצוֹנָה לֵאמֹר לַמֶּלֶךְ לְחַלּוֹת אֶת־מִרְדֵּכָי עַל־הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר־הִכִּין לוֹ: **ה** וַיֹּאמְרוּ גַּעְרֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵלָיו הִנֵּה הָמָן עֹמֵד בַּחֲצֵר וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ יָבוֹא: **ו** וַיָּבוֹא הָמָן וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ מַה־לַּעֲשׂוֹת בֹּאֵשׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן בָּלְבוּ לָמִי יַחֲפֹץ הַמֶּלֶךְ לַעֲשׂוֹת וְקִר יוֹתֵר מִמֶּנִּי: **ז** וַיֹּאמֶר הָמָן אֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ: **ח** וַיָּבִיאוּ לְבוּשׁ מַלְכוּת אֲשֶׁר לְבִישָׁבו הַמֶּלֶךְ וְסוּס אֲשֶׁר רָכַב עָלָיו הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאֲשֶׁר נָתַן בְּתוֹר מַלְכוּת בְּרֹאשׁוֹ: **ט** וַנָּתַן הַלְבוּשׁ וְהוֹסוּס עַל־יְדֵי־אִישׁ מִשְׁוֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הַפְּרָתְמִים וְהַלְבִּישׁוּ אֶת־הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ וְהִרְבִּיבֵהוּ עַל־הוֹסוּס בִּרְחוּב הָעִיר וְקָרְאוּ לִפְנָיו כָּכָה יַעֲשֶׂה לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בִּיקְרוֹ: **י** וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְהָמָן מַה־וּ קוֹ אֶת־הַלְבוּשׁ וְאֶת־הוֹסוּס בֹּאֲשֶׁר יְדִבְרָתָ וַעֲשִׂיהֶכֶן לְמִרְדֵּכָי הַיְּהוּדִי הַיּוֹשֵׁב בִּישְׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶל־תַּחַל דָּבָר מִכָּל אֲשֶׁר דִּבַּרְתָּ:

lower faculties function routinely. Similarly, Exile is a time when God, the soul and life-force of creation is "asleep", when darkness is confused for light.

verse was unable to sleep; that night saw the revelation of God's hand. Yet this revelation did not transform the night into day; it remained night. Godliness was revealed even in the context of Night.

But on "that night" the King of the uni-

—Likkutei Sichot, VII

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." 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.

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. 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 King Achashveirosh said—he 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

HAMAN'S
DOWNFALL

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

7:4 Had he cared for the king, Haman would have advised him to sell the Jews for monetary gain, or take them as his own slaves (Rashi). Or, "the trouble would not have been worth the king's bother" (Ibn Ezra).

י' וַיִּסַּח הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת־הַלְבוּשׁ וְאֶת־הַסּוּס וַיִּלְבַּשׁ אֶת־מְרֹדֶכִי וַיַּרְכִּיבֵהוּ בַּרְחוֹב הָעִיר וַיִּקְרָא לִפְנֵי כָּכָה יַעֲשֶׂה לְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר הַמֶּלֶךְ חָפֵץ בְּיִקְרָו: י"ב וַיֵּשֶׁב מְרֹדֶכִי אֶל־שַׁעַר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמָן נָדַחַף אֶל־בֵּיתוֹ אֲבָל וְחַפְזִי רָאשׁ: י"ג וַיִּסַּפֵּר הָמָן לְיָרֵשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ וּלְכָל־אֹהֲבָיו אֵת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר קָרָהוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ הַכְמִיז וְיָרֵשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ אִם מִזְרַע הַיְּהוּדִים מְרֹדֶכִי אֲשֶׁר הִחְלֹת לְנַפֵּל לִפְנֵי לֹא־יְחֻכָּל לוֹ בַּיַּדְפּוֹל תּוֹפֵל לִפְנֵי: י"ד עוֹדִם מַדְבִּירִים עִמּוֹ וְסָרִיסֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ הֵינֵנו וְיִבְהִילוּ לְהַבִּיא אֶת־הָמָן אֶל־הַמִּשְׁחָה אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂתָה אִסְתֵּר:

פרק ז

א וַיָּבֵא הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָמָן לִשְׁתוּת עִבֵּי־אִסְתֵּר הַמֶּלְכָּה: ב וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאִסְתֵּר גַּם בַּיּוֹם הַשֵּׁנִי בַּמִּשְׁחָה הַזֶּה מַה־שְּׁאַלְתָּ: אִסְתֵּר הַמֶּלְכָּה וְהָמָן לָךְ וּמַה־בְּקִשְׁתָּ עַד־חֲצֵי הַמִּלְכוּת וְהָעֵשׂ: ג וְהָעַן אִסְתֵּר הַמֶּלְכָּה וְהָאִמָּר אִם־מִצְרָאֲתִי חַן בְּעֵינֶיךָ הַמֶּלֶךְ וְאִם־עַל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב תִּתֵּן לִי נָפְשִׁי בַּשְּׁאֲלָתִי וְעַמִּי בַּבְּקִשְׁתִּי: ד כִּי נִמְכְּרֵנוּ אֲנִי וְעַמִּי לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהָרוֹג וּלְאַבֵּד וְאֵלּוּ לַעֲבָדִים וּלְשִׁפּוֹת נִמְכְּרֵנוּ חֲרָשִׁים: כִּי אֵין הַצָּר שׁוּן בְּנוֹק הַמֶּלֶךְ: ה וַיֹּאמֶר

הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחַשְׁוֵרוֹשׁ וַיֹּאמֶר לְאִסְתֵּר הַמֶּלְכָּה מִי הוּא זֶה וְאִי־זֶה הוּא אֲשֶׁר־מְלָאֵן לְבוֹ לַעֲשׂוֹת כֵּן: ו וְהָאִמָּר אִסְתֵּר אִישׁ צָר וְאִיִּב הָמָן הָרַע הוּא וְהָמָן נִבְעַת מִלְפְּנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהַמִּלְכָּה: ז וְהַמֶּלֶךְ קָם בַּחֲמָתוֹ מִמִּשְׁחָתוֹ הַזֶּה אֶל־גִּזְתַּת הַבֵּיתוֹ וְהָמָן עָמַד לְבָקֵשׁ עַל־נַפְשׁוֹ מֵאִסְתֵּר הַמֶּלְכָּה כִּי רָאָה כִּי־כָלְתָה אֵלָיו הָרָעָה מֵאֵת הַמֶּלֶךְ: ח וְהַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁב

7:5 Achashveirosh said—he said to Queen Esther. 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.

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

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 have his way with 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.

VIII.

On that day, King Achashveirosh 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 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?"

ESTHER
BEGS THE
KING TO
ABOLISH
HAMAN'S
DECREE

8:2 And gave it to Mordechai. The tests of Rachel's children—her son Joseph, and Mordechai, descendant of her son Benjamin—were equally great, as was their rise to greatness.¹⁰ Their tests were equal, for it says of Joseph

(Gen. 39:10), "when she had spoken to him day after day and he did not listen"; and of Mordechai it says (3:4), "when they had said this to him day after day and he did not listen."

And their rise to greatness was equal, for it

אסתר ז

מַנִּצֵּת הַבַּיִתָּן אֶל-בֵּית מִשְׁתֵּה הַיַּיִן וְהָמָן נָפַל עַל-הַמִּטָּה אֲשֶׁר אִסְתֵּר עָלֶיהָ וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ הֲגַם לְכַבּוֹשׁ אֶת-הַמֶּלֶכֶה עַמִּי בַּבַּיִת הַזֶּה לֵּצַא מִפִּי הַמֶּלֶךְ וּפְנֵי הָמָן כָּפוּ: ט וַיֹּאמֶר חַרְוֹנָה אַחֲרַיִם הַסְּרִיסִים לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְגַם הַנָּהָה הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה הָמָן לְמָרְדֳּכַי אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר-טוֹב עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ עַמֵּד בַּבַּיִת הָמָן גָּבַהַּ חֲמִשִּׁים אַמָּה וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּלְוֶהוּ עָלָיו: י וַיִּתְּלוּ אֶת-יְהֹנָתָן עַל-הָעֵץ אֲשֶׁר-הִכִּין לְמָרְדֳּכַי וְחַמַּת הַמֶּלֶךְ שָׁכְבָה:

א בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נָתַן הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ לְאִסְתֵּר הַמֶּלֶכֶה אֶת-בֵּית הָמָן צֶרֶר הַיְּהוּדִים [וַיְהוּדִים ב'] וּמָרְדֳּכַי בָּא לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בַּיּוֹמָיָה אִסְתֵּר מָה הוּא-לָהּ: ב וַיֹּסֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶת-טַבַּעְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר הָעֵבִיר מִדָּהֶמן וַיִּתְּנָהּ לְמָרְדֳּכַי וַתִּשָּׂם אִסְתֵּר אֶת-מָרְדֳּכַי עַל-בֵּית הָמָן: ג וַתִּסָּף אִסְתֵּר וַתִּדְּבַר לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ רֹגְלָיו וַתִּתְּנוּן לִי לְהַעֲבִיר אֶת-דַּעַת הָמָן הָאֲגָגִי וְאֵת מַחֲשַׁבְתּוֹ אֲשֶׁר חָשַׁב עַל-הַיְּהוּדִים: ד וַיִּשָּׁט הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאִסְתֵּר אֶת שַׂרְבֹּט הַזֶּהב וַתִּקֶּם אִסְתֵּר וַתַּעֲמֵד לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: ה וַתֹּאמֶר אִם-עַל-הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב וְאִם-מִצָּאֵתִי הֵן לִפְנֵי וְכֵשֶׁר הִדְבֵּר לִפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ וְטוֹבָה אֲנִי בְעֵינָיו יִכְתֹּב לְהַשִּׁיב אֶת-הַסְּפָרִים מַחֲשַׁבֶּת הָמָן בֵּן-הַמֶּלֶכָה הָאֲגָגִי אֲשֶׁר כָּתַב לְאַבֵּד אֶת-הַיְּהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל-מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ: ו כִּי אֵיכָכָה אוֹכֵל וְרֹאֵתִי בָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר-יִמָּצֵא אֶת-עַמִּי וְאֵיכָכָה אוֹכֵל וְרֹאֵתִי בְּאֵבֶדֶן מוֹלְדֹתַי:

says of Joseph (Gen. 41:42), "And Pharaoh removed his ring . . . and placed it on the hand of Joseph", and of Mordechai it says, "And the king removed his ring from his hand and gave it to Mordechai" (Midrash).

Furthermore, Joseph implanted the seeds of

the Purim redemption, when he placed his silver goblet, in Benjamin's pack (Gen. 44:2). י"ג can be divided into י"ד (13) and י"ז (17). 13x7 is the numeric equivalent of the Purim heroes, "Mordechai and Esther," who were descendants of Benjamin.

—Bnei Yissaschar

⁷ King Achashveirosh 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 Achashveirosh'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 [saying] 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 the thirteenth of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. ¹³ Copies of the 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

Verses 15 and 16 are read aloud verse-by-verse by the congregation followed by the reader.

8:9 This verse describes the reversal of that most identical language. This verse, however, which is described in 3:12, where the issuing contains 3 more words than its counterpart, of the edict to *kill* the Jews is described in alluding to the three days of fasting which

וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרֶשׁ לְאַסְתֵּר הַמִּלְכָּה וּלְמֹרְדֵכַי הַיְּהוּדִי הִנֵּה בֵּית־הָמֶן נָתַתִּי לְאַסְתֵּר וְאֹתוֹ תָלוּ עַל־הָעֵץ עַל־אֲשֵׁר־שָׁלַח יָדוֹ בַּיהוּדִים [בַּיהוּדִים כֹּן] ח וְאַתֶּם בָּתְבוּ עַל־הַיְּהוּדִים בְּטוֹב בְּעֵינֵיכֶם בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ וְחַתְמוּ בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ כִּי־כָתַבְתִּי אֲשֶׁר־נִבְרַתְבִּי בְּשֵׁם־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְנִחְתוּם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ אֵין לְהִשָּׁבִי: ט וַיִּקְרָא סִפְרֵי־הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּעֵת־הַיְּהוּדָא בְּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ סִין בְּשִׁלְשֹׁה וְעֶשְׂרִים בּו וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר־צִוָּה מֶלֶךְ־כִּי אֶל־הַיְּהוּדִים וְאֵל הָאַחֲשֻׁרְפָּנִים וְהַכּוֹהֲנִים וְשָׂרֵי הַמְּדִינוֹת אֲשֶׁר מֵהֶדוּ וְעַד־כּוּשׁ שִׁבְעַ וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה בְּכַתְּבָהּ וְעַם וְעַם כָּל־שָׁנוּ וְאֶל־הַיְּהוּדִים בְּכַתְּבָם וּכְלִשׁוֹנָם: י וַיִּכְתֹּב בְּשֵׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרֶשׁ וְנִחְתוּם בְּטַבַּעַת הַמֶּלֶךְ וַיִּשְׁלַח סִפְרִים בְּיַד הָרָצִים בְּטוֹסִים רַכְבִּי הָרַכֶּשׁ הָאַחֲשֻׁרְפָּנִים בְּנֵי הָרַמְכִּים: יא אֲשֶׁר נָתַן הַמֶּלֶךְ לַיְּהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּכָל־עִיר וְעִיר לְהִקָּהָל וּלְעַמֵּד עַל־נַפְשָׁם לְהִשְׁמִיד וּלְהַרְג וּלְאַבֵּד אֶת־כָּל־חַיִּל עִם וּמְדִינָה וְהָרָצִים אֹתָם טַף וְנָשִׁים וּשְׁלָלָם לָבוֹז: יב בַּיּוֹם אַחֵר בְּכָל־מְדִינוֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֻׁרֹשׁ בִּשְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ שְׁנֵים־עָשָׂר הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר: יג פָּתְשׁוֹן הִכְתֹּב לְהִנָּחֵן דָּת בְּכָל־מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה גִלּוּי לְכָל־הָעַמִּים וּלְהַיּוֹת הַיְּהוּדִים [וְהַיְּהוּדִים כֹּן] עֲתִידִים [וְעַתִּידִים כֹּן] לַיּוֹם הַזֶּה לְהִנָּקֵם מֵאֲבִיבָהֶם: יד הָרָצִים רַכְבִּי הָרַכֶּשׁ הָאַחֲשֻׁרְפָּנִים יָצְאוּ מִבְּהֶלֶם וְדוּחֹפִים בְּדָבָר הַמֶּלֶךְ וְהָדָת נִתְּנָה בְּשׁוֹשֵׁן הַבִּירָד: טו וּמֶלֶךְ־כִּי יָצָא מִלִּפְנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בְּלָבוֹשׁ מַלְכוּת תְּכֵלֶת וְחוּר וְעֶטְרָת זָהָב גְּדוּלָּה וְתַכְרִיר בּוֹץ וְאַרְגָּמָן וְהַעִיר שׁוֹשֵׁן צָהָלָה וְשִׁמְחָה: טז לַיְּהוּדִים

Verses 15 and 16 are read aloud verse-by-verse by the congregation followed by the reader.

8:16 There was light and happiness, joy and glory. Light refers to Torah, happiness to the festivals, joy to circumcision, and glory to Te-Rokeach (43 words).

was **light and happiness, joy and glory**. 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.

IX.

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, the situation was reversed: 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**

The words
in bold are
read aloud
by the
congregation
(in one
breath),
followed by
the reader.

men. ⁷

[they killed] Parshandata

Dalfon

Aspata,

Porata

Adalya

Aridata

Parmashta

Arisai

Aridai

Vaizata,

¹⁰ the ten

fillin (Megillah 16b). Haman had prohibited observing these four *mitzvoth*, and now that he

was gone the Jews were again able to perform them (Rashi).

הָיְתָה אוֹרָה וְשִׂמְחָה וְשֵׁשׁ וּמֵקֶרֶט י וְכָכָל מְדִינָה וּמְדִינָה
וְכָכָל-עִיר וְעִיר מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר דְּבַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ וָדָתוֹ מֵגִיעַ שְׂמִיחָה
וְשִׂשׁוֹן לַיהוּדִים מִשְׂמֵחַ וַיּוֹם טוֹב וְרַבִּים מֵעַמִּי הָאָרֶץ
מִתְנַהֲדִים כִּי־נָפַל פַּחַד־הַיְּהוּדִים עֲלֵיהֶם:

א וּבִשְׁנֵים עָשָׂר חֹדֶשׁ הוּא־חֹדֶשׁ אָדָר בְּשִׁלּוֹשֶׁה עָשָׂר יוֹם בּוֹ
אֲשֶׁר הִגִּיעַ דְּבַר־הַמֶּלֶךְ וָדָתוֹ לְהַעֲשׂוֹת בַּיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר שָׁבְרוּ
אֹיְבֵי הַיְּהוּדִים לְשִׁלּוֹט בָּהֶם וְנִהְפְּאוּ הוּא אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁלֹטוּ
הַיְּהוּדִים הֵמָּה בְּשִׁנְאִיָּהֶם: ב נִקְהְלוּ הַיְּהוּדִים בְּעָרֵיהֶם כָּכָל־
מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֻׁרוֹשׁ לְשַׁלֵּחַ יָד בַּמִּבְקָשִׁי רָעָתָם וְאִישׁ
לֹא־עָמַד לַפְּנֵיהֶם כִּי־נָפַל פָּחַדָם עַל־כָּל־עַמֻּמֵּיהֶם: ג וְכָל־שְׂרָרֵי
הַמְּדִינֹת וְהָאֲחֻשְׁרוֹשִׁים וְהַפָּחוֹת וְעָשִׂי הַמֶּלֶךְ אָבָה אֲשֶׁר
לְמֶלֶךְ מִנְּשָׂאִים אֲתִיב־הַיְּהוּדִים כִּי־נָפַל פַּחַד־מֶרְדֵּכִי עֲלֵיהֶם:
ד כִּי־גִדּוֹל מֶרְדֵּכִי בְּכִיתִי־הַמֶּלֶךְ וְשָׁמְעוּ הוֹלֵךְ כָּכָל־הַמְּדִינֹת
כִּי־הָאִישׁ מֶרְדֵּכִי הוֹלֵךְ וְגִדּוֹל: ה וַיָּכּוּ הַיְּהוּדִים בְּכָל־אֵיבֵיהֶם
מִפְּתִיחָרָב וְהָרָג וְאָבָדוֹן וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְּשִׁנְאִיָּהֶם כְּרָצוֹנָם:
ו וּבִשְׁוֶשֶׁן הַבִּירָה הָרָגוּ הַיְּהוּדִים וְאָבַד חֲמִשׁ מֵאוֹת

The words
in bold are
read aloud
by the
congregation
(in one
breath),
followed by
the reader.

אִישׁ:

פֶּרֶשְׁנָדָתָא

דַּלְפוֹן

אֶסְפָּתָא:

פּוֹרָתָא

אֲרִידָא

אֲרִידָתָא:

פֶּרְמָשְׁתָּא

אֲרִיסֵי

אֲרִידֵי

וַיִּזְתָּא:

עֶשְׂרֹת ,

8:17 Fear of the Jews had fallen upon them. them"—the awe of Heaven experienced by
Or, "that which the Jews feared fell upon the Jews was of such intensity that it infused

sons of Haman, son of Hamdata, persecutor of the Jews, but they took none of the spoils. ¹¹ That day, the number of killed persons 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 unwall 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 Mor-

even their countrymen, inspiring them to convert.
—R. Moshe Isserles

9:7-10 The names of Haman's sons are read by the congregation. Why? *Tzofnat Pameyach* offers this reason: Everyone is obligated to recite the *entire* Megillah. However, based on the halachic principle that "hearing is equivalent to reciting," one can fulfill this obligation by listening to it being read. But the reader's recitation of the ten names in *one breath* cannot absolve the listener of his ob-

ligation to do the same. Thus he must recite it himself.

9:17 A day of feasting and rejoicing. Chanukah celebrates the triumph of the Jewish soul. The Greeks (initially) 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 quiet and soulful symbol. Purim celebrates the deliverance of the Jew's bodily existence from the plot of Haman

בְּיָמֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ בִּיְהוּדָה אֶרֶץ הַיְּהוּדִים הָרְגוּ וּבָבְּרוּ לֹא שָׁלְחוּ אֲתֵיכֶם: י' בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא בָּא מִסְפֵּר הַהֲרוּגִים בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה לְפָנֵי הַמֶּלֶךְ: י" וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לְאַסְתֵּר הַמִּלְכָּה בְּשׁוּשַׁן הַבִּירָה הָרְגוּ וּבָבְרוּ וְאִבֵּר מֵאוֹת אִישׁ וְאֵת עֲשֶׂרֶת בְּנֵי־הָמָן בְּשָׂאֵר מְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ מִזֶּה עָשׂוּ וּמִזֶּה־שָׁאֲלוּךְ וַיִּנָּתֵן לָךְ וּמִזֶּה־בְּקִשְׁתְּךָ עוֹד וְתַעֲשִׂי: י" וַתֹּאמֶר אֶסְתֵּר אֲמִיעֶל־הַמֶּלֶךְ טוֹב וַיִּנָּתֵן גַּם־מִמָּוֶה לַיהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּשׁוּשַׁן לַעֲשׂוֹת כִּכָּרֵת הַיּוֹם וְאֵת עֲשֶׂרֶת בְּנֵי־הָמָן יִתְּלוּ עַל־הָעֵץ: י" וַיֹּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ לַהֲעֲשׂוֹת כֹּן וְתָנַת דָּת בְּשׁוּשַׁן וְאֵת עֲשֶׂרֶת בְּנֵי־הָמָן תָּחַל: ט" וַיִּקְהָלוּ הַיְּהוּדִים [וְהַיְּהוּדִים כ'] אֲשֶׁר־בְּשׁוּשַׁן גַּם בַּיּוֹם אֲרָבָעָה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ אָדָר וַיַּהֲרֹגוּ בְּשׁוּשַׁן שְׁלֹשׁ מֵאוֹת אִישׁ וּבְבָבְרוּ לֹא שָׁלְחוּ אֲתֵיכֶם: ט" וּשְׂאֵר הַיְּהוּדִים אֲשֶׁר בְּמְדִינֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ נִקְהָלוּ וַעֲמֹד עַל־נַפְשָׁם וְנוֹחַ מֵאִיבֵיהֶם וְהָרוּג בְּשׁוּשַׁן וְהָיוּ חֲמִשָּׁה וּשְׁבַעִים אָלֶף וּבָבְרוּ לֹא שָׁלְחוּ אֲתֵיכֶם: י" בַּיּוֹם־שְׁלֹשָׁה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ אָדָר וְנוֹחַ בְּאֶרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר בּוֹ וַעֲשֶׂה אֹתוֹ יוֹם מְשֻׁתָּה וּשְׂמֹחָה: י" וְהַיְּהוּדִים [וְהַיְּהוּדִים כ'] אֲשֶׁר־בְּשׁוּשַׁן וְהָיוּ חֲמִשָּׁה וּשְׁבַעִים אָלֶף וּבָבְרוּ לֹא שָׁלְחוּ אֲתֵיכֶם: י" וְנוֹחַ בְּחִמְשָׁה עָשָׂר בּוֹ וַעֲשֶׂה אֹתוֹ יוֹם מְשֻׁתָּה וּשְׂמֹחָה: י" עַל־כֵּן הַיְּהוּדִים הַפְּרוּזִים [וְהַפְּרוּזִים כ'] הַיֹּשְׁבִים בְּעָרֵי הַפְּרוּזֹת עָשׂוּ אֵת יוֹם אֶרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר לְחֹדֶשׁ אָדָר שְׂמֹחָה

who sought to destroy the Jews physically. Thus Purim is celebrated with physical feasting.
—Sichat Chanukah 5716

Rejoicing. There are four levels of joy: 1) "Serve God with joy." This joy is secondary to the primary objective: serving God. 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.

—Likutei Sichot, IV

dechai 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. 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 commemorated and celebrated in every generation, by every family, in every province and every city. And these days of Purim will never pass from among the

9:22 Gifts to the poor. Not charity; 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.

—Likutei Sichot, II

9:27 The Jews established and accepted. Before giving the Jews the Torah, God 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 Achashveirosh, as it says, “The Jews established and accepted”—they established in the days of Achashveirosh what

ומשנתה יום טוב ומשלוח מנות איש לרעהו: כ ויכתב מרדכי את־הקברים האלה וישלח ספרים אל־כל־היהודים אשר בכל־מדינות המלך אחשוורוש הקרובים והרחוקים: כא לקים עליהם להיות עשים את יום ארבעה עשר לחודש אדר ואת יום־חמשה עשר בו בכל־שנה ושנה: כב כימים אשר־נצחו בהם היהודים מאיביהם והחדש אשר נהפך להם מיגון לשמחה ומאכל ליום טוב לעשות אותם ימי משתה ושמחה ומשלח מנות איש לרעהו ומתנות לאבינים: כג וקבל היהודים את אשר־החלו לעשות ואת אשר־כתב מרדכי אליהם: כד כי המן בן־המרתא האגגי צרר כל־היהודים חשב על־היהודים לאבדם והפל פור הוא הוגדל להמם ולאבדם: כה ובבאה לפני המלך אמר עמ־הספר ישוב מחשבתי הרעה אשר־חשב על־היהודים על־ראשו ותלו אותו ואת־כנזו על־העץ: כו על־כן קראו לימים האלה פורים על־שם הפור עליהם על־פל־דברי האגרת הזאת ומדי־ראו על־ככה ומה הוגיע אליהם: כז קימו וקבלו וקבלו היהודים עליהם ועל־זרעם ועל כל־הנולדים עליהם ולא יעבור להיות עשים את־שני הימים האלה בכתבם וכוונתם בכל־שנה ושנה: כח והימים האלה נופרים ונעשים בכל־דור ודור משפחה ומשפחה מדינה ומדינה ועיר ועיר וימי

they had already accepted at Sinai (*Shabbat* 88a).

The miraculous events of Sinai consumed the Jew with fire and love. Thus any ‘acceptance’ during that intense condition did not constitute a true commitment. In the days of Purim, however, the Jew remained committed to Torah despite the Godless environment of the time.

9:28 And these days are commemorated and celebrated. When a holiday is “commemorated” properly, when it is truly relived, one can access the spiritual influences that were manifest on the original holiday, “celebrating” and actualizing them every year anew. —Arizal

The days of Purim. *Yom Kippurim* (Yom Kipur) can be translated as “a day like Purim”

PURIM IS
CONFIRMED
AND THE
BOOK OF
ESTHER IS
CANONIZED

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 behest of Esther confirmed the observances of these Purim days, and [the story] was included in Scripture.

X.
MORDECHAI
BECOMES
VICEROY

Verse 3 is
read aloud
by the
congregation
followed by
the reader.

King Achashveirosh 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 Achashveirosh, 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.**

The following blessing is recited after the Megillah reading if a quorum of ten is present.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who wages our battles, defends our rights, avenges the wrong done to us, punishes our oppressors in our behalf, and brings retribution upon all our mortal enemies. Blessed are You Lord, who exacts payment in behalf of His people Israel from all their oppressors; God who delivers.



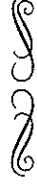
(Tikkunei Zohar). This suggests that the loftiness of Purim transcends even that of Yom Kippur.

On Yom Kippur we detach ourselves from the physical and mundane aspects of life and devote ourselves to prayer. Yom Kipur

universe that is rooted in the Oneness of its Creator.

—Likkutei Sichot, IV

Nor shall their memory depart. Even if all the festivals become obsolete, Purim will remain (Midrash). When Mashiach comes, 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.

—Torah Ohr

הַפּוּרִים הָאֵלֶּה לֹא יַעֲבֹרוּ מִתּוֹךְ הַיְּהוּדִים וְזָכָרם לֹא יִסּוּף מִזֶּרְעָם: כט וְהִנְכַּתֵּב אֶסְתֵּר הַמֶּלֶכֶה בֵּית אֲבִיהָ וּמִדְּבַר הַיְּהוּדִי אֲתֵּי-לִיתָקָף לְקִים אֶת־אֲגֻרַת הַפָּרִים הַזֹּאת הַשּׁוֹנִית: ל וַיִּשְׁלַח סִפְרִים אֶל־כָּל־הַיְּהוּדִים אֶל־שִׁבְעֵי וְעֶשְׂרִים וּמֵאָה מְדִינָה מְלָכוֹת אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ דְּבָרֵי שְׁלֹם וְאַמֶּת: לא לְקִים אֲתֵי־נִי הַפָּרִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּזִמְנֵיהֶם בְּאֶשֶׁר קִים עֲלֵיהֶם מִדְּבַר הַיְּהוּדִי וְאֶסְתֵּר הַמֶּלֶכֶה וְכֹאֲשֶׁר קִימוּ עַל־נַפְשָׁם וְעַל־זֶרְעָם דְּבָרֵי הַצּוּמוֹת וְהַעֲקוּתָם: לב וּמֵאֲמֵר אֶסְתֵּר קִים דְּבָרֵי הַפָּרִים הָאֵלֶּה וְנִכְתָּב בַּסֵּפֶר:

פסוק י

א וַיִּשֶׁם הַמֶּלֶךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ וְאַחֲשֵׁרִישׁ כִּי מִסַּעֲדָאֲרִיז וְאִי הֵיָם: ב וְכָל־מַעֲשֵׂה תַקְפוֹ וּגְבוּרָתוֹ וּפְרִשְׁתָּ גְדֻלַּת מְרָדְכִי אֲשֶׁר גָּדְלוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ הַלֹּאִיָּהִם בְּחוּבִים עַל־סֵפֶר דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים לְמַלְכֵי מִדֵּי וּפָרָס: ג כִּי מְרָדְכִי הַיְּהוּדִי מִשּׁוּנָה לְמַלְךְ אַחֲשֵׁרוֹשׁ וְגִדּוֹל לַיְּהוּדִים וְרָצוֹ לְרֹב אֲחֵיו דְּרִשׁ טוֹב לַעֲמֹ וְדָבָר שְׁלֹם לְכָל־זֶרְעוֹ:

Verse 3 is
read aloud
by the
congregation
followed by
the reader.

The following blessing is recited after the Megillah reading if a quorum of ten is present.

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, הָרַב אֶת רִיבֵנוּ, וְהִדָּן אֶת דִּינֵנוּ, וְהַנּוֹקֵם אֶת נַקְמָתֵנוּ, וְהַנּוֹפֵק לָנוּ מִצָּרֵינוּ, וְהַמְשִׁילָם גָּמוּל לְכָל אוֹיְבֵי נַפְשֵׁנוּ. בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ הַנּוֹפֵק לַעֲמֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל מִכָּל צָרֵיהֶם, הָאֵל הַמּוֹשִׁיעַ:

Purim Mitzvot

שׁוֹשְׁנֵת יַעֲקֹב צִהְלָה וְשָׂמְחָה, בְּרֵאוֹתָם יַחַד תִּכְבְּלֵת
מְרֹדְכָי, תְּשׁוּעָתָם הָיִיתָ לְנֹצָה, וְתַקּוֹתָם בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר.
לְהוֹדִיעַ שָׁפָל קוֹיָךְ לֹא יִבְשׁוּ וְלֹא יִכְלְמוּ לְנֹצָה כָּל
הַחוֹטִים בָּךְ. אֲרוּר הַמֶּן הָאֲשֶׁר בִּקֵּשׁ לְאַבְדִּי בְּרוּךְ מְרֹדְכָי
הַיְּהוּדִי. אֲרוּרָה זָרַשׁ אִשְׁתּוֹ מִפּוֹחֲדִי, בְּרוּכָה אֶסְמֶךָ בְּעַדִּי,
אֲרוּרִים כָּל הַרְשָׁעִים, בְּרוּכִים כָּל הַצְדִּיקִים, וְגַם חֲרֻבּוֹנָה
זְכוֹר לְטוֹב:

The rose of Jacob thrilled with joy and exulted when they beheld Mordechai garbed in royal blue. You have always been their salvation, their hope in every generation, to make known that all who place their hope in You shall not be put to shame, nor shall all those who trust in You be disgraced forever. Cursed be Haman who sought to destroy me; blessed be Mordechai the Jew. Cursed be Zeresh the wife of [Haman] who terrified me; 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.

- On Purim night continue with *Ve'atoh Kadosh* (And You, holy One. . .), Complete Kaddish without *Tikabel*, *Alenu* (It is incumbent. . .) and Mourner's Kaddish.
- On Saturday night continue with *V'hi Noam* (May the pleasantness. . .) *Ve'atoh Kadosh* (And You, holy One. . .), Complete Kaddish with *Tikabel*, *Alenu* (It is incumbent. . .) and Mourner's Kaddish.
- On Purim morning continue with *Ashrei* and the rest of the Morning Prayer.

Rose of Jacob. In Song of Songs (2:1-2) the Jewish nation is compared to a rose. Shoshanah (rose) is a reference to Shushan, recalling the verse "the city of Shushan celebrated and rejoiced" (Esther 8:15).

Garbed in royal blue. A reference to Mordechai's tzitzit, which include one blue string, that he displayed prominently despite his position in a non-Jewish society.

The Mitzvot of Purim

• Megillah

To relive the miraculous events of Purim, we listen to the reading of the Megillah (the Scroll of Esther) on Purim eve and again on Purim day.

Whenever Haman's name is mentioned with a title (according to Chabad custom), we stamp our feet and twirl *graggers* to "drown out" his evil name.

• Gifts Of Food

On Purim we emphasize the importance of Jewish unity and friendship by sending gifts of food to friends.

Send a gift of at least two kinds of ready-to-eat foods (for example, pastry, fruit, beverage), to at least one friend on Purim day.

It is proper that men send to men and women to women. Sending these gifts should be done through a third party. Children, in addition to sending their own gifts of food, make enthusiastic messengers.

• Gifts To The Needy

Concern for the needy is a year-round responsibility for the Jew.

On Purim, particularly, it is a special mitzvah to remember the poor. Give charity to at least two, but preferably more, needy individuals on Purim day.

The mitzvah is best fulfilled by giving directly to the needy. If, however, you cannot find poor people, place at least several coins into pushkas (charity boxes). Even small children should fulfill this mitzvah.

On Purim we give alms to "whoever extends his hand."

• The Festive Meal

As on all festivals, we celebrate Purim with a special festive meal on Purim day, when family and friends gather together to rejoice in the Purim spirit.

Other Observances Of Purim

- **The Fast of Esther**

To commemorate the day of prayer and fasting that the Jews held before their victory, we fast on the day before Purim, from approximately three hours before sunrise until 40 minutes after sunset. In the event that the day before Purim is on Shabbat we move the fast day up to the previous Thursday.

- **Machatzit Hashekel**

It is a tradition to give 3 half-dollar coins to charity to commemorate the half-shekel given by each Jew in the time of the Holy Temple. This mitzvah, usually performed in the synagogue, should be done on the fast-day prior to Purim, but can be done on Purim as well.

- **Special Prayers**

On Purim we recite the *Al HaNissim* liturgy in the *Amidah* (Silent Prayer) for evening, morning and afternoon, as well as in the Grace After Meals. In the morning service there is a special reading from the Torah Scroll in the synagogue.

